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The example of calix[4]pyrrole derivative containing Bodipy unit: fluorometric and colorimetric sensor for F⁻ ion

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25 ABSTRACT

26 A novel chemosensor based on calix[4]pyrrole derivative modified by Bodipy unit has been
27 synthesized, and its complexes with various anions were investigated. The results show that
28 the receptors can selectively recognize biologically important fluoride ions. The binding affinity
29 for fluoride ions was investigated by naked-eye colour change, absorption, emission, proton
30 nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy. The addition of fluoride ions to an acetonitrile
31 solution of chemosensor can result in an obvious color change (brownish yellow color to straw
32 yellow). The stoichiometries between the receptor and fluoride were determined from the
33 molar ratio plots using the UV-visible spectra, which showed evident 1:1. The proton nuclear
34 magnetic resonance spectral data supported the fluoride anion recognition with the
35 disappearance of the amino proton peaks.

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42 **Keywords:** Calix[4]pyrrole, Bodipy, Chemosensor, Anion recognition, Fluoride ion

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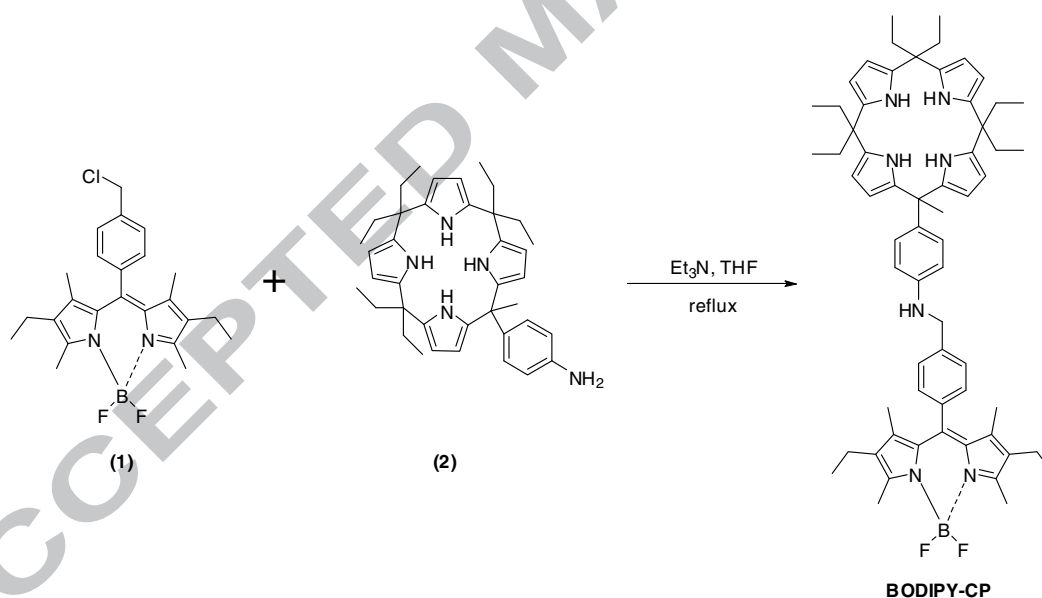
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45 1. Introduction

46 In recent years, there has been increasing emphasis on supramolecular chemistry on
47 the development of new synthetic sensing receptors for recognizing anionic species [1-4]. It is
48 commonly known that anions play an important role in numerous kinds of chemical and
49 biological processes, and consequently the design and development of selective anion
50 receptors is of great interest [5-8]. Among the various bioactive anionic analytes, fluoride is
51 one of the biochemically important anions, which plays a key role in dental care and the
52 treatment of osteoporosis [9-11]. Therefore the development of sensitive and selective
53 chemosensors of fluoride ions has been an active research field over the past decade, and the
54 colorimetric or fluorescent sensors of fluoride ions are intensifying and extensively
55 investigated by virtue of their tender response, inexpensive instrumentation, simple detection
56 procedure, and the potential of naked-eye recognition. A well-developed strategy is to couple
57 a chromogenic or fluorogenic signaling unit to a receptor unit that can interact with fluoride
58 ions via hydrogen bonding. A calix[4]pyrrole moiety was chosen for binding because it has
59 good anion-binding capability both in solution and solid phases [12-16]. These macrocycles
60 bind anions by means of hydrogen-bonding interactions between the polar NH units and the
61 electron-rich guests [16-19]. One of the most attractive developments involves the
62 construction of calix[4]pyrrole-based anion sensors in both the optical [20,21] and
63 electrochemical realms, [22] which are of particular interest in the field of recognition and
64 sensing of anionic analytes [23,24]. Like calix[4]pyrroles, Bodipy's (boron-dipyrromethene) are
65 preferred for the detection of anions owing to their interesting photophysical properties.
66 BODIPYs possess large molar extinction coefficients in visible or near infrared (NIR) region, high
67 fluorescence quantum yields and sharp emission bands, excellent thermal and photochemical
68 stabilities, as well as good amenability to structural modification. Therefore, many researchers
69 have found wide applications in the labeling of proteins and DNA, luminescent devices, and

chemical sensors [25-28]. Even though a great number of calix[4]pyrrole derivatives have been synthesized and reviews on synthesis and properties of calix[4]pyrrole derivatives have been published, to the best of our knowledge, studies on structural analyses of calix[4]pyrrole functionalized with Bodipy dyes in modern chemistry are very rare [29]. For that reason, we think that the synthesis of Bodipy's that function with calix[4]pyrrole derivative can generate new materials with interesting properties due to their above-mentioned specific complexation abilities with different anions.

In this study, we prepared to a selective fluorescent chemosensor based on calix[4]pyrrole and Bodipy for fluoride anion (Scheme 1), which shows straw yellow fluorescence quenching in the presence of fluoride ions.



Scheme 1. The synthesis route of **BODIPY-CP**.

2. Experimental

2.1. Reagents

Unless otherwise noted, all chemicals are of analytical reagent grade obtained from commercial suppliers and are used without further purification. Chloroform (CHCl_3) were refluxed with calcium hydride and distilled under atmospheric pressure. Tetrahydrofuran (THF) was refluxed with Na metal and distilled under atmospheric pressure. Thin layer chromatography (TLC) analysis was performed on silica gel plates and column chromatography was conducted over silica gel (mesh 200-300). In titration, all the anions were added in the form of tetra-butyl ammonium (TBA) salts.

2.2. Apparatus

Elemental analyses (C, H, and N) were determined using a LECO-932 CHNSO model analyzer. ^1H NMR and ^{13}C NMR spectra were recorded on a Bruker 400 MHz spectrometer in $\text{DMSO}-d_6$ as the solvent with Me_4Si as internal reference. UV-visible spectra were obtained using Shimadzu UV-1700 visible recording spectrophotometers. Fluorescence and excitation measurements were carried out in a PerkinElmer LS 55 spectrofluorimeter. The emission and excitation spectra were recorded in a 1 cm quartz cuvette at room temperature. The excitation and emission slits were set at 3 nm. Mass spectra were acquired in the linear mode with an average of 50 shots on a Bruker Daltonics Microflex mass spectrometer (Bremen, Germany) equipped with a nitrogen UV-Laser operating at 337nm.

110 2.3. Synthesis methods

111 2.3.1. The synthesis of 8-{4-(chloromethyl)phenyl}-2,6-diethyl-4, 4-difluoro-1,3,5,7-tetramethyl- 112 4-bora-3a,4a-diaza-s-indacene (**1**)

113 **1** was prepared according to known procedure [28] and used by purification
114 techniques. To a stirred solution of 2,4-dimethyl-3-ethylpyrrole (2.5 mL) in dry
115 dichloromethane (100 mL), 4-(chloromethyl)benzoyl chloride (1.875 g, 10 mmol) was added
116 drop-by-drop at room temperature and under N₂. The solution was heated and stirred to 60°C
117 for 2 h. After cooling the solution, triethylamine (TEA) (5 equiv.) was added to the residual
118 solid, the mixture was stirred at room temperature for 30 min under N₂, and boron trifluoride
119 diethyl etherate (7 equiv.) was then added. The solution was stirred at 60 °C for 2 h and the
120 final residue was purified by column chromatography (petroleum ether-EtOAc; in 8:1 ratio) and
121 obtained as a red solid. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ (ppm)= 7.41 (d, 2H, ArH), 7.18 (d, 2H, ArH)
122 4.63 (s, 2H, CH₂), 2.44 (s, 6H CH₃) 2.21 (q, 4H, CH₂) 1.27 (s, 6H, CH₃) 0.89 (t, 6H, CH₃). ¹³C NMR
123 (100 MHz, CDCl₃): δ (ppm)= 153.81, 139.42, 138.42, 136.12, 135.81, 132.83, 130.62, 129.02,
124 128.78, 45.59, 17.07, 14.43, 12.43, 11.62.

126 2.3.2. Synthesis of meso-heptaethyl-calix[4]pyrrole-meso-4-aminophenyl (**2**)

127 The benzyloxycarbonyl-protected calixpyrrole was synthesized by the co-condensation
128 of Cbz-protected *p*-aminoacetophenone (11.4 mmol, 3.0 g), pyrrole (43.2 mmol, 3 mL), and 3-
129 pentanone (45.6 mmol, 4.8 mL) in the presence of BF₃·Et₂O. Then, the benzyloxycarbonyl-
130 protected calixpyrrole, (100 mg, 0.138 mmol) was dissolved in EtOH (10 mL). To this solution,
131 40% aqueous KOH solution (10 mL) was added, refluxed overnight, and then the organic
132 materials were extracted with diethyl ether (50 mL) and washed with water (3×50 mL). The
133 phase was concentrated under reduced pressure and the residue was subjected to column
134 chromatography (1:3 EtOAc:hexane) and gave compound **2** (55mg, 67.4%) as a white powder.

¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ(ppm)= 7.17 (2H, s, pyrrole N–H), 7.00 (2H, s, pyrrole N–H), 6.81(2H, d, J=8.4 Hz, phenyl C–H), 6.55 (2H, d, J=8.4 Hz, phenyl C–H), 5.89–5.93 (m, 8H, CH), 3.53 (2H, br s, –NH₂), 1.87–1.45 (15H, m, –CH₃ and –CH₂–), 0.66–0.60 (18H, m, –CH₃); ¹³C NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ(ppm)= 144.6, 137.8, 137.1, 136.1, 135.9, 135.8, 128.2, 114.4, 105.6, 105.4, 104.9, 43.9, 43.0, 29.2, 29.0, 28.8, 28.7, 8.1, 8.0.

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2.3.3. The synthesis of **BODIPY-CP** (based on calix[4]pyrrole and Bodipy)

A solution of meso-heptaethylcalix[4]pyrrole-meso-4-aminophenyl (0.59 g, 1 mmol) in 10 mL dry THF was added to a mixture of 8-{4-(chloromethyl)phenyl}-2,6-diethyl-4,4-difluoro-1,3,5,7-tetramethyl-4-bora-3a,4a-diaza-s-indacene (0.42 g, 1 mmol) and triethylamine (0.14 mL, 1 mmol) in dry THF (20 mL). The mixture was refluxed at room temperature for 24 h and monitored by TLC. Then, ethyl acetate was added to the reaction mixture and the solution was washed with saturated NaCl (3×15 mL). The organic phase was collected, dried with Na₂SO₄, and the solvent was removed under reduced pressure. The product was purified by column chromatography (ethyl acetate/n-hexane, 1:1.5).

Yield 40%; mp>200⁰C; Elemental analysis (Found: C, 77.12; H, 8.06; N, 10.05 %. Calc.: C, 77.04; H, 8.00; N, 9.98%); ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ(ppm)= 0.51–0.62 (m, 18 H, CH₃), 0.90 (t, 6H, CH₃), 1.18(s, 6H, CH₃), 1.52–1.78 (m, 12 H CH₂+CH₃), 2.21 (q, 4H, CH₂), 2.46 (s, 6H CH₃), 4.69 (s, 2H, CH₂), 5.57–5.90 (m, 8 H, pyr-CH), 6.48 (d, 2H, CH), 6.73 (d, 2H, CH), 6.94 (br s, 2H, NH), 7.13 (br s, 2H, NH), 7.21 (d, 2H, ArH), 7.41 (d, 2H, ArH). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): δ (ppm)= 152.31, 144.33, 139.12, 138.82, 137.12, 137.15, 136.44, 136.30, 135.79, 135.23, 135.18, 133.11, 130.65, 128.94, 128.66, 128.32, 114.42, 106.77, 105.34, 105.19, 48.59, 43.88, 43.22, 30.02, 29.55, 28.97, 28.67, 19.96, 15.43, 12.65, 11.67, 9.11, 9.05. MS for C₆₃H₇₈N₇BF₂ m/z: 982.28 [M+H]⁺.

159

160 3. Results and discussion

161 The anion recognition properties of **BODIPY-CP** were firstly studied by UV-visible upon
 162 addition of tetra-n-butylammonium salt of F^- , Cl^- , Br^- , AcO^- , and $H_2PO_4^-$ in acetonitrile. The
 163 effect of various anions with different shapes and sizes on **BODIPY-CP** in acetonitrile is
 164 presented in Fig. 1. The most significant changes in the absorption spectra were observed only
 165 in the presence of F^- ion. The results, shown in Figure 1, clearly demonstrate that the addition
 166 of F^- ion into acetonitrile solution of **BODIPY-CP** (1.0×10^{-4} M) causes strong changes in the
 167 absorption band at 521 nm which decreased while new maximum bands appeared at 419 and
 168 443 nm.

169
 170 **Fig. 1.**

171
 172 Fig. 2 shows the absorption spectra of **BODIPY-CP** in acetonitrile in the presence of
 173 varied concentrations of F^- . Upon addition of F^- , a gradual absorbance decrease at 521 nm was
 174 accompanied by a gradual increase at 419 nm, and an isosbestic point appeared at 443 nm,
 175 indicating the formation of a new species, most likely resulting from the binding of F^- to
 176 **BODIPY-CP** via $N-H \cdots F$ hydrogen bonding. The selective sensing of F^- by **BODIPY-CP** may even
 177 be performed by naked eye. As shown in Fig. 3, the presence of 10 equiv. of F^- makes the
 178 acetonitrile solution of **BODIPY-CP** changed from brownish yellow color to straw yellow.

179
 180 **Fig. 2.**

181
 182 **Fig. 3.**

183 In order to disclose the concrete binding sites within the **BODIPY-CP**, the 1H NMR
 184 titration of the **BODIPY-CP** with F^- was conducted in $DMSO-d_6$ as an example (see Fig. 4). The

185 **BODIPY-CP** displayed two sharp peaks at 9.76 and 9.26 ppm, attributed to pyrrole NH. With 1
186 equiv. amounts of F^- the signal of pyrrole NH protons disappeared until the new signals
187 appeared at 12.41 ppm, which represented the formation of the stable complexes. The most
188 significant changes in chemical shift values of the pyrrole CH protons were observed for
189 pyrrole CH proton between NH moieties. The observed downfield shifts of the pyrrole NH
190 resonances are an indication of hydrogen bonding to fluoride anion, as well as simplification of
191 the pyrrole CH signals, a characteristic for transition from 1,3 alternate to a symmetrical cone-
192 like conformation.

193 **Fig. 4.**

194

195 The emissions and excitations of **BODIPY-CP** in presence of various anions just as UV-
196 visible were investigated by fluorometer. Observable color changes took place in acetonitrile.
197 Upon addition of 10 equiv. of fluoride ions, the brownish yellow solutions of the dye
198 became straw-yellow more in acetonitrile. No color changes of the receptor in
199 acetonitrile were observed in the presence of chloride, bromide, and dihydrogen
200 phosphate anions (Fig.3). The anions were added as tetrabutylammonium salts (10 equiv.) to
201 1.0×10^{-7} M solutions of **BODIPY-CP**. The emission spectrum of the fluorescent dye shows three
202 transitions in acetonitrile. Fig.5 shows that the **BODIPY-CP** has a strong emission band
203 entered at 532 nm (exc: 410 nm) due to its characteristic Bodipy emission band and two
204 hills appear between 450–480 nm due to calix[4]pyrrole unit. Upon the addition of anions,
205 only F^- gave increase/decrease to changes in calix[4]pyrrole emission bands and Bodipy
206 emission band, respectively. But no detectable spectral changes were observed even in
207 the presence of larger excess of hundred equivalents of other anions, which made it
208 clear that the fluorescent dye could sense F^- over studied other anions. This quenching
209 effect can be attributed to the smaller size and higher electronegativity of the F^- compared to

the other anions. The diversity of these emission hills implies that pyrrole-NH fragments of calix[4]pyrrole unit were involved in F^- binding and the deprotonation of the amino moiety by F^- rather than hydrogen bonds. Here, the fluorescence intensity of the **BODIPY-CP** is effectively quenched or completely 'turn off' after the addition of 10 equivalents of F^- .

214

215 **Fig. 5.**

Fig.6 shows the spectral changes in emission spectra of the **BODIPY-CP** depending on increasing of F^- anion. Once the concentration of F^- increased, the intensity of the peaks in shorter wavelength enhanced whereas the intensity of peak in longer wavelength decreases. This is attributed to more efficient energy transfer between anion and receptor. The changes in the emission spectra of the fluorescent dye upon titrating with F^- (1, 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10 equiv.), shown in Fig.6, clearly demonstrate by the formation of a clear isosbestic point at 521 nm.

223 **Fig. 6.**

The excitation measurements of receptor solution and receptor-anion mixtures were performed at 500 nm emission. Fig.7 shows a pronounced selectivity and sensitivity for F^- anion. The excitation graphs of other anions give similar curves such as receptor (almost a linear curve) while the addition of fluoride anion gives an enormous increase in excitation intensity. The increase of excitation wavelength of **BODIPY-CP**-fluoride indicates the energy transfer efficiency due to broader spectral overlaps between the donor and receptor when the fluoride anion is bound to the calix[4]pyrrole unit. The excitation spectrum of only **BODIPY-CP**-fluoride mixture compared to that of the **BODIPY-CP** and **BODIPY-CP**-anion mixtures presents an effective energy transfer within the target compound. Similarly, some little changes were recorded for acetate anion in excitation curve. As shown, acetate anion has a weaker quenching effect onto fluorescence of **BODIPY-CP**.

Fig. 7.

Stern–Volmer equation was utilized to quenching of fluorescence in the bonding of fluoride anions. The plots obtained emission intensities (I_0/I) against fluoride concentration and showed a negative linear graph (Fig. 8).

$$I_0/I = 1 + K_{sv}[M]$$

In the above equation, I_0 is the emission intensity of **BODIPY-CP** in the absence of F^- ; I is the emission intensity of **BODIPY-CP** in the presence of F^- ; and K_{sv} is the static quenching constant. Linear behavior was shown in graphic. The static quenching constants (K_{sv}) are calculated as 5.48×10^7 .

Fig.8.**4. Conclusions**

The anion recognition behavior of the **BODIPY-CP** containing four pyrrole-NH, as anion-binding units was investigated toward anions, such as F^- , Cl^- , Br^- , AcO^- , and $H_2PO_4^-$. It was reported that the receptor showed colorimetric and 'turn-off' fluorescent responses in the presence of high electronegative and small-size anions F^- because of their ability to form intermolecular hydrogen bonding pyrrole-NH proton.

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310 **Figure Captions**

311 **Fig. 1.** Change in the UV-visible absorption spectrum of **BODIPY-CP** (1.0×10^{-4} M) in the
312 presence of tetra-nbutylammonium salts of different anions in acetonitrile (10 equiv).

313 **Fig. 2.** Absorption spectra of **BODIPY-CP** (1.0×10^{-4} M) in acetonitrile in the presence of varied
314 concentrations of F^- (0, 2, 4, 6, 10 equiv).

315 **Fig. 3.** The photographs of **BODIPY-CP** (1.0×10^{-4} M) solutions in acetonitrile in the presence of
316 various anions (10 equiv), taken either under day light (down) or in the dark and lightened by
317 365 nm light from a hand-held UV lamp.

318 **Fig. 4.** Partial 1H NMR spectra of the **BODIPY-CP** in $DMSO-d_6$ upon addition of F^- (0, 1, 1.5, 2
319 equiv)

320 **Fig. 5.** Emission spectra of **BODIPY-CP** in acetonitrile (1.0×10^{-7} M) in the absence and presence
321 of various anions. The amount of added anions is 10 equiv. (Excitation: 410 nm).

322 **Fig. 6.** Change in emission spectra of **BODIPY-CP** in presence of F^- anion (1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10
323 equiv.in acetonitrile)

324 **Fig. 7.** Excitation spectra of **BODIPY-CP** in acetonitrile (1.0×10^{-7}) in the absence and
325 presence of various anions. The emission data were collected at 500 nm.

326 **Fig.8.** The fluorescence variation of **BODIPY-CP** by F^- for Stern–Volmer plot in acetonitrile
327 (emission: 532 nm, excitation: 410 nm).

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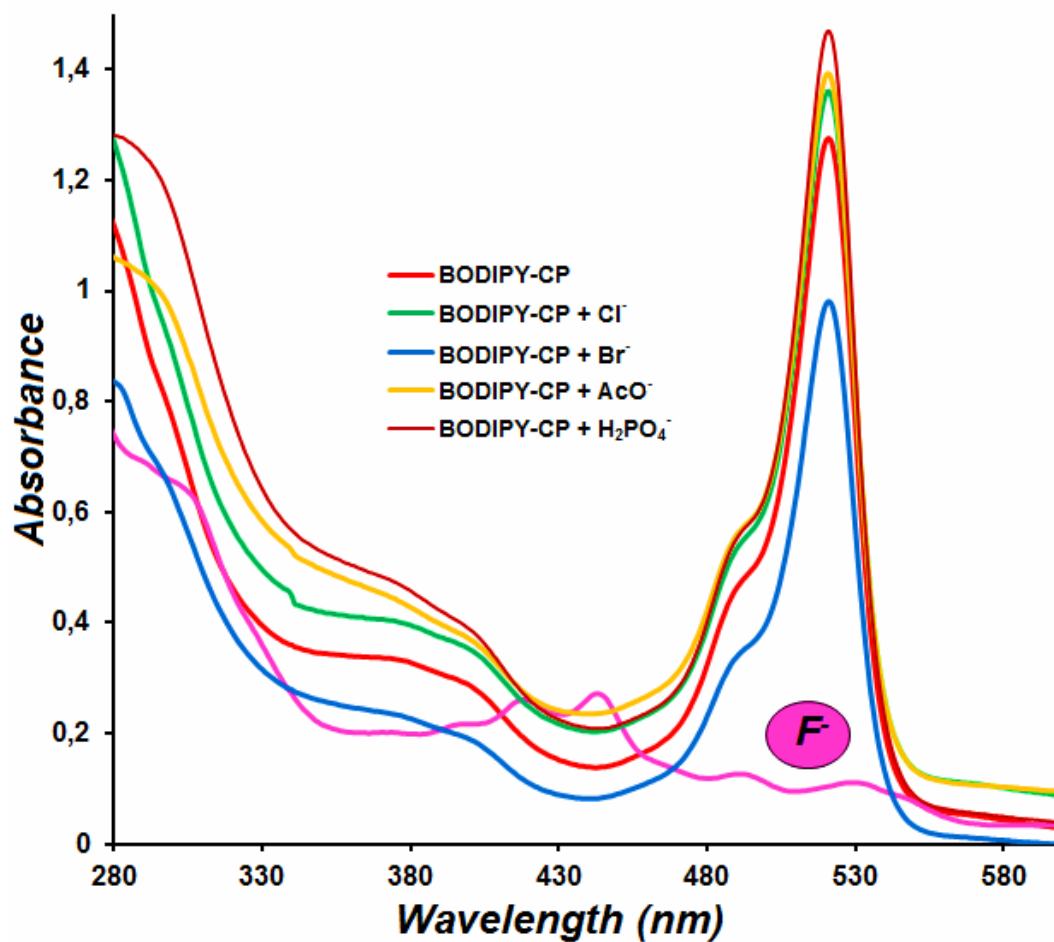


Fig. 1

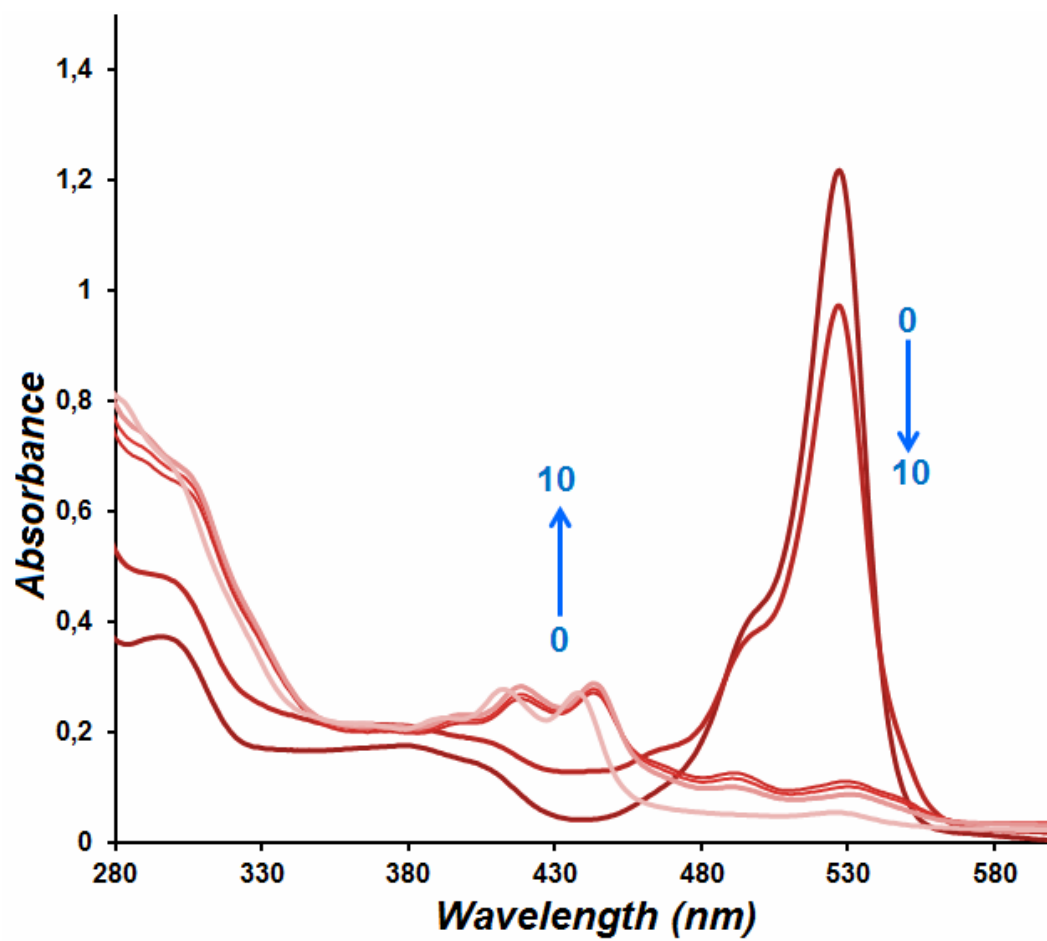


Fig.2.

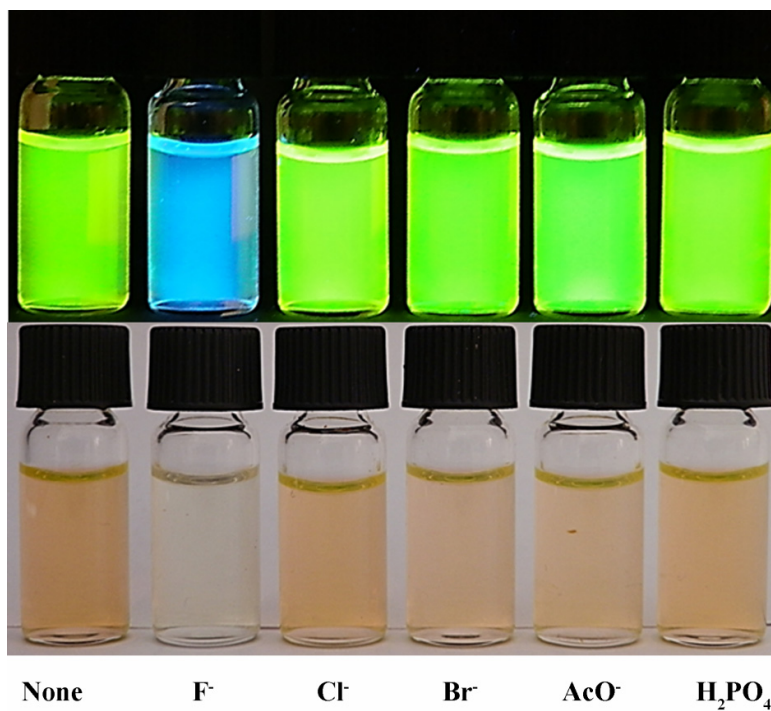
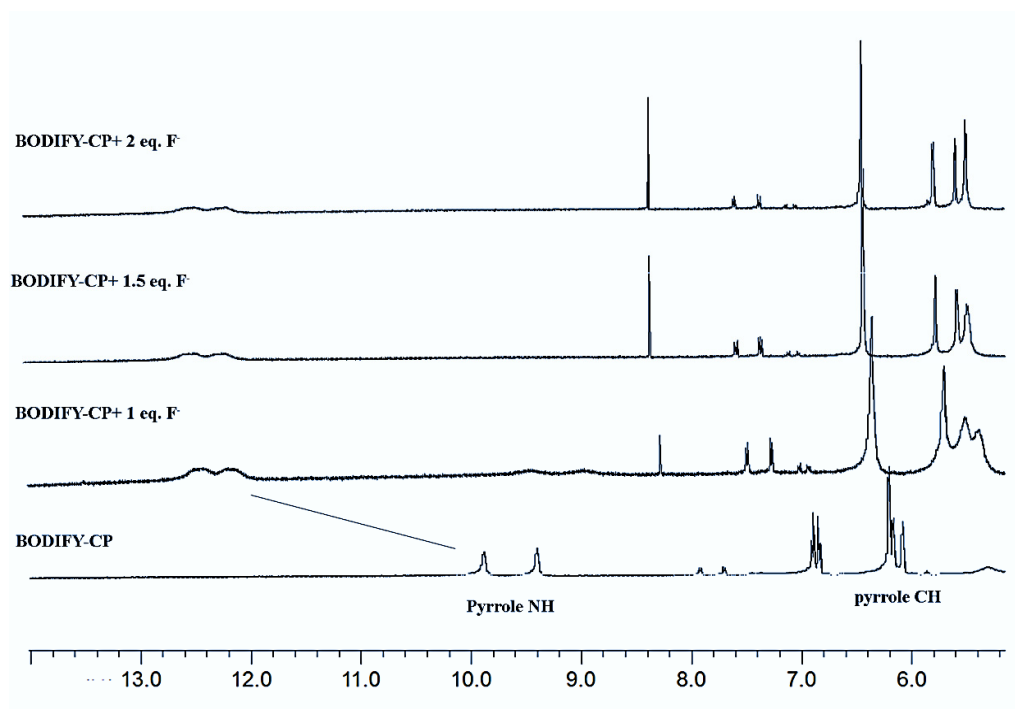


Fig. 3.

**Fig. 4.**

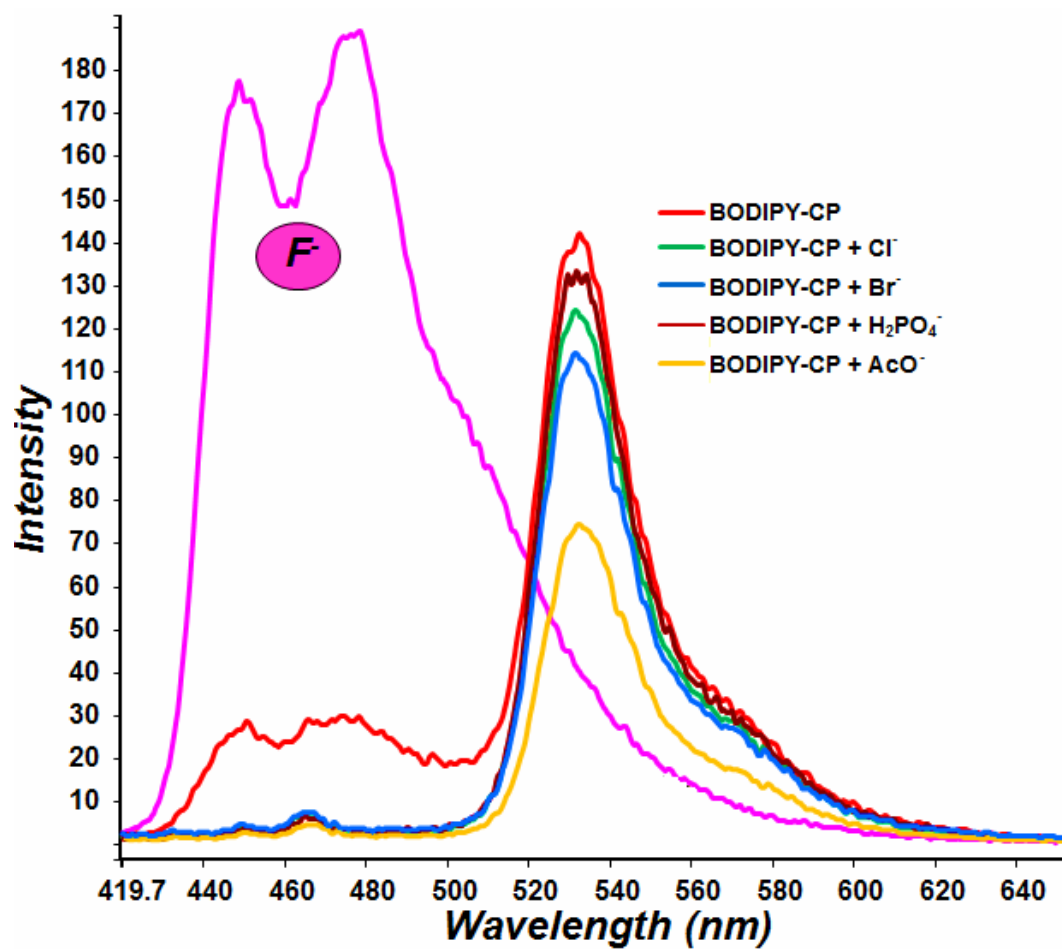


Fig. 5.

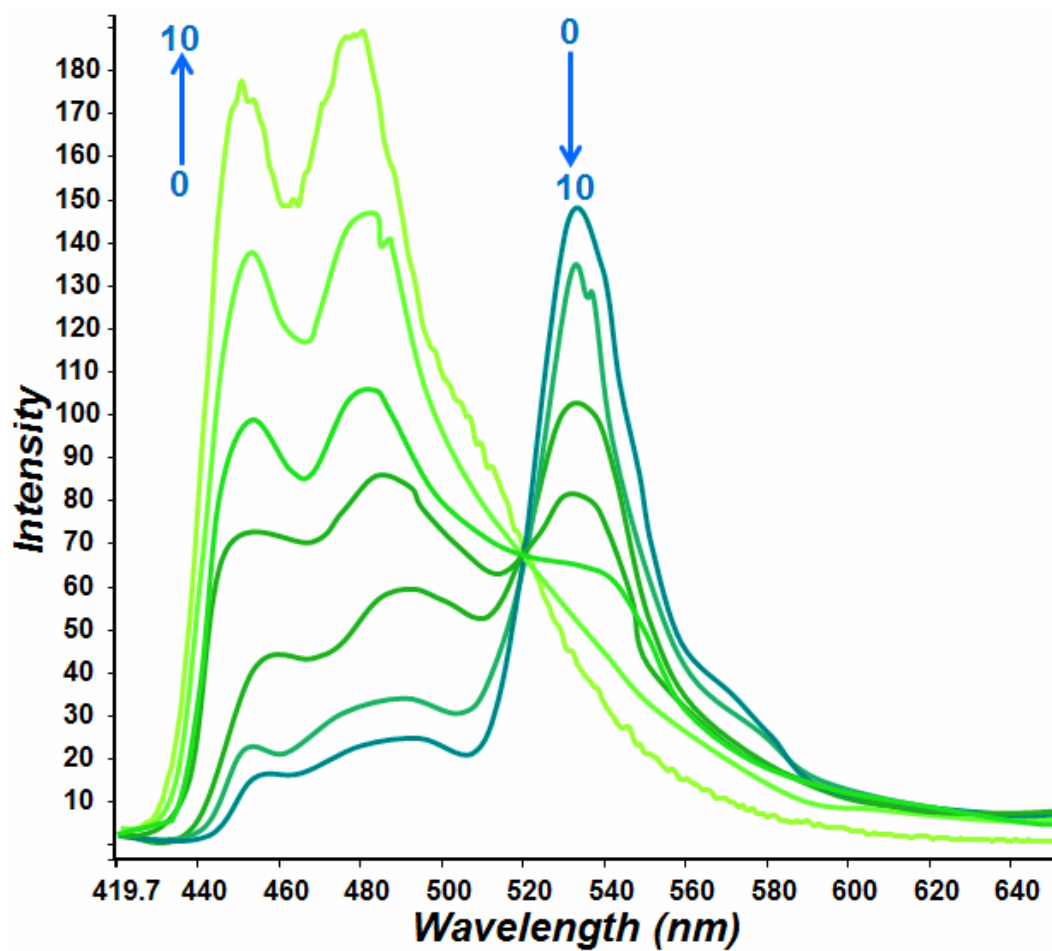


Fig. 6.

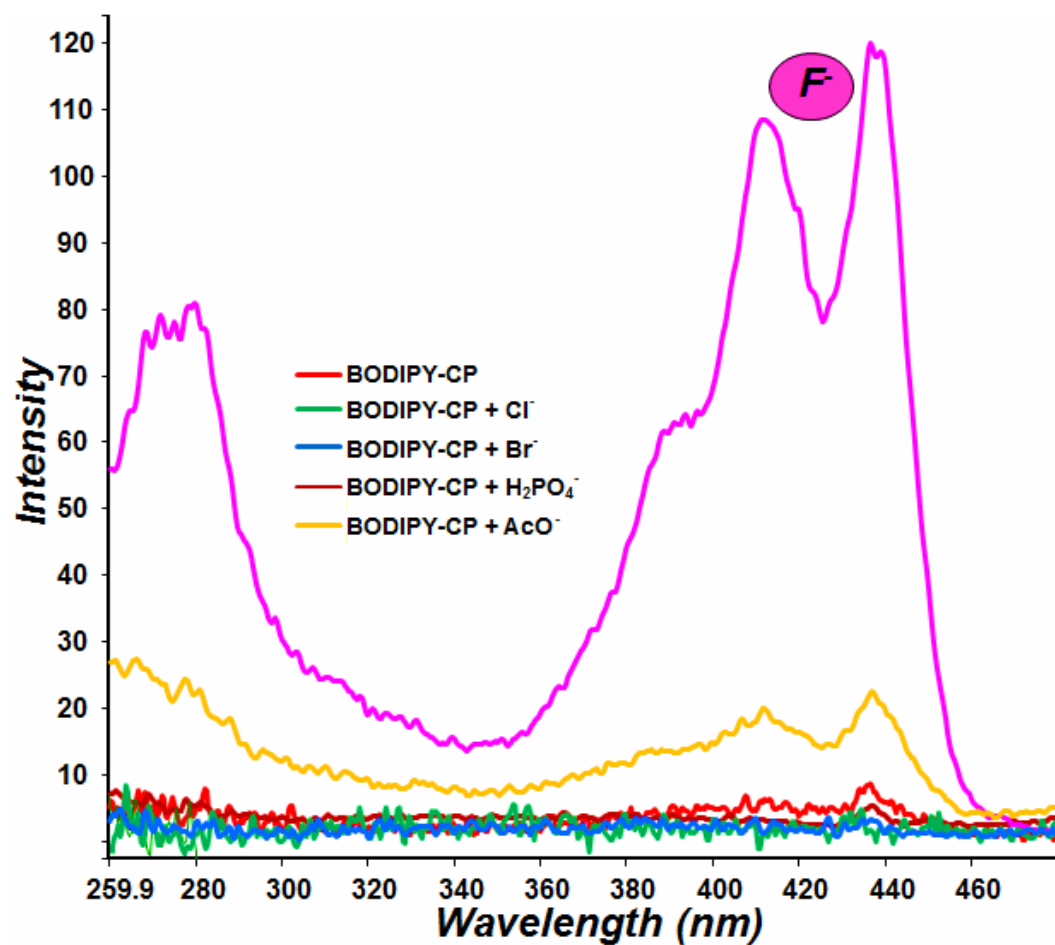


Fig. 7.

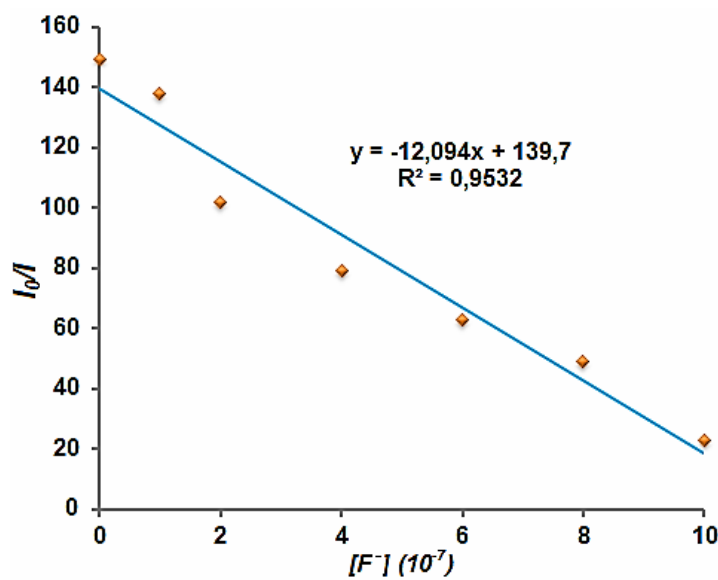


Fig.8.

Highlights

- The anion recognition behaviour of the **BODIPY-CP** containing four pyrrole-NH.
- **BODIPY-CP** showed to the colorimetric and ‘turn-off’ fluorescent responses.
- The rapid detection and identification of F⁻ anions.

Chemical structure of a macrocyclic boron complex. The macrocycle consists of four pyrrole rings linked by methylene groups, with two NH groups explicitly labeled. It is substituted with four ethyl groups and a 4-(4-(dimethylamino)phenyl)phenyl group. The boron atom is coordinated to two fluorine atoms and the two nitrogen atoms of the dimethylamino group.

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