Luminescent heterometallic gold–copper alkynyl complexes stabilized by tridentate phosphine†

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Received 8th September 2011, Accepted 5th December 2011
DOI: 10.1039/c2dt11710j

The reactions between trinuclear gold complex tppmAu(C6H4X)3 (tppm = tris(diphenylphosphino)methane), ary lacetylenes HC2C6H4X and Cu+ under basic conditions result in formation of the heterometallic complexes [tppm(Au(C6H4X)3)Cu]+, X = H (1), COOMe (2), CN (3), OMe (4), NH2 (5). These compounds belong to one structural motif and consist of the heterometallic {(Au(C6H4X)3)Cu} core stabilized by the tridentate phosphine. Compounds 1–5 were characterized by polynuclear NMR and IR spectroscopy, ESI-MS and single-crystal X-ray analysis. Luminescence properties of these complexes have been studied and revealed a substantial red shift of the emission maxima with the increase in the electron donicity of the alkynyl ligands substituents in the 550–680 nm range. The theoretical calculations of the electronic structures showed that variations of the substituents on the alkynyl ligands display very little effect on the molecular structural parameters but show appreciable influence on the orbital energies and luminescence characteristics of the compounds under study.

Introduction

The metal–metal interactions of the d10 ions of the coinage metals have been intensely investigated for more than two decades since the attraction between gold atoms was highlighted and defined as “aurophilicity” which resulted in exponential growth of the experimental and theoretical interest in this topic and was particularly stimulated by the intriguing photophysical properties of gold compounds.5 Development of gold(i) polymeric chemistry naturally resulted in expansion into the area of gold-containing heterometallic complexes,4 due to the successful demonstration that the presence of mixed metal–metal interactions between the closed-shell d10 ions causes the perturbation of the electronic structures and dramatic changes in the photophysical properties.7 Therefore special attention has been paid to heteronuclear coinage metal compounds as they were shown to be very effective luminophores exhibiting exceptionally intense room temperature emission.8–11

One of the ways to enhance the metal–metal contacts and to stabilize the polymeric cluster core is to use bridging bi- or polydentate ligands with short bite angles, which are capable of bringing the interacting metal ions into close proximity, i.e. to provide interatomic distances shorter than the sum of van der Waals radii. This methodology has been widely employed in the synthesis of numerous phosphine-containing species due to the high Au(i) affinity toward the phosphorus donor atom. Thus, utilization of hom- or heterobidentate bridging phosphate ligands in the preparation of Au(i) complexes is well documented in the literature and exemplified by a variety of compounds of different nuclearity – from bimetallic dimers2,12 to polymeric clusters and large supramolecular aggregates.6,10,13–15 Interestingly, the coordination chemistry of gold(i) based on tri- or polydentate phosphines is very limited,6 despite their high templating potential in the construction of the molecular multimetallic assemblies. For example, intense phosphorescence has been reported for the linear chain structures16,17 built on tri- and tetraphosphines; the oligothio functionalized tripodal alkynyl-phosphine gold(i) complex serves as a photoluminescent sensor for Mg2+ ions,18 and the combination of flexible triphosphine with bridging sulfide has driven the aggregation of a crown-like Au18 macrocycle.19

Recently our research efforts have focused on the synthesis and photophysical studies of the bimetallic Au(i)–Cu(i) and Au(i)–Ag(i) alkynyl-phosphine clusters, which showed unprecedented photoemissive properties, such as very high quantum efficiency (up to 96%) and negligibly small effect of...
phosphorescence quenching by molecular oxygen.\textsuperscript{11,20} These complexes contain linear diphosphine ligands with spatially separated phosphorus atoms that determine the observed structural motif – a “core” of an emissive heterometallic cluster stabilized by an external gold(i)-phosphine “belt”. As mentioned above, bridging diphosphines such as bis(diphenylphosphino)methane (dpmm) are also capable of supporting the polynuclear aggregates, including the alkynyl ones.\textsuperscript{14,21} Surprisingly, no alkynyl (dppm) are also capable of supporting the polynuclear aggregates. Herein, we report on the assembly of a family of tetranuclear Au(I) tppm-based clusters from the simple precursors, photophysical and theoretical investigations of the novel compounds.

**Experimental**

**General comments**

Phenylacetylene (Acros); 1-ethynyl-4-methoxybenzene (Alfa Aesar); tetrahydrothiophene; tris(diphenylphosphino)methane (tppm) (Strem Chemicals) and all solvents were used as received. Triethylamine was distilled over KOH under a nitrogen atmosphere prior to use. \([\text{tppm} \text{AuCl}_3]\) (tht = tetrahydrothiophene),\textsuperscript{23} \([\text{tppmAuCl}_2]\),\textsuperscript{14} \([\text{tppm}(\text{C}_6\text{H}_4\text{CN})\text{Au}]\),\textsuperscript{25} methyl-4-ethynylbenzoate,\textsuperscript{26} and 4-ethynylaniline\textsuperscript{27} were synthesized according to published procedures. The solution \(1^H, 1^H\)-H COSY and \(31^P\{1^H\} NMR spectra were recorded on a Bruker-DX300 spectrometer. Mass spectra were determined on a Bruker microTOF 10223 instrument in the ESI+ mode. Theoretical isotope patterns were calculated using the material property program available free of charge on-line http://winter.group.nscl.msu.edu/chemputer/. The IR and UV-Vis spectra were recorded using a Perkin Elmer FT-IR BX spectrometer and a Shimadzu UV 3600 spectrophotometer, respectively.

### [tppm(AuC\textsubscript{2}C\textsubscript{6}H\textsubscript{4}COOMe)\textsubscript{3}Cu]BF\textsubscript{4} (2)

Triethylamine (1 ml) was added dropwise to a mixture of methyl-4-ethynylbenzoate (22.6 mg, 0.141 mmol), \([\text{tppmAuCl}_3]\) (60.0 mg, 0.047 mmol) and \([\text{Cu(NCMe)}_4]\)BF\textsubscript{4} (14.8 mg, 0.047 mmol) in CH\textsubscript{2}Cl\textsubscript{2} (10 ml) under vigorous stirring. The reaction mixture was stirred for 2 h in the absence of light. The resulting transparent light-orange solution was reduced in volume \textit{in vacuo} and diluted with hexane to give an orange-yellow precipitate. The precipitate was filtered off, washed with hexane and ether, and dried \textit{in vacuo}. Yield: 81 mg (96%). IR (KBr, cm\textsuperscript{-1}): \(\nu(C=C) 2113\), \(\nu(C=O) 1705\). \textsuperscript{31}P\{1H\} NMR (CD\textsubscript{2}Cl\textsubscript{2}, \(\delta\)): 41.7, s. \(1^H\) NMR (CD\textsubscript{2}Cl\textsubscript{2}, \(\delta\)): phosphine: 6.57 (q, H–C\textsubscript{Ph}, 1H, \(J_{HH} 10.2\) Hz), 7.15 (dd, H-meta Ph, 12H, \(J_{HH} ca. 7\) Hz), 7.25 (t, H-para Ph, 6H, \(J_{HH} ca. 7\) Hz), 8.00 (unresolved multiplet, H-ortho Ph, 12H), \textit{alkynyl ligands}: 3.92 (s, COOOCH\textsubscript{3}, 9H), 7.44 (d, C\textsubscript{Ph}, 6H, \(J_{HH} ca. 8.2\) Hz), 7.74 (d, C\textsubscript{Ph}, 6H, \(J_{HH} 8.2\) Hz). ESI\textsuperscript{+} (m/z): 1699 (M\textsuperscript{+}), \textit{calcld for Au\textsubscript{3}Cu\textsubscript{6}H\textsubscript{25}P\textsubscript{6}O\textsubscript{3}: 1699. Anal. calcld for C\textsubscript{67}H\textsubscript{52}Au\textsubscript{3}Cu\textsubscript{1}F\textsubscript{4}O\textsubscript{6}P\textsubscript{3}: C, 45.02; H, 2.93. Found: C, 45.07; H, 3.02. Single crystals of 2 suitable for X-ray analysis were grown from CH\textsubscript{2}Cl\textsubscript{2} solution by Et\textsubscript{2}O slow diffusion at +5 °C.

### [tppm(AuC\textsubscript{2}C\textsubscript{6}H\textsubscript{4}CN)\textsubscript{3}Cu]BF\textsubscript{4} (3)

Tpmp (21.4 mg, 0.037 mmol) and \([\text{Cu(NCMe)}_4]\)BF\textsubscript{4} (11.8 mg, 0.037 mmol) were added dropwise to a suspension of \([\text{AuC}_2\text{C}_6\text{H}_4\text{CN}]\) (40.0 mg, 0.113 mmol), in CH\textsubscript{2}Cl\textsubscript{2} (10 ml) under vigorous stirring. The reaction mixture was stirred for 3 h in the absence of light. The resulting transparent yellow solution was reduced in volume \textit{in vacuo} with hexane, forming a yellow precipitate. The precipitate was filtered off, washed with hexane and ether, and dried \textit{in vacuo}. Yield: 50 mg (85%). IR (KBr, cm\textsuperscript{-1}): \(\nu(C=C) 2114\), \(\nu(C=O) 1726\). \textsuperscript{31}P\{1H\} NMR (CD\textsubscript{2}Cl\textsubscript{2}, \(\delta\)): 41.5, s. \(1^H\) NMR (CD\textsubscript{2}Cl\textsubscript{2}, \(\delta\)): phosphine: 6.44 (q, H–C\textsubscript{Ph}, 1H, \(J_{HH} 10.1\) Hz), 7.16 (dd, H-meta Ph rings, 12H, \(J_{HH} ca. 7\) Hz), 7.26 (t, H-para Ph rings, 6H, \(J_{HH} ca. 7\) Hz), 7.94 (unresolved multiplet, H-ortho Ph rings, 12H), \textit{alkynyl ligands}: 7.47 (s, C\textsubscript{Ph}, 12H). ESI\textsuperscript{+} (m/z): 1600 (M\textsuperscript{+}), \textit{calcld for Au\textsubscript{3}Cu\textsubscript{6}H\textsubscript{4}P\textsubscript{3}N\textsubscript{3}: 1600. Single crystals of 3 suitable for X-ray analysis were grown from CH\textsubscript{2}Cl\textsubscript{2} solution by Et\textsubscript{2}O slow diffusion at +5 °C.

### [tppm(AuC\textsubscript{2}C\textsubscript{6}H\textsubscript{4}OMe)\textsubscript{3}Cu]BF\textsubscript{4} (4)

Triethylamine (1 ml) was added dropwise to a mixture of 1-ethynyl-4-methoxybenzene (18.6 mg, 0.141 mmol), \([\text{tppmAuCl}_3]\) (60.0 mg, 0.047 mmol), and \([\text{Cu(NCMe)}_4]\)BF\textsubscript{4} (14.8 mg, 0.047 mmol) in CH\textsubscript{2}Cl\textsubscript{2} (10 ml) under vigorous stirring. The reaction mixture was stirred for 2 h in the absence of light. The resulting transparent yellow solution was reduced in volume \textit{in vacuo} and diluted with hexane, a yellow precipitate formed. The precipitate was filtered off, washed with hexane, and dried \textit{in vacuo}. Yield: 52.9 mg (66%). IR (KBr, cm\textsuperscript{-1}): \(\nu(C=C) 2113\)
2069.31 P\(^{1}H\) NMR (CD\(_2\)Cl\(_2\); δ): 41.5, s. \(^{1}H\) NMR (CD\(_2\)Cl\(_2\); δ): phosphine: 6.47 (q, H-CP\(_3\), 1H, J\(_{pH}\) 9.9 Hz), 7.14 (dd, H-\(meta\) Ph rings, 12H, J\(_{HH}\) ca. 7 Hz), 7.22 (t, H-para Ph rings, 6H, J\(_{HH}\) ca. 7 Hz), 7.99 (m, H-ortho Ph rings, 12H), **alkynyl ligands**: 3.81 (s, OCH\(_3\), 9H), 6.64 (d, C\(_6\)H\(_4\), 6H, J\(_{HH}\) 8.6 Hz), 7.27 (d, C\(_6\)H\(_4\), 6H, J\(_{HH}\) 8.6 Hz). ESI (m/z): 1615 (M\(^+\)), calculated for Au\(_3\)Cu(C\(_6\)H\(_4\))P\(_3\)O\(_6\); Au\(_3\)Cu(C\(_6\)H\(_4\))P\(_3\)N\(_3\); Au\(_3\)Cu(C\(_6\)H\(_4\))P\(_3\)O\(_3\) (d, C\(_6\)H\(_4\), 6H, J\(_{HH}\) 8.2 Hz), 7.00 (d, C\(_6\)H\(_4\), 6H, J\(_{HH}\) 8.2 Hz). ESI (m/z): 1570 (M\(^+\)), calculated for Au\(_3\)Cu(C\(_6\)H\(_4\))P\(_3\)N\(_3\); 1570.

**X-ray crystal structure determination**

For single crystal X-ray diffraction experiments, crystals of 2, 3 and 4 were fixed on micro mounts and placed on a Bruker Smart Apex II diffractometer and measured at temperature 210, 150 and 170 K, respectively, using monochromated MoK\(_{α}\) radiation. Absorbance correction was applied according to the shape of crystals. The structures have been solved by direct methods using SHELX-97 program. Positions of H atoms were modeled using a ‘riding’ model. Crystallographic data for 2–4 are collected in Table 1. Atomic coordinates and displacement parameters are presented in Tables S1–S4 (S denotes Supporting Information) for 2, 3, and 4, respectively. Supplementary crystallographic data for this paper have been deposited at the Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre (CCDC 786915, 786916 and 805993) and can be obtained free of charge via www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/data_request/cif.

**Photophysical measurements**

All photophysical measurements were carried out in CH\(_2\)Cl\(_2\), which was distilled immediately prior to use. All solutions were carefully degassed before lifetime and quantum yield measurements. The light-emitting diode (LED, maximum emission at 533 nm) was stirred for 2 h in the absence of light and resulted in orange precipitate formation. All volatile components were removed in vacuo and the crystalline deposit washed with hexane, and dried in vacuo. Yield: 69.5 mg (89%). IR (KBr, cm\(^{-1}\)): ν(C≡C) 2063 cm\(^{-1}\); \(^{1}P\) NMR (CD\(_2\)Cl\(_2\); δ): 41.2, s. \(^{1}H\) NMR ((CD\(_2\))\(_2\)SO; δ): phosphine: 6.80 (q, H-CP\(_3\), 1H, J\(_{pH}\) 10.0 Hz), 7.28 (dd, H-\(meta\) Ph rings, 12H, J\(_{HH}\) ca. 7 Hz), 7.16 (t, H-para Ph rings, 6H, J\(_{HH}\) ca. 7 Hz), 7.91 (unresolved multiplet, H-\(ortho\) Ph rings, 12H), **alkynyl ligands**: 5.58 (s br, NH\(_2\), 6H), 6.35 (d, C\(_6\)H\(_4\), 6H, J\(_{HH}\) 8.2 Hz), 7.00 (d, C\(_6\)H\(_4\), 6H, J\(_{HH}\) 8.2 Hz).

### Table 1 Crystallographic data for 2–4

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<th>Compound</th>
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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<td>Au(_3)Cu(_2)C(_6)H(_9)P(_3)N(_3)</td>
<td>Au(_3)Cu(_2)C(_6)H(_7)P(_2)O(_3)</td>
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<td>Trigonal</td>
<td>Trigonal</td>
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<td>16.9942(7)</td>
<td>17.1541(8)</td>
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<td><strong>b ((\AA))</strong></td>
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<td>16.9942(7)</td>
<td>17.1541(8)</td>
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<td><strong>c ((\AA))</strong></td>
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<td>16.6654(11)</td>
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<td>150(2)</td>
<td>170(2)</td>
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<td>0.3 (×) 0.2 (×) 0.2</td>
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<td>Mo-K(_α)</td>
<td>Mo-K(_α)</td>
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<td>5509</td>
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<td>3.66–60.00</td>
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<td>\geq 4\sigma_F)**</td>
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<td>0.0355</td>
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<td><strong>R(_e)</strong></td>
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<td>F_o</td>
<td>\geq 4\sigma_F))**</td>
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<tr>
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<td>F_o</td>
<td>\geq 4\sigma_F))**</td>
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<td>−0.019(5)</td>
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<td><strong>S</strong></td>
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\(R_1 = \sum |F_o| - |F_c|/\sum |F_o|; \; wR_2 = \left(\sum w(F_o^2 - F_c^2)^2\right)\left(\sum |F_o|^2\right)^{-1/2}; w = 1/\left[\sigma^2(F_o^2) + (aP)^2 + bP\right], \text{ where } P = (F_o^2 + 2F_c^2)/3; s = \left(\sum |wF_o|^2 - |wF_c|^2\right)/(n - p)\left|\right|^{-1/2} \) where \(n\) is the number of reflections and \(p\) is the number of refinement parameters.

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**Dalton Trans.**

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Computational details for DFT and TD-DFT calculations

Compounds 3 and 5 with different X substituents in the alkynyl ligands were chosen to investigate and to assign the effects of the X on the spectral and photophysical properties. The influence of the Cu(i) ion incorporated in the central \{AuC_2C_6H_4X\}_3 cluster on the spectral behavior of these complexes was studied by comparison of 3 with the model system [tppm(AuC_2C_6H_4CN)_3], 3a, which does not contain the hetero ion. Geometry optimizations were performed on 3, 3a, and 5 in the absence of solvent using the hybrid exchange–correlation functional PBE0 (also known as PBE1PBE) in combination with the SDD+DZVP basis set. The SDD basis set with relativistic effective core potentials was used for the heavy metal atoms and the all-electron DZVP basis set for hydrogen, carbon, nitrogen, and oxygen atoms.

Frequency analysis has shown that the optimized structures correspond to the energy minima on the potential surface. All TD-DFT calculations for the singlet and triplet excited states were carried out using these optimized ground-state geometries. The geometry of the lowest-energy triplet state of 3 and 5 was also optimized using an unrestricted formalism (SCF approach). The results of the calculations are summarized in Table 4.

The DFT calculations were carried out using the Gaussian 03 package. ChemCraft program was employed for 3D visualization of Kohn–Sham orbitals. The contour maps of the electron density deformation were plotted by the Chemissian program http://www.chemissian.com. Notation of the low lying electronic states is shown in Scheme 1 (the geometry used in the calculations is indicated in brackets).

Results and discussion

Synthesis and characterization

The reactions of the trinuclear gold complex [tppmAu_3Cl_3] with a stoichiometric amount of HC_2C_6H_4X (X = H, COOMe, CN, OMe, NH_2) and Cu⁺ in the presence of a deprotonating agent (NEt_3) resulted in formation of the novel heterometallic [tppm(AuC_2C_6H_4X)_3Cu]⁺ complexes 1–5 in good yields (see Scheme 2), which were isolated as BF_4⁻ salts after recrystallization.

The moderately air-stable yellow to orange complexes 1–5 were characterized by H_1, H_3H COSY, 31P{1H} NMR and ESI-MS spectroscopy. The structures of 2–4 in the solid state were determined by X-ray diffraction analysis. The molecular views of 2–4 cations together with essential structural parameters are given in Fig. 1; crystallographic data are summarized in Table 1.

Compounds 2–4 are isostructural and contain the \{(AuC_2C_6-H_2X)Cu\} skeleton stabilized by coordination to the tridentate phosphine. Three \{PAuC_2C_6H_4X\}’ rods held together by the phosphine, Cu–Au, Cu–Cu=≡C, and Au–Au bonding are slightly twisted to form a distorted tetrahedral \{Au_4Cu\}. The symmetry of these complexes involves a threefold axis passing through the Cu(1)–C(1)–H(1) as well as F(1)–H(1) atoms of the BF_4⁻ anion. The Au–P distances in 2–4 are nearly identical (2.282(1)–2.285(1) Å) and fit well with the values previously reported for Au–P bond lengths. The Cu–Au contacts from 3.1843(4) to 3.2388(3) Å fall in the range typical for aurophilic interactions in the “Au₃⁺” clusters supported by the tridentate phosphine. The Cu-C bond lengths in 2, 3, and 4 are significantly shorter than those found in the other alkynyl and alkynyl-phosphine Au(i)–Cu(i) compounds. The Cu–Au contacts were found to be 2.9565(9), 2.9538(7) and 2.9278(7) Å for 2, 3, and 4, respectively, which are essentially lower than the sum of the Au and Cu van der Waals radii (3.06 Å). Due to geometrical constraints the π-C≡C–Cu interaction is asymmetric, the Cu–C distances for a certain triple bond differ substantially, see caption to Fig. 1. The C≡C bond lengths in 2, 3, and 4 are significantly shorter than those found earlier in stable clusters containing effective alkynyl–copper bonds that evidently implies rather weak π-bonding of the alkynyl ligands to the copper ion.

In the crystal cell the cluster cations are “head-to-tail” packed to form infinite columns (see Fig. 2 and Fig. S1†), where the...
constituting units are bound to each other through hydrogen bonds, which involve the BF₄ anions. Complexes 1 and 5 didn’t give single crystals suitable for X-ray analysis and their structures have been established on the basis of spectroscopic data. The ESI mass spectra of the compounds studied (Figs. S2–S6) display signals of the singly charged [tppm(AuC₂C₆H₄X)₃Cu]+ molecular ions, the \( m/z \) values and isotopic patterns of which completely match the calculated ones. The 31P{1H} NMR spectra of 1–5 display singlet resonances at ca. 41 ppm that corresponds to all equivalent phosphorus atoms of the triphosphine ligand and is compatible with the presence of the threefold axis in the molecules under study. The number of signals in the 1H NMR spectra of 1–5 and their relative intensities fit well the structural patterns shown in Scheme 2, as well as the solid state structures revealed for 2–4. Assignment of the signals observed in the 1H NMR spectra of 1, 4, and 5 was additionally supported by 1H–1H COSY spectra because the aromatic resonances were not clearly resolved in 1D 1H NMR. The high-field quartet at 6.5 ppm (\( J_{PH} \) ca. 10 Hz, 1H) corresponds to the CH group of tppm. Two clearly resolved doublets (6H per signal) in the 6.35–7.74 ppm range arise from the ortho- and meta-protons of the alkylnyl phenylene spacer, excluding 3 where these two doublets overlap to give a singlet with 12H integral intensity. The strong-field singlets at 3.92, 3.81 and 5.58 ppm, respectively, correspond to the protons of the X substituent. The low-field multiplets (7.14–8.00 ppm, see Experimental), which display correlations in the corresponding COSY spectra, Figs. S7–S9, are evidently generated by the protons of the phosphine phenyl rings. It is worth noting that the chemical shifts of these signals are nearly identical for all clusters studied. This observation together with the relative intensity and multiplicity of the signals clearly supports the suggested assignment. The solid-state IR spectra of 1–5 expectedly show a low frequency shift of C≡C stretching bands (in the range from 2063 to 2226 cm\(^{-1}\)) as a result of coordination of the C≡C triple bonds to the metal ions. These spectroscopic data obtained show that the general structural motif found in the solid state remains unchanged in solution.

![Fig. 1](image1.png)

**Fig. 1** Molecular views of the cations 2, 3 and 4. Selected interatomic distances (Å) for 2 are P(1)–Au(1) = 2.2816(13), Au(1)–Au(1) = 3.2388(3), Au(1)–Cu(1) = 2.9565(9), Au(1)–C(2) = 2.007(6), Cu(1)–C(2) = 2.138(5), C(2)–C(3) = 1.220(7); for 3 are P(1)–Au(1) = 2.2851(11), Au(1)–Au(1) = 3.1843(3), Au(1)–Cu(1) = 2.9538(7), Au(1)–C(2) = 2.016(5), Cu(1)–C(2) = 2.123(4), C(2)–C(3) = 1.207(6); for 4 are P(1)–Au(1) = 2.2828(10), Au(1)–Au(1) = 3.1937(3), Au(1)–Cu(1) = 2.9278(7), Au(1)–C(2) = 2.018(5), Cu(1)–C(2) = 2.130(4), Cu(1)–C(3) = 2.453(4), C(2)–C(3) = 1.204(6).

![Fig. 2](image2.png)

**Fig. 2** View of the infinite column structure formed in the crystalline phase of 3.
Photophysical properties

The photophysical and spectroscopic data for complexes 1–5 are summarized in Table 2, the UV-Vis absorption and emission spectra in dichloromethane are shown in Fig. 3. The absorption spectra of the compounds are essentially similar. The broad higher-energy absorptions below 290 nm can be ascribed to the intra-ligand \( \pi \rightarrow \pi^* \) transitions of the alkynyl \( \{C_2C_6H_4X\} \) moieties and phosphine ligand rings. This assignment is consistent with the previous reports on the related alkynyl–phosphine complexes, for which the prevalent absorption in the spectral range 250–300 nm, in general, is ascribed to the characteristic bands of the alkynyl and phosphine ligands.\(^{11,15,38,42} \) As for the lower energy absorption bands, the TD-DFT calculations have been used to interpret these electronic transitions, \textit{vide infra}.

All compounds studied exhibit room temperature luminescence in solution (Fig. 3, Table 2). Variation of the para-substituents in the alkynyl groups from the electron-withdrawing CN to the electron-donating NH\(_2\) allowed for the monitoring of the ligands' electronic effect onto the photophysical characteristics of these complexes. Emission band maxima fall in 550–680 nm range and display a systematic red shift with the increase in X substituent donicity together with the related decrease of luminescence lifetime and quantum yield, Fig. 4. A similar trend was observed earlier for the Au(I)–Cu(I) “rods-in-belt” clusters,\(^{41} \) where variations of luminescence wavelength were rationally ascribed to the changes in the energy of ground state orbitals involved in the emission. Similar to related heterometallic gold–copper alkynyl phosphine complexes,\(^{11,15,37–39,42} \) the excited state lifetimes for 1–5 fall in the microsecond domain that point to the triplet origin of the emission. It is worth mentioning that emission quantum yield and lifetime for all the complexes show nearly no luminescence quenching by molecular oxygen, which is an indication of effective shielding of the chromophoric center by external ligand environment.

\begin{table}
\centering
\begin{tabular}{cccccccc}
\hline
& & & & & & & \\
\hline
Hammett & \( \lambda_{\text{abs}, \text{nm}} \) & \( \lambda_{\text{em}, \text{nm}} \) & Q.Y., & & & & \\
constant & \( (\epsilon \times 10^{-3}, \text{cm}^{-1}\text{M}^{-1}) \) & & \( \% \) & & & & \\
\hline
1 & 0 & 270sh (32); 319sh (12); 390 (1) & 270; 309; 390 & 1.7 ± 0.2 & 1.4 ± 0.2 & 2.8 ± 0.1 & 1.45 ± 0.08 & 0.35 & 0.68 & 0.006 & 0.009 \\
2 & 0.45 & 256 (101); 268sh (92); 300sh (42); 341 (18); 387 (3) & 293; 345; 387w & 4.0 ± 0.6 & 1.0 ± 0.2 & 7.0 ± 0.4 & 2.8 ± 0.1 & 0.14 & 0.35 & 0.006 & 0.004 \\
3 & 0.66 & 290 (56); 305 (54); 326sh (38); 390 (5); 484 (1) & 270; 305; 390 & 5.2 ± 0.8 & 3.1 ± 0.5 & 6.8 ± 0.4 & 2.8 ± 0.1 & 0.14 & 0.35 & 0.008 & 0.011 \\
4 & –0.27 & 258 (95); 287sh (58); 342 (16); 404 (3) & 270; 302; 339; 396 & 1.9 ± 0.3 & 1.2 ± 0.2 & 0.95 ± 0.05 & 0.63 ± 0.04 & 1.0 & 1.6 & 0.02 & 0.02 \\
5 & –0.66 & 271 (26); 314sh (16); 338 (13); 357sh (11); 424w (3) & 270; 309; 342; 365; 424 & 0.6 ± 0.1 & 0.4 ± 0.1 & 0.44 ± 0.02 & 0.30 ± 0.02 & 2.2 & 3.3 & 0.02 & 0.01 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Photophysical properties of the complexes 1–5 in CH\(_2\)Cl\(_2\) solution, 25 °C, \( \lambda_{\text{ex}} = 385 \text{ nm} \).}
\end{table}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{fig3}
\caption{The UV-Vis absorption and emission spectra of 1–5.}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{fig4}
\caption{The correlations between Hammett constants of the X substituent and emission wavelength, luminescence lifetime, and quantum yield for 1–5; ■ emission band maxima; ◆ quantum yield; ▼ lifetime.}
\end{figure}

\section*{Computational studies}

Structural and electronic properties of the complexes under study were elucidated by density functional calculations (see the Experimental for notation and computational details). Selected calculated structural parameters of the ground and excited triplet states for 3, 5 and the model compound 3a (without Cu(i) ion)
Table 3 Selected interatomic distances (Å) and Au–C(2)–C(3) angles (deg) for 3, 5, and 3a

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Exper.</th>
<th>Calc. S0(S0)</th>
<th>Calc. T1(T1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cu–Au</td>
<td>2.954</td>
<td>2.982</td>
<td>2.971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Au–Au</td>
<td>3.184</td>
<td>3.264</td>
<td>3.263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Au–P</td>
<td>2.285</td>
<td>2.334</td>
<td>2.335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Au–C(2)</td>
<td>2.016</td>
<td>2.010</td>
<td>2.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cu–C(2)</td>
<td>2.123</td>
<td>2.129</td>
<td>2.130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cu–C(3)</td>
<td>2.376</td>
<td>2.456</td>
<td>2.203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C≡C</td>
<td>1.207</td>
<td>1.234</td>
<td>1.232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cu–C(1)</td>
<td>5.183</td>
<td>5.188</td>
<td>5.379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Au–C(2)–C(3)</td>
<td>175.0</td>
<td>176.4</td>
<td>171.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Exper.</th>
<th>Calc. S0(S0)</th>
<th>Calc. T1(T1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

For compounds 3 and 5, the HOMO’s are mainly located at the alkynyl {C2C6H4X} moieties and the Cu(i) center. In the model complex 3a the HOMO orbital is mostly centered at the alkynyl ligand with a small contribution from the gold centers. The LUMO’s of 3, 5 and 3a are mainly located on the tppm ligand with some admixture of the Au(i) atomic orbitals.

The major contribution into the two lowest almost degenerated singlet–singlet transitions is related to the HOMO→LUMO excitation. Thus, the absorption in the 300–360 nm range (complexes 3, 5) can be assigned to the electronic transitions from the [{Cu}, {C2C6H4}] fragments to the {Au3} skeleton and empty antibonding orbitals of the phosphine ligand. On the contrary, the low energy transitions in the model complex 3a correspond to the inter-ligand transfer {C6H4}→{PPh3}, that is indicative of a significant influence of the copper center on the spectral behavior of the heterometallic complexes. It was also found that the energy and the composition of the HOMOs depend on the nature of the X substituent. The contribution of the alkynyl -C6H4- fragment to the HOMO in 5 (with the donor X) is appreciably higher than in 3 (with acceptor X) while the percentage of Cu(i) orbitals is higher in 3 compared to 5 (see Figs. S10–13 and Table S7†). Thus, the replacement of the CN substituent for NH3 results in a reduction of the HOMO/LUMO gap due to a larger increment of the HOMO energy in comparison to that of the LUMO. This observation is completely in line with the observed variations of luminescence parameters of the complexes under study where the increase in electron-donor ability of the X group shifts the emission energy to lower values.

Only the lowest spin-forbidden transition was modeled, since phosphorescence usually occurs from the lowest triplet (T1) excited state. For 5 the calculated energy of T1 is lower than that for 3 as well as the energy of S1 and the HOMO/LUMO gap. However, the results of the TD-DFT calculations give markedly overestimated values of the emission energies for both complexes (Table 4). Additionally, the TD-DFT approach didn’t reveal a dominant configuration of the triplet state for 3, therefore the description of this state on the basis of the ground state
Table 4  DFT energies (eV) of the lowest singlet and triplet states of 3 and 5 and the HOMO/LUMO gap (for notation see Scheme 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>3</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HOMO/LUMO gap, $S_0(S_0)$</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>3.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$S_0(S_0)$</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$S_0(T_1)$</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$S_1(S_0)$ TD-DFT</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>2.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$T_1(S_0)$ scf</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>2.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$T_1(S_0)$ TD-DFT</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>2.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$T_1(T_1)$</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>2.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$T_1(T_1) - S_0(T_1)$</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>1.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$E_{ex}(expert)$</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>1.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 6  Isosurfaces of the natural orbitals based on the electron density difference ($S_0-T_1$) for the complexes 3 with optimized $S_0$ geometry: the orbital, from which the electron is excited (left), and the orbital, to which the electron is transferred (right).

Conclusions

In summary, a new family of tetranuclear Au(i)–Cu(i) alkynyl clusters supported by a tridentate phosphine ligand (tppm) has been synthesized using a self-assembly reaction of simple precursors under basic conditions. The complexes [tppm(AuC2=C=H4X)2Cu] (X = H, COOMe, CN, OMe, NH2) display a general structural motif which contains heteronuclear {Au$_3$Cu} cluster core, stabilized by tripodal phosphine ligand and alkynyl groups. All the compounds studied exhibit phosphorescence in solution at room temperature with emission maxima in the range 550–680 nm. Luminescence properties of these clusters depend on the electron donor properties of the aromatic alkynyl ligands, which were varied via changing the X substituents in the para positions of the –C6H4– groups; increase in basicity of X causes a bathochromic shift of the emission maxima. The latter is clearly exemplified by the correlation of emission parameters with the corresponding Hammett constants. Quantum chemical calculations provide a deeper insight into the structural, electronic and spectroscopic properties of this novel family of gold–copper alkynyl–phosphine complexes and show that the observed long-wavelength phosphorescence is associated with metal centered triplet emission within the heterometallic alkynyl cluster.

Acknowledgements

The authors greatly appreciate the financial support of Saint-Petersburg State University research grant 12.37.132.2011, the University of Eastern Finland (Russian–Finnish collaborative project), the Russian Foundation for Basic Research grants 11-03-00974, 11-03-00541, and 11-03-92010. The work was carried out using the equipment of the Resource Center “Analytical centre of nano- and bio-technology of SPbSPU”. We also would like to thank Prof. V. I. Baranovskii and Dr. L. V. Scripni- kov for fruitful discussions of theoretical results.

Notes and references
