Solvent Extraction Studies of Lanthanide Acetylacetonates. Part III. Complexes formed by Tb, Ho, Tm and Lu

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The complex formation of the heavier trivalent lanthanides (Ln)₄Tb,₄Ho,₄Tm and ₄Lu with acetylacetone (HAA) has been studied at 25 ± 0.1°C by the liquid-liquid extraction technique in the system 0.02–3.5 M HAA in benzene/1.0 M Na(H)ClO₄ using trace amounts of radioactive lanthanides. The stepwise formation constants, Kₙ = [LnAAₙ]/[LnAAₙ₋₁][H₃A]⁻¹ (n = 2 to 4), the distribution constant of the neutral complex LnAA₁, between the phases (P₃), and the self-adjunct formation of LnAA₁, HAA in the organic phase (Kₑₐₜ) have been evaluated.

To obtain the necessary data for a precise evaluation of the lower formation constants, distribution values as low as 0.0001% had to be measured with high accuracy in the pH range 3–9. To make this possible the investigation was made by the recently developed AKUFVE–LISOL technique. A survey of the results on all the lanthanides studied in this series is also given.

Solvent (or liquid–liquid) extraction is a well-known method for determining metal complexation. The extraction of the metal is often described by an “extraction curve”, where the distribution ratio D of the metal is plotted as a function of pH or ligand concentration. The gathering of the data needed is conventionally achieved by a “test-tube technique”, which, however, often gives scattered data. To provide a continuous solvent extraction technique, Rydberg and coworkers in the 1960s developed the AKUFVE instrument. In this investigation the AKUFVE, coupled to a recently developed detector system called LISOL (Liquid scintillation on line) has been used.

With the AKUFVE–LISOL equipment it has been possible to measure the weak complexation of the lanthanides Pr, La, Nd, Sm and Eu with acetylacetone; this has been reported before in this series. In this paper the extraction of Tb, Ho, Tm and Lu in the system 0.02–3.5 M acetylacetone (HAA) in benzene/1 M Na(H)ClO₄ will be reported. Also, a survey on all the lanthanides investigated in this series will be made.

AKUFVE–LISOL

In our continuous studies of fission product, lanthanide (Ln) and actinide (An) complexation with acetylacetone the AKUFVE technique was used in order to achieve good accuracy and to speed up the collection of data. Several on-line measurement techniques have been used with the AKUFVE, but all of them have suffered from the facts that it was possible to detect only γ-radiation and that sorption limited the detection range, especially at high pH values. Further, the complexation of the lanthanides with HAA takes place in the pH range 3–9, where these metals become hydrolyzed, leading to increased sorption on the walls of the flow system, with consequent radionuclide losses to the container walls and memory effects in the detector system. Most of these difficulties are overcome by the LISOL detector system used in this paper. The principle of the AKUFVE–LISOL technique and its performance is given in Part II of this series; see also Fig. 1.

Experimental

Chemicals. Acetylacetone of analytical grade (Merck p.a.) was used. It was purified by fractional distillation, the fraction at 139°C being collected. The HAA was kept in

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For Parts I and II, see Refs. 1 and 2.
dark bottles to avoid any degradation; it was stored no longer than two weeks prior to use. Different concentrations of HAA were prepared by dilution with benzene that had been washed three times with doubly distilled water. The aqueous phase was made up using NaClO₄ (Merck p.a.) analytically free from carbonate.

Radiotracers of Tb, Ho, Tm and Lu were prepared by neutron activation of pure lanthanide oxides (>99.999 % by Ventron, F.R.G.) at the Institutt for Energetikk in Norway. The irradiated oxides were dissolved in warm concentrated perchloric acid, filtered and diluted with doubly distilled water to give 1.0 M HClO₄. Gamma spectrometry with a HPGe detector showed no detectable amounts of other radioactivity in the solutions than the desired one. The following radionuclides were used; 169Tb \( t_1 = 72 \) d, 169Ho \( t_1 = 27 \) h, 169Tm \( t_1 = 128 \) d, 177Lu \( t_1 = 7 \) d.

A non-gelling liquid-scintillation cocktail made for heavily buffered aqueous solutions (FLOW-SCINT III from Radiomatic Instruments and Chemicals Co., U.S.A.) was used in the LISOL system (Fig. 1).

**Distribution measurements.** All experiments were made in the AKUFVE under nitrogen flow to maintain an “inert” atmosphere. Nitrogen gas was bubbled through both solvents before entering the mixer in the AKUFVE to avoid substantial losses of solvent. The liquid evaporating from the AKUFVE system under these conditions is mainly benzene (from the AKUFVE centrifuge), amounting to about 4 ml h⁻¹. To keep the composition of the organic phase constant a peristaltic pump was used that continuously added benzene to compensate for the evaporation losses.

Two different original concentrations of HAA in benzene (1.0 and 3.0 M) were used in the experiments carried out to evaluate the formation constants. The pH was adjusted by adding 4 M NaOH into the mixing vessel of the AKUFVE. This gives a deviation in the ionic strength at the highest measured pH values (maximum 10 %), which, however, should be neglectable in the evaluation of the formation constants. The results, corrected for quenching (see below), are presented in Fig. 2. The distribution ratio \( D \) is defined as the total concentration of all metal species in the

![Fig. 2 Distribution ratio (D) of tracer Ln(III) (Tb, Ho, Tm and Lu) between 1 M NaClO₄ and C₆H₆ containing (×) 1 M [HAA]₀ and (□) 3 M [HAA]₀ as a function of pAa = -log[Aa⁻⁻]. The curves are calculated with the experimentally obtained constants β, P₂ and Kₐest.](image-url)
organic phase divided by the total concentration of all metal species in the aqueous phase, see eqn. (3) below. pAA = −log [Aa−] is obtained from eqn. (7) below.

To measure the adduct formation with HAA, one experiment was made starting with 1 M NaClO4/0.02 M HAA in benzene at equal phase volumes and then increasing the concentration of HAA by adding equal volumes of pure HAA and 1.0 M NaClO4. The results, corrected for quenching, are presented in the form of the Y-function in Fig. 3.

The pH was measured by a flow-through glass reference electrode (A1205D03 2195-100 LKB, Sweden). The KCl solution in the electrode was replaced with NaClO4 to avoid precipitation in the electrode membrane. The electrode was placed in a side flow of the centrifuge exit aqueous phase. The temperature was in all experiments kept at 25 ± 0.1°C by a thermostat system.

The scintillation detector was a modified version of a Flow-One detector (Radiometric Instruments and Chemical Co., Tampa U.S.A.), in which the detector cell was replaced by a specially constructed sample changer.4 The experimental conditions are further described in Ref. 7.

Quenching. When using liquid scintillation as a detection technique for β-emitting radionuclides, as in our experiments, quenching becomes a problem. The quenching is mostly due to the presence of HAA:6 consequently it will depend on the pAA (or pH) value and the original concentration of HAA. Quenching may cause losses of counting efficiency up to 20% with 194Ho [Eβmax(β) = 1.9 MeV] and up to 50% with 177Lu [Eβmax(β) = 0.5 MeV] in 3 M HAA in benzene. To correct for this effect, calibration measurements were made, holding all other parameters as in the main experiment. In this experiment the radioactive Ln is fed through the sorption supression liquid (i.e. 2 M HClO4, Fig. 1), the same amount to each phase, while no activity is added to the AKUFVE. A plot of $F_{HAA}$ [eqn. (1)], where $R_{org}$ and $R_{sq}$ are the measured radioactivities in the respective phases corrected for background radioactivity, as a function of [Aa−] at given original concentration of HAA in the organic phase ([HAA]org), see Fig. 4, can be best approximated by a straight line [eqn. (2)]

$$F_{HAA} = \frac{R_{org}}{R_{sq}}$$

for each [HAA]org. [Aa−] is obtained from eqn. (7) below.

For the experiments in which HAA was varied but the pAA was kept constant, the correction factors were obtained by making an experiment under exactly the same conditions as in the main experiment (including pAA and [HAA]org), but with the radioactive Ln fed through the sorption supression liquid, and with no radioactivity added to the AKUFVE flows. In Fig. 5 $F_{HAA}$ has been plotted against [HAA]org for the lanthanides used.

$F_{HAA}$ also takes into account differences in volumes between the two spiral cells in the detector. All data in Figs. 2 and 3 are $D_{corr}$ values.

The extraction curve

From the considerations in Parts I and II of this series,1,2 the conclusion can be drawn that only acetylacetone complexes are of any importance in our system. The model for Ln(III) extraction will then be given by eqn. (3) (leaving out water of hydration):

$$D = \frac{P_3 [AA^-]^n (1 + K_{aa}[HAA]_{org} + K_{aa}[HAA]_{org} + \ldots)}{1 + \beta_0 [Aa^-] + \beta_2 [Aa^-] + \beta_4 [Aa^-]^2}$$

where

$$\beta_n = [LnAA_n][Ln^{3+}][Aa^-]^{-n}$$

$$P_3 = [LnAA_3]_{org}[LnAA_3]^{-1}$$

and

$$K_{aa} = [LnAA_3(HAA)]_{org}[LnAA_3]^{-1}[HAA]_{org}^{-1}$$

The [Aa−] value is calculated from eqn. (7)1,9

$$[Aa^-] = K_c[H^+]^{-1}[HAA]_{org}(1 + K_a + K_c[H^+]^{-1})^{-1}$$

where $K_c = 1.0 \times 10^{-9}$ and $K_a = 4.4$ in 1 M NaClO4.10 and [HAA]org is the original concentration of HAA in the organic phase. No index refers to the aqueous phase.
From the data in Fig. 2 and using the $\beta$ values derived according to the previous paragraph, $Y$ may be calculated using the left-hand side of eqn. (8). The two curves (for each Ln) in Fig. 2 yield two points in Fig. 3. The other way to calculate the parameters is to measure $D_{\text{abs}}$ as a function of [HAA]$^\circ_{\text{org}}$ at approximately constant pAA. This yields the filled points in Fig. 3. Both sets of $Y$ values should follow the right-hand relation of eqn. (8). The points seem to fit a straight line. From these lines, the parameters $P_j$ and $K_{\text{addJ}}$ are obtained.

**Results**

Using the experimental technique and data treatment described above, the complexation of Tb, Ho, Tm and Lu with acetylacetone has been investigated, yielding the formation constants $\beta_2$, $\beta_3$ and $\beta_4$, the distribution constant $P_j$ and the first adduct formation constant $K_{\text{add1}}$. The values are listed in Table 1, together with $\beta$ values from Grenthe et al.\textsuperscript{14} These values are used to calculate the “theoretical” curves in Fig. 2. The distribution curves go smoothly through the experimental points, and no interfering reactions from, e.g. hydrolysis, can be detected. Also, the influence of polyfunctional species can be excluded, because within the concentration range $3\times10^{-4}$ to $5\times10^{-5}$ M Ln no change in the extraction curves could be observed.

**Discussion**

The complex formation of the lanthanides Pm (Part I\textsuperscript{1}), La, Nd, Sm and Eu (Part I\textsuperscript{2}) and Tb, Ho, Tm and Lu (this paper) with HAA in 1 M NaClO$_4$ has been studied by the AKUFVE–LISOL technique and the stepwise formation constants calculated. Some of the first three formation constants have been reported earlier by other researchers,\textsuperscript{14,16–20} but only one group\textsuperscript{21,22} has reported a fourth formation constant, besides us.\textsuperscript{1,23} Although we can estimate a $K_s$ value, within $\pm 0.3$ log units, we have not been able to determine it with satisfactory accuracy, because of experimental limitations which would have required reliable measurements of $D$ values as low as $10^{-5}$, which is practically impossible in our opinion. Therefore we have taken the most accurate $K_s$ values available in the literature (measured potentiometrically), converted them to 1.0 M ionic strength,\textsuperscript{1,15} and used them in our final $D$ versus pAA plots.

In Fig. 6 the $K_s$ values have been plotted against atomic number. Each $K_s$ value increases with increasing atomic number, as expected due to the lanthanide contraction, which increases the metal charge density and thus also the strength of the electrostatic bond to the AA$^-$ oxygen atoms. The increase in formation constant with increasing Ln atomic number has been observed with many complexing ligands.\textsuperscript{24} Often in such plots a break around Gd is observed; in $\sigma$Gd, the 4f electron shell is half-filled. We can also see such a break in Fig. 6, but only as a slight indication, perhaps being more prominent for the first com-

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**Treatment of data**

The experimental data with 1.0 and 3.0 M [HAA]$^\circ_{\text{org}}$ (Fig. 2) were corrected for quenching and then fitted by a least-squares method (Simplex) to calculate the formation constants according to the procedure described in Part II of this series.\textsuperscript{2} The final minimized error square sum ($S_{\text{min}} = \sum (y_i - y_i)^2)$\textsuperscript{11} was $1.0 \pm 0.3$, indicating that the mathematical model and the weights are consistent with the experimental data.\textsuperscript{12,13} The errors given for the formation constants are the change in that constant that doubles the $S_{\text{min}}$ value.

The distribution and adduct formation constants can be obtained in two ways, based on eqn. (8), which is derived from eqn. (3):

\[ Y = D(\beta_1 + \sum \beta_i [\text{AA}^-]^i) + K_{\text{add1}}[\text{HAA}]_{\text{org}} + K_{\text{add2}}[\text{HAA}]_{\text{org}}^2 + \ldots \]  

(8)
Table 1. Complex formation constants for terbium, holmium, tilmium and luthetium with acetylacetonate at 25°C in 1.0 M NaClO₄ (eqn. 4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ln</th>
<th>log β₁⁺</th>
<th>log β₂⁺</th>
<th>log β₃⁺</th>
<th>log β₄⁺</th>
<th>log P₃⁻</th>
<th>log K_{diss}⁺</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tb</td>
<td>(5.93)</td>
<td>10.00±0.12</td>
<td>13.34±0.06</td>
<td>15.26±0.11</td>
<td>-1.42</td>
<td>0.62</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ho</td>
<td>(5.96)</td>
<td>9.93±0.11</td>
<td>13.30±0.05</td>
<td>15.23±0.08</td>
<td>-1.04</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tm</td>
<td>(6.00)</td>
<td>10.43±0.08</td>
<td>13.82±0.05</td>
<td>15.66±0.08</td>
<td>-0.35</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lu</td>
<td>(6.14)</td>
<td>10.58±0.12</td>
<td>13.81±0.07</td>
<td>15.60±0.13</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The β₁⁺ values are taken from Ref. 14 corrected for ionic strength.¹,¹⁵ †The distribution constant for LnA₃⁺ (hydrated) is defined by eqn. (5). ‡The adduct formation constant, K_{diss}, refers to pure benzene (water saturated), see eqn. (6).

Table 2. Stepwise formation constants for LnA₃⁺ complexes from (a) this series of papers, I = 1.0, (b) Refs. (21) and (22), solvent extraction, I = 0.1, (c) Ref. 14, potential titration, I = 0.1, and (d) Ref. 17, potential titration, I = 2, converted to 1 M ionic strength.¹,¹⁵

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>log K₂</th>
<th>log K₃</th>
<th>log K₄</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Refs. 21, 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La⁶⁺</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nd⁶⁺</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>4.30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pm⁶⁺</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sm⁶⁺</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eu⁶⁺</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tb⁶⁺</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ho⁶⁺</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>4.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tm⁶⁺</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>4.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A comparison of the log K₂ values obtained in this investigation using solvent extraction (at I = 1) and those obtained with potentiometric titration (Table 2) reveals a difference of about 0.5 in log value (lower in our investigation). For this there is no explanation at the moment. The K₂ values given by Nakamura and Suzuki,²¹,²² measured by the solvent extraction technique, are uncertain, since they often depend on a few measured points at low distribution values.

The value of log K₁ obtained in this investigation is in fair agreement with those measured by Greenthe et al., with a mean deviation of less than 0.1 in log value. For the values given by Nakamura and Suzuki for K₁, the agreement improves with increasing Ln atomic number (within 0.6–0.2 in log value); this can be explained by the increased accuracy of the Nakamura–Suzuki data.

Also, for K₃ there is good agreement between our values and those obtained by Nakamura and Suzuki, except for La (deviation 0.6 in log value).

The maximum distribution of Ln(III) in the Ln(III)–H₃A C₅H₇/1 M NaClO₄ system, log D_{max}(Ln), is low. The D_{max}(Ln) value increases with atomic number Z, being -1.4 for La and +0.1 for Lu in 1 M [H₃A]ₙ⁻; at 3 M [H₃A]ₙ⁻ the values go from -0.7 to +0.4. These low distribution ratios can be explained by the strong hydration of the LnA₃⁺ complex, which does not give up its water of hydration even on transfer from the aqueous to the organic phase, thus all the time being strongly hydrophilic. Studies on solid LnA₃⁺ dissolved in benzene show several molecules of water attached to the metal complex.¹ The increase
in $D_{\text{max}}(\text{Ln})$ with $Z$ could then be explained by a decreasing hydration of the complex with increasing $Z$, e.g. perhaps being $\text{LaAa}_3(\text{H}_2\text{O})_9$ for $\gamma_2\text{La}$ and $\text{LuAa}_3(\text{H}_2\text{O})_9$ for $\gamma_2\text{Lu}$. The successive increase in $D_{\text{max}}(\text{Ln})$ from $Z$ 57 to 71 requires a dynamic view of the number of hydrate waters on the molecule.

A comparison of the distribution ratios log $D_{\text{max}}(\text{Ln})$ with those obtained by Suzuki et al. reveals a difference of about 0.2 in log values (higher in this investigation) at 0.2 M [HAa]$_{\text{org}}$. This can be explained by the variation in ionic strength, 1.0 M (ours) and 0.1 M (Suzuki et al.), respectively. Allard et al. found the difference in $D_{\text{max}}$ for ZnAa in the benzene/NaClO$_4$ system at ionic strengths 0.1 and 1.0, respectively, to be about 0.2 log units. This is in accordance with our findings on the LnAa$_3$ complex. La, however, differs in the opposite direction.

With the support of the extraction data in this series (Parts I and II and this paper) and the literature survey in Part I concerning the adduct formation of LnAa$_3$, it is concluded that in the organic phase at least two complexes exist, LnAa$_3$ and the self-adduct LnAa$_2$HAa$_2$ also, for the lower lanthanides (especially for La) a second self-adduct, LnAa$_2$(HAa)$_2$, may possibly exist.

Assuming the adduct to be in the keto-form, LnAa$_3$:HAa would occupy 8 coordination positions and LnAa$_2$(HAa)$_2$ 10 coordination positions. For the hydration of Ln(III), the coordination number is assumed to decrease from 9 for $\gamma_2\text{La}$ to 8 for $\gamma_2\text{Lu}$. With the exception of structural difficulties accompanying an LnAa$_3$(HAa)$_2$ complex, our results are otherwise in accordance with the picture of a decreasing coordination number as $Z$ increases.

Although $P_i, K_{\text{add}}$ can be determined exactly, the values of the distribution constants, $P_i$, and the adduct formation constants, $K_{\text{add}}$, are difficult to calculate with high precision, at least for the lower lanthanides, because $P_3$ is very low and imprecise, and the $K_{\text{add}}$ value depends on the $P_3$ value. Thus the values in Figs. 7 and 8 must be taken with some care. A decreasing adduct formation constant $K_{\text{add}}$ with $Z$ has been observed by Nakamura and Suzuki for the LnAa$_3$:phen (phen = 1,10-phenanthroline) system, in agreement with our findings.

From the distribution of the uncharged complex ($P_i$) in Fig. 7 it can be seen that there may be a break at around $\alpha_3\text{Eu}$. This is more strongly indicated in the adduct formation constant $K_{\text{add}}$ (Fig. 8). It may be explained by a change in the coordination number from 9 to 8 around atomic number 63, thus decreasing the ability of the LnAa$_3$ complex to add an HAa molecule.

**Acknowledgements.** This work has been supported by the Swedish Natural Science Research Council. I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Prof. Jan Rydberg for his guidance in this research. Skilful experimental assistance was provided by Hasse Persson, Lars-Erik Ohlsson, Lennart Bätsvik and Åsa Lind.
References


Received December 23, 1988.