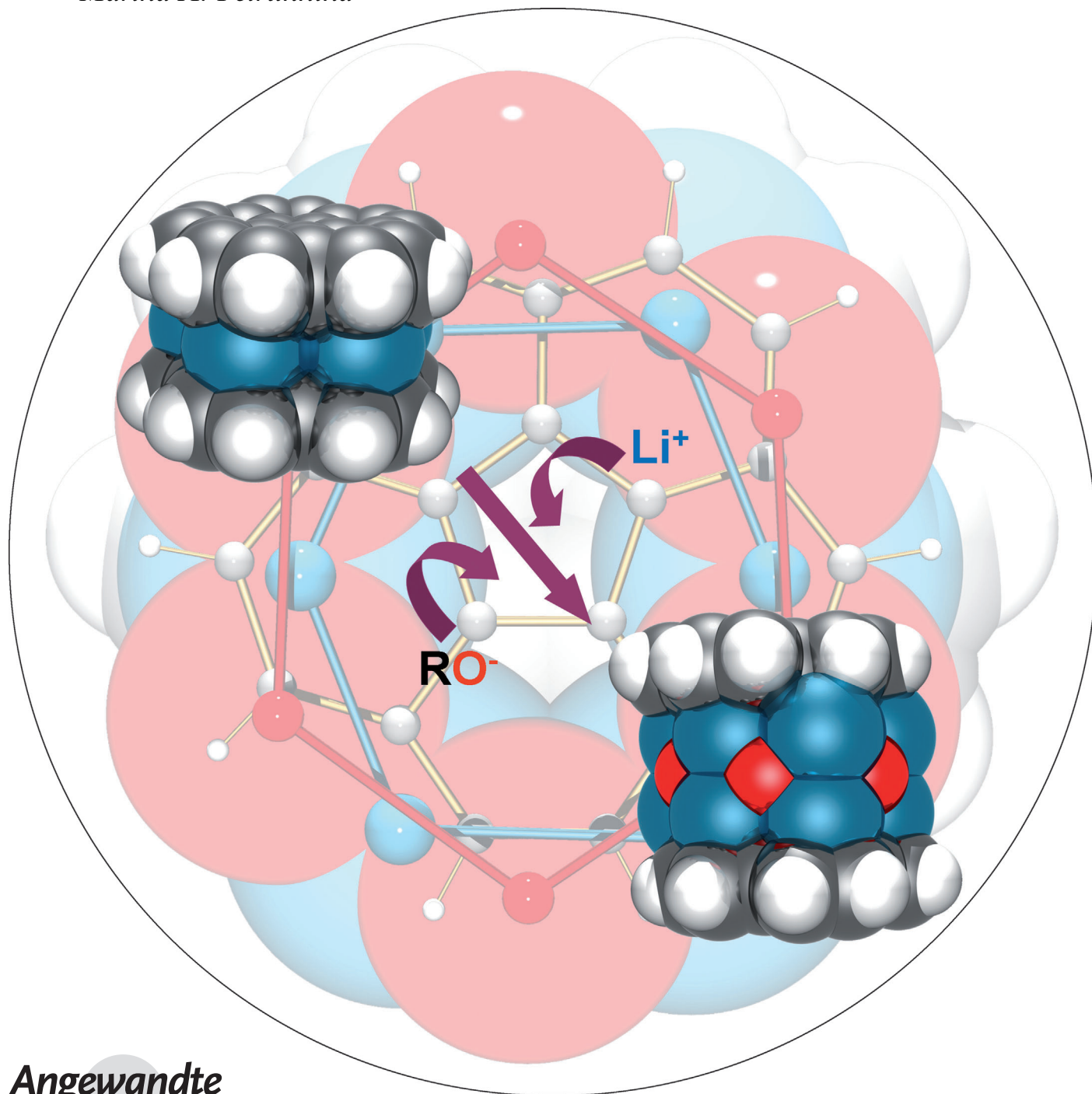


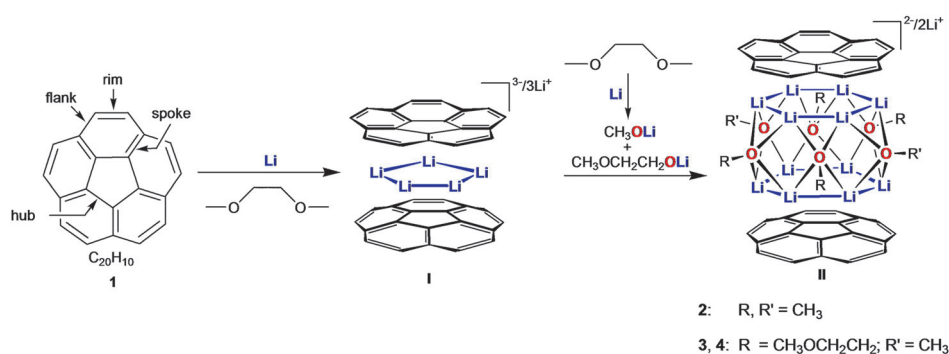
Pentadecker Supramolecules with a Lithium Alkoxo Nanobelt Sandwiched between Two Highly Charged Buckybowl Surfaces**

Alexander V. Zabula, Sarah N. Spisak, Alexander S. Filatov, and Marina A. Petrukhina*



The knowledge and fundamental understanding of charge/discharge processes in Li-ion batteries and side-reactions leading to their aging are critical for the design and fabrication of highly efficient rechargeable cells.^[1] Decomposition of most common electrolytes such as organic carbonates upon manifold charge/discharge cycles in graphite-based Li-ion batteries leads to power fade and reduces battery performance and durability.^[2] The decomposition products formed upon the first charging of graphitic anodes are known to include lithium carbonate, dicarbonates, alkoxides, and other fragmentation species.^[3] These compounds form a solid-electrolyte interphase (SEI) on the graphite surface that provides the transportation of lithium ions to the negative graphitic electrode. Numerous experimental and theoretical investigations are now focused on the modeling and study of the SEI structure and the mechanism of its formation.^[4]

It has been demonstrated that carbon allotropes with curved π -surfaces can substitute graphite and serve as prospective anode materials for the fabrication of Li-ion batteries.^[5] In this regard, bowl-shaped carbon-rich polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons have been widely used as useful and effective models for investigation of fullerenes and nanotubes^[6] and their alkali metal intercalated products.^[7] Recently, we accomplished the first structural characterization of a supramolecular aggregate formed by the highly reduced 1/3 structural subunit of C_{60} -fullerene, the corannulene tetraanion ($C_{20}H_{10}^{4-}$, $\mathbf{1}^{4-}$), with lithium ions.^[8] The resulting product formed in tetrahydrofuran (THF; **I**, Scheme 1) exhibits high lithium encapsulation capacity having five lithium ions sandwiched between two tetra-reduced corannulene decks. Notably, the triple-decker structure is retained upon recrystallization of **I** from THF in the presence of such strong O-donors as crown ethers and diglyme.^[8a,9] At the same time, the use of neat diglyme for reduction of $C_{20}H_{10}$ with lithium metal has prevented the high-order self-assembly of $\mathbf{1}^{4-}$ with Li^+ ions, according to our recent NMR investigations.^[9] Supramolecular assembly processes of highly charged corannulene and other π -bowls have not been explored in other solvent media, which is important



Scheme 1. Preparation of multilayered sandwiches **2–4**.

and pertinent to the Li-induced electrolyte decomposition and Li-graphite intercalation processes. In this work, we investigate the reduction of corannulene with lithium metal in dimethoxyethane (DME) and report the formation of multilayered supramolecular aggregates of a new type, namely $[1^{4-}/Li_5/1^{4-}]^{2-}$ (**II**, Scheme 1).

The low-temperature 7Li NMR spectrum of tetra-reduced corannulene in DME, measured after the formation of a brown solution characteristic of $\mathbf{1}^{4-}$ (3 h, 20 °C), shows the sharp resonance of $[1^{4-}/Li_5/1^{4-}]^{3-}$ at $\delta = -11.3$ ppm and the broad signal of solvated Li^+ ions at $\delta = -1.3$ ppm (Figure 1). The 7Li signal of the type **I** sandwich in DME is shifted slightly up-field compared to that observed in THF ($\delta = -11.7$ ppm).^[8] The prolonged reaction time leads to a decrease of the resonance intensity of **I**. This process is accompanied by the appearance of the 7Li NMR signals in the range from $\delta = -6.0$ to $\delta = -11.0$ ppm (Figure 1), illustrating the formation of new contact ion pairs and sandwiched lithium ions. At ambient conditions, the 7Li NMR resonance signal of sandwich **I** completely disappears in eight days.

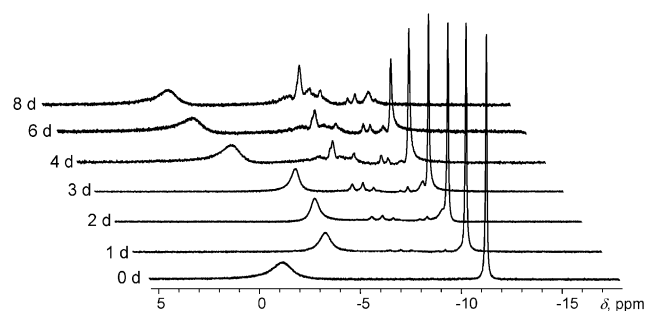


Figure 1. Time-evolution of the 7Li NMR spectra ($-40^\circ C$) of the $[1^{4-}/Li_5/1^{4-}]^{3-}$ sandwich in DME in the presence of Li metal.

Investigation by 1H NMR spectroscopy also demonstrates the disappearance of the singlet at $\delta = 6.95$ ppm of **I** and the appearance of multiple new resonances of aromatic protons in the range of $\delta_H = 7.25$ – 7.15 ppm. Moreover, the time-dependent 1H NMR spectra show the formation of $H_2C=CHOCH_3$ and $H_2C=CH_2$ in the reaction mixture. It should be emphasized that sandwich **I** is stable in THF solution in the presence of lithium metal. The NMR study of **I**

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[**] Financial support of this work from the National Science Foundation (CHE-1212441) is gratefully acknowledged. We also thank the University at Albany for supporting the X-ray center and the International Centre for Diffraction Data for the 2012 Ludo Frevel Crystallography Scholarship to S.N.S.

Supporting information for this article (experimental details) is available on the WWW under <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/anie.201206936>.

does not show any noticeable changes for the probe kept at ambient conditions for two months. However, the Li- and K-induced cleavage of DME with the formation of $\text{CH}_3\text{OCH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{O}^-$ alkoxide species has been previously detected by West and co-workers.^[10]

Various crystallization techniques have been applied and lead to the successful isolation of several new supramolecular aggregates of tetra-reduced corannulene with lithium ions (**2–4**). Based on the above NMR observations, we can speculate that products **2–4** are formed upon reaction of the initially produced sandwich **I** with the reactive ionic species resulting from the DME cleavage (Scheme 1). Compound **2** has been crystallized from a DME/THF mixture (v/v 20:1) as black blocks with an overall formula of $[\text{Li}_2(\text{dme})_3][\text{I}^{4-}/\text{Li}_6(\text{thf})/(\text{OCH}_3)_6/\text{Li}_6(\text{thf})/\text{I}^{4-}]$. Its X-ray diffraction study^[11] revealed the formation of a unique $\text{Li}_6/(\text{OCH}_3)_6/\text{Li}_6$ cluster core stabilized by two corannulene tetraanions to form a remarkable supramolecular aggregate (Figure 2a). The layered lithium alkoxo belt with the overall dimensions of $6.5 \times 5.5 \times 2.5 \text{ \AA}$ consists of an O_6 -ring bridging two essentially planar Li_6 -hexagons. The Li–O distances within the cluster are in the range of 1.942(5)–1.994(5) Å and comparable to those measured in lithium methoxide (1.94(3) Å).^[12]

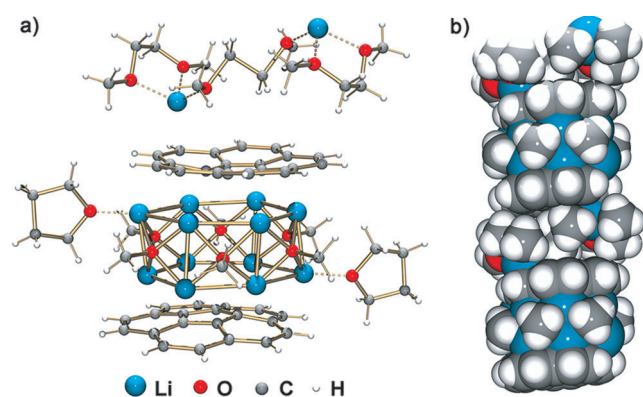


Figure 2. The building unit (a) and the space-filling model of a fragment of a 1D polymeric chain of **2** (b, THF molecules are omitted for clarity).

The Li...Li distances between the two Li_6 -rings in **2** (2.500(6)–2.538(6) Å) are very short. They are shorter than those found in $[\text{CH}_3\text{Li}]_4$ (2.591(9) Å).^[13] The Li...Li interatomic separations within the Li_6 -rings (2.751(7)–2.767(7) Å) are longer than the above but still remain significantly shorter than those in the type **I** sandwich (3.053(5)–3.104(5) Å)^[8a] and in lithium metal (3.04 Å).^[14] Notably, the formation of lithium alkoxo nanobelts may represent possible structural motifs of Li–O deposits on a carbon composite electrode in Li-ion cells.^[15]

Two additional lithium ions are bound to the sandwich exteriors in an η^2 -binding mode (2.256(5)–2.308(5) Å) in **2**. In **I**, the exterior coordination of lithium ions to the concave face of $\text{C}_{20}\text{H}_{10}^{4-}$ was of the η^3 -type.^[8a] The coordination of the extraneous Li^+ ions is completed by a chelating dme molecule. One additional dme molecule bridges two neighboring $\text{Li}(\text{dme})^+$ cations to form $[\text{Li}_2(\text{dme})_3]^{2+}$ units that link

the sandwiches **II** into a 1D polymer in the crystal lattice of **2** (Figure 2b).

A few crystals of **3** were deposited from the reaction mixture of corannulene with excess lithium metal in DME layered with hexanes and kept at 13 °C for three weeks. An X-ray diffraction study of **3** revealed the presence of the same pentadecker $[\text{I}^{4-}/\text{Li}_6/(\text{OR})_6/\text{Li}_6/\text{I}^{4-}]^{2-}$ supramolecular aggregate. In contrast to **2**, both methoxide (CH_3O^-) and 2-methoxyethoxide ($\text{CH}_3\text{OCH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{O}^-$) groups participate in the formation of the lithium alkoxo nanobelt to afford $[\text{Li}_2(\text{dme})_2][\text{I}^{4-}/\text{Li}_6/(\text{OCH}_3)_2(\text{OCH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{OCH}_3)_4/\text{Li}_6/\text{I}^{4-}]$ (**3**, Figure 3a). The Li–O bond lengths within the belt in **3** span a broader range (1.87(3)–2.07(2) Å) than in **2**. The extraneous

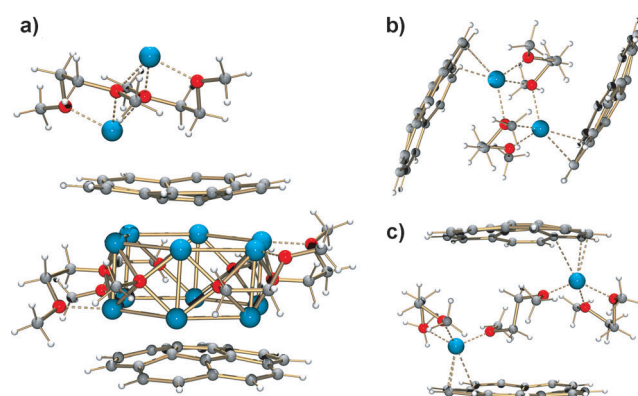


Figure 3. The building unit (a) of a 1D polymeric chain of **3**; the $[\text{Li}_2(\text{dme})_2]^{2+}$ of **3** (b) and $[\text{Li}_2(\text{dme})_3]^{2+}$ of **2** and **4** (c) that hold the two corannulene tetraanions of neighboring sandwiches **II** together.

Li^+ ions are bound to the sandwich **II** in an η^3 -mode (2.250(6)–2.478(6) Å). They also have one dme molecule coordinated in a chelating fashion with additional $\text{Li}\cdots\text{O}$ contacts (2.143(6) Å) that hold two neighboring $\text{Li}(\text{dme})^+$ moieties together. As a result, the slightly different cationic building units, $[\text{Li}_2(\text{dme})_2]^{2+}$, hold the anionic sandwiches together in **3** (Figure 3b), but the overall 1D polymeric chains in **2** and **3** are quite similar.

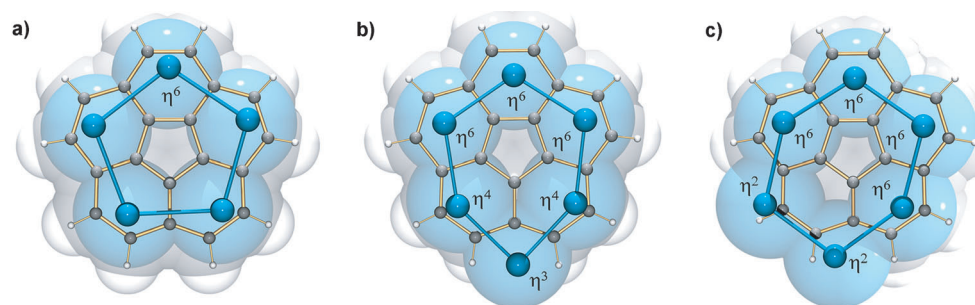
Crystals of **4**, $[\text{Li}_2(\text{dme})_3][\text{I}^{4-}/\text{Li}_6/(\text{OCH}_3)_2(\text{OCH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{OCH}_3)_4/\text{Li}_6/\text{I}^{4-}]$, were deposited from the reaction mixture in DME kept at 20 °C for seven days. Their X-ray diffraction investigation shows the formation of the type **II** sandwich, identical to that observed in **3**, with four $\text{CH}_3\text{OCH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{O}^-$ and two CH_3O^- equatorial groups around the nanobelt interior (Figure S1). At the same time, the cationic building block in **4**, $[\text{Li}_2(\text{dme})_3]^{2+}$, is the same as that in **2** (Figure 3c). Importantly, all three new products **2–4** contain the same type of lithium alkoxo nanobelt showing its stability and wide occurrence under different experimental settings.

The C–C bond distances of $\text{C}_{20}\text{H}_{10}^{4-}$ in **2** and **3** (sandwich **II**) are almost equidistant to those measured for sandwich **I** (Table 1). Similarly, the C–C bond length perturbations of the corannulene core upon the acquisition of four electrons are indicative of the formation of the central aromatic cyclopentadienyl $6e^-/5\text{C}$ ring surrounded by an aromatic $18e^-/15\text{C}$ annulenyl cycle.^[16]

Table 1: Key distances [Å] for sandwiches **I** and **II** (2–3).

	$[\text{Li}^4/\text{Li}_5/\text{Li}^4]^{3-}$ (sandwich I) ^[a]	2	3
		$[\text{Li}^4/\text{Li}_6(\text{OR})_6/\text{Li}_6/\text{Li}^4]^{2-}$ (sandwich II)	
hub	1.390(3)–1.400(2)	1.394(4)–1.406(4)	1.390(4)–1.404(4)
spoke	1.421(2)–1.433(2)	1.421(4)–1.436(4)	1.426(4)–1.436(4)
flank	1.429(3)–1.445(2)	1.431(4)–1.444(4)	1.421(4)–1.439(4)
rim	1.449(3)–1.490(2)	1.445(4)–1.484(4)	1.443(4)–1.474(4)
bowl depth	0.241(2)–0.355(2)	0.354(4)	0.433(4)
$\text{Li}_{\text{sandwcd}}\cdots\text{C}$	η^6 : 2.204(4)–2.690(4)	η^6 : 2.337(5)–2.600(5) η^4 : 2.235(5)–2.528(5) η^3 : 2.344(5)–2.665(5)	η^6 : 2.322(5)–2.688(6) η^2 : 2.301(6)–2.381(6)
$\text{Li}_{\text{extraneous}}\cdots\text{C}$	η^3 : 2.316(4)–2.776(4) η^6 : 2.208(4)–2.736(4)	η^2 : 2.256(5)–2.308(5)	η^3 : 2.250(6)–2.479(6)
$\text{Li}\cdots\text{Li}$	3.053(5)–3.104(5)	2.751(7)–2.768(7) ^[b] 2.500(6)–2.539(6) ^[c]	2.773(7)–2.898(8) ^[b] 2.481(7)–2.525(6) ^[c]

[a] for the $[\{\text{Li}(\text{thf})_2\}\{\text{Li}^4/\text{Li}_5/\text{Li}^4\}\{\text{Li}(\text{thf})_3\}][\text{Li}(\text{thf})_4]$ salt;^[8a] [b] within the Li_6 -ring; [c] between two Li_6 -rings.


Figure 4. Coordination of the interior Li^+ ions (blue spheres) to a corannulene tetraanion in sandwiches of the type **I** (a) and **II** (**2** (b), **3** and **4** (c)) superimposed with the space-filling models.

The presence of the quadruple negative charge along with the binding of multiple Li^+ ions to the corannulene surface lead to a significant flattening of the bowl depth (0.354(4)–0.433(4) Å) compared to the neutral ligand (0.875(2) Å).^[17] Notably, relatively large bowl-depth variations are observed for tetra-reduced corannulene in different coordination environments. For example, an approximately 0.2 Å difference is revealed for $\text{C}_{20}\text{H}_{10}^{4-}$ in **I** and **II**. Thus, the highly reduced corannulene bowl shows sufficient core flexibility which allows it to readily adjust for the geometry and electrostatic forces of the encapsulated positively charged Li-based clusters.

Coordination of internal lithium ions to the tetra-reduced surface of corannulene in **I** and **II** is shown in Figure 4. All sandwiched Li^+ ions in **I** exhibit an asymmetric η^6 -binding to five six-membered rings of the anionic surface (Figure 4a); whereas variations in coordination are observed for **II** in **2–4**. Overall, the $\text{Li}\cdots\text{C}$ interatomic distances are shorter in **I** than those in **II** (Table 1). Three different $\text{Li}_{\text{sandwcd}}\cdots\text{C}$ binding

modes, namely η^3 -, η^4 -, and η^6 -, are observed for the sandwiched lithium ions in **2** (Figure 4b). Notably, strong binding of the solvated thf molecule ($\text{Li}-\text{O}_{\text{thf}}$ 1.933(5) Å) completes the coordination of the η^3 -bound lithium ion. For **3** and **4**, four internal Li^+ ions are coordinated to the π -surface of **1**⁴⁻ in the η^6 -fashion, while two others exhibit η^2 -binding (Figure 4c). Additional intermolecular $\text{Li}\cdots\text{O}$ interactions with the donor functionalities of the equatorial alkoxo groups (1.971(6) and 2.011(8) Å for **3**) can be identified for these η^2 -coordinated lithium ions.

In conclusion, the self-assembly of tetra-reduced corannulene with the products of Li-induced DME decomposition constitutes a new facet in supramolecular chemistry of highly charged bowl-shaped polyarenes. In addition to a better

understanding of possible solvent/electrolyte cleavage processes in the presence of carbonaceous materials and excess lithium, a novel type of high-order multilayered sandwiches, $[\text{C}_{20}\text{H}_{10}/\text{Li}_6(\text{OR})_6\text{Li}_6/\text{C}_{20}\text{H}_{10}]^{2-}$, has been reproducibly obtained under different crystallization conditions. The above pentadecker supramolecular aggregates show only slight variations of coordination environment at the exterior and perimeter, according to

the X-ray diffraction studies of **2–4**. But in all cases, the formation of a unique lithium alkoxo cluster with nanosize dimensions sandwiched between two tetra-reduced corannulene decks has been revealed, expanding the organometallic chemistry of lithium(I) and coordination limits of $\text{C}_{20}\text{H}_{10}^{4-}$.

Received: August 27, 2012

Published online: October 22, 2012

Keywords: corannulenes · lithium reduction · self-assembly · tetraanions · X-ray diffraction

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