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Biomimic O₂ Activation Hydroxylates a *meso*-Carbon of the Porphyrin Ring Regioselectively under Mild Condition

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The reaction site of the Co(II) porphyrin created by an amide group and coordinating 1,2-dimethylimidazole at the fifth site activated an O₂ molecule, and then hydroxylated the *meso*-carbon of the ligand. The biomimic O₂ activation under mild condition is described.

Proximal and distal histidine residues provide the coordination environment for stable O₂ fixation¹ at the heme site of hemoglobin (Hb) and myoglobin (Mb), while proximal and distal-polar residues create a reaction environment for O–O bond activation^{2,3} at the heme sites of some metalloenzymes such as cytochrome *c* peroxidase (CcP), cytochrome P450 (CYPs), and heme oxygenase (HO) (Fig. 1). HO activates O₂ at the active site, and then hydroxylates the *meso*-carbon of heme, yielding hydroxy heme in the initial step (Fig. 1c). For activation of the

O–O bond at the active sites, the so-called “push-pull” mechanism³ has been proposed. This is a cooperative effect by electron donation from the proximal residue at the fifth site (push effect) and associations from distal-polar residues to the coordinating substrate (pull effect).

Although various porphyrin complexes that mimic the microenvironments have been designed and synthesized,^{4–6} model complexes that activate O₂ molecules under mild conditions are still rare. As an important example, Chang and co-workers have shown that their complex [Co^{II}(npca-por)] (H₂npca-por = naphthoic acid porphyrin), having a carboxyl group that interacts with O₂ bound at the metal center, activates O₂ and then oxidizes itself to the oxaporphyrin cation.⁴ Because this reaction did not need coordination of a proximal base, the O₂ activation of this system would be caused by the carboxyl group (pull effect).

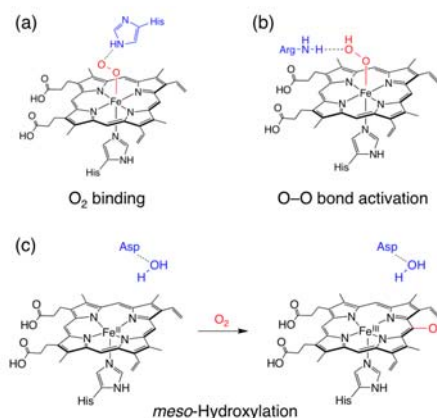
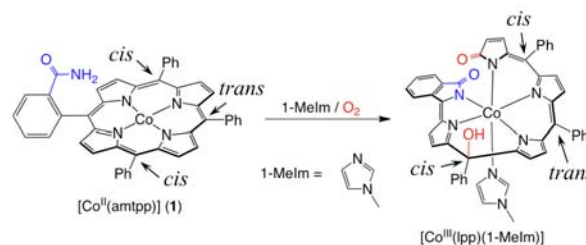


Fig. 1 (a) Proximal and distal histidine for stable O₂ fixation observed in active sites of Hb and Mb. (b) Active site of CcP created by proximal and distal-polar residues for “push-pull” O–O bond activation. (c) The hydroxylation of *meso*-carbon of heme at the initial step in the catalytic reaction by HO.

We have recently designed a new porphyrin ligand, amtp, that has an amide group at the *ortho*-position of a phenyl group of tetraphenylporphyrin (TPP) to mimic the microenvironment created by a distal-polar residue observed in the heme-containing metalloproteins. In a recent report, we have shown that [Co^{II}(amtp)] (**1**) converted to new Co(III) complexes bearing an acyclic pentapyrrole-type ligand, lpp, under air in the presence of nitrogen bases (Scheme 1).⁶ The structure of lpp is shown in this Scheme.



Scheme 1 Conversion of **1** to [Co^{III}(lpp)(1-Melm)] by reaction with O₂ in the presence of 1-Melm.

We have continued studies on the conversion reaction by using other types of nitrogen bases. Through this work, we have found

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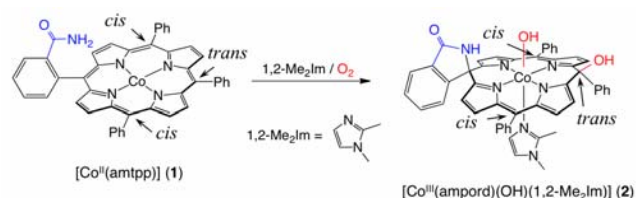
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that treatment of **1** with 1,2-dimethylimidazole (1,2-Me₂Im) under air yielded a new Co(III) complex **2** bearing a porphodimethene-type ligand, ampord, whose structure is illustrated in Scheme 2. We report herein the new conversion reaction from **1** to **2** by “push–pull” O₂ activation, which mimics the initial step of the catalytic reaction by HO.

A chloroform solution of **1** led to a dramatic color change from red to brown in a few hours by addition of 1,2-Me₂Im. Diffusion of *n*-hexane into the solution afforded single crystals of [Co^{III}(ampord)(OH)(1,2-Me₂Im)] (**2**) in 32% yield after a few days. As byproduct, [Co(amtpp)(1,2-Me₂Im)₂]Cl was isolated in 28% yield (Scheme S1 in ESI[†]).



Scheme 2 Conversion of **1** to **2** by reaction with O₂ in the presence of 1,2-Me₂Im.

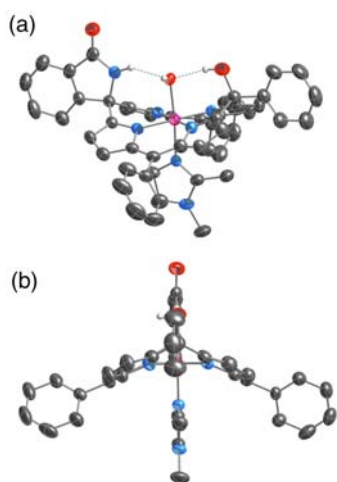


Fig. 2. (a) Thermal ellipsoid plot of **2** at 30% probability. (b) This view shows the bent structure of **2**. Hydrogen bonds formed by the coordinating OH⁻ with NH and OH groups are illustrated by broken lines. Color code: pink, cobalt; red, oxygen; blue, nitrogen; black, carbon; gray, hydrogen.

The structure of **2** was determined by a single-crystal X-ray diffraction study⁸ (Fig. 2). The *meso*-carbon atoms in the positions *cis* and *trans* to the benzamide group of amtpp are designated as *cis-meso*-carbon and *trans-meso*-carbon atoms, respectively, in this paper (Scheme 1, 2). The amide nitrogen atom of **1** forms a C–N bond with the *meso*-carbon atom of amtpp to yield an oxoisindoline ring in **2**, while a hydroxyl group is regioselectively introduced to the same side of the porphyrin framework where the amide group existed. This is the opposite side from the one that 1,2-Me₂Im occupies. The coordinating OH⁻ at the Co(III) center forms hydrogen bonds with an NH site of the oxoisindoline ring (O⋯N = 2.788(6) Å) and the hydroxyl

group at the *meso*-carbon (O⋯O = 2.704(5) Å).

As shown in Fig. 2b, the porphodimethene framework is remarkably bent at the two sp³ carbons. The angle defined by the two conjugating dipyrin rings is about 118°. The Co(III) ion is in the plane defined by the four coordinating nitrogen atoms of ampord. The average of the four Co–N bond distances is 1.93 Å. These bond distances are slightly shorter than those of Co–N and Co–O formed between the Co(III) ion and 1,2-Me₂Im and the coordinating OH⁻ (2.030(4) Å and 2.007(3) Å). Complex **2** shows characteristic absorptions at 470 and 502 nm, which are ascribed to the π–π* transition of their polypyrrole parts. Charts of absorption spectra of **1** and **2** are shown in Figs. S18 and S19 in the ESI.

We confirmed that OH⁻ at the Co(III) center and a hydroxyl group at the *meso*-carbon of **2** come from O₂ molecules by ¹⁸O₂-labeling experiments. Fig. 3 shows the electrospray ionization–time of flight (ESI–TOF) mass spectrum charts of **2** obtained by reaction of **1** with ¹⁶O₂ or ¹⁸O₂ in the presence of 1,2-Me₂Im. Complex **2** obtained under ¹⁶O₂ showed an isotope cluster at *m/z* 844.2, assigned to [H⁺·**2**], while **2** obtained under ¹⁸O₂ showed the corresponding isotope cluster at *m/z* 848.3. The isotope shift clearly shows that both of the OH⁻ and hydroxyl groups in **2** originate from the O₂ molecules.

When the reaction was carried out in tetrahydrofuran containing 2,000 equiv of H₂¹⁸O under ¹⁶O₂, ¹⁸O was not incorporated into the obtained **2** (Fig. S12 in the ESI[†]), showing that the water molecule is not a source of the OH⁻ and hydroxyl group in **2**. This result is consistent with the above isotope-labeling experimental results.

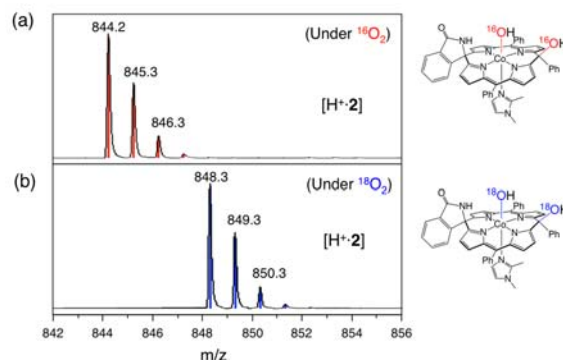


Fig. 3. ESI–TOF mass spectrum charts of **2** obtained by treatment of **1** with 1,2-Me₂Im under ¹⁶O₂ (a) and ¹⁸O₂ (b). Each simulation pattern is illustrated by red and blue lines.

Scott and co-workers have reported that porphyrins that have two carboxyl groups near two different *meso*-carbon atoms that are located in the *trans* position converted to porphodimethene-type compounds by chemical or electrochemical oxidation.⁷ The metal ions are not necessary in this conversion system. We characterized the electrochemical behavior of **1** in the presence of 1,2-Me₂Im using cyclic voltammetry (CV). The oxidation wave was observed at 1063 mV (vs. SCE), which is extremely positive compared with those of Scott’s compounds (286–516 mV). Moreover, in contrast to the case of Scott’s system, treatment of **1** with 2,3-dichloro-5,6-dicyano-1,4-benzoquinone in MeOH did not yield Co(III)-ampord-type compounds (page 18 in the ESI[†]),

showing that the formation of **2** from **1** is not the result of the simple oxidation of the amtpp framework by O₂ molecules without O–O bond activation.

The nitrogen base 1,2-Me₂Im has a stronger electron-donating ability than other nitrogen bases that yielded Co(III)-lpp-type complexes by treatment with **1** (Fig. S22 in the ESI[†]). To examine whether or not the conversion of **1** to **2** is due to the strong electron-donating ability of the axial ligand, we studied the reaction of **1** with 1,5-dicyclohexylimidazole (1,5-Cy₂Im), which has a similar strong electron-donating ability compared with that of 1,2-Me₂Im. Single-crystal X-ray analysis and elemental analysis clearly showed that the reaction product is not a Co(III)-ampord-type complex, but [Co^{III}(lpp)(1,5-Cy₂Im)] (**3**) (page 5 and Figs. S3-S5 in the ESI[†]). This result means that the formation of **2** in this system is not due to stronger electron donation from the axial ligand, but would likely be due to the steric effect of the methyl groups of 1,2-Me₂Im.

To obtain insight into the steric effects of the 1,2-Me₂Im on the reactivity of **1** toward O₂, structures of [Co^{II}(amtpp)B] (**1**·B) (B = 1-MeIm and 1,2-Me₂Im) were estimated by density functional theory (DFT) calculations at the B3LYP/6-31G* level.⁹ Their optimized structures are shown in Fig. S29. For **1**·1-MeIm, although the phenyl group in the position *trans* to the benzamide bends down slightly, the conjugating porphyrin framework including four *meso*-carbon atoms remains planar. In contrast, for **1**·1,2-Me₂Im, the porphyrin framework significantly deviates from planarity because of the steric repulsion from the methyl group of 1,2-Me₂Im in the 2-position. The two *cis-meso*-carbon atoms bend down from the porphyrin plane, while the *trans-meso*-carbon site bends up from the plane. Selective hydroxylation at the *trans-meso*-carbon atom induced by 1,2-Me₂Im in this system would be due to the approach of the *trans-meso*-carbon atom to the activated O₂ species, and the separation of the *cis-meso*-carbon atom from the activated O₂ species. It is likely that terminal oxygen of the activated O₂ molecule is a source of hydroxyl group which was introduced to the *meso*-carbon, and the residual oxygen would be the source of OH⁻ bound at the Co(III) site.

In summary, reaction of air-stable Co(II) complex **1** with O₂ in the presence of 1,2-Me₂Im was studied. The reaction site, which is created by the amide group and 1,2-Me₂Im at the fifth position, activated the O₂ molecule under mild condition, and then yielded a new Co(III)-porphodimethene-type complex **2**. Isotope-labeling experiments showed that OH⁻ at the Co(III) center and a hydroxyl group at the *meso*-carbon of **2** originate from the O₂ molecule. This reaction mimics the “push–pull” O₂ activation observed in heme-containing metalloenzymes. The effects of 1,2-Me₂Im on the selective hydroxylation at the *trans-meso*-carbon were preliminary studied by using DFT calculation. The further studies of the reaction mechanism are currently underway.

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- Crystallographic data have been deposited with the Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre (CCDC 908587 (**2**) and 908586 (**3**)) and can be obtained via www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/data_request/cif. Single Crystal Data; **2**·2CHCl₃: C₅₂H₄₀Cl₆CoN₇O₃, *M* = 1082.58, monoclinic, *P*2₁/*n*, *a* = 10.7642(5) Å, *b* = 20.7043(12) Å, *c* = 22.5542(12) Å, β = 96.087(3)°, *V* = 4998.2(5) Å³, *T* = 293 K, reflections collected/unique reflections/parameters refined: 31876/8708/757, *R*_{int} = 0.0556, final *R*₁ = 0.0777 (*I* > 2σ (*I*)), *wR*₂ = 0.1395 (all data); **3**·3.25CHCl₃: C_{63.25}H_{55.25}Cl_{9.75}CoN₇O₃, *M* = 1366.03, triclinic, *P*1̄, *a* = 12.8053(7) Å, *b* = 12.8800(6) Å, *c* = 21.7874(17) Å, α = 87.958(6)°, β = 80.671(6)°, γ = 62.793(4)°, *V* = 3150.6(4) Å³, *T* = 173 K, reflections collected/unique reflections/parameters refined: 20445/10799/1018, *R*_{int} = 0.0364, final *R*₁ = 0.0538 (*I* > 2σ (*I*)), *wR*₂ = 0.1138 (all data).
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