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Phys. Rev. B **95**, 094409 — Published 9 March 2017

DOI: [10.1103/PhysRevB.95.094409](https://doi.org/10.1103/PhysRevB.95.094409)

Quantum interference effects in molecular spin hybrids

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(Dated: February 13, 2017)

We have studied by means of low-temperature scanning tunneling microscopy (STM) and spectroscopy (STS) single molecular spin hybrids formed upon chemisorbing a polycyclic aromatic, 3-fold symmetric hydrocarbon molecule on Co(111) nanoislands. The spin-dependent hybridization between the Co *d*-states and the π -orbitals of the molecule leads to a spin-imbalanced electronic structure of the chemisorbed organic molecule. Spin-sensitive measurements reveal that the spin polarization shows intramolecular variations among the different aromatic rings in spite of the highly symmetric adsorption geometry promoted by symmetry matching of the 3-fold symmetric molecule and the 6-fold symmetric Co(111) lattice. Hence, the varying degree of spin polarization on the organic molecule does not stem from a different hybridization of the aromatic rings with the Co atoms, but is proposed to be a consequence of the superposition of the spin polarization of the molecule and the spatially modulated spin polarization of the spin-dependent quantum interference pattern of the Co(111) surface state.

I. INTRODUCTION

In order to design miniaturized spin-based devices, e.g. for data storage, spintronics¹⁻⁴ or quantum computation⁵⁻⁹, the interest in magnetic properties of nanostructures is currently in the focus of research. However, the precise design of magnetic nanostructures is a quite challenging task, since small changes, e.g. in the size, shape and composition, can lead to drastic changes of the magnetic properties, e.g. magnetic moments or switching fields¹⁰⁻¹².

The problems due to inhomogeneities could be avoided by using single-molecule magnets¹³ with large magnetic moments and high magnetic anisotropy, since molecules can be synthesized in large numbers with identical properties. However, up to now such single-molecule magnets are limited to the operation at cryogenic temperatures, because thermal fluctuations can easily change the magnetization direction and/or magnitude at higher temperatures. Stabilizing the magnetization of a molecule by magnetic exchange coupling to a ferromagnetic building block is one possible solution for this problem¹⁴⁻¹⁸. An alternative approach is to tailor a hybrid molecular magnet from a non-magnetic molecule by spin-dependent hybridization with a ferromagnetic building block. Besides the fact that the electronic and magnetic properties of the molecule are tuned, e.g. by inducing a magnetic moment or other spin-dependent features¹⁹⁻²¹, also the magnetic properties of the ferromagnetic building block are affected²². Such effects can lead to magnetic hardening or softening of the newly formed unit consisting of the chemisorbed molecule and its direct metal neighbors^{19,23,24}. Since such new hybrid systems promise

unique magnetic functionalities, they are currently studied intensively^{19,21,25-30}.

The idea of this work is based on the latter approach, namely on the spin-dependent hybridization of a non-magnetic, aromatic molecule on a ferromagnetic surface. Here the key is that the spin-dependent hybridization between the *d*-states of the ferromagnetic metal and the π -orbitals of the molecule leads to a spin-imbalanced electronic structure of the chemisorbed molecule^{31,32}. Besides the question if it is possible to form such a hybrid molecular magnet, the main focus of this work is placed on the question if it is possible to have different spin-dependent effects, i.e. enhancement and inversion of the spin polarization in comparison to the polarization of the surrounding ferromagnetic surface, on the same molecule at the same time, for instance on different aromatic rings. To address this question and to find out, if it is possible to tailor a hybrid molecular magnet that exhibits varying spin features for different units, i.e. different aromatic rings, we have employed the molecule 2,4,6-triphenyl-1,3,5-triazine or shortly TPT shown in Fig. 1. TPT consists of a central triazine-like ring and three peripheral phenyl groups. In the gas phase it is non-magnetic and exhibits a 3-fold rotational symmetry. For the ferromagnetic building block we have chosen Co nanoislands on Cu(111), since this system has already been studied in detail and because it is known that its spin polarization is spatially modulated³³. This makes the Co nanoislands an ideal system to investigate the spin-dependent hybridization and in particular to study the possibility to create a hybrid molecular magnet that may exhibit varying spin features for different units.

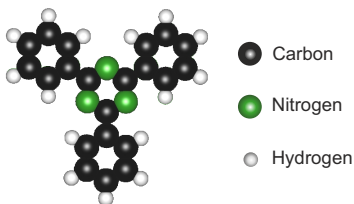


FIG. 1. Graphical representation of the 2,4,6-triphenyl-1,3,5-triazine (TPT) molecule in the gas phase.

II. METHODS

A. Sample preparation

All measurements in this work have been carried out in a commercially available scanning tunneling microscope equipped with a Joule-Thomson cooling stage (JT-STM from SPECS) at a base temperature of $T = 4.3$ K and magnetic fields up to 3 T (out-of-plane) in ultra-high vacuum (UHV) conditions.

The Cu(111) crystal was prepared by repeated cycles of Ar^+ sputtering and subsequent annealing to 700 K for 10 minutes. In the next step a submonolayer amount of Co [$\lesssim 0.4$ monolayers (ML)] was deposited at a rate of ≈ 0.2 ML/min from a rod by electron bombardment heating onto the clean Cu(111) surface held at room temperature. This preparation procedure leads to the formation of triangular and 2 ML-high Co islands of varying sizes^{34,35}. In order to minimize contaminations and also intermixing of Co and Cu atoms the sample was directly transferred into the STM³⁶. The electronic and magnetic properties of the Co islands were checked by spin-polarized STM before the deposition of the TPT molecules. The TPT molecules were sublimated from a home-built Knudsen cell (deposition temperature approximately 415 K) onto the precooled sample ($\lesssim 70$ K) to reduce the mobility of the adsorbed molecules. The coverage with TPT molecules was chosen such that typically less than four TPT molecules adsorbed per Co island. The pressure during the deposition of Co and the TPT molecules did not exceed 2×10^{-10} mbar.

B. Magnetic tip preparation

In order to investigate also the magnetic properties of the sample a spin-sensitive STM tip is needed. Besides the obvious choice of ferromagnetic materials for the fabrication of the tips^{37–39}, antiferromagnetic materials can be used^{40–42}. Antiferromagnetic materials have the advantage that they only exhibit weak stray fields, and an influence of the tip on the investigated magnetic structures can therefore be excluded, making them more suitable for small and magnetically susceptible structures. For this reason we have used bulk Cr tips for our spin-sensitive measurements. Note that besides the use of

bulk materials it is also possible to coat non-magnetic STM tips with (anti)ferromagnetic materials^{43–46}.

The Cr tips have been fabricated by electrochemical etching of polycrystalline Cr rods in 5 M NaOH. The Cr rods have been obtained from a 99.95% Cr foil. Before making use of the electrochemically etched bulk Cr tips they have been cleaned *ex-situ* in distilled water and isopropanol and furthermore in UHV by electron bombardment heating (1 kV, 2.6 mA, 30 s) to remove the remaining oxides. Although it is known that the apex of the tip is likely spin-polarized, the direction of the tip magnetization, its strength and also the response to an external magnetic field are usually unknown⁴⁷. Indeed, not all fabricated Cr tips showed the desired properties (high out-of-plane sensitivity) in the first instance. Therefore, the Cr tips have also been treated *in-situ* by applying short voltage pulses (4 – 10 V, 10 ms) between the STM tip and sample in order to obtain appropriate magnetic tips. The magnetic sensitivity of the Cr tips has been checked by spectroscopic imaging of clean Co islands at different magnetic fields (see section III A).

C. Differential conductance spectra and images

Differential conductance dI/dV spectra have been acquired using conventional lock-in technique with the feedback loop switched off. Parameters at the stabilization point before switching off the feedback loop were bias voltage $V = -200$ mV and tunneling current $I = 200$ pA. Spectroscopic maps of the first derivative dI/dV (dI/dV -maps) have been measured simultaneously with constant-current images also using the conventional lock-in technique. The typical parameters were a modulation amplitude of 10 mV with a modulation frequency of 801 Hz. To ensure a featureless DOS of the tip, we measured reference spectra on the clean Cu(111) surface before starting measurements on the Co islands and TPT molecules. All differential conductance spectra shown in this work have been averaged over two measurements, one being a forward, the other a backward sweep of the bias voltage.

D. Theory

1. Computational Details

Spin-polarized electronic structure calculations were carried out in the framework of density functional theory (DFT)^{48,49} making use of the VASP program^{50–52}. In addition, projector augmented-wave (PAW) datasets⁵³ as constructed for the Perdew, Burke and Ernzerhof (PBE) exchange-correlation functional⁵⁴ were employed. Throughout the calculations a plane wave cutoff of 500 eV was used and the Brillouin zone was sampled at the Γ -point. All structures were geometrically optimized until the forces were smaller than 10 meV/Å.

The unit cell was made up of two unfaulted fcc-stacked Co layers on top of five fcc-stacked Cu layers each represented by an 8×8 in-plane surface unit cell containing 64 Co or Cu atoms. The TPT molecule was adsorbed on top of the Co layers. The vacuum distance in the direction perpendicular to the surface plane to the next periodic slab was about 18 Å. The shortest lateral distance between two atoms of TPT molecules in neighboring unit cells was 8.8 Å. During the geometry optimization the uppermost Cu layer, the Co layers and the molecular coordinates were allowed to relax. Note that due to the periodic boundary conditions employed in our first principles calculations, it is not computationally tractable to investigate large Co nanoislands on Cu(111) to describe the Co(111) surface state interference effects as measured in the STM and STS experiments. Therefore in the following we will refrain from presenting a direct comparison between the calculated density of states and the measured dI/dV spectra.

2. Geometric structure

As depicted in Fig. 2, in the ground-state the TPT molecule adsorbs with its C atoms of the central triazine-like ring on top of the hcp hollow sites while the N atoms are over the surface Co ones. This adsorption position is consistent with both the experimental findings and the general tendency of N to adsorb on top of surface atoms⁵⁵. Additionally, the calculated adsorption energy E_{ads} of 3.55 eV⁵⁶ clearly indicates that on 2 ML Co/Cu(111) the TPT molecule is chemisorbed. This conclusion is further supported by a N-Co distance of 2.07 Å and an average C-Co one of 2.06 Å for the Co atoms directly below the N and C ones, respectively.

As regarding the magnetic properties of the hybrid molecule-surface system, we first note that upon the TPT adsorption the magnetic moments of the twelve surface Co atoms underneath the molecule (three below each molecular ring) are modified. More specifically, due to the hybridization between these twelve surface Co atoms

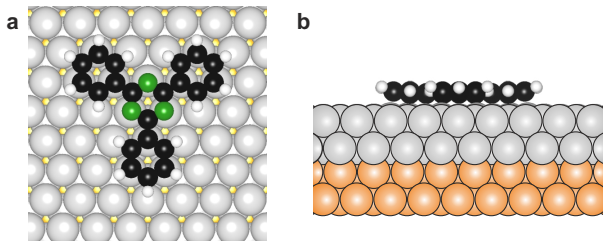


FIG. 2. Ground-state adsorption geometry of a single TPT molecule on 2 ML Co/Cu(111): **a** top view and **b** side view. Note that in this adsorption configuration the TPT molecule has the C atoms of the central ring on top of the hcp hollow sites and the N atoms above the Co surface atoms. Color code: Co (gray), Cu (orange), C (black), N (green) and H (light gray).

and the TPT molecule their magnetic moments are reduced compared to the clean surface moment of $1.8 \mu_B$. In a qualitative agreement with the results reported in Ref. [23], the Co moments below N of $1.6 \mu_B$ are less diminished than the ones underneath C amounting to 1.4-1.5 μ_B . Besides this, with respect to the clean surface Co-Co inter-layer distance of 2.40 Å the average one for the hybrid TPT-surface is slightly larger (i.e., 2.43 Å). This observation implies that for this hybrid system a molecular-induced skyhook effect²⁴ is possible such that an inter-layer softening of the magnetic exchange interactions between the Co layers can occur.

III. RESULTS

A. Co islands on Cu(111)

In this section the main properties of the Co island are only briefly introduced, since the growth, electronic and magnetic properties of this system have already been intensively investigated before^{10-12,33,45,57-61}.

Co islands prepared on the Cu(111) surface according to the procedure described in section II A exhibit the typical triangular shape [inset of Fig. 3a] and bilayer height of approximately 3.9 Å. Two different orientations of the

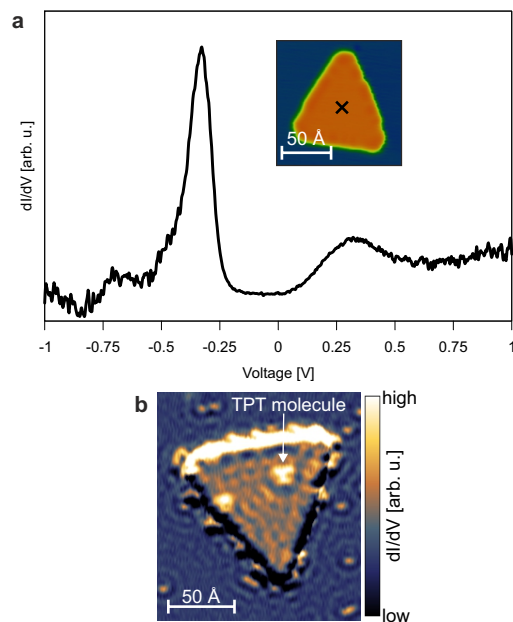


FIG. 3. **a** Differential conductance dI/dV spectra acquired in the center of a Co island. For the measurement a non-magnetic tungsten tip has been used. Inset shows the STM image of the corresponding Co island with the marked spectroscopy location ($V = 500$ mV, $I = 200$ pA). **b** dI/dV -map of a Co island at $V = +690$ mV. The spatially modulated pattern is a result of the sp electron confinement in the Co island. A detailed analysis of the adsorption of the TPT molecules is presented in section III B.

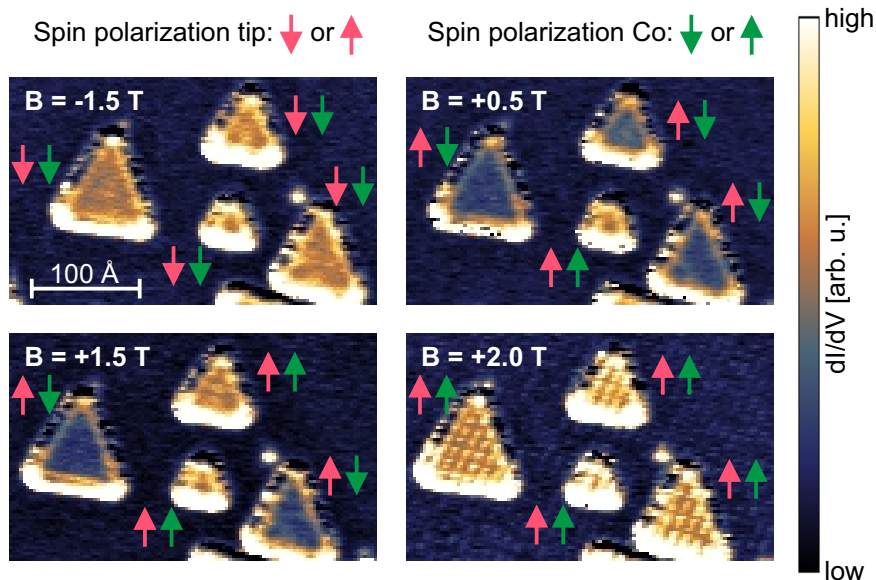


FIG. 4. dI/dV -maps of Co islands on Cu(111) at different external magnetic fields B measured with a spin-polarized bulk Cr tip ($V = -500$ mV, $I = 1$ nA). Changes in the contrast correspond to the magnetization reversal of the tip ($B = +0.5$ T) or the Co islands ($B \geq +0.5$ T). The arrows next to the Co islands indicate the spin polarization of the tip and the particular Co island, respectively. The pattern in the spectroscopic image for $B = +2.0$ T is due to noise and not related to the standing waves within the Co island.

Co islands on the Cu(111) surface correspond to fcc (unfaulted) or hcp (faulted) stacking of the first Co layer with respect to the stacking of the substrate³⁵.

Figure 3a displays a typical dI/dV conductance spectrum, which has been acquired in the center of a Co island. The spectrum shows a sharp peak at approximately -330 mV, which corresponds to the spin-polarized d -like minority surface state of Co⁵⁹. The broad peak at $\approx +310$ mV corresponds also to a spin-polarized d -like minority state^{57,62}. Furthermore, a free electron-like sp majority surface state with a parabolic dispersion starting around -0.17 V below the Fermi energy^{33,59}, which is not directly visible in the differential conductance spectra, because it is not a localized peak but smeared out over a broad energy range, can be visualized by measuring spectroscopic images. This is illustrated in Fig. 3b, where a quantum interference pattern is clearly visible due to the scattering of the sp electron waves at the boundaries of the Co island. This quantum confinement gives rise to the observed standing waves. The interference pattern in Fig. 3b is measured at $+0.69$ V, i.e. well inside the existence range of the sp surface state that has been observed to extend up to $+2.4$ V⁵⁹. The d -like surface state is not influenced by the electron confinement because of its energetically and spatially localized nature⁶³. The spin polarization at a certain energy E is given by the difference of the density of states (DOS) of electrons with opposite spin at the given energy E normalized by the spin-integrated DOS at E . Note that the spatially modulated DOS of the sp surface state leads to a spatially modulated spin polarization across the Co islands³³. This spatial modulation of the spin polariza-

tion is the key for understanding the magnetic properties of the TPT molecules reported in section IIID and discussed in section IV.

The electronic properties show no significant difference for faulted and unfaulted Co islands. Only the d -like surface state shifts slightly in energy (< 50 mV) for differently oriented Co island as well as for different island sizes⁶⁰. These small variations are specific for each Co island and, thus, necessitate that the spin-polarized measurements, namely for magnetically parallel and anti-parallel configuration, must always be carried out on the same island and molecule, because otherwise the data are not comparable.

The Co islands exhibit an out-of-plane magnetization (parallel to the surface normal) and can be switched by an external magnetic field. In order to check the properties of the bulk Cr tip we measured dI/dV -maps of Co islands at a fixed bias voltage at different magnetic fields applied in the out-of-plane direction. Since the spin-polarized current and therefore also the differential conductance depends strongly on the relative orientation of the magnetization directions of the Co islands and the tip, a change in the magnetization is visible in the dI/dV signal, i.e. as a change in the contrast in the spectroscopic images. The results are shown in Fig. 4. At a magnetic field of $B = -1.5$ T all Co islands have the same color. By changing the magnetic field to $B = +0.5$ T the contrast of the Co islands (except the smallest one) is inverted from bright to dark. With further increase of the magnetic field at first one Co island changes its contrast from dark to bright ($B = +1.5$ T) and finally at $B = +2.0$ T all Co islands appear bright again. The same behavior is ob-

served when the magnetic field sweep is reversed. From previous studies it is known that the Co islands switch in magnetic fields between $B = \pm 0.5$ T and $B = \pm 2.5$ T depending on their size^{10,12,58}. Thus, we can conclude that the first contrast change at $B = +0.5$ T is due the magnetization reversal of the tip. Such a behavior of bulk Cr tips has been observed in previous studies and was explained by uncompensated Cr spins that are sensitive to the external magnetic field⁵⁸. All bulk Cr tips used in this work showed similar behavior.

B. Adsorption of TPT on Co nanoislands

Having investigated the properties of bare Co islands, TPT molecules have been deposited on the same sample at low temperatures (see also section II A) and then single TPT molecules on top of Co islands are imaged by STM⁶⁴⁻⁶⁶. Note that for the studies in this section a non-magnetic tungsten tip has been used. Figure 5 shows an STM image of a Co island after the adsorption of the molecules. The TPT molecules can be clearly identified by their shape that resembles the structure of the molecule in the gas phase. This is emphasized by the overlaid graphical true-scale representation of the TPT molecule in the inset of Fig. 5. Fragments of the molecules are barely found, which indicates that most of the molecules stay intact after adsorption on the Co islands. Only at the edges of the Co islands impurities are observed, which are assumed to be fragments of the TPT molecule, since their shapes and sizes coincide with the phenyl rings of the intact molecules.

An analysis of many adsorbed TPT molecules reveals two preferred adsorption orientations on the Co islands (also recognizable in Fig. 5), which is reasonable if we consider the symmetries of the surface atomic lattice of the Co island and the TPT molecule. Due to the 6-fold rotational symmetry of the uppermost Co layer we should expect 6 different adsorption geometries at first glance, but since the TPT molecule has a 3-fold symmetry, the 6 adsorption geometries are 3-fold degenerate, thus leading to 2 different adsorption orientations.

To determine the exact adsorption position of the TPT molecules on the Co islands we have recorded STM images with atomic resolution. Since it is difficult to resolve the atomic structure of the Co islands with a bare metal tip in the presence of adsorbed TPT molecules without causing too much interaction, we have made use of a functionalized tip. From other works it is known that functionalized tips can show unmatched spatial resolution⁶⁷⁻⁷³. Thus, we have picked up an (occasionally adsorbed) CO molecule from the Cu(111) surface and imaged a TPT molecule and the underlying Co island with atomic resolution by approaching the functionalized tip to the surface (Fig. 6a and b). Interestingly, we found that by coming closer to the surface the TPT molecule appears much smaller than in reality⁷⁴. This can be clearly seen in Fig. 6a, which shows the same area

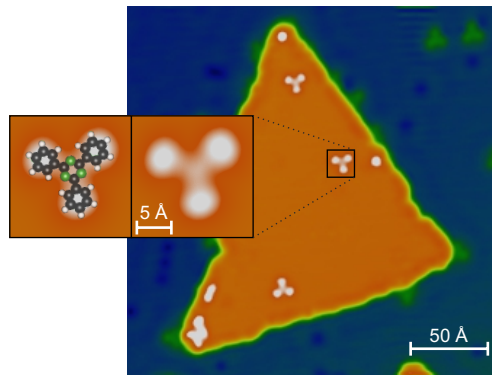


FIG. 5. Constant-current STM image of a Co island on Cu(111) after the deposition of TPT molecules ($V = -200$ mV, $I = 200$ pA). Inset: Magnified STM image of a TPT molecule (right) overlaid with a graphical true-scale representation of the TPT molecule in the gas phase (left).

for two different tip-sample distances. With decreasing tip-sample distance this effect becomes even more pronounced and the real size of the molecule is actually given by the blurred cloud that surrounds the bright center of the molecule. In Fig. 6b the atomic structure of the Co(111) surface is clearly seen. Note that the TPT molecule seems to be even smaller than in Fig. 6a. The real size is again given by the blurred cloud. By overlaying the atomic lattice of the Co island and the gas-phase structure of the TPT molecule we can precisely identify the adsorption position of TPT (Fig. 6c): the nitrogen atoms of the triazine ring adsorb on top of the Co atoms, leading to a symmetric adsorption geometry for all phenyl rings and thus to two distinguishable orientations on the Co islands. Note that the adsorption geometry was only experimentally determined for a TPT molecule adsorbed on an fcc (unfaulted) Co island. Nevertheless, we can assume that this adsorption site remains also valid for hcp (faulted) Co islands, since all types of islands, i.e. with different stackings, exhibit the same symmetry and electronic properties at the surface.

Our finding is also confirmed by the DFT calculations, as we find the highest binding energy (3.55 eV) for the experimentally observed adsorption geometry. As seen from Fig. 6d the calculated adsorption geometry is in excellent agreement with the experimental one. For reasons of simplicity the DFT calculations have been only carried out for an fcc type stacking of the Co.

C. Electronic properties of TPT on Co islands

An important prerequisite for the formation of a hybrid molecular magnet is the hybridization with the ferromagnetic building block, i.e. in our case with the Co island. Thus, we have to investigate the electronic properties of the adsorbed TPT molecules in order to check if this precondition is fulfilled. For this purpose we have measured

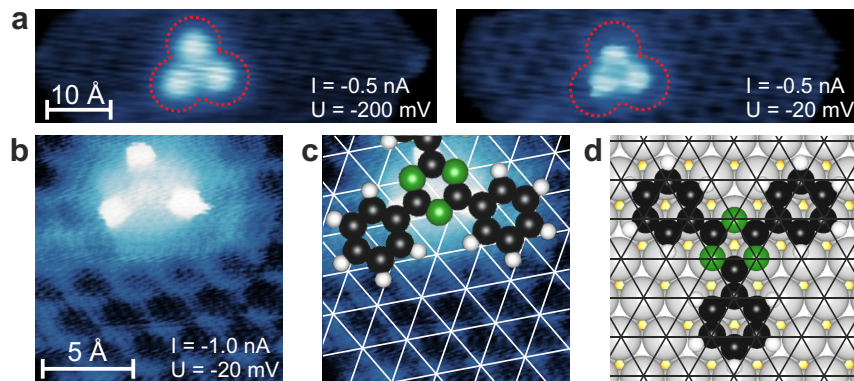


FIG. 6. **a** Constant-current STM images of a TPT molecule adsorbed on a fcc (unfaulted) Co island grown on Cu(111) for different tip-sample distances obtained with a CO functionalized tip. Already for small currents the atomic structure of the Co island is somewhat visible (left panel). For a smaller bias voltage (right panel), i.e. for a smaller tip-sample distance, the TPT molecule appears smaller compared to the left panel as indicated by the dotted red contours. **b** As panel a, but for even smaller tip-sample distance. The real size of the TPT molecule is actually given by the blurred blue cloud. The atomic lattice of Co(111) is clearly visible. **c** STM image of panel b overlaid with the atomic structure of the Co island and the gas-phase structure of the TPT molecule. **d** Calculated adsorption geometry of TPT on 2Co/5Cu (see text).

differential conductance spectra at different locations on the molecule, namely on the triazine and phenyl rings. Note that for the studies in this section a non-magnetic tungsten tip has been used. Figure 7 shows typical dI/dV spectra, which reveal the main electronic features that we have observed during our measurements on different TPT molecules and also for different tips. Besides minor differences, all spectra show the same features, namely three peaks located at approximately -340 mV, $+170$ mV and $+600$ mV. Note that the peak at -340 mV is located in the same energy region as the d -like surface state of the Co (compare with Fig. 3a). This, and also the fact that only broad features are observed, leads to the conclusion that the molecule is strongly hybridized with the Co island, thus fulfilling the basic requirement for a hybrid molecular magnet.

The slightly different electronic properties of the phenyl rings at higher energies, mainly above $+700$ mV,

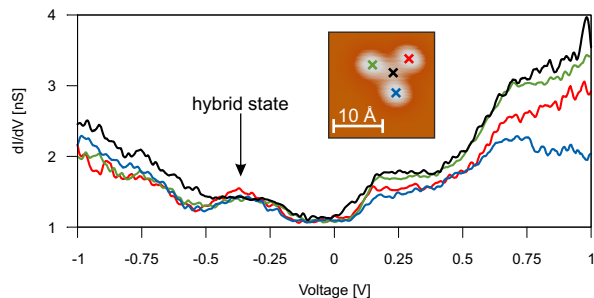


FIG. 7. Differential conductance dI/dV spectra acquired on the different aromatic rings of the TPT molecule. For the measurement a non-magnetic tungsten tip has been used. The inset shows the STM image of the corresponding TPT molecule with the marked spectroscopy locations ($V = -200$ mV, $I = 200$ pA).

seem surprising at first glance, since the adsorption site and geometry are identical for all phenyl rings as revealed by our analysis of the adsorption geometry in section III B. Significant intramolecular variations of the electronic and magnetic properties among the aromatic rings have recently been observed for TPT molecules adsorbed on 2 ML Fe on W(110)²⁷. In this case the combination of the 3-fold symmetric TPT molecule and the 2-fold symmetric substrate lattice leads to a highly asymmetric and chiral adsorption geometry with different bonding and hybridization conditions for the three peripheral phenyl groups in each TPT molecule. In the present case the 3-fold symmetry is not broken by the adsorption process, but if we take into account the presence of the standing electron waves on the Co nanoislands due to the confinement of the sp electrons, then the most probable explanation for the differences among the phenyl groups is that they are related to the spatial modulation of the sp surface state. This seems reasonable, since the periodicity of standing waves at this energy is of the order of 10 Å (see Fig. 3b) and thus comparable with the size of the molecule. The small intramolecular variations among the peripheral phenyl groups emphasize why it is important to carry out the spin-polarized measurements for different spin configurations between tip and sample on the same molecule.

For simplicity, we will call the state located at -340 mV in the following *hybrid state*, since we are going to show in section III D that this state is not just the d -like surface state measured through the TPT molecule, but a manifestation of a new hybrid electronic structure due to the hybridization with the Co island and that this state exhibits the strongest spin-dependent effect. Note that we do not observe major differences between TPT molecules adsorbed on fcc (unfaulted) or hcp (faulted) Co islands, respectively. The only difference is that the

position of the hybrid state shifted slightly (< 50 mV), which correlates with the shift of the d -like surface state of Co reported in Ref. [60].

D. Magnetic properties of the hybrid system

Having investigated the electronic properties of the TPT molecules on the Co islands, we finally turn to their magnetic properties. For this purpose we use a bulk Cr tip prepared according to the description in section II B. The tip showed the same behavior as the one in section III A. This means that the magnetization direction of the Cr tip can be reversed by applying an external magnetic field of $B = \pm 0.5$ T. We have used this feature to measure spin-resolved dI/dV -maps and differential conductance spectra of the TPT molecules for parallel (P) and anti-parallel (AP) alignments of the tip and sample magnetization directions.

But before we turn to the spin-resolved dI/dV -maps and dI/dV spectra of TPT it is important to define the parallel and anti-parallel spin configurations. To this end we applied an external magnetic field of $B = +1.75$ T in order to align the magnetization of the Co islands with the external field. The switching of the Co islands was confirmed by taking a dI/dV -map at -500 mV (analogous to the procedure in section III A). Then we switched the magnetization of the tip by sweeping the external magnetic field to $B = -0.5$ T and measured again a dI/dV -map at -500 mV. We define the state in which we observed a high differential conductance signal as parallel and accordingly the state with low conductance as anti-parallel. The dI/dV -maps of the Co islands (with the adsorbed TPT molecules) are shown in Fig. 8 and correspond to the parallel and anti-parallel states, respectively. Before measuring spin-resolved dI/dV -maps and dI/dV spectra of TPT we always confirmed the actual state (P or AP) by dI/dV -maps of the particular Co islands.

To determine the spin polarization of the TPT

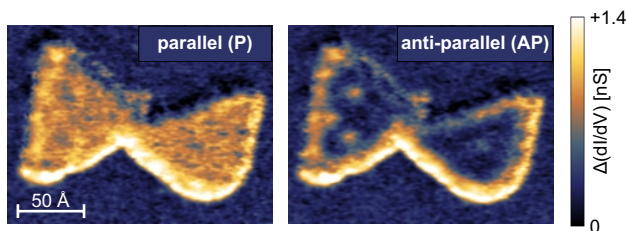


FIG. 8. dI/dV -maps of Co islands on Cu(111) with adsorbed TPT molecules for parallel and anti-parallel magnetization orientations between tip and Co island measured with a bulk Cr tip ($V = -500$ mV, $I = 1.5$ nA). The switching between the two states is caused by the magnetization reversal of the tip magnetization in the external magnetic field B .

molecules we calculated the spin asymmetry

$$A = \frac{(dI/dV)_{\text{AP}} - (dI/dV)_{\text{P}}}{(dI/dV)_{\text{AP}} + (dI/dV)_{\text{P}}}, \quad (1)$$

where $(dI/dV)_{\text{AP}}$ and $(dI/dV)_{\text{P}}$ are the differential conductance signals in AP and P configuration, respectively. The spin asymmetry A is related to the spin polarization P_{S} of the sample at the position of the tip, and to the spin polarization P_{T} of the tip via

$$A = -P_{\text{S}}P_{\text{T}}. \quad (2)$$

Since the spin polarization of the tip, P_{T} , does not vary spatially above the sample for a fixed bias voltage, we can assume that variations in the spatially resolved spin asymmetry A are linked to the spin polarization of the sample, that is, $A \propto P_{\text{S}}$.

Figure 9 exemplarily shows the spin-resolved dI/dV spectra of the different aromatic rings of one TPT molecule. As seen, the strongest spin-dependent effect occurs for the hybrid state. All other states show hardly any spin polarization. Currently, it is not known if the STM tip was not spin sensitive in these energy ranges, or if the TPT molecules are not spin-polarized in these energy ranges. Note that the peak at ≈ -80 mV was not detected in the spin-averaged measurements before and thus is most probably a tip state. This is emphasized by the fact that also in the differential conductance spectra on the bare Co islands (gray curve) a peak at this energy (≈ -80 mV) is recognizable. Having a tip state in the gap-like structure of the TPT/Co spectrum (see also section III C) is unfortunate but reveals how difficult it is to prepare a STM tip with good electronic properties (i.e. flat DOS near the Fermi energy), spatial resolution (e.g. no double tips) and with magnetic sensitivity. Interestingly, the hybrid state exhibits different spin polarizations on the different aromatic rings of the TPT molecule. The spin polarization of the hybrid state is inverted (green curve) or has the same sign (red curve) in comparison to the spin polarization of the d -like surface state (gray curve), or shows no spin polarization (blue curve). The spin asymmetry of the hybrid state at different locations on the TPT molecule and on the uncovered Co island extracted from the data in Fig. 9 are listed in Table I.

TABLE I. Spin asymmetry A of the hybrid state around -310 mV derived from the spectra in Fig. 9. The error margins are estimated from the noise of each spectrum.

Spin asymmetry A [%]				
TPT red	TPT green	TPT blue	TPT black	Co gray
13.0 ± 2.9	-5.6 ± 2.8	1.5 ± 2.2	10.1 ± 3.7	16.0 ± 0.8

Before discussing the possible origin of the varying spin polarizations on the different aromatic rings of a TPT

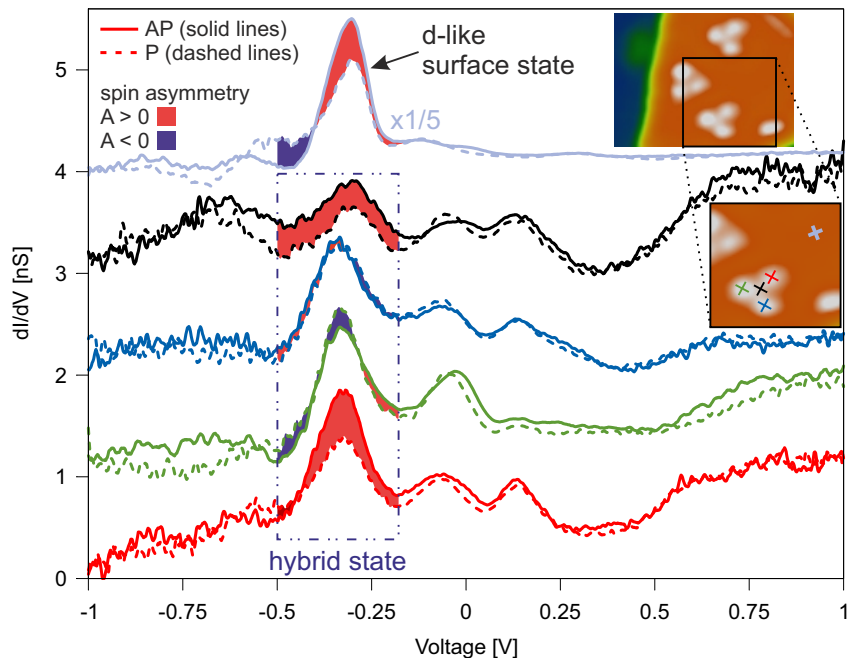


FIG. 9. Spin-resolved differential conductance dI/dV spectra acquired on the different aromatic rings of the TPT molecule (red, green, blue, black) and for comparison far from the molecule (gray) for parallel (P) and anti-parallel (AP) configuration between tip and Co island. The color of the filled areas between the dI/dV spectra for AP and P configuration indicates the sign of the spin asymmetry A . For the measurement a bulk Cr tip has been used. The different spectroscopy locations on the TPT molecule are marked in the STM image in the inset ($V = -200$ mV, $I = 200$ pA). Spectra are vertically shifted for clarity and the gray spectrum measured on bare Co is divided by 5.

molecule we note that the spin-resolved spectra of the Co island (gray curves) show the typical behavior known from literature^{10,58}. The varying spin polarizations on the aromatic rings of the TPT molecules cannot be explained by a different hybridization of the aromatic rings, because TPT adsorbs highly symmetric on the Co islands (see section III B). Hence, the three phenyl rings have the same adsorption sites and should hybridize equally with the Co island. Thus, the spin-dependent properties should be also equal, but, as seen in Fig. 9, they exhibit different spin polarizations. This variation in the spin polarization also demonstrates that the hybrid state is not just the d -like surface state of Co which shows through the molecules but a new state formed due to the hybridization of the molecular states and the d -like surface state, because the spin polarization of the latter one does not change its sign within the Co islands.

In order to gain a better insight into the spatial variations of the spin polarization of the hybrid state of TPT we measured spatially resolved dI/dV -maps in AP and P configurations at the energy of the hybrid state of TPT, that is, $V = -310$ mV in this particular case (see Fig. 9). Figure 10a shows a constant-current STM image of TPT molecules adsorbed on a Co island, and Fig. 10b and c the dI/dV -maps in AP and P configurations, respectively. Note that this Co island is the same as in the inset of Fig. 9 and that the different contrast in Fig. 8 and Fig. 10 stems from the strongly different range of

the displayed dI/dV values. The resultant spatially resolved map of the spin asymmetry according to Eq. (1) is shown in Fig. 10d. To make the analysis easier, the map of the spin asymmetry has been smoothed by removing the high frequency noise using a Gaussian filter (Fig. 10e), and in addition graphical representations of the TPT molecules have been overlaid in Fig. 10f. The spin asymmetry maps are shown using the discrete color scale shown on the right hand side.

As seen in Figs. 10e and f, the spin asymmetry A , and consequently the spin polarization P_S of the sample, shows a strong spatial modulation within the Co island. The strongest effects occur around the TPT molecules, namely the spin asymmetry A exhibits positive and negative values. This change occurs on a length scale of approximately 13 Å as indicated in Fig. 10f. Such a change in the sign of the spin asymmetry is not observed in areas, where no molecules are adsorbed – there the spin polarization only shows positive values, but also varies on a length scale of ≈ 13 Å from minimum to maximum (see Fig. 10f).

IV. DISCUSSION

In order to exclude that the observed variations in the spin polarization stem from our measuring inaccuracy, we estimated the uncertainty of the measured spin po-

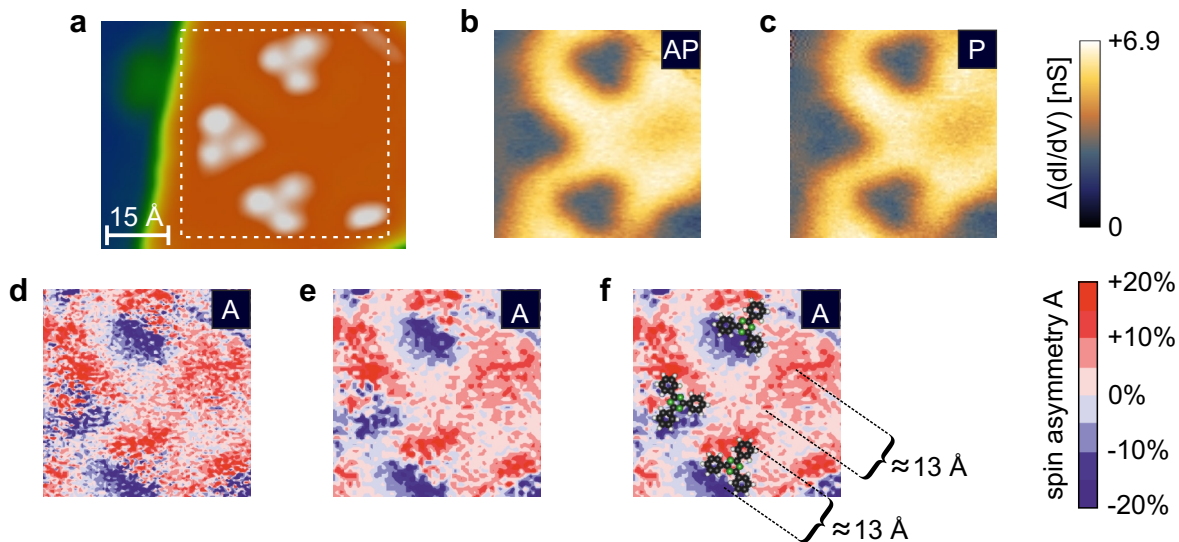


FIG. 10. **a** Constant-current STM image of a Co islands with adsorbed TPT molecules ($V = -200$ mV, $I = 200$ pA). Note that the Co island is the same as in Fig. 9. **b** dI/dV -map of the Co island with adsorbed TPT molecules at the energy of the hybrid state for anti-parallel magnetization directions between tip and sample measured with a bulk Cr tip ($V = -310$ mV, $I = 1.5$ nA). Image section corresponds to the area indicated in panel a. **c** As panel b, but for the parallel state. **d** Spin asymmetry map calculated from the dI/dV -maps in panels b and c according to Eq. (1). **e, f** The spin asymmetry map from panel d after applying a Gaussian filter to remove the noise. **f** For the purpose of illustration the graphical representation of the TPT molecule has been overlaid to the map in panel e. The positions of the TPT molecules have been extracted from the simultaneously recorded constant-current image.

larization. In our STM setup the stability of the tunneling junction is roughly ± 1 pm. According to Ref. 75, the relation between spin-dependent height differences (Δz) and the spin polarization is given by

$$P_S P_T = \frac{\exp(A\sqrt{\phi}\Delta z) - 1}{\exp(A\sqrt{\phi}\Delta z) + 1}. \quad (3)$$

For a typical work function $\phi \approx 4$ eV, the constant $A \approx 1$ eV $^{-1/2}$ Å $^{-1}$, and $\Delta z = 2$ pm this leads to $P_S P_T \approx 2\%$. Hence, the uncertainty of the measured spin polarization in our setup is about 2%. As seen from Fig. 10d the observed changes in the spin polarization exceed this value. Thus, both the observed spatial modulation of the spin polarization on the uncovered Co island and the intramolecular variations on the different aromatic rings of the TPT molecules are real effects. Furthermore, we have observed and confirmed similar variations of the spin polarization among the aromatic rings of a TPT molecule on 4 different Co islands and in total for 7 different TPT molecules, while using two different Cr bulk tips. Finally, we point out that the spin asymmetry values at the five locations in Fig. 10f, where the spectra in Fig. 9 were taken, are in good correspondence with the spin asymmetry values in Table I.

As mentioned in section III A it has been shown in previous works that Co nanoislands exhibit varying spin polarizations due to the difference between the spatially modulated DOS of the sp surface state and the non-modulated d -like surface state³³. Depending on the energy, the periodicity of the spatial modulation of the spin

polarization is in the order of $\approx 10 - 30$ Å^{33,59}. The changes in the spin polarization in Fig. 10f also occur on a length scale of ≈ 13 Å (periodicity of ≈ 26 Å), as mentioned above, and thus are most likely linked to the spin-dependent interference pattern of the Co nanoisland. The spin modulation pattern depends on the island edges and other scattering centers (e.g. defects, adsorbates) and, thus, in general does not exhibit a 3-fold symmetry. Therefore, the influence of spin polarization pattern due to the interference of the Co(111) surface state is an obvious explanation for the observed broken 3-fold symmetry of the spin polarization within a single chemisorbed TPT molecule, which according to our STM images (Fig. 5) and DFT calculations (Fig. 2) forms a structurally 3-fold symmetric hybrid molecule-surface system. Note that the sp surface state of the clean Co(111) starts at approximately -0.17 V below the Fermi level^{33,59} as mentioned in section III A and thus is not expected to be present in the energy range of the hybrid state. Nevertheless, a quantum interference pattern can be clearly recognized in Figs. 10b-d. This can be explained by assuming that the adsorption of a sufficient number of TPT molecules on the Co islands leads to a shift of the sp surface state to lower energies. Such a behavior has been observed for other systems, where the surface state shifts linearly with increasing adsorbate coverage. For example, such a shift to lower energies is reported for the surface states of Pd(111) and Cu(111) due to the adsorption of H and O, respectively^{76,77}. Shifts to higher energies have also been reported, e.g. for metallocenes on

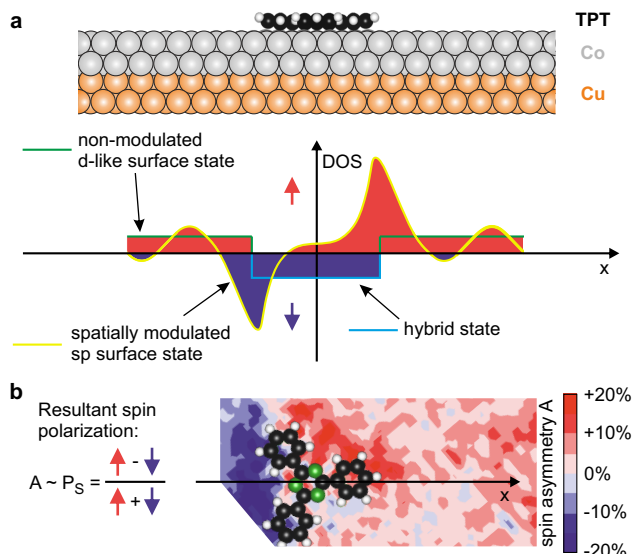


FIG. 11. **a** Illustration of the spin-resolved DOS of the non-modulated *d*-like surface state, the hybrid state and the spatially modulated *sp* surface state depending on the position on the Co island. **b** The DOS illustrated in panel a results in a spin polarization pattern as observed in the experiment. The shown spin asymmetry map is an image section of Fig. 10e.

Cu(111)⁷⁸. Furthermore, we conclude that the inversion of the spin polarization must be related to the presence of the TPT molecules and cannot be explained solely by the properties of the Co island, since the inversion of the spin polarization only occurs in the vicinity of the TPT molecules.

Hence, to explain the possible origin of the strongly varying spin polarizations around the TPT molecules we propose a model where the molecules act as additional scattering centers for the electrons of the *sp* surface state, and thus modulate the intensity of the spin-dependent quantum interference pattern of the Co nanoislands similar to the effect reported in Ref. [79] for the rim of the islands. Since the wave function of the *sp* surface state cannot vanish abruptly at the edges of the TPT molecule, but rather extends into the molecules, a superposition of the spin polarization of TPT and of the modulated *sp* surface state is detected above the TPT molecules in the spin-resolved STM measurements. In Fig. 11a the different states, i.e. the non-modulated *d*-like surface state, the hybrid state and the spatially modulated *sp* surface state, which contribute to the spin-resolved signal, are schematically illustrated as a function of the position on the Co island. The observed magnitudes of the spin asymmetries (see Fig. 11b) can be explained within this model under the assumption that the additional scattering processes lead to an enhancement of spin polarization of the *sp* surface state at the boundaries of the molecules and that the spin polarization of the hybrid state is inverted in comparison to the *d*-like surface state of the Co island.

An inversion of the spin polarization of the hybrid state

in comparison to the *d*-like surface state is reasonable, since we deduced in section III C that the TPT molecules must be strongly hybridized with the Co islands, and a strong hybridization results in an inversion of the spin polarization in agreement with previous combined STM and DFT studies^{27,31,32} and model calculations²⁰.

V. CONCLUSION

In this work we have analyzed systematically the formation of single molecular spin hybrids on Co islands on Cu(111) by means of spin-polarized scanning tunneling microscopy and spectroscopy (SP-STM/STS). The spin-sensitive measurements revealed that the spin polarization varies among the different aromatic rings of the TPT molecule, although the molecules exhibit a highly symmetric adsorption geometry as revealed by atomically resolved STM images and confirmed by ab initio calculations that yield the highest binding energy for the experimentally ascertained adsorption site. Hence, the varying degree of spin polarization on the different aromatic rings cannot stem from a different hybridization of the aromatic rings with the ferromagnetic substrate as recently observed for TPT on Fe/W(110)²⁷. Given that the spatially resolved spin asymmetry maps also showed a modulation of the spin polarization on the uncovered parts of the Co islands, we propose to link the appearance of the intramolecular variations of the spin polarization to a superposition of the spin polarization of the TPT molecule and the spatially modulated spin-polarized *sp* surface state of the Co(111) surface. This emphasizes the importance to consider effects due to quantum confinement when tailoring molecular spin hybrids on magnetic nanostructures.

Our results demonstrate the formation of a single molecular spin hybrid, i.e. a molecule that is spin-dependently hybridized with a ferromagnetic surface, using a polyaromatic molecule and that the aromatic rings within the molecule can exhibit different spin polarizations. In further studies it will be interesting to explore to what extent the spin properties of hybrid molecular magnets can be modified by spin-dependent quantum interference patterns and to analyze the effect of the magnetic field on the hybrid molecular magnet in more detail to find out if the aromatic rings react differently on the magnetic field, e.g. if they switch at different magnetic fields.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The computations were performed under the auspices of the VSR at the computer JUROPA/JURECA and the GCS at the high-performance computer JUQUEEN operated by the JSC at the Forschungszentrum Jülich. N.A., V.C., and D.E.B acknowledge financial support from the

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