A Homoleptic Diphosphatetrahedrane Nickel(0) Complex

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Dedicated to Professor Cameron Jones on the occasion of his 60th birthday

The stable diphosphatetrahedrane, (tBuCP)$_2$, was isolated only recently, and its coordination chemistry has been little explored so far. Herein we report the synthesis of [Ni(ni)$_2$-(tBuCP)$_2$]$_4^2$ (1) by CO substitution of Ni(CO)$_4$ with (tBuCP)$_2$. Single-crystal X-ray diffraction studies revealed that 1 features three intact diphosphatetrahedrane molecules coordinated via their P–P bonds to a single nickel(0) atom. multinuclear NMR studies suggest that the structure of 1 is retained in solution. The bonding situation is analysed using quantum chemical methods. The coordination behavior of (tBuCP)$_2$ is compared to the isoelectronic P$_4$ molecule, which scarcely forms complexes of intact P$_4$ tetrahedra.

In 1970 Ginsberg and Lindsell reported the first transition metal complexes of white phosphorus (P$_4$) [RhCl$_2$L$_2$(η$_2$-P$_4$)] (L = PPh$_3$, P(m-Tol)$_2$, P(Tol)$_2$, AsPh$_3$; Tol = C$_6$H$_5$)$_2$. Since then, a wide variety of coordination compounds have resulted from coordination studies of P$_4$.[2] These complexes often contain reduced polyphosphide units resulting from a formal electron transfer from the metal atom to P$_4$. In many cases, this effects the cleavage of P–P bonds (as observed in the above-mentioned rhodium complexes),[3] which may be followed by a redistribution of the P atoms forming various polyphosphido ligands of the general composition P$_{n-x}$. In contrast to this, the number of transition metal complexes featuring an intact, neutral P$_4$ tetrahedron has remained limited.

Figure 1a shows the structure of [(np$_3$)Ni(ni$^{-1}$P$_3$)] (A, np$_3$ = tris(2-diphenylphosphinoethyl)amine) reported by Sacconi and co-workers in 1979, the first structurally characterized transition metal complex in which the P$_4$ moiety coordinates end-on via a single phosphorus atom.[4,5] Further examples for this end-on coordination mode have been reported for a variety of transition metals such as Fe, Ru, Os, Mn, and W.[6] In addition, several complexes with intact, side-on coordinated P$_4$ molecules have been reported.[3c,6] Such complexes are typically stabilized by different ancillary ligands, while the coinage metal complexes [M(P$_4$)$_2$]X (B: M = Cu, X = Al(OC(CF$_3$)$_3$)$_3$4; M = Au, X = GaCl$_4$) displayed in Figure 1a are the only isolated homoleptic P$_4$ complexes to the best of our knowledge.[3c,4,6] These rare homoleptic complexes are stabilized by weakly coordinating anions. The coordinated P–P bonds are only slightly elongated.

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Supporting information for this article is available on the WWW under https://doi.org/10.1002/zaac.202200124

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by 0.10 to 0.20 Å with respect to those in the free P₄ molecule, indicating the presence of intact P₄ tetrahedra.

Phosphatetrahedra comprised of phosphorus and carbon atoms were isolated only recently. We synthesized di-tert-butylidiphosphatetetrahedra (tBuCP),[7] while Cummins and co-workers reported the related monophosphatetetrahedra tri-tert-butylphosphatetetrahedra (tBuC₃P) almost simultaneously and a triphosphatetetrahedra (HCP) soon afterwards.[8,9] Studies on the reactivity of these species are still scarce,[10] yet our preliminary investigations on the coordination behavior of (tBuCP) have revealed that this species easily undergoes P–C bond cleavage upon coordination to transition metal centers. Thus, reactions with anionic metalates of Fe and Co afforded η²-coordinated diphasphacyclobutadiene complexes.[10a] Similar diphasphacyclobutenediido ligands were formed when reacting (tBuCP) with Ni(0) and Ni(I) NHC complexes, showing planar tBuC₆P₂⁻ units which are α-coordinated to Ni atoms.[10b] Only two complexes with intact phosphatetetrahedra moieties have been structurally characterized so far. The silver complex [{Ag(tBuCP)}₃][Al(OCl)(CF₃)₃]₂ (C, Figure 1b) was obtained by reacting (tBuCP) with [Ag(CH₂Cl₂)(Al(OCl)(CF₃)₃)]₃.[7] However, it was not possible to obtain a homoleptic complex in this case. In addition, Cummins and co-workers recently described the complexation of their triphosphatetetrahedra (HCP) to Fe in the complex [Cp*Fe(dppe)(η¹-tBuCP)]BPh₄⁻ (D, Figure 1b), dppe = 1,2-bis(diphenylphosphino)ethane, Cp* = C₅Me₅.[10b] In the molecular structure of this complex, the phosphatetetrahedra is end-on coordinated via a single phosphorus atom.

These initial results promise a versatile coordination chemistry of phosphatetrahedra, which is expected to be similar to that of P₄ and may also be comparable to the coordination behavior of related low-coordinate organophosphorus compounds such as phosphalkynes and phosphabenzynes.[11a] However, in contrast to these well-investigated compound classes, reactivity studies of phosphate tetrahedra towards transition metal carbonyl complexes have not yet been reported. In extension to our recent studies of di-tert-butylidiphosphatetetrahedra towards NHC-stabilized Ni(0) complexes, we studied its reaction towards the highly reactive tetracarbonyl nickel(0) complex Ni(CO)₄. Herein we report the isolation and characterization of [Ni(η²-tBuCP)₂]⁻ (1), which features three intact di-tert-butylphosphatetetrahedra moieties that coordinate to the Ni(0) core via their P–P bonds.

The reaction of three equivalents of di-tert-butylidiphosphatetetrahedra with Ni(CO)₄ (Scheme 1) was performed in toluene at −80 °C under exclusion of light to prevent the light-mediated dimerization of (tBuCP)₂. After warming to 0 °C overnight, the reaction affords a deep blue solution. A ¹¹³P(¹H) NMR spectrum of the crude reaction mixture showed a new singlet resonance assigned to 1 at δ = −337.7 ppm (see Figures S4 and S5, SI). In addition, signals for (tBuCP) (δ = −469.0 ppm) and the ladder-like-type compound (tBuC₃P) (δ = −23.4 ppm) were observed. After work-up and crystallization from a concentrated solution in n-hexane, indigo coloured crystals of 1 suitable for single crystal X-ray diffraction analysis were obtained. The structure was solved in the triclinic space group P1, revealing a non-centrosymmetric molecular structure with the presence of two formula units of 1 per unit cell.

The molecular structure of 1 is depicted in Figure 2. Three intact di-tert-butylidiphosphatetetrahedra units coordinate to a single nickel atom via their P–P bonds. Steric repulsion between the tert-butyl groups causes a propeller twist, resulting in a chiral complex, which crystallizes as racemate with both enantiomers in the unit cell. Note that the classic alkene complex tris(ethylene)nickel(0) reported by Wilke and co-workers in 1973 shows a related structure, but this complex has a
The P–P bonds in compound 1 (2.3288(5) to 2.3319(5) Å) are elongated compared to (tBuCP)\(_2\), (calculated gas-phase structure: P–P 2.203 Å).\(^{[5]}\) The P–P bonds of the tetrahedral moieties in the only other well-characterized diphosphatetrahedrane complex \([\text{Ag}(\eta^2-\text{tBuCP})_2(\eta^2-\text{tBuCP})_2][\text{Al(OCCF}_3)_2]_2\) \((2.308(3)\) Å) are slightly less elongated than in 1.\(^{[1]}\) This suggests a stronger interaction between the ligand and the metal atom of 1 compared to C. The P–C bonds in 1 \((1.8418(16)\) to \(1.8496(16)\) Å) are also slightly longer than in C \((1.820(8)\) to \(1.836(9)\) Å) yet similar to the structure of \((\text{tBuCP})_2\) calculated by theoretical methods \((1.852\) Å).\(^{[5]}\) The C–C bonds of the tetrahedral moieties in complex 1 \((1.471(2)\) to \(1.474(2)\) Å) are only very slightly elongated compared to \((\text{tBuCP})_2\) \((1.458\) Å) and C \((1.462(12)\) Å).\(^{[5]}\) The Ni–P bonds of 1 \((2.2947(4)\) to \(2.3082(4)\) Å) are somewhat longer than those for Ni complexes with a bridging \(\mu^2\)-P\(_2\) moiety or a side-on coordinated \(\mu^2\)-P\(_2\) unit, e.g. \(2.2354(7)\) to \(2.2648(8)\) Å in \([\text{Ni}(\text{IPr})\text{Im}]_2(\mu^2\)-P\(_2\))\(^{[16]}\) \(2.241(1)\) to \(2.250(1)\) Å in \((\mu^2\)-P\(_2\)Ni\(_2\))(\text{Mes})\(_2\).\(^{[15]}\) 2.255(4) to \(2.277(2)\) Å in \([\text{MNacnacSi}(\mu^2\)-P\(_2\)Ni(Nacnac)])\(^{[1]}\) and 2.2657(6) to \(2.2923(8)\) Å in \([\text{IPrNi}(\mu^2\)-P\(_2\)Si(O)_2Nacnac)]_2\) \((\text{IPr}[\text{Im} = 1,3\text{-di(isopropyl)imidazolin-2-ylidene, IMes} = 1,3\text{-bis(2,4,6-trimethylphenyl)imidazolin-2-ylidene, Nacnac} = \text{CH}[\text{Me(NDipp)}]_2, \text{Dipp}_2\text{nacnac} = \text{CH(NMe)}\text{NDipp}][\text{CH(ChN(NDipp)}]_2\text{Dipp})\). \(^{[5]}\) Furthermore, the Ni–P bond to nickel.

The Ni complex 1 was isolated in 23% yield as an indigo-colored solid. The relatively low yield can likely be attributed to the thermal instability of 1 at room temperature. 1 is characterized by a \(^{31}\text{P}^1(\text{H})\) NMR singlet at \(-338.4\) ppm, which is significantly shifted to lower field in comparison to the resonance of free diphosphatetrahedrane \((\text{tBuCP})_2\) \((\text{d}^{1}(\text{P}) = -468.2\) ppm). The low-field shift is far less pronounced for the Ag complex \((\text{d}^{1}(\text{P}) = -446.8\) ppm).\(^{[7]}\) Again, this points to a stronger interaction between metal core and ligand for 1. The \(^1\text{H}\) NMR spectrum of 1 displays the singlet of the tert-butyl groups at 1.33 ppm, while the \(^{13}\text{C}^1(\text{H})\) NMR spectrum shows three resonances at 29.7 ppm, 32.0 ppm, and 45.5 ppm. These are assigned to the quaternary carbon atoms of the tert-butyl groups, the methyl groups, and the carbon atoms in the tetrahedral core, respectively. The signal at 45.5 ppm shows the expected multiplet structure due to coupling with the \(^3\text{P}^1\) nuclei. In conclusion, the multinuclear NMR spectra of 1 are fully consistent with the molecular structure observed in the solid state. The UV-Vis absorption spectrum of 1 dissolved in \(n\)-hexane displays three absorption bands in the UV region at 225 nm, 280 nm and 315 nm in addition to two absorptions in the visible region at 415 nm and 680 nm, which presumably cause the blue color of 1.

While complex 1 can be isolated as a reasonably pure compound according to elemental analysis, it is noteworthy that it decomposes at ambient temperature, forming a clear brown mixture within 48 h which contains free \((\text{tBuCP})_2\) and its dimerization product, the ladderane \((\text{tBuCP})_4\), according to \(^{31}\text{P}^1(\text{H})\) NMR monitoring.\(^{[7]}\) The reaction proceeds without formation of side products as NMR spectra of the crude reaction mixture illustrate (see Figures S4 and S5 in the SI), yet the thermal decomposition hampers the isolation of higher yields of 1. The structurally comparable Ni(0) complex tris(ethylene)nickel(0) is also thermolabile, decomposing above \(0{\text{°C}}\).\(^{[12]}\)

The bonding situation in 1 was analyzed by calculating intrinsic bond orbitals (IBOs) on the BP86/def2-TZVP level of theory.\(^{[3]}\) Three filled orbitals forming 3-center-2-electron bonds between Ni1/P1/P2, Ni1/P3/P4 and Ni1/P5/P6 could be identified (see Figure 3 for a representative IBO 175, IBOs 173 and 174 are similar and represent the other NiP\(_2\) moieties; these orbitals and further relevant IBOs are displayed in Figure S7, SI). Such 3-center-2-electron bonds are also characteristic for olefin complexes as described by the Dewar-Chatt-Duncanson model, which describes the structure of tris(ethylene)nickel(0) well.\(^{[19]}\)

Indeed, calculations constructing IBOs for tris(ethylene)nickel(0) on the same level of theory confirmed the existence of three filled orbitals forming 3-center-2-electron bonds between Ni1/C1/C2, Ni1/C3/C4 and Ni1/C5/C6 (see Figure S8 in the SI for a graphical representation of these orbitals). Similarly, the bonding mode of \(\eta^2\)-coordinated intact P\(_2\) tetrahedra is analogous to the Dewar-Chatt-Duncanson model.\(^{[30]}\) Moreover, a 3d\(^{10}\) configuration for the nickel could be derived from the IBO analysis of 1, confirming the oxidation state Ni(0) (see Figure S7 in the SI for a depiction of the orbitals).

In summary, complex 1 is only the third reported example of coordination of an intact phosphatetrahedrane other than P\(_2\) and the first homoleptic complex among these compounds. In the structure of 1, diphosphatetrahedrane acts as a bidentate ligand coordinating in an \(\eta^2\)-fashion via the P–P bond to nickel. So far, mainly coinage metal cations stabilized by weakly coordinating anions have been reported to side-on coordinate intact tetrahedra of phosphatetrahedrane and the isoelectronic P\(_2\) molecule. Prior to this work, only one example of the side-on coordination of an intact P\(_2\) tetrahedron to a Ni core was proposed, however, this compound was neither isolated nor
confirmed by an X-ray structure.\textsuperscript{[6c]} Quantum chemical calculations support the oxidation state Ni(0) in 1 and indicate the formation of 3-center-2-electron bonds between the P atoms of (tBuCP)\(_2\) and the Ni center. The bonding situation appears to be comparable to that of tris(ethylene)nickel(0) and the few known examples in the literature showing side-on coordination of an intact P\(_3\) tetrahedron.\textsuperscript{[6c],[19]} Further studies exploring the coordination chemistry of (tBuCP), and related molecules are currently underway in our laboratory.

**Experimental Section**

**General:** All reactions and manipulations were performed under an atmosphere of dry argon using standard Schlenk line techniques or in an MBraun UniLab glovebox under an atmosphere of dry argon. n-Hexane, and toluene were dried and degassed with an MBraun SPS-800 solvent purification system. Toluene was stored under argon over a potassium mirror. Deuterated toluene was purchased from Eurisotop and used as received. (\(^7\)BuCP)\(_2\) in toluene (c = 1.2 M) was kindly provided by the group of Manfred Scheer.

**NMR spectroscopy:** NMR spectra were recorded by the NMR department of the University of Regensburg on a Bruker Avance 400 spectrometer at 243 K and internally referenced to residual solvent resonances (toluene-d\(_8\); H\(_{\text{NMR}}\): 2.08 ppm, \(^{13}\)C\(_{\text{NMR}}\): 20.43 ppm). Chemical shifts (\(\delta\)) are given in ppm referring to external standards of tetramethylsilane (H (\(^{1}H\)) and (\(^{13}\)C\(_{\text{NMR}}\)) and the Ni(0) resonance (\(^{31}\)P\(_{\text{NMR}}\), ppm = 13.33 (s, 54 H), \(^{31}\)C\(_{\text{NMR}}\): 100.61 MHz, 243 K, toluene-d\(_8\)); \(\delta\)/ppm = 29.7 (s, C(HCH\(_2\))\(_2\)), 32.0 (s, CH\(_3\)), 45.5 (m, P(C\(_{\text{Me}}\))) and 85 \% phosphorus acid (\(^{31}\)P(H)). \(^{13}\)C\(_{\text{NMR}}\) signals were assigned based on 2D NMR spectra (\(^{1}H\), \(^{13}\)C-HMBC, \(^{1}H\), \(^{13}\)C-HSQC).

**Elemental analysis:** The elemental analysis was determined by the analytical department of the University of Regensburg with a Micro Vario Cube (Elementar).

**UV-Vis spectroscopy:** The UV/Vis absorption spectrum was recorded on an Ocean Optics Flame Spectrometer with the corresponding light source (DH-2000-BAL/UV-Vis-NIR light source).

**X-ray diffraction:** The single-crystal X-ray diffraction data was recorded on a Rigaku XtaLAB Synergy DW R (DW system, HyPix-Arc 150) diffractometer with microfocus Cu-K\(_\alpha\) radiation (\(\lambda = 1.54184\) Å). Crystals were selected under mineral oil, mounted on micromount loops and quench-cooled using an Oxford Cryosystems open flow N\(_2\) cooling device. Either semi-empirical multi-scan absorption corrections\textsuperscript{[20]} or analytical ones\textsuperscript{[21]} were applied to the data. Using Olex2,\textsuperscript{[22]} the structure was solved with the SHELXT\textsuperscript{[3]} structure solution program using Intrinsic Phasing and refined with the SHELXL\textsuperscript{[24]} refinement package using Least Squares refinements on \(F^2\). The hydrogen atoms were located in idealized positions and refined isotropically with a riding model. Crystallographic data for the structure in this paper has been deposited with the Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre, CCDC, 12 Union Road, Cambridge CB21EZ, UK. Copies of this data can be obtained free of charge on quoting the depository number: 2158460 for compound 1; E-mail: deposit@ccdc.cam.ac.uk, http://www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk).

\[\text{[NiH}()\text{)}\text{[tBuCP]_2]}\] (1): The synthesis of 1 was carried out under the exclusion of light (flasks wrapped in aluminium foil) to prevent the decomposition of (tBuCP). A colorless solution of Ni(CO)\(_6\) in toluene (0.07 mL, 1.215 mmol/L, 0.085 mmol, 1.0 eq.) was diluted with toluene (7 mL) and cooled to \(-80\) °C. Subsequently, a colorless solution of (tBuCP)\(_2\) in toluene (1.5 mL, 0.18 mol/L, 0.26 mmol, 3.0 eq.) was added. A deep blue mixture was formed, which was allowed to warm to 0 °C whilst stirring overnight. Volatiles were removed in vacuo to yield an indigo-colored residue. This was extracted in n-hexane (6 mL). Storage of the extract in the freezer (\(-35\) °C) for 21 days afforded indigo-colored crystals which were isolated by filtration of the mother liquor and drying in vacuo. Single crystals suitable for X-ray analysis were grown from n-hexane at ambient temperature over 8 days. Complex 1 can be stored for prolonged periods in the freezer at \(-30\) °C, but decomposes to a brown mixture upon storage at or below room temperature. Yield: 13.1 mg (23 %). UV-Vis: (n-hexane, \(\lambda_{\text{max}}/\text{nm}, \epsilon_{\text{max}}/\text{L mol}^{-1} \cdot \text{cm}^{-1}\)): 225 (36000), 280 (23000), 315 (16000), 415 (9000), 685 (2000). \(^{1}H\) NMR (400.13 MHz, 243 K, toluene-d\(_8\)); \(\delta\)/ppm = 1.33 (s, 54 H), (\(^{31}\)C\(_{\text{NMR}}\): 100.61 MHz, 243 K, toluene-d\(_8\)); \(\delta\)/ppm = -29.7 (s, C(HCH\(_2\))\(_2\)), 32.0 (s, CH\(_3\)), 45.5 (m, P(C\(_{\text{Me}}\))) and 85 \% phosphorus acid (\(^{31}\)P(H)), (\(^{13}\)C\(_{\text{NMR}}\): 100.61 MHz, 243 K, toluene-d\(_8\)); \(\delta\)/ppm = -338.4 (s). Elemental analysis (calculated values for \(\text{[NiH}()\text{)}\text{[tBuCP]_2]}\)): C 54.83 (54.65), H 8.16 (8.26\%).

**Crystallographic details for 1:** \(\text{[NiH}()\text{)}\text{[tBuCP]_2}]\) (MW = 659.30 g mol\(^{-1}\), in parentheses): C 54.83 (54.65), H 8.16 (8.26%).

**Acknowledgements**

Financial support by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (WO1496/10-1) is gratefully acknowledged. We thank the group of Manfred Scheer (Universität Regensburg) for the generous donation of Ni(CO)\(_6\). Open Access funding enabled and organized by Projektd DEAL.

**Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Data Availability Statement**

The data that support the findings of this study are available in the supplementary material of this article.

**Keywords:** phosphorus · nickel · coordination chemistry · tetrahedran · organophosphorus compounds

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