Divergent 4,2′:6′,4″- and 3,2′:6′,3″-terpyridines as linkers in 2- and 3-dimensional architectures

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4,2′:6′,4″-Terpyridine (4,2′:6′,4″-tpy) and 3,2′:6′,3″-terpyridine (3,2′:6′,3″-tpy) typically coordinate through the outer pyridine rings, leaving the central ring non-coordinated. They therefore present divergent sets of N,N′-donor atoms and are ideal linkers for connecting metal nodes in coordination polymers and networks. This Highlight illustrates the strategies that are currently used to encourage the formation of 2- and 3-dimensional architectures as opposed to 1-dimensional chains. Functionalization in the tpy 4′-position with substituents such as pyridyl or carboxylate that can bind metal ions is one strategy. The second is to increase the coordination number of the metal centre. The third is to design ligands that contain multiple 4,2′:6′,4″-tpy or 3,2′:6′,3″-tpy domains.

Introduction

2,2′:6′,2″-Terpyridine (2,2′:6′,2″-tpy) presents a bis-chelating donor set and coordination complexes are dominated by octahedral \{M(2,2′:6′,2″-tpy)\}_2 domains which, if bearing peripheral donor groups, function as ‘expanded ligands’ (Scheme 1) in supramolecular assemblies including coordination polymers. The coordination chemistry of 2,2′:6′,2″-tpy is abundantly represented, whereas the coordination behaviours of the other 47 isomers of terpyridine have attracted less attention. Two isomers especially demand exploration because of their ease of synthesis and functionalization in the 4′-position: 2,3 4,2′:6′,4″-terpyridine (4,2′:6′,4″-tpy) and 3,2′:6′,3″-terpyridine (3,2′:6′,3″-tpy). Both ligands typically coordinate metals through only the outer pyridine rings, and Scheme 2 illustrates that, while the directionality of the donor atoms in 4,2′:6′,4″-tpy is fixed, that in 3,2′:6′,3″-tpy is varied by virtue of rotation about the inter-ring C–C bonds.

In terms of using these ligands as linkers in the construction of coordination polymers, this distinction between 4,2′:6′,4″-tpy and 3,2′:6′,3″-tpy presents interesting design issues, and it might appear that assemblies directed using 4,2′:6′,4″-tpy may be more predictable than those using 3,2′:6′,3″-tpy. However, even with its apparent preorganization, 4,2′:6′,4″-tpy can yield surprises when coordinating metals as is illustrated below.

The coordination chemistry of 3,2′:6′,3″-terpyridines remains largely unexplored. A search of the Cambridge...

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Scheme 1  Divergent metal binding mode of \{M(2,2′:6′,2″-tpy)\}_2 unit where X is a donor group, e.g. pyridyl, (spacer)-CO_2-.
The peripheral donor

A strategy adopted by many groups to switch the assembly preference from 1-dimension to 2- or 3-dimensions is to incorporate a peripheral donor group. Popular choices are heterocycles (e.g. pyridine, pyrimidine) or carboxylic acids. Note the analogy between 4′-(4-pyridyl)-4,2′:6′,4″-tpy and 2,4,6-tris(4-pyridyl)-1,3,5-triazine (Scheme 3), a building block par excellence in coordination networks.10 If all three outer pyridine rings bind metals, py-4,2′:6′,4″-tpy acts as a planar, 3-connecting node. In some cases, serendipity rules, and one or more donors remain coordinatively innocent when the ligand reacts with a metal salt.11 A pertinent example is ligand 1 (Fig. 1a). Its reaction with Zn(acac)2 unexpectedly gives a discrete complex in which 1 coordinates to Zn through one pyridine ring only (Fig. 1b), along with a linear polymer (Fig. 1b); CH⋯N contacts are implicated as one controlling factor in these two assemblies.12

The examples discussed below are not comprehensive, but rather exemplify how peripheral pyridyl or carboxylate groups are applied to direct the assembly of 2- and 3-dimensional frameworks. A few recent examples have been selected, and citations within these publications guide the reader to a wider literature coverage of the area.

The cationic metal–organic framework (MOF) present in [(Cu(py-4,2′:6′,4″-tpy))NO3]·MeOH has been prepared using a solvothermal approach, with in situ reduction of copper(ii) to copper(i). Both Cu and py-4,2′:6′,4″-tpy are 3-connecting nodes, and the resulting 4-fold interpenetrating 3-dimensional framework (Fig. 2a) retains channels in which anions and solvent molecules are accommodated. Solvent can be

![Scheme 2](image)

**Scheme 2** Divergent N,N′-metal binding mode of 4,2′:6′,4″-tpy, and variable binding modes of 3,2′:6′,3″-tpy accessible through inter-ring bond rotation.

![Scheme 3](image)

**Scheme 3** Structural analogy between 4′-(4-pyridyl)-4,2′:6′,4″-tpy (py-4,2′:6′,4″-tpy) and 2,4,6-tris(4-pyridyl)-1,3,5-triazine, and the structure of 4′-(4-pyridyl)-3,2′:6′,3″-tpy (py-3,2′:6′,3″-tpy).
exchanged (MeOH for H$_2$O) without a change in the lattice. The nitrate anions in the hydrated MOF can be exchanged with a range of anions, allowing the system to be applied for anion sensing.$^{13}$ Retaining the 3-connecting Cu and py-4,2'-6',4''-tpy nodes, but introducing bridging cyanido ligands into the MOF leads to [Cu$_3$(μ-μ-CN)$_3$(py-4,2'-6',4''-tpy)$_2$]$_n$, which is also 4-fold interpenetrating (Fig. 2b).$^{14}$

The trinuclear unit {Fe$_2$NiO(Piv)$_6$} ($\text{Piv} = \text{pivalic acid}$) is preorganized as a planar, 3-connecting node and combined with py-4,2'-6',4''-tpy gives a 2-dimensional (6,3) net.$^{15}$ Replacement of py-4,2'-6',4''-tpy by py-3,2',6',3''-tpy leads to a switch from a (6,3) net to (4.8)-fes topology.$^{16}$ An attractive application of py-4,2'-6',4''-tpy is as a ‘lock’ in MOFs to prevent loss of guest molecules. This is demonstrated by the introduction of 4,2'-6',4''-tpy to [(Na$_2$Zn$_2$(fda)$_3$(H$_2$O)$_2$)]. (H$_2$fda = 2,5-furandicarboxylic acid) which contains channels with a diameter comparable to that of the 4,2'-6',4''-tpy ligand.$^{17}$

4'-((Carboxyphenyl)-4,2'-6',4''-terpyridine (4'-((Hc)-4,2'-6',4''-tpy), Scheme 4) has been used in a range of coordination polymers, a number assembled in the presence of a co-ligand.$^{18}$ If the peripheral carboxylate is monodentate or acts as a chelating ligand, 4'-((cp)-4,2'-6',4''-tpy can function as a planar 3-connecting node and is therefore potentially analogous to py-4,2'-6',4''-tpy. But, as seen above, one or more donor sites may remain non-coordinated leading to lower dimensionality structures than anticipated. An example is [Co(4'-((cp)-4,2'-6',4''-tpy)(H$_2$O)$_2$)]$_n$ which is a 1D-coordination polymer with 4'-((cp)-4,2'-6',4''-tpy acting as a bridging N,O-donor.$^{19}$ The addition of co-ligands in some investigations makes it difficult to appreciate clear design strategies in the use of 4'-((carboxyphenyl)-4,2'-6',4''-terpyridines. Nonetheless, the examples below illustrate the potential for their use in 2- and 3-dimensional assemblies.

Interpenetrating sheets are observed in [[Cd(4'-((cp)-4,2'-6',4''-tpy)(OAc)(H$_2$O))]. (H$_2$O)-DMA]$_n$ (Fig. 3a), but a change in cadmium(II) salt, solvothermal conditions and solvent leads to [[Cd(4'(4-((cp)-4,2'-6',4''-tpy))(OAc)(H$_2$O))/H$_2$O-DMA]$_n$ (Fig. 3a), whereas [[Cd$_2$(4'-((cp)-4,2'-6',4''-tpy))].3.5H$_2$O]$_n$ exhibits doubly interpenetrating (4,4) nets.$^{22}$

One structure deserves particular attention. The reaction of CoCl$_2$-6H$_2$O with 4'-((Hc)-4,2'-6',4''-tpy under basic solvothermal conditions leads to [Co(4'-((cp)-4,2'-6',4''-tpy)]$_n$.
The assembly of the entangled framework depicted in Fig. 3b arises from the 8-connecting node shown in Fig. 3c in which ‘N’ represents an N-bound 4′-(4- cp)-4,2′:6′,4′-tpy domain, and ‘RCO’ represents the carboxylate functionality in 4′-(4-cp)-4,2′:6′,4′-tpy. The assembly is of note because of coexisting interpenetration, self-threading and polythreading.23 Despite possible steric crowding of the 2-substituted functionality in 4′-(2-cp)-4,2′:6′,4′-tpy (Scheme 4), this ligand has been shown to be a versatile building block in coordination networks.24 The effects of removing the phenylene spacer on going from 4′-(4- Hcp)-4,2′:6′,4′-tpy to 4′- HO2C-C-4,2′:6′,4′-tpy have also been explored, and recently, Wang and co-workers have shown that the introduction of two peripheral carboxylic acid groups opens up the pathway to zinc-containing MOFs which exhibit selective CO2 capture.26

Going for higher coordination numbers

The previous section illustrates the approach adopted by many research teams to increase the dimensionality of coordination networks which incorporate divergent tpy linkers. We now move to our own strategies which have developed from an initial penchant for coordination polymers containing zinc(n) nodes.7 To encourage the assembly of 2- or 3-dimensional networks using 4,2′:6′,4′-tpy linkers, our approach was to increase the connectivity of the metal node. We originally showed that going from zinc to cadmium facilitated a switch from helical 1-dimensional chains [ZnCl2(4′-aryl-4,2′:6′,4′-tpy)]n containing 2-connecting Zn nodes, to 2-dimensional sheets [Cd(NO3)2(2)]n containing 4-connecting Cd nodes (2 = 4′- phenyl-4,2′:6′,4′-tpy, Scheme 5). The 6-coordinate Cd atom (with trans-nitrato ligands) binds four ligands to give a (4,4) net with each divergent 4,2′:6′,4′-tpy ligand bridging adjacent Cd atoms. This is a motif that reappears in a number of related compounds with 4-connecting Cd nodes and 4′- aryl-functionalized 4,2′:6′,4′-tpy ligands, for example with ligand 328 (Scheme 5). However, the assembly principle is not general, and the assemblies formed with ligands 4–9 (Scheme 5) provide pertinent examples; 4–9 are derivatives of 2 bearing alkoxy tails. Cd(NO3)2·4H2O reacts with 4 (methoxy substituent) to give a 1-dimensional ladder (Fig. 4a) under room temperature crystallization conditions with an input Cd:ligand ratio of 3:1.29 A ladder is again seen when Cd(NO3)2·4H2O is combined with 8 (n-hexoxy substituent, Fig. 4b) in a molar ratio of 1:1, but if the amount of ligand is increased in the crystallization experiment (ratio of moles of Cd:8 = 1:3), the assembly switches to a (4,4) net (Fig. 5a).29 A closely related (4,4) net is formed with 7, but on going to 5 with the shorter n-propyl chain, a (6,3) net assembles in [(Cd2(NO3)2(6)]·3CHCl3]n (Fig. 5b). Powder diffraction was used to confirm the homogeneity of the bulk samples, and also indicates that reaction of Cd(NO3)2·4H2O with 6 leads to a (6,3) net. In this network, packing involves the accommodation of the n-propoxy chain in a pocket comprising three ligands 5; this pocket is big enough to accommodate an n-butoxy chain, but not a longer chain. Hence, going from an n-butoxy to n-pentoxy chain switches the architecture from a (6,3) to (4,4) net.30 Reactions of Cd(NO3)2·4H2O with 10 or 11 also give ladders (Fig. 4c).31 The study of network assembly with cadmium nitrate and ligands 5–9 was systematic, using a 1:3 ratio of Cd:ligand, and constant volumes of the same

Scheme 5 Structures of ligands 2-12.
The use of cobalt trans ligands are not all bulk samples have been analysed by X-ray powder diffraction.

The preference for the ladder motif is unclear. Given that the reaction of cadmium(n) nitrate with ligand 8 can lead to either a ladder or a (4,4) net, it seems unlikely that substituent effects are the dominant factor, and the preference is possibly associated with concentration effects. Concentration effects are the well-established roots for the competitive formation of metallomacrocycles versus metallopolymer.

It is tempting to think that an octahedral \{MX\_N\}_4 metal centre (N = donor atom from a 4,2\_6:4\_4\_tpy ligand, X = ancillary ligand) is predisposed to acting as a 4-connecting node only if the ancillary ligands are mutually trans. This is not the case. The reactions of cadmium(n) nitrate with 7, 8 and 9 all lead to (4,4) nets, but in [[Cd\_2(NO\_3)_4\_7\_1]]\_3\_CHCl\_3\_MeOH\_n, and [[Cd\_2(NO\_3)_4\_8\_3]]\_3\_CHCl\_3\_MeOH\_n, the nitrate ligands are trans, while in [[Cd\_2(NO\_3)_4\_9\_2]]\_2\_MeOH\_n, they are cis. Fig. 6 illustrates views through part of a sheet in each of [[Cd\_2(NO\_3)_4\_8\_3]]\_3\_CHCl\_3\_MeOH\_n, and [[Cd\_2(NO\_3)_4\_9\_2]]\_2\_MeOH\_n, showing how trans/cis isomerisation at Cd affects the profile of the net; the profile of the sheet in [[Cd\_2(NO\_3)_4\_7\_1]]\_3\_CHCl\_3\_MeOH\_n mimics that in [[Cd\_2(NO\_3)_4\_8\_3]]\_3\_CHCl\_3\_MeOH\_n (Fig. 6a).

The structural similarities between the (4,4) nets in [CdX\_2\_3\_2] (X = NO\_3, Br, I) and [CoCl\_2\_3\_2], demonstrate the use of cobalt(n) as an alternative to cadmium(n) for increasing the dimensionality of architectures involving 4,2\_6:4\_4\_tpy linkers. The (4,4) nets in [[2Co\_3\_2\_2\_3\_H\_2O]]\_35 and [[Cd\_2(NO\_3)_4\_2\_3\_MeOH\_CHCl\_3]]\_27 mimic one another, and reaction of Co(NCS\_2\_12\_2)\_0.5H\_2O\_n, with 12 (Scheme 5) produces a (4,4) net with a ‘ball-and-socket’ packing of adjacent sheets involving \text{CH}_{\text{tert-Bu}}^\cdot\cdot\cdot\text{Npyridine} interactions. The latter is an interesting example in which a change in solvent causes a switch in packing of the (4,4) nets. In [[4Co\_3\_2\_2\_3\_MeOH\_H\_2O\_3\_12\_2]]\_7461, the sheets are equally spaced (Fig. 7a) while in [[Co\_3\_2\_2\_2\_0.5H\_2O\_3\_12\_2]]\_7468 the sheets are equally spaced (Fig. 7b) with 12 (Scheme 5) produces a (4,4) net with a ‘ball-and-socket’ packing of adjacent sheets involving \text{CH}_{\text{tert-Bu}}^\cdot\cdot\cdot\text{Npyridine} interactions.
Expanding dimensionality using ditopic bis(4,2′:6′,4″-tpy) and bis(3,2′:6′,3″-tpy) ligands

The tool-kit of the supramolecular chemist is made richer by the use of multitopic ligands, i.e. ‘tying together’ metal-binding domains in preorganized arrays. Ligands containing multiple 2,2′:6′,2″-tpy metal-binding sites are invaluable for accessing a range of exciting supramolecular architectures. In contrast, ligands with multiple 4,2′:6′,4″- or 3,2′:6′,3″-tpy are still little investigated. In 2013, Yoshida et al. demonstrated the potential for such ditopic ligands in reactions of 13 or 14 (Scheme 6) with bis(3-cyanopentane-2,4-dionato)cobalt(ii). Ligands 13 and 14 are both 4-connecting, and the combination of bis(3-cyanopentane-2,4-dionato)cobalt(ii) with 13 gives 2-dimensional nets that are triply interpenetrating.

The rather poor solubilities of bis(4,2′:6′,4″-tpy) ligands with phenylene spacers can be rectified by introducing solubilizing alkyl chains. This turns out to have an added advantage: the octoxy tails in ligand 15 (Scheme 7) direct the assembly of 2D–2D parallel interpenetrated sheets in \([\{\text{ZnCl}_4(15)\}-4\text{H}_2\text{O}\}_n\) and \([\text{ZnBr}_4(15)\]\). The interpenetration is lost when the long alkoxy chains are replaced by methoxy groups in \([\{\text{ZnBr}_4(16)\}-2\text{C}_6\text{H}_4\text{Cl}_2\}_n\) and \([\{\text{ZnI}_4(16)\}-2.3\text{C}_6\text{H}_4\text{Cl}_2\}_n\) (Scheme 7 for ligand 16). All four coordination polymers consist of similar (4,4) nets in which the ligand (15 or 16) behaves as a planar, 4-connecting node. This is illustrated in Fig. 8 for \([\{\text{ZnBr}_4(16)\}-2\text{C}_6\text{H}_4\text{Cl}_2\}_n\); the centroid of each phenylene ring in 16 (i.e. the 4-connecting node in the network) is shown in red in Fig. 8, emphasizing that the zinc centres do not play a role in defining the connectivity of the network. Each sheet in \([\{\text{ZnCl}_4(15)\}-4\text{H}_2\text{O}\}_n\), \([\text{ZnBr}_4(15)\]n, \([\{\text{ZnBr}_4(16)\}-2\text{C}_6\text{H}_4\text{Cl}_2\}_n\), and \([\{\text{ZnI}_4(16)\}-2.3\text{C}_6\text{H}_4\text{Cl}_2\}_n\) has a corrugated profile (Fig. 8b). In the coordination networks with ligand 16, the MeO groups point above and below the sheet, and sheets nest together with inter-sheet face-to-face π-stacking interactions. In contrast, in \([\{\text{ZnI}_4(15)\}-4\text{H}_2\text{O}\}_n\), and \([\text{ZnBr}_4(15)\]n, the octoxy chains (in extended conformations) run through the plane of the sheet and play a role in guiding the 2D–2D parallel interpenetration shown in the TOPOS representation in Fig. 9.

In the examples above, the connectivity of the 2-dimensional networks is entirely governed by the ditopic ligand, and this is clearly seen in Fig. 8a. In contrast, the reaction of 1,4-bis(n-octoxy)-3,5-bis(3,2′:6′,3″-terpyridin-4′-yl)benzene, 17, with Co(NCS)₂ leads to a 3-dimensional network in which both ligand and cobalt act as 4-connecting nodes. Effectively, this combines the strategy of ‘going for higher
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The design of 2- and 3-dimensional networks in which the linkers are divergent isomers of terpyridine is a rapidly expanding area of research. Ultimate goals include MOFs for gas adsorption, and photo- or redox-active networks. This Highlight has demonstrated approaches to encourage the formation of 2- and 3-dimensional architectural, thus moving away from the 1-dimensional chains that pervaded earlier investigations of the coordination chemistry of 4,2:6′,4′-tpy. Functionalization in the tpy 4'-position with, for example, pyridyl, pyrimidyl or carboxylate donors is an approach widely adopted. However, the ligand is not necessarily coordinate, divergent 4,2:6′,4′- or 3,2:6′,3′-tpy linkers, and (ii) to design ligands than contain multiple 4,2:6′,4′- or 3,2:6′,3′-tpy domains. The latter strategy has proved to be particularly successful, and one that is ripe for further development.

**Conclusions**

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Notes and references


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