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## Base-Promoted, Remote C-H Activation at a Cationic ( $\eta^5$ -C<sub>5</sub>Me<sub>5</sub>)Ir(III) Center Involving Reversible C-C Bond Formation of Bound C<sub>5</sub>Me<sub>5</sub>

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# Base-Promoted, Remote C-H Activation at a Cationic ( $\eta^5$ -C<sub>5</sub>Me<sub>5</sub>)Ir(III) Center Involving Reversible C-C Bond Formation of Bound C<sub>5</sub>Me<sub>5</sub>

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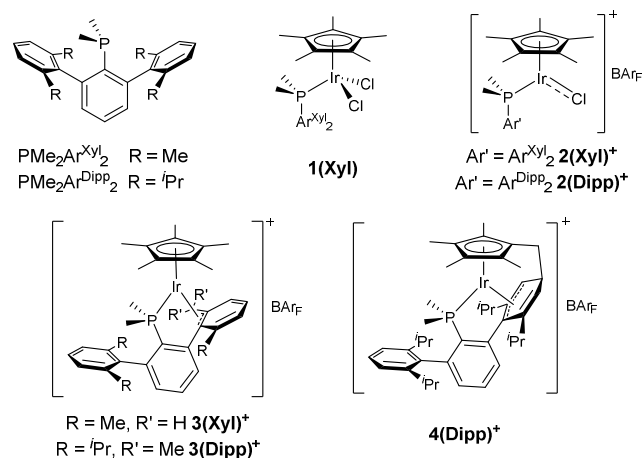
## Supporting Information Placeholder

**ABSTRACT:** C-H bond activation at cationic [ $(\eta^5$ -C<sub>5</sub>Me<sub>5</sub>)Ir(PMe<sub>2</sub>Ar')] centers is described, where PMe<sub>2</sub>Ar' are the terphenyl phosphine ligands PMe<sub>2</sub>Ar<sup>Xyl</sup><sub>2</sub> and PMe<sub>2</sub>Ar<sup>Dipp</sup><sub>2</sub> (Scheme 1). Different pathways are defined for the conversion of the five-coordinate complexes [ $(\eta^5$ -C<sub>5</sub>Me<sub>5</sub>)Ir(Cl)(PMe<sub>2</sub>Ar')]<sup>+</sup>, **2(Xyl)**<sup>+</sup> and **2(Dipp)**<sup>+</sup>, into the corresponding pseudoallyls **3(Xyl)**<sup>+</sup> and **3(Dipp)**<sup>+</sup>. In the absence of an external Brønsted base, electrophilic, remote  $\zeta$  C-H activation takes place, for which the participation of dicationic species, [ $(\eta^5$ -C<sub>5</sub>Me<sub>5</sub>)Ir(PMe<sub>2</sub>Ar')]<sup>2+</sup>, is proposed. When NEt<sub>3</sub> is present, the PMe<sub>2</sub>Ar<sup>Dipp</sup><sub>2</sub> system is shown to proceed via **4(Dipp)**<sup>+</sup> as an intermediate *en route* to the thermodynamic, isomeric product **3(Dipp)**<sup>+</sup>. This complex interconversion involves a non-innocent C<sub>5</sub>Me<sub>5</sub> ligand, which participates in C-H and C-C bond formation and cleavage. Remarkably, the conversion of **4(Dipp)**<sup>+</sup> to **3(Dipp)**<sup>+</sup> also proceeds in the solid state.

Cyclopentadienyls, C<sub>5</sub>R<sub>5</sub>, and tertiary phosphines, PR<sub>3</sub>, are unquestionably two of the most important classes of ligands in organometallic chemistry and catalysis.<sup>1</sup> Although in most cases C<sub>5</sub>R<sub>5</sub> and PR<sub>3</sub> behave strictly as spectators, in some reactions they can also directly participate. As PR<sub>3</sub> and C<sub>5</sub>R<sub>5</sub> continue to be increasingly employed in homogeneous catalysis, knowledge of these unforeseen reactions is crucial because they might strongly influence catalytic outcomes<sup>2</sup> or lead to catalyst deactivation.<sup>3</sup> Certain aryl phosphines undergo facile cyclometalation,<sup>4,5</sup> and recently, nickel- and palladium-mediated dearomatization of dialkylbiaryl phosphines has been reported.<sup>2,6</sup> With cyclopentadienyl ligands, in particular C<sub>5</sub>Me<sub>5</sub>, ring methyl activation implying either deprotonation or hydride abstraction,<sup>7,8</sup> as well as metal-to-ring hydride transfer,<sup>9,10</sup> have all been documented.

Transition metal mediated C-H bond activation is a very important transformation with great potential for the functionalization of hydrocarbons. Decisive mechanistic advances have been made with the investigation of electrophilic C-H bond activation at ( $\eta^5$ -C<sub>5</sub>Me<sub>5</sub>)Ir(III) centers,<sup>11</sup> revealing, among other details, the influence of coligands, in particular their ability to act as a base to accept the generated proton.<sup>12</sup> Here, we targeted the synthesis of cationic ( $\eta^5$ -C<sub>5</sub>Me<sub>5</sub>)Ir(III) complexes of the terphenyl phosphines<sup>13</sup> PMe<sub>2</sub>Ar<sup>Xyl</sup><sub>2</sub> and PMe<sub>2</sub>Ar<sup>Dipp</sup><sub>2</sub> (Scheme 1). In particular,

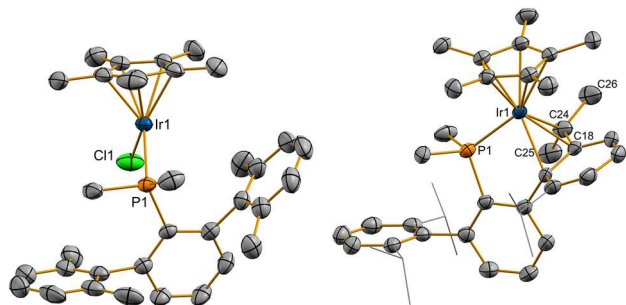
we report that the five-coordinate complexes [ $(\eta^5$ -C<sub>5</sub>Me<sub>5</sub>)Ir(Cl)(PR<sub>2</sub>Ar')]<sup>+</sup>, **2(Xyl)**<sup>+</sup> and **2(Dipp)**<sup>+</sup>, promote facile electrophilic C-H activation at remote  $\zeta$  C-H bonds of the phosphine ligand to form **3(Xyl)**<sup>+</sup> and **3(Dipp)**<sup>+</sup>. Moreover, for **2(Dipp)**<sup>+</sup> the observed  $\zeta$  C-H activation in the presence of NEt<sub>3</sub> occurs through a complex mechanism that implies reversible  $\eta^5$ -C<sub>5</sub>Me<sub>5</sub> deprotonation and reversible C-C bond formation between the resulting tetramethylfulvene terminal methylene group, and one of the flanking Dipp rings of the phosphine, that itself undergoes dearomatization.<sup>2,6</sup> The resulting intermediate, **4(Dipp)**<sup>+</sup>, contains a 10-membered phospho-iridacycle. Intriguingly, this complex transforms readily into the isomeric  $\zeta$  C-H activation species, **3(Dipp)**<sup>+</sup>, not only in solution, but also in the solid state.



**Scheme 1.** The dimethyl terphenyl phosphines and corresponding iridium(III) cyclopentadienyl complexes reported in this work

Treatment of [ $(\eta^5$ -C<sub>5</sub>Me<sub>5</sub>)IrCl<sub>2</sub>]<sub>2</sub> with PMe<sub>2</sub>Ar<sup>Xyl</sup><sub>2</sub> in CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> yielded the expected [ $(\eta^5$ -C<sub>5</sub>Me<sub>5</sub>)IrCl<sub>2</sub>(PMe<sub>2</sub>Ar<sup>Xyl</sup><sub>2</sub>)] product, **1(Xyl)**, in high yields (~ 90%). Chloride abstraction by NaBAF was also straightforward and allowed isolation of the cationic complex [ $(\eta^5$ -C<sub>5</sub>Me<sub>5</sub>)IrCl(PMe<sub>2</sub>Ar<sup>Xyl</sup><sub>2</sub>)]<sup>+</sup> (**2(Xyl)**<sup>+</sup>, Scheme 1) as its BA<sub>F</sub> salt, which appeared as a very dark red crystalline solid. Because of the high solution reactivity of this low-coordinate complex under ambient conditions, its synthesis and characterization were performed at -20 °C. Microanalytical and spectroscopic data (see the Supporting Information) were in agreement with the

formulation indicated in Scheme 1, which was subsequently confirmed by X-ray crystallography (Figure 1, left). The short Ir–Cl bond length of 2.2785(9) Å (*cf.* the 2.396(1) Å average distance in **1(Xyl)**), coupled with the distinct, intense dark color,<sup>14–16</sup> suggest chloride acts as a  $\pi$ -donor in this formally 16e complex; similar Ru–Cl shortening was also reported in  $[(\eta^5\text{-C}_5\text{Me}_5)\text{Ru}(\text{Cl})(\text{P}^i\text{Pr}_3)]$ .<sup>17</sup>

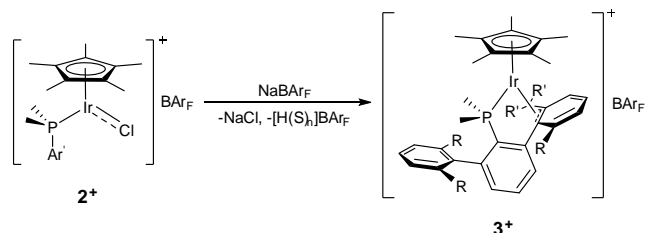


**Figure 1.** ORTEPs of the cations of complex **[2(Xyl)]BARf** and **[3(Dipp)]BARf**. Hydrogen atoms are excluded for clarity and thermal ellipsoids are set at 50 % probability. Gray lines represent Dipp Pr substituents.

At room temperature, dichloromethane solutions of **2(Xyl)**<sup>+</sup> underwent further chemical changes, as evidenced by a color change from the initial dark red to yellow-red. This process was accelerated by the presence of water and product crystallization from CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>/Et<sub>2</sub>O solvent yielded mixtures of a new iridium complex, **3(Xyl)**<sup>+</sup>, along with  $[(\eta^5\text{-C}_5\text{Me}_5)\text{IrCl}_2]_2$  and  $[\text{HPMe}_2\text{Ar}^{\text{Xyl}}]_2\text{BARf}$ . **3(Xyl)**<sup>+</sup> was unequivocally characterized as a pseudoallylic species formed via remote  $\zeta$  C–H activation of a benzylic C–H bond of one of the Xyl substituents. It thus appears that the HCl released in the formation of **3(Xyl)**<sup>+</sup> decomposed unreacted **2(Xyl)**<sup>+</sup> to yield the above-mentioned side products.

Given that increased coligand steric demands often confers enhanced kinetic stability and hinders undesirable side reactions,  $(\eta^5\text{-C}_5\text{Me}_5)\text{Ir(III)}$  complexes of the bulkier phosphine  $\text{PMe}_2\text{Ar}^{\text{Dipp}_2}$  (Scheme 1) were considered. Although the dichloride analogue of **1(Xyl)** could not be generated, possibly because of steric hindrance, cationic **2(Dipp)**<sup>+</sup> formed rapidly when  $[(\eta^5\text{-C}_5\text{Me}_5)\text{IrCl}_2]_2$  and  $\text{PMe}_2\text{Ar}^{\text{Dipp}_2}$  were allowed to react in the presence of NaBARf. The similar properties of the two **2(PMe<sub>2</sub>Ar')**<sup>+</sup> complexes, including the observation for **2(Dipp)**<sup>+</sup> of a <sup>31</sup>P{<sup>1</sup>H} NMR singlet with a  $\Delta(\delta)$  shift relative to free  $\text{PMe}_2\text{Ar}^{\text{Dipp}_2}$  practically identical to the corresponding value for **2(Xyl)**<sup>+</sup>, strongly supported a five-coordinate structure analogous to that of **2(Xyl)**<sup>+</sup>. Notwithstanding the structural similarity, **2(Dipp)**<sup>+</sup> possesses much superior solution stability.

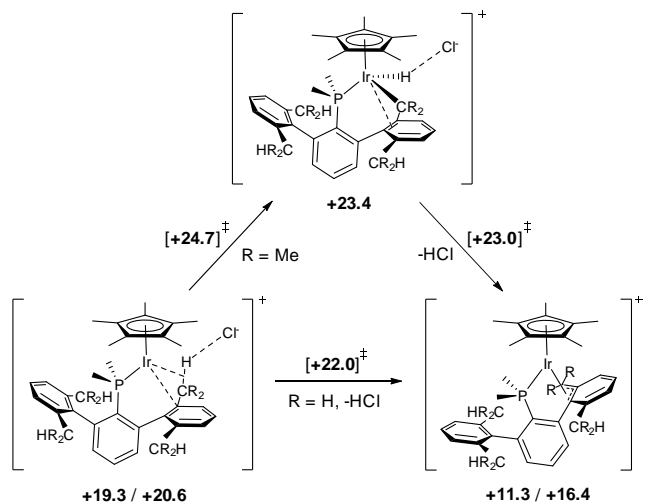
As the formation of cationic pseudoallyls, **3(PMe<sub>2</sub>Ar')**<sup>+</sup>, from the corresponding chlorides, **2(PMe<sub>2</sub>Ar')**<sup>+</sup>, implies electrophilic C–H activation and elimination of HCl, we considered it of interest to study (i) the generation of dicationic  $[(\eta^5\text{-C}_5\text{Me}_5)\text{Ir}(\text{PR}_2\text{Ar}')]_2^{2+}$  species by chloride abstraction from **2(PMe<sub>2</sub>Ar')**<sup>+</sup> with NaBARf and (ii) the use of an external Brønsted base such as NEt<sub>3</sub> to facilitate HCl elimination. The first approach actually constitutes the best procedure for the high yield synthesis of complexes **3(Xyl)**<sup>+</sup> and **3(Dipp)**<sup>+</sup> (see Scheme 2). Focusing on the  $\text{PMe}_2\text{Ar}^{\text{Dipp}_2}$  analogues for additional solution reaction studies, it was found that the formation of **3(Dipp)**<sup>+</sup> promoted by NaBARf was very slow at room temperature, probably due to the absence of an effective base. Consistent with this hypothesis, reaction of  $\text{PMe}_2\text{Ar}^{\text{Dipp}_2}$  with  $[(\eta^5\text{-C}_5\text{Me}_5)\text{Ir}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_3](\text{SO}_4)$ <sup>18</sup> proceeded rapidly to afford **3(Dipp)**<sup>+</sup>.



**Scheme 2.** Electrophilic  $\zeta$  C–H activation in complexes **2**<sup>+</sup> to give the pseudoallylic species **3**<sup>+</sup>, S represents a solvent molecule.

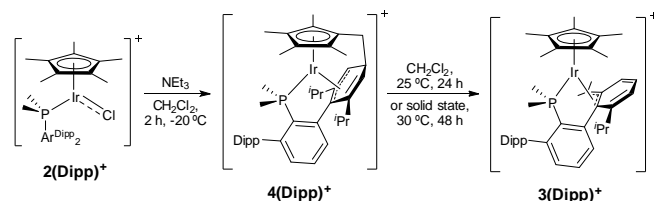
The BARf salts of the two pseudoallyl complexes **3(Xyl)**<sup>+</sup> and **3(Dipp)**<sup>+</sup> were fully characterized by microanalysis and multinuclear NMR spectroscopy. For **3(Xyl)**<sup>+</sup> distinct <sup>1</sup>H NMR resonances corresponding to the *anti* and *syn* pseudoallylic protons are seen as multiplets at 3.14 and 1.04 ppm, with <sup>2</sup>J<sub>HH</sub> = 3.9 and <sup>3</sup>J<sub>HP</sub> = 1 and 14 Hz, respectively. The corresponding carbon atom gives a <sup>13</sup>C{<sup>1</sup>H} signal at 26.3 ppm (<sup>2</sup>J<sub>CP</sub> = 4 Hz), whereas the *C<sub>ortho</sub>* and *C<sub>ipso</sub>* involved in the  $\eta^3$ -bonded unit appear at 89.1 and 83.2 ppm, respectively. Single-crystals of **[3(Dipp)]BARf** were also investigated by X-ray crystallography (Figure 1, right) that confirms that a Dipp ring in **2(Dipp)**<sup>+</sup> has undergone  $\zeta$  C–H activation to give a pseudoallylic product (Ir–C<sub>Me<sub>2</sub></sub> = 2.224(3), Ir–C<sub>ortho</sub> = 2.197(3) and Ir–C<sub>ipso</sub> = 2.257(3) Å).

The mechanism of the C–H bond activation to form the **3(PMe<sub>2</sub>Ar')**<sup>+</sup> complexes was also investigated by DFT methods<sup>19</sup>. The most accessible pathway involves initial Cl<sup>−</sup> dissociation from an ion-pair comprising dicationic  $[(\eta^5\text{-C}_5\text{Me}_5)\text{Ir}(\text{PMe}_2\text{Ar}')]_2^{2+}$ , in which the phosphine is bound in a  $\kappa\text{-P}$ ,  $\eta^3\text{-C}_{\text{arene}}$  fashion (Figure S1), and Cl<sup>−</sup>, which resides in the outer coordination sphere. For **2(Xyl)**<sup>+</sup>, this process entails a barrier of 18.4 kcal/mol and gives a species at +16.5 kcal/mol. Facile rearrangement then forms  $\zeta$  C–H agostic intermediate at +19.3 kcal/mol (Scheme 3). The acidity of the agostic proton in this dicationic species promotes its facile abstraction by the Cl<sup>−</sup> ion via a transition state at +22.0 kcal/mol, this representing the overall barrier to the C–H activation process<sup>20</sup>. In contrast, chloride-mediated deprotonation in **2(Dipp)**<sup>+</sup> does not occur at the agostic complex, but requires an additional C–H oxidative cleavage step to form an Ir(V) hydride, which is then deprotonated by Cl<sup>−</sup>. The overall barrier in this case is 24.7 kcal/mol, 2.7 kcal/mol higher than that in **2(Xyl)**<sup>+</sup> and so consistent with the observed enhanced solution stability of the former (see SI for details). The formation of  $[\text{HPMe}_2\text{Ar}']\text{BARf}$  and  $[(\eta^5\text{-C}_5\text{Me}_5)\text{IrCl}_2]_2$  from **2**<sup>+</sup> and HCl seems to be the driving force of the reaction in both systems.



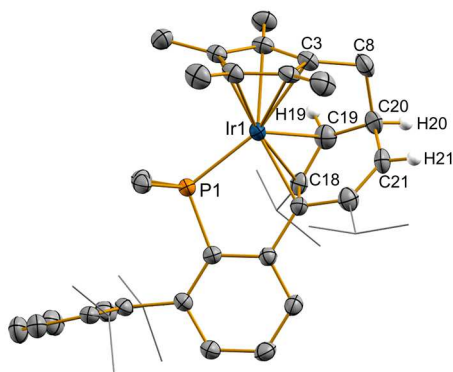
**Scheme 3.** Proposed mechanism for the electrophilic C–H activation in **2(PMe<sub>2</sub>Ar')**<sup>+</sup> complexes ( $\Delta G_{50}^\circ$ , kcal/mol, R = H, Me).

The addition of a slight excess of  $\text{NEt}_3$  to solutions of  $2(\text{Dipp})^+$  highlighted the remarkable chemical and structural changes that occur *en route* to  $3(\text{Dipp})^+$ . The latter formed quantitatively by  $^1\text{H}$  NMR after stirring at room temperature for about 24 hours. However, following the reaction by NMR demonstrated the formation of an intermediate,  $4(\text{Dipp})^+$ , responsible for a  $^{31}\text{P}\{^1\text{H}\}$  singlet resonance at  $-4.4$  ppm, clearly distinguishable from those of  $2(\text{Dipp})^+$  and  $3(\text{Dipp})^+$  at 6.6 and 9.8 ppm, respectively. After careful NMR analysis of reaction temperature and time, we found that intermediate  $4(\text{Dipp})^+$  formed as the only observable product when  $2(\text{Dipp})^+$  and  $\text{NEt}_3$  were allowed to react at  $-20$  °C for 2 hours (Scheme 4).



**Scheme 4.**  $\text{NEt}_3$  assisted formation of complex  $4(\text{Dipp})^+$  from  $2(\text{Dipp})^+$ , and solution and solid-state isomerization of  $4(\text{Dipp})^+$  to  $3(\text{Dipp})^+$ .  $\text{BAR}_\text{F}$  anions omitted for clarity.

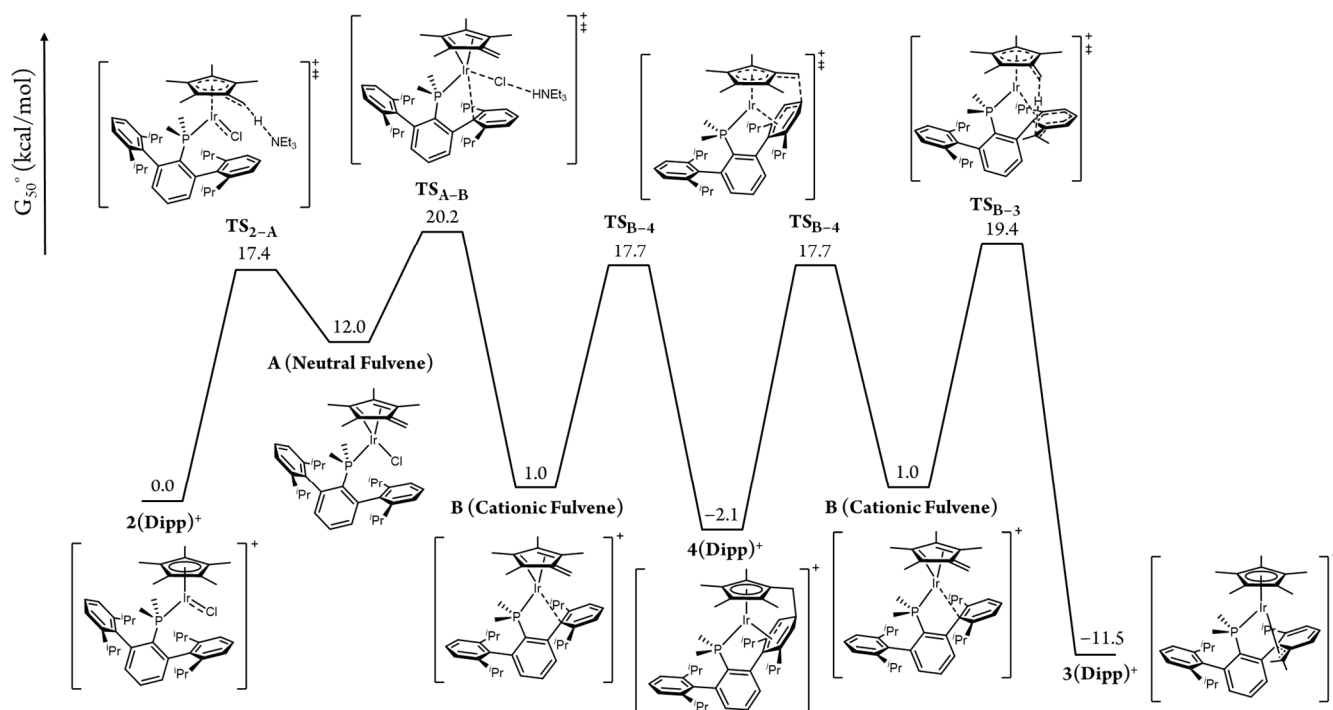
Although  $3(\text{Dipp})^+$  and  $4(\text{Dipp})^+$  are isomers, the latter exhibits a very different metallacyclic constitution, for it contains a 10-membered metallacyclic unit resulting from deprotonation of the  $\text{C}_5\text{Me}_5$  ring,<sup>7</sup> followed by nucleophilic attack<sup>7a,b</sup> at the *para* carbon atom of the coordinated Dipp ring, which is dearomatized.<sup>2,6</sup> Unequivocal structural evidence was gained from variable temperature multinuclear NMR and X-ray studies (Figure 2). In solution, two degenerate pseudoallylic structures undergo fast exchange at room temperature, but reach the slow-exchange regime at  $-30$  °C. At this temperature the diastereotopic  $\text{C}_5\text{Me}_4\text{CH}_2$  protons resonate as doublets of doublets centered at 3.27 and 2.46 ppm, as a consequence of additional coupling to the adjacent *para*  $\text{CH}$  nucleus. The X-ray structure in Figure 2 reveals that beyond the  $\eta^5$  coordination of the  $\text{C}_5\text{Me}_4\text{CH}_2$  moiety, the now activated phosphine ligand binds to iridium through the phosphorus atom and three adjacent carbon atoms of the dearomatized ring (Ir–C bond distances of 2.166(4) (to  $\text{C}_{\text{ipso}}$ ), 2.178(4) ( $\text{C}_{\text{ortho}}$ ) and 2.255(5) Å ( $\text{C}_{\text{meta}}$ )), whereas the newly formed C–C bond has a length of 1.560(6) Å.



**Figure 2.** ORTEP of the cation of complex  $[4(\text{Dipp})]\text{BAR}_\text{F}$ . Hydrogen atoms are excluded for clarity and thermal ellipsoids are set at 50 % probability. Gray lines represent Dipp  $^i\text{Pr}$  substituents.

The isomerization of  $4(\text{Dipp})^+$  to  $3(\text{Dipp})^+$  required neither base ( $\text{NEt}_3$ ) nor acid ( $\text{HNEt}_3^+$ ) catalysis. Instead, it occurred cleanly in  $\text{CH}_2\text{Cl}_2$  solution (Scheme 4) following first-order kinetics ( $t_{1/2} \approx 6$  h; see SI for details). It was, however, most notable to find that the  $4(\text{Dipp})^+$  to  $3(\text{Dipp})^+$  isomerization occurred also easily in the solid state (2 days, 30 °C).<sup>21,22</sup> Periodical sampling and NMR monitoring disclosed no observable intermediates.

The conversion of  $2(\text{Dipp})^+$  into  $3(\text{Dipp})^+$  through  $4(\text{Dipp})^+$  was also studied computationally (Figure 3). Amine-mediated  $\text{C}_5\text{Me}_5$  deprotonation (17.4 kcal/mol,  $\text{TS}_{2-\text{A}}$ ) led to the formation of a neutral, Ir(I) fulvene complex (12.0 kcal/mol, **A**). The thus generated triethylammonium cation then facilitates chloride release (20.2 kcal/mol,  $\text{TS}_{\text{A}-\text{B}}$ ) to yield intermediate **B** (1.0 kcal/mol). **B** is a cationic fulvene complex for which metal unsaturation is compensated by means of a  $\pi$ -arene interaction with one of the flanking aryl rings of the phosphine, and presents an appropriate geometry to undergo C–C bond formation via  $\text{TS}_{\text{B}-4}$  at 17.7 kcal/mol. We propose this ring dearomatization step proceeds with concomitant metal re-oxidation to give Ir(III) complex  $4(\text{Dipp})^+$  at  $-2.1$  kcal/mol. Isomerization of  $4(\text{Dipp})^+$  to  $3(\text{Dipp})^+$  involves the reversible formation of Ir(I) complex **B** via  $\text{TS}_{\text{B}-4}$ . Attack of the fulvene moiety in **B** at the C–H of an isopropyl group of the proximate aryl ring (19.4 kcal/mol,  $\text{TS}_{\text{B}-\text{c}}$ ) re-oxidizes the metal center to Ir(III) and gives the  $\eta^1$ -allyl complex **C** (see SI) at 7.6 kcal/mol. Isomerization to the corresponding  $\eta^3$ -allyl occurs via  $\text{TS}_{\text{C}-3}$  (18.9 kcal/mol) and yields  $3(\text{Dipp})^+$  at  $-11.5$  kcal/mol. It is striking that both the classically innocent ligands ( $\text{C}_5\text{Me}_5$  and  $\text{PR}_3$ ) play a fundamental role in these transformations (C–H activation and reversible C–C bond formation), whereas the metal center participates by means of the Ir(I)-Ir(III) redox cycle (see SI for details).



**Figure 3.**  $\Delta G_{50}^{\circ}$  profile for the conversion of **2(Dipp)<sup>+</sup>** into **3(Dipp)<sup>+</sup>** through **4(Dipp)<sup>+</sup>**.

In conclusion, chloride abstraction from complexes **2<sup>+</sup>** fosters electrophilic, remote C–H bond activation at dicationic intermediates  $[(\eta^5\text{-C}_5\text{Me}_5)\text{Ir}(\text{PMe}_2\text{Ar}')^2]^2+$  ( $\text{Ar}' = \text{Ar}^{\text{Xyl}_2}$ ,  $\text{Ar}^{\text{Dipp}_2}$ ), to give the pseudoallyl products **3<sup>+</sup>** shown in Scheme 2. In the presence of  $\text{NEt}_3$ , complex **2(Dipp)<sup>+</sup>** converts into the same C–H activation product **3(Dipp)<sup>+</sup>**, though through an unforeseen intermediate, **4(Dipp)<sup>+</sup>**. The latter participates in a complex reaction path involving a non-innocent  $\text{C}_5\text{Me}_5$  ligand that undergoes reversible C–H and C–C bond formation and cleavage at one of the methyl termini. The **4(Dipp)<sup>+</sup>**-to-**3(Dipp)<sup>+</sup>** conversion occurs both in solution and in the solid state. The latter observation represents, we believe, a valuable contribution to the field of solid state organometallic chemistry, which despite its importance as a bridge between molecular and solid-state chemistry, and hence between homogeneous and heterogeneous catalysis, is still underdeveloped.<sup>21a</sup>

## ASSOCIATED CONTENT

### Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge on the ACS Publications website at DOI:

Experimental procedures, NMR spectra, computational results and kinetic experiments (PDF).

All optimized geometries along with their SCF energies (xyz files).

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## Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interests.

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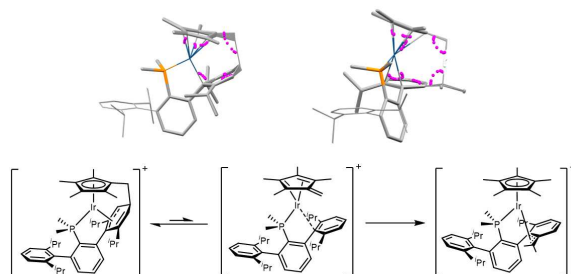
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