Supporting Information

Synthesis of Cyclobutadienoid-Fused Phenazines with Strongly Modulated Degrees of Antiaromaticity

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1. General Information

Materials. All chemicals were obtained from commercial sources and used as received unless otherwise noted. Dry toluene and THF were obtained from solvent purification columns. Anhydrous 1,4-dioxane was purchased from Acros Organics and used as received. Compounds $2a^1$ and $2b^2$ were prepared according to literature procedures. All CANAL reactions were performed under nitrogen in flame-dried glassware. Flash chromatography (FC) was carried out with Silica 60 (230-400 mesh; Fisher). Analytical thin-layer chromatography (TLC) was carried out using 0.2 mm silica gel plate (silica gel 60, F254, EMD chemical).

Characterizations. ¹H and ¹³C NMR spectra were recorded using 300 MHz, 400 MHz, or 500 MHz Varian NMR spectrometers. Chemical shifts are reported in ppm using the residual protiated solvent as an internal standard (CDCl₃ 1 H: 7.26 ppm and 13 C: 77.16 ppm; THF- d_8 ¹H: 3.58 ppm and ¹³C: 67.57 ppm). Data are reported as follows: chemical shift, multiplicity (s = singlet, d = doublet, dd = doublet of doublets, t = triplet, q = quartet, m = multiplet, br = broad signal, and associated combinations), coupling constant(s) (Hz), and integration. ESI MS was obtained using Waters Acquity QDa or SQ mass spectrometers. HRMS was obtained from Thermo Exactive Orbitrap mass spectrometer. UV–Vis spectra were recorded on a Thermo Scientific Genesys 10S spectrophotometer with background correction using pure solvent. Fluorescence spectra were recorded on a Fluorolog-3 fluorimeter (450W Xenon lamp) using right-angle detection. Quantum yields (QY) in Chloroform (CHCl3) were determined relative to perylene in ethanol (EtOH) or fluorescein in 0.1 M NaOH as indicated, and are corrected for solvent refractive index and absorption differences at the excitation wavelength. Cyclic voltammetry (CV) was performed on a computer-controlled Nanowave in a three-electrode cell in a CH_2Cl_2 solution of TBAPF₆ (0.1 M) with a scan rate of 100 mV/s at room temperature. A Pt wire as counter electrode, $Ag/AgNO_3(0.01 \text{ M})$, TBAPF₆(0.1 M)/MeCN as reference electrode, and a glassy carbon electrode as working electrode. The Ferrocene/Ferrocenium redox couple served as an external reference.

2. Synthetic Procedures

2.1. Syntheses of bromophenazines

Mono/dibromo-phenazines **1a-1e** were prepared following a reported procedure³ with slight modifications.

General procedure for bromophenazine synthesis

1. Synthesis of N-aryl-2-nitrosoanilines

To a cooled solution of *t*-BuOK (18 mmol, 2.02 g) in THF (25 mL) was added dropwise at -78 °C a solution of aniline (6 mmol), followed by nitroarene (6 mmol) in THF (5 mL each). The mixture was stirred at this temperature for 1 hour. The reaction mixture was then poured into a concentrated NH4Cl solution (ca. 70 mL) and extracted with EtOAc. The combined organic layers were washed with water and brine, and dried over Na₂SO₄. The solvent was evaporated, and the remaining residual was purified by silica gel chromatography (1:9 EA/Hex) to obtain the product.

2. Cyclization of N-aryl-nitrosoanilines

To a solution of nitrosoaniline (1 mmol) in MeCN (4 mL) was added N,Obis(trimethylsilyl)acetamide (BSA) (1.2 mL, 5 mmol) and the reaction mixture was heated in a sealed tube at 100 $^{\circ}$ C for 12 h. The precipitated product was filtered off, washed with cold MeOH, and dried under vacuum.



2-bromophenazine³ (**1a**). Pale yellow solid. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, Chloroform-*d*) δ 8.47 (d, J = 2.0 Hz, 1H), 8.24 (dd, J = 6.8, 3.3 Hz, 2H), 8.13 (d, J = 9.2 Hz, 1H), 7.92 – 7.84 (m, 3H).



1-bromophenazine⁴ (**1b**). Pale yellow solid. ¹H NMR (300 MHz, Chloroform-*d*) δ 8.43 (dd, *J* = 7.1, 3.1 Hz, 1H), 8.34 – 8.20 (m, 3H), 7.97 – 7.89 (m, 2H), 7.77 – 7.68 (m, 1H).



2,7-dibromophenazine (1c). Bright yellow solid. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, Chloroform-*d*) δ 8.43 (s, 2H), 8.09 (d, J = 9.2 Hz, 2H), 7.91 (d, J = 9.3 Hz, 2H). ¹³C NMR (101 MHz, Chloroform-*d*) δ 143.80, 142.49, 135.07, 131.87, 131.03, 125.51. HRMS (ESI): m/z calculated for C₁₂H₇Br₂N₂ [M+H⁺]: 336.8971; found: 336.8979.



1,8-dibromophenazine (**1d**). Brown solid. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, Chloroform-*d*) δ 8.62 (s, 1H), 8.21 (d, *J* = 8.0 Hz, 2H), 8.13 (d, *J* = 9.2 Hz, 1H), 7.93 (d, *J* = 9.1 Hz, 1H), 7.71 (t, *J* = 8.0 Hz, 1H).¹³C NMR (101 MHz, Chloroform-*d*) δ 144.03, 143.85, 142.49, 141.23, 135.24, 134.42, 132.18, 130.86, 130.70, 129.87, 125.88, 124.49. HRMS (ESI): m/z calculated for C₁₂H₇Br₂N₂ [M+H⁺]: 336.8971; found: 336.8980.

1,6-dibromophenazine (**1e**). Bright yellow solid. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, Chloroform-*d*) δ 8.38 (d, *J* = 8.8 Hz, 2H), 8.24 (d, *J* = 7.3 Hz, 2H), 7.75 (t, *J* = 8.0 Hz, 2H). ¹³C NMR (126 MHz, Chloroform-*d*) δ 144.05, 141.23, 134.48, 131.04, 130.14, 124.23. MS (ESI): m/z calculated for C₁₂H₇Br₂N₂ [M+H⁺]: 336.8971; found: 336.8976.

2.2. Syntheses of CBD-fused phenazines



exo-7,12-dimethyl-6b,7,12,12a-tetrahydro-7,12-epoxynaphtho[2',3':3,4]

cyclobuta[1,2-**b**]**phenazine** (3'): To a flame-dried 15 mL pressure tube was added 1a (65 mg, 0.25 mmol), **2a** (43 mg, 0.25 mmol), palladium acetate (2.8 mg, 0.0125 mmol) and Johnphos ligand (7.5 mg, 0.025 mmol). The tube was then transferred to a glovebox, and cesium carbonate (81.5 mg, 0.25 mmol) and 1 mL 1,4-dioxane were added. The tube was closed and taken outside glovebox. The mixture was stirred at room temperature for 5 min, and then heated to 150 °C. After 24 h, the reaction was cooled to room temperature, and was passed through a thin layer of Celite to remove the inorganic salt. The solution was concentrated *in vacuo* and the residue was purified by column chromatography (1:5 EA/Hex) to yield **3'** as a yellow solid (58 mg, 66%). ¹H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.23 (dd, *J* = 6.7, 3.4 Hz, 2H), 7.96 (s, 2H), 7.82 (dd, *J* = 6.7, 3.4 Hz, 2H), 7.35 – 7.27 (m, 4H), 3.76 (s, 2H), 1.95 (s, 6H). ¹³C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 147.97, 147.30, 145.14, 142.36, 130.13, 129.50, 127.26, 122.44, 118.68, 85.24, 56.29, 14.21. HRMS (ESI): m/z calculated for C₂₄H₁₉N₂O [M+H⁺]: 351.1492; found: 351.1493.



7,12-dimethylnaphtho[**2'**,**3'**:**3**,**4**]**cyclobuta**[**1**,**2-b**]**phenazine** (**3**): Compound **3'** (20.0 mg, 0.057 mmol) was dissolved in 0.6 mL isopropanol, 0.15 mL chloroform, and 0.1 ml HCl (37%). The solution was heated at 80°C for 24 h. The reaction mixture was cooled, washed with sat'd NaHCO₃ solution and extracted with chloroform. The combined organic layer was dried over Na₂SO₄ and concentrated. The solid was washed with MeOH, collected by filtration, and washed with cold MeOH to obtain **3** as a bright yellow solid (16 mg, 84%). ¹H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.06 (dd, *J* = 6.5, 3.4 Hz, 2H), 7.85 (dd, *J* = 6.3, 3.4 Hz, 2H), 7.71 (dd, *J* = 6.6, 3.4 Hz, 2H), 7.51 (s, 2H), 7.45 (dd, *J* = 6.3, 3.3 Hz, 2H), 2.62 (s, 6H). ¹³C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 150.83, 147.54, 142.29, 142.13, 136.04, 129.72, 129.15, 126.77, 126.27, 125.40, 116.66, 15.02. MS (ESI): m/z calculated for C₂₄H₁₇N₂ [M+H⁺]: 333.14; found: 333.06.



exo-8,13-dimethyl-7b,8,13,13a-tetrahydro-8,13-epoxynaphtho[2',3':3,4] cyclobuta[1,2-a]phenazine (4'): To a flame-dried 15 mL pressure tube was added 1b (65 mg, 0.25 mmol), **2a** (43 mg, 0.25 mmol), palladium acetate (2.8 mg, 0.0125 mmol) and Johnphos ligand (7.5 mg, 0.025 mmol). The tube was then transferred to a glovebox, and cesium carbonate (81.5 mg, 0.25 mmol) and 1 mL dioxane were added. The tube was closed and taken outside glovebox. The mixture was stirred at room temperature for 5 min, and then heated to 150 °C. After 24 h, the reaction was cooled to room temperature, and was passed through a thin layer of Celite to remove the inorganic salt. DCM $(2 \times 5 \text{ mL})$ was then used to wash the residue on Celite. The solution was concentrated in vacuo and the residue was purified by column chromatography (1:5 EA/Hex) to yield 4' as a yellow solid (65 mg, 74%). ¹H NMR (400 MHz, Chloroform-d) δ 8.32 – 8.23 (m, 3H), 7.89 – 7.79 (m, 2H), 7.75 (d, J = 8.5 Hz, 1H), 7.41 – 7.35 (m, 1H), 7.35 – 7.27 (m, 3H), 4.02 (d, J = 3.3 Hz, 1H), 3.63 (d, J = 3.3 Hz, 1H), 2.04 (s, 3H), 1.89 (s, 3H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) & 148.17, 147.89, 147.73, 144.30, 143.05, 140.96, 131.76, 130.78, 130.13, 130.10, 129.92, 127.12, 127.01, 126.29, 118.88, 118.56, 83.98, 83.03, 55.42, 54.94, 15.49, 14.64. HRMS (ESI): m/z calculated for $C_{24}H_{19}N_2O[M+H^+]$: 351.1492; found: 351.1493.



8,13-dimethylnaphtho[2',3':3,4]cyclobuta[1,2-a]phenazine (4): Compound 4' (20.0 mg, 0.057 mmol) was dissolved in 0.6 mL isopropanol, 0.15 mL chloroform, and 0.1 ml HCl (37%). The solution was heated at 80°C for 24 h. The reaction mixture was cooled and washed with sat'd NaHCO₃ solution, and extracted with chloroform. The combined organic layer was dried over Na₂SO₄ and concentrated. The solid was washed with MeOH, collected by filtration, and washed with cold MeOH to obtain **4** as a red solid (17 mg, 89%). ¹H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.04 – 7.96 (m, 2H), 7.89 (d, *J* = 8.3 Hz, 1H), 7.69 – 7.62 (m, 2H), 7.50 (dd, *J* = 8.8, 1.5 Hz, 2H), 7.45 – 7.39 (m, 1H), 7.24 – 7.18 (m, 2H), 2.67 (s, 3H), 2.26 (s, 3H). ¹³C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 152.88, 147.47, 144.64, 144.62, 143.46, 143.21, 142.90, 136.72, 136.69, 136.08, 131.87, 130.86, 130.33, 130.27, 130.04, 126.38, 126.13, 125.00, 124.70, 122.90, 121.36, 121.09, 15.37, 14.50. MS (ESI): m/z calculated for C₂₄H₁₇N₂ [M+H⁺]: 333.14; found: 333.14.



(5'): To a flame-dried 15 mL pressure tube was added **1c** (42 mg, 0.125 mmol), **2b** (95 mg, 0.25 mmol), palladium acetate (2.8 mg, 0.0125 mmol) and Johnphos ligand (7.5 mg, 0.025 mmol). The tube was then transferred to a glovebox, and cesium carbonate (81.3 mg, 0.25 mmol and 1.5 mL 1,4-dioxane were added. The tube was closed and taken outside glovebox. The mixture was stirred at room temperature for 5 min, and then heated to 150 °C. After 24 h, the reaction was cooled to room temperature, and was passed through a thin layer of Celite to remove the inorganic salt. The solution was concentrated *in vacuo* and the residue was purified by column chromatography (1:3 EA/Hex) to yield **5'** as a yellow solid (mixture of syn/anti isomers, 64 mg, 55%). ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.98 (s, 4H), 7.22 (s, 4H), 7.05 (t, *J* = 7.5 Hz, 4H), 6.94 (d, *J* = 7.6 Hz, 8H), 3.89 (d, *J* = 5.6 Hz, 4H), 2.00 (m, 36H). ¹³C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 146.77, 146.41, 146.36, 143.98, 140.31, 138.79, 138.78, 136.93, 136.89, 136.71, 136.68, 127.66, 127.64, 127.59, 127.56, 127.08, 122.37, 122.33, 122.26, 85.38, 85.36, 56.62, 56.53, 21.52, 21.51, 21.43, 21.42, 14.30, 14.28. MS (ESI): m/z calculated for C₆₈H₆₁N₂O₂ [M+H⁺]: 937.47; found: 937.94.

(5): Compound 5' (20 mg, 0.021 mmol) was dissolved in 0.6 mL isopropanol, 0.15 mL chloroform, and 0.1 ml HCl (37%). The solution was heated at 80°C for 24 h. The reaction mixture was cooled, washed with sat'd NaHCO₃ solution and extracted with DCM. The combined organic layer was dried over Na₂SO₄ and concentrated. The solid was washed with MeOH, collected by filtration, and washed with cold MeOH to yield 5 as an orange solid (16 mg, 85%). ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.75 (s, 4H), 7.48 (s, 4H), 7.09 (t, *J* =7.6 Hz, 4H), 6.98 (d, *J* = 7.6 Hz, 8H), 2.60 (s, 12H), 2.02 (s, 24H). ¹³C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 150.44, 146.15, 142.73, 140.19, 138.94, 136.96, 134.63, 128.78, 127.68, 127.27, 125.33, 117.06, 21.54, 15.05. HRMS (ESI): m/z calculated for C₆₈H₅₇N₂ [M+H⁺]: 901.4516; found: 901.4538.



(6'): To a flame-dried 15 mL pressure tube was added 1d (42 mg, 0.125 mmol), 2b (95 mg, 0.25 mmol), palladium acetate (2.8 mg, 0.0125 mmol) and Johnphos ligand (7.5 mg, 0.025 mmol). The tube was then transferred to a glovebox, and cesium carbonate (81.3 mg, 0.25 mmol and 1.5 mL 1,4-dioxane were added. The tube was closed and taken outside glovebox. The mixture was stirred at room temperature for 5 min, and then heated to 150 °C. After 24 h, the reaction was cooled to room temperature, and was passed through a thin layer of Celite to remove the inorganic salt. The solution was concentrated *in vacuo* and the residue was purified by column chromatography (1:3 EA/Hex) to yield 6' as a yellow solid (mixture of syn/anti isomers, 60 mg, 51%). ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.32 (dd, J = 8.5, 2.9 Hz, 1H), 8.08 (d, J = 16.6 Hz, 1H), 8.04 (s, 1H), 7.80 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 1H), 7.34 -7.24 (m, 4H), 7.09 (dd, J = 9.3, 5.7 Hz, 4H), 7.05 -6.93 (m, 8H), 4.20 (dd, J = 8.6, 3.3 Hz, 1H), 3.95-3.91 (m, 2H), 3.79 (dd, J = 6.1, 3.4 Hz, 1H), 2.12 - 1.95 (m, 36H). ¹³C NMR $(101 \text{ MHz}, \text{CDCl}_3) \delta 147.73, 147.40, 146.95, 146.92, 146.71, 146.57, 146.49, 146.43,$ 146.41, 146.36, 145.36, 145.28, 144.77, 143.22, 143.17, 140.76, 140.72, 140.58, 140.37, 138.92, 138.69, 138.65, 138.58, 138.51, 137.13, 137.08, 137.04, 137.02, 137.00, 136.98, 136.95, 136.91, 136.86, 136.79, 136.77, 131.67, 131.56, 127.76, 127.68, 127.19, 127.12, 125.97, 122.99, 122.94, 122.82, 122.56, 122.38, 122.27, 85.58, 85.56, 85.54, 84.30, 83.39, 83.29, 56.82, 56.71, 55.79, 55.23, 21.79, 21.66, 21.63, 21.60, 21.57, 21.54, 21.49, 21.47, 21.43, 15.64, 15.61, 14.85, 14.83, 14.54, 14.41, 14.39, 14.33. MS (ESI): m/z calculated for C₆₈H₆₁N₂O₂ [M+H⁺]: 937.47; found: 937.23.

(6): Compound 6' (18 mg, 0.019 mmol) was dissolved in 0.5 mL isopropanol, 1.5 mL chloroform, and 0.1 ml HCl (37%). The solution was heated at 80°C for 24 h. The reaction mixture was cooled, washed with sat'd NaHCO₃ solution, and extracted with chloroform. The combined organic layer was dried over Na₂SO₄ and concentrated. The solid was washed with MeOH, collected by filtration, and washed with cold MeOH to yield **6** as a bright red solid (14 mg, 80%). ¹H NMR (400 MHz, Chloroform-*d*) δ 7.83 (d, *J* = 8.0 Hz, 1H), 7.78 (d, *J* = 10.7 Hz, 2H), 7.53 (s, 1H), 7.47 (d, *J* = 8.1 Hz, 1H), 7.44 – 7.36 (m, 3H), 7.07 (dt, *J* = 12.1, 6.5 Hz, 4H), 7.01 – 6.92 (m, 8H), 2.74 (s, 3H), 2.62 (s, 3H), 2.56 (s, 3H), 2.24 (s, 3H), 2.06 (s, 6H), 2.01 (s, 12H), 2.00 (s, 6H). ¹³C NMR (126 MHz, CDCl3) δ 151.78, 150.84, 150.36, 148.50, 147.38, 147.07, 143.53, 143.43, 143.15, 142.50, 140.29, 139.85, 139.06, 137.95, 137.77, 136.67, 136.63, 135.21, 134.98, 134.53, 134.48, 131.35, 128.69, 128.50, 128.19, 127.64, 127.56, 127.25, 126.94, 126.09, 126.03, 121.75, 121.14, 120.53, 117.29, 117.14, 21.48, 15.48, 15.44, 14.99, 14.54. HRMS (ESI): m/z calculated for C₆₈H₅₇N₂ [M+H⁺]: 901.4516; found: 901.4541.



(7'): To a flame-dried 15 mL pressure tube was added 2e (42 mg, 0.125 mmol), 1b (95 mg, 0.25 mmol), palladium acetate (2.8 mg, 0.0125 mmol) and Johnphos ligand (7.5 mg, 0.025 mmol). The tube was then transferred to a glovebox, and cesium carbonate (81.3 mg, 0.25 mmol and 1.5 mL 1,4-dioxane were added. The tube was closed and taken outside glovebox. The mixture was stirred at room temperature for 5 min, and then heated to 150 °C. After 24 h, the reaction was cooled to room temperature, and was passed through a thin layer of Celite to remove the inorganic salt. The solution was concentrated in vacuo and the residue was purified by column chromatography (1:3 EA/Hex) to yield 7' as a yellow solid (mixture of syn/anti isomers, 52 mg, 44%). ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.35 (dd, J = 8.5, 2.6 Hz, 2H), 7.80 (dd, J = 8.5, 1.9 Hz, 2H), 7.27 (s, 2H), 7.21 (s, 2H), 7.06 (td, J =7.5, 4.9 Hz, 4H), 7.01 – 6.90 (m, 8H), 4.17 (dd, J = 5.3, 3.4 Hz, 2H), 3.76 (dd, J = 3.5, 1.3 Hz, 2H), 2.08 - 2.02 (m, 18H), 1.99 - 1.92 (m, 18H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 147.48, 147.35, 146.54, 146.45, 146.23, 144.29, 141.25, 141.22, 140.46, 139.26, 138.62, 138.58, 138.49, 138.44, 137.00, 136.96, 136.92, 136.88, 136.83, 136.78, 136.75, 131.99, 131.91, 127.67, 127.48, 127.01, 126.59, 126.52, 122.47, 122.15, 84.20, 84.17, 83.25, 83.17, 55.24, 55.17, 21.68, 21.65, 21.54, 21.53, 21.37, 21.34, 21.32, 15.54, 15.45, 14.75, 14.72. MS (ESI): m/z calculated for C₆₈H₆₁N₂O₂ [M+H⁺]: 937.47; found: 937.85.

(7): Compound 7' (10 mg, 0.010 mmol) was dissolved in 0.5 mL isopropanol, 0.5 mL chloroform, and 0.1 ml HCl (37%). The solution was heated at 80°C for 24 h. The reaction mixture was cooled and the solid collected by filtration. The solid was re-dissolved in chloroform, washed with sat'd NaHCO₃ solution, dried over Na₂SO₄ and concentrated to obtain 7 as a dark purple solid (5 mg, 50%). ¹H NMR (400 MHz, Chloroform-*d*) δ 7.96 (d, *J* = 8.4 Hz, 2H), 7.62 (d, *J* = 8.4 Hz, 2H), 7.51 (s, 2H), 7.43 (s, 2H), 7.07 (t, *J* = 7.5 Hz, 4H), 7.00 – 6.94 (m, 8H), 2.73 (s, 6H), 2.36 (s, 6H), 2.05 (d, *J* = 4.1 Hz, 24H). ¹³C NMR (126 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 152.75, 147.72, 145.64, 143.25, 142.88, 140.19, 138.17, 137.91, 136.62, 135.01, 134.45, 132.72, 128.59, 128.27, 127.57, 127.47, 126.97, 123.45, 121.22, 120.96, 21.47, 15.47, 14.57. HRMS (ESI): m/z calculated for C₆₈H₅₇N₂ [M+H⁺]: 901.4516; found: 901.4541.

2.3. Reduction of linear and bent CBD-fused phenazines



7,12-dimethyl-5,14-dihydronaphtho[2',3':3,4]cyclobuta[1,2-b]phenazine (**3-H**₂). A vial containing **3** (10 mg), 10 wt% Pd/C catalyst (2 mg) and 1.5 mL of THF was bubbled with nitrogen followed by hydrogen gas for 3 min each. The reaction mixture was stirred under H₂ (1 atm) at room temperature for 15 min, during which the fluorescence of the solution was gradually turned off by monitoring using 365 nm light irradiation. The reaction vial was then transferred to a glovebox and the mixture passed through a thin layer of Celite to remove the Pd/C catalyst. The solution was concentrated *in vacuo* to yield **3-H2** as an orange solid. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, THF-*d*₈, under N₂) δ 7.31 (dd, *J* = 6.0, 3.4 Hz, 2H), 7.02 (dd, *J* = 6.1, 3.3 Hz, 2H), 6.49 (s, 2H), 6.15 (dd, *J* = 5.6, 3.4 Hz, 2H), 5.84 (dd, *J* = 5.5, 3.4 Hz, 2H), 5.70 (s, 2H), 2.04 (s, 6H). ¹³C NMR (101 MHz, THF-*d*₈) δ 145.83, 144.19, 137.95, 136.30, 135.58, 126.56, 125.30, 122.61, 117.51, 113.17, 106.48, 15.37. **3-H2** is spontaneously oxidized back to **3** upon exposure to air.



8,13-dimethyl-5,14-dihydronaphtho[2',3':3,4]cyclobuta[1,2-a]phenazine (4-H₂). A vial containing 4 (10 mg), 10 wt% Pd/C catalyst (2 mg) and 1.5 mL of THF was bubbled with nitrogen followed by hydrogen gas for 3 min each. The reaction mixture was stirred under H_2 (1 atm) at room temperature for 15 min, during which the fluorescence of the solution was gradually turned on by monitoring using 365 nm light irradiation. The reaction vial was then transferred to a glovebox and the mixture passed through a thin layer of Celite to remove the Pd/C catalyst. The solution was concentrated in vacuo to yield $4-H_2$ as a yellow solid. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, THF- d_8 , under N₂) δ 7.48 (ddt, J = 21.2, 5.0, 2.4 Hz, 2H), 7.11 (dt, J = 7.1, 2.1 Hz, 2H), 6.81 (s, 1H), 6.30 – 6.19 (m, 2H), 6.18 – 6.11 (m, 1H), 5.96 (td, J = 6.4, 2.0 Hz, 2H), 5.79 (s, 1H), 5.48 (dd, J = 7.1, 2.0 Hz, 1H), 2.29 (s, 3H), 2.14 (s, 3H). ¹³C NMR (101 MHz, THF- d_8) δ 144.60, 144.06, 141.49, 137.75, 137.05, 136.81, 134.50, 133.37, 130.40, 127.84, 126.55, 126.26, 125.70, 125.38, 122.87, 121.68, 119.79, 119.14, 114.72, 114.24, 113.39, 111.14, 16.87, 15.12. A minute amount of byproduct was noticeable in crude NMR spectrum, which may correspond to reduction of fused benzenoid in phenazine. 4-H₂ is spontaneously oxidized back to 4 upon exposure to air.

3. Supporting Figures



3.1. UV-vis and Fluorescence Spectra of CBD-fused phenazines

Figure S1. Normalized UV–vis and fluorescence spectra of **3-7** in chloroform. Perylene/EtOH was used as standard for QY calculation of **3**. Fluorescein/0.1 M NaOH was used as standard for QY calculations of **4-6**.

			optical			electro	chemical ^c	calcula	ation ^d
Comp.	λ _{max} [nm]	λ _{onset} [nm]	λ _{em,} ^{max} [nm]	QY	E _{gap} [eV]	E _{red} [V]	LUMO [eV]	HOMO [eV]	LUMO [eV]
3	448 ^{<i>a</i>}	461	454	0.72	2.67	-1.72	-3.38	-6.04	-2.72
4	455 ^{<i>a</i>}	590	648	0.02	2.10	-1.50	-3.60	-5.57	-2.98
3-H ₂	470^{b}	535	502	0.02	2.32	n.d	-	-4.40	-1.35
$4-H_2$	437^{b}	496	544	0.74	2.50	n.d	-	-4.82	-1.42

Table S1. Optical, Electrochemical and Calculation Data for 3-4

^{*a*}Optical spectra were obtained in CHCl₃ solution at 298K; the optical gap was estimated from the absorption edge (λ_{onset}). ^{*b*}Optical spectra were obtained in THF solution at 298K. ^cElectrochemical data were obtained at a scan rate of 100 mV s⁻¹ in DCM containing 0.1 M *n*Bu₄NPF₆ using a glassy carbon working electrode and Fc⁺/Fc as an external standard. LUMO energy levels in eV were calculated from the reversible half-potential waves using the equation, LUMO = -(5.10 + E_{red}). ^{*d*}DFT calculations were performed at the B3LYP/6-311+G* level of theory.

Table S2. Transition energies (ΔE), oscillator strengths (*f*), and orbital assignments for 3-7^{*a*}

Comp.	Excited state	$\Delta E [eV]$	f	Assignments
3	1 2	2.93 3.03	$0.000 \\ 0.479$	$\begin{array}{c} H \rightarrow L \\ H\text{-}1 \rightarrow L; H \rightarrow L\text{+}1 \end{array}$
4	1 2	2.09 2.68	0.019 0.095	$\begin{array}{c} H \rightarrow L \\ H\text{-}1 \rightarrow L; H \rightarrow L\text{+}1 \end{array}$
3-H ₂	1 2	2.39 2.73	0.002 0.511	$\begin{array}{c} H \rightarrow L \\ H\text{-}1 \rightarrow L; H \rightarrow L\text{+}1 \end{array}$
4-H ₂	1 2	2.85 2.93	0.005 0.098	$\begin{array}{c} H \rightarrow L \\ H\text{-}1 \rightarrow L; H \rightarrow L\text{+}1 \end{array}$
5	1 2	2.57 2.77	1.83 0.0004	$\begin{array}{c} H \rightarrow L \\ H\text{-}1 \rightarrow L; H \rightarrow L\text{+}1 \end{array}$
6	1 2	2.05 2.54	0.025 0.547	$\begin{array}{c} H \rightarrow L \\ H\text{-}1 \rightarrow L; H \rightarrow L\text{+}1 \end{array}$
7	1 2	1.67 2.08	0.016 0.000	$\begin{array}{c} H \rightarrow L \\ H-1 \rightarrow L \end{array}$

^{*a*} TD-DFT calculations were performed at the B3LYP/6-311+G* level of theory and xylyl groups were replaced by phenyl groups.

3.2. UV-vis and Fluorescence Spectra of N,N-dihydro derivatives



Figure S2a. Normalized UV–vis and fluorescence spectra of **3-H**₂ and **4-H**₂ in THF. Fluorescein/0.1 M NaOH was used as standard for QY calculations.



Figure S2b. Frontier MOs and normalized UV-vis spectrum of **3**-H₂ with theoretically assigned percentage contributions of various transitions to the observed absorption peak. $\lambda_{max,abs}$ and oscillator strength (*f*) values predicted at the TDDFT B3LYP/6-311+G* level of theory are shown in parentheses.

TDDFT calculations of **3**-H₂ predict that the lower energy excitation possesses HOMO-LUMO character with low oscillator strength (0.002) (Table S2). The second excitation is predicted to have a maximum wavelength of 454 nm, f = 0.511, and contributions of 93% from the HOMO-LUMO+1 and 5.5% from the HOMO-1-LUMO transitions. The HOMO-LUMO+1 transition is of charge transfer (CT) character, where the electron occupying a π orbital localized on the dihydrophenazine core is promoted into the π * LUMO+1 orbital.



Figure S3. Cyclic voltammograms of compounds **3-7** recorded in DCM with ferrocene as an external standard. Experimental Parameters: Glassy carbon (3 mm dia) working electrode, Ag/AgNO₃(0.01 M), TBAPF₆(0.1 M)/MeCN reference electrode, Pt wire counter electrode, scan rate 100 mVs⁻¹.



Figure S4. UV–vis spectra of compounds **5-7** recorded after different time periods at 298 K in CHCl₃ solution under ambient conditions and light. The half-life was estimated by monitoring the intensity of the maximum absorption peak in the 450-550 nm region.



8.9 8.8 8.7 8.6 8.5 8.4 8.3 8.2 8.1 8.0 7.9 7.8 7.7 7.6 7.5 7.4 7.3 7.2 7.1 7.0 6.9 6.8 6.7 6.6 6.5 6.4 6.3 f1 (ppm)

Figure S5. Partial ¹H NMR spectra (400MHz, CDCl₃, 298K) of compound (a) **5'**, (b) **5**, (c) **7'**, (d) **7**.

3.6. HOMA of 3 and 4



Table S3. HOMA values of 3 and 4.

	HOMA					
Comp.	А	В	С	D	Е	F
3	0.782	0.724	0.242	-0.780	0.416	0.785
4	0.619	0.713	0.657	-0.829	0.150	0.869

3.7. Resonance structures of 3 and 4



Figure S6. Resonance structures of 3 and 4 using Clar's sextet rule, showing more double bond character in the CBD of 4 as compared to 3.

4. X-ray crystallographic analysis

4.1. General X-Ray data collection

A crystal was coated with Paratone-N oil, attached to a Mitegen® loop or micromesh mount, and transferred to a Bruker D85 diffractometer equipped with a Photon 100 CMOS detector at Beamline 11.3.1 at the Advanced Light Source at the Lawrence Berkeley National Lab. Synchrotron X-rays of wavelength $\lambda = 0.7749$ Å were monochormated using silicon (111). Frames were collected using ω and ϕ and scans and the unit-cell parameters were refined against all data. Data were integrated and corrected for Lorentz and polarization effects using SAINT v8.34A and were corrected for absorption effects using SADABS V2014/2.⁵ The structure was solved using the intrinsic phasing method implemented in APEX2. It was refined against all data using SHELXTL^{6,7} and OLEX2⁸ software.⁹ Hydrogen atoms were inserted at idealized positions and refined using a riding model with an isotropic thermal parameter 1.2 or 1.5 times that of the attached non-methyl carbon or methyl carbon, respectively. Thermal parameters for all nonhydrogen atoms were refined anisotropically.

The X-ray crystallographic coordinates for structures reported in this article have been deposited at the Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre (CCDC), under deposition number CCDC 1586460 (**3**), 1586464 (**4**). These data can be obtained free of charge from CCDC via http://www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/data_request/cif.

4.2. Crystallographic Data

	3
Empirical formula	C ₂₄ H ₁₆ N ₂
Formula weight	332.39
Temperature/K	100.0
Crystal system	monoclinic
Space group	$P2_1/n$
a/Å	6.8981(4)
b/Å	13.8999(9)
c/Å	17.4205(11)
α/°	90
β/°	99.144(2)
γ/°	90
Volume/Å ³	1649.10(18)
Z	4
$\rho_{calc}g/cm^3$	1.339
μ/mm^{-1}	0.095
F(000)	696.0
Crystal size/mm ³	$0.25\times0.1\times0.02$
Radiation	Synchotron ($\lambda = 0.7749$)
20 range for data collection/	° 4.108 to 67.168
Index ranges	$-9 \le h \le 9, -19 \le k \le 19, -24 \le l \le 24$
Reflections collected	25535
Independent reflections	5022 [$R_{int} = 0.0900, R_{sigma} = 0.0691$]
Data/restraints/parameters	5022/0/237
Goodness-of-fit on F ²	1.050
Final R indexes $[I \ge 2\sigma(I)]$	$R_1 = 0.0658, wR_2 = 0.1748$
Final R indexes [all data]	$R_1 = 0.0806, wR_2 = 0.1925$
Largest diff. peak/hole / e Å-	³ 0.52/-0.43

 Table S4. Crystal data and structure refinement for 3.

	4
Empirical formula	C ₂₄ H ₁₆ N ₂
Formula weight	332.39
Temperature/K	100.0
Crystal system	monoclinic
Space group	P2 ₁ /c
a/Å	14.8902(7)
b/Å	6.8039(3)
c/Å	17.2784(8)
a/°	90
β/°	113.073(2)
$\gamma/^{\circ}$	90
Volume/Å ³	1610.47(13)
Z	4
$\rho_{calc}g/cm^3$	1.371
μ/mm^{-1}	0.097
F(000)	696.0
Crystal size/mm ³	0.6 imes 0.1 imes 0.005
Radiation	Synchrotron ($\lambda = 0.7749$)
2Θ range for data collection/	° 5.248 to 69.498
Index ranges	$-21 \le h \le 21, -10 \le k \le 9, -25 \le l \le 25$
Reflections collected	27064
Independent reflections	5343 [$R_{int} = 0.0504$, $R_{sigma} = 0.0404$]
Data/restraints/parameters	5343/0/237
Goodness-of-fit on F ²	1.062
Final R indexes [I>= 2σ (I)]	$R_1 = 0.0536, wR_2 = 0.1490$
Final R indexes [all data]	$R_1 = 0.0774, wR_2 = 0.1653$
Largest diff. peak/hole / e Å-3	3 0.38/-0.30

Table S5. Crystal data and structure refinement for 4.

5. Computational Details

5.1. Computational Methods

All calculations were performed using the Gaussian 09^{10} program package. In model compounds, dixylyl groups are replaced with phenyl groups. The geometries of these molecules were first optimized at the B3LYP level of density functional theory (DFT) with the 6-31+G(d) basis set, and the energy were then calculated with the 6-311+G(d) basis set. All structures are ground-state minima according to the analysis of their harmonic vibrational analytical frequencies computed at the same level, which show no imaginary frequencies. The first six vertical transition energies were calculated by time-dependent density functional theory (TD-DFT) at the B3LYP/6-311+G(d) level of theory. NICS calculations of the compounds are at the GIAO-B3LYP/6-311+G(d) computational level and were all carried out using the Aroma package¹¹ according to published procedures.¹² The NICS(1)_{π,ZZ} values are derived from the sigma only model.

5.2. Quantum Chemical Calculations of the FMOs of 3-7



Figure S7. Quantum-chemical calculations (B3LYP 6-311+G(d)) of the FMOs for compounds 3-7.

5.3 Calculated Cartesian Coordinates of 3-7

3

С	-6.9206600000	-0.7108830000	-0.0002230000
С	-5.7413750000	-1.4106580000	-0.0001450000
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С	-4.4993220000	0.7178440000	-0.0000570000
С	-5.7413750000	1.4106580000	-0.0001450000
С	-6.9206600000	0.7108830000	-0.0002230000
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С	-2.2059710000	-0.7308630000	0.0000820000
С	-0.9609760000	-1.4656880000	0.0001940000
Η	-1.0073950000	-2.5486790000	0.0001120000
С	0.1740190000	-0.7298910000	0.0004000000
С	0.1740190000	0.7298910000	0.0004000000
С	-0.9609760000	1.4656880000	0.0001940000
Η	-5.7176600000	-2.4949040000	-0.0001470000
Η	-5.7176600000	2.4949040000	-0.0001470000
Н	-1.0073950000	2.5486790000	0.0001120000
Ν	-3.3451750000	1.4150950000	0.0000160000
Ν	-3.3451750000	-1.4150950000	0.0000160000
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С	4.0275800000	0.7227670000	-0.0000440000
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С	6.4715090000	-0.7021960000	-0.0002770000
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Η	1.7374070000	-3.3496270000	0.0000810000
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Η	6.0882210000	-3.1492850000	0.0000550000
Ν	2.1955860000	-0.8598360000	0.0000650000
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Η	7.4336100000	-1.0590420000	-0.0000300000

3-H₂

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С	4.5871930000	0.7051410000	0.0004600000
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С	-0.2555700000	0.7070680000	0.0003440000
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Η	5.7929160000	2.4759810000	-0.0007320000
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Η	-5.3812500000	-2.4711810000	-0.0004920000
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С	-5.3640680000	1.3871690000	-0.0004960000
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С	-6.5669250000	-0.6991790000	-0.0006310000
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Η	-7.5043030000	-1.2464380000	-0.0007350000
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Η	-3.3557590000	-3.3999790000	-0.8804900000
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Η	-3.3557560000	3.3998240000	0.8804830000
Н	-1.8278100000	3.3542920000	-0.0000170000
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Н	7.9456910000	1.2461680000	-0.0027640000
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Η	3.3550150000	2.3718990000	0.0008620000
Ν	3.3550180000	-1.3649380000	0.0018960000
Η	3.3550150000	-2.3718990000	0.0008560000

4-H₂

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Η	6.0758110000	-3.1581470000	0.5422720000
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Η	7.4194730000	-1.0607200000	0.5796390000

Ν	3.6988080000	1.4793410000	-0.3307130000
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Η	1.6834320000	-1.6564260000	-0.2550870000

5_{cal}

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С	-1.1524540000	-0.7266860000	-0.0025700000
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С	1.1524540000	-0.7266860000	0.0025700000
С	1.1524540000	0.7266860000	-0.0025700000
С	2.3919710000	1.4655340000	-0.0103120000
Η	2.3452080000	2.5503140000	-0.0175470000
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С	3.5339080000	-0.7279240000	0.0072880000
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Η	-2.3452080000	-2.5503140000	-0.0175470000
Η	2.3452080000	-2.5503140000	0.0175470000
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Η	3.2652660000	12.8616520000	-0.3581000000
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5.4. NICS calculations



Figure S8. $NICS(1)_{\pi,ZZ}$ calculations on 3-H₂, 4-H₂, and 5-7 (GIAO-B3LYP/6-311+G(d)).

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7. NMR Spectra of New Compounds













































1.5....







2.745 2.624 2.562 2.240 2.059 2.014 2.014







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