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**Charge-Tagged Cyclopentadienone Iron Complexes: Mechanistic
Studies Using Mass Spectrometry for Catalytic Hydrogenation
Reactions**

A thesis submitted to attain the degree of

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presented by

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“The Universe is under no obligation to make sense to you.”

Neil deGrasse Tyson

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Abstract

Cyclopentadienone iron complexes, also referred to as Knölker catalysts, have emerged as promising catalysts for the reduction of ketones, aldehydes, and imines. They constitute the iron analogues to the ruthenium based Shvo catalysts and offer the possibility to enable the same chemistry as the ruthenium based system with use of a widely available first-row transition metal.

While there is a consensus on the operating reaction mechanism, detailed, real-time monitoring of the catalytic cycle has not been described in the literature. To this end, we have investigated the reaction mechanism by mass-spectrometry. To make the cyclopentadienone iron complex system amenable to electrospray ionization-mass spectrometry, prosthetic charge-tags, both positive and negative ones, were introduced. These charge-tags, in combination with conventional kinetic experiments, allowed for the observation of the catalyst in the working state. The mass spectrometric studies led to the identification of a major catalyst decomposition pathway that takes place in aqueous solvent. In particular, hydrolysis of trimethylsilyl groups in the catalyst was observed, which led to dimerization, radical formation and, ultimately, to catalysts death. Replacement of the trimethylsilyl groups by non-hydrolysable *tert*-butyl groups lead to a significant boost in rate and to an increase in turn-over number from 65 to over 1000.

In addition to the mass spectrometric and kinetic studies to investigate the reaction mechanism, an experimental study investigating the influence of the charge-tag on catalysis is presented. It was observed that negatively charge-tagged complexes generally show slower rates than the classical Knölker catalyst. Using a combination of NMR and kinetic measurements, it could be experimentally shown that binding of the charge-tag to the catalytically active site and electric field effects are not responsible for the difference in catalytic performance. The presence of a tertiary amine in the catalyst structure was identified as a possible source of the difference. Furthermore, it was found that negatively charge-tagged iron catalysts form micelles in aqueous solvent. These micelles were found to enhance catalytic performance compared to other amine containing catalysts.

Neutral, isocyanide ligand-bearing cyclopentadienone iron complexes are presented in this work. These complexes generally show lower catalytic performance than the corresponding carbonyl complexes. However, the isocyanides allow for the tuning of steric and electronic properties by varying the R group on the CNR ligand, offering a new handle to tune reactivity. Furthermore, since the isocyanides can be prepared from primary amine precursors, for which many chiral ones are available, chiral iron complexes could be prepared. The complexes show very modest stereoselection. Their syntheses, characterizations and catalytic performances will be presented and discussed.

Zusammenfassung

Cyclopentadienoneisenkomplexe, auch bekannt als Knölker-Katalysatoren, sind in den letzten Jahren als vielversprechende Katalysatoren für die Reduktion von Ketonen, Aldehyden und Iminen aufgekommen. Sie stellen Eisenanaloga zu den Ruthenium basierten Shvo-Katalysatoren dar und ermöglichen dieselbe Art von Chemie, jedoch mit einem häufig vorkommenden 3d-Metall.

Obwohl sich die Wissenschaftsgemeinschaft über den Reaktionsmechanismus einig ist, sind detaillierte Echtzeitreaktionsverfolgungen vom katalytischen Zyklus in der Literatur noch nicht beschrieben worden. Zu diesem Zweck haben wir den Reaktionsmechanismus mittels Massenspektrometrie untersucht. Um die Cyclopentadienoneisenkomplexe für Elektrospray-Ionisation-Massenspektrometrie sichtbar zu machen, wurden die Komplexe mit positiv und negativ geladenen Gruppen markiert. Kombiniert mit konventionellen kinetischen Experimenten konnten mittels dieser Markierungen die Katalysatoren in Echtzeit beobachtet werden. Die massenspektrometrischen Studien haben zu der Entdeckung eines Katalysatorzersetzungs Vorgangs geführt, welcher in wässriger Lösung stattfindet. Es wurde gefunden, dass Trimethylsilylgruppen hydrolysiert wurden. Dies führte zu Dimerisierung, der Bildung von Radikalen und schlussendlich zur Zersetzung des Katalysators. Durch Ersetzen der Trimethylsilylgruppen durch nicht hydrolysierbare *tert*-Butylgruppen konnte die Reaktionsgeschwindigkeit signifikant gesteigert werden. Ausserdem konnte die Wechselzahl von ca. 65 auf über 1000 erhöht werden.

Zusätzlich zu den massenspektrometrischen und kinetischen Studien, welche für die Untersuchung des Reaktionsmechanismus durchgeführt wurden, wurde eine experimentelle Studie bezüglich des Einflusses der Ladungsmarkierungen auf die Katalyse durchgeführt. Bei negativ geladenen Komplexen wurde beobachtet, dass, verglichen mit dem neutralen Knölker-Katalysator, die Reaktionsgeschwindigkeit geringer ist. Mittels einer Kombination aus NMR-Experimenten und kinetischen Messungen konnte gezeigt werden, dass die negative Ladungsmarkierung nicht direkt mit dem Eisenatom interagiert und dass elektrische Feldeffekte nicht für die geringere Reaktionsgeschwindigkeit verantwortlich sind. Die tertiäre Aminogruppe wurde als Grund für den Unterschied identifiziert. Ausserdem wurde beobachtet, dass die negativ geladenen Katalysatoren in wässriger Lösung Mizellen bilden. Verglichen mit anderen Komplexen, welche tertiäre Aminogruppen enthalten, führt die Mizellenbildung zu schnelleren Reaktionen.

Neutrale Cyclopentadienoneisenkomplexe mit Isocyanidliganden werden in dieser Arbeit beschrieben. Diese Komplexe sind, verglichen mit den Carbonylkomplexen, katalytisch weniger aktiv. Jedoch ermöglichen Isocyanidliganden eine Variierung der sterischen und elektronischen Eigenschaften, indem die R-Gruppe in den CNR Isocyanidliganden variiert

wird. Dies ist eine neue Möglichkeit, um die Reaktivität der Komplexe anzupassen. Isocyanide können aus Aminen hergestellt werden, für welche auch viele Chirale verfügbar sind. Somit können auch chirale Komplexe hergestellt werden. Diese chiralen Komplexe führen zu einer moderaten Stereoinduktion. Die Synthese dieser Komplexe, deren Charakterisierung und deren katalytische Aktivität wird beschrieben.