

## Communication

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#### Dynamic Helicity Inversion by Achiral Anion Stimulus in Synthetic Labile Cobalt(II) Complex

Hiroyuki Miyake,\* Kana Yoshida, Hideki Sugimoto, and Hiroshi Tsukube

Department of Chemistry, Graduate School of Science, Osaka City University, Sugimoto, Sumiyoshi-ku, Osaka 558-8585, Japan

Received February 17, 2004; E-mail: miyake@sci.osaka-cu.ac.jp

Natural supramolecules such as DNAs and proteins often have ordered helical structures, and inversion of the helical direction is thought to play key roles in gene expression and cellular processes.<sup>1</sup> Although the helicities of these molecules, whether right- or lefthanded, are generally determined by the stereochemistry of the components, external stimuli also alter the helix sense. For example, the left-handed DNA, Z-DNA, is derived from a right-handed helix by salt enrichment, cytosine methylation, and complexation with spermine, spermidine, and metal cations.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the helical direction of the left-handed polyproline II structure changes, depending on the polarity of the medium.<sup>3</sup> Several artificial systems offering helicity inversion by external stimuli have been reported recently.<sup>4</sup> Yashima et al.<sup>4c,d</sup> and Fujiki et al.<sup>4e</sup> demonstrated that the helicities of polyacetylenes and polysilylenes can be inverted by the addition of chiral amines and by temperature changes. Such helicity inversion systems provide further insights into the chemical understanding of biologically sophisticated processes and represent the basis for the development of supramolecular sensors, catalysts, switches, and memory devices. This communication reports that the helicity of a synthetic Co(II) complex with chiral tetradentate ligand L1 is dynamically and efficiently inverted by simply adding achiral NO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup> anion. Several types of metal complexes have been shown to offer helicity inversion induced by external stimuli.<sup>5</sup> However, these previous examples included the kinetically inert Co(III) and Cr(III) centers, and rendered the inversion processes slow and incomplete. In contrast, the kinetically labile Co(II) complex allows dynamic and efficient helicity inversion (as demonstrated in this report), which is required for application to supramolecular switching devices.



The chiral tetradentate N2O2 ligand L16 including secondary amide groups external to the ethylenediamine part formed a pseudooctahedral complex with the Co(II) cation. This complex was crystallized from a CH<sub>3</sub>OH solution of L1 and Co(ClO<sub>4</sub>)<sub>2</sub>•6H<sub>2</sub>O. Its X-ray crystal structure analysis revealed that the Co(II) center is coordinated by two amine nitrogens and two amide oxygens from the ligand, adopting a  $\Lambda$  cis- $\alpha$  configuration around the Co(II) center (Figure 1). The other two coordination sites are occupied by two oxygen atoms of the two CH<sub>3</sub>OH molecules present as the solvent, with two counter perchlorate anions outside of the coordination sphere. In the <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectrum of the L1-Co(ClO<sub>4</sub>)<sub>2</sub> complex recorded in  $CD_3CN/CD_2Cl_2 = 1/9$ , all signals appeared in the region -50 to 160 ppm with  $C_2$  symmetric patterns, except for a signal of the released  $CH_3OH$ .<sup>7</sup> Since only weak signals with  $C_2$  symmetry due to the minor diastereomeric isomer were observed (<2.5%), this complex retained an asymmetric helical structure in solution.



**Figure 1.** Crystal structures of  $[Co(L1)(CH_3OH)_2](ClO_4)_2 \cdot (CH_3OH)_2$  (left) and  $[Co(L2)(NO_3)](NO_3) \cdot (CH_3CN)$  (right). Most hydrogen atoms and solvent molecules are omitted for simplification.



*Figure 2.* CD spectral changes of 1:1 mixture of L1 and Co(ClO<sub>4</sub>)<sub>2</sub>·6H<sub>2</sub>O (black) upon the addition of Bu<sub>4</sub>NNO<sub>3</sub> in CH<sub>3</sub>CN/CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> = 1/9 at room temperature. (Inset) Titration profiles of the CD amplitudes at 304 and 545 nm. [L1] = [Co(ClO<sub>4</sub>)<sub>2</sub>·6H<sub>2</sub>O] =  $1.5 \times 10^{-3}$  mol dm<sup>-3</sup>.

This L1–Co(ClO<sub>4</sub>)<sub>2</sub> complex exhibited a positive CD signal in the range of the d–d transition (around 530 nm) in CH<sub>3</sub>CN/CH<sub>2</sub>-Cl<sub>2</sub> = 1/9 (Figure 2). The sense of the observed CD spectra changed dramatically from positive to negative upon the addition of NO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup> anion as an external stimulus, suggesting that the addition of achiral NO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup> anion induced the helicity inversion of the labile Co(II) complex from A to  $\Delta$  form (Scheme 1).<sup>8</sup> The <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectrum of this complex in the presence of 10 equiv of Bu<sub>4</sub>NNO<sub>3</sub> clearly showed that almost complete inversion of helicity ( $\Delta/\Lambda$  form = 85/15) was achieved within one minute at room temperature. When Cl<sup>-</sup> and Br<sup>-</sup> anions were added to the L1–Co(ClO<sub>4</sub>)<sub>2</sub> solution, UV–vis spectra showed the formation of tetrahedral species in addition to octahedral ones, while AcO<sup>-</sup> anion accelerated the oxidation of Co(II) to Co(III). The addition of excess ClO<sub>4</sub><sup>-</sup> and BF<sub>4</sub><sup>-</sup> anions had little effect on the CD spectral shape or intensity

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Scheme 1. Helicity Inversion Achieved by Achiral NO3<sup>-</sup> Anion



of the L1-Co(ClO<sub>4</sub>)<sub>2</sub> complex, indicating that the NO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup> anion acted as a specific external stimulus to invert the chirality at the metal center. Similar helicity inversion was observed with Ni(II) and Cu(II) complexes. The sense of CD spectra on  $L1-Ni(ClO_4)_2$  and L1-Cu(ClO<sub>4</sub>)<sub>2</sub> complexes was reversed upon the addition of NO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup> anion. Figure 2 also indicates that the induced CD signal was also observed at 280–360 nm due to an absorption of the NO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup> anion, possibly reflecting the fixation of the NO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup> anion around the chiral centers of the Co(II) complex. Titration experiments showed that 2 equiv of NO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup> anion is required to induce complete chirality inversion of this metal complex (inset of Figure 2). The cooperative actions of two NO3- anions for coordination to the Co(II) center and hydrogen bondings with amide hydrogen were demonstrated to stabilize the  $\Delta$  form more effectively than the corresponding  $\Lambda$ form in  $L2-Co(NO_3)_2$  complex (Figure 1).<sup>9</sup> The binding of the NO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup> anion with the amide hydrogen causes steric repulsion with a substituent to destabilize the  $\Lambda$  form, while the bidentate chelation of the NO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup> anion to the Co(II) center with a small bite angle moderates steric hindrance around the Co(II) center in the  $\Delta$  form.

When optically active ligands form chiral metal complexes with defined stereochemistry, the resulting complexes are usually static and generally require high temperature, highly polar media, long periods, and severe conditions to induce helicity inversion.<sup>5a,10</sup> The present results demonstrated that the helical chirality of the kinetically labile Co(II) complex is dynamically invertible by an external stimulus within one minute. Co(II) complexes have been applied as highly stereoselective catalysts,<sup>11a</sup> effective building-block cores for molecular architecture,<sup>11b</sup> specific redox devices, electron-transfer mediators, and ion sensors.<sup>11c,d</sup> A dynamic and efficient helicity inversion system as presented in this report is therefore a promising step toward the design of supramolecular devices.

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**Supporting Information Available:** Synthetic procedures, X-ray analysis data of  $[Co(L1)(CH_3OH)_2](ClO_4)_2 \cdot (CH_3OH)_2$  and  $[Co(L2) \cdot (NO_3)](NO_3) \cdot (CH_3CN)$  complexes (CIF and PDF) and CD spectra of  $L2-Co(ClO_4)_2$  and  $L2-Co(NO_3)_2$  complexes. This material is available free of charge via the Internet at http://pubs.acs.org.

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- (6) Its <sup>1</sup>H and <sup>1</sup><sup>3</sup>C NMR spectra indicated its stereochemical purity to be >98% de.
- (7) <sup>1</sup>H NMR signal corresponding to free CH<sub>3</sub>OH molecules was observed at 3.5 ppm, indicating the rapid replacement of two CH<sub>3</sub>OH molecules by two CH<sub>3</sub>CN molecules.
- (8) L1-Co(ClO<sub>4</sub>)<sub>2</sub> complex showed the same CD sign in CH<sub>3</sub>OH and water, although it is not soluble in nonpolar solvents. Changing the complex concentration rarely altered the helicity of the complex.
- (9) L2-Co(ClO<sub>4</sub>)<sub>2</sub> complex exhibited a CD signal with the sign opposite to that of L2-Co(NO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub> complex in CH<sub>3</sub>CN (Figure S3).
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