**Abstract:** The one-electron reduction of a cyclic (alkyl)-(amino)carbene (CAAC)-stabilized arylborylene carbonyl complex yields a dimeric borylketyl radical anion, resulting from an intramolecular migration to the CO carbon atom. Computational analyses support the existence of a [(CAAC)B(CO)Ar]− radical anion intermediate. Further reduction leads to a highly nucleophilic dianionic (boranylidylenemethano) complex. The two-electron reduction of transition metal (TM) carbonyl complexes, [TM(CO)]n, generally proceeds with loss of CO to the corresponding [TM(CO)2]− dianions (Figure 1a), and/or anionic metal carbonyl clusters.[1–4] Our group and others have used [TM(CO)2]− precursors (TM = Cr, Mo, W, n = 6; M = Fe, n = 5) for the synthesis of terminal borylene complexes of the form [(OC),TM=BR] (R = anionic substituent).[13–17] In which the BR ligand is isolobal with CO. The two-electron reduction of aryl- and aminoborylene complexes of this type proceeds quite distinctly, however, from that of [TM(CO)2], resulting in double B–CO coupling and the release of an iminoborane dimer, respectively (Figure 1b). Owing to the lone pair and empty p orbital at boron, metal-free borylenes of the form LnBR (L = Lewis base; n = 1, 2) display reactivity reminiscent of low-oxidation-state TM complexes.[21–27] but including the coordination of CO.[21–27] Borylene carbonyl complexes (LB(CO)R) are generally obtained either by the direct addition of CO to a dicoordinate borylene (LBR)[27] or by releasing TM-bound borylenes through the addition of CO or other strong donors.[25,26] Spectroscopic and theoretical studies show a B–CO bonding pattern analogous to that of TM carbonyls, with the CO ligand donating into the empty orbital at boron and the boron lone pair backdonating into the π* orbital at CO (Figure 1c).[24,26] Like their TM counterparts, borylene carbonyls undergo exchange reactions with other Lewis bases upon UV irradiation,[25] or photolytic intramolecular oxidative addition with C–H and C–C bonds.[25,26] Lin and Xie also reported a cationic borylene carbonyl reacting with nucleophiles under reduction, migration, or complete cleavage of CO in a TM-like manner.[26] Inspired by this metallohydrophilic behavior, we report herein the one- and two-electron reduction chemistry of a carbonyl borylene, LB(CO)R, and highlight how it differs from that of TM carbonyls.

**Communications**

**Reduction and Rearrangement of a Boron(I) Carbonyl Complex**

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**Abstract:** The one-electron reduction of a cyclic (alkyl)-(amino)carbene (CAAC)-stabilized arylborylene carbonyl complex yields a dimeric borylketyl radical anion, resulting from an intramolecular migration to the CO carbon atom. Computational analyses support the existence of a [(CAAC)B(CO)Ar]− radical anion intermediate. Further reduction leads to a highly nucleophilic dianionic (boranylidylenemethano) complex.

**Figure 1.** a) One- and two-electron reduction of a TM carbonyl. b) Reduction of TM borylene complexes. c) Analogous orbital interactions between CO and TM or borylene fragments, respectively.
359.97(10)\(^\text{a}\) with delocalized \(\pi\) bonding over the entire N1-C1-B1-C36 framework (N1–C1 1.3575(15), C1–B1 1.5047(17), B1–C36 1.4857(18) Å), similar to other (CAAC)B-(CO)R borylenes.\(^{[21–27]}\)

The low-temperature reduction of \(2\) with 3 equiv KC\(_8\) (Scheme 1b) or that of \(1\) with 10 equiv KC\(_8\) under 1.5 atm CO (Scheme 1c) afforded the red, NMR-silent compound \(3\), which shows no identifiable IR C=O stretching bands. X-ray diffraction analysis of \(3\) revealed that the Dip substituent has migrated from the CAAC nitrogen to the former CO carbon C36 (Figure 2). The compound dimerizes via O···K···O bridges, with additional K···aryl \(\pi\) interactions. The \([\text{Cl}-\text{B1}(\text{C21})-\text{C36}-\text{O1}-\text{K1}]_2\) framework is quasi-planar, with delocalized \(\pi\) bonding over the B1-C36-O1 unit (B1-C36 1.527(2); C36-O1 1.2939(18) Å). Unlike in borylene \(2\), the C\(_3\)N rings of the former CAAC ligands are rotated ca. 33° out of the [Cl-B1(C21)-C36-O1-K1] plane. The short N1–C1 (1.283(2) Å) and significantly lengthened B1–C1 distances (1.577(2) Å) indicate a localized C=\(\equiv\)N double and B=\(\equiv\)C single bond, respectively, turning the ligand into an anionic 3,4-dihydro-2\(H\)-pyrro1-5-yl. These structural features, combined with the EPR-active nature of \(3\) allow its identification as a dimeric borylketyl radical anion, the first of its kind.

Figure 2. Crystallographically-derived molecular structures of \(3\), 4-H, and 4-K.\(^{[54]}\) Atomic displacement ellipsoids set at 50% probability. Ellipsoids of ligand periphery and hydrogen atoms omitted for clarity, except for H1 in 4-H (detected in the difference Fourier map and freely refined). Selected bond lengths [Å] and angles [°] for 3 (Et\(_2\)O co-crystal): N1–C1 1.283(2), C1–B1 1.577(2), B1–C36 1.527(2), C36–O1 1.2939(18), O1···K1 2.5963(13), O1···K1’ 2.6488(13), torsion (N1,C1,B1,C36) 33.1(2); for 4-H: N1–C1 1.377(2), C1–B1 1.503(2), B1–C36 1.518(2), C36–O1 1.301(2), O1···K1 2.5513(13), O1···K1’ 2.7040(13), torsion (N1,C1,B1,C21) –2.8(3); for 4-K: K1···N1 2.6759(18), N1–C1 1.326(3), C1–B1 1.557(3), B1–C36 1.484(3), C36–O1 1.343(2), O1···K2 2.5328(14), O1···K3 2.5767(13), torsion (N1,C1,B1,C21) –0.8(3).
The solution EPR spectrum of 3 in a toluene/THF mixture at 270 K displays a six-line resonance (Figure 3a), for which simulation provides the following hyperfine coupling constants: $a(\text{B}) = 11.7$ MHz (4.2 G) and $a(\text{N}) = 9.8$ MHz (3.5 G). Given the absence of exchange coupling effects we assume that 3 exists as a monomer in solution. In the solid state, 3 exhibits featureless broad EPR spectral signals (Figure 3b). While again no direct evidence for electron–electron exchange coupling was found, fitting of the temperature-dependent double-integral intensity to the Bleaney–Bowers equation (Figure 3c) suggests a weak electron exchange interaction with $2\Gamma = -12$ cm$^{-1}$, that is, a small singlet–triplet gap of $\Delta E_{\text{ST}} = 0.14$ kJ mol$^{-1}$. This result is consistent with 3 existing as a ground-state singlet with an energy gap to the triplet state of $\Delta E_{\text{OS–CS}} = 87$ kJ mol$^{-1}$. The preferential formation of the CS singlet indicates that the spin densities are delocalized throughout the BCO moieties, with the largest contribution at boron, in agreement with the experimental EPR hyperfine coupling constants. The NBO picture of the system indicates a bonding situation resembling the mesomeric structures $B$ (α system) and $D$ (β system). The dominant attractive contribution to the structure comes from the $O(p)-B-C(\pi^*)$ donor–acceptor interaction (α system), as revealed by the second-order stabilization energies (Figure 4c). This also indicates that delocalization through BCO plays a major role for the stabilization of 3.

The unexpected formation of 3 from the reduction of 2 can be rationalized by the one-electron reduction of 2 to an intermediate borylene radical anion $[2^-]$, followed by radical attack of the CO carbon C36 at the ipso-carbon of the Dip group, and subsequent migration of Dip to C36 to generate $[3^-]$ (Scheme 2). DFT calculations revealed that $[2^-]$ is indeed a stable minimum energy structure with a quasi-linear BCO arrangement of 174.4°, a B–C1 bond length of 1.507 Å, and spin density mainly located at C1 (0.64) and C36 (0.38, Scheme 2). Radical anions of TM carbonyls and their clusters can be generated both chemically and electrochemically. While a DFT study of group-6 $[\text{TM(CO)}_5\text{PPh}_3]^- \text{radical anions}$ showed that spin density in these species is largely
The cyclic voltammogram of 3 in THF showed several irreversible oxidation waves as well as a reduction wave at −2.66 V (relative to the Fc/Fc⁺ couple), suggesting the possibility of further chemical reduction (see Figure S36 in the SI). Indeed the reduction of 3 with 3 equiv KC₈ in THF yielded a dark red solution of an extremely air-sensitive NMR-active species, compound 4-K (Scheme 1d), with an ⁱ¹B NMR shift at 14.5 ppm. Upon hydrolysis of 4-K the N-protonated dimer 4-H was isolated (Scheme 1e), with a similar ⁱ¹B NMR shift at 15.0 ppm and a characteristic ¹H NMR NH singlet at 3.82 ppm. Alternatively, 4-H could be accessed directly from 1 by reduction with 10 equiv KC₈ under CO in the presence of B(OH)₃, as the proton source (Scheme 1f).

At first sight the solid-state structure of 4-H is very similar to that of 3 (Figure 2), displaying a dimeric structure with central O···K···O bridges and additional K···aryl π interactions. Upon closer inspection, however, there are significant differences. The C₄N ring of the former CAAC ligand, which has flipped around the B1–C1 bond and now bears a nitrogen-bound hydrogen atom (located in the difference Fourier map), is now aligned with the boron plane. This results in extensive π delocalization over the entire quasi-planar [N1-C1-B(C21)-C36-O1-K1], framework (N1-C1 1.377(2), C1-B1 1.503(2), B1-C36 1.518(2), C36-O1 1.301(2) Å), indicating that the protonated C₄N ring now acts as a π-accepting CAAC ligand again. 4-H may therefore be described as a CAAC-stabilized aryl(benzoyl)boryl anion or an aryl(boraneylidene)methanolate. The solid-state structure of 4-K (Figure 2) shows two additional potassium cations bound to N1 and N2 and stabilized by two THF molecules each, as well as π-K···Tip π interactions. Compared to the corresponding bonds of 4-H the N1/2-C1/41 and B1/2-C36/76 bonds are shortened by 0.03–0.05 Å, while the C1/41-B1/2 and C36/76-O1/2 bonds are lengthened by 0.04–0.05 Å. Accordingly, the calculated Mayer bond orders[52,53] of N1/2-C1/41 and B1/2-C36/76 are increased, respectively by 28% and 16%, while those of the C1/41-B1/2 and C36/76-O1/2 bonds are decreased by ca. 12%, upon going from 4-H to 4-K. These results indicate that 4-K is better described as an aryl(boraneylidene)methanolate, with its π electron density essentially localized on the N1–C1 and B1–C36 bonds.

The reactions of 4-H with various electrophiles, including B(OH)₃, MeOTf (Tf = triflate) and Me₃SiCl, resulted in exclusive functionalization of the oxygen atom (Scheme 3), thereby confirming that 4-H behaves more like a methanolate species than a boryl anion. The resulting products, 5-H, 5-Me, and 5-TMS, show ¹¹B NMR resonances in the 15 to 18 ppm region. In the solid state (see Figures S38–S40 in the SI), all three compounds show the N-protonated CAAC ligand

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located at the metal center,[47] [TM(CO)₃]⁻⁻ complexes (TM = Fe, n = 5; TM = Cr, n = 6) also display CO-centered radical reactivity similar to that of [2]⁻⁻, undergoing facile hydrogen atom transfer with trialkyltin hydrides to yield the formyl complexes [TM(CO)₃(CHO)][46] To our knowledge the radical transfer of a nitrogen-bound aryl group to CO has never been observed in TM carbonyl chemistry. In low-valent main group chemistry, however, the cleavage of N–Cₓᵧ bonds by the insertion of borylene or silylene fragments has been observed at N-heterocyclic olefin[49] or carbene ligands[51] respectively.

![Figure 4. a) Mesomeric resonance forms of monomeric [B³⁻⁻] (methyl groups truncated for clarity). b) Plot of Mulliken spin density of 3 (B3LYP-D3(BJ)/def2-SVP). Spin density distribution: N1 = 0.09, C1 = 0.07, B1 = 0.50, C36 = 0.38, O1 = 0.10. c) Leading NBO donor-acceptor interaction (a system) of [3]⁻⁻ (O(lp) → B-C(nσ)).](image-url)
yielding a novel ketyl boron radical anion. Calculations show that borylenes display a unique reactivity quite distinct from that of TM analogues.

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**Conflict of interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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