

The Structure of L-Mimosine, an L-DOPA Analogue

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The crystal structure of L-mimosine, β -N-(3-hydroxy-4-pyridone)- α -amino propionic acid, has been determined by X-ray methods using 1729 observed reflections collected by counter methods. The crystals are orthorhombic, space group $P2_12_1$, with unit cell dimensions $a = 20.45$, Å; $b = 9.48$, Å; $c = 8.50$, Å. The asymmetric unit consists of two independent molecules. The refinements yielded a conventional R -factor of 0.064; estimated standard deviations are about 0.005 Å in bond lengths and 0.3° in angles. The conformation of the two non-equivalent molecules is nearly identical and is similar to that found in L-DOPA. The pyridone ring has a pronounced quinoid character.

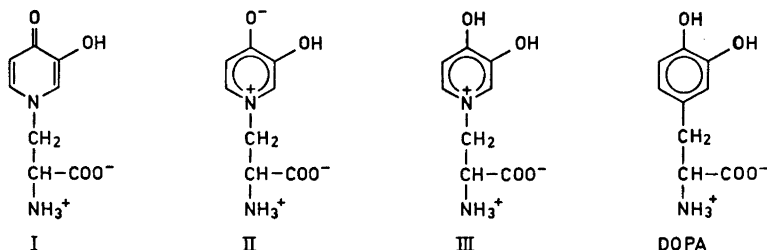
Mimosine, β -N-(3-hydroxy-4-pyridone)- α -amino propionic acid, leucenol, is a naturally occurring amino acid found in certain plants.¹ Its notable biological properties have been described by several authors and summarized by Owen.² Hegarthy *et al.*³ point out that inhibition of mitosis in the hair follicle is the reason for hair loss in sheep by mimosine intoxication, Hylin and Lichton⁴ report the loss of fertility in female rats by ingestion of mimosine, and Prabhakaran *et al.*⁵ found that injection of the compound inhibit the development of melanoma in mice.

Thompson *et al.*¹ have reviewed various theories for the mechanisms of the toxic action of mimosine in animals. One of these depends on the structural similarity between mimosine and DOPA; mimosine may thus interact with the enzymes concerned with the DOPA metabolism.

The chemical formula for mimosine is usually written as I. Several authors⁶⁻⁸ have, however, indicated II as an important contributor to the electronic structure. It may be seen that III, the protonized form of II, is isoelectronic with DOPA.

The absolute configuration of L-mimosine has been investigated by chemical methods⁹ and shown to belong to the S -series.

After the publication of the X-ray structure analysis of L-DOPA,¹⁰ Dr. Hegarthy pointed out for us the analogy between this compound and mimosine and suggested a structure analysis of the latter compound; he also kindly supplied a sample of pure L-mimosine.



EXPERIMENTAL

A hot saturated solution of L-mimosine was cooled to room temperature during a period of 2–3 days. Single crystals in the form of thin, needle-formed very brittle plates separated; a crystal roughly cut to the dimensions $0.13 \times 0.21 \times 0.06$ mm³ was used for the X-ray experiments.

Oscillation and Weissenberg photographs indicated orthorhombic symmetry; systematically absent reflections determined the space group to be $P2_12_12_1$.

Unit cell parameters were determined from diffractometer measurements on 62 reflections using a manual Picker diffractometer with a copper tube ($\lambda_{\beta} = 1.3922$ Å, $\lambda_{\alpha_1 + \alpha_2} = 1.5418$ Å). The take-off angle was 1.0° . The computer program employed in the least-squares calculation of cell parameters as well as the programs applied during the structure investigation are described in Ref. 11.

Three-dimensional intensity data were recorded on an automatic Picker four-angle diffractometer using graphite crystal monochromated MoK radiation. The take-off angle was 4° . Intensities of 2640 reflections with $2\theta < 60^\circ$ were measured using the $\omega - 2\theta$ scanning mode with a 2θ scanning speed of 1° min^{-1} . Background counts were taken for 20 sec at each of the scan range limits. Three standard reflections measured after every 100 reflections showed a variation of up to 10% during the run; the intensity data were accordingly adjusted. Estimated standard deviations in the intensities were taken as the square root of the total counts with a 2.5% addition to allow for the uncertainty in the adjustments.

The 1729 reflections with intensity larger than 2σ (I) were considered to be observed; the rest were regarded as unobserved and excluded from the refinement procedure. Lorentz and polarization corrections were applied to the intensity data.

Atomic form factors used were those of Hanson *et al.*¹² for oxygen, nitrogen, and carbon, and of Stewart *et al.*¹³ for hydrogen.

CRYSTAL DATA

S- β -N-(3-hydroxy-4-pyridone)- α -amino propionic acid (L-mimosine, leucenol), $\text{C}_8\text{H}_{10}\text{N}_2\text{O}_4$, orthorhombic. $a = 20.453(0.002)$ Å, $b = 9.485(0.001)$ Å; $c = 8.500(0.001)$ Å. Figures in parentheses are estimated standard deviations. $V = 1648.9$ Å³; $M = 198.18$; $F(000) = 832$; $Z = 8$; $D_{\text{obs}} = 1.59$ g cm⁻³ (floatation); $D_{\text{calc}} = 1.595$ g cm⁻³. Absent reflections: ($h00$) for h odd, ($0k0$) for k odd, ($00l$) for l odd; space group $P2_12_12_1$.

STRUCTURE DETERMINATION

The data were put on an absolute scale by Wilson's statistical method and normalized structure amplitudes were calculated. Eight sets of phases for 250 structure amplitudes were obtained by the application of the symbolic

Table 1. Continued.

10	2	8	65	92	6	7	9	67	42	4	0	9	54	21	5	5	0	35	25*	14	3	4	46	38*
11	2	8	66	62	13	6	9	65	40	0	0	10	69	54	1	6	0	37	22*	12	3	4	41	25*
12	2	8	53	48	2	6	9	75	58	1	0	10	71	72	4	6	0	37	10*	13	5	4	46	4*
14	2	8	60	48	0	6	9	82	85	2	0	10	125	115	14	6	0	46	5*	9	5	4	43	17*
15	2	8	58	60	1	5	9	81	86	4	0	10	91	97	1	8	0	44	1*	2	6	4	41	36*
19	2	8	63	42	6	5	9	69	45	5	0	10	108	42	3	8	0	44	14*	5	6	4	44	36*
15	3	8	117	105	7	5	9	76	61	7	0	10	87	105	5	8	0	45	5*	7	4	45	27*	
13	3	8	118	105	8	5	9	127	135	9	0	10	65	50	5	9	0	48	2*	0	7	4	44	24*
11	3	8	84	75	10	5	9	75	55	12	1	10	95	77	4	9	0	47	31*	4	7	5	49	54*
10	3	8	75	74	11	5	9	80	44	10	1	10	70	53	10	8	1	48	41*	5	7	5	49	47*
8	3	8	154	155	13	5	9	75	76	9	1	10	71	60	4	8	1	47	72*	6	6	5	45	18*
6	3	8	101	106	14	4	9	72	55	8	1	10	109	114	5	7	1	40	21*	8	5	4	45	27*
5	3	8	52	40	11	4	9	67	53	2	1	10	61	48	8	6	1	44	45*	4	5	5	42	35*
4	3	8	83	90	10	4	9	86	91	0	1	10	100	98	5	5	1	35	23*	8	5	5	47	25*
3	3	8	88	101	9	4	9	107	102	1	2	10	72	66	11	5	1	39	21*	13	4	5	48	23*
1	3	8	82	104	7	4	9	109	105	2	2	10	58	84	13	4	1	39	5*	4	5	38	16*	
0	4	8	265	274	6	4	9	73	75	7	2	10	99	85	17	2	1	45	11*	11	3	5	43	10*
1	4	8	102	104	5	4	9	56	51	8	2	10	61	75	14	1	1	38	50*	14	3	5	48	52*
3	4	8	65	55	2	0	87	86	12	2	10	64	61	15	1	1	40	36*	6	1	5	35	15*	
4	4	8	75	80	1	4	9	90	87	8	3	10	86	75	19	0	1	45	5*	10	1	5	40	48*
7	4	8	60	48	0	3	9	91	67	3	3	10	83	64	15	0	1	38	20*	15	0	5	44	6*
7	4	8	53	55	1	3	9	95	95	1	3	10	57	80	13	0	1	36	7*	11	0	5	41	40*
11	4	8	60	46	2	3	9	82	86	6	4	10	82	66	10	0	1	34	27*	8	0	5	35	2*
14	4	8	94	85	4	3	9	66	67	7	4	10	117	125	8	0	1	33	33*	7	0	5	35	12*
15	4	8	57	45	6	3	9	79	72	9	4	10	77	65	11	0	2	35	13*	1	0	5	34	46*
16	4	8	85	78	7	3	9	73	81	10	5	10	109	107	12	0	2	35	2*	2	1	6	37	45*
18	4	8	129	125	8	3	9	114	120	8	5	10	141	136	4	0	2	39	17*	11	3	6	47	46*
14	5	8	106	106	9	3	9	97	90	7	5	10	69	45	17	0	2	44	24*	7	5	6	46	57*
13	5	8	59	63	10	3	9	179	171	6	5	10	95	92	18	1	2	47	51*	2	5	6	47	45*
12	5	8	61	52	12	3	9	103	105	2	5	10	70	53	0	7	2	40	3*	0	5	6	43	24*
7	5	8	87	84	16	3	9	68	73	1	5	10	102	67	3	8	2	43	25*	1	6	6	45	14*
5	5	8	113	115	12	2	9	75	67	0	4	11	74	55	5	8	2	43	21*	6	6	46	35*	
2	5	8	109	107	11	2	9	75	174	0	4	11	74	55	5	8	2	43	21*	6	6	46	35*	
0	5	8	69	90	9	2	9	133	145	4	3	11	81	63	0	9	2	46	12*	3	4	7	47	63*
0	6	8	168	173	8	2	9	63	45	5	3	11	81	64	12	6	3	47	25*	2	3	7	43	36*
2	6	8	150	152	7	2	9	167	165	6	3	11	103	118	6	6	3	40	26*	4	3	7	43	16*
4	6	8	79	66	6	2	9	80	66	8	3	11	137	136	2	5	3	37	20*	9	2	7	45	9*
5	6	8	56	86	1	2	9	86	84	8	2	11	78	72	6	5	3	38	24*	0	2	7	41	15*
8	6	8	102	112	0	2	9	191	187	5	2	11	62	35	11	3	3	38	16*	0	1	7	40	7*
9	6	8	78	67	1	1	9	92	111	4	2	11	63	61	15	2	3	43	25*	7	1	7	46	32*
11	6	8	103	88	2	1	9	78	77	1	1	11	114	125	2	1	3	31	10*	9	1	7	47	26*
13	6	8	72	76	5	1	9	106	101	6	1	11	105	75	12	1	3	37	20*	10	0	7	47	35*
15	6	8	69	47	6	1	9	88	107	9	1	11	82	61	14	0	3	48	14*	8	0	7	45	8*
16	6	8	111	116	8	1	9	273	282	18	1	0	49	25*	17	0	3	42	5*	2	0	7	42	30*
10	7	8	112	111	10	1	9	155	163	11	1	0	35	27*	13	0	7	37	8*	1	0	7	40	32*
8	7	8	181	162	14	1	9	63	52	9	1	0	33	10*	4	0	4	32	41*	1	0	8	45	23*
6	7	8	84	76	16	1	9	89	70	3	1	0	32	1*	14	0	4	43	43*	5	1	8	46	41*
2	9	8	95	45	17	1	9	135	112	17	2	0	47	21*	16	0	4	48	61*	4	1	8	48	40*
1	9	8	87	52	18	1	9	68	55	16	3	0	45	50*	11	2	4	39	32*	0	2	8	45	10*
2	8	9	93	76	11	0	9	71	88	13	5	0	41	15*	15	3	4	45	37*	4	2	8	47	42*
1	7	9	71	75	5	0	9	88	72	7	2	0	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9

addition procedure and the tangent formula.^{14,15} In one of the corresponding eight *E*-maps the atoms of the two non-equivalent pyridone rings and also the atoms bonded directly to the rings could be located. A Fourier map based on phases calculated from these atomic positions including all observed structure factors yielded information on the positions of all non-hydrogen atoms.

Preliminary refinements were carried out by the minimum residual method¹⁶ using the 300 largest structure factors. A couple of full-matrix least-squares refinement cycles with isotropic thermal parameters yielded a conventional *R*-factor of 0.125; introduction of anisotropic thermal parameters followed by some cycles of block-diagonal least-squares refinement gave an *R*-factor of 0.084. At this point a difference Fourier map was calculated and from this it was possible to establish the position of the hydrogen atoms. New series of block-diagonal least-squares calculations with refinement of positional parameters of all atoms and anisotropic thermal parameters of the nonhydrogen atoms (the isotropic thermal parameters for the hydrogen atoms were kept constant at 2.2 Å²) resulted in a final *R*-value of 0.064 (*R*_w = 0.047). The overdetermination ratio was only 5.5, 313 parameters being refined on the basis of 1729 observed reflections with $\sin \theta/\lambda < 0.7$ Å⁻¹. No rigid-body thermal analysis was carried out.

A comparison of observed and calculated structure factors is given in Table 1; the final parameters for non-hydrogen atoms are listed in Table 2 and for

Table 2. Fractional atomic coordinates and thermal parameters with estimated standard deviations ($\times 10^6$). The temperature factor is given by $\exp-(B_{11}h^2 + B_{22}k^2 + B_{33}l^2 + B_{12}hk + B_{13}hl + B_{23}kl)$.

Atom	<i>x</i>	<i>y</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>B</i> ₁₁	<i>B</i> ₂₂	<i>B</i> ₃₃	<i>B</i> ₁₂	<i>B</i> ₁₃	<i>B</i> ₂₃
O1	-7615 11	17176 29	45274 31	119 7	894 38	1001 46	142 26	189 30	-59 76
O2	-7809 11	-13723 30	20360 35	81 6	1251 42	1364 49	-70 28	19 31	-968 85
O3	25216 12	-14133 31	-1473 31	131 7	1201 41	902 42	-157 30	204 32	-408 81
O4	30325 12	-11327 34	21311 33	85 6	1729 50	1122 47	-162 30	-11 33	43 91
N1	9439 14	4982 31	24697 35	86 7	504 36	836 50	78 27	-6 33	-121 81
N2	19650 15	-12695 36	38617 39	108 7	895 45	986 52	32 34	62 37	218 94
C1	3591 16	-446 38	19485 44	101 8	493 45	702 56	36 33	-15 40	-155 91
C2	-2112 16	3666 38	26290 43	96 8	487 46	711 57	-70 33	-33 41	308 95
C3	-2284 17	13308 41	39214 43	108 9	504 45	714 58	39 35	95 41	203 97
C4	3945 18	17919 42	44271 46	140 9	609 51	810 64	-11 38	-107 43	-375 102
C5	9514 18	14018 41	36823 50	98 9	545 46	1254 70	36 37	-152 45	-171 106
C6	15559 17	1541 41	16361 45	87 8	814 54	799 63	18 38	56 41	-29 105
C7	18674 16	-12397 41	21462 46	74 8	691 48	839 60	-30 35	1 40	16 103
C8	25402 17	-12829 41	13021 46	96 9	552 46	918 58	15 37	206 42	6 99
O1*	-8862 12	32200 28	93725 31	102 6	939 39	1014 46	-153 27	253 29	-271 76
O2*	-8171 11	50870 29	68492 32	87 6	1325 44	1044 45	165 30	46 30	376 85
O3*	29816 12	47919 31	69112 41	74 6	1116 44	2469 65	212 28	111 39	114 103
O4*	26465 13	68867 30	59996 34	161 7	868 39	1360 51	-94 27	273 35	449 82

Table 2. Continued.

N1*	8818 14	43544 31	75614 36	66 7	546 36	918 51	-32 27	12 33	-299 80
N2*	16380 13	69677 32	81156 37	90 7	708 40	768 50	-116 30	81 35	-368 85
C1*	3193 18	49011 38	69395 44	98 8	502 45	699 56	25 33	-24 40	133 91
C2*	-2749 16	45594 39	75628 43	89 9	560 46	768 59	45 34	-23 41	-34 98
C3*	-3261 17	36160 41	88501 44	116 9	514 46	765 59	-34 37	81 42	-471 98
C4*	2738 18	31479 42	94992 48	135 10	574 49	983 67	-101 38	-31 47	95 104
C5*	8554 17	35107 38	88238 49	111 9	401 44	1068 66	-23 36	-142 44	273 99
C6*	15116 17	46747 41	67810 47	84 8	623 48	899 63	-19 34	172 41	-352 106
C7*	19556 17	55957 40	77694 42	77 8	638 46	676 56	2 34	53 39	-83 97
C8*	25944 17	58040 42	68153 46	74 8	880 55	903 61	-107 36	-41 43	-368 107

hydrogen atoms in Table 3. Standard deviations were calculated from the correlation matrix from the block-diagonal least-squares calculations ignoring the standard deviations in cell parameters.

Table 3. Fractional atomic coordinates ($\times 10^4$) with estimated standard deviations for hydrogen atoms.

Atom	<i>x</i>	<i>y</i>	<i>z</i>	Atom	<i>x</i>	<i>y</i>	<i>z</i>
H1	408 16	-773 36	1224 40	H1*	351 16	5508 37	6099 40
H4	426 16	2424 37	5319 42	H4*	276 16	2533 36	10496 39
H5	1353 16	1658 36	3913 40	H5*	1310 16	3243 36	9242 38
H61	1844 16	924 34	1915 40	H61*	1394 16	5129 34	5742 40
H62	1461 16	56 33	610 40	H62*	1716 16	3772 36	6593 40

Table 3. Continued.

H7	1600 15	-2043 34	1891 41	H7*	2071 16	5108 34	8759 39
H1N	2147 16	-308 36	4183 38	H1N*	1285 16	6796 35	8961 39
H2N	1479 16	-1352 36	4436 40	H2N*	1459 16	7400 34	6248 40
H3N	2259 16	-2108 36	4037 40	H3N*	1947 17	7601 34	9609 41
HO2	-1098 16	78 35	2530 38	HO2*	-1126 16	5073 35	7544 38

DISCUSSION

A drawing of the two molecules (I and II) in the asymmetric unit is presented in Fig. 1; the numbering of the atoms is indicated, as are the bond lengths and angles arrived at in the structure analysis. Interatomic distances and bond angles are also given in Table 4 together with their standard deviations. The latter values might be somewhat underestimated, however, since possible correlations between positional parameters of different atoms are disregarded in the computing procedure.

The crystals of L-mimosine offer the opportunity to study two non-equivalent molecules in different environment. However, the different surroundings seem to have only minor influence on the molecular structure as the bond lengths and angles as well as the conformation of the two molecules are nearly equal.

The molecular conformation. Both of the molecules in the asymmetric unit have a conformation similar to the one found in L-DOPA.¹⁰ The dihedral angle C1-N-C6-C7 is 275° and C1*N*-C6*-C7* 113°, the side chain is thus situated on opposite sides of the ring plane in the two molecules, and the molecule II (*) is the one corresponding to L-DOPA.

The carboxyl groups are in *trans* position relative to the phenyl rings with respect to the C α -C β bond; the dihedral angles N-C6-C7-C8 and N*-C6*-C7*-C8* are 172° and 178°, respectively, as compared to 175° for the corresponding angle in L-DOPA.

The alanine part. The zwitterionic character of the molecule is apparent in the present structure as usual for such compounds. The four C-O bonds of the carboxy groups are equal, mean bond length 1.242 Å, with a calculated standard deviation equal to the estimated standard deviation of each bond, 0.005 Å. The C-NH₃⁺ bonds, 1.472 and 1.484 Å, are possibly on the short side of the expected value 1.49 Å, as found in L-DOPA¹⁰ and L-tyrosine.¹⁷ The C6-C7 bonds (1.530 and 1.515) are found to be slightly shorter than the C7-C8 bonds (1.552 and 1.550 Å). The α carbon atom is within the experimental accuracy situated in the plane of the carboxy group in both molecules. The dihedral angle N2-C7-C8-O4 is 350.1° (in clock-wise direction) and the N2*-C7*-C8*-O4* angle is 334.8° (e.s.d. 0.5°), both being within the limits

Table 4. Interatomic distances (Å) and bond angles (°). Estimated standard deviations are 0.005 Å and 0.3°, respectively.

Bond	Molecule I	Molecule II(*)	Bond angle	Molecule I	Molecule II
O1-C3	1.261	1.285	O1-C3-C4	124.4	123.1
O2-C2	1.357	1.360	O1-C3-C2	121.4	121.2
O3-C8	1.239	1.247	O2-C2-C3	119.3	121.1
O4-C8	1.237	1.244	O2-C2-C1	118.5	117.8
N2-C7	1.472	1.484	C1-C2-C3	122.1	121.0
N1-C1	1.375	1.368	C2-C3-C4	114.2	115.7
N1-C5	1.341	1.340	C3-C4-C5	122.1	120.9
N1-C6	1.475	1.480	C4-C5-N1	121.6	121.5
C1-C2	1.359	1.365	C5-N1-C1	119.8	120.1
C2-C3	1.430	1.417	N1-C1-C2	120.1	120.6
C3-C4	1.414	1.416	C1-N1-C6	120.0	118.7
C4-C5	1.355	1.364	C5-N1-C6	120.1	121.1
C6-C7	1.530	1.515	N1-C6-C7	114.1	113.1
C7-C8	1.552	1.550	C6-C7-N2	110.7	110.7
			C6-C7-C8	105.1	106.8
			N2-C7-C8	109.7	111.2
			C7-C8-O3	115.8	113.8
			C7-C8-O4	117.1	118.0
			O3-C8-O4	127.1	128.2
Hydrogen bond lengths			Other intermolecular distances (cf. Fig. 2)		
O1-N2*(-x, -½+y, ¾-z)	2.699		O1-N1*	3.348	
O2-O3*(½+x, ½-y, 1-z)	2.704		O1-C1*	3.578	
O3-N2*(½-x, -y, -½+z)	2.880		O1-C5*	3.355	
O3-N2*(x, -1+y, -1+z)	2.793		O1*-N1	3.448	
O4-O2*(½+x, ½-y, 1-z)	2.696		O1*-C1	3.694	
N2-O1*(-x, -½+y, ¾-z)	2.713		O1*-C5	3.690	
N2-O4*(x, -1+y, z)	2.882				
O1*-N2*(-x, -½+y, ¾-z)	2.872				

reported for amino acids.¹⁸ In both molecules the hydrogen atoms are tetrahedrally arranged about the nitrogen atom; their positions correspond to a 10–15° rotation about the C–N bond relative to a strictly staggered conformation.

The hydroxypyridone part. The six-membered rings are nearly planar, the deviations of the atoms from a least-squares plane being less than 0.03 Å. The non-hydrogen atoms attached to the rings are situated from 0.05 to 0.12 Å out of the ring planes.

Except for the C3–O1 and the C3*–O1* bond lengths the two hydroxypyridone moieties are identical. An estimate of the relative contribution to the structure from the formulae I and II indicated in the introduction may be based on several features in the geometry. The mean value of the C1–C2, C4–C5, C1*–C2*, and the C4*–C5* bonds is 1.361 Å (e.s.d. 0.005 Å) as compared to the mean value for C2–C3, C3–C4, C2*–C3* and C3*–C4* of 1.419 Å (e.s.d. 0.007 Å). The corresponding bond lengths in quinone are 1.322 Å and 1.477 Å,¹⁹ and in quinone in the quinone-resorcinol complex 1.330 Å and 1.468 Å,²⁰ respectively. The C–C bond length to be expected for

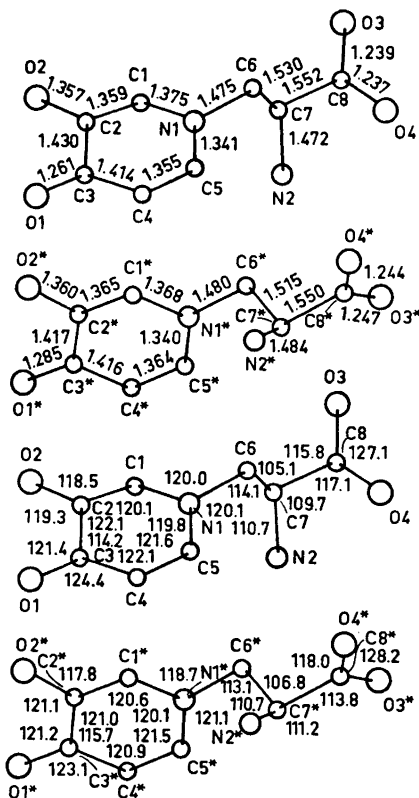


Fig. 1. Bond lengths (Å) and angles (°) observed in L-mimosine.

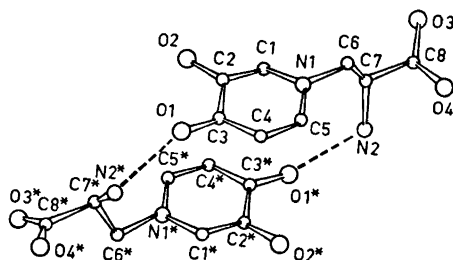


Fig. 2. The dimeric arrangement of the two crystallographically independent molecules of L-mimosine.

an aromatic model is 1.397 Å; the contributions from the two extreme structures appear thus to be about equal. This feature is also indicated by the C3-O1 and C3*-O1* bonds of 1.261 Å and 1.285 Å, these being close to the mean length of the quinone C=O bond (1.22 Å) and the phenolic C-O bond (1.36-1.38 Å).

From these results one might expect the C-N bond lengths to be somewhere between the values reported for pyrrol, 1.374²¹ ("quinoid" case) and for pyridine, 1.339²² ("aromatic" case). In the present structure determination both of these values were found for the C-N bonds, the C1-N1 bond being the longer in both molecules. The difference between the two C-N bonds in each of the two independent molecules is significant according to normal standards of structure analysis; we find no obvious explanation for this difference, however.

The two phenolic C-O bonds are equal in the two molecules, 1.357 and 1.360 Å, respectively.

The bond between the hydroxypyridone and the alanine moieties, N1–C6, is found equal to 1.475 and 1.480 Å. The $N_{sp^2}-C_{sp^2}$ bond length to be expected is somewhat shorter than the aliphatic N–C of 1.47 Å; the relative lengthening in the present case may be attributed to the positive charge on the nitrogen atom in analogy with the bond length in $C_{sp^2}-\overset{+}{N}H_3$ of 1.49 Å.

The crystal structure. Packing and hydrogen bonding. The high values for the melting point (decomp. 227–228°C) and density (1.59 g cm⁻³) indicate strong intermolecular forces and a close packing of the molecules in the crystal. The packing coefficient²³ estimated from data given by Bondi²⁴ is as high as 0.82 as compared with the one calculated for L-DOPA of 0.79 and L-tyrosine of 0.75, whereas a normal value for benzene derivatives is given by Kitai-gorodskii²³ to be 0.69. It seems reasonable to relate the high values to the zwitterionic character of the molecules, especially for L-mimosine. From the partial quinoid structure it may be deduced that the nitrogen atom in the ring is positively and the keto oxygen atom negatively charged. This also seems reasonable from the way pairs of crystallographically independent molecules are forming dimers in the crystals. The asymmetric unit may be represented as visualized in Fig. 2. The two molecules are linked together by two hydrogen bonds, O1–N2* (2.699 Å) and O1*–N2 (2.872 Å). The planes of the pyridone moieties are nearly parallel, the interplanar separation being 3.4 Å. The shortest distances between atoms from each molecule apart from the hydrogen bonded atoms are N1–O1* of 3.448 Å and N1*–O1 of 3.348 Å. This may indicate

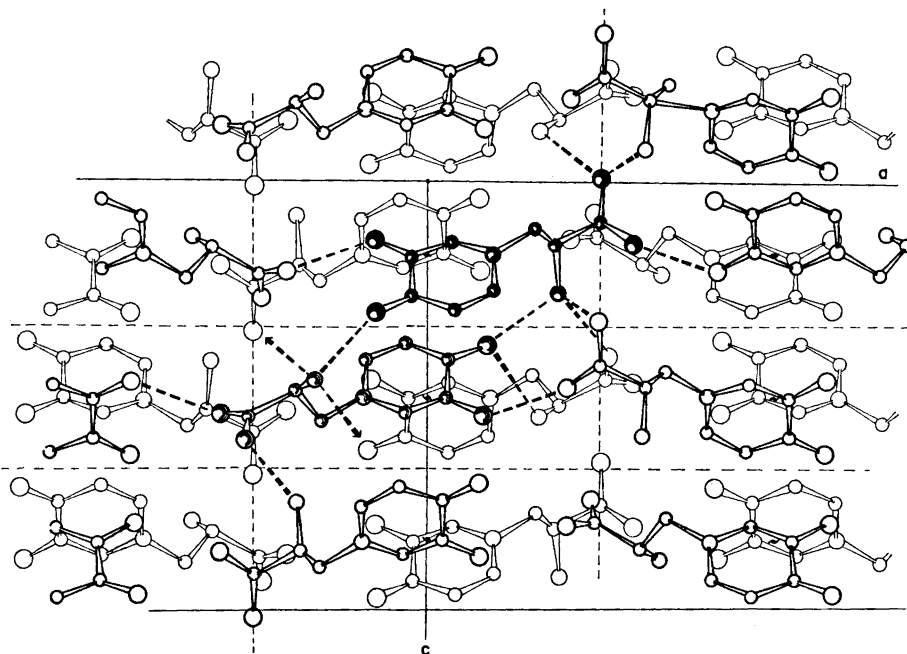


Fig. 3. The crystal structure as seen along the *b*-axis. Hydrogen bonds from one dimer (shaded) are indicated by broken lines.

an electrostatic interaction between the two ring systems owing to their zwitterionic character, and results in a pseudo centre of symmetry between the planar parts of the molecules.

The hydrogen bond system in the crystal is shown in Fig. 3, the hydrogen bond lengths are listed in Table 4. All hydrogen atoms bonded to hetero atoms are engaged in hydrogen bonds, each molecule being involved in eight hydrogen bonds to seven different neighbouring molecules. There is some difference in hydrogen bonding for the two crystallographically independent molecules in that the carbonyl oxygen atom (O1) in the pyridone part is hydrogen acceptor for only one ammonium group, whereas the corresponding oxygen atom (O1*) of the other molecule act as an acceptor of two such hydrogen bonds. Correspondingly, one of the oxygen atoms of the carboxyl group (O3) is acceptor for two ammonium hydrogen atoms and O3* for only one. The nitrogen atom N2 is engaged in hydrogen bonds to two carboxyl oxygen atoms (O3 and O4*) and one carbonyl oxygen atom (O1*); N2* is hydrogen bonded to one carboxyl (O3) and two carbonyl (O1 and O1*) oxygen atoms.

The molecules of type II (*) related by a screw axis in the *b* direction are connected through the hydrogen bonds between O1* and N2*. Similarly, molecules of type I related by a screw axis along *a* are forming chains by means of hydrogen bonds between N2 and O3. Both types of molecules are involved in the hydrogen bonded helix about the screw axis along the *c* direction through the hydrogen bonds O2–O3* and O4*–N2.

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