

# Dual-mode electrochromism switched by proton transfer: dynamic redox properties of bis(diarylmethylenium)-type dyes†

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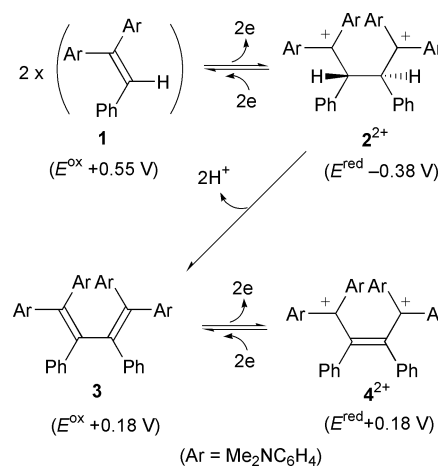
Upon oxidative dimerization of pale yellow  $\text{Ar}_2\text{C}=\text{CHPh}$  **1** ( $\text{Ar} = 4\text{-Me}_2\text{NC}_6\text{H}_4$ ), deep blue 1,4-dication  $2^{2+}$  was obtained as a stable salt, which was transformed into **1** by reductive C–C bond fission; deprotonation of  $2^{2+}$  gave intense yellow diene **3**, which was interconvertible with violet dication  $4^{2+}$  by two-electron transfer, thus exhibiting two distinct modes of electrochromism before and after proton transfer.

Recently, much attention has been focused on electrochromic dyes<sup>1,2</sup> for use as optical memories or electrochemical switches.<sup>3</sup> The representative examples are a series of open-chain violenes<sup>4</sup> shown by the redox couple of **C** and **D** in Scheme 1. Diene **C** can be prepared by oxidative dimerization of olefin **A**,<sup>2a</sup> and the similar procedure has been widely used to synthesize novel TTF vinylogues.<sup>5,6</sup> Although the oxidation reactions are believed to proceed *via* unconjugated 1,4-dication **B**, this intermediate has never been isolated nor even detected spectroscopically probably due to its instability by rapid deprotonation to **C** under the reaction conditions.

In our continuing efforts to develop new electrochromic systems endowed with bistability by reversible C–C bond making/breaking<sup>7</sup> or drastic structural changes<sup>8</sup> upon electron transfer (dynamic redox properties), we have found here that the dication **B** possessing two dye chromophores [ $\text{X} = (4\text{-Me}_2\text{NC}_6\text{H}_4)_2\text{C}$ ] and two aryl groups ( $\text{R} = \text{aryl}$ ) can be isolated as stable salts. By the selective transformation of **B** to **A** by reduction and **B** to **C** by deprotonation, novel dual-mode electrochromism shown in Scheme 1 could be realized, where proton transfer alters the mode from one to another.

The voltammetric analysis† indicated that olefin **1**§ undergoes irreversible oxidation at +0.55 V *vs.* SCE in MeCN. The corresponding reduction wave appeared in the far cathodic region (−0.38 V), which is rather close to the reduction potential of  $(4\text{-Me}_2\text{NC}_6\text{H}_4)_2\text{CH}^+$  (−0.54 V). Such a large shift of redox peaks can be accounted for by assuming oxidative dimerization of **1** (Scheme 2).

In fact, dication  $2^{2+}$  was isolated as deep blue  $\text{I}_3^-$  salt§ in 97% yield by the reaction of yellow olefin **1**§ with 1.5 eq. of  $\text{I}_2$  in  $\text{CH}_2\text{Cl}_2$ . Mechanistically, there can be two pathways to produce  $2^{2+}$  from **1**: (a) dimerization of  $1^{+\cdot}$  to  $2^{2+}$ , and (b) reaction of  $1^{+\cdot}$  with neutral **1** to form  $2^{+\cdot}$  followed by further one-electron



Scheme 2

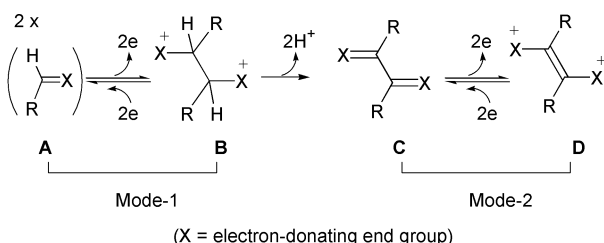
oxidation. In the present case, path (a) is plausible because  $2^{2+}$  ( $\text{I}_3^-$ )<sub>2</sub> was obtained in 92% yield by the reaction of **1** with 1.5 eq.  $\text{I}_2$  under the presence of  $\text{Ph}_2\text{C}=\text{CHPh}$  (2 eq.) which remained intact and was recovered quantitatively.

The 1,4-dication  $2^{2+}$  is surprisingly stable with no sign of spontaneous deprotonation; its methine proton appears at 6.02 ppm as a sharp singlet in the  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectrum measured in  $\text{CD}_3\text{CN}$ . Upon reduction of this salt with Zn powder in MeCN, olefin **1** was regenerated in 100% yield. Such high-yield interconversion indicates that **1** and  $2^{2+}$  can be considered as a 'reversible' redox pair even though C–C bond making and breaking are accompanied by two-electron transfer.<sup>7,10</sup>

When  $2^{2+}$  ( $\text{I}_3^-$ )<sub>2</sub> was treated with  $\text{Bu}_4\text{NF}$  in THF–MeCN, deprotonation proceeded smoothly to give intense yellow diene **3**§ in 75% yield, which is a stronger donor [ $E^{\text{ox}} +0.18$  V (2e, rev.)]† than **1**. Attempted deprotonation of  $2^{2+}$  ( $\text{I}_3^-$ )<sub>2</sub> with  $\text{Et}_3\text{N}$  [ $E^{\text{ox}} +0.85$  V (irrev.)] resulted in formation of olefin **1** in quantitative yield by electron transfer, and deprotonation with pyridine was very slow.

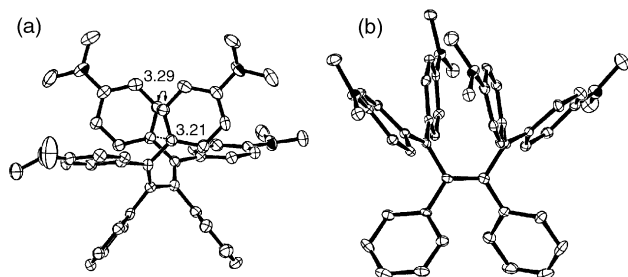
Upon treatment of **3** with 3 eq. of  $\text{I}_2$  in  $\text{CH}_2\text{Cl}_2$ , deep violet dication  $4^{2+}$  ( $\text{I}_3^-$ )<sub>2</sub>§ was obtained in 98% yield, which regenerated diene **3** in 100% yield upon reduction with Zn in MeCN. According to the X-ray analyses,¶ the diene unit in **3** adopts a nonplanar geometry with a large torsion angle of  $59.1^\circ$  around the  $\text{C}^2\text{--C}^3$  bond (Fig. 1a), which is undoubtedly due to steric congestion among six aryl groups. It is likely that lack of effective conjugation in diene **3** as well as steric shielding against the base in the hindered C–H acid  $2^{2+}$  are the reasons for reluctant deprotonation of  $2^{2+}$  to **3**. On the other hand, all of the diene carbons lie nearly on the same plane in  $4^{2+}$  (Fig. 1b), thus confirming drastic geometrical changes by twisting motions<sup>2,6,8</sup> during interconversion between **3** and  $4^{2+}$ .

In this way, two types of dynamic structural changes are presented by the redox couples of  $1\text{--}2^{2+}$  and  $3\text{--}4^{2+}$ , which can be switched by proton transfer. Furthermore, the novel dual-mode electrochromism can be realized by these couples since each pair exhibits distinct spectral changes upon electrolyses

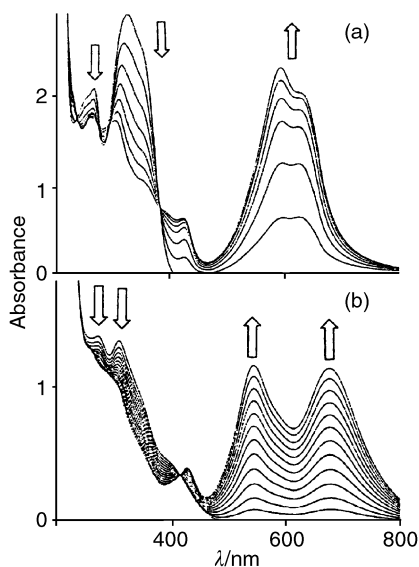


Scheme 1

† Electronic supplementary information (ESI) available: spectral data for new compounds. See <http://www.rsc.org/suppdata/cc/b1/b104742f/>



**Fig. 1** (a) ORTEP drawing of diene **3** determined by X-ray at  $-163\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Torsion angle of diene unit is  $59.1^{\circ}$ . Two aryl groups are arranged in a face-to-face manner (dihedral angle  $7.9^{\circ}$ ). Short intramolecular C...C contacts (3.21 and 3.29 Å) are shown by dotted line. (b) ORTEP drawing of dication **4**<sup>2+</sup> determined by X-ray at  $-176\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$  on  $\text{I}_3^-$  salt. The four carbon atoms of  $\text{C}^+-\text{C}=\text{C}-\text{C}^+$  lie nearly on the same plane (the largest deviation from the least-squares plane, 0.09 Å).



**Fig. 2** Two modes of electrochromism. a) Mode-1; changes in the UV-VIS spectrum of **1** ( $3.5\text{ mL}$ ,  $1.1 \times 10^{-4}\text{ mol dm}^{-3}$  in MeCN) upon constant-current electrochemical oxidation ( $32\text{ }\mu\text{A}$ , 4 min interval) to **2**<sup>2+</sup>. (b) Mode-2; changes in the UV-VIS spectrum of **3** ( $3.5\text{ mL}$ ,  $2.6 \times 10^{-5}\text{ mol dm}^{-3}$  in MeCN) upon constant-current electrochemical oxidation ( $31\text{ }\mu\text{A}$ , 2 min interval) to **4**<sup>2+</sup>. Note the presence of isosbestic points in both transformation.

(Fig. 2), which opens up a way to construct a molecular device where two independent inputs ( $\text{e}^-$  and  $\text{H}^+$ ) are transduced into a unified two-dimensional output ( $\epsilon$  vs.  $\lambda$  in UV-VIS).

This work has revealed that the 1,4-dication **B** in Scheme 1 can exist as stable species (as in **2**<sup>2+</sup>)|| when deprotonation is not feasible due to steric shielding in **B** and/or prohibited full-conjugation in diene **C** by twisted geometry. In such an appropriate case, all of the species of **A–D** (as in **1–4**<sup>2+</sup>) are stable enough to realize the dual-mode optical response. The present electrochromism modulated by proton transfer provides a new successful entry into the proton–electron cooperating functions.<sup>11</sup>

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## Notes and references

† All of the redox potentials shown in the text were measured under the same conditions:  $E/\text{V}$  vs. SCE, 0.1 mol  $\text{Et}_4\text{NClO}_4$  in MeCN, Pt electrode,

scan rate  $100\text{ mV s}^{-1}$ . Values for  $E^{\text{ox}}$  and  $E^{\text{red}}$  were calculated as  $E_p - 0.03$  and  $E_p + 0.03\text{ V}$ , respectively, in the cases of irreversible processes.

§ Olefin **1** was prepared in 95% yield by Wittig–Horner reaction of PhCHO and  $\text{Ar}_2\text{CH-PO(OMe)}_2/\text{Bu}^n\text{Li}$  in THF, and its physical data are identical to those reported in ref. 9. Stereochemistry of **2**<sup>2+</sup> was determined to be *dl* by X-ray analysis of  $\text{I}_3^-$  salt.¶ All new compounds show satisfactory analytical values.  $\lambda_{\text{max}}$  (MeCN)/nm (log  $\epsilon$ ): **1**, 345 sh (4.38), 322 (4.43), 266 (4.30), 255 (4.28); **2**<sup>2+</sup> ( $\text{I}_3^-$ )<sub>2</sub>, 619 (4.83), 595 (4.84), 423 (4.47), 361 (4.80), 293 (5.04); **3**, 397 sh (4.27), 345 sh (4.59), 312 (4.71), 277 (4.65); **4**<sup>2+</sup> ( $\text{I}_3^-$ )<sub>2</sub>, 679 (4.86), 545 (4.91), 426 (4.48), 358 (4.83), 292 (5.14).†

¶ Crystal data for **2**<sup>2+</sup> ( $\text{I}_3^-$ )<sub>2</sub>:  $\text{C}_{48}\text{H}_{52}\text{N}_4\text{I}_6$ ,  $M$  1446.39, monoclinic,  $P2_1/n$ ,  $a = 10.054(2)$ ,  $b = 17.393(3)$ ,  $c = 28.880(5)$  Å,  $\beta = 92.970(9)^{\circ}$ ,  $U = 5043(1)\text{ }\text{\AA}^3$ ,  $D_c$  ( $Z = 4$ ) =  $1.905\text{ g cm}^{-3}$ ,  $\mu(\text{Mo-K}\alpha) = 37.43\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ,  $T = 123\text{ K}$ . The final  $R$  value is 0.062 for 4842 independent reflections with  $I > 3\sigma I$  and 263 parameters. For **3**:  $\text{C}_{48}\text{H}_{50}\text{N}_4$ ,  $M$  682.95, monoclinic,  $P2_1/c$ ,  $a = 14.612(3)$ ,  $b = 16.076(2)$ ,  $c = 17.1807(7)$  Å,  $\beta = 91.792(1)^{\circ}$ ,  $U = 4034.0(10)\text{ }\text{\AA}^3$ ,  $D_c$  ( $Z = 4$ ) =  $1.124\text{ g cm}^{-3}$ ,  $\mu(\text{Mo-K}\alpha) = 0.66\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ,  $T = 110\text{ K}$ . The final  $R$  value is 0.065 for 3614 independent reflections with  $I > 3\sigma I$  and 469 parameters. For **4**<sup>2+</sup> ( $\text{I}_3^-$ )<sub>2</sub>:  $\text{C}_{48}\text{H}_{50}\text{N}_4\text{I}_6$ ,  $M$  1444.38, monoclinic,  $P2_1/n$ ,  $a = 9.6884(8)$ ,  $b = 23.432(1)$ ,  $c = 22.8948(4)$  Å,  $\beta = 107.5794(4)^{\circ}$ ,  $U = 4954.9(5)\text{ }\text{\AA}^3$ ,  $D_c$  ( $Z = 4$ ) =  $1.936\text{ g cm}^{-3}$ ,  $\mu(\text{Mo-K}\alpha) = 37.99\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ,  $T = 97\text{ K}$ . The final  $R$  value is 0.026 for 7707 independent reflections with  $I > 3\sigma I$  and 526 parameters. CCDC/164961–164963. See <http://www.rsc.org/suppdata/cc/b1/b104742f/> for electronic files in .cif or other electronic format.

|| Similarly, 2,2'-bis[2,2'-bis(4-dimethylaminophenyl)ethenyl]biphenyl undergoes oxidative cyclization to give another isolable 1,4-dication framed in a 9,10-dihydrophenanthrene skeleton, which will be reported in a full paper.

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