Angewandte Chemie

Molecular Loop Lock: A Redox-Driven Molecular Machine Based on a Host-Stabilized Charge-Transfer Complex**

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Dedicated to Professor Dong H. Kim

Artificial molecular machines have received much attention in recent years because of their potential application in the creation of nanometer-scale molecular devices.[1,2] A wide variety of molecular machines such as shuttles,[3a] rotors,[3b] muscles,[3c] ratchets,[3d] pistons and cylinders,[3e] scissors,[3f] and elevators[3g] have been reported. Nevertheless, the design and synthesis of new molecular machines that are reminiscent of macroscopic machines would further widen the scope of this area of chemistry.

Cucurbit[8]uril (CB[8]),[4] a member of the host family cucurbit[*n*]uril, which has a cavity that is similar to that of γ-cyclodextrin, exhibits remarkable host–guest properties including the encapsulation of a hetero-guest-pair inside the cavity.[5] For example, it encapsulates methyl viologen (MV^{2+}) and 2,6-dihydroxynaphthalene ($Np(OH)_2$) inside the cavity to form the stable 1:1:1 complex $\mathbf{1}^{2+}$. Formation of the complex is driven by the markedly enhanced charge-transfer (CT) interaction between the electron-deficient and electron-rich guest molecules inside the hydrophobic cavity of CB[8].[5a] This discovery led us to build several novel supramolecular assemblies such as supramolecular amphiphiles that led to

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[**] We gratefully acknowledge the Creative Research Initiative Program and the International R&D Cooperation Program of the Korean Ministry of Science and Technology for support of this work, and we thank the Korean Ministry of Education (BK 21 Program) for graduate studentships to W.S.J., E.K., and I.H. This paper is dedicated to Professor Dong H. Kim, a founding father of Pohang University of Science and Technology, on his retirement.

Supporting information for this article is available on the WWW under http://www.angewandte.org or from the author.

DOI: 10.1002/ange.200461806

vesicles,[5b] molecular loops,[5c] supramolecular polymers on surfaces,[5d] and molecular necklaces[5e] by exploiting the host-stabilized CT interactions. Despite the progress in the construction of self-assembly systems, the redox properties of the host-stabilized CT complexes, in particular, the interplay between the redox process and the exchange of the guest within the host-stabilized CT complexes have not been reported. These properties may provide a novel operating principle of molecular machines or stimuli-responsive materials. Herein we report the redox-coupled guest-exchange properties of CB[8]-stabilized CT complexes which demonstrate the interconversion of hetero- and homo-guest-pair inclusion in a molecular host triggered by an external stimulus (Scheme 1). We also report a molecular loop lock, a novel redox-driven molecular machine based on this phenomenon.

Treatment of a mixture of methyl viologen (MV^{2+}) and the ternary complex $\mathbf{1}^{2+}$ (1:1) with a reducing agent such as sodium dithionite ($Na_2S_2O_4$) results in a drastic change in the UV/Vis spectrum. The appearance of new absorption bands at $\lambda = 365$, 540, and 884 nm (see Supporting Information) supports the near-quantitative formation of the 2:1 inclusion complex $(MV^{+\bullet})_2 \subset CB[8]$ ($\mathbf{2}^{2+}$)[6] and free $Np(OH)_2$ (Scheme 1). Introduction of O_2 into the solution regenerates $\mathbf{1}^{2+}$ and MV^{2+}. This behavior is confirmed by UV/Vis and NMR spectroscopy, and this result demonstrates the reversible conversion of hetero- and homo-guest-pair inclusion inside CB[8] triggered by a redox stimulus.

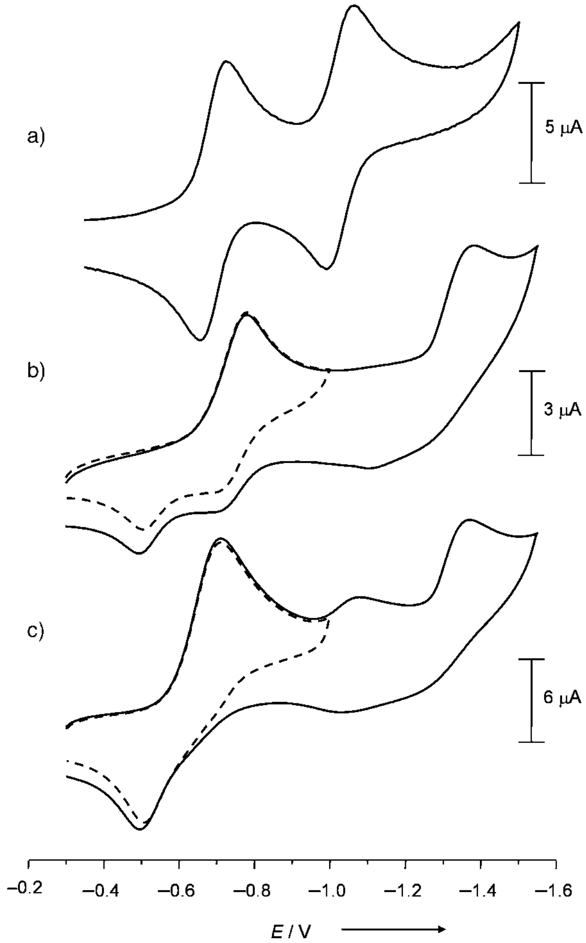
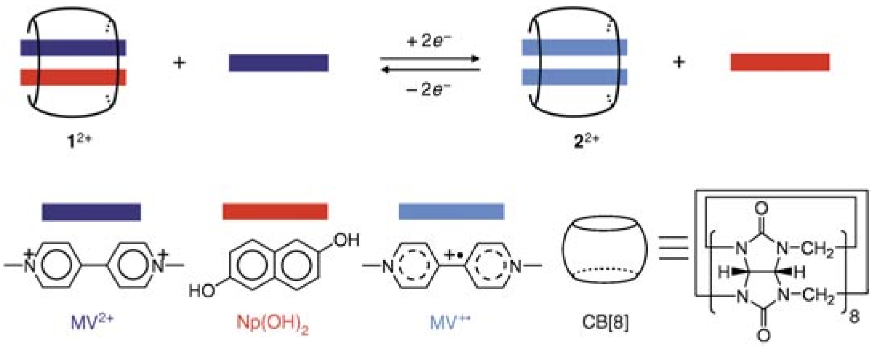


Figure 1. Cyclic voltammograms of a) MV^{2+} (0.5 mM) and b) $\mathbf{1}^{2+}$ (0.5 mM) in the absence of free MV^{2+}, and c) $\mathbf{1}^{2+}$ (0.5 mM) in the presence of free MV^{2+} (1 equiv) in phosphate buffer solution (0.1 M, pH 7.0). Scan rate = 100 mV s^{-1}; – – – different scan rate.

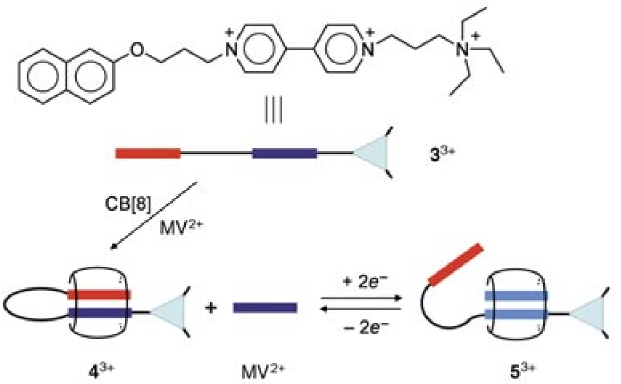
The redox-coupled guest-exchange process was further investigated by cyclic voltammetry (Figure 1). Methyl viologen (MV^{2+}) shows two reversible waves that correspond to the redox couples $MV^{2+}/MV^{+\bullet}$ and $MV^{+\bullet}/MV^{0}$ (Figure 1 a). Compared to MV^{2+}, $\mathbf{1}^{2+}$ exhibits a moderate negative shift of the first reduction peak and a large negative shift of the second reduction peak (Figure 1 b). Furthermore, the oxidation process that corresponds to the first reduction process of $\mathbf{1}^{2+}$ shows two peaks at −0.71 V and −0.50 V (vs SCE—saturated calomel electrode), the latter of which is almost the same as that for the oxidation of $\mathbf{2}^{2+}$.[6] With increasing scan rates the oxidation peak at −0.71 V increases, whereas the peak at −0.50 V decreases (see Supporting Information), as often seen in processes that involve electron transfer followed by a chemical reaction. The addition of MV^{2+} (1 equiv) results in a small positive shift of the first reduction wave, disappearance of the oxidation peak at −0.71 V, and concomitant increase of the peak at −0.50 V (Figure 1 c).[7] A spectroelectrochemical study shows that the absorption spectrum of the species generated by the electrolysis of $\mathbf{1}^{2+}$ (applied potential, −0.85 V vs SCE, in the presence or absence of MV^{2+} (1 equiv)) is essentially identical to that of $\mathbf{2}^{2+}$ (see Supporting Information). Taken together, these results suggest that the reduction of $\mathbf{1}^{2+}$ initially generates the one-electron-reduced species $\mathbf{1}^{+\bullet}$, which contains $MV^{+\bullet}$ and $Np(OH)_2$ encapsulated in CB[8], and then reacts with free $MV^{+\bullet}$ to undergo the rapid guest exchange that leads to $\mathbf{2}^{2+}$ and free $Np(OH)_2$ (see Supporting Information). Note that the regeneration of $\mathbf{1}^{2+}$ and MV^{2+} by the oxidation of $\mathbf{2}^{2+}$ and $Np(OH)_2$ probably does not follow the reverse pathway because the 1:1 mixture of $\mathbf{2}^{2+}$ and $Np(OH)_2$ is thermodynamically far more stable than the 1:1 mixture of $\mathbf{1}^{+\bullet}$ and $MV^{+\bullet}$. Instead, it is more likely to occur through another pathway that involves the initial generation of the 1:1 complex $MV^{2+} \subset CB[8]$ by the oxidation of $\mathbf{2}^{2+}$, as we



Scheme 1. Interconversion of hetero- and homo-guest-pair inclusion in CB[8] triggered by a redox stimulus. MV = methyl viologen, $Np(OH)_2$ = 2,6-dihydroxynaphthalene, CB[8] = cucurbit[8]uril.

demonstrated previously,[6] which then reacts with free Np(OH)$_2$ to produce $\mathbf{1}^{2+}$ (see Supporting Information).

The discovery of the redox-coupled guest-exchange process prompted us to design and synthesize a redox-driven molecular machine that behaves as a molecular loop lock, which can be switched on and off (locked and unlocked) by means of a key and a redox stimulus (Schemes 2 and 3). The guest molecule $\mathbf{3}^{3+}$, which contains a naphthalen-2-yloxy (Np) unit and a viologen unit linked to each other by a flexible tether as well as a bulky cationic unit at the terminal,[8] was synthesized in four steps (see Supporting Information). Treatment of $\mathbf{3}^{3+}$ with CB[8] (1 equiv) in water resulted in the exclusive formation of the stable 1:1 complex $\mathbf{4}^{3+}$ through the formation of the intramolecular CT complex between the Np and viologen units inside CB[8], as confirmed by ESI-MS and UV/Vis and NMR spectroscopy analyses (see Supporting Information). In particular, the upfield-shifted signals for the protons of the Np and viologen units and the downfield-shifted signals for the protons of the linker and cationic terminal in the ^{1}H NMR spectrum of $\mathbf{4}^{3+}$ (see Supporting Information) are consistent with the formation of a molecular loop[5c] with a "closed" or "locked" conformation as illustrated in Scheme 2.



Scheme 2. Formation of the molecular loop lock $\mathbf{4}^{3+}$ (folded "locked" state) through the formation of an intramolecular CT complex inside CB[8], and the redox-induced formation of ternary complex $\mathbf{5}^{3+}$ (open "unlocked" state).

The ^{1}H NMR spectrum of $\mathbf{4}^{3+}$ is not affected by the addition of MV^{2+} (1 equiv) which indicates that the 1:1 host–guest complex formed by the intramolecular CT interaction is much more stable than the ternary complex formed by the intermolecular CT interaction between the Np unit of $\mathbf{4}^{3+}$ and MV^{2+} inside CB[8]. However, treatment of a solution containing $\mathbf{4}^{3+}$ and MV^{2+} (1 equiv) with Na$_2$S$_2$O$_4$ results in the formation of the ternary complex $\mathbf{5}^{3+}$ (Scheme 2) in which the one-electron-reduced viologen unit of $\mathbf{3}^{2+\bullet}$ interacts with MV$^{+\bullet}$ inside CB[8]. The formation of this complex was confirmed by the appearance of new absorption bands at λ = 368, 550, and 890 nm, which are characteristic of a CB[8]-stabilized viologen radical-cation dimer (Figure 2).[9,10] Owing to the paramagnetic nature of $\mathbf{5}^{3+}$, the signals for the Np unit are broad, but are clearly observed by NMR spectroscopy (Figure 3).[10] Furthermore, the chemical shift values ($\delta \approx$ 7–8 ppm) for the protons of $\mathbf{5}^{3+}$ are close to those for free $\mathbf{3}^{3+}$ which indicates that the Np unit is now located outside CB[8] and that $\mathbf{5}^{3+}$ has an open or "unlocked" conformation as schematically shown in Scheme 2. Introduction of O$_2$ into the solution of $\mathbf{5}^{3+}$ regenerates $\mathbf{4}^{3+}$ and MV^{2+} as confirmed by UV/Vis and NMR spectroscopy. Thus, $\mathbf{4}^{3+}$ with a "closed" conformation is converted into $\mathbf{5}^{3+}$ with an "open" conformation upon reduction in the presence of MV^{2+}, and the process can be reversed by oxidation.[11] This system thus behaves as a molecular loop lock that can be locked and unlocked with a key and a redox stimulus (Scheme 3): The two species $\mathbf{4}^{3+}$ and $\mathbf{5}^{3+}$ represent the locked and unlocked states, respectively, and MV^{2+}, which is activated by reduction, plays the role of the key. It may be regarded as a "safeguarded" lock that requires not only a key but also an activation process to open.[10,12,13]

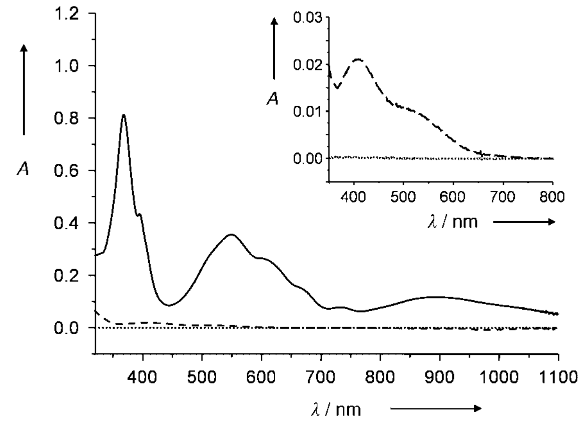


Figure 2. Absorption spectra of $\mathbf{4}^{3+}$ (0.25 mM) before (----- and inset) and after (——) reduction with Na$_2$S$_2$O$_4$ in the presence of MV^{2+} (1 equiv) in carbonate buffer (pH 10.0). Optical path = 1 mm; ••••• zero absorption.

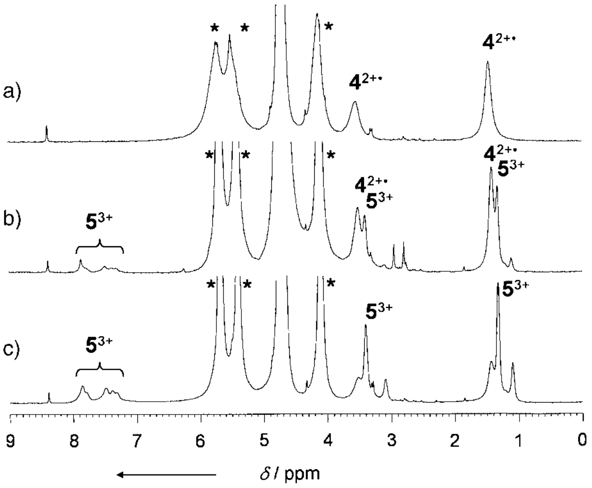


Figure 3. ^{1}H NMR spectra obtained after reduction of $\mathbf{4}^{3+}$ with Na$_2$S$_2$O$_4$ in carbonate buffer (pH 10.0) a) in the absence of MV^{2+}, b) in the presence of MV^{2+} (0.5 equiv), and c) in the presence of MV^{2+} (1.0 equiv). The signals labeled with * correspond to the CB[8] host.

In summary, we have demonstrated the redox-coupled guest-exchange of CB[8]-stabilized CT complexes which illustrates unprecendented interconversion, triggered by an

Scheme 3. Illustration of the working mode of a molecular loop lock with a key.

external stimulus, of hetero- and homo-guest-pair inclusion in a molecular host. Furthermore, we have synthesized a redox-driven molecular machine based on this phenomenon that behaves as a molecular loop lock, which requires both a key and an activation process to open. Further studies on the novel molecular machine and its applications are in progress.

Experimental Section

3·3 Br: The tribromide salt of *N*-(3-(naphthalen-2-yloxy)propyl)-*N*′-(3-(trimethylamino)propyl-4,4′-bipyridinium) ($\mathbf{3}^{4+}\cdot 3\,\mathrm{Br}^-$) was prepared according to a reported procedure[5c] with a minor modification. Detailed procedures are described in Supporting Information.

4·3 Br: CB[8]·H_2SO_4·16 H_2O (20.0 mg, 11.6 μmol) was added to a solution of **3**·3 Br (7.0 mg, 9.7 μmol) in D_2O (4 mL), and the resulting mixture was sonicated for 1 min. Undissolved solid was filtered off, and the filtrate was slowly evaporated under reduced pressure to yield the title product (18.2 mg, 92 %). ^{1}H NMR (500 MHz, D_2O, 25 °C, TMS): $\delta = 8.84$ (d, J(H,H) = 6.3 Hz, 1 H; Py), 8.79 (d, J(H,H) = 6.6 Hz, 2 H; Py), 8.76 (d, J(H,H) = 6.3 Hz, 1 H; Py), 6.85–6.78 (m, 2 H; Py, Np), 6.74 (d, J(H,H) = 6.5 Hz, 3 H; Py, Np), 6.65 (d, J(H,H) = 8.9 Hz, 1 H; Np), 6.62 (d, J(H,H) = 4.8 Hz; Np), 6.56 (d, J(H,H) = 8.1 Hz, 1 H; Np), 6.51 (d, J(H,H) = 3.4 Hz, 2 H; Np), 6.06 (d, J(H,H) = 1.9 Hz, 1 H; Np), 5.72 (dd, J(H,H) = 9.2, 15.3 Hz, 16 H; CB[8]), 5.47 (s, 16 H; CB[8]), 5.08–5.02 (m, 2 H; Py-CH_2), 4.91–4.88 (m, 2 H; Py-CH_2), 4.62–4.57 (m, 2 H; OCH_2), 4.21–4.16 (dd, J(H,H) = 9.2, 15.3 Hz, 16 H; CB[8]), 3.66 (t, J(H,H) = 9.1 Hz, 2 H; NCH_2), 3.57–3.56 (m, 6 H; NCH_2), 2.99–2.66 (m, 4 H; CH_2), 1.46 ppm (t, J(H,H) = 7.11 Hz, 9 H; CH_3); HRMS (ESI-MS): *m*/*z*: calcd for $C_{80}H_{90}N_{35}O_{17}$ $[M\text{-}3\,Br]^{3+}$: 604.2418; found: 604.2411.

Received: August 27, 2004
Revised: September 25, 2004

Keywords: charge transfer · electrochemistry · molecular devices · self-assembly · supramolecular chemistry

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[6] We previously demonstrated that the 1:1 inclusion complex $MV^{2+}\subset CB[8]$ undergoes disproportionation to form an equal mixture of the 2:1 complex $\mathbf{2}^{2+}$ ($(MV^{+\bullet})_2\subset CB[8]$) and free CB[8] upon chemical or electrochemical reduction and that the reaction is reversible: W. S. Jeon, H.-J. Kim, C. Lee, K. Kim, *Chem. Commun.* **2002**, 1828.

[7] The small, reversible wave at −1.1 V in Figure 1 c, which increases with increasing scan rates, corresponds to the $MV^{+\bullet}/MV^0$ redox couple of free $MV^{+\bullet}$. The subsequent spectroelectrochemical study revealed no absorption bands that correspond to free monomeric $MV^{+\bullet}$ after electrolysis of $\mathbf{1}^{2+}$ in the presence of MV^{2+} (1 equiv, see Supporting Information) which implies that the reaction between $\mathbf{1}^{+\bullet}$ and $MV^{+\bullet}$ that leads to $\mathbf{2}^{2+}$ is relatively slow on the timescale of cyclic voltammetry experiments. The second reduction wave of $\mathbf{1}^{2+}$ in the absence (Figure 1 b) or presence (Figure 1 c) of MV^{2+} is apparently related to the reduction of the 2:1 complex $\mathbf{2}^{2+}$ generated in the first reduction step, but we do not clearly understand this process at the moment.

[8] The bulky cationic unit was introduced at the terminal to prevent the formation of intermolecular CT complexes and intermolecular viologen radical-cation dimers inside CB[8] upon reduction. Another role of the cationic terminal unit is to improve the solubility of the complex after reduction.

[9] The bands at $\lambda = 368$, 550, and 890 nm can also be attributed to $\mathbf{2}^{2+}$ ($(MV^{+\bullet})_2\subset CB[8]$), which may be generated during the reduction process. However, the intensity of the band at $\lambda = 368$ nm increases linearly with increasing concentrations of MV^{2+} (0–1.0 equiv) and is almost twice as high as that of $\mathbf{2}^{2+}$ generated by the reduction of a 1:1 mixture of MV^{2+} and CB[8] at the same concentration (see Supporting Information). These results thus indicate that the amount of $\mathbf{2}^{2+}$ generated during this reduction process is insignificant. Besides the bands that are assigned to $\mathbf{5}^{3+}$, shoulders at $\lambda = 395$ and 610 nm are observed (Figure 2) which can be attributed to the one-electron-reduced species $\mathbf{4}^{2+\bullet}$ and $MV^{+\bullet}$ that are in equilibrium with $\mathbf{5}^{3+}$. It also suggests that the reduction of a 1:1 mixture of $\mathbf{4}^{3+}$ and MV^{2+} first generates $\mathbf{4}^{2+\bullet}$ and $MV^{+\bullet}$, which further react to produce $\mathbf{5}^{3+}$ (see Supporting Information).

[10] Treatment of $\mathbf{4}^{3+}$ with $Na_2S_2O_4$ in the absence of MV^{2+} produces the one-electron-reduced species $\mathbf{4}^{2+\bullet}$, whose UV/Vis spectrum is similar to that of $MV^{+\bullet}$ which indicates that the viologen unit of the guest molecule exists in its radical-cation form. Owing to the paramagnetic nature of the species, the signals for the protons from the stopper unit ($\delta \approx 1.4$ and ≈ 3.5 ppm) are broad. However, the signals are clearly observed in the ^{1}H NMR spectrum of $\mathbf{4}^{2+\bullet}$ whereas those for the Np unit are not, which indicates that the Np unit is still in close proximity to the viologen radical-cation unit. This result in turn suggests that $\mathbf{4}^{2+\bullet}$ maintains the same "locked" conformation with the one-

electron-reduced viologen and Np units located inside CB[8]. Thus, the molecular loop lock does not open in the absence of the key (MV^{2+}) and the activation process (reduction).

[11] Preliminary electrochemical studies confirmed that this reversible process can also be triggered by electrochemical stimuli. Details of the electrochemical behavior of $\mathbf{4}^{3+}$ and related compounds will be published elsewhere in due course.

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