



# Concept Paper Gold(III) Complexation in the Presence of the Macropolyhedral Hydridoborate Cluster [B<sub>20</sub>H<sub>18</sub>]<sup>2-</sup>

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**Abstract:** Gold(III) complexation with the octadecahydrido-eicosaborate anion  $[B_{20}H_{18}]^{2-}$  was studied for the first time. It was found that when gold(III) complexes  $[Au(L)Cl_2]BF_4$  (L = bipy, phen) reacted with  $[B_{20}H_{18}]^{2-}$ , complexes  $[Au(L)Cl_2]_2[B_{20}H_{18}]$  were isolated. The compounds consisted of a cationic gold(III) complex  $[Au(L)Cl_2]^+$  and the hydridoborate cluster as a counterion. X-ray diffraction studies revealed weak B–H...Au interactions for both compounds. Note that more reactive anions  $[B_nH_n]^{2-}$  (n = 10, 12) in similar reactions with gold(III) complexes resulted in gold mirror reactions.

Keywords: hydridoborates; boron clusters; mixed-ligand complexes; X-ray diffraction; gold

# 1. Introduction

Higher polyhedral boron dianions  $[B_nH_n]^{2-}$  (n = 6-12) [1-5] (n.b., hydridoborate is the new IUPAC recommended name for this class of compounds [6]) are fascinating ligands in coordination chemistry of transition metals. On the one hand, due to their 3D aromaticity [7–11] and low charge density, they are typical soft Lewis bases, which form numerous stable complexes with the soft metal acids including copper(I) and silver(I) [12–15], zinc(II) and cadmium(II) [16–19], and lead(II) ([20] and references therein). In addition, the boron cluster anions form compounds with metal(II) complex cations acting as counterions, e.g., Cu(II), Fe(II), Co(II), Ni(II), and Mn(II) [15,21–26]. In the presence of metals(III) complexes, the boron cluster anions act as reducing agents being oxidized to oxidoborates [27–29]. On the other hand, boron clusters form numerous products of the substitution of terminal hydrogen atoms by various functional groups keeping the initial *closo*-structure [30–34].

The *closo*-decaborate anion  $[B_{10}H_{10}]^{2-}$  can be easily oxidized in the presence of Fe(III) or Ce(IV) salts to form a macropolyhedral boron cluster  $[trans-B_{20}H_{18}]^{2-}$  [35,36], and the coordination chemistry of the latter began to be studied only a few years ago. A number of silver(I) compounds with the coordinated macropolyhedron and Ph<sub>3</sub>P ligand were isolated and characterized by X-ray diffraction; the single-crystal-to-single-crystal transformations initiated with UV radiation and high temperature were studied [37,38]. First lead(II) complexes with coordinated Bipy and  $[B_{20}H_{18}]^{2-}$  were synthesized and characterized by IR spectroscopy and X-ray diffraction [38]. *Tris*-chelate manganese complex [Mn(Bipy)<sub>3</sub>][B<sub>20</sub>H<sub>18</sub>] [39] and iron(II) complex [*Cp*Fe(*Cp*-CH<sub>2</sub>-NMe<sub>2</sub>*Et*<sub>2</sub>)][B<sub>20</sub>H<sub>18</sub>] [40] with the boron clusters in the outer sphere are also known.



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**Copyright:** © 2022 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https:// creativecommons.org/licenses/by/ 4.0/). A number of gold compounds with boron clusters were synthesized and characterized. In particular, the gold(I) complex with triphenylphosphine and the hexahydridocloso-hexaborate anion  $\{Au_2(Ph_3P)_4[B_6H_6]\}$  was reported [41]. The compound is a binuclear complex containing a closo-hexaborate anion as a bridging ligand coordinated to the gold(I) atoms via opposite B<sub>3</sub> faces. The complex with a direct metal-boron bond  $\{Au_3(Ph_3P)_3[B_{10}H_9]\}$  [42] was obtained by the reaction of  $[Au(Ph_3P)Cl]$  with  $\{Ag_2[B_{10}H_{10}]\}$ in the acetonitrile/benzene system. A triangular Au<sub>3</sub> fragment can be considered as a substituent in the apical position of the boron cluster.

Gold(I) compounds with an outer-sphere coordination of the boron clusters were also described. Complexes  $[Au(Ph_3P)_x]_2[B_{12}Hal_{12}]$  (Hal = F, Cl, Br, I; x = 2, 3) with perhalogenated boron clusters in the outer sphere were isolated [43] from the electrochemically assisted reactions of  $(H_3O)_2[B_{12}Hal_{12}]$  acids with  $Au^0$  in the presence of  $Ph_3P$ . Structures of mononuclear gold(I) complexes  $[(CH_3CN)_2Au][B_{12}Cl_{11}(Me_3N)] \cdot CH_2Cl_2$  and  $[(Ph_3P)_2Au_2Cl][B_{12}Cl_{11}(Me_3N)]$  [44], as well as binuclear gold(I) complex  $[Ph_3PAuClAuPh_3P][B_{12}Cl_{11}(Me_3N)]$  [45] with a substituted *closo*-dodecaborate anion  $[B_{12}Cl_{11}(Me_3N)]^-$ , were also reported. In addition, polymeric chain complex  $[Au(Ph_3P)_2][Ag[B_{12}H_1_2]]_n$  was isolated [46].

It is noteworthy that the reaction of  $[Au(Ph_3P)Cl]$  with  $\{Ag_2[B_{12}H_{12}]\}$  gave a gold complex  $[Au_9(PPh_3)_8][B_{24}H_{23}]$  [42]. The nine-vertex gold cluster  $[Au_9(PPh_3)_8]^{3+}$  is a cationic part of the compound, while the  $[B_{24}H_{23}]^{3-}$  trianion with a linear B–H–B' bridge is a counterion and shows a centrosymmetric structure.

Complexes of metals in a high oxidation state are extremely rare. Usually, metals(III) are reduced to metals(II) because of reducing properties of boron clusters. As far as we know, a few examples of iron(III) and cobalt(III) complexes have been reported. Binuclear iron(III) complex [ $\{(\eta^5-Cp)(dppe)Fe\}_2\{\mu^2-1,10-NC[B_{10}H_8]CN)\}$ ]·H<sub>2</sub>O was isolated with disubstituted 1,10-derivative [B<sub>10</sub>H<sub>8</sub>(CN)<sub>2</sub>]<sup>2-</sup>, which acts as a bridge ligand between two metal complexes with cyclopentadienyl and phosphine ligands [47]. In addition, the cobalt(III) complex with the least reactive *closo*-dodecaborate anion [Co<sup>III</sup>(Phen)<sub>3</sub>][B<sub>12</sub>H<sub>12</sub>]NO<sub>3</sub>·2DMF·4H<sub>2</sub>O was isolated [48].

Here, we describe the results of our study of gold(III) complexation in the presence of a  $[B_{20}H_{18}]^{2-}$  anion. First, gold(III) complexes with boron cluster anions were isolated and characterized.

## 2. Experimental

## 2.1. Synthesis

All reactions were carried out in air. Acetonitrile (HPLC grade), ethanol (95%), bipy (98%), and Ph<sub>3</sub>P (98%) were purchased from Sigma-Aldrich.  $(Et_3NH)_2[B_{10}H_{10}]$  was synthesized from decaborane(14) according to the known procedure [49].  $(Et_3NH)_2[trans-B_{20}H_{18}]$  was prepared by oxidation of aqueous  $(Et_3NH)_2[B_{10}H_{10}]$  with FeCl<sub>3</sub> according to the procedure reported [35,50]. The obtained solid was dissolved in a CH<sub>3</sub>CN/water mixture followed by the addition of aqueous Ph<sub>4</sub>PCl in the reaction solution resulting in the quantitative precipitation of (Ph<sub>4</sub>P)<sub>2</sub>[B<sub>20</sub>H<sub>18</sub>]. [Au(bipy)Cl<sub>2</sub>]BF<sub>4</sub> and [Au(phen)Cl<sub>2</sub>]BF<sub>4</sub> were prepared according to the known procedure [51].

Synthesis of  $[Au(L)Cl_2]_2[B_{20}H_{18}]$  (1: L = bipy, 2: L = phen)

A solution of  $[Au(L)Cl_2]BF_4$  (0.2 mmol) in acetonitrile was added with stirring to a solution of  $(Ph_4P)_2[B_{20}H_{18}]$  (0.1 mmol) in acetonitrile (10 mL). The formation of dark-orange crystals was observed within 5–10 min. The crystals were filtered off and dried in air. The yield was ~90%. Single crystals 1·2CH<sub>3</sub>CN and 2·2CH<sub>3</sub>CN suitable for X-ray diffraction study were taken from the reaction solutions.

Anal. calcd. for  $Au_2C_{20}H_{34}N_4Cl_4B_{20}$  (1): C, 22.2; H 3.2; N, 5.2; B 20.0. Found, %: C 22.3; H 3.1; N, 5.1; B 19.9. IR (NaCl,  $\nu$ , cm<sup>-1</sup>):  $\nu$ (BH) 2540, 2515, 2501, 2470;  $\nu$ (CN)<sub>CH3CN</sub> 2355, 2335; $\delta$ (BBH) 1029; 1605w, 1507w, 1456, 1377, 1320, 1249w, 1113w, 1077w, 1047w; 771. NMR <sup>11</sup>B (dmso-*d*<sub>6</sub>, ppm): -30.7 (d, 2B<sub>ap</sub>), -16.2 (s, 2B, B2, B2'), -6.0 (d, 2B<sub>eq</sub>), -11.7 (d, 4B<sub>eq</sub>), -15.3 (d, 4B<sub>eq</sub>), -18.8 (d, 4B<sub>eq</sub>), -25.1 (d, 2B<sub>ap</sub>).

Anal. calcd. for Au<sub>2</sub>C<sub>24</sub>H<sub>34</sub>N<sub>4</sub>Cl<sub>4</sub>B<sub>20</sub> (**2**): Au, 34.8; C, 25.5; H 3.0; N, 5.0; B 19.1. Found, %: Au, 34.3; C 24.8; H 2.9; N, 5.0; B 19.0. **IR** (NaCl,  $\nu$ , cm<sup>-1</sup>):  $\nu$ (BH) 2530, 2490;  $\nu$ (CN)<sub>CH3CN</sub> 2360, 2332;  $\delta$ (BBH) 1030; 1602w, 1518w, 1461s, 1432, 1377, 1221w, 1153w, 954w, 871w; 847, 823w, 748w, 723w, 701w, 673w. **NMR**<sup>11</sup>B (dmso-*d*<sub>6</sub>, ppm): -31.0 (d, 2B<sub>ap</sub>), -16.9 (s, 2B, B2, B2'), -5.9 (d, 2B<sub>eq</sub>), -11.6 (d, 4B<sub>eq</sub>), -15.2 (d, 4B<sub>eq</sub>), -18.7 (d, 4B<sub>eq</sub>), -24.9 (d, 2B<sub>ap</sub>).

#### 2.2. Materials and Methods

**Elemental analysis** for carbon, hydrogen, and nitrogen was performed using a Carlo ErbaCHNS-3 FA 1108 automated elemental analyzer. Boron and metal contents were determined on an iCAP 6300 Duo ICP emission spectrometer with inductively coupled plasma. Samples were dried in air to constant mass; thus, solvent-free samples **1** and **2** were used.

**IR spectra** of compounds were recorded with a Lumex Infralum FT-02 FTIR-spectrometer in the range of 4000–600 cm<sup>-1</sup> at a resolution of 1 cm<sup>-1</sup>. Samples were prepared as Nujol mulls; NaCl plates were used. Fresh crystals containing solvent molecules were used in measurements.

<sup>11</sup>B NMR spectra of solutions of compounds in dmso- $d_6$  were recorded with a Bruker AC 200 spectrometer at a frequency of 64.297 MHz using BF<sub>3</sub>·Et<sub>2</sub>O as an external standard.

X-ray powder diffraction studies of crystals 1.2CH<sub>3</sub>CN were carried out on a Bruker D8 Advance X-ray diffractometer at the Shared Research Center of the Kurnakov Institute of General and Inorganic Chemistry, Russian Academy of Sciences. The measurements were performed using CuK $\alpha$  radiation in low-background cuvettes with a substrate of an oriented silicon single crystal in the 2 $\theta$  angle range of 5°–80° with a step of 0.01125°. To obtain diffraction patterns, the samples were carefully triturated in an agate mortar. Before the measurements, the samples were dried to constant weight to remove solvent molecules. X-ray powder diffraction patterns of compound 1.2CH<sub>3</sub>CN are shown in Figure S1. The data obtained verify the purity of the compound.

X-ray diffraction studies of single crystal 1·2CH<sub>3</sub>CN were performed with a Bruker Apex DUO diffractometer (MoK<sub> $\alpha$ </sub> radiation, respectively); crystal 2·2CH<sub>3</sub>CN was studied using a Bruker Smart Apex II diffractometer (MoK<sub> $\alpha$ </sub> radiation). The structures were solved by the SHELXT method [52] and refined by the full-matrix least squares method against  $F^2$ of all data using SHELXL-2014 [53] and OLEX2 [54] software. Nonhydrogen atoms were found on difference Fourier maps and refined with anisotropic displacement parameters. The positions of hydrogen atoms were calculated and included in the refinement in isotropic approximation by the riding model with the  $U_{iso}(H) = 1.5U_{eq}(C)$  for methyl groups and  $1.2U_{eq}(C)$  for the other atoms, where  $U_{eq}(C)$  are equivalent thermal parameters of parent atoms. Crystal data, details of data collection, and results of structure refinement are summarized in Table S1. The crystallographic data were deposited with the Cambridge Crystallographic Data Center as supplementary publications under CCDC nos. 2126248 and 2153860. These data can be obtained free of charge from the Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre via www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/structures (accessed on 17 June 2022). Molecular views of compounds are shown in Figures S2 and S3.

# 3. Results and Discussion

Here, we studied the reactions of gold(III) complexes  $[Au(L)Cl_2]^+$  containing chelating N,N-ligands (L = bipy, phen) with the boron cluster anions. Earlier, it was found that iron(III) and cobalt(III) salts react with  $[B_nH_n]^{2-}$  anions (n = 10, 12) in the presence of bipy and phen, giving metal(II) compounds [55] with the boron clusters as counterions or even with substituted derivatives of the *closo*-decaborate anion with OH or Phen substitutes [56,57]. In the case of less reactive  $[B_{12}H_{12}]^{2-}$ , it was possible to isolate the cobalt(III) complex [Co(phen)<sub>3</sub>][B<sub>12</sub>H<sub>12</sub>]NO<sub>3</sub> [44].

First, we carried out reactions of  $[Au(L)Cl_2][BF_4]$  with the  $[B_{10}H_{10}]^{2-}$  and  $[B_{12}H_{12}]^{2-}$  anions in acetonitrile or acetonitrile/water solutions. However, it was found that both boron cluster anions reduce gold(III) to  $Au^0$  decomposing to oxidoborates.

# $(Et_3NH)_2[B_{10}H_{10}]$ or $(Ph_4P)_2[B_{12}H_{12}] + [Au(L)Cl_2][BF_4] \rightarrow Au^0 \downarrow + oxidoborates (L = bipy, phen)$

The reaction solutions became black for a few seconds and a thin layer of gold formed on the flask wall, indicating that a gold mirror reaction took place. <sup>11</sup>B NMR spectra of the reaction solutions showed the only peak at +20 ppm related to oxidoborates. In the IR spectra, a broad band at 1300–1200 cm<sup>-1</sup> is also observed assigned to  $\nu$ (BO) of oxidoborates. No bands were found around 2500 cm<sup>-1</sup>, which is a typical range for  $\nu$ (BH).

Then, we studied the reactions of  $[Au(L)Cl_2][BF_4]$  with  $[B_{20}H_{18}]^{2-}$  in acetonitrile and found that in such a case, gold(III) complexes  $[Au(L)Cl_2]_2[B_{20}H_{18}]$  (1: L = bipy, 2: L = phen) precipitate immediately as solvates  $[Au(L)Cl_2]_2[B_{20}H_{18}] \cdot 2CH_3CN$  (1·2CH<sub>3</sub>CN or 2·2CH<sub>3</sub>CN). The complexes start to precipitate from the reaction solutions as dark orange needles (1·2CH<sub>3</sub>CN) or prisms (2·2CH<sub>3</sub>CN) as soon as solutions of reagents were mixed in acetonitrile.

$$(Ph_4P)_2[B_{20}H_{18}] + [Au(L)Cl_2][BF_4] \rightarrow [Au(L)Cl_2]_2[B_{20}H_{18}] \downarrow$$

Successful formation of the gold(III) complexes with the  $[B_{20}H_{18}]^{2-}$  anion is most probably due to a lower reduction ability of the macropolyhedral boron cluster compared to  $[B_nH_n]^{2-}$  (n = 10, 12) boron clusters.

A crystallographically independent part of the orthorhombic and triclinic unit cells of complexes 1·2CH<sub>3</sub>CN (Pbca) and 2·2CH<sub>3</sub>CN (P-1) contains the [Au(L)Cl<sub>2</sub>]<sup>+</sup> cationic complex, half an anion, and a solvate molecule of acetonitrile, thus having the composition of  $[Au(Bipy)Cl_2]_2[B_{20}H_{18}] \cdot 2CH_3CN$  or  $[Au(Phen)Cl_2]_2[B_{20}H_{18}] \cdot 2CH_3CN$ . The anion in both cases also realizes the *trans*-configuration. The metal atom of the cations realize the square geometry with the gold(III) atom situated in the center of the AuCl<sub>2</sub>N<sub>2</sub> polyhedron (the shift in metal atom from the center is equal to 0.042(3) A and 0.043(3) A, respectively). The Au–N and Au–Cl distances are 2.016(8)–2.064(7) Å and 2.265(5)–2.278(4) Å for 1, and 2.051(7)–2.060(6) Å and 2.270(3)–2.283(3) Å for 2, respectively. In the structures of 1·2CH<sub>3</sub>CN and 2·2CH<sub>3</sub>CN, additional intermolecular interactions of the gold(III) atom can be observed (Figure 1). These are the B-H...Au interaction with the anion  $(r(Au...B8) = 3.89(1) \text{ Å}, AuHB = 138.1(6)^{\circ}, and NAuH = 72.4(2)-91.2(2)^{\circ} \text{ for } 1 \text{ and } r(Au...B9)$ = 3.55(1) Å, AuHB =  $123.7(5)^{\circ}$ , and NAuH =  $73.4(2)-93.9(2)^{\circ}$  for **2**) and a long Au...Cl bond  $(r(Au-Cl) = 3.406(5) \text{ Å}, AuClAu = 88.2(2)^{\circ}, and NAuCl = 82.8(2)-87.7(2)^{\circ}) \text{ in 1 and } Au \dots$ Au bond (r(Au-Au) = 3.586(4) Å and AuAuN = 86.6(2)–102.6(2)°) in **2**. Crystal packings of both compounds are shown in Figures S4 and S5. One of the equatorial BH groups interacts with the gold(III) atom in both structures.

In the IR spectra of complexes 1.2CH<sub>3</sub>CN and 2.2CH<sub>3</sub>CN, a strong splitting of the band of stretching vibrations  $\nu(BH)$  is observed near 2500 cm<sup>-1</sup>, which is explained by weak interactions found in the structure. A narrow intensive band of bending vibrations of the BH group with respect to the boron cage  $\delta(BBH)$  is observed near 1030 cm<sup>-1</sup>. Bands  $\nu(CN)$  assigned to CH<sub>3</sub>CN molecules are observed near 2300 cm<sup>-1</sup>. In addition, bands corresponding to coordinated Bipy and Phen ligands are observed in the region of 1600–700 cm<sup>-1</sup>.

At room temperature, complexes 1.2CH<sub>3</sub>CN and 2.2CH<sub>3</sub>CN are stable both in DMF solutions (at least for few days) and as solids (for some weeks) following our experimental data. We did not expose it to higher temperatures; however, based on our previous data for closely related compounds, we can expect them to show reasonable thermal stability. Note that cobalt and nickel compounds of the general formula [ML<sub>6</sub>][B<sub>10</sub>H<sub>10</sub>] (M = Co, Ni; L = DMF, H<sub>2</sub>O,  $1/2N_2H_4$ ) were used for low-temperature synthesis of metal borides [58–61]; they contain solvent molecules that can be easily removed when heating. Thermal stability data of gold complexes obtained here could be interesting because gold complexes contain metal in a more oxidized form (gold(III)), and in the presence of boron clusters that act as reducing agents, the obtained compounds should be more power-consuming compounds.



Figure 1. Gold(III) intermolecular interactions in the crystal of 2·2CH<sub>3</sub>CN (a) and 2·2CH<sub>3</sub>CN (b).

## 4. Conclusions

We studied the reactions of gold(III) complexes  $[Au(L)Cl_2]^+$  (L = bipy, phen) with hydridoborate anions  $[B_{10}H_{10}]^{2-}$ ,  $[B_{12}H_{12}]^{2-}$ , and the macropolyhedral hydridoborate anion  $[B_{20}H_{18}]^{2-}$ . The first gold(III) complexes with a hydridoborate cluster anion  $[Au(L)Cl_2]_2[B_{20}H_{18}]$  (L = bipy, phen) were isolated and characterized. In the structures of the compounds, the B–H...Au interactions were observed above the plane of the square-planar AuN<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> coordination polyhedron.

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**Supplementary Materials:** The following are available online at https://www.mdpi.com/article/ 10.3390/inorganics10070099/s1, Figure S1: Calculated (orange) and experimental (black) X-ray powder diffraction patterns of complex 1·2CH<sub>3</sub>CN, Figure S2: Molecular view of 1·2CH<sub>3</sub>CN in representation of atoms with thermal ellipsoids (p = 50%), Figure S3: Molecular view of 2·2CH<sub>3</sub>CN in representation of atoms with thermal ellipsoids (p = 50%), Figure S4: Crystal packing of 1·2CH<sub>3</sub>CN, Figure S5: Crystal packing of 2·2CH<sub>3</sub>CN, Table S1: Crystal structure data and refinement details for 1·2CH<sub>3</sub>CN and 2·2CH<sub>3</sub>CN.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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