A Dy₃ complex, exhibiting SMM behaviour, and its Y analogue were prepared via in situ oxidation of Py₂TTA, a pincer type ligand, followed by dimerisation. This unique metal complexation and subsequent dimerization were followed by solution NMR studies.

Since the discovery of the magnet-like behaviour of slow relaxation of the magnetization in individual molecules, Single-Molecule Magnets (SMMs) have emerged as prominent systems in regard to molecular magnetism. This is primarily due to the fact that these molecules hold tremendous potential towards implementation in quantum computation and memory storage devices. Over the years, several hundreds of research groups have focused their attention on the synthesis of new SMMs with large energy barriers using various anisotropic 3d metal ions. However, the recent attention on the synthesis of new SMMs with large energy barriers to molecular magnetism is primarily due to the fact that magnets (SMMs) have emerged as prominent systems in regard to their realization in the aforementioned applications. For these reactions involve several ingredients in a one-pot synthesis. Important is typically given to the self-assembly process as the reaction intermediates are often hard to isolate or study since these reactions involve several ingredients in a one-pot synthesis. However, if the self-assembly process can be monitored and studied, invaluable information on the complex formation can be achieved. This can subsequently be applied to the synthesis of targeted molecules.

The synthesis of SMMs based on coordination chemistry relies on a self-assembly process. In this approach, energetically favourable coordination complexes are formed and subsequently studied through single-crystal X-ray diffraction and magnetometry in order to establish magneto-structural correlations. Little importance is typically given to the self-assembly process as the reaction intermediates are often hard to isolate or study since these reactions involve several ingredients in a one-pot synthesis. However, if the self-assembly process can be monitored and studied, invaluable information on the complex formation can be achieved. This can subsequently be applied to the synthesis of targeted molecules. With this in mind, we have focused our attention on the synthesis of Py₂TTA based lanthanide SMMs, not only for their magnetic behaviour but also to investigate their self-assembly process. Herein we report the synthesis, isolation and study of [Dy₃(1-oxo-Py₂TTA)₃(NO₃)₃(H₂O)₃]·CH₃CN (3a), exhibiting SMM properties. In addition, its yttrium analogue is reported to form 1-oxo-3,5-bis(2-pyridyl)-4-hydro-1,2,4,6-thiatriazine (1-oxo-Py₂TTA); all while retaining its stable coordination pocket. Therefore, Py₂TTAH is an ideal ligand system to explore in the coordination chemistry of lanthanide ions.

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Reaction of Dy(NO₃)₅·6H₂O (1 equiv.) with Py₂TTAH (1 equiv.) in CH₃CN yielded a dark-purple solution which turns clear colourless within one hour (Scheme 1 inset). After 3 hours, the formation of pale yellow rectangular shaped crystals of 3a resulted in 60% yield. The drastic change in colour of the reaction
intermediates are formed, using yttrium in place of dysprosium enables identification of the intermediates via NMR spectroscopy. In order to correlate these results with the reaction observed between Dy(NO₃)₆·6H₂O and Py₂TTAH, in addition to similar physical properties of the reaction (i.e., bleaching of the reaction mixture), X-ray analysis confirmed the generation of isostructural \([\text{Y}_2(1\text{-oxo-Py}_2\text{TTA})_3\text{(NO}_3)_4\text{(H}_2\text{O})_2]\)·CH₃CN (3b, see ESI† Fig. S1).

Time dependent \(^1\text{H}\) NMR studies, which are summarized in Fig. 1, reveal that the reaction mixture initially consists solely of the unreacted Py₂TTAH starting material. After 15–20 min, four additional pyridyl peaks begin to emerge, which is attributed to the generation of a yttrium coordinated Py₂TTA ligand intermediate (i.e., 1b; Y(Py₂TTA)X₃). Within 5–10 min of the observation of the first intermediate, a second compound also exhibiting a pattern consistent with four pyridyl peaks appears, which is postulated to be the oxidized ligand, 3,5-bis(pyridyl)-1-oxo-1,2,4,6-thiatriazine (1-oxo-Py₂TTA) coordinated to yttrium (i.e., 2b; Y(1-oxo-Py₂TTA)X₃). After 60 min, Py₂TTAH, Y(Py₂TTA)X₃, and Y(1-oxo-Py₂TTA)X₃ are all present in the solution. After 90 min, we begin to see the depletion of Py₂TTAH and broadening of the NMR peaks, which is attributed to precipitation of the dimer within the NMR tube. Following the complete consumption of Py₂TTAH (6 h spectrum) the N–H peaks no longer exist, providing evidence for these assignments as metal coordinated ligands. Comparison of the peak shifts with that of unreacted Py₂TTAH and the 1-oxo-Py₂TTA (prepared via oxidation of the radical), coupled with the formation of the dimer (which precipitates out of solution), further supports these assignments.

Due to the isostructural nature of complexes 3a and 3b, only the dysprosium analogue is discussed below. The asymmetric unit of the centrosymmetric structure of 3a is composed of a Dy\(^{10+}\) ion with a nine-coordinate environment adopting a distorted muffin geometry (Fig. 2). \(^9\) The tridentate terpyridine-like coordination pocket of the Py₂TTA ligand binds to the metal centre via N1, N4 and N5 donors while oxygen atoms (O2, O3, O5, O6) from two nitrate anions and a water molecule (O8) occupy the primary coordination environment. The remaining single coordination site is occupied by an oxygen atom (O1a) from the oxidized S–O group of the neighbouring Py₂TTA ligand. This S–O group plays an integral role in the dimerization and formation of the dinuclear molecule. The intramolecular Dy–Dy distance of 7.09 Å (Fig. S2, ESI†) is relatively long compared to the reported dinuclear complexes; however, weak intramolecular magnetic interactions cannot be ignored for highly anisotropic Dy\(^{3+}\) ions. \(^10\) It is interesting to note that there are no short contacts or hydrogen bonding between the asymmetric units; only the S–O bridges hold the dinuclear molecules together. Close inspection of the packing arrangement reveals that the molecules are well aligned with each other with the closest inter-metal distance being 6.76 Å (Fig. S2, ESI†).

In order to elucidate the magnetic properties of the paramagnetic complex 3a, direct current (dc) and alternating current (ac) magnetic susceptibility measurements were performed using a squid magnetometer. The dc susceptibility measurements at 1000 Oe (Fig. S3, ESI†) reveal a room temperature \(\chi T\) value of

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**Scheme 1** Synthesis of complexes 3a and 3b. Reagents and conditions: (i) Ln(NO₃)₃·6H₂O, CH₃CN, RT. Inset: Evolution of the reaction mixture at (a) T = 0 min; (b) T = 80 min; (c) T = 90 min; (d) T = 100 min.
27.97 cm$^3$ K mol$^{-1}$ consistent with the expected value of 28.34 cm$^3$ K mol$^{-1}$ for two non-interacting Dy$^{III}$ ions ($S = 5/2$, $L = 5$, $^6H_{15/2}$, $g = 4/3$). Upon lowering the temperature, the $\chi T$ product decreases gradually to reach a minimum value of 18.80 cm$^3$ K mol$^{-1}$ at 1.8 K. Such a negative deviation suggests the existence of weak antiferromagnetic interactions between metal ions and/or the presence of magnetic anisotropy. Intra- and intermolecular distances (7.09 and 6.76 Å, respectively) suggest that at this applied field interactions between the ions are likely rather small, if not negligible, due to the core nature of the 4f ions.$^{11}$ Therefore, it is reasonable to attribute the decrease of the $\chi T$ product to the magnetic anisotropy of the Dy$^{III}$ ions.

Recent studies have shown a nine-coordinate environment around the Dy ion that can provide non-negligible magnetic anisotropy to a molecular system if an ideal ligand field is present. $^9$ Here, the two nitrate ions around the metal centre play an important electron withdrawing effect by promoting higher degeneracy of the 4f orbitals subsequently leading to enhanced spin–orbit coupling.$^{12}$ In order to further confirm the magnetic anisotropy, magnetization measurements were performed (Fig. S4, ESI†). The magnetization plot $M$ vs. $H/T$ shows field dependence of the magnetization that does not saturate at low temperatures and high magnetic fields indicating the presence of magnetic anisotropy and/or low lying excited states in this system. Moreover, the non-superimposition of the iso-temperature lines indicates magnetic anisotropy.

To further explore the possibility of SMM behaviour, ac magnetic susceptibility measurements were carried out under a zero dc field. The characteristic frequency dependent out-of-phase signal was not observed; this can be attributed to significant quantum tunnelling of the magnetization (QTM) often observed in lanthanide SMMs, which diminishes the relaxation barriers. Such QTM can be reduced upon application of a small static field. In order to determine the optimum dc field, ac susceptibility measurements at various static fields (250–3000 Oe) were performed at 2 K (Fig. S5, ESI†). The out-of-phase data clearly exhibit an optimum dc field (the field at which the minimum of characteristic frequency is observed, Fig. S6, ESI†) of 750 Oe, where the QTM is minimized. Ac measurements at this optimum field reveal a full frequency dependent peak below 5 K between 0.1 and 1000 Hz (Fig. 3) indicative of field-induced SMM behaviour. Analysis of the data using the Arrhenius law [$\tau = \tau_0 \exp(U_{eff}/k_B T)$] gave a calculated relaxation barrier of $U_{eff} = 19$ K and a $\tau_0$ value of $2.0 \times 10^{-7}$ s for the thermally activated regime (Fig. S7, ESI†). The observed barrier is relatively small as a result of the QTM. It is noteworthy that the presence of a peak shoulder around 1 Hz can be observed in Fig. 3. The intensity of the peak shoulder grows to become a full peak when the applied static field is increased to 2500 Oe and diminishes at smaller fields such as 250 Oe.
that can be used to understand the nature of self-assemblies and their driving forces.

**Notes and references**