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Reactions and Mechanisms of B-Substituted Amine Boranes with THF·BH₃

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Abstract: The reactions of NH₃BH₂R (R = Me, Ph and Cl) with THFBH₃ have been investigated and it was found that different substituents on the B atom help to proceed the reactions in different ways. The expected doubly-bridged B-substituted aminodiborane products, similar to aminodiborane (ADB, BH₂(μ-H)(μ-NH₂)BH₂) via the reaction of ammonia borane (AB, NH₃BH₃) and tetrahydrofuran borane (THFBH₃), are not obtained. Two competitive reactions occurred with the change of R = Me or Ph. When R is a Me group, an “open” version of B-substituted μ-aminodiborane, THFBH(Me)(μ-NH₂)BH₃, is formed as a major product; when R is a Ph group, AB and THFBH₂Ph are formed as main products via the intermolecular NH₃-THF exchange reaction. However, if R is Cl, then NH₃BH₂Cl reacts with THFBH₃ through reversible intermolecular Cl-H exchange mechanism. Furthermore, DFT calculations are performed to elucidate the formation mechanism of THFBH(Me)(μ-NH₂)BH₃ via the reaction of NH₃BH₂Me and THFBH₃ as well as the exchange mechanism of Cl-H in the reaction of NH₃BH₂Cl and THFBH₃.

Introduction

Aminodiborane (ADB, BH₂(μ-H)(μ-NH₂)BH₂, Figure 1) was first formed serendipitously in 1938 and then prepared through a tedious procedure with a low yield.^[1,2] During the last following few decades, although its structure was established unambiguously,^[3-5] intensive studies on this compound were not carried out extensively perhaps due to its instability and inaccessibility. In 2010, a facile method for the synthesis of ADB was developed by reacting ammonia borane (AB, NH₃BH₃) with tetrahydrofuran borane (THFBH₃),^[6] which is also considered as a general method for the preparation of N-substituted μ-aminodiborane.^[7] The new synthetic method benefited from the study of the dihydrogen bond^[8] and the nucleophilicity of the B-H bonding pair electrons that leads to the formation of the B-N bond.^[9] Previous methods for the synthesis of N-substituted ADB^[10,11] are not suitable for the synthesis of unsubstituted ADB. In 2015, it was demonstrated that the formation rates and conversions of N-methyl aminodiboranes decrease with the

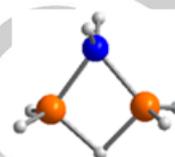


Figure 1. Structure of BH₂(μ-H)(μ-NH₂)BH₂. N, blue; B, orange; H, light-gray.

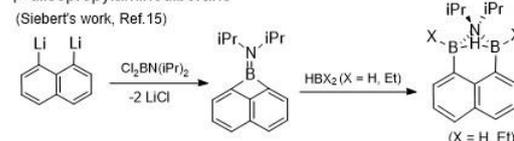
increase of methyl substitution.^[12] It is evident that N-substitution has significant effect on the properties of the resultant ADB derivatives.

B-substituted amine boranes are also well known.^[13] However, very few examples of B-substituted μ-aminodiborane have been documented (Scheme 1). In 1970 Dobson and Schaeffer reported the first example of B-substituted μ-aminodiborane, μ-dimethylaminomethylidiborane.^[14] After that, μ-diisopropylaminodiborane was obtained by the reaction of boron bridged naphthalene with diborane and diethylborane (X = H, Et).^[15] μ-9-(dimethylamino)-(9-borabicyclo[3.3.1]nonan-9-yl)-9-borabicyclo[3.3.1]nonane was also synthesized by the reaction of

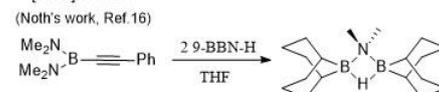
(a) B-substituted μ-aminodiborane, μ-dimethylaminomethylidiborane (Dobson and Schaeffer's work, Ref. 14)



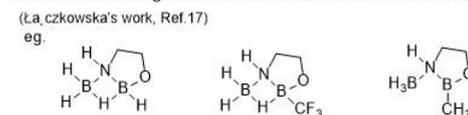
(b) μ-diisopropylaminodiborane



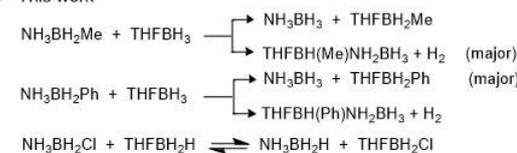
(c) μ-9-(dimethylamino)-(9-borabicyclo[3.3.1]nonan-9-yl)-9-borabicyclo[3.3.1]nonane



(d) Theoretical study: different substituents on B-substituted oxazaborolidine-borane have a significant effect on the formation of B-H-B bridge bond.



(e) This work



Scheme 1. The preparative reactions of the B-substituted aminodiborane derivatives.

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bis(dimethylamino)(phenylethynyl)-borane with 9-BBN-H in 1995.^[16] It was found that different substituents on B-substituted oxazaborolidine-borane impact significantly on the formation of the B-H-B bridge bond in this type of complex.^[17] To the best of our knowledge, no previous report is available for an ADB derivative with substituted B atom and non-substituted N atom. Herein we report the reactions between $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{R}$ (R = Me, Ph, and Cl) and THFBH_3 that lead to three different results: the formation of $\text{THFBH}(\text{Me})(\mu\text{-NH}_2)\text{BH}_3$ (R = Me) and THFBH_2Ph (R = Ph) as major products. An interesting reversible intermolecular chloride-hydride exchange between $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Cl}$ and THFBH_3 was also observed.

Results and Discussion

In B-substituted amine boranes, the substituents on the boron atom not only affect the hydricity of the H on B atom, but also have significant inference on the stability of the corresponding amine boranes. For example, $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Me}$ and $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Ph}$ are stable in THF after 170 hours at 20 °C,^[18,19] but $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Cl}$ decomposes immediately in THF at 30 °C.^[20] The B-substituted amine boranes are generally less stable as compared with AB and N-substituted AB. In order to explore the influence of B-substituents on the reactions, we chose amine boranes bearing a different electronic effect substituent on boron such as $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Me}$, $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Ph}$, and $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Cl}$, and allow them to react individually with THFBH_3 .

Reaction of $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Me}$ with THFBH_3

When $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Me}$ was treated with 1 equiv of THFBH_3 in THF at 0 °C for 0.5 h, the ^{11}B NMR spectrum shows the formation of an "open" version of B-methyl-substituted μ -aminodiborane, $\text{THFBH}(\text{Me})(\mu\text{-NH}_2)\text{BH}_3$, NH_3BH_3 , BH_4^- and $(\text{NHBMe})_3$ (Figure 2, bottom). After 3 hours, $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Me}$ disappeared almost and THFBH_2Me appeared along with an unknown species (signal "i" in Figure 2). Base on the products and unreacted reactants detected in ^{11}B NMR (Figure 2), it is believed that the reaction between $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Me}$ and THFBH_3 is complicated and several

competitive reactions may occur in this process at 0 °C. An NH_3 -THF exchange reaction results in the formation of NH_3BH_3 and THFBH_2Me as shown in equation 1. It is worthy to note that NH_3BH_3 and THFBH_2Me should be formed in a stoichiometric ratio of 1:1 on the basis of equation 1, but only trace amount of THFBH_2Me and an unknown species (signal "i") are observed in ^{11}B NMR after 3 hours. This result indicates that THFBH_2Me may be an active species that is consumed in other reactions and the Me group redistribution may occur as described in the literature^[18] but the mechanisms are not clear. The asymmetric peak "c" in Figure 2 may also be related to the Me group redistribution. During the reaction process, NH_3BH_3 is formed (equation 1) but does not further react with THFBH_3 to produce ADB because the reaction was carried out at 0 °C, which is consistent with the previous experimental results.^[6,12] $\text{THFBH}(\text{Me})(\mu\text{-NH}_2)\text{BH}_3$ was detected as a major product (Figure 2) and H_2 was also determined by ^1H NMR spectrum during the experiment as shown in the Supporting Information (Figure S1a). This observation indicates that the formation mechanism of $\text{THFBH}(\text{Me})(\mu\text{-NH}_2)\text{BH}_3$ by equation 2 may be similar to the formation of ADB in the reaction of AB and THFBH_3 . In this reaction, $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}(\text{Me})(\mu\text{-H})\text{BH}_3$ (1) is first formed as an intermediate (equation 3), from which the BH_4^- anion and $[\text{NH}_3\text{BHMMeTHF}]^+$ cation are formed when the bridge hydrogen moves to BH_3 group (equation 4). The BH_4^- anion was detected but the $[\text{NH}_3\text{BHMMeTHF}]^+$ cation could not be observed in ^{11}B NMR spectrum. As this type of larger species usually shows broad ^{11}B NMR peaks, which may lead to the broadening beneath its ^{11}B resonances. On the other hand, a large amount of THFBH_3 , compared with $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Me}$, remains unreacted after 3 hours (Figure 1, top), which may be caused by the dehydrogenation of $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Me}$ to $(\text{NHBMe})_3$ under the current reaction conditions (equation 5). However, when THFBH_3 is present in excess in the reaction, the amount of $(\text{NHBMe})_3$ based on ^{11}B NMR is obviously decreased in comparison with the forming $(\text{NHBMe})_3$ by the reaction at 1:1 ratio (Figures S1c and S1g). These results seem to be inconsistent with theoretical results of the borane-catalyzed dehydrogenation of the NH_3BH_3 to $(\text{NHBH})_3$ reported by Dixon group in 2007^[21]. An attempt to purify $\text{THFBH}(\text{Me})(\mu\text{-NH}_2)\text{BH}_3$ was not successful, borazine was mixed with the product after fraction distillation as shown in Figure S1h.

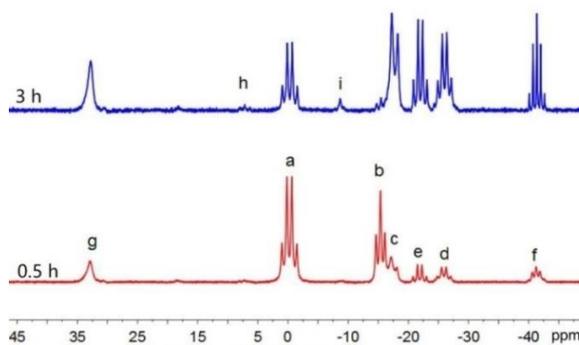
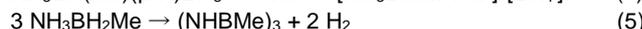
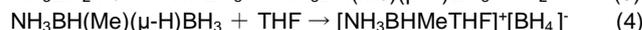


Figure 2. ^{11}B NMR spectra of the reaction $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Me}$ with 1 equiv of THFBH_3 in THF at 0 °C. a, THFBH_3 ; b, $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Me}$; c, and d, $\text{THFBH}(\text{Me})(\mu\text{-NH}_2)\text{BH}_3$; e, NH_3BH_3 ; f, BH_4^- ; g, $(\text{NHBMe})_3$; h, THFBH_2Me ; i, unknown species.



In order to understand the above reaction process, we treated $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Me}$ with an excess amount of THFBH_3 in THF at -40 °C and the reaction temperature was gradually increased to 30 °C in 5 hours. The reaction was monitored by ^{11}B NMR. Two signals at δ -13.29 (doublet) and δ -24.99 (quartet) are observed when the temperature was at -20 °C (Figure S1c). In comparison with our previous work in which ammonia diborane ($\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2(\mu\text{-H})\text{BH}_3$, AaDB) is a key intermediate for the formation of ADB in the

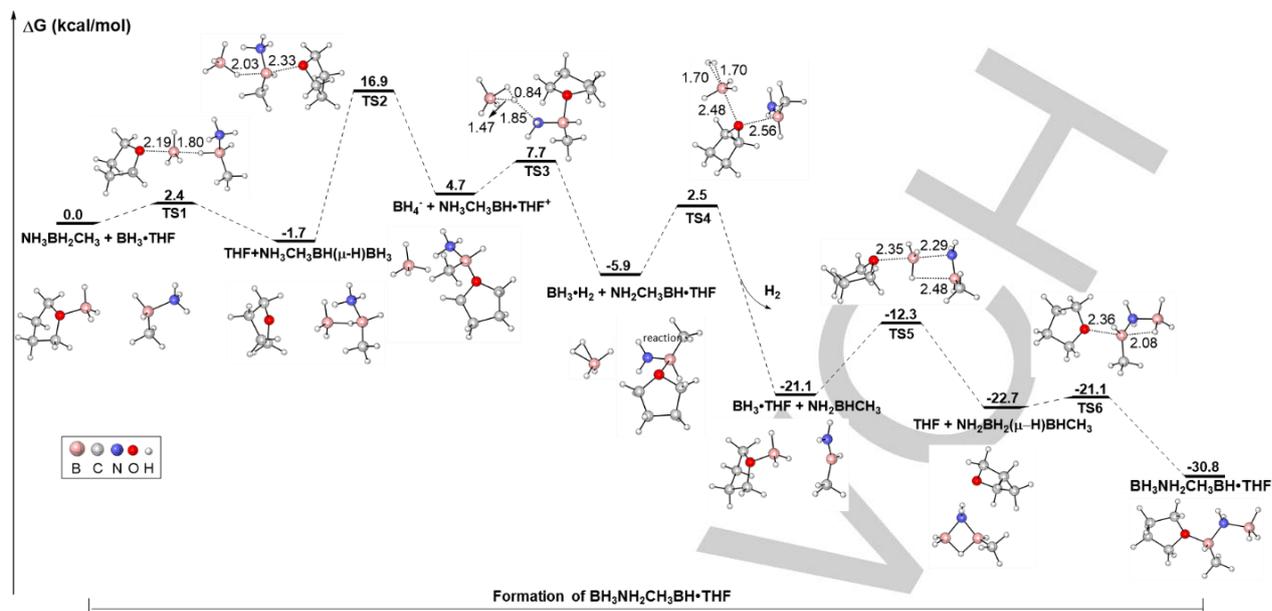


Figure 3. Energy profile for the reaction of $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Me}$ with THFBH_3 calculated at the DLPNO-CCSD(T)/def2-TZVP//M06-2X/6-311++G(d, p)/SMD_{THF} level.

reaction of AB with THFBH_3 ,^[22] the two resonances observed in the present ^{11}B NMR study are in good agreement with $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}(\text{Me})(\mu\text{-H})\text{BH}_3$ (**1**), a counterpart of AADB. The doublet and quartet can be assigned to BHMe and BH_3 , respectively, in the molecule of **1** (see Figure S1c in the Supporting Information). It should be noted that intermediate **1** was not observed at higher temperatures. When $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Me}$ was treated with 1 equiv of THFBH_3 in THF at -40°C and the temperature was gradually increased to room temperature, similar signals were observed in ^{11}B NMR spectroscopy (Figure S1f).

Based on the information described above, we proposed a possible mechanism for the reaction of $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Me}$ and THFBH_3 to produce $\text{THFBH}(\text{Me})(\mu\text{-NH}_2)\text{BH}_3$. This mechanism is further confirmed by theoretical study. We performed DFT and DLPNO-CCSD(T)^[23] calculations using Gaussian 09^[24] and ORCA^[25] programs. The energy profile for the reaction of $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Me}$ with THFBH_3 is provided in Figure 3. As shown in Figure 3, the B-H bond in $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Me}$ attacks the B atom in THFBH_3 to form $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}(\text{Me})(\mu\text{-H})\text{BH}_3$ via a $\text{S}_{\text{N}}2$ -type transition state TS1, then BH_4^- is dissociated through transition state TS2. Subsequently, a molecule of H_2 is desorbed via the transition states TS3 and TS4. After the transition state TS5, transformed into a four-membered ring intermediate $\text{BH}_2(\mu\text{-H})(\mu\text{-NH}_2)\text{BHMe}$. Finally, THF attacks on the B atom in BH_2Me group to form the final product via transition state TS6. The energy barriers of TS1-6 are 2.4, 18.6, 3.0, 8.4, 8.8, and 1.6 kcal/mol, respectively, which indicates that the reactions can occur smoothly at room temperature and even at low temperatures.

Reaction of $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Ph}$ and THFBH_3

The reactivity of $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Ph}$ against THFBH_3 is quite similar to the reactivity of $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Me}$ that also comprises two processes: the intermolecular NH_3 -THF exchange (equation 6) and the formation of $\text{THFBH}(\text{Ph})(\mu\text{-NH}_2)\text{BH}_3$ (equation 7). Because the

reaction of $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Ph}$ and THFBH_3 proceeds very slowly at 0°C , in order to explore the reaction process, we adjust the reaction to room temperature. Under this reaction condition, the coexisting NH_3BH_3 and THFBH_3 react to form ADB (equation 8). Moreover, in addition to the formation of ADB, the intermolecular NH_3 -THF exchange between THFBH_3 and $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Ph}$ proved to be a dominant process on the basis of the integration value in $^{11}\text{B}\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR spectra (Figure. S2). This is perhaps due to the weaker electron donating ability of the phenyl group as compared with methyl group, as a result, the nucleophilicity of B-H bond on the $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Ph}$ is lowered that reduced the ability of reaction of $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Ph}$ with THFBH_3 to form $\text{THFBH}(\text{Ph})(\mu\text{-NH}_2)\text{BH}_3$.

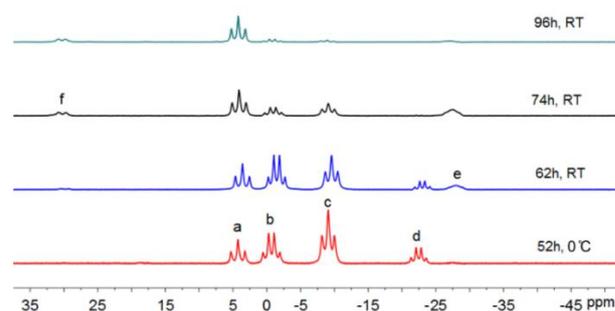
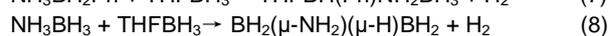


Figure 4. ^{11}B NMR spectra of the reaction mixture of $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Cl}$ and THFBH_3 in THF. a, $\text{THF}\cdot\text{BH}_2\text{Cl}$; b, $\text{THF}\cdot\text{BH}_3$; c, $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Cl}$; d, NH_3BH_3 ; e, $\text{NH}_2\text{BH}_2\text{H}$; f, $(\text{NHBH})_3$.

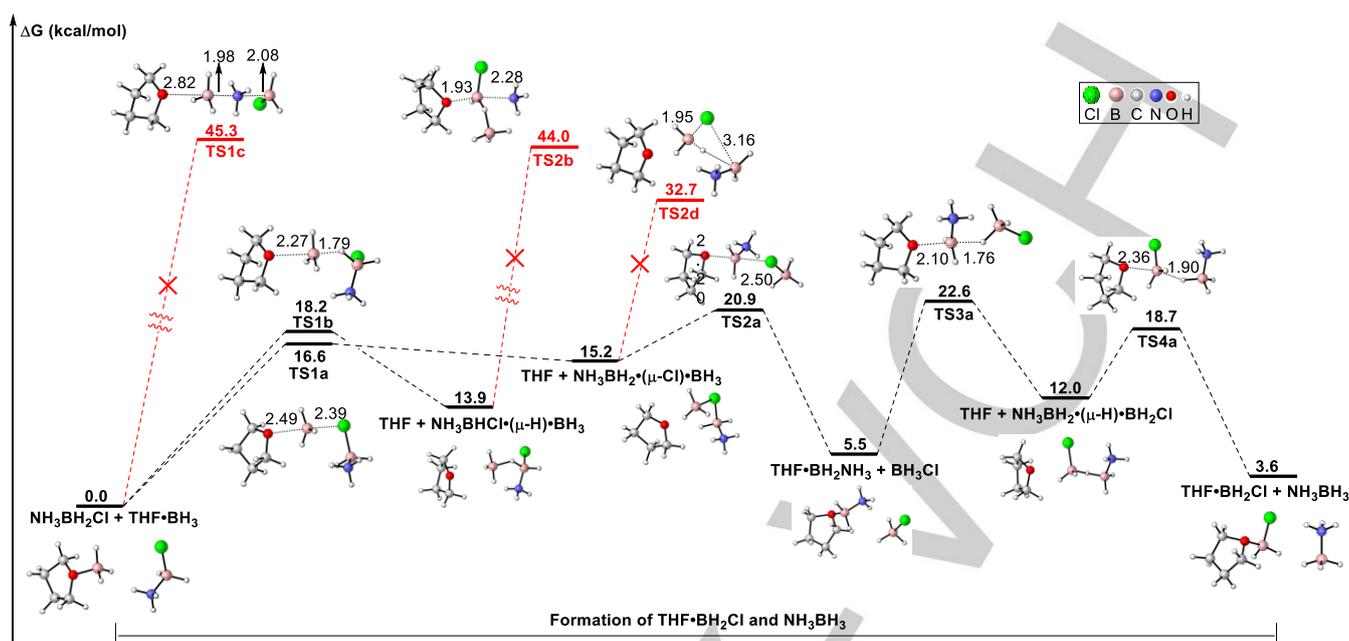


Figure 5. Energy profiles for the reaction of $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Cl}$ with THFBH_3 calculated at the M06-2X/6-311++G(d, p)/SMD_{THF} level and 273.15 K.

It is also worthy to note that the temperature of the reaction of $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{R}$ with THFBH_3 should be kept below 0 °C. Since NH_3BH_3 and THFBH_3 coexist in the system during the reaction, not only the corresponding aminodiborane but some boron-containing compounds such as borazine are also produced at elevated temperatures.

Reaction of $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Cl}$ and THFBH_3

The reaction of $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Cl}$ and THFBH_3 is completely different from the reaction of $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{R}$ (R = Me and Ph) and THFBH_3 . The expected "open" version of B-substituted ADB derivative is not observed. When $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Cl}$ was treated with 1 equiv of THFBH_3 at 0 °C, AB and THFBH_2Cl were detected. The reaction is proved to be a reversible process (equation 9) and reached its equilibrium after 52 h at 0 °C (see Figure S3a). This reaction was repeated with different $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Cl}$ to THFBH_3 ratios (1:1, 1:2 and 1:3) for three times and an average value of the equilibrium constant (0.11) was calculated based on the ^{11}B NMR integration data, which is consistent with the calculation results at 0 °C (see Figure 5 and Table S1 in the Supporting Information).



The above equilibrium can only maintain at a temperature below 0 °C. Once the temperature is raised to room temperature, the original equilibrium is destroyed. This is due to the reaction of NH_3BH_3 and THFBH_3 to form ADB and then converted into borazine at room temperature. Figure 4 shows the ^{11}B NMR spectra of the mixture of $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Cl}$ and THFBH_3 at 0 °C and at room temperature.

Two possible pathways of intermolecular NH_3 -THF exchange or Cl-H exchange are considered in reaction 9. In order to figure

out the mechanism, we performed a DFT calculations at the M06-2X/6-311++G(d, p)/SMD_{THF} level and 273.15 K. The energy profiles for the possible reaction pathways of $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Cl}$ with THFBH_3 are provided in Figure 5. As shown in Figure 5, the B-Cl bond in $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Cl}$ attacks the B atom in THFBH_3 to form a B-Cl-B bridge bond through TS1a in the most energetically favorable pathway. The free energy barrier of the transition state TS1a is computed to be 16.6 kcal/mol. Then, THF attacks the B atom in $\text{BH}_2(\mu\text{-Cl})$ moiety and the B-Cl-B bridge bond breaks to form $[\text{THFBH}_2\text{NH}_3]^+[\text{BH}_3\text{Cl}]^-$ through TS2a. This process only requires an energy of 5.7 kcal/mol. The B-H bond in the $[\text{BH}_3\text{Cl}]^-$ anion interacts with the B atom in the $[\text{THFBH}_2\text{NH}_3]^+$ cation to form a B-H-B bridge bond (TS3a), which needs to overcome the highest energy barrier of 17.1 kcal/mol. Finally, THF is coordinated with the B atom of BH_2Cl in $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2(\mu\text{-H})\text{BH}_2\text{Cl}$, which makes the B-H-B bridge bond broken to form the final products of THFBH_2Cl and NH_3BH_3 with the energy barrier of 6.7 kcal/mol (TS4a). Related to the NH_3 -THF exchange, the free energy barriers of the other possible pathways associated with TS1-2b, TS1c, and TS2d are too high to overcome for the reaction. Furthermore, when $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Cl}$ was dissolved in THF solution at room temperature, the THFBH_2Cl failed to be detected after days. This observation indicates that THF cannot replace NH_3 from $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Cl}$ to form THFBH_2Cl in THF solution. Therefore, both the experimental observation and theoretical analysis support the mechanism of the intermolecular H-Cl exchange rather than the NH_3 -THF exchange in the reaction of $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Cl}$ with THFBH_3 .

Conclusions

We have investigated the reactions between B-substituted amine boranes ($\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{R}$) and THFBH_3 . It was found that when R is Me, an electron-donating group, the major product of the reaction is $\text{THFBH}(\text{Me})(\mu\text{-NH}_2)\text{BH}_3$. When R is Ph, a weak electron-donating group, the reaction mainly tends to undergo the intermolecular $\text{NH}_3\text{-THF}$ exchange to produce AB and THFBH_2Ph . The reversible intermolecular C-H exchange reaction occurs when the R group is Cl, an electron-withdrawing group. The R group on the B atom affects the nucleophilicity of the B-H bond. The strong electron-donating ability of the R group reinforces the hydricity of H on the B atom and increases the nucleophilicity of the B-H bond, which probably are the reasons for the different reactions of $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{R}$ (R = Me, Ph, and Cl) and THFBH_3 .

Experimental Section

General remarks

All manipulations were carried out on a Schlenk line or in a glove box filled with high-purity nitrogen. The ^{11}B NMR spectra were obtained at 128 MHz or 193 MHz and externally referenced to $\text{BF}_3 \cdot \text{OEt}_2$ in C_6D_6 ($\delta = 0.00$ ppm).

Reaction of $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Me}$ with THFBH_3 at low temperature

$\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Me}$ (0.031 g, 0.68 mmol) was put into a 10 mL flask which was connected to a Schlenk line and then 5 mL of THF was added. The flask was cooled in an ice-water bath and THFBH_3 (0.68 mL, 1 mol/L) was added into the reaction mixture dropwise. The reaction mixture was stirred for 3 h at this temperature and monitored by ^{11}B NMR spectroscopy. After $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Me}$ disappeared completely, the reaction mixture was condensed to another flask. The collected liquid was subjected to fractional distillation to remove the excess THFBH_3 to further purify the products. The ^{11}B NMR spectra of the final product are provided in the Supporting Information (Figure S1h).

Reaction of $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Ph}$ with THFBH_3

At room temperature, $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Ph}$ (0.104 g, 0.97 mmol) was placed in a 10 mL flask which was connected to a Schlenk line. Then 2 mL of THF and 4 mL of THFBH_3 solution (1 mol/L) were added. The mixture was stirred for 42 h and monitored by ^{11}B NMR spectroscopy. After $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Ph}$ disappeared completely, the reaction mixture was condensed to another flask.

Reaction of $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Cl}$ with THFBH_3

$\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Cl}$ (0.065 g, 1 mmol) was put into a 10 mL flask which was connected to a Schlenk line and then 2 mL of THF was added. After the flask was cooled in an ice-water bath, 1 mL of THFBH_3 solution (1 mol/L) was added. The reaction mixture was stirred at this temperature and monitored by ^{11}B NMR spectroscopy until the equilibrium was reached (52 h). The ^{11}B NMR spectra are provided in the supporting Information (Figure S3a and b). The reaction was repeated with the $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{Cl}$ to THFBH_3 ratios of 1:2 and 1:3 using the same procedure.

Density Functional Theory (DFT) Calculation

All DFT calculations were carried out by using Gaussian 09.^[23] The M06-2X functional was used with a standard 6-311++G(d,p) basis set and SMD model in THF solvent to optimize the geometries of all the structures. The frequency calculations were performed for all stationary points to confirm the local minima or transition state (TS) structures and to derive Gibbs free energies (ΔG , kcalmol^{-1} at 298K). The natural

population analysis (NPA) was based on the geometry from the single crystal X-ray diffraction analysis of ADB and ADB-Me.

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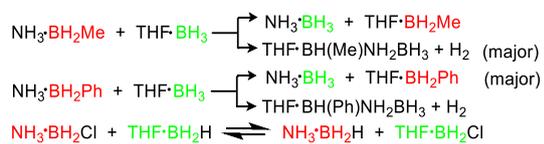
Keywords: B-substituted aminodiborane • B-substituted amine boranes • THF-BH₃ • mechanism

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FULL PAPER



Different substituents on the B atom make $\text{NH}_3\text{BH}_2\text{R}$ react with $\text{THF}\cdot\text{BH}_3$ in different ways. With $\text{R} = \text{Me}$ or Ph , intermolecular NH_3 and THF exchange occurs and B-substituted μ -aminodiborane forms. With $\text{R} = \text{Cl}$, a reversible intermolecular chloride-hydride exchange takes place.

B-Substituted Amine Boranes

Yu Guo, Xinghua Wang, Nana Ma, Yilin Cao, Sajjad Hussain, Jie Zhang, Donghui Wei,* and Xuenian Chen**

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