

## Article

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# Postsynthetic Oxidation of Coordination Site in a Heterometallic Metal-Organic Framework: Tuning Catalytic Behaviors

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**ABSTRACT:** Postsynthetic modification (PSM) in metal-organic frameworks (MOFs) can introduce multiple functionalities and alter the structural function for the desired application. However, the PSM of the coordination site faces the challenges of structural collapse or incompatibility between the original metal site and the newly formed coordination group. Herein, we developed a novel concept of introducing “primary” and “secondary” nodes, coexisting in a water-stable, Zr-based heterometallic MOF,  $[\text{Zr}_6(\mu_3\text{-OH})_8(\text{OH})_8][\text{Cu}^{\text{I}}_4(\text{L}_1)_4]_2$  (**1-SH-a**,  $\text{H}_2\text{L}_1$  = 6-mercaptopyridine-3-carboxylic acid). The post-synthetic oxidation at the coordination site was successfully achieved in the “secondary” nodes  $[\text{Cu}^{\text{I}}_4(\text{L}_1)_4]^+$ , while the robust “primary” nodes  $[\text{Zr}_6(\mu_3\text{-OH})_8(\text{OH})_8]^{8+}$  stabilized the whole framework to form  $[\text{Zr}_6(\mu_3\text{-OH})_8(\text{OH})_8][(\text{Cu}^{\text{I}}_{0.44}\text{Cu}^{\text{II}}_{0.56}(\text{OH})_{0.56})_4(\text{L}_2)_4]_2$  (**1-SO<sub>3</sub>H**,  $\text{H}_2\text{L}_2$  = 6-sulfonicotinic acid). Attempts to directly synthesize **1-SO<sub>3</sub>H** under the reactions of Zr(IV), Cu(II), and  $\text{H}_2\text{L}_2$  failed. Furthermore, PSM of **1-SH-a** to form **1-SO<sub>3</sub>H** was utilized to tune the catalytic behaviors toward the styrene oxide ring-opening reaction to give an improved regioselectivity of primary alcohol (A) of ~99% compared with **1-SH-a** (~71%).

## INTRODUCTION

Postsynthetic modification (PSM) of porous materials such as mesoporous silica and porous carbons has been successfully used to control and analyze their organization and functionalization.<sup>1,2</sup> In the past decades, much interest has been focused on tailoring metal-organic frameworks (MOFs) using PSM.<sup>3-4</sup> PSM has been extensively used and has become much sought-after compared to de novo synthesis because PSM offers the ability to: (i) facilitate the introduction of a wide variety of chemical functionalities, (ii) maximize the rejection of undesirable byproducts in unpredictable ways, and (iii) endow functions that are thermally labile, which are thwarted almost in solvothermal conditions. Accordingly, MOFs have been vested with significant multi-functionalities, and thus adapting the modified functions in response to exploration for the associated applications.

PSM of MOFs can be broadly divided into three major divisions: unique reactions in terms of (i) metal or linker exchange,<sup>5-6</sup> (ii) covalent modification,<sup>7</sup> and (iii) oxidation/reduction.<sup>8-10</sup> Most of these modifications are carried out on the organic components of the framework. Specifically, linker exchange in readily accessible isoreticular MOF analogues leads to progressively diverse functionalities and properties.<sup>11-15</sup> By contrast, covalent modification allows for chemically modifying the organic struts to either introduce the functionality or functionalize the inherent reactive tags<sup>16-19</sup> (Scheme 1). On the other hand, PSM on the coordination site has not yet been exploited by the MOF community, possibly due to the structural collapse under the conditions required or incompatibility between the original metal and the newly formed coordination group.

The coordination ability of thiol and sulfonic groups has been popularized by their extensive use in materials science.<sup>20,21</sup>

Generally, thiol preferentially coordinates with soft Lewis acids

(*i.e.*, Cu(I), Ag(I), Au(III)), while the sulfonic group shows affinity for the harder ones (*i.e.*, Cu(II), Ni(II), Fe(II)). In addition, the vulnerability of thiol compounds to oxidize to the sulfonate derivatives assisted by H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> is well documented even in porous supports, such as thiol grafted single-walled carbon nanotubes.<sup>22</sup> The unique use in coordination chemistry and ready conversion toward thiol and sulfonic groups would enable the preparation of a specific thiolated MOF and permit the formation of the isolated sulfonate one employing postsynthetic oxidation.

**Scheme 1. Generic schemes for (a) linker exchange, (b) covalent PSM, and (c) coordination site PSM.**

Herein, we report a water-stable heterometallic Zr-MOF [Zr<sub>6</sub>(μ<sub>3</sub>-OH)<sub>8</sub>(OH)<sub>8</sub>][Cu<sub>4</sub>(L<sub>1</sub>)<sub>4</sub>]<sub>2</sub>·*x*guest (**1-SH**, H<sub>2</sub>L<sub>1</sub> = 6-mercaptopyridine-3-carboxylic acid), which can undergo a guest-dependent structural transformation to form **1-SH-a**. As expected, in the presence of H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>, the coordination site modification was successfully achieved in **1-SH-a** by postsynthetic oxidation of L<sub>1</sub><sup>2-</sup> to the corresponding L<sub>2</sub><sup>2-</sup> (H<sub>2</sub>L<sub>2</sub> = 6-sulfonicotinic acid) (Scheme 1c). The resulting **1-SO<sub>3</sub>H** was determined by powder X-ray diffraction (PXRD), X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS), and nuclear magnetic resonance (<sup>1</sup>H NMR). Significantly, the styrene oxide ring-opening reactions catalyzed by **1-SH-a** and **1-SO<sub>3</sub>H** were thoroughly investigated to compare their catalytic behaviors derived from their modified organic fragments and copper species, indicating that the functionalization of **1-SH-a** to form **1-SO<sub>3</sub>H** tuned the catalytic behavior to give an improved regioselectivity of primary alcohol (A) of ~99% compared with **1-SH-a** (~71%).

**Figure 1.** Rational design of BUT-52 and **1-SH** on the basis of In(III) or Zr(IV), Cu(I), and the *in-situ* synthesized L<sub>1</sub><sup>2-</sup>.

## EXPERIMENTAL SECTION

Unless otherwise noted, all starting materials were directly purchased from commercial suppliers and used without further purification. ZrCl<sub>4</sub> (>99.5+%, Alfa Aesar), CuI (99.0%, ARCOS), 6,6'-Dithiodinitric Acid (H<sub>2</sub>L) (>98.0%, TCI), 6-Mercaptopyridine-3-carboxylic acid (H<sub>2</sub>L<sub>1</sub>) (90%, Sigma-Aldrich), Benzoic Acid (>99%, TCI), Hydrogen Peroxide Solution (H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>) (30 wt. % in H<sub>2</sub>O, ACS reagent, Sigma-Aldrich), N,N-Dimethylformamide (DMF) (>99.8%, GR ACS), acetonitrile (CH<sub>3</sub>CN) (99.8%, Sigma-Aldrich), dichloromethane (CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>) (99.5+%, Alfa Aesar), acetone (99.5%, Fisher) styrene oxide

(98+%, Alfa Aesar), isopropanol (99.6%, ARCOS), 1-bromo-3,5-difluorobenzene (98%, Alfa Aesar), tetrahydrofuran (THF) (99.9%, Sigma-Aldrich), methanol (95%, Fisher), ethanol (95%, Fisher). 6-sulfonicotinic acid (H<sub>2</sub>L<sub>2</sub>) was synthesized according to the reported literature.<sup>23</sup>

**Synthesis of 1-SH.** A mixture of ZrCl<sub>4</sub> (100 mg), CuI (142.5 mg), and H<sub>2</sub>L (61.6 mg) in presence of benzoic acid (2 g) dissolved in N,N-dimethylformamide (DMF, 10 mL) and acetonitrile (CH<sub>3</sub>CN, 5 mL) in a 20 mL vial was heated at 120 °C for 96 h. Yellow single crystals in 56% yield (based on H<sub>2</sub>L) were harvested.

**Synthesis of 1-SH-a.** As-synthesized single crystals of **1-SH** was thoroughly washed by fresh DMF and then soaking in acetone for 12 h to produce single crystals of **1-SH-a**. Elemental analysis (EA) (%): Calcd for C<sub>57</sub>H<sub>62</sub>Cu<sub>8</sub>N<sub>8</sub>O<sub>37</sub>S<sub>8</sub>Zr<sub>6</sub> = [Zr<sub>6</sub>(μ<sub>3</sub>-OH)<sub>8</sub>(OH)<sub>8</sub>][Cu<sub>4</sub>(L<sub>1</sub>)<sub>4</sub>]<sub>2</sub>·3(C<sub>3</sub>H<sub>6</sub>O)·2H<sub>2</sub>O: C, 24.77; H, 2.26; N, 4.06; S, 9.28; Found: C, 25.01; H, 1.99; N, 4.02; S, 9.32. The resulting molecular formula was derived from the combination of EA and thermogravimetric analysis (TGA). The solid was continued to soaking in acetone for 5 days, during which acetone was decanted and freshly replenished two times, and then dried at 120 °C under vacuum for 12 h to yield activated sample.

**Synthesis of 1-SO<sub>3</sub>H.** As-synthesized single crystals of **1-SH-a** (~30 mg) were immersed in a mixture of THF (4 mL)/H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> (0.1 ml) for 12 h, during which THF/H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> was decanted and freshly replenished two times. The resulting green crystals was washed by THF and dried in air. EA (%): Calcd for C<sub>63</sub>H<sub>74</sub>Cu<sub>8</sub>N<sub>8</sub>O<sub>38</sub>S<sub>8</sub>Zr<sub>6</sub> = [Zr<sub>6</sub>(μ<sub>3</sub>-OH)<sub>8</sub>(OH)<sub>8</sub>][Cu<sub>4</sub><sup>0.44</sup>Cu<sub>0.56</sub>(OH)<sub>0.56</sub>(L<sub>2</sub>)<sub>4</sub>]<sub>2</sub>·3(C<sub>4</sub>H<sub>8</sub>O)·(C<sub>3</sub>H<sub>6</sub>O)·2H<sub>2</sub>O: C, 26.42; H, 2.60; N, 3.91; S, 8.96; Found: C, 26.22; H, 3.01; N, 3.88; S, 9.10. Inductively coupled plasma atomic emission spectroscopy (ICP-AES) confirmed the ratios of Zr/Cu upon digestion of **1-SO<sub>3</sub>H** in dilute H<sub>2</sub>O/HNO<sub>3</sub>, showing the concentrations of Zr and Cu are 49.8 and 49.6 ppm, respectively, corresponding to the molar ratio of Zr/Cu to be ~0.7, which is close to the ratio of Zr/Cu (0.75) in **1-SH**. The activated sample was obtained by soaking in acetone for 5 days and dried at room temperature under vacuum for 24 h.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Solvothermal reactions of ZrCl<sub>4</sub>, CuI, 6,6'-Dithiodinitric Acid (H<sub>2</sub>L) and benzoic acid in a mixture of DMF/CH<sub>3</sub>CN at 120 °C afforded yellow single crystals of **1-SH**. Single-crystal X-ray diffraction (SCXRD) reveals that **1-SH** crystallizes in the tetragonal space group *P4<sub>2</sub>/mnm* and has a three-dimensional flu topology, which consists of the 8-connected [Zr<sub>6</sub>(μ<sub>3</sub>-OH)<sub>8</sub>(OH)<sub>8</sub>]<sup>8+</sup> clusters (denoted “primary” nodes) linked by

tetrahedral  $[\text{Cu}_4(\text{L}_1)_4]^{4+}$  metalloligands (denoted “secondary” nodes). Similar to our previously reported framework BUT-52,<sup>24</sup> both  $\text{H}_2\text{L}_1$  are originated from the cleavage of S-S bond during the solvothermal reaction and are allowed to form distinct cuprous sulfur cluster-based heterometallic MOFs (Figure 1). Unlike the 6-connected  $[\text{Cu}_6(\text{L}_1)_6]^{6-}$  moiety observed in BUT-52, in **1-SH**, a 4-connected  $[\text{Cu}_4(\text{L}_1)_4]^{4+}$  tetrahedra with  $D_{2d}$  symmetry is achieved (Figure. S1). Moreover, an open dodecahedral cage is observed with dimensions of about  $22.8 \times 22.8 \times 29.3 \text{ \AA}^3$ , which is constructed by six  $[\text{Zr}_6(\mu_3\text{-OH})_8(\text{OH})_8]^{8+}$  and eight  $[\text{Cu}_4(\text{L}_1)_4]^{4+}$  tetrahedra as vertices and twenty-four  $\text{L}_1^{2-}$  linkers as edges (Figure S2).

**Figure 2.** Experimental and simulated PXRD patterns of **1-SH** and **1-SH-a**; inset is the structural transformation from **1-SH** to **1-SH-a**.

An interesting feature in the PXRD pattern of dried bulk **1-SH** after acetone washing resulted in the peak shift, compared to the calculated pattern from the single crystal data, inferring a guest-dependent structural transformation (Figure 2). The size and shape of single crystals after acetone treatment remains unaltered indicative of a single-crystal to single-crystal transformation (Figure. S3). This prompted us to obtain the transformed structure (**1-SH-a**) using SCXRD. **1-SH-a** exhibits very similar unit cell parameters (Table S1), but with a shrink angle in the window compared to that of **1-SH** (Figure 2 inset). Significantly, the calculated PXRD pattern matched well with the as-synthesized **1-SH-a**. Unlike the varied flexibility presented by the previously reported Zr-MOFs in response to guest molecules,<sup>25,26</sup> **1-SH** was found to exclusively maintain its contracted conformation upon immersion in different solvents, showing no guest solvent dependence (Figure S4). TGA and PXRD indicated that **1-SH-a** did not decompose until  $350^\circ\text{C}$  in air (Figures S4 and S5). Upon acetone exchange and activation at  $120^\circ\text{C}$ , **1-SH-a** showed no  $\text{N}_2$  uptake at 77 K, which is most likely due to the insufficient activation and pore size selectivity.<sup>27</sup> However, effective  $\text{CO}_2$  adsorption at 273 K was measured with maximum capacity of  $40.1 \text{ cm}^3 \text{ g}^{-1}$ , which showed type I adsorption isotherm (Figure S6). The chemical stability of **1-SH-a** was measured by soaking in water for 12 h, where the crystallinity and porosity were maintained as evidenced by PXRD and  $\text{CO}_2$  adsorption (Figures S5 and S6). These results demonstrate that the high connectivity “primary” ( $\text{Zr}_6$ ) nodes<sup>28</sup> and robust “secondary”  $\text{Cu}_4\text{S}_4$  nodes ( $pK_a(\text{Cu}_2\text{S}) = 47.6$ )<sup>29</sup> in **1-SH-a** are responsible for the excellent thermal and chemical stability.

**Figure 3.** XPS spectra in the regions of (a) Cu 2p and (b) S 2p for **1-SH-a** and **1-SO<sub>3</sub>H**. (c)  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectrum of commercially available  $\text{H}_2\text{L}_1$  (1), as-synthesized  $\text{H}_2\text{L}_2$  (2) and  $\text{DCI/D}_2\text{O}$  digested **1-SO<sub>3</sub>H** in

DMSO- $d_6$  solution (3). Note: We found there is trace  $\text{H}_2\text{L}_2$  in commercially available  $\text{H}_2\text{L}_1$  from Sigma-Aldrich Co. (purity: 90%).

Due to the combination of exceptional thermal and chemical stability of **1-SH-a** and the nature of vulnerability of thiol compounds to oxidize to the sulfonate derivatives, the exploration for postsynthetic oxidation of coordination site seemed to be very promising. Therefore, as-synthesized **1-SH-a** was treated in a mixed solution of THF/ $\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$  ( $v/v = 4/0.1$ ) at room temperature for 12 h to produce **1-SO<sub>3</sub>H** (Figure S7). XPS data showed the sulfur 2p region of **1-SH-a** showed that the peak centered at  $\sim 162.3 \text{ eV}$  corresponded to a reduced oxidation state of sulfur as in  $\text{L}_1^{2-}$ , while in **1-SO<sub>3</sub>H**, this peak is absent and a new characteristic band at  $\sim 167.6 \text{ eV}$  formed, which is assigned to a higher oxidation state of sulfur ( $\text{L}_2^{2-}$ ) (Figure. 3a).<sup>30</sup> Similarly, an intense asymmetrical Cu 2p<sub>3/2</sub> photoelectron peak together with shakeup satellite peaks indicated mixed valence state of Cu in green crystals of **1-SO<sub>3</sub>H** (Figure S7), which can be deconvoluted into two contributions located at 932.1 and 934.6 eV, corresponding to Cu(I) 2p<sub>3/2</sub> and Cu(II) 2p<sub>3/2</sub>, respectively. Integration of the Cu(I) 2p<sub>3/2</sub> and Cu(II) 2p<sub>3/2</sub> peaks with Cu(II) satellite peaks gives a calculated ratio of Cu(II)/Cu(I) to be  $\sim 0.56/0.44$  in **1-SO<sub>3</sub>H**. In **1-SH-a**, a strong characteristic band at 932.1 eV is consistent with Cu(I) 2p<sub>3/2</sub>, indicating that the Cu species possess 1+ oxidation state (Figure 3b).<sup>31</sup> Further,  $^1\text{H}$  NMR upon digestion of **1-SO<sub>3</sub>H** in dilute  $\text{DCI/D}_2\text{O}$  and DMSO- $d_6$  solution confirmed the degree of conversion by oxidation. It is obvious that the appearance of pure resonances centered at  $\delta$  8.91, 8.21, and 7.73 ppm are shown, corresponding to different hydrogen signals in  $\text{H}_2\text{L}_2$  (Figure 3c). The conversion from -S $\cdot$  to -SO<sub>3</sub> $\cdot$  highlights the fact that the oxidation can access both the exterior and the interior of the MOF crystal, contributing to overall modification of the organic linkers. FT-IR spectra also indicated that the characteristic S-O stretches of R-SO<sub>3</sub> $\cdot$  in **1-SO<sub>3</sub>H** were evident at 1244 and 1201  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ ,<sup>21</sup> which were not absent in **1-SH-a** (Figure S8). Continued oxidation of **1-SO<sub>3</sub>H** for another 12 h can lead to **1-SO<sub>3</sub>H-a** with an increased ratio of Cu(II)/Cu(I) being  $\sim 0.78/0.22$ , however, causing partial structural collapse (Figures 3b and S4). Despite the incomplete conversion of Cu(I), the percent sulfonation of **1-SH-a** is 100% during the oxidation, indicating the first example of coordination site modification through PSM in MOF materials. In addition, no obvious reversible process from -SO<sub>3</sub> $\cdot$  to -S $\cdot$  was observed when soaking **1-SO<sub>3</sub>H** ( $\sim 30 \text{ mg}$ ) in a saturated THF/ $\text{H}_2\text{O}$  (2 ml/2 ml) solution of reduced agent, such as  $\text{NaNO}_2$  for 10 days (Figure S11). Attempts to directly synthesize **1-SO<sub>3</sub>H** under the reactions of Zr(IV), Cu(I)/Cu(II), and pure  $\text{H}_2\text{L}_2$ , however, failed. Furthermore, BUT-52 was also investigated under the same condition for this modification. The PXRD patterns indicated that

the material lost crystallinity, albeit the color change from red to green was observed (Figure S4 and S7). Clearly, the access of robust “primary” nodes seems extremely critical for stabilization of the whole framework, while postsynthetic oxidation can occur in “secondary” nodes.

**Figure 4.** (a) PXRD patterns of simulated or as-synthesized **1-SH**, **1-SH-a**, and **1-SO<sub>3</sub>H**. (b) DFT optimized structure of **1-SO<sub>3</sub>H**. (Only the optimized unit of the R-SO<sub>3</sub>-Cu<sup>II</sup> is shown; the remaining atoms and hydrogen atoms in **1-SO<sub>3</sub>H** are omitted for clarity.). C, black; O, red; N, blue; S, yellow; H, gray; Cu<sup>II</sup>, cyan.

PXRD revealed that the pattern of **1-SO<sub>3</sub>H** was not consistent with **1-SH-a**, but changed to match the PXRD pattern of **1-SH** (Figure 4a). The resulting formula of  $[\text{Zr}_6(\mu_3\text{-OH})_8(\text{OH})_8][(\text{Cu}^{I}_{0.44}\text{Cu}^{II}_{0.56}(\text{OH})_{0.56})_4(\text{L}_2)_4]_2 \cdot 3(\text{C}_4\text{H}_8\text{O}) \cdot (\text{C}_3\text{H}_6\text{O}) \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$  (**1-SO<sub>3</sub>H**) was defined from the combination of PXRD, XPS, <sup>1</sup>H NMR, IR spectra, ICP-AES, EA and TGA along with the reasonable deduction of oxidation states based on L<sub>1</sub><sup>2-</sup> and Cu(I) (Section VI†).<sup>32</sup> Although scanning electron microscopy (SEM) confirmed that the shapes of single crystals of **1-SO<sub>3</sub>H** remain, the structure of **1-SO<sub>3</sub>H** could not be determined by SCXRD due to the cracking of crystals (Figures S3 and S9), leading to very weak diffraction. Thus, we modeled **1-SO<sub>3</sub>H** using the framework of **1-SH** as a constraint and geometrically optimized the models using periodic density functional theory (DFT) calculations using the CP2K code (Section VII †).<sup>33</sup> The newly formed sulfonate anions coordinate in a bidentate fashion to Cu(II), either in a bridging mode or in chelating and bridging modes to two Cu(II) ions. Cu(II) was then allowed to coordinate to N atom of pyridine unit, and further coordinated to one -OH terminal to form 4- or 5-coordinated species (Figure 4b). TGA shows that **1-SO<sub>3</sub>H** is not thermally stable and the activated sample was achieved by the exchange with acetone and dried at room temperature under vacuum for 24 h (Figure S5). **1-SO<sub>3</sub>H** exhibits CO<sub>2</sub> adsorption at 273 K with maximum capacity of 32.0 cm<sup>3</sup> g<sup>-1</sup> (Figure S6).

**Scheme 2.** (a) Styrene oxide ring-opening reaction with isopropanol, (b) conversion and (c) regioselectivity of A catalyzed by **1-SH-a** and **1-SO<sub>3</sub>H**.

Compared with ideal 12-connected Zr-MOFs, such as UiO-type series,<sup>34</sup> **1-SH-a** and **1-SO<sub>3</sub>H** with lower connectivity (8-connected) can be seen with “inherent defects”, and the terminal hydroxide groups (Zr-OH) can be considered as catalytic Brønsted acid sites.<sup>35-39</sup> To test the catalytic activities of **1-SH-a** and **1-SO<sub>3</sub>H**, ring-opening of styrene oxide with a monohydric alcohol (*i.e.* isopropanol) was selected as a model reaction. This

reaction is hardly processed in the absence of catalyst, due to the poor nucleophilicity of alcohols.<sup>40,41</sup> As shown in Scheme 2a, the reaction was carried out at 55 °C with 1 mol% MOF catalyst. In accordance with the two possible sites of nucleophilic attack of isopropanol on styrene oxide, two products are possible: the primary alcohol (A) and the secondary alcohol (B). After 8 h, the reactions led to a >90% conversion of styrene oxide, and the final conversion can reach ~100% after 24 h for both catalysts (Scheme 2b and Table S2). PXRD indicated that the crystallinity of both MOFs remained intact after catalysis (Figure S4). Recycling tests with three consecutive runs were performed without any significant loss of their catalytic activities to indicate the catalysts can be reused (Table S2).

**Figure 5.** Plausible mechanisms for styrene oxide ring-opening reaction catalyzed by different catalytic sites.

Interestingly, for **1-SH-a** tested, both products A and B were achieved with ~71% of the regioselectivity towards primary alcohol (A), whereas **1-SO<sub>3</sub>H** gave a regioselectivity of ~99% (Scheme 2c, Fig. S13-14 and Table S2). The regioselectivity of **1-SH-a** (71%) and **1-SO<sub>3</sub>H** (99%) toward primary alcohol (A) was almost identical throughout the reaction course. This observation can be further rationalized by a first-order parallel reaction model (Section VIII †). From mechanistic point of view, generally, the ring-opening reaction of epoxides can proceed by either SN1 or SN2 mechanisms, depending on the nature of the catalyst and reaction conditions. Accordingly, plausible reaction mechanisms are proposed: (1) When styrene oxide undergoes in presence of an acidic catalyst, ring-opening occurs by an SN1 mechanism, and the more-substituted carbon is the site of attack, leading to product A. (2) Conversely, when initiating with a basic catalyst, the reaction takes place by a mechanism with substantial SN2 character, and the less-substituted carbon is the site of nucleophilic attack. As a result, product B predominates.<sup>42</sup> As shown in Figure 5, **1-SH-a** possesses  $[\text{Zr}_6(\mu_3\text{-OH})_8(\text{OH})_8]^{8+}$  (Zr<sub>6</sub> nodes) and cuprous sulfur clusters (R-S-Cu<sup>I</sup>), in which there is Zr<sub>6</sub> nodes-based Brønsted acid available to protonate the oxygen atom in styrene oxide to create a good leaving group, resulting in product A (I). This matched well with the product catalyzed by the previously reported benchmark Zr-MOFs.<sup>40,41</sup> For R-S-, divalent organic sulfides are well-known strong Lewis bases and have stronger electron-donating ability. Thus, a deprotonated, negatively charged alkoxide is preferentially created. An alkoxide is a poor leaving group, making the ring unlikely to open without a “push” from the nucleophile, and the reaction is very likely to proceed by an SN2 mechanism (II). Clearly, this illuminates that both products A and B were observed when using Brønsted

acid sites and strong Lewis bases dual-functionalized **1-SH-a**. After postsynthetic oxidation, **1-SH-a** was completely accessible to form **1-SO<sub>3</sub>H**, with retained Zr<sub>6</sub> nodes and newly formed R-SO<sub>3</sub>-Cu<sup>II</sup><sub>0.56</sub>-OH<sub>0.56</sub> units. Cu(II)-MOFs were found to be effective for the ring-opening reaction of styrene oxide with unsaturated coordinated Cu(II) sites as Lewis acids.<sup>43-45</sup> In this case, three types of plausible mechanisms could probably be adopted simultaneously and give an integrative contribution to the catalytic performance in **1-SO<sub>3</sub>H**. Besides mechanism I, Lewis acidic Cu(II) binds to styrene oxide to produce an enhanced electrophilic nature of the carbon attached to the phenyl group through an acid – base interaction. Subsequently, the carbon with a partial positive charge is attacked by isopropanol to give product A (III). In addition, R-SO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup> moieties might be protonated by inherent -OH from Zr-OH or Cu<sup>II</sup>-OH in **1-SO<sub>3</sub>H** and form strong Brønsted acidic R-SO<sub>3</sub>H sites for alcoholysis of epoxides (IV).<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, only product A is exclusively obtained within the above three proposed mechanisms, which is consistent with the experimental data observed in this work.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, a water-stable heterometallic Zr-MOF with “primary” and “secondary” nodes has been reported, and the guest-dependent structural dynamic was studied by SCXRD. The presence of “primary” nodes in the framework plays a vital role in the improvement of structural stability. Subsequently, postsynthetic oxidation induced coordination site modification was successfully observed in “secondary” nodes. In addition, the catalytic behavior toward the styrene oxide ring-opening reaction after PSM was tuned, and plausible mechanisms were also unambiguously verified. The present work not only demonstrates a suitable MOF model for investigating the coordination site modification but also provides a potential prediction on the unique design of heterogeneous catalysts at the molecular level. Furthermore, postsynthetic oxidation of coordination site is expected to become a promising strategy for the introduction of multi-functionalities in MOFs for advanced applications.

## ASSOCIATED CONTENT

### Supporting Information.

The Supporting Information including synthesis of MOFs, PXRD, FT-IR, TGA, SEM, <sup>1</sup>H NMR, XPS, catalysis reaction, DFT calculation and crystal data is available free of charge on the ACS Publications website.

Crystallographic data for **1-SH** and **1-SH-a** (CIF)

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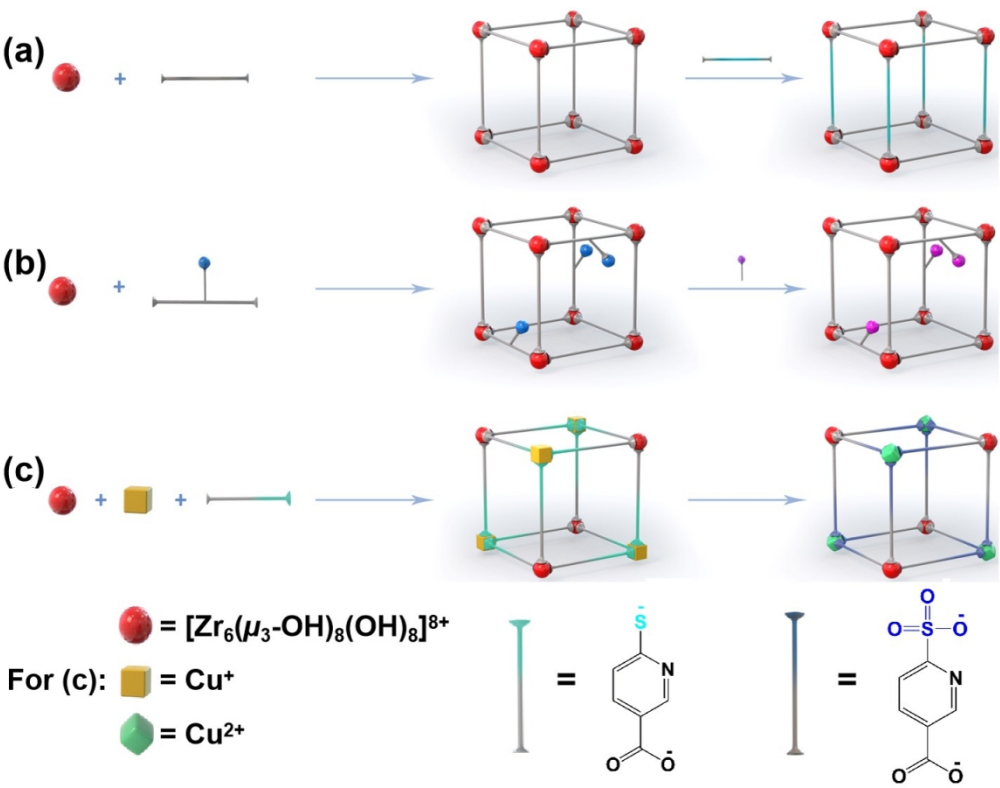
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Scheme 1

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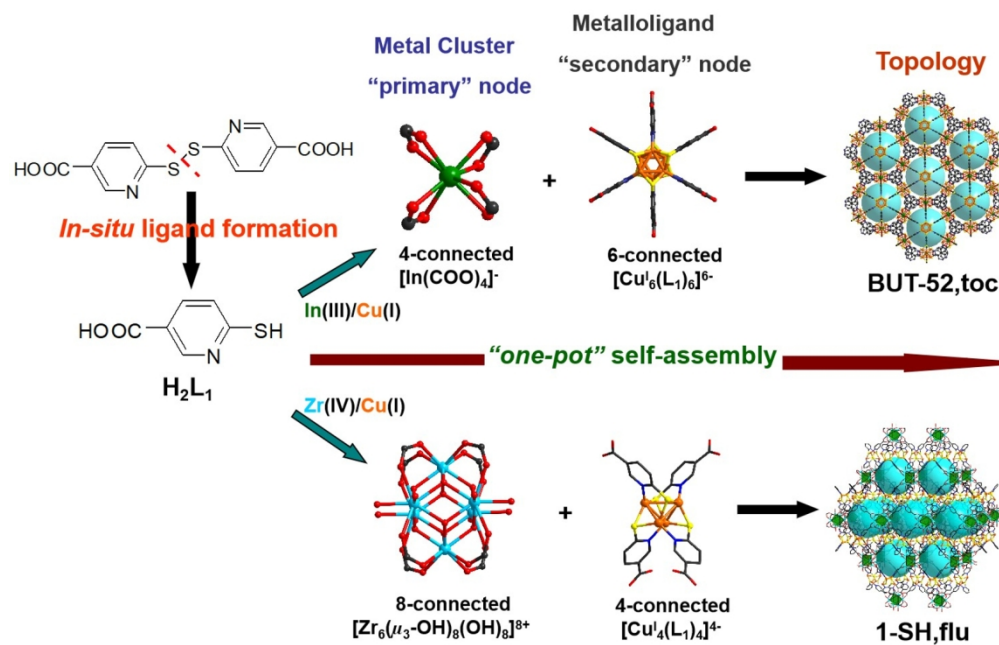


Figure 1

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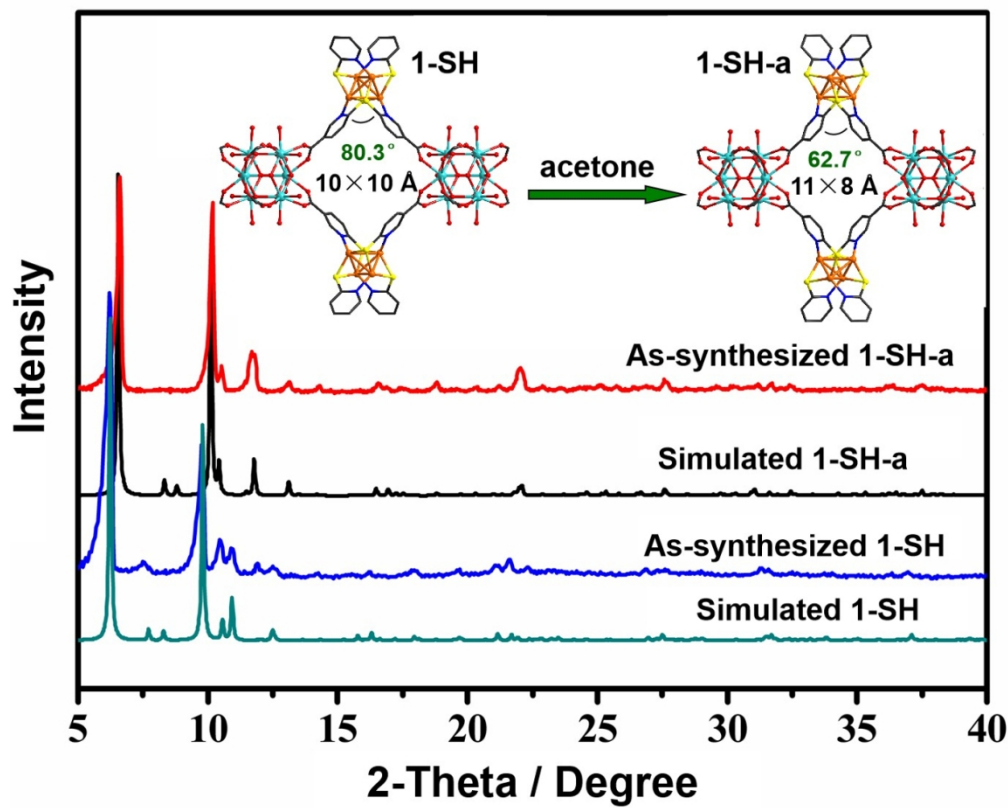


Figure 2

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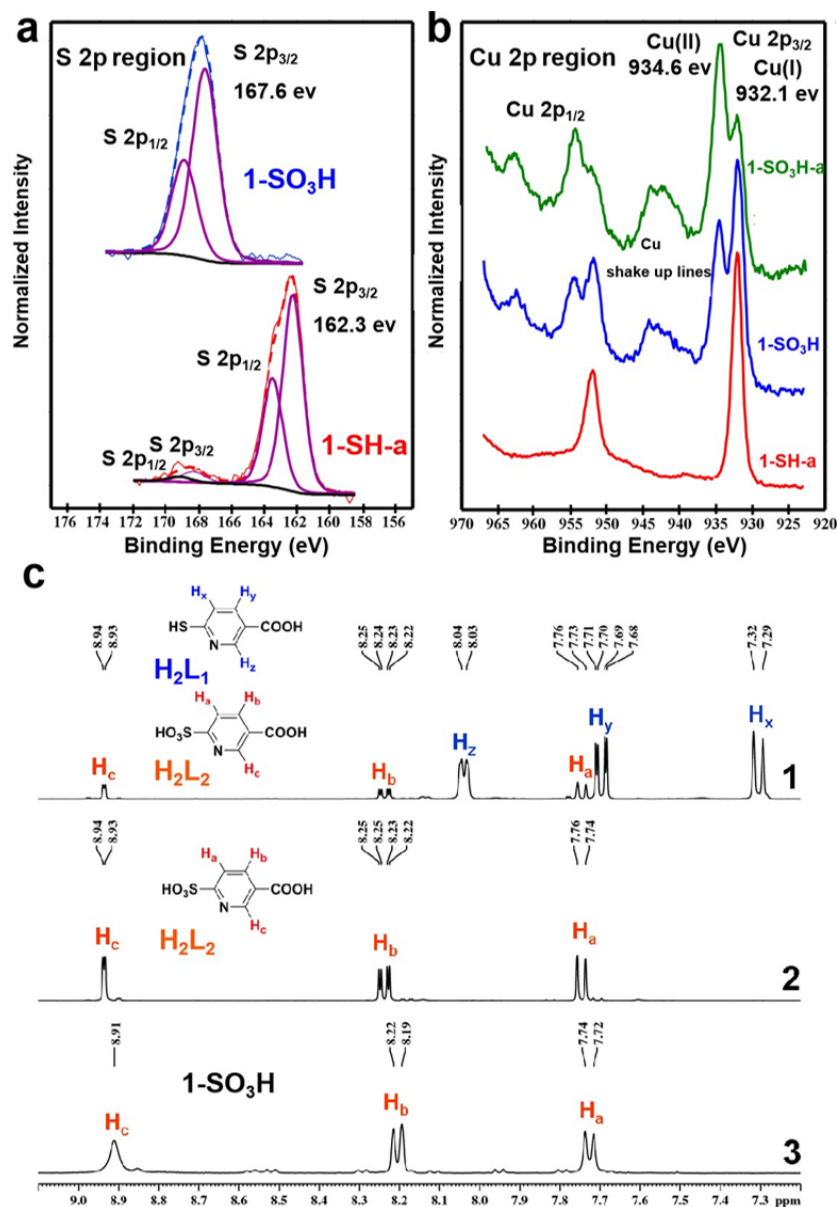


Figure 3

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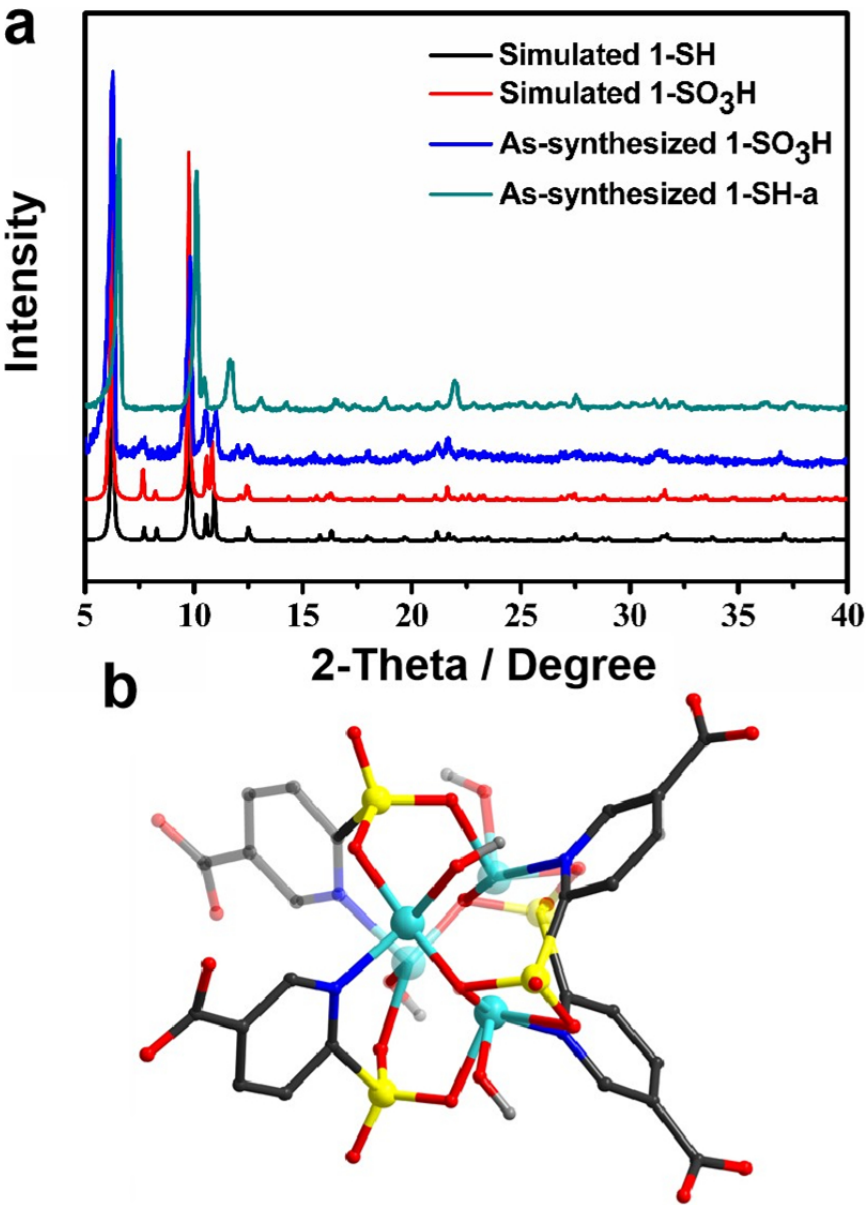
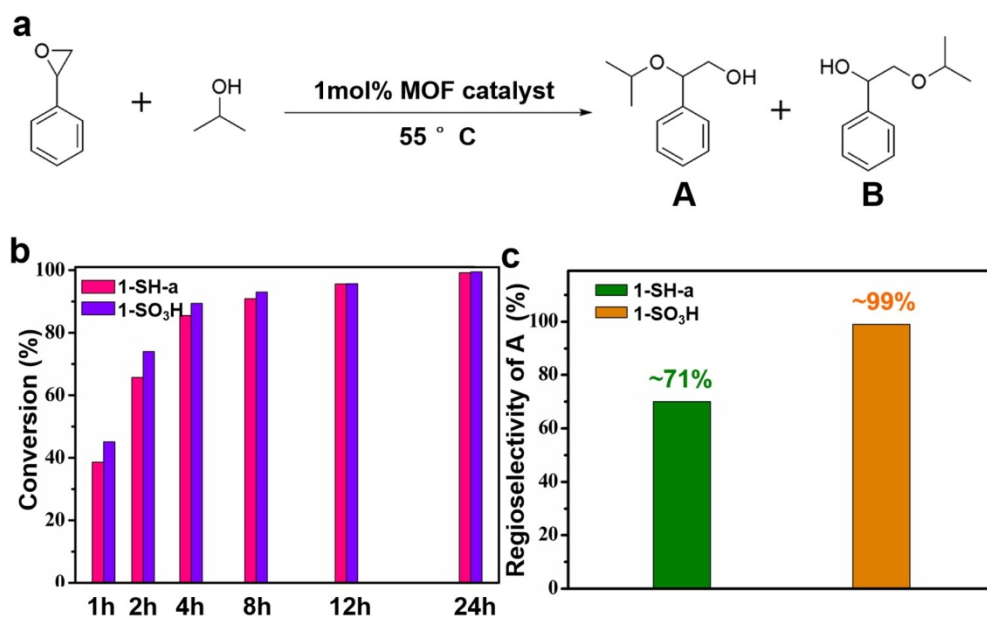


Figure 4

136x189mm (150 x 150 DPI)



Scheme 2

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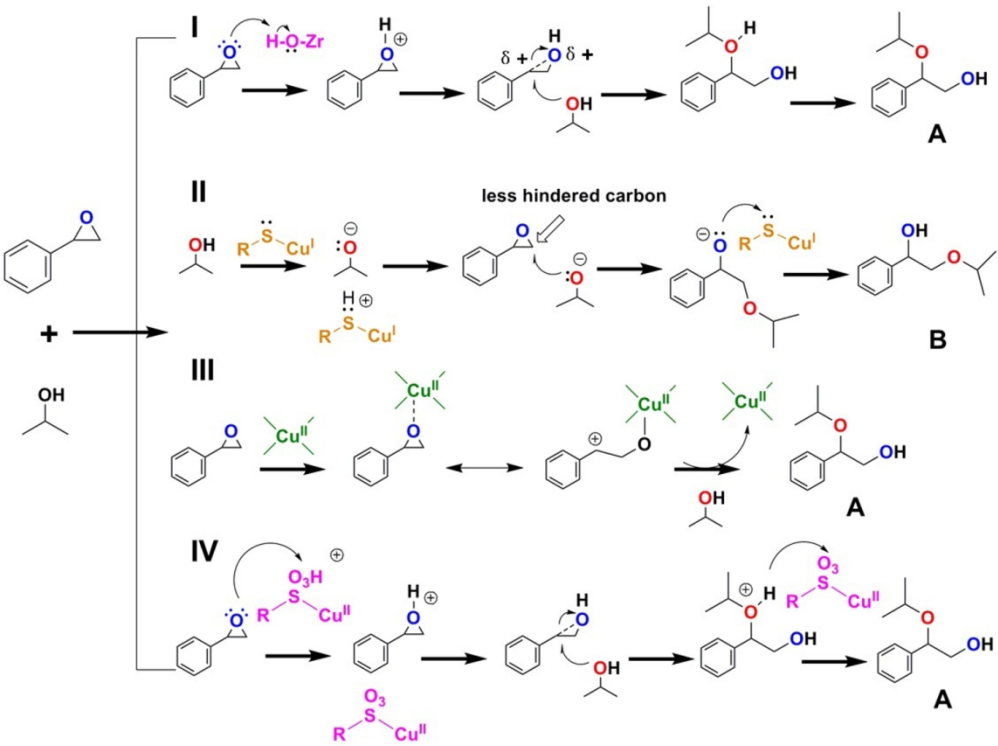
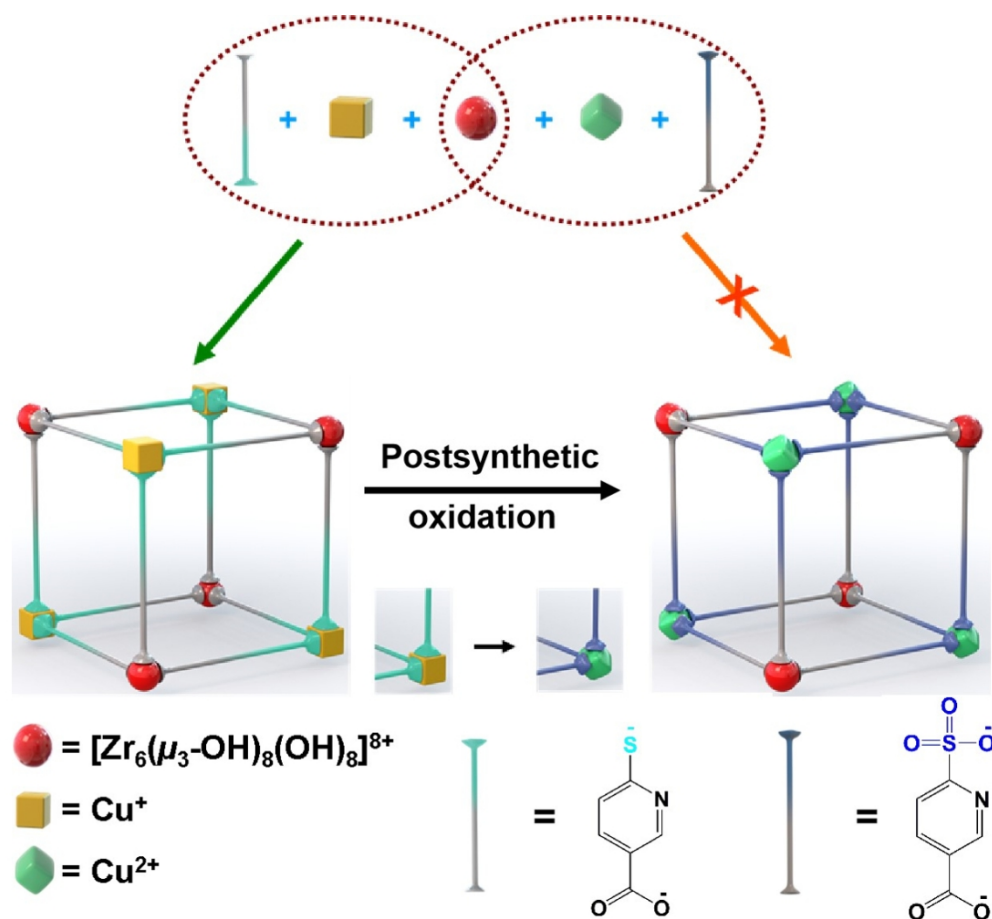


Figure 5

256x190mm (150 x 150 DPI)





ToC graphic for this manuscript

210x189mm (150 x 150 DPI)