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# Supramolecular chemistry of substituted cucurbit[n]urils

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Since the first example of substituted cucurbit[n]urils (Q[n]), decamethylcucurbit[5]uril (Me<sub>10</sub>Q[5]), was reported in 1992, numerous substituted Q[n]s have been synthesized and studied. In this review article, we focus on the recognition properties of the substituted Q[n]s toward a variety of organic species as well as the coordination chemistry of substituted Q[n]s with different metal ions, including alkali/alkaline-earth metals, transition metals, and lanthanides. Applications of substituted Q[n]s, and the self-assembly processes affording mechanically interlocked molecules (MIMs) are also described. The main purpose of this review is to highlight important advances in the blossoming field of substituted Q[n]s, which will likely be of interest to researchers in supramolecular chemistry.

## 1. Introduction

Since the first macrocyclic polyether, dibenzo[18]crown-6, was reported by Pedersen back in 1967,<sup>1,2</sup> host-guest/supramolecular chemistry has experienced rapid development. Host-guest/supramolecular chemistry usually involves the molecular recognition and inclusion of substrates by macrocyclic com-

pounds, such as cyclodextrins ( $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$  and  $\gamma$ ), calix[n]arenes, pillar[n]arenes, and various cyclophanes.<sup>3–9</sup> Cucurbit[n]uril ( $n = 5–8, 10, 13–15$ , commonly abbreviated as Q[n]s or CB[n]s, Fig. 1),<sup>5,10–20</sup> a family of artificial macrocyclic hosts, have in recent years played a central role in supramolecular chemistry, which reflects their excellent properties in molecular recognition and molecular assembly. The journey for Q[n]s started in 1905, when a white solid (Q[6]), was prepared by Behrend and co-workers, although its composition and structure was not known at that time.<sup>21</sup> Seventy-five years later, Freeman *et al.* restudied the synthesis of the white solid and ascertained the structure of Q[6] via the use of X-ray diffraction.<sup>22</sup> Since then, Q[6] has been used for both metal ion coordination and small molecule inclusion. After the discovery of a series of Q[n] homologues in 2000 and 2001 by Kim and Day,<sup>23,24</sup> research activity in Q[n] chemistry progressed greatly,

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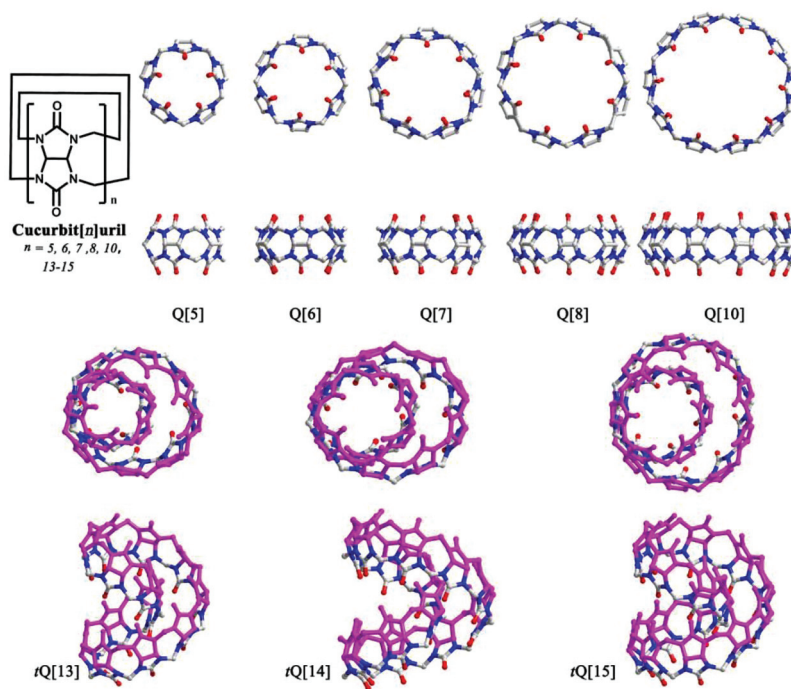


Fig. 1 X-ray crystal structures of cucurbit[n = 5–8, 10, 13–15]urils.

and has impacted on a wide range of fields, including sensing, catalysis, drug delivery, nano-materials and stimuli-responsive systems.

The common Q[n] homologues comprise  $n$  glycoluril units linked by  $2n$  methylene (Fig. 1). They feature a hydrophobic cavity with different sizes, two polar carbonyl portals with negative electrostatic potential, and a circular outer surface with positive electrostatic potential. Based on these structural features, Q[n]s can accommodate hydrophobic molecules or groups of suitable size in their cavities, coordinate to various

metal ions at their portals, and connect with electronegative species through their outer surfaces. As a result, many research groups have reported a large number of Q[n] complexes with different metal ions, anions and charged organic molecules.<sup>5,10–20</sup> Although Q[n] homologues are outstanding macrocyclic hosts for fundamental and applied molecular recognition, three main shortcomings still hinder their research and applications. Firstly, Q[n] homologues have poor solubility in pure water and in most common organic solvents, especially the Q[6], Q[8], and Q[10] systems. Most host–



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guest chemistry research on  $Q[n]$  homologues has to be performed in acid solution or in the presence of alkali metal ion, which strongly affects the binding affinity between the host and the guest, as illustrated by Buschmann,<sup>25</sup> Kaifer,<sup>26</sup> Nau,<sup>27</sup> and Kim<sup>28</sup> *et al.* Secondly, although the sizes and shapes of the guests are diverse,  $Q[n]$  homologues (except for  $Q[13-15]$ ) possess high symmetrical cavities. Consequently,  $Q[n]$  homologues fail to selectively recognize some guest molecules with special shape.<sup>75-77,142,152</sup> Thirdly, in comparison with other macrocyclic hosts, for example the calix $[n]$ arenes,  $Q[n]$  homologues are difficult to functionalize. To overcome these shortcomings, significant efforts have been invested on the design and synthesis of substituted  $Q[n]$ s.

Over the past two decades or so, various substituted  $Q[n]$ s have been prepared.<sup>29-60</sup> As will be discussed later, the host-guest/supramolecular properties exhibited by substituted  $Q[n]$ s reveal advantages *versus*  $Q[n]$ s. (1) Substitutions greatly increase solubility of substituted  $Q[n]$ s by decreasing solid-state packing. (2) Unsymmetrical substitutions deform the cavity symmetry and open up better selectivity to guest sequestration.<sup>39,40,50,56</sup> It should be noted that  $Q[n]$ s are amongst some of the most selective hosts because of their different cavity sizes. (3) Substitutions greatly increase the functionalizability of  $Q[n]$  homologues. (4) By creating substituted  $Q[n]$ s and increasing the diversification of the structures, more complex chemical systems such as complicated molecular machines and smart sensors can be built.

Although great progress has been achieved in  $Q[n]$ s chemistry and numerous reviews have appeared,<sup>10-20</sup> few focus on the field of substituted  $Q[n]$ s. This review article will highlight advances in field of substituted  $Q[n]$ s. We will begin by discussing the synthesis of classical substituted  $Q[n]$ s, such as fully and partially methyl-substituted  $Q[n]$ s, cyclohexano-substituted  $Q[n]$ s, cyclopentano-substituted  $Q[n]$ s, hydroxy-substituted  $Q[n]$ s, and substituted  $Q[n]$ s with mixed substitutions. We will then focus on the host-guest complexation properties of the substituted  $Q[n]$ s, their inclusion and coordination compounds, plus mechanically interlocked molecules (MIMs) and molecular devices, including many examples from our own group's efforts.

## 2. Synthesis of substituted $Q[n]$ s

Back in 1992, Stoddart and co-workers reported the first example of a substituted  $Q[n]$ , namely decamethylcucurbit[5]uril ( $Me_{10}Q[5]$ ).<sup>29</sup> The reaction of 2,3-butanedione with urea under acidic conditions leads to dimethylglycoluril. Condensation of dimethylglycoluril with formaldehyde in acidic medium generates a white precipitate of  $Me_{10}Q[5]$  (Table 1). Since then, a variety of  $Q[n]$  derivatives, including fully and partially alkyl-substituted  $Q[n]$ , hemicucurbit[ $n$ ]uril,<sup>30,31</sup> biotin[6]uril,<sup>32</sup> bambus[6]uril,<sup>33</sup> and acyclic  $Q[n]$  congeners,<sup>34,35</sup> have been synthesized by Day, Isaacs, Kim, Sindelar, Tao and other groups. Note that the present review

focuses on substituted  $Q[n]$ s, those  $Q[n]$  derivatives where the basic skeleton is preserved, as shown in Table 1.

In 2001, Kim *et al.* synthesized fully substituted cyclohexano $Q[n]$ s (abbreviated as  $CyH_nQ[n]$ s,  $n = 5, 6$ ), which are soluble not only in water but also in some organic solvents.<sup>36</sup> Day and coworkers synthesized two other kinds of fully substituted  $Q[n]$ , the cyclopentano $Q[n]$ <sup>37</sup> (abbreviated as  $CyP_nQ[n]$ ,  $n = 5, 6, 7$ ) in 2012 and the cyclobutano $Q[n]$ <sup>38</sup> (abbreviated as  $CyB_nQ[n]$ ,  $n = 5-8$ ) in 2017. The syntheses of these fully substituted  $Q[n]$ s have similar procedures: the synthesis of the substituted glycoluril (precursor), and condensation of substituted glycoluril with formaldehyde in acidic medium.

The Tao group prepared the first example of a partially methyl-substituted  $Q[n]$ , the symmetrical tetramethylcucurbit[6]uril (TMeQ[6]) in 2004.<sup>39</sup> The synthetic procedure involved the diether of dimethylglycoluril and the glycoluril dimer. Using similar strategies and appropriate building blocks, the Tao group later prepared a series of partially methyl-substituted  $Q[n]$ s, such as the symmetrical octamethyl-substituted cucurbit[6]uril<sup>40</sup> (OMeQ[6]), *ortho*-tetramethyl-substituted cucurbit[6]uril<sup>41</sup> (*o*-TMeQ[6]), *meta*-tetramethyl-substituted cucurbit[8]uril<sup>42</sup> (*m*-Me<sub>4</sub>Q[8]). Moreover, the same group has recently synthesized a series of hemimethyl-substituted cucurbit[ $n$ ]urils ( $HMe_nQ[n]$ s,  $n = 5, 6, 7$ ) using the precursor 3 $\alpha$ -methylglycoluril.<sup>43-45</sup> A series of partially cyclohexano-substituted cucurbit[6]uril such as the *para*-dicyclohexanocucurbit[6]uril<sup>46</sup> ( $CyH_2Q[6]$ ) and *meta*-tricyclohexanocucurbit[6]uril<sup>47</sup> ( $CyH_3Q[6]$ ) and some substituted  $Q[n]$ s with mixed substituents<sup>48</sup> were isolated. Concomitantly, the toxicity of  $HMe_7Q[7]$  was studied by Wang and co-workers, revealing that  $HMe_7Q[7]$  exhibited a good biocompatibility profile.<sup>49</sup> Other groups also reported the synthesis of methyl- and cyclohexano-substituted  $Q[n]$ . The Isaacs group in 2015 presented a building block strategy for the synthesis of *ortho*-tetramethyl-substituted cucurbit[8]uril (*o*-Me<sub>4</sub>Q[8]) and *ortho*-dicyclohexano-substituted cucurbit[8]uril (*o*- $CyH_2Q[8]$ ) by condensation of glycoluril hexamer with bis(cyclic ethers) under well-defined conditions.<sup>50</sup>

One of the shortcomings of the  $Q[n]$  homologues is that they are difficult to functionalize. To overcome this long-standing problem, Kim *et al.* created an effective procedure in 2003 *via* the oxidation the  $Q[n]$  homologues with  $K_2S_2O_8$  in water to produce their corresponding hydroxy-substituted (HO) $_mQ[n]$ s ( $n = 5-8$ ,  $m = 10, 12, 14$  and 16), which can then be further modified to afford tailored  $Q[n]$  derivatives.<sup>51</sup> The Kim group recently demonstrated a superacid-mediated conversion of the hydroxyl group on  $Q[n]$ s ( $n = 6$  and 7) to yield other important functional groups in high yields.<sup>52</sup> Additionally, they found that the resulting substituted  $Q[n]$  can be readily conjugated to an enzyme to afford a  $Q[n]$ -conjugated enzyme which is useful in protein blotting assays.<sup>53</sup>

Other groups also have made significant progress towards functionalizing  $Q[n]$  homologues. In 2012, Scherman and co-workers prepared monohydroxylated  $Q[6]$  through the controlled oxidation of  $Q[6]$  in the presence of a tailor-made bismidazolium guest.<sup>54</sup> In the same year, the Isaacs group pre-

**Table 1** Synthesis of substituted Q[n]s

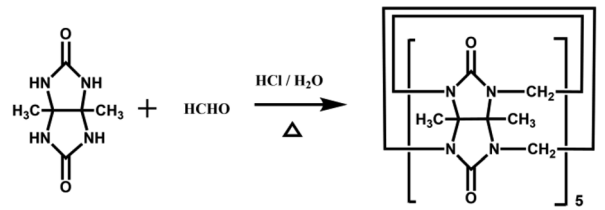
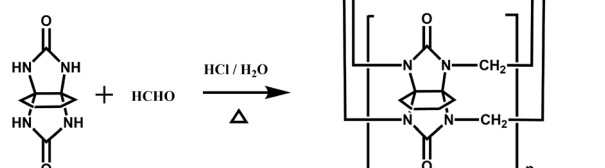
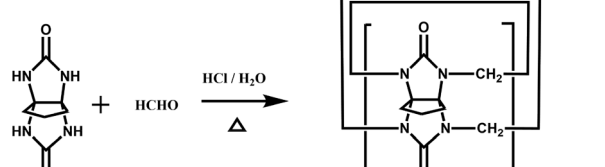
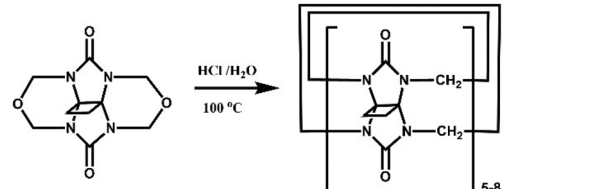
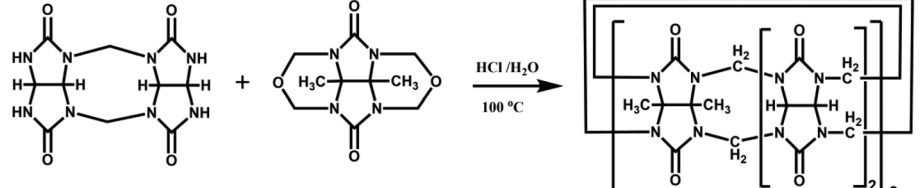
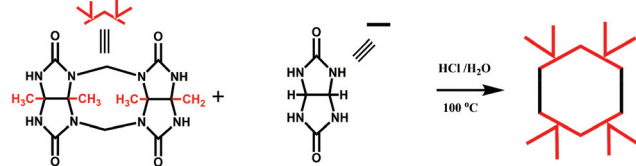
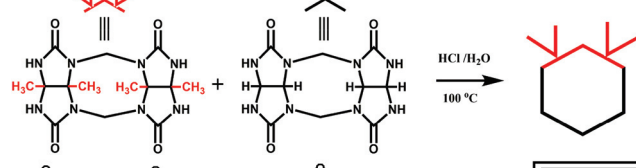
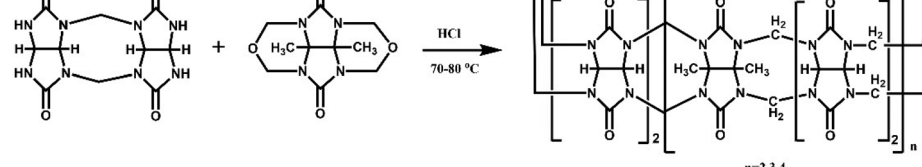
| No. | Synthetic strategy                                                                   | Yields                                                                                                             | Ref. |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 1   |     | Me <sub>10</sub> Q[5]: 16%                                                                                         | 29   |
| 2   |     | CyH <sub>5</sub> Q[5]: 16%<br>CyH <sub>6</sub> Q[6]: 2%                                                            | 36   |
| 3   |     | CyP <sub>5</sub> Q[5]: 3.2%<br>CyP <sub>6</sub> Q[6]: 5.2%<br>CyP <sub>7</sub> Q[7]: 1.4%                          | 37   |
| 4   |    | CyB <sub>5</sub> Q[5]: 10%<br>CyB <sub>6</sub> Q[6]: 13%<br>CyB <sub>7</sub> Q[7]: 4%<br>CyB <sub>8</sub> Q[8]: 1% | 38   |
| 5   |  | TMeQ[6]: 30%                                                                                                       | 39   |
| 6   |   | OMeQ[6]: 3.4%                                                                                                      | 40   |
| 7   |   | <i>o</i> -TMeQ[6]: 3.4%                                                                                            | 41   |
| 8   |  | <i>m</i> -Me <sub>4</sub> Q[8]: 4%                                                                                 | 42   |



Table 1 (Contd.)

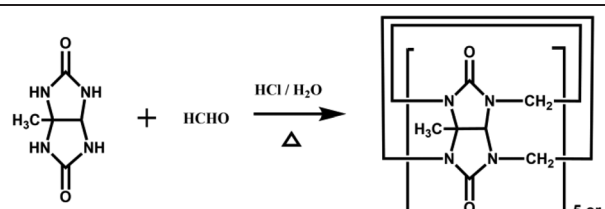
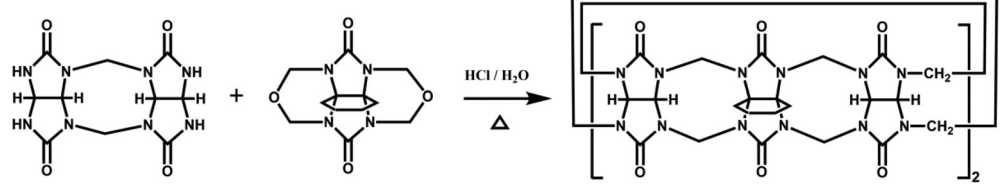
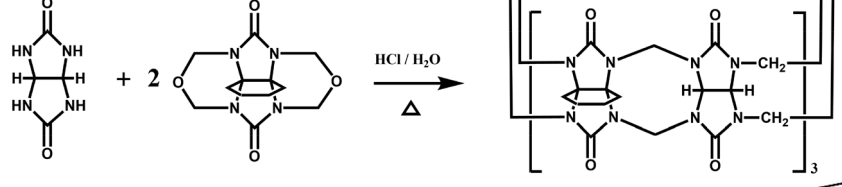
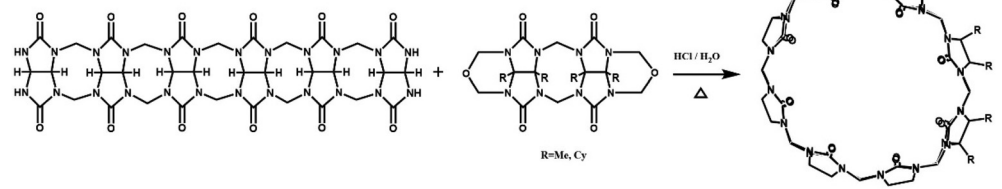
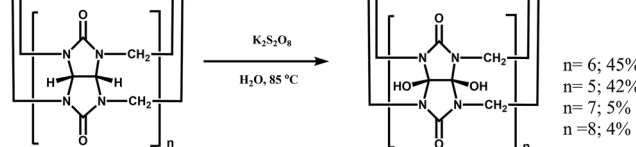
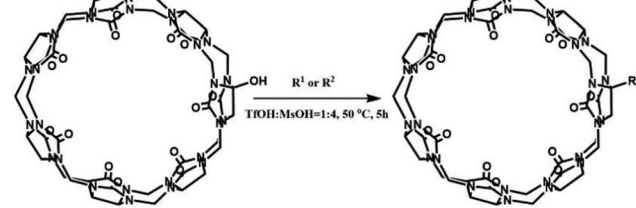
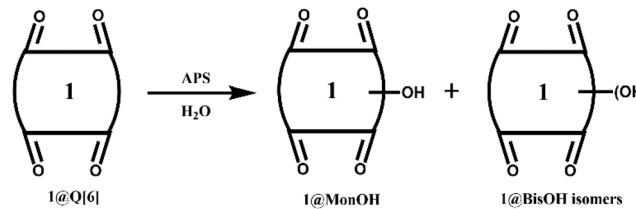
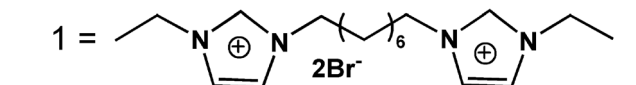
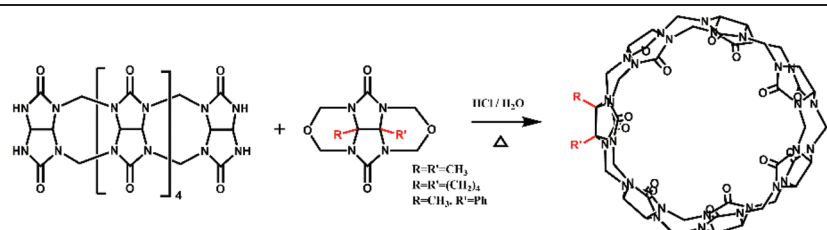
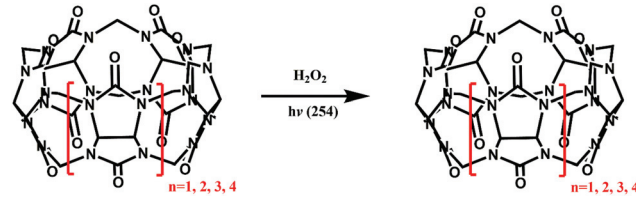
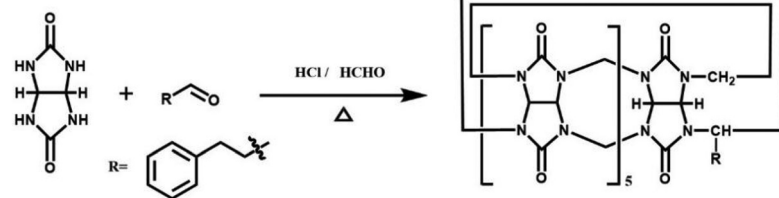
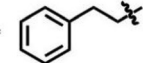
| No. | Synthetic strategy                                                                                                                                                                 | Yields                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Ref. |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 9   |                                                                                                   | HMe <sub>5</sub> Q[5]: 6.4%<br>HMe <sub>6</sub> Q[6]: 5.8%                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 43   |
| 10  |                                                                                                  | CyH <sub>2</sub> Q[6]: 30%                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 46   |
| 11  |                                                                                                  | CyH <sub>3</sub> Q[6]: 39.6%                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 47   |
| 12  |                                                                                                 | <i>o</i> -Me <sub>4</sub> Q[8]: 11%<br><i>o</i> -CyH <sub>2</sub> Q[8]: 4%                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 50   |
| 13  |                                                                                                 | (HO) <sub>10</sub> Q[5]: 42%<br>(HO) <sub>12</sub> Q[6]: 45%<br>(HO) <sub>14</sub> Q[7]: 5%<br>(HO) <sub>16</sub> Q[8]: 4%                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 51   |
| 14  |                                                                                                 | Q[7]-NHCO-CH <sub>2</sub> CH <sub>3</sub> : 96%<br>Q[7]-NHCO-CHCH <sub>2</sub> : 87%<br>Q[7]-NHCO-CH <sub>2</sub> CN: 94%<br>Q[7]-NHCO-CH <sub>2</sub> CO <sub>2</sub> H: 84%<br>Q[7]-NHCO-C <sub>6</sub> H <sub>5</sub> : 63%<br>Q[7]-NHCO-(CH <sub>2</sub> ) <sub>2</sub> Br: 73%<br>Q[7]-O-(CH <sub>2</sub> ) <sub>3</sub> OH: 76%<br>Q[7]-O-(CH <sub>2</sub> ) <sub>3</sub> Br: 63%<br>(HO) <sub>1</sub> Q[6]: 12% | 52   |
| 15  |  <p>1 = </p> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 54   |

Table 1 (Contd.)

| No. | Synthetic strategy                                                                                                                                                                                            | Yields                                                                                          | Ref. |
|-----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 16  |  <p> <math>R=R'=\text{CH}_3</math><br/> <math>R=R'=(\text{CH}_2)_4</math><br/> <math>R=\text{CH}_3, R'=\text{Ph}</math> </p> | Me <sub>2</sub> Q[7]: 31%<br>CyHQ[7]: 18%<br>MePhQ[7]: 3%                                       | 55   |
| 17  |  <p> <math>n=1, 2, 3, 4</math><br/> <math>n=1, 2, 3, 4</math> </p>                                                           | (HO) <sub>1</sub> Q[5]: 95%<br>(HO) <sub>1</sub> Q[6,7]: 95–100%<br>(HO) <sub>1</sub> Q[8]: 90% | 57   |
| 18  |  <p> <math>R=</math>  </p>                  | PheQ[6]: 0.2%                                                                                   | 60   |

sented a building-block approach for mono-functionalization of some substituted Q[7]s.<sup>55</sup> Interestingly, mono-functionalized Q[7] exhibits self-association into tetrameric aggregates in aqueous solution, as shown in Fig. 2. In 2015, the Isaacs group synthesized hydrophobic monofunctionalized Q[7], which can undergo self-inclusion complexation and form vesicle-type assemblies.<sup>56</sup> Ouari and Bardelang *et al.* reported a photochemical method for producing hydroxy-substituted (HO)<sub>m</sub>Q[*n*]s using hydrogen peroxide and UV light.<sup>57,58</sup> Very recently, Kaifer, Dong and coworkers obtained monohydroxylated cucurbit[7]uril ((HO)<sub>1</sub>Q[7]) through the direct oxidation of Q[7].<sup>59</sup>

By simply mixing glycoluril, paraformaldehyde, and another aldehyde, Sindelar and coworkers prepared a novel type of monosubstituted Q[6], mono(2-phenylethyl)cucurbit[6]uril (PheQ[6]).<sup>60</sup> Different from the above mentioned substituted Q[*n*]s, the substituent is attached to one methylene bridge of the PheQ[6] (Fig. 3a and b). Impressively, the

monosubstituted Q[6] macrocycles self-assembled into tetrameric aggregates (Fig. 3c) in the solid state. Compared to the PheQ[6], it is impossible for unsubstituted Q[*n*]s to self-associate into polymers without the assistance of other compounds.

### 3. Molecular recognition of substituted Q[*n*]s

#### 3.1. Binding behaviour of alkyldiammonium ions toward substituted Q[*n*]s

In their pioneering work, Collet, Cram, Rebek, *et al.* observed that molecular behaviour including conformations and reactivity in small spaces can be quite different from that in dilute solution.<sup>61–64</sup> With this in mind, the molecular behaviour of different alkyl chains in the hydrophobic cavities of the Q[*n*]

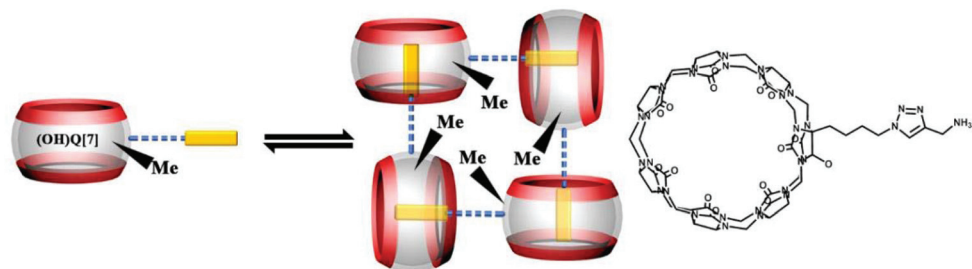


Fig. 2 Mono-functionalized Q[7] self-associated into tetrameric aggregates.

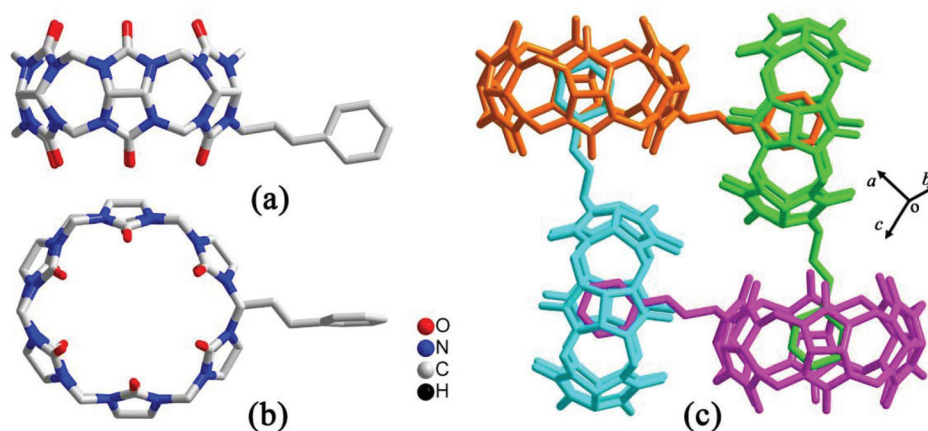


Fig. 3 The crystal structures of mono(2-phenylethyl)cucurbit[6]uril (PheQ[6], top (a) and side (b) views) and the tetramer (c) based on PheQ[6].

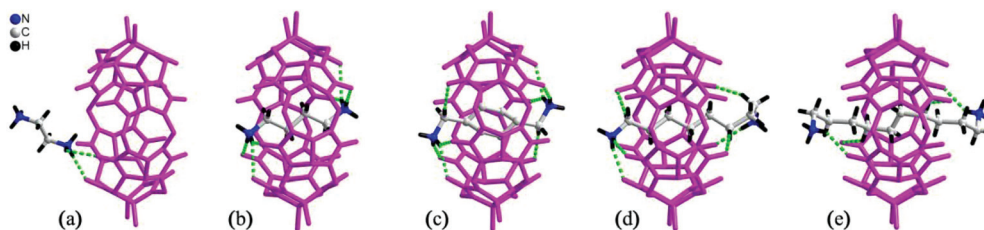


Fig. 4 Extended and contorted conformations of alkanediammonium ions in the cavity of TMeQ[6]: (a) 1,2-ethanediammonium@TMeQ[6]; (b) 1,4-butanediammonium@TMeQ[6]; (c) 1,6-hexanediammonium@TMeQ[6]; (d) 1,8-octanediammonium@TMeQ[6]; (e) 1,10-decanediammonium@TMeQ[6].

derivatives can also be regarded as another study of a kind of small space. Therefore, the binding interactions between a series of alkyldiammonium ions and a variety of substituted Q[6]s, including TMeQ[6],<sup>65,66</sup> CyH<sub>2</sub>Q[6],<sup>67</sup> CyH<sub>6</sub>Q[6],<sup>67</sup> and CyP<sub>6</sub>Q[6]<sup>68</sup> has been investigated both in aqueous solution and in the solid state. NMR spectra and single-crystal X-ray diffraction analyses revealed that the binding behaviour varies depending upon the alkyl chain length. Here, the TMeQ[6] is taken as a representative example for discussion (Fig. 4). 1,2-Ethanediammonium resides outside the portals of the TMeQ[6] and binds *exo* to the host portals forming an exclusion complex. Other longer alkyldiammonium guests can be accommodated in the cavity of the TMeQ[6] forming 1 : 1 inclusion complexes. Interestingly, if the alkyl chain length is longer than the height of the cavity of the TMeQ[6], then the alkyl chains usually take a contorted conformation. Isothermal titration calorimetry (ITC) experiments indicated that the binding of the alkyldiammonium guests with the substituted Q[6] is mainly enthalpy driven, which benefits from hydrophobic effects and host–guest interactions. It is accepted that the main driving force for the assembly of the inclusion complex based on Q[*n*] is the hydrophobic effect.<sup>69</sup> However, the binding of the charged alkyldiammonium guests with the substituted Q[6] should also take into account the host–guest interactions, including ion–dipole interactions and van der Waals interactions.

HMe<sub>6</sub>Q[6] is soluble in water as well as in DMSO. The binding behaviour of HMe<sub>6</sub>Q[6] towards alkyldiammonium ions in aqueous solution is completely different from that observed in the organic solvent DMSO.<sup>70</sup> In aqueous solution, the alkyl chains of the alkyldiammonium ions were encapsulated into the HMe<sub>6</sub>Q[6] cavity, forming an inclusion complex. In contrast, in DMSO, the HMe<sub>6</sub>Q[6] engulfs only the NH<sub>3</sub><sup>+</sup> groups of the alkyldiammonium ions, forming a head-inclusion complex, which can be switched to supramolecular polymers upon heating (Fig. 5). Recently, we also compared the binding behaviour of HMe<sub>6</sub>Q[7] with alkyldiammonium ions (protonated guests) and their corresponding uncharged alkyldiamines in aqueous solution.<sup>71</sup> The results suggested that the driving force for the host–guest binding is related to the features of the guests.

It is also noteworthy that ammonium ions can act as templates in Q[*n*] formation, influencing both the kinetics and the thermodynamics of the process. In particular, Anzenbacher Jr. and Isaacs and coworkers showed that the *p*-xylylenediammonium ion was capable of acting as a template in the reaction between glycoluril and formaldehyde (<2 equiv.) affording a methylene bridged glycoluril hexamer and bis-nor-seco-Q[10].<sup>72</sup> Importantly, this methodology could be readily scaled up to deliver, without the need for chromatography, multigram quantities of the hexamer. Further reaction (macrocyclization) with phthalaldehydes allowed access to monofunctionalized

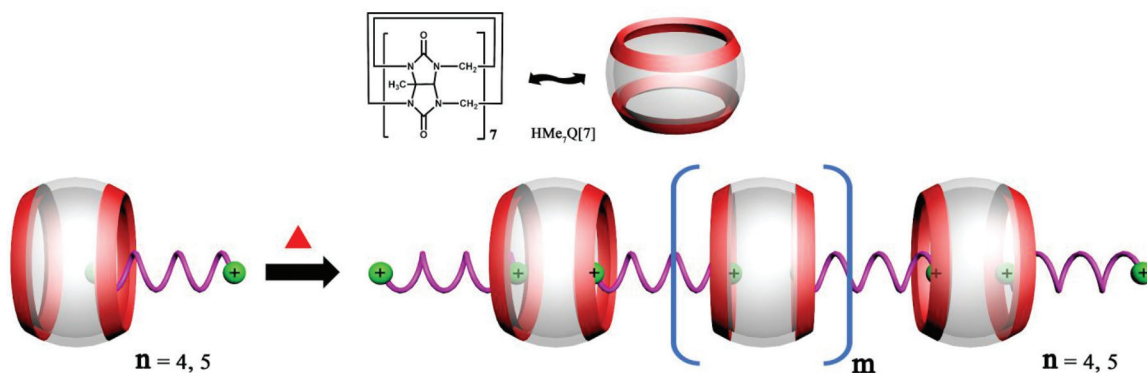


Fig. 5 Supramolecular polymer aggregated from head-inclusion complex.

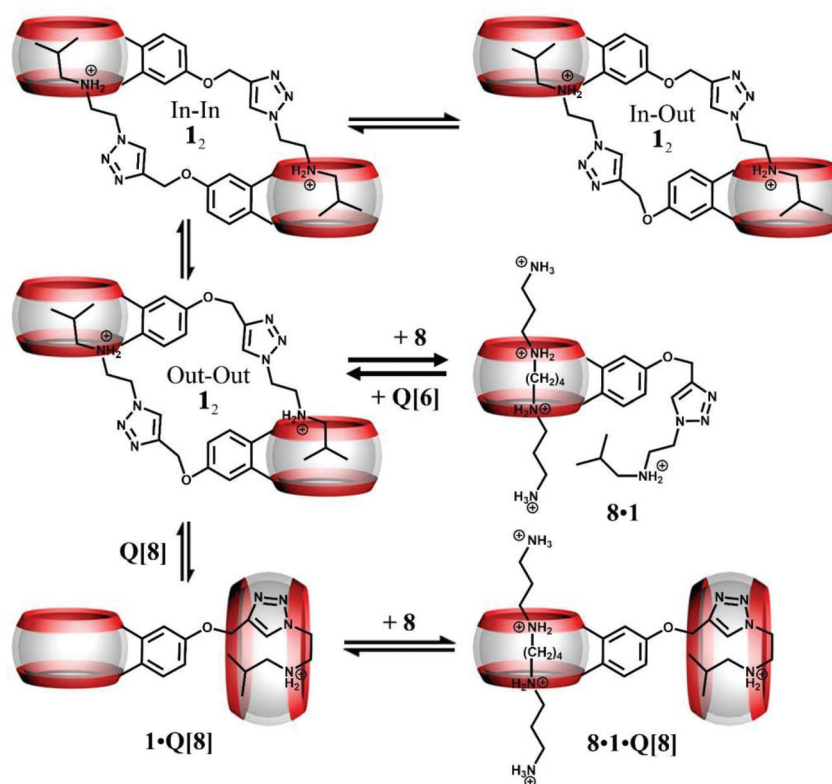


Fig. 6 Depiction of the three isomers of  $1_2$  and their response to addition of spermine (symbol 8), Q[8], and Q[6].

Q[6] derivatives, for example derivatives containing  $\text{NO}_2$  or  $\text{CO}_2\text{H}$  motifs, thereby opening up the possibility for further functionalization. The size of the template proved crucial in determining the product formed during the macrocyclization. For example, both the *p*-xylylenediammonium and hexanediammonium ions were found to slow down the formation of Q[6], instead preferring to favour formation of an intermediate containing an  $\text{NCOCN}$ -bridge which contains two stereogenic centers. Conducting the reaction between the hexamer and *o*-phthalaldehyde in  $\text{CF}_3\text{CO}_2\text{H}$  allowed the intermediate to be

characterized by mass spectrometry and  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectroscopy.

Cao and Isaacs designed a monofunctionalized Q[6] derivative (symbol 1 in Fig. 6) that possessed a covalently bonded (added by Click chemistry *via* a propargyloxy substituent) isobutylammonium group.<sup>73</sup> The structure comprised a mixture of cyclic dimers as evidenced by DOSY and ESI-MS experiments, and in water, they self-assemble into a cyclic daisy chain. This structure proved to be responsive to specific competing hosts, for example whilst Q[6] and Q[7] had little effect,



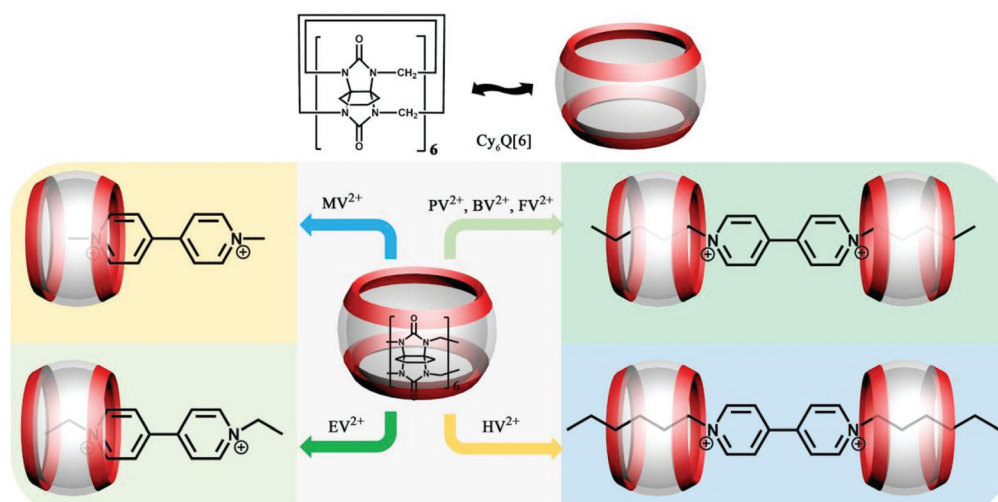


Fig. 7 Binding behaviour of *N*-alkylated viologens with  $\text{CyH}_6\text{Q}[6]$ .

the addition of  $\text{Q}[8]$  (1.5 equiv.) resulted in the formation of a new complex involving the monomeric isobutylammonium and  $\text{Q}[8]$ .  $^1\text{H}$  NMR studies (upfield shifts for the triazole and isobutylammonium protons) indicated that a back-folded conformation was present in the  $\text{Q}[8]$  cavity. Further addition of  $\text{Q}[6]$  reverses the process and gives back the daisy chain. Obviously, substituents in **1** also act as competitive guests.

### 3.2 Binding behaviour of *N*-alkylated viologens with substituted $\text{Q}[n]$ s

The series of *N*-alkylated viologens (methyl viologen  $\text{MV}^{2+}$ , ethyl viologen  $\text{EV}^{2+}$ , propyl viologen  $\text{PV}^{2+}$ , butyl viologen  $\text{BV}^{2+}$ , pentyl viologen  $\text{FV}^{2+}$  and heptyl viologen  $\text{HV}^{2+}$ ) are special redox-active organic guests with an alkyl chain and an aromatic group. A host–guest study involving *N*-alkylated viologens can help to understand the interdependence of redox processes and molecular selectivity. We and others have performed a series of experiments to study the binding interactions between a series of *N*-alkylated viologen guests and substituted  $\text{Q}[6]$ s, including  $(\text{HO})_1\text{Q}[7]$ ,<sup>55</sup>  $\text{CyH}_6\text{Q}[6]$ ,<sup>74</sup>  $\text{TMeQ}[6]$ ,<sup>75</sup>  $\text{CyH}_2\text{Q}[6]$ <sup>76</sup> and  $\text{CyH}_3\text{Q}[6]$ .<sup>76</sup> As shown in Fig. 7,  $\text{MV}^{2+}$  and  $\text{EV}^{2+}$  form 1 : 1 complexes in which the bipyridinium aromatic nucleus is partially included inside the  $\text{CyH}_6\text{Q}[6]$  cavity.  $\text{PV}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{BV}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{FV}^{2+}$ , and  $\text{HV}^{2+}$  form 2 : 1 complexes with  $\text{CyH}_6\text{Q}[6]$ , in which each of the viologen aliphatic chains is included by a host molecule. The results suggested that the inclusion of the alkyl chains is favored compared to inclusion of the aromatic nucleus.<sup>74</sup>

### 3.3 Aniline-containing guests recognized by substituted $\text{Q}[n]$

In these  $\text{Q}[n]$  systems, it is usual to encounter shielding and deshielding effects of the host. For example, the hydrophobic cavity of a  $\text{Q}[n]$  is a proton-shielding region. When the guest is encapsulated into the  $\text{Q}[n]$  cavity, the proton signals of the guest undergo an upfield shift. In contrast, the outside of the portals of a  $\text{Q}[n]$  is a proton-deshielding region which would

induce a downfield shift of the proton signals of guests located outside of the  $\text{Q}[n]$  portal. However, we recently encountered shielding and deshielding effects induced by a guest.<sup>75–77</sup> When the aromatic motif of a guest, such as aniline-containing guests, is located inside of the  $\text{TMeQ}[6]$  cavity, the ellipsoidal cavity of the  $\text{TMeQ}[6]$  is complementary in both size and shape to the aromatic group of the guest. As a result, remarkable chemical shifts for the  $\text{TMeQ}[6]$  host protons were observed (Fig. 8). Similar situations were observed for other substituted  $\text{Q}[n]$ s with ellipsoidal cavity.<sup>76</sup>

### 3.4 Recognition of enantiomeric amino acids by substituted $\text{Q}[n]$ s

Amino acid recognition and determination is of great significance in fields as diverse as food testing, nutritional analysis, and medical diagnostics.<sup>78–80</sup> In 2017, we reported a family of supramolecular complexes of  $\text{TMeQ}[6]$  which interacted with enantiomeric amino acids ( $\text{D,L-Gln}$ ;  $\text{D,L-Glu}$ ;  $\text{D,L-Met}$ ;  $\text{D,L-Ser}$ ;

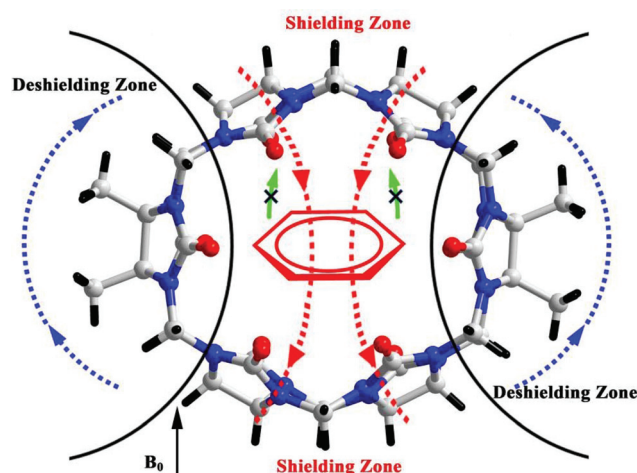


Fig. 8 Aromatic ring-induced shielding and deshielding zones.

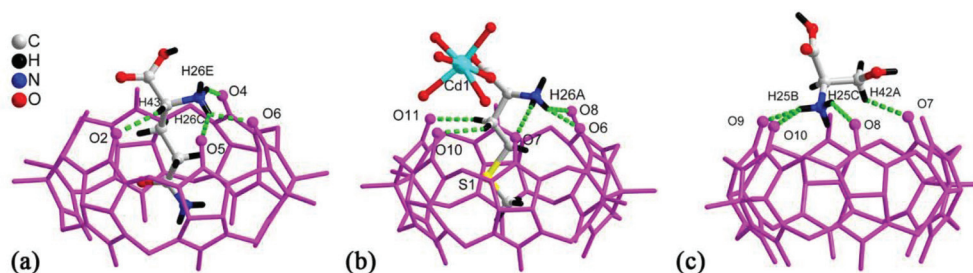


Fig. 9 X-ray crystal structure of TMeQ[6] complexes with different amino acids showing inclusion and exclusion structural types: (a) D-Gln@TMeQ[6]; (b) D-Met@TMeQ[6]; (c) D-Ser@TMeQ[6].

D-Val).<sup>81</sup> The seven supramolecular complexes are classified into two structural types, inclusion and exclusion structures (Fig. 9), the adoption of which mainly depends on the length of the alkyl chain of the enantiomeric amino acid. Interestingly, the reaction of TMeQ[6] with L-Val doesn't produce a crystalline material, suggesting that TMeQ[6] can be used to separate D-Val from its enantiomer.

### 3.5. Recognition of other organic guests by substituted Q[n]s

Haloalkanes are an important class of organic compound which possess various applications. In 2015, we reported the first example of haloalkane encapsulation inside the cavities of Q[n]s.<sup>82</sup> X-ray crystallography and NMR spectroscopy were used to establish that the haloalkane 1-(3-chlorophenyl)-4-(3-chloropropyl)-piperazinium (PZ<sup>+</sup>) dihydrochloride forms a highly stable

inclusion complex PZ<sup>+</sup>@TMeQ[6], with half of the chloropropyl group of the PZ<sup>+</sup> residing within the TMeQ[6] cavity (Fig. 10).

The binding behaviour of HMe<sub>7</sub>Q[7] with 1,10-phenanthroline and its derivative 4,7-dimethyl-1,10-phenanthroline was investigated by NMR spectroscopy and ITC techniques, which suggested the formation of a half-inclusion complex and a double binding complex (Fig. 11).<sup>83</sup> The latter complex exhibits two binding modes simultaneously: *endo* binding and *exo* binding, which is not observed in conventional host-guest complexes.

As more substituted Q[n]s are synthesized, more organic guests are reported to be recognized and accommodated by these new substituted Q[n]s. For example, hymexazol,<sup>84</sup> thia-benzazole,<sup>85</sup> 6-benzyladenine<sup>86</sup> were reported to form inclusion complexes with HMe<sub>6</sub>Q[6], and TMeQ[6]. Kaifer, Dong and coworkers recently studied the binding properties of (HO)<sub>1</sub>Q[7] with a series of selected guests.<sup>59</sup> The results indi-

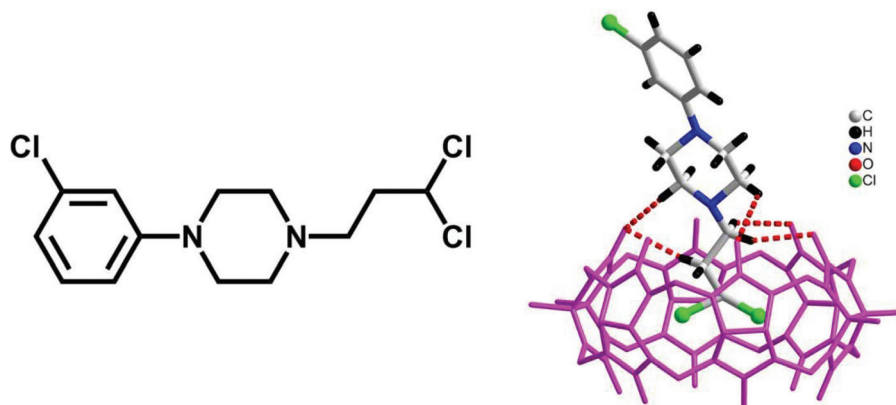


Fig. 10 ORTEP diagram of the inclusion complex PZ<sup>+</sup>@TMeQ[6].

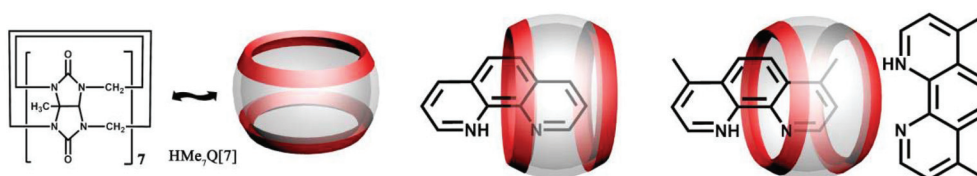


Fig. 11 Schematic representation of two binding modes.

cated that the binding affinities of the guests with the (HO)<sub>1</sub>Q[7] were slightly smaller than those of the parent Q[7].

## 4. Coordination chemistry of substituted Q[n]s with metal ions

The two identical carbonyl-laced portals that Q[n]s possess makes them fascinating coordination ligands. The coordination affinities of substituted Q[n]s are different from those of their parent Q[n]s because of the effects of the substituents. This is in part due to the new affinities displayed by the introduced substituents, which will become evident from the examples described below, but also because these substituents impart new properties such as increased solubility which can greatly enhance chemical reactivity. For fully and partially alkyl-substituted Q[n]s, the alkyl groups on the waist belong to electron-donating groups, which can enhance the polar properties of the carbonyl oxygen atoms at the portal, and enhance the electrostatic interactions between substituted Q[n]s and metal ions. In this section, we describe the outstanding coordination properties of the substituted Q[n]s, and their coordination compounds with a wide range of metal ions, including alkali metals, alkaline-earth metals, transition metals and lanthanides. These coordination compounds (Table 2) have led to many interesting structural features and applications, some of which are discussed herein.

### 4.1. With alkali metal ions

Generally, the coordination of Q[n] homologues with alkali metal ions leads to discrete (closed or opened) molecular capsules or 1D chains because the Q[n] homologues contain only two opposite coordination orientations. For instance, we previously reported a series of discrete molecular capsules of unsubstituted Q[5] with various metal ions, such as alkali (K<sup>+</sup>), alkaline earth (Ba<sup>2+</sup>), transition (Cd<sup>2+</sup>), and lanthanide (La<sup>3+</sup>) metal ions.<sup>87</sup> However, (HO)<sub>m</sub>Q[n] are a series of multi-dentate ligands with different coordination orientations. In 2011, we prepared and characterized three coordination polymers of alkali metal ions (K<sup>+</sup>, Rb<sup>+</sup> and Cs<sup>+</sup>) with the (HO)<sub>10</sub>Q[5] ligand.<sup>88</sup> Their crystal structures revealed that not only the carbonyl groups of the portals but also the hydroxy groups at the waist position of the (HO)<sub>10</sub>Q[5] ligand participated in the coordination, which led to 1D to 2D coordination polymers **A-1-3** (Fig. 12).

In 2008 and 2010, Day, Lindoy, Tao, and Wei *et al.* reported three attractive catenane structures, which resulted from the coordination of three substituted Q[5]s (1,2,4-Me<sub>6</sub>Q[5], 1,2,4-CyH<sub>3</sub>Q[5] and CyH<sub>5</sub>Q[5]) with potassium ions.<sup>89,90</sup> These catenated structures **A-5-7** featured trigonal-planar units, each one involving three substituted Q[5] ligands and six bound K<sup>+</sup> ions. Adjacent trigonal-planar basic units connected with each other through their bound K<sup>+</sup> ions, generating a 10-ligand “bracelet” framework. Interpenetration of the “bracelet” framework led to a complicated 3D catenane structure (Fig. 13). Using a similar strategy, the Tao group also prepared a series of 2D networks

**A-8-12** by using the coordination of K<sup>+</sup> ion with other substituted Q[5]s, including Me<sub>2</sub>Q[5], 1,3-CyH<sub>2</sub>Q[5], 1,2,3-CyH<sub>3</sub>Q[5] and 1,2,4-CyH<sub>3</sub>Q[5].<sup>91</sup> Apparently, the electron donating effect of the substituents increased the electron density at the portals of these substituted Q[5] ligands, and hence enhanced their binding affinities.

We and others have also reported coordination compounds of alkali metal ions (Na<sup>+</sup>, K<sup>+</sup>, Rb<sup>+</sup> and Cs<sup>+</sup>) with both fully and partially alkyl-substituted Q[n]s, including TMeQ[6],<sup>92</sup> Me<sub>10</sub>Q[5],<sup>93-95</sup> CyP<sub>5</sub>Q[5],<sup>96</sup> OMeQ[6],<sup>97</sup> (HO)<sub>1</sub>OMeQ[6],<sup>98</sup> 1,3,5-Me<sub>6</sub>Q[6].<sup>99</sup> For example, Chen, Tao and coworkers investigated the coordination of OMeQ[6] with alkali metal ions in the presence of polychloride cadmium anions, such as [Cd<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>8</sub>]<sup>4-</sup>, [CdCl<sub>4</sub>]<sup>2-</sup>, and [Cd<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>7</sub>]<sup>3-</sup> anions, or in the presence of *p*-hydroxybenzoic acid.<sup>97</sup> The resulting structures **A-29-34** indicated the presence of “outer-surface interactions”, which are a unique type of noncovalent interaction first proposed by Tao.<sup>100</sup> For the OMeQ[6] molecules and the selected inorganic anions or aromatic molecules (Fig. 14), such interactions play an important role in the formation of different OMeQ[6]/A<sup>+</sup>-based supramolecular assemblies.

### 4.2. Interaction with alkaline earth metal ions

As early as 2008, the Tao group reported the coordination compounds **AE-5** and **AE-6** of TMeQ[6] which incorporated two alkaline earth metal ions, Ca<sup>2+</sup> and Sr<sup>2+</sup>, which coordinated directly to the TMeQ[6] ligand.<sup>101</sup> In 2012, we prepared and characterized three coordination compounds **AE-7-9** of the CyH<sub>5</sub>Q[5] ligand with alkaline-earth metal ions (Ca<sup>2+</sup>, Sr<sup>2+</sup>, Ba<sup>2+</sup>).<sup>102</sup> Analysis of the crystallographic data indicated that the radius (size) of the coordinated metal ions determines whether the molecular capsule is closed or opened (Fig. 15).

Tao and Ma *et al.* investigated the coordination compounds **AE-10-17** of CyP<sub>5</sub>Q[5] and CyP<sub>6</sub>Q[6] with a series alkaline-earth metal ions (AE<sup>2+</sup> = Mg<sup>2+</sup>, Ca<sup>2+</sup>, Sr<sup>2+</sup>, Ba<sup>2+</sup>) in the presence of [ZnCl<sub>4</sub>]<sup>2-</sup> anions.<sup>103,104</sup> X-ray diffraction analysis revealed that the [ZnCl<sub>4</sub>]<sup>2-</sup> anion acts as an inducer in the self-assembly of the CyP<sub>5</sub>Q[5]/CyP<sub>6</sub>Q[6]-based complexes. As shown in Fig. 16, for example, due to the ion-dipole interaction between the [ZnCl<sub>4</sub>]<sup>2-</sup> anions and the electropositive outer surface of the CyP<sub>5</sub>Q[5], the [ZnCl<sub>4</sub>]<sup>2-</sup> anions form a honeycomb-like framework, and the CyP<sub>5</sub>Q[5]-Mg<sup>2+</sup> coordination complex occupy the cells of this framework. For coordination compounds of alkaline earth metal ions with other substituted Q[n]s, such as (HO)<sub>1</sub>OMeQ[6],<sup>99</sup> *o*-TMeQ[6],<sup>41</sup> CyP<sub>6</sub>Q[6],<sup>104</sup> HMe<sub>6</sub>Q[6]<sup>105</sup> and (HO)<sub>1</sub>Q[7],<sup>106</sup> the honeycomb effect is also observed, which originates from the inorganic anions [CdCl<sub>4</sub>]<sup>2-</sup> or [ZnCl<sub>4</sub>]<sup>2-</sup>.

Coordination compounds of substituted Q[n]s with alkaline-earth metal ions constructed in the presence of inorganic anions usually possess different porous structures, and display differing absorption of volatile compounds.<sup>103,105,106</sup> For example, the HMe<sub>6</sub>Q[6]-Ca<sup>2+</sup>/Ba<sup>2+</sup>-[CdCl<sub>4</sub>]<sup>2-</sup> based coordination compounds **AE-18** and **AE-19** exhibit excellent thermal stability as well as permanent porosity. They also show high adsorption capacity and selectivity to Et<sub>2</sub>O and CH<sub>3</sub>OH.<sup>105</sup> The porous materials constructed by the coordination compounds

**Table 2** A list of the substituted Q[n]-based coordination compounds. For the sake of clarity, they are named according to the type of the metal ions contained in the compounds: A for alkali metal, AE for alkali-earth metal, TM for transition metal, and Ln for lanthanide metals

| Compounds | Formula                                                                                                | Structural type | Ref. |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|------|
| A-1       | $\{[K(H_2O)](NO_3@ (HO)_{10}Q[5])[K(\mu-NO_3)]Cl(H_2O)_2\}^{2+} \cdot 7H_2O$                           | 2-D             | 88   |
| A-2       | $\{[Rb_3(\mu_2-H_2O)(\mu_3-H_2O)(H_2O)_5SO_4]^{+}(H_2O@ (HO)_{10}Q[5])\}Cl(H_2O)^+ \cdot 2H_2O$        | 1-D             | 88   |
| A-3       | $[Cs_2(H_2O@ (HO)_{10}Q[5])SO_4]^{2-} \cdot (H_2O)_4$                                                  | 2-D             | 88   |
| A-4       | $\{Sr_2(Cl@Me_2Q[5])\} \cdot 3Cl \cdot 19H_2O$                                                         | 2-D             | 89   |
| A-5       | $\{K_2(H_2O@1,2,4-CyH_3Q[5])\} \cdot 2Cl \cdot 15.5H_2O$                                               | 3-D             | 89   |
| A-6       | $\{[K_2(1,2,4-Me_6Q[5])_3(H_2O)_4]^{6+} \cdot 6Cl^- \cdot 47(H_2O)\}$                                  | 3-D             | 90   |
| A-7       | $\{[K_2(CyH_5Q[5])_3(H_2O)]^{6+} \cdot 6I^- \cdot 23(H_2O)\}$                                          | 3-D             | 91   |
| A-8       | $\{K_6(H_2O)_4(H_2O@Me_2Q[5])_3\} \cdot 6I \cdot 39H_2O$                                               | 2-D             | 91   |
| A-9       | $\{K_6(H_2O)_4(H_2O@1,3-CyH_2Q[5])_2(H_2O@1,2,4-CyH_3Q[5])\} \cdot 6I \cdot 46H_2O$                    | 2-D             | 91   |
| A-10      | $\{K_6(H_2O)_4(H_2O@1,2,4-CyH_3Q[5])_3\} \cdot 6Cl \cdot 55H_2O$                                       | 2-D             | 91   |
| A-11      | $\{K_6(H_2O)_4(H_2O@1,2,3-CyH_3Q[5])_3\} \cdot 6I \cdot 26H_2O$                                        | 2-D             | 91   |
| A-12      | $\{K_6(H_2O)_4(H_2O@CyH_5Q[5])_3\} \cdot 6Cl \cdot 53H_2O$                                             | 2-D             | 91   |
| A-13      | $\{[Na_2(H_2O)_6(H_2O@TMeQ[6]) \cdot 2(C_6H_5NO_3) \cdot Cl_2(H_2O)_{10}]\}$                           | 1-D             | 92   |
| A-14      | $\{[Na_2(H_2O)_6(H_2O@TMeQ[6]) \cdot 2(C_6H_5NO_3) \cdot Br_2(H_2O)_{10}]\}$                           | 1-D             | 92   |
| A-15      | $\{[Na_2(H_2O)_6(C_6H_5NO_3)_2(2H_2O@TMeQ[6]) \cdot 6(C_6H_5NO_3)]F_2(H_2O)_4\}$                       | 1-D             | 92   |
| A-16      | $[K_2(H_2O)_3(H_2O)_{0.5}@Me_{10}Q[5)] \cdot Cl_2$                                                     | 1-D             | 93   |
| A-17      | $[K_2(H_2O)_2(H_2O@Me_{10}Q[5]) \cdot (ClO_4)_2 \cdot 3H_2O$                                           | 0-D             | 93   |
| A-18      | $[K_2(H_2O)_2(SCN)(Me_{10}Q[5]) \cdot (SCN) \cdot H_2O$                                                | 0-D             | 93   |
| A-19      | $[Sr_2Me_{10}Q[5](H_2O)_4Cl]^{3+} \cdot 3Cl^- \cdot 2(HCl) \cdot 19H_2O$                               | 0-D             | 94   |
| A-20      | $[K(H_2O)Me_{10}Q[5]Cl] \cdot [Zn(H_2O)_2Cl_2] \cdot [ZnCl_4]^{2-} \cdot 2(H_3O)^+ \cdot 8H_2O$        | 0-D             | 94   |
| A-21      | $[Na(H_2O)(H_2O)_2@Me_{10}Q[5]](C_6H_6O_2)_2Cl \cdot 8H_2O$                                            | 0-D             | 95   |
| A-22      | $[K_2(H_2O)_2(H_2O@Me_{10}Q[5])](C_6H_6O_2)_2Cl_2 \cdot 7H_2O$                                         | 1-D             | 95   |
| A-23      | $[Rb_2(H_2O)_2(H_2O@Me_{10}Q[5])](C_6H_6O_2)_2Cl_2 \cdot 7H_2O$                                        | 1-D             | 95   |
| A-24      | $[Cs(H_2O)_2(H_2O@Me_{10}Q[5])](C_6H_6O_2)_2Cl \cdot 6H_2O$                                            | 0-D             | 95   |
| A-25      | $\{Na_2(H_2O)_2Cl@CyP_5Q[5]\} \cdot [ZnCl_4] \cdot H_3O \cdot 9H_2O$                                   | 0-D             | 96   |
| A-26      | $\{K_2(H_2O)_2Cl@CyP_5Q[5]\} \cdot [ZnCl_4] \cdot H_3O \cdot 10H_2O$                                   | 0-D             | 96   |
| A-27      | $\{Rb_2CyP_5Q[5]\} \cdot [ZnCl_4] \cdot 3H_2O$                                                         | 0-D             | 96   |
| A-28      | $\{Cs_2CyP_5Q[5]\} \cdot [ZnCl_4] \cdot 3H_2O$                                                         | 1-D             | 96   |
| A-29      | $OMeQ[6] \cdot [Cd_2Cl_7] \cdot 3H_3O \cdot 10H_2O$                                                    | 0-D             | 97   |
| A-30      | $\{K_4(H_2O)_{10}OMeQ[6]\} \cdot [Cd_2Cl_8] \cdot 2H_2O$                                               | 1-D             | 97   |
| A-31      | $OMeQ[6] \cdot [CdCl_4] \cdot 2H_3O \cdot 11H_2O$                                                      | 0-D             | 97   |
| A-32      | $\{CsOMeQ[6]\} \cdot [Cd_2Cl_7] \cdot 2H_3O \cdot 5H_2O$                                               | 0-D             | 97   |
| A-33      | $\{Na_2(H_2O)_6(p-Hyb)_2OMeQ[6]\} \cdot 2(p-Hyb) \cdot 2Cl \cdot H_2O$                                 | 0-D             | 97   |
| A-34      | $\{Cs(H_2O)OMeQ[6]\} \cdot 4(p-Hyb) \cdot 3H_3O \cdot 7H_2O$                                           | 0-D             | 97   |
| A-35      | $\{Na_2(H_2O)_{10}(HO)_1OMeQ[6]\} \cdot 2[CdCl_4] \cdot 2H_3O \cdot 3H_2O$                             | 0-D             | 98   |
| A-36      | $\{K_2(H_2O)_{10}(HO)_1OMeQ[6]\} \cdot 2[CdCl_4] \cdot 2H_3O \cdot 2H_2O$                              | 1-D             | 98   |
| A-37      | $\{Rb(H_2O)_8(HO)_1OMeQ[6]\} \cdot 2[CdCl_4] \cdot 3H_3O \cdot H_2O$                                   | 1-D             | 98   |
| A-38      | $\{K_2(H_2O)_6(1,3,5-Me_6Q[6])\}^{2+} \cdot Cr_2O_7^{2-} \cdot 15H_2O$                                 | 0-D             | 99   |
| A-39      | $\{Rb_2(H_2O)_6(1,3,5-Me_6Q[6])\}^{2+} \cdot 2Cl^- \cdot 14H_2O$                                       | 0-D             | 99   |
| A-40      | $\{Cs_2(H_2O)_6(1,3,5-Me_6Q[6])\}^{2+} \cdot 2Cl^- \cdot 11H_2O$                                       | 1-D             | 99   |
| A-41      | $[Li_2(H_2O)_4(H_2O@Me_{10}Q[5]) \cdot PdCl_4] \cdot 4H_2O$                                            | 0-D             | 124  |
| A-42      | $[Na_2(H_2O)_5(H_2O@Me_{10}Q[5]) \cdot PdCl_4] \cdot 5H_2O$                                            | 0-D             | 124  |
| A-43      | $[K_2(H_2O)_3(H_2O)_{0.5}@Me_{10}Q[5]] \cdot PdCl_4$                                                   | 2-D             | 124  |
| A-44      | $[Rb_2(H_2O)_3(H_2O)_{0.5}@Me_{10}Q[5]] \cdot PdCl_4$                                                  | 2-D             | 124  |
| A-45      | $[Cs_2(H_2O)_2(H_2O@Me_{10}Q[5]) \cdot PdCl_4]$                                                        | 0-D             | 124  |
| A-46      | $\{[Ag(H_2O)_2(H_2O@Me_{10}Q[5]) \cdot 2NO_3] \cdot 2H_2O\}$                                           | 0-D             | 125  |
| AE-1      | $2\{Sr_2(H_2O)_8(HO)_1OMeQ[6]\} \cdot 3[CdCl_4] \cdot 2Cl \cdot 31H_2O$                                | 1-D             | 97   |
| AE-2      | $\{Ba_2(H_2O)_8Cl[CdCl_4](HO)_1OMeQ[6]\} \cdot 2Cl \cdot H_3O \cdot 22H_2O$                            | 1-D             | 97   |
| AE-3      | $2[Ca_2(H_2O)_8(NO_3@o-TMeQ[6])] \cdot 2(CdCl_4) \cdot 4Cl \cdot 2H_3O \cdot 21H_2O$                   | 1-D             | 41   |
| AE-4      | $2[Sr_2(H_2O)_9(NO_3@o-TMeQ[6])] \cdot 2(CdCl_4) \cdot 2Cl \cdot 22H_2O$                               | 1-D             | 41   |
| AE-5      | $\{(CaCl)(TMeQ[6]) \cdot Cl \cdot 17.5H_2O\}$                                                          | 0-D             | 111  |
| AE-6      | $\{(Sr_2Cl_2)[TMeQ[6]@H_2O] \cdot Cl_2 \cdot 10H_2O\}$                                                 | 1-D             | 111  |
| AE-7      | $\{Ca_2(H_2O)_4[(NO_3)@CyH_5Q[5]]_2(NO_3)_6 \cdot 26H_2O\}$                                            | 0-D             | 102  |
| AE-8      | $\{Sr_2(H_2O)_3(NO_3)[(NO_3)@CyH_5Q[5]](NO_3)_2 \cdot 7H_2O\}$                                         | 1-D             | 102  |
| AE-9      | $\{Ba(H_2O)[(H_2O)_2@CyH_5Q[5]](NO_3)_2 \cdot 11H_2O\}$                                                | 1-D             | 102  |
| AE-10     | $\{Mg(H_2O)(Cl@CyP_5Q[5]) \cdot 2[ZnCl_4] \cdot 3H_3O \cdot 15H_2O\}$                                  | 0-D             | 103  |
| AE-11     | $\{Ca_2(Cl@CyP_5Q[5]) \cdot 2[ZnCl_4] \cdot H_3O \cdot 16H_2O\}$                                       | 0-D             | 103  |
| AE-12     | $2\{Sr_2(H_2O)_5(Cl@CyP_5Q[5]) \cdot 2[ZnCl_4] \cdot [Zn(H_2O)Cl_3] \cdot Cl \cdot H_3O \cdot 8H_2O\}$ | 0-D             | 103  |
| AE-13     | $2\{Ba_2(H_2O)_3(Cl@CyP_5Q[5]) \cdot 3[ZnCl_4] \cdot 23H_2O\}$                                         | 1-D             | 103  |
| AE-14     | $\{Mg(H_2O)_6@CyP_6Q[6]\} \cdot 2[Zn(H_2O)Cl_3] \cdot 9H_2O$                                           | 0-D             | 104  |
| AE-15     | $\{Ca_2(H_2O)_8CyP_6Q[6]\} \cdot 2[ZnCl_4] \cdot 13(H_2O)$                                             | 1-D             | 104  |
| AE-16     | $\{Sr_2(H_2O)_{10}CyP_6Q[6]\} \cdot 2[ZnCl_4] \cdot 6(H_2O)$                                           | 1-D             | 104  |
| AE-17     | $\{Ba_2(H_2O)_{10}CyP_6Q[6]\} \cdot 2[ZnCl_4] \cdot 6(H_2O)$                                           | 1-D             | 104  |
| AE-18     | $\{Ca(H_2O)_4@HMe_6Q[6]\} \cdot [CdCl_4] \cdot 7H_2O$                                                  | 1-D             | 105  |
| AE-19     | $\{Ba_2(H_2O)_8@HMe_6Q[6]\} \cdot [CdCl_4] \cdot 2Cl \cdot 12H_2O$                                     | 1-D             | 105  |
| AE-20     | $\{Ca_{1.5}(H_2O)_5(HO)_1Q[7]\} \cdot 2[CdCl_4] \cdot H_3O \cdot 35H_2O$                               | 1-D             | 106  |
| AE-21     | $\{Sr_{1.5}(H_2O)_5(HO)_1Q[7]\} \cdot 2[CdCl_4] \cdot H_3O \cdot 35H_2O$                               | 1-D             | 106  |
| TM-1      | $\{Cd_6Cl_{14}CyH_6Q[6]\} \cdot (H_3O)_2 \cdot (H_2O)_2$                                               | 0-D             | 108  |
| TM-2      | $(TMeQ[6]) \cdot (H_3O)_4^{4+} \cdot (CuCl_4)_2^{4-} \cdot 8H_2O$                                      | 0-D             | 109  |



Table 2 (Contd.)

| Compounds       | Formula                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Structural type | Ref. |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|------|
| <b>TM-3</b>     | [(TMeQ[6])(CuCl <sub>2</sub> ) <sub>2</sub> (H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>4</sub> ].10H <sub>2</sub> O                                                                                                                                                        | 1-D             | 109  |
| <b>TM-4</b>     | TMeQ[6].14H <sub>2</sub> O                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 0-D             | 109  |
| <b>TM-5</b>     | [Cu(H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>4</sub> (C <sub>4</sub> H <sub>8</sub> O <sub>2</sub> )@CyH <sub>6</sub> Q[6]].2(NO <sub>3</sub> ).4(H <sub>2</sub> O)                                                                                                       | 1-D             | 110  |
| <b>TM-6</b>     | [Cu <sub>2</sub> (H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>6</sub> Cl <sub>2</sub> (TMeQ[6]).2Cl.15(H <sub>2</sub> O)                                                                                                                                                     | 1-D             | 110  |
| <b>TM-7</b>     | [Cu <sub>2</sub> (H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>9</sub> (TMeQ[6]).2(SO <sub>4</sub> ).16(H <sub>2</sub> O)                                                                                                                                                     | 0-D             | 110  |
| <b>TM-8</b>     | [(C <sub>6</sub> H <sub>10</sub> N <sub>2</sub> )@TMeQ[6]].CuCl <sub>4</sub> .7(H <sub>2</sub> O)                                                                                                                                                       | 0-D             | 110  |
| <b>TM-9</b>     | [Cu(H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>3</sub> .CyP <sub>5</sub> Q[5]].(ClO <sub>4</sub> ) <sub>2</sub>                                                                                                                                                             | 1-D             | 111  |
| <b>TM-10</b>    | [Zn <sub>2</sub> (H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>4</sub> .(CyP <sub>5</sub> Q[5]) <sub>2</sub> ].(ClO <sub>4</sub> ) <sub>4</sub>                                                                                                                               | 1-D             | 111  |
| <b>TM-11</b>    | [Cu(H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>2</sub> .CyP <sub>6</sub> Q[6]].(ClO <sub>4</sub> ) <sub>2</sub>                                                                                                                                                             | 1-D             | 111  |
| <b>TM-12</b>    | [Zn(H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>2</sub> .CyP <sub>6</sub> Q[6]].(ClO <sub>4</sub> ) <sub>2</sub> .H <sub>2</sub> O                                                                                                                                           | 0-D             | 111  |
| <b>Ln-1-3</b>   | {LnCl <sub>2</sub> (H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>3</sub> CyH <sub>5</sub> Q[5]}.NO <sub>3</sub> .18.5H <sub>2</sub> O Ln = La, Ce, Pr                                                                                                                         | 1-D             | 115  |
| <b>Ln-4,5</b>   | {LnCl <sub>2</sub> (H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>2</sub> CyH <sub>5</sub> Q[5]}.NO <sub>3</sub> .14H <sub>2</sub> O Ln = Nd, Sm                                                                                                                               | 1-D             | 115  |
| <b>Ln-6</b>     | {Dy(H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>2</sub> [Cl@CyH <sub>5</sub> Q[5]]Dy(H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>6</sub> }.5Cl.20H <sub>2</sub> O                                                                                                                                 | 0-D             | 115  |
| <b>Ln-7,8</b>   | {LnCl(H <sub>2</sub> O)[Cl@CyH <sub>5</sub> Q[5]]Ln(H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>6</sub> }.4Cl.13H <sub>2</sub> O Ln = Ho, Er                                                                                                                                 | 0-D             | 115  |
| <b>Ln-9-17</b>  | [Ln(H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>4</sub> (NO <sub>3</sub> ) <sub>3</sub> .CyH <sub>6</sub> Q[6].nH <sub>2</sub> O, Ln = Y, Sm, Eu, Gd, Tb, Dy, Ho, Er, Yb                                                                                                     | 1-D             | 116  |
| <b>Ln-18</b>    | {Lu <sub>2</sub> (H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>12</sub> CyH <sub>6</sub> Q[6]}.4NO <sub>3</sub> .2Cl.20H <sub>2</sub> O                                                                                                                                       | 1-D             | 116  |
| <b>Ln-19-21</b> | {Ln <sub>4</sub> (H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>16</sub> [NO <sub>3</sub> @CyH <sub>6</sub> Q[6]] <sub>2</sub> }.10NO <sub>3</sub> .nH <sub>2</sub> O, Ln = La, Ce, Nd                                                                                         | 0-D             | 116  |
| <b>Ln-22</b>    | {Pr(H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>3</sub> Cl <sub>2</sub> [NO <sub>3</sub> @CyH <sub>6</sub> Q[6]]}.25H <sub>2</sub> O                                                                                                                                         | 0-D             | 116  |
| <b>Ln-23</b>    | {Pr(H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>3</sub> Cl <sub>2</sub> [NO <sub>3</sub> @CyH <sub>6</sub> Q[6]]}.23H <sub>2</sub> O                                                                                                                                         | 0-D             | 116  |
| <b>Ln-24-27</b> | {Ln <sub>2</sub> (H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>6</sub> [Cl@HMe <sub>5</sub> Q[5]]}.2[CdCl <sub>4</sub> ].2H <sub>2</sub> O Ln = La, Ce, Pr, Nd                                                                                                                | 0-D             | 117  |
| <b>Ln-28-32</b> | {HMe <sub>6</sub> Q[6].[Ln(H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>8</sub> ].3Cl.nH <sub>2</sub> O n = 11-14, Ln = Tb, Dy, Ho, Er, Tm                                                                                                                                    | 0-D             | 117  |
| <b>Ln-33</b>    | {HMe <sub>6</sub> Q[6].[Sm(H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>8</sub> ].3Cl.10H <sub>2</sub> O                                                                                                                                                                      | 0-D             | 117  |
| <b>Ln-34-40</b> | {o-TMeQ[6].[Ln(H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>8</sub> ].2(NO <sub>3</sub> ).Cl.9H <sub>2</sub> O Ln = Tb, Dy, Ho, Er, Tm, Yb, Lu                                                                                                                                | 0-D             | 118  |
| <b>Ln-41</b>    | La(H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>4</sub> OMeQ[6].2(CdCl <sub>4</sub> ).[CdCl <sub>2</sub> (H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>4</sub> ].16H <sub>2</sub> O                                                                                                                 | 1-D             | 119  |
| <b>Ln-42</b>    | {(NO <sub>3</sub> ) <sub>2</sub> @OMeQ[6].Ce <sub>2</sub> (H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>10</sub> }.2(CdCl <sub>4</sub> ).10H <sub>2</sub> O                                                                                                                   | 0-D             | 119  |
| <b>Ln-43,44</b> | {Cl@OMeQ[6].Ln <sub>2</sub> (H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>9</sub> }.2(CdCl <sub>4</sub> ).3Cl <sup>-</sup> .nH <sub>2</sub> O Ln = Pr, Eu                                                                                                                     | 0-D             | 119  |
| <b>Ln-45</b>    | {OMeQ[6].Nd <sub>2</sub> (H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>12</sub> }.2(CdCl <sub>4</sub> ).2Cl <sup>-</sup> .4H <sub>2</sub> O                                                                                                                                   | 0-D             | 119  |
| <b>Ln-46</b>    | OMeQ[6].Sm(H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>8</sub> .(CdCl <sub>4</sub> ).NO <sub>3</sub> <sup>-</sup> .3H <sub>2</sub> O                                                                                                                                         | 0-D             | 119  |
| <b>Ln-47-49</b> | OMeQ[6].Ln(H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>8</sub> .(CdCl <sub>4</sub> ).Cl <sup>-</sup> .nH <sub>2</sub> O Ln = Gd, Dy, Ho                                                                                                                                      | 0-D             | 119  |
| <b>Ln-50</b>    | {(C <sub>6</sub> H <sub>6</sub> O <sub>2</sub> )@OMeQ[6].Ho <sub>2</sub> (H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>10</sub> }.2(CdCl <sub>4</sub> ).[C <sub>6</sub> H <sub>6</sub> O <sub>2</sub> ].4Cl <sup>-</sup> .4(H <sub>3</sub> O) <sup>+</sup> .8H <sub>2</sub> O | 0-D             | 119  |
| <b>Ln-51-53</b> | {Ln(H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>6</sub> .CyP <sub>6</sub> Q[6]}.2[ZnCl <sub>4</sub> ].Cl.2(H <sub>3</sub> O).n(H <sub>2</sub> O) Ln = La, Ce, Sm                                                                                                             | 0-D             | 120  |
| <b>Ln-54-59</b> | {Ln(H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>5</sub> .CyP <sub>6</sub> Q[6]}.2[ZnCl <sub>4</sub> ].(H <sub>3</sub> O).n(H <sub>2</sub> O) Ln = Pr, Nd, Eu, Gd, Tb, Dy                                                                                                     | 0-D             | 120  |
| <b>Ln-60</b>    | CyP <sub>6</sub> Q[6].[Ho(H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>8</sub> ].[ZnCl <sub>4</sub> ].[Zn(H <sub>2</sub> O)Cl <sub>3</sub> ].15(H <sub>2</sub> O)                                                                                                             | 0-D             | 120  |
| <b>Ln-61-69</b> | {t(HO) <sub>2</sub> OMeQ[6]}.[Ln(H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>8</sub> ].x(NO <sub>3</sub> ).yCl.zH <sub>2</sub> O Ln = Eu, Gd, Tb, Dy, Ho, Er, Tm, Yb, Lu                                                                                                     | 0-D             | 121  |
| <b>Ln-70-72</b> | {Ln(H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>5</sub> (NO <sub>3</sub> )(o-TMeQ[6])}.(NO <sub>3</sub> ) <sub>2</sub> .6H <sub>2</sub> O Ln = Nd, Sm, Eu                                                                                                                    | 0-D             | 122  |
| <b>Ln-73-80</b> | {Ln(H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>6</sub> (o-TMeQ[6])}.2(NO <sub>3</sub> ).Cl.nH <sub>2</sub> O Ln = Gd, Tb, Dy, Ho, Er, Tm, Yb, Lu                                                                                                                            | 0-D             | 122  |
| <b>Ln-81-84</b> | {Ln(H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>6</sub> CyH <sub>6</sub> Q[6]}.2(CdCl <sub>4</sub> ).H <sub>3</sub> O.nH <sub>2</sub> O Ln = La, Ce, Pr, Nd                                                                                                                  | 1-D             | 123  |
| <b>Ln-85</b>    | {Sm(H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>5</sub> CyH <sub>6</sub> Q[6]}.2(CdCl <sub>4</sub> ).H <sub>3</sub> O.10H <sub>2</sub> O                                                                                                                                     | 1-D             | 123  |
| <b>Ln-86-88</b> | {Ln(H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>5</sub> (NO <sub>3</sub> )@CyH <sub>6</sub> Q[6]}.2(CdCl <sub>4</sub> ).2H <sub>3</sub> O.nH <sub>2</sub> O Ln = Gd, Tb, Dy                                                                                                  | 1-D             | 123  |

of (HO)<sub>1</sub>Q[7] with Ca<sup>2+</sup> and Sr<sup>2+</sup>, **AE-20** and **AE-21**, revealed a large sorption capacity for CH<sub>3</sub>OH.

#### 4.3. Interaction with transition metal ions

Transition metal coordination complexes usually display special optical, electrical and magnetic properties. However, only a few examples of Q[n]-transition metal coordination complex have been reported.<sup>107-110</sup> More often than not, transition metal ions prefer to form aqua complexes rather than to coordinate with Q[n] ligands in aqueous solution. This section presents some examples of substituted Q[n]s complexes with transition metal ions.

In 2010, the complexation behaviour of CyH<sub>6</sub>Q[6] with Cd<sup>2+</sup> ions was investigated by electrochemical methods and X-ray crystallography.<sup>108</sup> The host CyH<sub>6</sub>Q[6] displayed extraordinary binding affinity towards Cd<sup>2+</sup> ions. It can form a 1:6 CyH<sub>6</sub>Q[6]/Cd<sup>2+</sup> complex **TM-1** in both aqueous solution and the solid state (Fig. 17). The strong binding affinity of CyH<sub>6</sub>Q[6] toward Cd<sup>2+</sup> ions may be derived from the electron donating property of its six substituted cyclohexano groups.

The study suggests the potential utility of CyH<sub>6</sub>Q[6] as an effective chelator and extractant for toxic heavy metals.

Three years later, we studied the effect of chloride anion concentration on the self-assembly of supramolecular architectures based on TMeQ[6] and copper chloride.<sup>109</sup> Under different chloride anion concentrations, three supramolecular architectures **TM-2-4** were obtained through the reaction of TMeQ[6] and copper chloride. X-ray diffraction analysis revealed three tubular structures (Fig. 18), one of which is attributed to coordination bonds and the other two resulted from weak noncovalent interactions. In 2013, Zhang *et al.* described coordination compounds of CyP<sub>6</sub>Q[6] (**TM-5**) and TMeQ[6] (**TM-6-8**) with Cu<sup>2+</sup> in the absence or presence of a third species.<sup>110</sup> The resulting coordination compounds showed how the corresponding supramolecular assemblies can depend on the addition of the third species. Very recently, Ma and co-workers studied coordination compounds of CyP<sub>5</sub>Q[5] (**TM-9** and **TM-10**) and CyP<sub>6</sub>Q[6] (**TM-11** and **TM-12**) with two transition metal ions, namely Cu<sup>2+</sup> and Zn<sup>2+</sup>.<sup>111</sup>

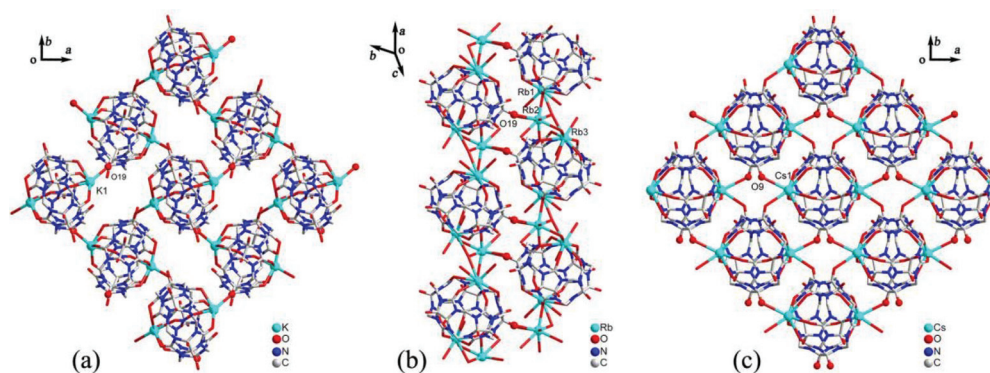


Fig. 12 2D coordination polymers of  $(\text{HO})_{10}\text{Q}[5]$  with alkali metal ions  $\text{K}^+$  (a),  $\text{Rb}^+$  (b) and  $\text{Cs}^+$  (c).

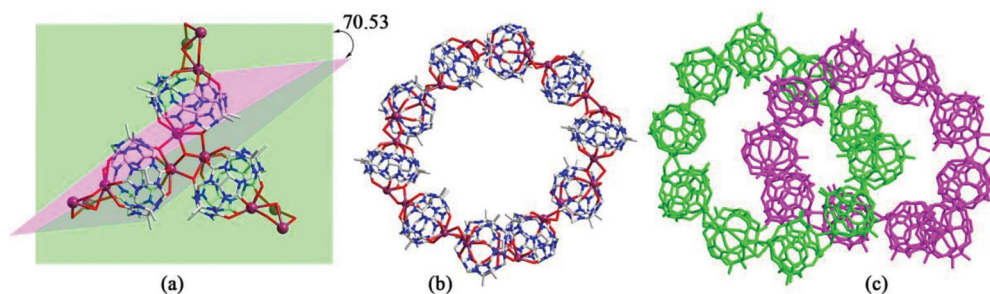


Fig. 13 (a) Schematic illustrating that the dihedrals between any two K1 junction planes in the trigonal planar branch are identical at 70.53. (b) A single 10-membered 1,2,4-HMeQ[5] "bracelet". (c) Catenation of two 10-membered 1,2,4-HMeQ[5] bracelets.

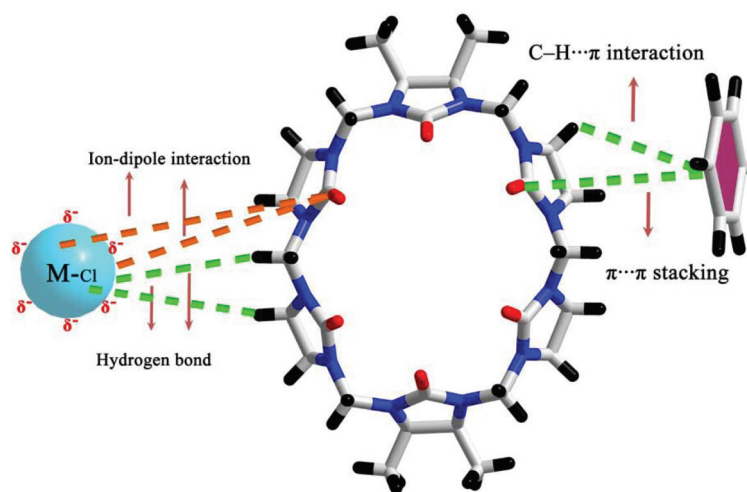


Fig. 14 Outer-surface interactions of  $\text{OMeQ}[6]$  with inorganic anions (left) and aromatic moieties (right).

#### 4.4. Interaction with lanthanide metal ions

Due to their unique physicochemical properties, lanthanide ions are widely used in numerous technological devices.<sup>112–114</sup> However, lanthanide ions are difficult to separate because of the poor shielding of the nuclear charge by filling of the 4f electron shell. The study of lanthanide coordination complexes here may lead to fascinating topological structures and prom-

ising applications. On comparison with other metal ions, lanthanide ions are the most studied in the coordination chemistry of substituted  $\text{Q}[n]$ s.<sup>115–123</sup>

Because of the effect of lanthanide contraction, the lanthanide complexes with substituted  $\text{Q}[n]$ s usually display interesting structural progressions. As early as 2012, we prepared eight coordination compounds **Ln-1-8** of  $\text{CyH}_5\text{Q}[5]$  with a number of lanthanide ions ( $\text{La}^{3+}$ ,  $\text{Ce}^{3+}$ ,  $\text{Pr}^{3+}$ ,  $\text{Nd}^{3+}$ ,  $\text{Sm}^{3+}$ ,  $\text{Dy}^{3+}$ ,  $\text{Ho}^{3+}$ ,

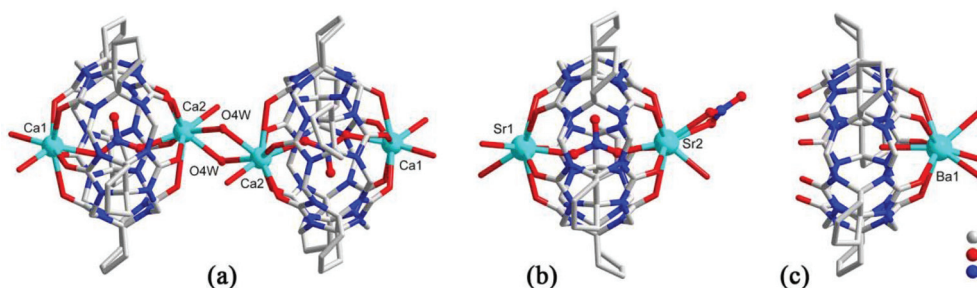


Fig. 15 Crystal structures of three coordination compounds of CyH<sub>5</sub>Q[5] with alkaline-earth metal ions (Ca<sup>2+</sup> (a), Sr<sup>2+</sup> (b) and Ba<sup>2+</sup> (c)) showing three kinds of molecular capsules.

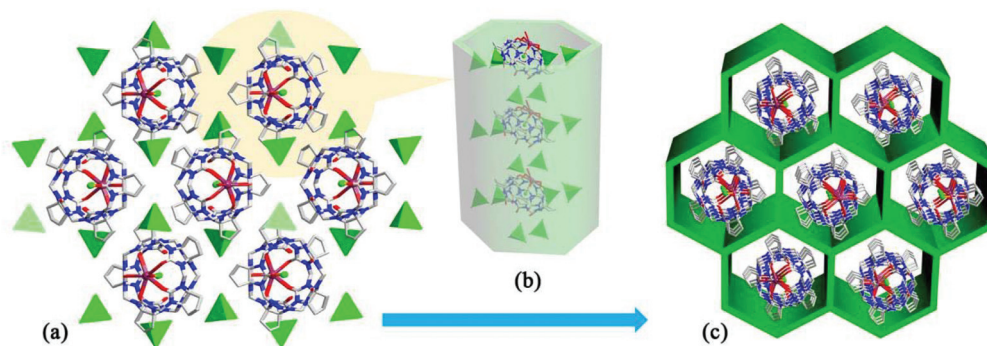


Fig. 16 Binding interaction of Mg<sup>2+</sup> with CyP<sub>5</sub>Q[5]. (a) Supramolecular assembly of Mg<sup>2+</sup> cations, CyP<sub>5</sub>Q[5] molecules and [ZnCl<sub>4</sub>]<sup>2-</sup> anions. (b) Occupying the cells of the framework. (c) Honeycomb-like framework constructed of [ZnCl<sub>4</sub>]<sup>2-</sup> anions, with CyP<sub>5</sub>Q[5]-based chains.

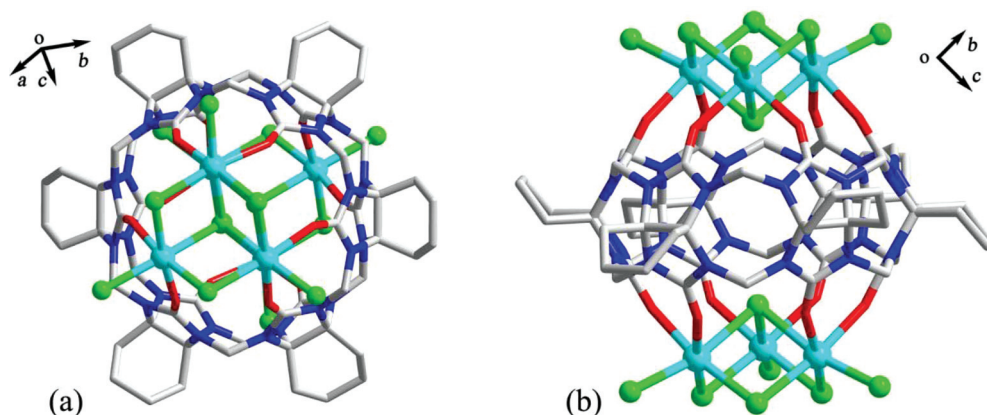


Fig. 17 X-ray structure of CyH<sub>6</sub>Q[6]/Cd<sup>2+</sup> complex: (a) top view; (b) side view.

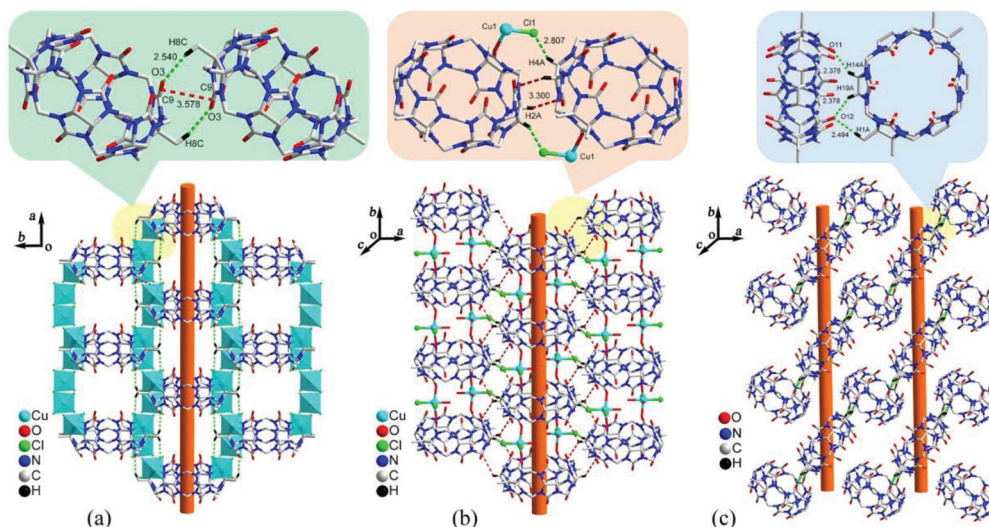
and Er<sup>3+</sup>) by reactions of the corresponding lanthanide species with the CyH<sub>5</sub>Q[5] in aqueous solution.<sup>115</sup> Crystal structure analysis revealed two coordination modes (Fig. 19). Close inspection of these crystal structures revealed some interesting structural variations, which were ascribed to the effect of lanthanide contraction.

In the following year, the effect of lanthanide contraction induced coordination architectures of CyH<sub>6</sub>Q[6] was also

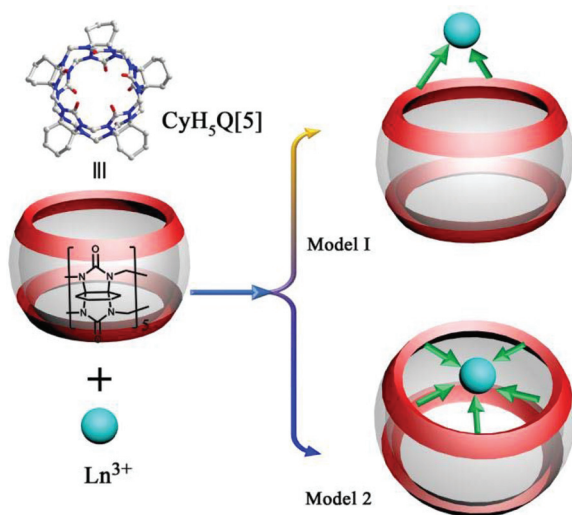
studied by Ni and Tao *et al.*<sup>116</sup> The slightly different ionic radii of the lanthanide metal ions plays a key role in the formation of different coordination modes for CyH<sub>6</sub>Q[6]. As a result, fifteen coordination architectures Ln-9–23 of CyH<sub>6</sub>Q[6]-Ln were structurally classified into four groups, as shown in Fig. 20.

On the other hand, each substituted Q[*n*] displays a different binding affinity to the same lanthanide ions. Some





**Fig. 18** Three tubular structures self-assembled from TMeQ[6] and copper chloride under different chloride anion concentrations: (a) 1.0 M HCl; (b) 3.0 M HCl; (c) 6.0 M HCl.



**Fig. 19** Two kinds of coordination mode observed for CyH<sub>5</sub>Q[5] with lanthanide ions.

substituted Q[*n*]s only coordinate with light lanthanide ions, while others only coordinate with heavy lanthanide ions, and this provided a new method for separating lanthanide ions. For example, Zhu *et al.* investigated the interactions between a series of lanthanide ions and HMe<sub>5</sub>Q[5] and HMe<sub>6</sub>Q[6] in 2015.<sup>117</sup> X-ray diffraction analysis revealed that HMe<sub>5</sub>Q[5] and HMe<sub>6</sub>Q[6] selectively interacted with certain lanthanide ions. In the presence of [CdCl<sub>4</sub>]<sup>2-</sup>, HMe<sub>5</sub>Q[5] crystallized with four light lanthanides, La<sup>3+</sup>, Ce<sup>3+</sup>, Pr<sup>3+</sup>, and Nd<sup>3+</sup> and formed the coordination capsules **Ln-24–27**, whereas the other lanthanide ions remained in solution. Under the same conditions, HMe<sub>6</sub>Q[6] crystallized with aqua complexes of lanthanide cations ([Ln(H<sub>2</sub>O)<sub>8</sub>]<sup>3+</sup>, Ln = Gd–Lu) and formed the adducts **Ln-28–32**, whilst La<sup>3+</sup>, Ce<sup>3+</sup>, Pr<sup>3+</sup>, Nd<sup>3+</sup>, Sm<sup>3+</sup>, and Eu<sup>3+</sup>

remained in solution. It should be noted that no satisfactory data were collected for the ions Gd<sup>3+</sup>, Yb<sup>3+</sup>, and Lu<sup>3+</sup>. In neutral solution and in the absence of CdCl<sub>2</sub>, HMe<sub>6</sub>Q[6] crystallized with aqua complexes of lanthanide cations (Ln = Sm–Lu) to form adducts. Here, **Ln-33** is a representative adduct. No solid crystals of HMe<sub>6</sub>Q[6] with La<sup>3+</sup>, Ce<sup>3+</sup>, Pr<sup>3+</sup>, and Nd<sup>3+</sup> could be obtained. Energy-dispersive spectrometry (EDS) studies indicated that the lighter or heavier lanthanide ions could be isolated from their counterparts through the interaction with HMe<sub>5</sub>Q[5] and HMe<sub>6</sub>Q[6].

In the past five years, the coordination chemistry of lanthanide metal ions with other substituted Q[*n*]s, such as *o*-TMeQ[6],<sup>118,122</sup> OMeQ[6],<sup>119</sup> CyP6Q[6],<sup>120</sup> *t*-(HO)<sub>2</sub>OMeQ[6],<sup>121</sup> and CyH6Q[6],<sup>123</sup> under different conditions were also studied. Table 3 lists the coordination conditions and results of all substituted Q[*n*]s on interaction with lanthanide metal ions.

## 5. Applications of substituted Q[*n*]s

It must be noted that applications of hydroxylated Q[*n*]s and their derivatives have been reviewed in our previous work,<sup>19</sup> and will not be discussed in this review.

### 5.1. Catalysis

In 2013, the Cao group prepared a series of M-Pd-Me<sub>10</sub>Q[5] (M = Li, Na, K, Rb, and Cs) hybrid solid materials (Fig. 21), which displayed excellent catalytic performance and good recyclability as phosphine-free pre-catalysts for Heck cross-coupling reactions.<sup>124</sup> Their studies revealed that the activated Pd(II) species were released from the crystalline hybrid pre-catalysts and were transformed into catalytically active Pd nanoparticles during the catalytic reactions. In the following year, the Cao group prepared a composite material



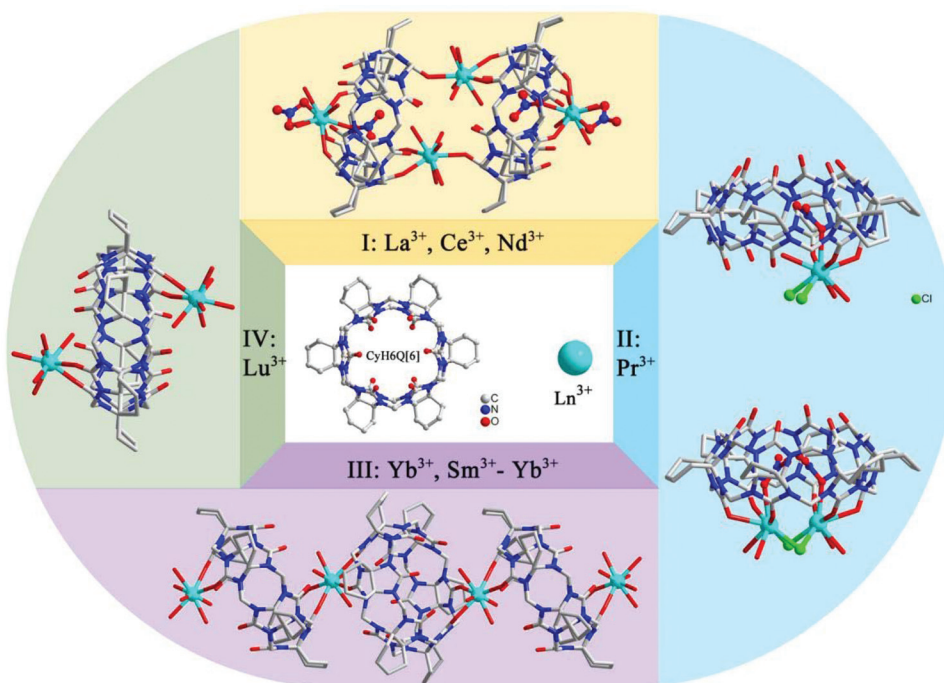


Fig. 20 Coordination complexes of Cy6Q[6] with lanthanide ions, which were structurally classified into four groups.

Table 3 The coordination conditions and results of substituted Q[n]s with lanthanide ions<sup>a</sup>

| Ligand                                                      | La | Ce | Pr | Nd | Sm | Eu | Gd | Tb | Dy | Ho | Er | Tm | Yb | Lu | Ref. |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|------|
| CyH <sub>5</sub> Q[5] in water                              | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | —  | —  | —  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | —  | —  | —  | 115  |
| CyH <sub>6</sub> Q[6] in water                              | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | —  | ✓  | ✓  | 116  |
| HMe <sub>5</sub> Q[5] in [CdCl <sub>4</sub> ] <sup>2-</sup> | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ×  | ×  | ×  | ×  | ×  | ×  | ×  | ×  | ×  | ×  | 117  |
| HMe <sub>6</sub> Q[6] in [CdCl <sub>4</sub> ] <sup>2-</sup> | ×  | ×  | ×  | ×  | ×  | ×  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | 117  |
| HMe <sub>6</sub> Q[6] in water                              | ×  | ×  | ×  | ×  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | 117  |
| <i>o</i> -TMeQ[6] in neutral sol.                           | ×  | ×  | ×  | ×  | ×  | ×  | ×  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | 118  |
| OMeQ[6] in [CdCl <sub>4</sub> ] <sup>2-</sup>               | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | —  | ✓  | ✓  | ×  | ×  | ×  | ×  | 119  |
| CyP <sub>6</sub> Q[6] in [ZnCl <sub>4</sub> ] <sup>2-</sup> | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ○  | ○  | ○  | 120  |
| (HO) <sub>2</sub> OMeQ[6] in water                          | ×  | ×  | ×  | ×  | ×  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | 121  |
| <i>o</i> -TMeQ[6] in Cd(NO <sub>3</sub> ) <sub>2</sub>      | ×  | ×  | ×  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | 122  |
| CyH <sub>6</sub> Q[6] in [CdCl <sub>4</sub> ] <sup>2-</sup> | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | —  | ✓  | ✓  | ○  | ×  | ○  | ○  | ×  | 123  |

<sup>a</sup> Promethium is not discussed because it is a radioactive element. × No crystals were obtained, ✓ Obtained crystals contain lanthanide ions, — no information, ○ The obtained crystals without lanthanide ions.

Ag@Me<sub>10</sub>Q[5], in which spherical silver nanoparticles (Ag<sup>0</sup> NPs) with an average size of *ca.* 4.4 nm were observed.<sup>125</sup> As a heterogeneous catalyst for the reduction of various nitrophenols, the composite material Ag@Me<sub>10</sub>Q[5] exhibited excellent catalytic performance and remained active after several consecutive cycles.

## 5.2. Inorganic-organic hybrid materials

The redox catalysis and magnetism exhibited by inorganic polyoxometalates (POMs) has made them attractive for research.<sup>126</sup> In 2009, Kögerler and coworkers reported an example of a hybrid supramolecular architecture based on POMs and Q[n].<sup>127</sup> Since then, Cao, Tao, Zhang, Zhu and co-

workers have demonstrated numerous hybrid compounds of POMs with substituted Q[n] derivatives.<sup>128–137</sup> Very recently, Zhang and co-workers found that the self-assembly of (HO)<sub>12</sub>Q[6] and Keggin-type POMs (such as H<sub>3</sub>[PMo<sub>12</sub>O<sub>40</sub>] and H<sub>3</sub>[PW<sub>12</sub>O<sub>40</sub>]) under different concentrations of hydrochloric acid yields two types of supramolecular assemblies: one being hybrid compounds (HO)<sub>12</sub>Q[6]-POMs-HCl and the other (HO)<sub>12</sub>Q[6]-HCl (Fig. 22).<sup>137</sup>

They exhibited various interesting chemical and physical properties. It is worth mentioning that the complexation of POMs with Q[n]s or substituted Q[n]s is driven by “outer-surface interactions”, including ion-dipole interactions, hydrogen bonding, C-H...π interactions, as well as π...π stacking.

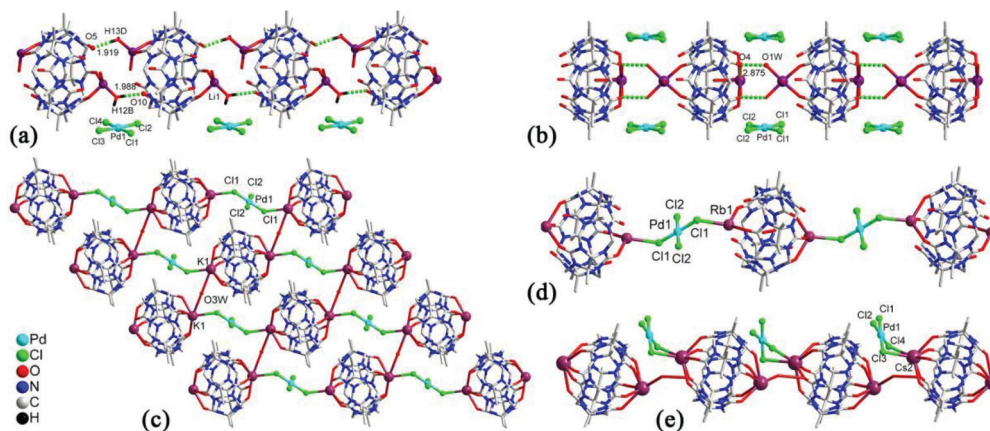


Fig. 21 Crystal structures of a series of M-Pd-Me<sub>10</sub>Q[5] (M = Li (a), Na (b), K (c), Rb (d), and Cs (e)) hybrid solid materials.

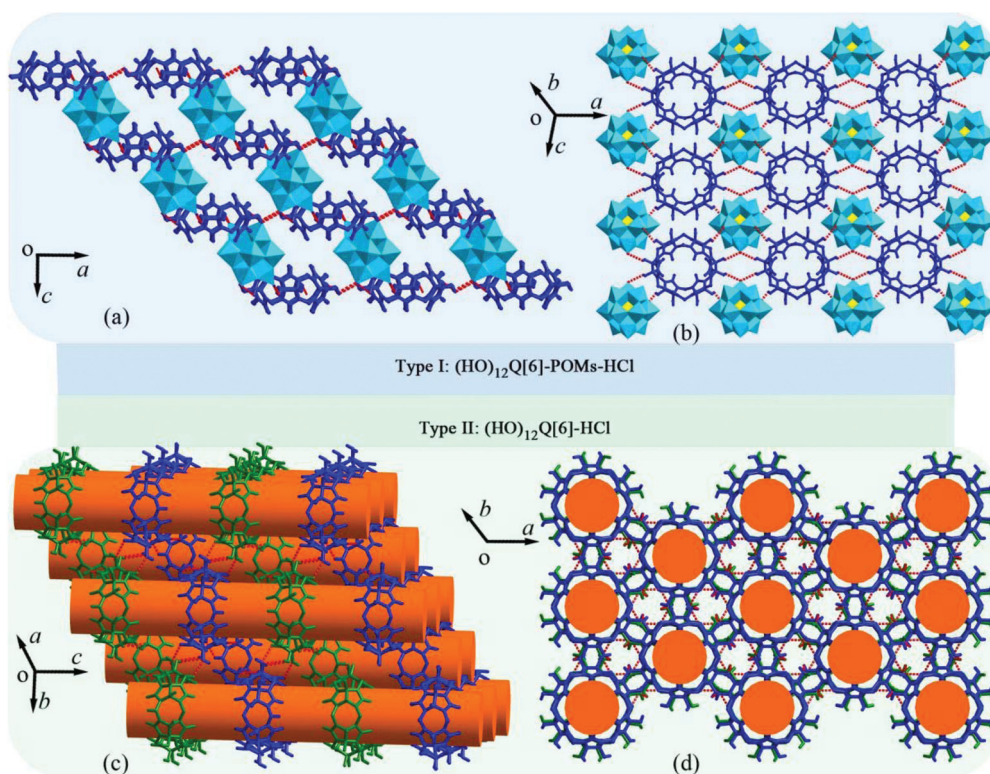


Fig. 22 Two types of supramolecular assemblies in different directions: hybrid compounds (HO)<sub>12</sub>Q[6]-POMs-HCl ((a) and (b)) and accumulation body of (HO)<sub>12</sub>Q[6]-HCl ((c) and (d)).

Compared to Q[*n*], HO groups of the (HO)<sub>12</sub>Q[6] facilitate the formation of the “outer-surface interactions”, and enhance crystal stability of the supramolecular assemblies.

### 5.3. Fluorescent chemosensors

Using the host-guest interactions of TMeQ[6] and HMe<sub>6</sub>Q[6] with a fluorophore guest (Fig. 23) as a fluorescence indicator displacement (FID) system, Ni and co-workers constructed a

new type of ratiometric fluorescent chemosensor for the sensing, detection, and recognition of two  $\alpha$ -amino acids, namely lysine and methionine.<sup>138</sup> As indicated in Fig. 23, the differing binding interactions of the two substituted Q[6]s towards the target analytes led to a useful ratiometric detection signal output for the discrimination of lysine and methionine *versus* the other tested  $\alpha$ -amino acids.

As part of their template studies (see section 3.1), Anzenbacher Jr. and Isaacs and coworkers isolated a Q[6]

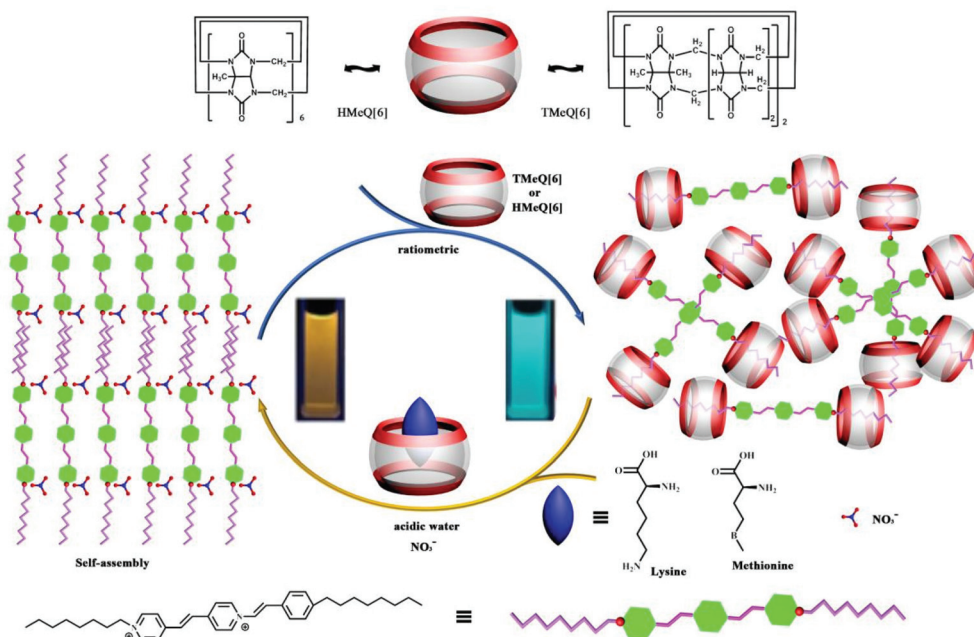


Fig. 23 Illustration of the plausible fluorescence indicator displacement process based on host-guest interactions.

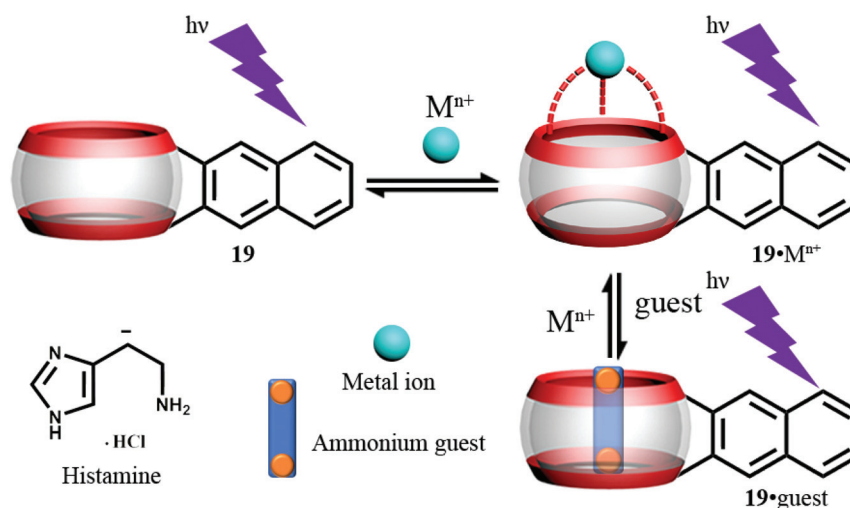


Fig. 24 Structure and Schematic representation of fluorescence assay based on **19**.<sup>72</sup>

derivative with a covalently attached 2,3-dialkylfluorophore (symbol **19** in Fig. 24), which can emit fluorescence in response to UV irradiation.<sup>72</sup> When combined with a number of different metals, only in the case of  $\text{Eu}^{3+}$  or  $\text{Dy}^{3+}$  was significant fluorescence quenching observed. The  $\text{Eu}^{3+}$  system was found to act as a sensor for the histamine shown below (Fig. 24, bottom, left). It was postulated that the histamine occupies the cavity and one ureidyl C=O portal and adopts a 1 : 1 binding model; the  $\text{Eu}^{3+}$  was thought to occupy the other ureidyl C=O portal. The addition of the histamine leads to displacement of the quenching  $\text{Eu}^{3+}$  or  $\text{Dy}^{3+}$ , and recovers fluorescence.

Urbach and coworkers reported an optical sensor based on the combination of Q[7] and tetramethylrhodamine.<sup>139</sup> Equilibrium dissociation constants for this system matched those of the parent Q[7] despite the presence of the fluorophore. Cellular uptake was demonstrated using HT22 neurons, with localization at the cytoplasm and no disruption of cell growth over a 4 day period (concentration  $\leq 2.2 \mu\text{M}$ ).

#### 5.4. Controlled “smart” SERS hot spot

One of the challenges that has faced single-molecule surface-enhanced Raman spectroscopy (SERS) is the ability to place the single molecule of interest reliably within a hot spot. In



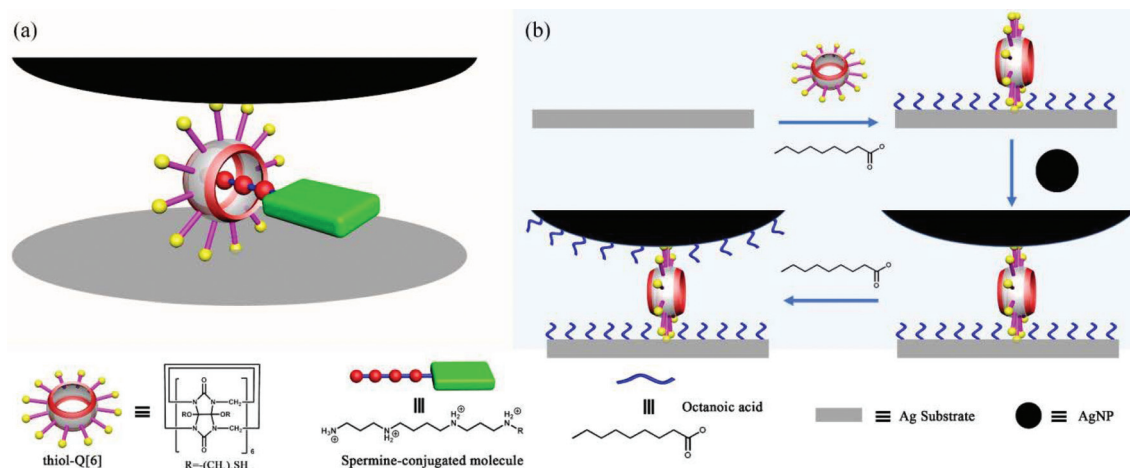


Fig. 25 (a) Schematic representation of a SERS hot spot. (b) Fabrication process of a SERS hot spot.

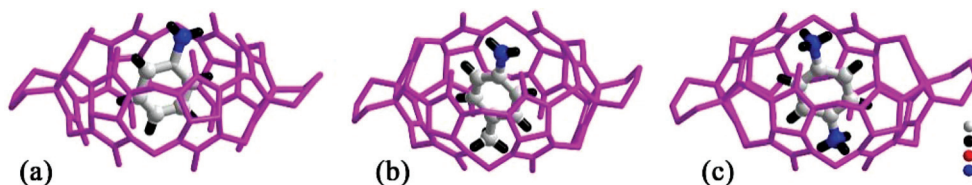


Fig. 26 X-ray crystal structures of CyH<sub>2</sub>Q[6] with guests aniline (a), *p*-methylaniline (b), and *p*-phenyldiamine (c).

their pioneering work, Kim and co-workers demonstrated a novel strategy for locating and securing a single target analyte in a SERS hot spot at a plasmonic nanogap.<sup>140</sup> As shown in Fig. 25, a thiol-functionalized cucurbit[6]uril, mercaptopropoxy-Q[6] (thiol-Q[6]), acts as dual-function building block: a molecular spacer to generate a nanogap between a Ag nanoparticle and a Ag substrate, and a binding pocket to accommodate the target molecule through host-guest interactions. It is noteworthy that the substituent of the thiol-Q[6] play an important role in linking a single silver nanoparticle (AgNP) to the Ag substrate. The position of the hot spot is controllable by adjusting the length of the polymethylene linker separating the target from the binding moiety, spermine.

### 5.5. Gas inclusion and adsorption

Huber *et al.* recently investigated the binding of three substituted Q[5]s with dioxygen O<sub>2</sub>.<sup>141</sup> The study revealed that the (HO)<sub>10</sub>Q[5] is able to significantly bind dioxygen gas at physiological temperature, even in the presence of sodium chloride at the concentration of injectable solution in blood. The study suggests the potential utility of (HO)<sub>10</sub>Q[5] as a precursor host to transport O<sub>2</sub> in a hemoglobin substitute solution.

We recently compared the binding abilities of the hosts CyH<sub>2</sub>Q[6] and CyH<sub>6</sub>Q[6] with the guests aniline, *p*-methylaniline, and *p*-phenyldiamine.<sup>142</sup> The results suggested that both hosts can accommodate all guests to form stable inclusion complexes. Entrapment tests and thermogravimetric analyses showed that the CyH<sub>2</sub>Q[6] possessed higher removal efficiency

for aniline than did the CyH<sub>6</sub>Q[6]. Presumably the size and shape of the CyH<sub>2</sub>Q[6] is more complementary to the aromatic rings of the guests than those of CyH<sub>6</sub>Q[6] (Fig. 26).

In 2015, the Tao group synthesized HMe<sub>5</sub>Q[5]-Hydroquinone-based<sup>143</sup> and HMe<sub>6</sub>Q[6]-based<sup>144</sup> supramolecular assemblies which had large porous structures. These porous materials demonstrated selective sorption for methanol and ethanol. Zhang and Chen *et al.* recently prepared two supramolecular assemblies of (HO)<sub>12</sub>Q[6] under different concentrations of hydrochloric acid, which were found to possess different kinds of channels.<sup>145</sup> These activated desolvated (HO)<sub>12</sub>Q[6]-based solid supramolecular assemblies demonstrated high absorption selectivities and capacities for polychloromethanes, including tetrachloromethane, trichloromethane, and dichloromethane.

## 6. Self-assembly processes using substituted Q[n]s

### 6.1. Self-assembly of (pseudo)rotaxane and poly(pseudo)rotaxane

(Pseudo)rotaxanes, poly(pseudo)rotaxanes, catenanes, dendrimers, and other MIMs have attracted much attention because they are precursors for molecular machines. From a structural point of view, Q[n]s and substituted Q[n]s are perfect candidates for MIMs because they possess different hydrophobic cavities and different binding affinities. About twenty years



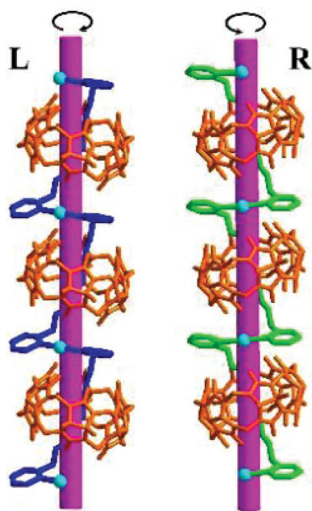


Fig. 27 X-ray crystal structure of helical polyrotaxanes of TMeQ[6] with *N,N'*-bis(2-pyridylmethyl)-1,6-hexanediamine and  $\text{Ag}^+$ .

ago, Kim and co-workers demonstrated a useful approach for constructing polyrotaxanes.<sup>146</sup> By using the same approach with minor modifications, some examples of MIMs based on substituted  $\text{Q}[n]$ s have been reported.

In 2011, we presented a novel strategy for synthesizing chiral helical polyrotaxanes. The achiral *N,N'*-bis(2-pyridylmethyl)-1,6-hexanediamine “string” contains two typical functional pyridyl groups and one 1,6-hexanediamine chain.<sup>147</sup> In aqueous solution, the TMeQ[6] bead was held in the middle position of the “string”. The addition of  $\text{AgNO}_3$  resulted in a helical polyrotaxane, which was characterized by X-ray crystallography (Fig. 27).<sup>148</sup> The chirality of the polyrotaxane originated from the twist of the long alkyl chain when bound within the TMeQ[6] cavity. Two opposite chiral helical polyrotaxanes were observed in the crystal structure, indicating that they crystallized as a racemic compound. When KI was added to the solution of helical polyrotaxane, a mass of

white precipitate was formed immediately and all of the  $^1\text{H}$  NMR signals of the helical polyrotaxane disappeared, indicating that the polyrotaxane structure was thoroughly destroyed.

Zhang *et al.* reported the synthesis of two polyrotaxanes by using TMeQ[6] (Fig. 28).<sup>149</sup> The TMeQ[6] “bead” first reacted with the “string’s” of *N,N'*-bis(3-pyridylmethyl)-1,4-butanediamine dichloride and *N,N'*-bis(3-pyridylmethyl)-1,6-hexanediamine dichloride to form stable pseudorotaxanes. The reaction of the pseudorotaxanes with various transition metal ion  $\text{Cd}^{2+}$  then produced 1D polyrotaxanes. Another kind of poly-pseudorotaxanes, which involve the combination of multiple noncovalent interactions, including host–guest interactions,  $\pi$ – $\pi$  stacking interactions, C–H $\cdots\pi$  interactions and metal–host coordination, were also reported.<sup>150</sup>

## 6.2. Self-assembly of heterowheel pseudorotaxanes

The Day group designed and synthesized an intriguing tetra-ammonium chain, which performs the molecular machine function of contraction and expansion when bound with  $\text{CyP}_6\text{Q}[6]$  and  $\text{Q}[7]$ , respectively.<sup>151</sup> They also demonstrated the construction of a hetero-[4]-pseudorotaxane (Fig. 29), which combined the binding function of the “wheels”  $\text{CyP}_6\text{Q}[6]$  and  $\text{Q}[7]$  with the designed molecular “axle”.

Very recently, we constructed two novel heterowheel [4] pseudorotaxanes consisting of TMeQ[6] and  $\text{Q}[7]$  in which the  $\text{Q}[7]$  can rotate freely around the horizontal axis, while the TMeQ[6] cannot. In the construction process of the [4]pseudorotaxanes, the dethreading and movement of the wheels along the axle was observed (Fig. 30).<sup>152</sup> Under alkaline conditions, the [4]pseudorotaxanes is destroyed. Thus, the construction and dissociation of the [4]pseudorotaxanes can be controlled through acid/base regulation.

## 6.3. Molecular encapsulation and release by substituted $\text{Q}[n]$

Artificial macrocyclic hosts have potential applications in various fields such as fragrance sustained-release, nutrient preservation, and drug delivery, molecular encapsulation and

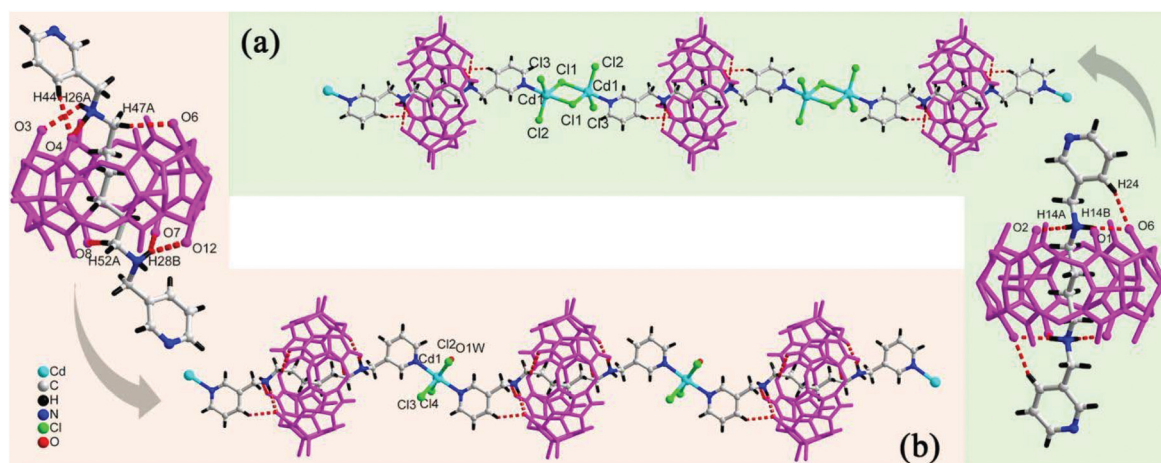


Fig. 28 X-ray crystal structure of two polyrotaxanes of TMeQ[6] with *N,N'*-bis(3-pyridylmethyl)-1,4-butanediamine (a) and *N,N'*-bis(3-pyridylmethyl)-1,6-hexanediamine (b).

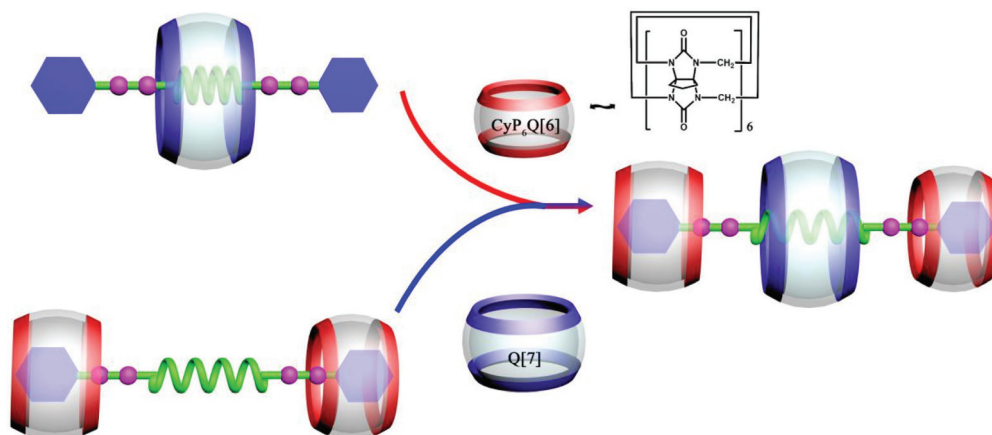


Fig. 29 Schematic representation of the construction of a hetero[4]pseudorotaxane based on  $\text{CyP}_6\text{Q}[6]$  and  $\text{Q}[7]$ .

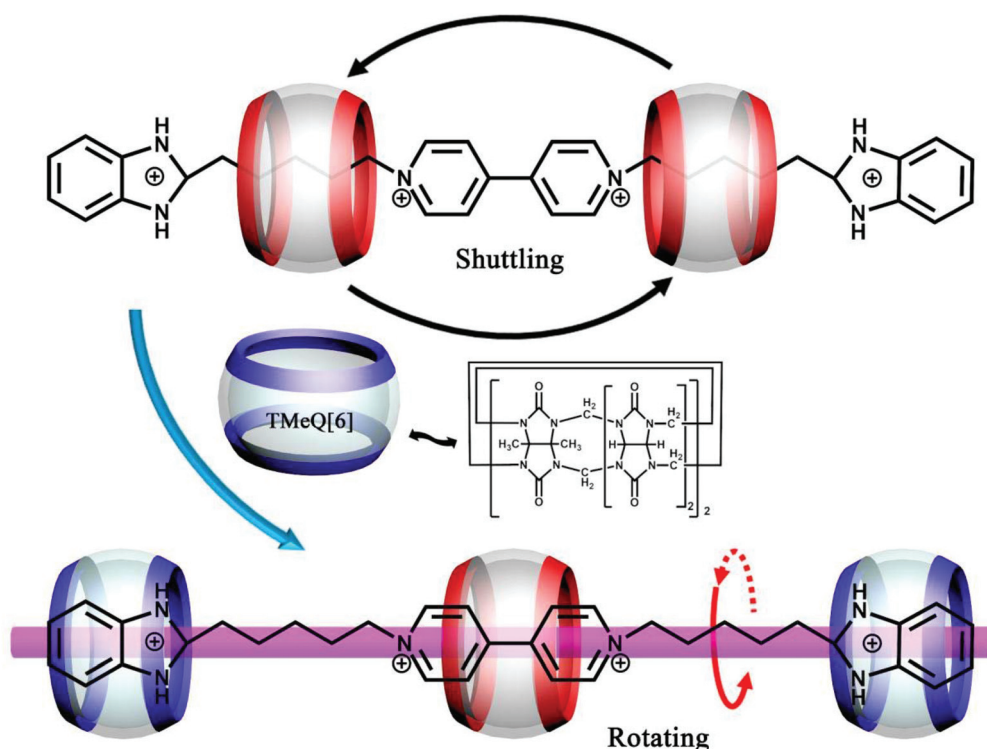


Fig. 30 Schematic representation of the construction of a hetero[4]pseudorotaxane based on  $\text{TMeQ}[6]$  and  $\text{Q}[7]$ .

controlled release. Very recently, we have synthesized 1-(4-carboxybenzyl)-4-[2-(4-pyridyl)-vinyl]-pyridinium chloride with *trans*- and *cis*-isomers.<sup>153</sup> The *trans*- and *cis*-form of the guest can be controlled by encapsulation and release by the molecular container  $\text{TMeQ}[6]$  under light irradiation and heating (Fig. 31). The encapsulation of the *trans*-form into  $\text{TMeQ}[6]$  is attributed to strong host-guest interactions and hydrophobic effects while *cis*-form release from  $\text{TMeQ}[6]$  is attributed to a size effect.

Very recently, we found another molecular encapsulation and release system based on  $\text{CyH}_6\text{Q}[6]$  and

1,ω-bisbenzimidazolyl derivatives.<sup>154</sup> Experimental results revealed that all guests can form 1:1 or 1:2 inclusion complexes with  $\text{CyH}_6\text{Q}[6]$  residing over benzimidazole groups of the guests. Interestingly, the guest was released from the  $\text{CyH}_6\text{Q}[6]$  cavity at high pH value and encapsulated back into the  $\text{CyH}_6\text{Q}[6]$  cavity at low pH value.

#### 6.4. Molecular switches

In 2017, we designed and successfully constructed an electrochemically-driven molecular switch involving a special axle

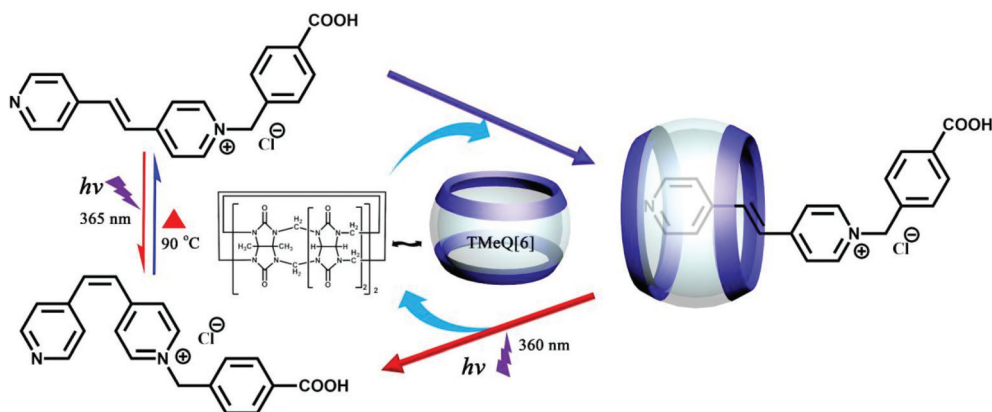


Fig. 31 Guest encapsulation and release by TMeQ[6] under light irradiation and heating.

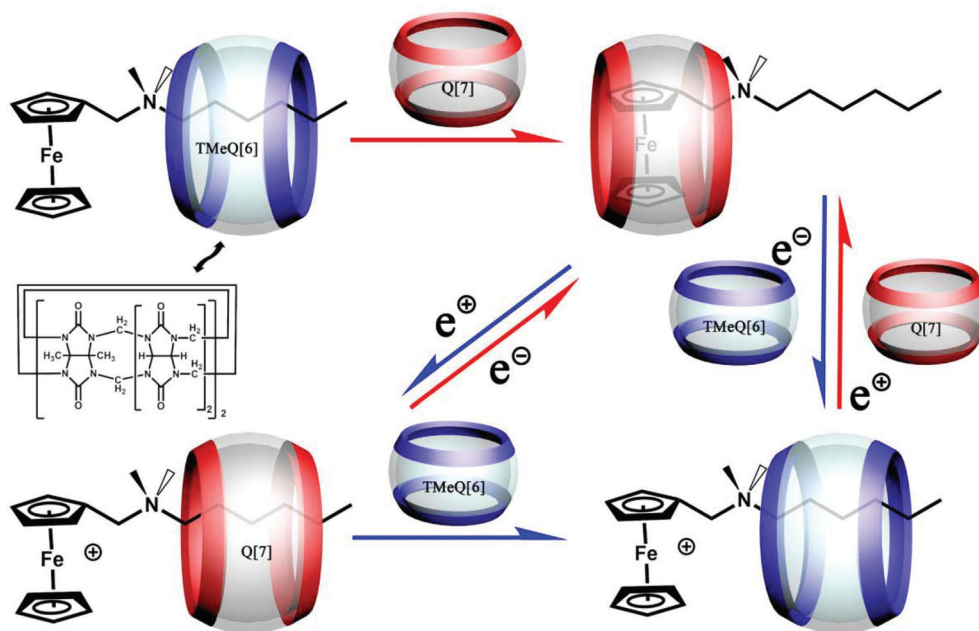


Fig. 32 Electrochemically-driven molecular switch constructed by axle guest hexyldimethyl(ferrocenylmethyl)ammonium bromide with hosts CyH<sub>6</sub>Q[6] and Q[7].

guest hexyldimethyl(ferrocenylmethyl)ammonium bromide.<sup>155</sup> As shown in Fig. 32, both hosts CyH<sub>6</sub>Q[6] and Q[7] can form different stable [2]pseudorotaxanes with the axle guest in its different redox states. Most importantly, the combination and dissociation of the hosts with the guest as well as the binding location can be controlled by electrochemical means.

## 7. Summary and outlook

Almost two decades have passed since the first example of substituted Q[n] was reported by the Stoddart group. Numerous substituted Q[n]s have been designed and successfully syn-

thesized, which addressed many long-standing concerns in cucurbituril chemistry. These substituted Q[n]s possess enhanced solubility in aqueous and organic media, good selectivity in molecular recognition, and high binding affinities to different metal ions. In particular, the synthesis of monohydroxylated Q[n]s provides an opportunity to further functionalize the substituted Q[n]s. In this review article, the recognition properties of the substituted Q[n]s toward many organic species have been demonstrated. The coordination structures and characteristics of substituted Q[n] with different metal ions, including alkali/alkaline-earth metals, transition metals, and lanthanides have also been identified. The supramolecular properties of the substituted Q[n]s have led to their applications in



areas as diverse as catalysis, sensors, hybrid materials, and gas inclusion and adsorption. The substituted Q[n]s also have been used in the construction of MIMs and molecular devices.

With the synthesis of more substituted Q[n]s, cucurbituril chemistry has ushered in a new era of development. The intrinsic properties of the substituted Q[n]s—high binding affinities, high selectivity, fine solubility in aqueous and organic media, diversity of cavity size and shape—suggest that substituted Q[n]s will become important components in MIMs. New molecular machines involving substituted Q[n]s with unprecedented characteristics are expected. The potential applications of substituted Q[n]s can be envisioned in pharmaceutical sciences, functional material science and beyond.

## Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest to declare.

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