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▶ To cite this version:

Avassaya Vanitcha, Cecilia Damelincourt, Geoffrey Gontard, Nicolas Vanthuyne, Virginie Mouriès-Mansuy, et al.. Bis-phosphine allene ligand: coordination chemistry and preliminary applications in catalysis. Chemical Communications, 2016, 52, pp.6785-6788 10.1039/c6cc02316a . hal-01311658

HAL Id: hal-01311658 https://hal.sorbonne-universite.fr/hal-01311658

Submitted on 4 May 2016 $\,$

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Bis-phosphine allene ligand: coordination chemistry and preliminary applications in catalysis

Received 00th January 20xx, jkjAccepted 00th January 20xx

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DOI: 10.1039/x0xx00000x

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A 1,3-bis-diphenylphosphine allene can give birth to new coordination complexes with palladium, platinum and gold metals. These complexes were fully characterized by NMR, HRMS and X-ray diffraction analysis. For gold(I), the corresponding dinuclear complex has been used in a series of diagnostic catalytic reactions and gave promising preliminary results in asymmetric catalysis.

Coordination chemistry has been at the center of chemists' preoccupations since the pioneering works of Christian Wilhem Blomstrand, Sophus Mads Jorgensen and Alfred Werner in the 19th century. This very fundamental and intense domain of investigation has continuously irrigated several fields of applications such as catalysis, material sciences. supramolecular and medicinal chemistry.¹ Based on the interaction between a ligand and a metal center, the game of combining both components appears unlimited and the number of existing coordination adducts is still restricted, leaving a vast unexplored chemical space. Nevertheless, a rationale design is desirable to guarantee the preparation of objects with optimized properties. This approach generally requires to start from elementary building blocks (ligand or metal) with peculiar attributes.

Thus, thanks to its unique stereoelectronic features, an allene scaffold bearing Lewis base and possibly conveying some chiral information sites appeared to us as a valuable keystone (Scheme 1).² As further incentive, there has been, to the best of our knowledge, a very limited number of allene-derive ligands involved in metallic coordination complexes. Krause reported the formation of silver and copper complexes from allene-containing bipyridine ligands, but no catalytic activity was reported.³ Chiral diphosphine oxide allenes were first used as

organocatalysts by Ready who described the highly enantioselective formation of epichlorhydrines from *meso*epoxides with SiCl₄.⁴ Later, the same group devised chiral allene-containing bisphosphines, that when coordinated to Rh(I), were able to promote the asymmetric addition of arylboronic acids to α -keto esters with high enantioselectivity.⁵



Scheme 1 New prospects in coordination chemistry with allene ligands

In line with this strategy, our attention was drawn to bisphosphine 1,3-bis(diphenylphos-phino)-1,3-diphenylallene 1 featuring direct attachment of the phosphorus moieties on the allene scaffold, which has been so far very rarely encountered.⁶ The Schmidbaur group previously described the synthesis of $1.^7$ Following their procedure, we obtained 1 in a consistent yield of 48 % (Scheme 2).

$$Ph \longrightarrow Ph \xrightarrow{Ph BuLi (2 equiv)}_{Ph 2PCI (2 equiv) Ph_2P} \xrightarrow{Ph} \xrightarrow{Ph} \underbrace{Se (7.2 equiv)}_{Ph_2} \xrightarrow{Ph} \underbrace{Ph}_{Ph_2} \xrightarrow{Ph}_{Ph_2} \xrightarrow{Ph}_{Ph$$

Scheme 2 Allene bisphosphine 1 and its bis-seleno derivative 2

We then studied the unexplored coordination properties of **1** and focused on the possibility of obtaining mononuclear palladium (II) and platinum (II) complexes. Thus, heating at 80°C for 4 h a 1:1 mixture of bis(acetonitrile)dichloropalladium and **1** in toluene afforded the coordination complex **3** (84% yield) that was isolated as an orange solid after precipitation in cold ether. ³¹P NMR showed a singlet peak resonance at $\delta_P = 128.3$ ppm, very downfield compared to the starting allene **1** ($\delta_P = 33.2$ ppm) and the ¹³C peak of the central allene carbon was

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Electronic Supplementary Information (ESI) available: [details of any supplementary information available should be included here]. See DOI: 10.1039/x0xx00000x

observed as a triplet peak (t, ${}^{2}J_{CP} = 3.8$ Hz) at 193.3 ppm ($\delta \Box \Box 209.9$ ppm, d, ${}^{2}J_{CP} = 3.5$ Hz) for **1**). An initial crystallization attempt of the bis-P-coordinated Pd allene complex **3** in MeOH provided suitable material for a single crystal X-ray diffraction (XRD) analysis. Interestingly, the latter showed a co-crystallized mixture of MeOH and HCl adducts on **3** (see SI). While these findings strongly suggested the formation of the Pd-allene complex **3**, its structure was fully confirmed after XRD analysis of crystals grown in a CH₂Cl₂/cyclohexane mixture.⁸ A square planar coordination was observed. More striking was the severely bent character of the allene moiety, exhibiting a C=C=C bond angle of 151.2(2)°. The C1-C2 and C2-C3 bond lengths of respectively 1.303(3) and 1.315(3) Å lie in the typical range observed for cumulenes.⁹



was also confirmed by XRD studies (Scheme 4).¹⁷ Despite the known carbophilicity of gold(I) salts,¹⁸ coordination took place exclusively on the phosphine moieties, leaving the allene unaltered. The two Au atoms lie in opposite direction, with an Au-Au distance of 6.498(1) Å precluding any aurophilic interaction.¹⁹ The distance between the Au atom and the phenyl group of the allene moiety is, on average, 3.71(2) Å suggesting no η^1 or η^2 interaction as described for the JohnPhos gold(I) chloride complex and congeners.²⁰



Scheme 4 Mononuclear and dinuclear gold(I) complexes

Scheme 3 Pd and Pt mononuclear complexes with ligand 1

Similarly, platinum complex **4** was formed quantitatively. ³¹P NMR shows a central resonance at $\delta_P = 98.7$ ppm with two small satellite peaks due to ¹⁹⁵Pt (${}^{1}J^{31}{}_{P}{}^{195}{}_{Pt} = 4371$ Hz). Here also, the ¹³C peak of the allene central carbon is more shielded ($\delta = 198.9$ ppm, ${}^{2}J_{CP} = 5.1$ Hz). The XRD analysis⁸ confirmed the structure and also showed a square planar coordination with a similar C=C=C bent angle of 151.8(4)° (see SI).

A few bent allenes have previously been reported¹⁰ though there has been some controversy in assigning an allenic character to some of them.¹¹ The most structurally related example to **3** or **4** corresponds to cyclic allene **5**, previously isolated by Regitz and exhibiting a C=C=C angle of 155.8° .^{6c} While palladium complex **3** appears quite stable, platinum complex **4** decomposed in few days upon standing on the bench at rt.

These preliminary findings validated the coordination ability of allene **1** so we looked at the possible formation of gold complexes in connection with our interest in gold catalysis.^{12,13} Our initial attempt focused on the formation of a tricoordinate mononuclear complex as more and more examples¹⁴ of this coordination mode have been reported and shown intriguing properties.¹⁵ Interestingly, when mixing 1.1 equiv of **1** with 1 equiv of Me₂SAuCl in CH₂Cl₂ at –20°C, a new species (δ_P = 12.5 ppm, broad peak) was selectively formed. The XRD analysis revealed the polymeric gold complex **6**.^{16,17} While the properties of these macromolecular objects will be studied, we turned our attention on dinuclear complexes.

Thus, treatment of 1 with 2 equiv of Me₂SAuCl in CH_2Cl_2 provided quantitatively the chiral gold(I) complex *rac-7*. The latter proved to be quite stable to air and moisture. Its structure

The evaluation of the electronic properties of allene **1** was achieved by measuring the magnitude of ${}^{1}J_{P-Se}$ on the ${}^{77}Se$ isotopomer²¹ of the corresponding bis-selenide derivative **2** (Scheme 2). With a ${}^{1}J_{P-Se}$ value of 754 Hz, allene **1** exhibits an intermediate σ -donor ability, lower that PPh₃ (${}^{1}J_{P-Se} = 728$ Hz) but much higher than P(PhO)₃ (${}^{1}J_{P-Se} = 1027$ Hz).²²

We then evaluated the catalytic activity of gold complex *rac-7* using the prototypical *N*-tethered 1,6-enyne precursor **8a**. The reaction was carried out in CH_2Cl_2 with a catalytic 1:1 mixture of *rac-7* (3 mol%) and AgSbF₆ to afford diene **9a** in 74% yield. When 1,6 enyne **8b** was treated in the same conditions, only starting material was recovered even in refluxing conditions. An additional 3 mol% of silver salt gave the expected product **9b** in 52% yield. It is noteworthy that when 2 equiv of AgSbF₆ (6 mol%) were introduced right from the start of the reaction, compound **9a** was obtained in similar yield as with 3 mol% but we observed a better yield (85%) for compound **9b** (Scheme 5).



Scheme 5 Preliminary catalytic testing

As previously reported in the literature²³ and by us,²⁴ we suspected the detrimental formation of a chloride-bridged digold complex. The latter was detected by ESI MS at 20V (see SI) from an equimolar mixture of **1** and AgSbF₆ in CH₂Cl₂, as

attested by the presence of a peak at m/z 989 (C₃₉H₃₀Au₂ClP₂⁺). This complex would be cleaved by more coordinating substrates like **8a** or by the addition of an excess of silver salt yielding a dicationic gold catalytic species.

Following the previously defined reaction conditions, we extended the investigation on the electrophilic catalytic properties of *rac-7* by examining the reactivity of several representative polyunsaturated substrates. Thus, enyne **10** provided regioselectively cyclopentadienic dienes **11a**,**a**²⁵ in 70% yield with no cyclohexadienic product.^{13c} Running the same reaction in methanol as solvent did not affect the catalytic activity and gave smoothly methoxycyclization adduct **12** as a single regioisomer.²⁵ The quantitative conversion of enyne **13** into tricyclic derivative **14** confirmed the robustness of this catalytic system.²⁶





Scheme 6 Scope of the catalysis with *rac-7*

Intermolecular gold catalyzed additions offer interesting synthetic opportunities. We evaluated the intermolecular cyclopropanation reaction between propargyl pivalate 15 and styrene and were pleased to obtain cyclopropane adduct 16 in 60% yield and in a improved diastereoselectivity (>20:1) in favor of the *cis*-isomer than previously reported (>6:1).²⁷ The cycloisomerization of allenediene 17 served as a very informative probe. It showed that the chemoselective activation of an allene was possible with our allene-based catalytic system since a 4:1 mixture of [4+2] and [4+3] cycloadducts 18 and 19 was obtained in 67% yield. The major formation of 18 suggests a rather electron depleted catalytic species, more electrophilic than with triphenylphosphine as ligand which gives a 2 : 1 ratio of 18 and 19.28 This product distribution is thus consistent with our preliminary evaluation of the electronics with bis-seleno derivative 2 (Scheme 6).

We finally wished to look at the opportunity to use the chirality of ligand **1** for asymmetric transformations.²⁹ Although the number of optical resolutions of organometallic complexes by preparative HPLC remains limited,³⁰ and to the best of our knowledge none with gold,³¹ we tried this method on the gold chloride complex *rac-7*. Gratifyingly, the enantiomers of complex *rac-7* were nicely separated by analytical chiral chromatography on Chiralpak IE column. Each enantiomer was obtained with high 98% ee and their absolute configuration determined by anomalous XRD.³² We then evaluated the catalytic activity of (*aR*)-(+)-7 for the asymmetric cycloisomerisation of 1,6-enynes **8b** and **20**. The expected aza bicyclo[4.1.0]heptenes **9b** and **21** were obtained in good yields and in promising ees of 29 and 32 %, respectively (Scheme 7). **Scheme 7** Resolution and asymmetric catalysis



Conclusions

This journey in the coordination of bis-phosphine allene 1 with palladium, platinum and gold salts has allowed the formation of highly novel and original coordination complexes. Physicochemical properties of these complexes will be pursued. Focusing on gold(I) salts, we could generate a new type of chiral dinuclear gold precatalyst. The precatalyst rac-7 in the presence of a silver salt proved to be very competent and robust a series of prototypical gold-catalyzed reactions. in Investigation of the electronic properties suggests a moderately electrophilic gold complex which was corroborated by catalytic results. Preliminary testing of the corresponding optically pure complex obtained by preparative chiral HPLC gave promising hits for asymmetric catalysis. It is anticipated that fine electronic and steric tuning of the allene bis-phosphine ligand by appropriate substitution should boost the catalytic properties.

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