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# Synthesis, X-Ray Structure and (Spectro)electrochemical Study of an Electrochromic Iron(II) Chlathrochelate with Tuned Redox Properties

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A boron-capped tris-dioximate iron(II) bis-macrocyclic clathrochelate with annulated dimethylquinoxaline heterocycle has been synthesized. The compound has been characterized with single-crystal X-ray diffraction, multinuclear NMR, IR, UV-vis spectrometry, CV and spectroelectrochemistry. The clathrochelate is capable of ligand-centered two-electron reversible reduction coupled with electrochromism (in solution and thin film).

Keywords: Macrocyclic compounds, clathrochelates, iron complexes, ligand reactivity, electrochromism.

# Синтез, строение и (спектро)электрохимическое исследование электрохромного клатрохелата железа(II) с модифицированными редокс-свойствами

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Синтезирован бор-сшитый трис-диоксиматный бис-макроциклический клатрохелат железа(II), имеющий на ребре аннелированный диметилхиноксалиновый фрагмент. Клатрохелат способен к лиганд-центрированному обратимому двух-электронному восстановлению сопровождаемому электрохромизмом.

**Ключевые слова:** Макроциклические соединения, клатрохелаты, комплексы железа, реакционная способность лиганда, электрохромизм.

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# Introduction

Reactivity of the boron-capped tris-dioximate metal mono-, di-, tri-, tetra- and hexahalogenoclathrochelates have been widely used for chemical modification of their chelate ribbed fragments. These fragments of a quasiaromatic macrobicyclic polyazomethine framework have been functionalized using well-known "classical" organic reactions, such as N,O,S,C,P-nucleophilic substitution,<sup>[1-3]</sup> free-radical substitution<sup>[4,5]</sup> and electrophilic addition to the diamine iron(II) clathrochelate.<sup>[6,7]</sup> These reactions allowed obtaining the different types of mono-, di- and triribbedfunctionalized cage complexes with pendant and annulated substitutents, thus paving the way to new types of molecular switches,<sup>[8]</sup> wires,<sup>[9,10]</sup> light- and redox-driven molecular machines<sup>[11-13]</sup> and clathrochelate-based electrocatalysts for hydrogen evolution reaction.<sup>[14-16]</sup> The rigidity of their polyazomethine macrobicyclic ligands imposes a strong limitation on the size of the encapsulated metal ion. As a result, in the most cases, only one oxidation state of this ion gives the stable cage complexes, whereas those in other oxidation states are chemically unstable and easily undergo side chemical transformations, such as the complete destruction of the clathrochelate frameworks. The only exception is cobalt clathrochelates of this type forming the stable complexes of a given encapsulating macrobicyclic ligand with an encapsulated cobalt ion in two oxidation states {*i.e.* cobalt(I)/cobalt(II) or cobalt(II)/cobalt(III) pairs}.<sup>[17–22]</sup> Another pathway of transformations of these cage metal complexes is based on the ligand-centered processes, such as chemical or electrochemical redox reactions of heterocyclic ribbed fragments, annulated to the quasiaromatic macrobicyclic framework. Recently<sup>[23]</sup> we reported the synthesis and reactivity of an iron(II) clathrochelate FeBd<sub>2</sub>(QnGm) (BF), (where Bd<sup>2-</sup> and Gm are  $\alpha$ -benzildioxime dianion and glyoxime residue, respectively) carrying an annulated ribbed quinoxaline (Qn) fragment. This complex revealed the reversible, ligand-centered, chemical (electrochemical) redox transformations coupled with electrochromism. Aiming to tune the redox and electrochromic properties of such cage complexes using electron-donating (electronwithdrawing) substituents at the annulated fragment, at the first stage we chose an analogous iron(II) cage complex with two electron-donating methyl groups. Here we report the synthesis, single-crystal X-ray structure, spectral parameters, redox and (spectro)electrochemical properties of this new iron(II) clathrochelate with annulated dimethylquinoxaline ribbed fragment.

# **Experimental**

# Materials

Dichloroclathrochelate precursor  $\text{FeBd}_2(\text{Cl}_2\text{Gm})(\text{BF})_2$ was prepared as described in Ref. <sup>[24]</sup> The commercial reagents (Sigma-Alrdrich®), silica gel, 1,2-diamino-4,5-dimethylbenzene, triethylamine, tetraethylammonium perchlorate (TEAP) and organic solvents (except of DMSO and acetonitrile) were used without further purification. DMSO was dried and distilled *in vacuo* before the experiments. Acetonitrile was purified according to Ref. <sup>[25]</sup>

#### **Synthesis**

Complex FeBd<sub>2</sub>(Cl<sub>2</sub>Gm)(BF)<sub>2</sub> (0.101 g, 0.14 mmol) and 1,2-diamino-4,5-dimethylbenzene (0.024 g, 0.17 mmol) were dissolved/suspended in DMSO (15 mL) and few drops of triethylamine were added. The reaction mixture was intensively stirred for the dissolution of a dichloroclathrochelate precursor and left for one week. Then the reaction mixture was poured in brine (80 ml), the precipitate formed was filtered off, dried in air, and extracted with chloroform (150 ml). The extract was evaporated to approximately 25–30 ml, and 5-fold excess of PbO<sub>2</sub> (0.7 mmol) was added to the solution. The reaction mixture was stirred for 30 min and then filtered. The filtrate was separated by column chromatography on silica gel (230-400 mesh; eluents: chloroform and chloroformethanol 20:1 mixture). The first elute was thrown out and the second elute was evaporated to dryness in vacuo. The solid residue was recrystallized from dichloromethane-heptane mixture and the product was dried in vacuo. Yield: 0.065 g (60 %). HR ESI-MS (positive range): [M+H<sup>+</sup>]<sup>+</sup>: found/calculated 809.172/809.171; (negative range): [M-H+]-: found/calculated -807.158/-807.155. <sup>1</sup>H NMR (CD<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>) δ ppm: 2.44 (s, 6H, CH<sub>2</sub>), 7.26–7.5 (m, 20H, Ph), 7.63 (s, 2H, Qn). <sup>13</sup>C{<sup>1</sup>H} NMR (CD<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>) δ ppm: 21.28 (s, CH<sub>2</sub>), 128.56 (s, 3-C (Ph)), 128.85 (s, CH(Qn)), 129.12 (s, 1-C (Ph)), 129.39 (s, C<sub>a</sub> (Qn)), 130.89 (s, 2-C (Ph)), 131.18 (s, 4-C (Ph)), 147.38, 147.54, 147.78 (three s, C=N(Qn) + QnC=N), 157.24 (s, PhC=N). <sup>11</sup>B NMR (CD<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>)  $\delta$  ppm: 4.59 (d,  $J_{11_{B-19_{F}}}$ =17.3 Hz, O<sub>3</sub>BF). <sup>19</sup>F NMR (CD,Cl<sub>2</sub>)  $\delta$  ppm: -169.64 (q, O<sub>3</sub>BF). UV-vis (CH<sub>3</sub>CN)  $\lambda_{max}$  nm  $(\varepsilon \cdot 10^{-3}, \text{mol}^{-1} \cdot \text{L} \cdot \text{cm}^{-1})$ : 420(16), 550(15), 620(23).

Single crystals, suitable for the X-ray diffraction experiment, were grown from dichloromethane-heptane-acetonitrile mixture.

#### EPR Studies

X-Band EPR spectra (modulation frequency 100 kHz) of *in situ* electrochemically generated anion-radical of the FeBd<sub>2</sub>(Me<sub>2</sub>QnGm)(BF)<sub>2</sub> clathrochelate were recorded from its degassed acetonitrile solution (tetraethylammonium perchlorate [TEAP] as background electrolyte) at room temperature with a Varian E-109 spectrometer (Bruker). A home-made molybdenum-glass EPR cavity with sealed-in-platinum wire electrodes was used for these combined EPR–electrochemical experiments. The EPR signal of the manganese(II) ions in MgO matrix was used as an external standard for calibration of the field.

#### X-Ray Crystallography

The intensities of reflections for the crystal FeBd<sub>2</sub>(Me<sub>2</sub>QnGm) (BF), 0.8 CH, CN were measured at 298(2) K with a Bruker Nonius X8Apex CCD diffractometer using graphite monochromated Mo-K<sub>a</sub> ( $\lambda$ =0.71073 Å) radiation. SMART software was used for the data collection, reflection indexing and determination of the unit cell parameters. The collected data were integrated and the absorption correction was applied using SAINT<sup>[26]</sup> software. The structure was solved by the direct method<sup>[27]</sup> and refined by full-matrix least-squares method against F<sup>2</sup> for all data using SHELXTL software.<sup>[28]</sup> Non-hydrogen atoms of the clathrochelate molecule were refined with anisotropic displacement parameters. The solvate acetonitrile molecules were refined isotropically without their hydrogen atoms with fixed occupation factors of 0.3 and 0.5. Selected crystallographic data and refinement parameters are listed in Table 1. The structural data have been deposited to the Cambridge Structural Database (CCDC 1480832) and are available free of charge at https://summary.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/ structure-summary-form.

#### Electrochemical Experiments

Cyclic voltammogram (CV) of the complex FeBd<sub>2</sub>(Me<sub>2</sub>QnGm) (BF), was recorded from its 1mM acetonitrile solution using Elins

potentiostat P-8 in a conventional one-compartment three-electrode cell with 0.1 M TEAP as a supporting electrolyte. A platinum counter electrode and the Ag/0.1 M AgNO<sub>3</sub> reference electrode in acetonitrile, contacting with the solution under study through a Luggin capillary filled by the supporting electrolyte, were used. A platinum wire of 0.3 mm-in-diameter with the geometrical surface of 0.095 cm<sup>2</sup> was used as a working electrode. The solutions were thoroughly deaerated before the CV experiments using argon bubbling. All potentials are given *versus* saturated calomel references electrode (SCE) (+336 mV against the reference electrode used<sup>[28]</sup>). The electrochemical processes are reversible. The formal potentials ( $E_{1/2}$ ) are -680 mV and -100 mV.

#### Spectroelectrochemical Studies

The solution spectroelectrochemical studies were carried out in a standard three-electrode configuration. Platinum mesh (the apparent surface area of 9 cm<sup>2</sup>) was submerged in 1 mM acetonitrile solution of the FeBd<sub>2</sub>(Me<sub>2</sub>QnGm)(BF)<sub>2</sub> clathrochelate and placed in the optic path of a fiber–optic spectrometer Avaspec2048x64 (Avantes, Netherlands) for the registration of its absorbance UV-vis spectrum in the range 300–1000 nm. 0.1 M tetrabutylammonium tetrafluoroborate was used as a supporting electrolyte. A platinum plate and the standard Ag/AgCl reference electrode were used. The working and auxiliary electrodes with separate volumes were connected by a Luggin capillary.

Spectroelectrochemical studies of the cast films on mixed indium–tin oxide (ITO) electrodes were performed in an analogous three-electrode cell under similar experimental conditions, except that ITO electrode was used as the working electrode instead of platinum mesh. 0.1 M aqueous  $\text{HCIO}_4$  was used as a supporting electrolyte and CV measurements were performed with IPC-compact potentiostat, home–made by IPCE RAS, Russia. A platinum auxilliary electrode and the standard Ag/AgCl

### **Results and Discussion**

Complex FeBd<sub>2</sub>(Me<sub>2</sub>QnGm)(BF)<sub>2</sub> was obtained using the synthetic approach similar to that earlier elaborated for the preparation of its analog FeBd<sub>2</sub>(QnGm)(BF)<sub>2</sub>.<sup>[23]</sup> This approach is based on nucleophilic substitution of the reactive chlorine atoms of the dichloroclathrochelate precursor FeBd<sub>2</sub>(Cl<sub>2</sub>Gm)(BF)<sub>2</sub> with 4,5-dimethyl-1,2phenylenediamine in the presence of triethylamine as organic base followed by *in situ* oxidation of the amine macrobicyclic intermediate FeBd<sub>2</sub>(H<sub>2</sub>QnMe<sub>2</sub>Gm)(BF)<sub>2</sub> with PbO<sub>2</sub> (Scheme 1). The obtained FeBd<sub>2</sub>(Me<sub>2</sub>QnGm)(BF)<sub>2</sub> clathrochelate was characterized using HR ESI-MS, IR, UV-Vis, <sup>1</sup>H, <sup>11</sup>B, <sup>19</sup>F and <sup>13</sup>C{<sup>1</sup>H} NMR spectra. The molecular structure of this complex was studied both in solid state and in solution using single-crystal X-ray diffraction and various NMR techniques, respectively.

General view of the macrobicyclic molecule in the crystal FeBd<sub>2</sub>(Me<sub>2</sub>QnGm)(BF)<sub>2</sub> · 0.8 CH<sub>3</sub>CN is shown in Figure 1. *FeN*<sub>6</sub>-coordination polyhedron of the encapsulated iron(II) ion possesses a geometry intermediate between a trigonal prism (the distortion angle  $\varphi=0^{\circ}$ ) and a trigonal antiprism ( $\varphi=60^{\circ}$ ). The average  $\varphi$  value of 20.5°, as well as the height *h* of this polyhedron (2.35 Å), are characteristic of the boron-capped iron(II) tris-dioximates.<sup>[30]</sup>

Fe–N distances in this molecule are slightly nonequivalent and fall within the range 1.917(3)–1.924(3) Å for its  $\alpha$ -benzildioximate fragments and are close to 1.90 Å for the functionalized chelate cycle with the annulated dimethylquinoxaline heterocycle. The C–C bonds in this heterocyclic substituent show an expressed alternation



#### Scheme 1.

reference electrode were used. Spectroelectrochemical studies were performed in the potential range from -700 to 1000 mV; this scan range is determined by a working window of ITO electrode.

#### NMR Experiments

<sup>1</sup>H, <sup>11</sup>B, <sup>13</sup>C{<sup>1</sup>H} and <sup>19</sup>F{<sup>1</sup>H} NMR spectra of the complex FeBd<sub>2</sub>(Me<sub>2</sub>QnGm)(BF)<sub>2</sub> were recorded from its CD<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> solution with a Bruker Avance III 500 spectrometer (working frequencies: 500.13 (<sup>1</sup>H), 160.46 (<sup>11</sup>B), 470.59 (<sup>19</sup>F), and 125.76 (<sup>13</sup>C) MHz). <sup>1</sup>H and <sup>13</sup>C{<sup>1</sup>H} NMR chemical shifts are given in the  $\delta$  scale and were referred to the signals of the solvent (5.34 ppm for *CH*DCl<sub>2</sub> and 53.8 ppm for *CD*<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>, respectively). Assignment of the <sup>1</sup>H and <sup>13</sup>C NMR signals for the molecule of FeBd<sub>2</sub>(Me<sub>2</sub>QnGm)(BF)<sub>2</sub> was carried out using 2D HMBC and HSQC NMR techniques. <sup>11</sup>B and <sup>19</sup>F NMR signals of this complex were referred to BF<sub>3</sub>·O(C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>5</sub>)<sub>3</sub> and TFT as external standards, respectively.



**Figure 1.** General view of the molecule  $\text{FeBd}_2(\text{Me}_2\text{QnGm})(\text{BF})_2$  with selected bond lengths. Hydrogen atoms of the phenyl substituents are omitted for clarity.

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(Figure 1) characteristic of a quinoid system. Main C=N, N–O and B–O bond lengths as well as the corresponding bond angles in a clathrochelate framework are characteristic of the boron-capped iron(II) tris-dioximates.<sup>[29,30]</sup>

The molecular structure of the clathrochelate  $FeBd_2(Me_2QnGm)(BF)_2$  in solution was confirmed using one-dimensional (1D) and two-dimensional (2D) <sup>1</sup>H and <sup>13</sup>C{<sup>1</sup>H} NMR spectra; the assignment of the signals in these spectra is shown in Figure 2. These NMR data were found to be in an excellent agreement with the above single-crystal X-ray diffraction data.



**Figure 2.** Assignment of the NMR signals for the molecule FeBd<sub>2</sub>(Me,QnGm)(BF),.

Electrochemical and spectroelectrochemical characteristics of the complex FeBd<sub>2</sub>(Me<sub>2</sub>QnGm)(BF)<sub>2</sub> were recorded from its acetonitrile solution. Cyclic voltammogram (CV) of this clathrochelate (Figure 3) in the cathodic range contains two one-electron reduction waves at the potentials  $E_{2c}$ =-710 mV and  $E_{1c}$ =-130 mV. Backscanning of the potential showed two re-oxidation waves with the peaks at  $E_{2a}$ =-650 mV and  $E_{1a}$ =-70 mV. The formal potentials ( $E_{1/2}$ ) are -680 mV and -100 mV, correspondingly.

The differences  $\Delta E = E_{ia} - E_{ic}$  between the peaks of these direct and backward processes are approximately 60 mV and the above potentials are only slightly affected by the change of scan rate from 100 to 1200 mV·s<sup>-1</sup>, thus suggesting the reversible character of these redox processes.<sup>[31]</sup> In general, the electrochemical characteristics of this cage complex are quite similar to those of the FeBd<sub>2</sub>(QnGm)(BF)<sub>2</sub> clathrochelate, but in the former case these potentials are shifted by approximately 80 mV to the cathodic range due to inductive effect of the weakly electron-donating methyl groups. First of these reduction processes gives an anion-radical



**Figure 3.** CV for 1mM acetonitrile solution of the complex  $FeBd_2(Me_2QnGm)(BF)_2$  at scan rate of 100 mV·s<sup>-1</sup>.

derivative of the complex  $\text{FeBd}_2(\text{Me}_2\text{QnGm})(\text{BF})_2$  shown in Scheme 2.

This result was confirmed by *in situ* EPR experiment (Figure 4). The obtained Lande factor value of 2.004 is characteristic of the compounds with an unpaired electron localized on light atoms, thus confirming the ligand-centered character of the redox process.



**Figure 4.** X-Band EPR spectrum of acetonitrile solution of *in situ* electrochemically generated reduced form of the clathrochelate  $FeBd_2(Me_2QnGm)(BF)_2$ . The sharp signals correspond to the manganese(II) ions as an external standard.



Scheme 2.

Two major bands with maxima at approximately 415 and 610 nm (Figure 5) cause blue coloration of an acetonitrile solution of the FeBd<sub>2</sub>(Me<sub>2</sub>QnGm)(BF)<sub>2</sub> complex. Its chemical reduction with metallic lithium proceeded rather slow being completed in approximately 2.5 h and gave a red solution; its coloration is determined by superposition of new bands with maxima at 390, 475, 510, and 708 nm. The presence of the corresponding isobestic points suggests the stoichiometric character of this reduction process. UV-vis spectrum of the obtained reduced form of FeBd<sub>2</sub>(Me<sub>2</sub>QnGm) (BF)<sub>2</sub> is very similar to that of the radical anion derivative of the clathrochelate FeBd<sub>2</sub>(QnGm)(BF)<sub>2</sub>.<sup>[23]</sup>

The similar spectral changes were spectroelectrochemically observed in the course of an electrochemical reduction of  $\text{FeBd}_2(\text{Me}_2\text{QnGm})(\text{BF})_2$ : the absorption band with maximum at approximately 600 nm goes down, whereas new bands with maxima from 450 to 500 nm appear (Figure 6).



**Figure 5.** UV-vis spectra of acetonitrile solution of the FeBd<sub>2</sub>(Me<sub>2</sub>QnGm)(BF)<sub>2</sub> clathrochelate (c=3.1·10<sup>-5</sup> mol·L<sup>-1</sup>) during its reduction with metallic lithium; the total reaction time is 160 mins (start: in blue, end: in dashed red line).



**Figure 6.** UV-vis spectra of acetonitrile solution of the clathrochelate  $\text{FeBd}_2(\text{Me}_2\text{QnGm})(\text{BF})_2$  ( $c=1.0\cdot10^{-5}$  mol·L<sup>-1</sup>) upon application of the redox potential from +400 mV (the initial complex) to -1200 mV (its reduced form).

Surprisingly, we failed to observe any optical response from the second reduction of  $\text{FeBd}_2(\text{Me}_2\text{QnGm})(\text{BF})_2$  after either chemical or electrochemical reduction. This result contrasts with that for its homolog  $\text{FeBd}_2(\text{QnGm})(\text{BF})_2$ , where both reduced forms (*i.e.* radical anion and dianion species) have been clearly detected<sup>[23]</sup> using the same technique; the origin of this difference requires additional studies.

The reduction of the FeBd<sub>2</sub>(Me<sub>2</sub>QnGm)(BF)<sub>2</sub> clathrochelate was also examined in a cast film. Due to limitations of the electrochemical window of the working ITO electrode, the potentials above –700 mV (vs. Ag/AgCl), corresponding to the first reduction process, were applied. Changes of the differential UV-vis spectra of this film (with the spectrum of the initial complex as a baseline) are shown in Figure 7. It is clearly seen that the absorption bands with maxima at approximately 420 and 500 nm increase simultaneously with rising degree of reduction. This electrochromic transition FeBd<sub>2</sub>(Me<sub>2</sub>QnGm)(BF)<sub>2</sub> $\rightarrow$ [FeBd<sub>2</sub>(Me<sub>2</sub>QnGm)(BF)<sub>2</sub>]<sup>-•</sup> can be easily detected with naked eye (Figure 8). Unexpectedly, this spectrum also showed some changes in the NIR range from 900 to 1000 nm.



**Figure 7.** Differential UV-vis absorption spectra of the reduced forms of the clathrochelate  $\text{FeBd}_2(\text{Me}_2\text{QnGm})(\text{BF})_2$  in a cast film (with the spectrum of an initial cage complex as a baseline) upon application of the redox potential from +400 (an initial complex) to -700 mV (its one-electron reduced form).



**Figure 8**. Photography of the cast films of the initial clathrochelate  $FeBd_2(Me_2QnGm)(BF)_2$  (on the left) and its reduced radical anion form (on the right).

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# Conclusions

Comparison of a monoribbed-functionalized iron(II) clathrochelate with annulated dimethyl substituted quinoxaline fragment and its non-methylated analog showed that these distal substituents allow fine tuning of the potential of their ligands-centered redox processes.

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Table 1. Crystallographic data and refinement parameters for the crystal FeBd<sub>2</sub>(Me<sub>2</sub>QnGm)(BF)<sub>2</sub> · 0.8CH<sub>3</sub>CN.

Empirical formula	C <sub>39.6</sub> H <sub>28</sub> B <sub>2</sub> F <sub>2</sub> FeN <sub>8.8</sub> O <sub>6</sub>
Formula weight	838.58
Temperature (K)	293(2)
Wavelength (Å)	0.71073
Crystal system	monoclinic
Space group	<i>C2/c</i>
a (Å)	33.502(1)
<i>b</i> (Å)	16.735(1)
<i>c</i> (Å)	15.589(1)
β (°)	107.33(1)
Volume (Å <sup>3</sup> )	8343.5(6)
Z	8
Density (calculated) (g·cm <sup>-3</sup> )	1.328
Absorption coefficient (mm <sup>-1</sup> )	0.425
F(000)	3424
Crystal size (mm)	0.35×0.16×0.08
Theta range for data collection	2.27-26.43°
Index ranges	$-41 \le h \le 37, -20 \le k \le 20,$
Reflections collected	$-19 \le 1 \le 19$ 30664
Independent reflections	8498 (R = 0.0500)
Completeness to theta = $25.00^{\circ}$ (%)	99 3
Data / restraints / parameters	8498/0/522
$Goodness_of_fit on F^2$	0.951
Final D indiana $(1>2\pi)$	D = 0.0568  m D = 0.1672
$\frac{1}{20}$	$R_1 = 0.0308, WR_2 = 0.1072$ $R_2 = 0.0896, WR_2 = 0.1890$
	$\kappa_1 = 0.0880, W\kappa_2 = 0.1880$
Largest diff. peak and hole $(e/A^{-3})$	0.982 and $-0.290$

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