

## REVIEW

View Article Online  
View Journal | View IssueCite this: *Inorg. Chem. Front.*, 2024,  
11, 5004A dual-heteroatom–lanthanide cluster-embedded polyoxotungstate for sequential fluorescence detection of Fe<sup>3+</sup> and pyrophosphate†Siyu Zhang,<sup>‡a,b</sup> Tiantian Gong,<sup>‡b</sup> Chenyun Liu,<sup>a,b</sup> Qiuyu Wang,<sup>b</sup> Fuxiu Chen,<sup>b</sup> Jiancai Liu,<sup>\*a,b</sup> Lijuan Chen<sup>\*b</sup> and Junwei Zhao<sup>‡a,b</sup>

A neoteric inorganic–organic hybrid dual-heteroatom (HA) and lanthanide (Ln) cluster-bridged polyoxotungstate (POT) [H<sub>8</sub>BTHMMAP]<sub>1.5</sub>[H<sub>2</sub>N(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>]<sub>4</sub>Na<sub>3</sub>H[Eu<sub>2</sub>Bi<sub>3</sub>(Hpdca)<sub>3</sub>(H<sub>2</sub>O)<sub>3</sub>Te<sub>2</sub>W<sub>3</sub>O<sub>14</sub>][(W<sub>5</sub>O<sub>18</sub>)(B-α-BiW<sub>9</sub>O<sub>33</sub>)<sub>2</sub>].44H<sub>2</sub>O (**1**, H<sub>6</sub>BTHMMAP = 1,3-bis[tris-(hydroxymethyl)methylamino]propane, Hpdca = 2-pyridinic acid) was prepared by the dual-HA template strategy. The skeleton of **1** possesses a three-bladed propeller-shaped [Eu<sub>2</sub>Bi<sub>3</sub>(Hpdca)<sub>3</sub>(H<sub>2</sub>O)<sub>3</sub>Te<sub>2</sub>W<sub>3</sub>O<sub>14</sub>]<sup>13+</sup> core wrapped by two Keggin [B-α-BiW<sub>9</sub>O<sub>33</sub>]<sup>9-</sup> and one Lindqvist [W<sub>5</sub>O<sub>18</sub>]<sup>6-</sup> segments. Noteworthy, the intricate [Eu<sub>2</sub>Bi<sub>3</sub>(Hpdca)<sub>3</sub>(H<sub>2</sub>O)<sub>3</sub>Te<sub>2</sub>W<sub>3</sub>O<sub>14</sub>]<sup>13+</sup> unit consisting of a Bi–Te dual-HA-bridged Ln–W polynuclear cluster is rather attractive and rarely seen in POT crystal engineering. Prominently, **1** exhibits an “ON–OFF” luminescence response triggered by Fe<sup>3+</sup> based on dynamic quenching and competitive absorption, and the subsequent addition of pyrophosphate (PPI) leads to the recovery of luminescence due to the efficient interaction of Fe<sup>3+</sup> and PPI. The developed “ON–OFF–ON” switch allows the consecutive discrimination of Fe<sup>3+</sup> and PPI with low detection limits of 1.23 μM and 2.16 μM, respectively. This work provides a profound understanding of the dual-HA template approach in assembling complicated POTs, and shows the great potential of POT materials in environmental and biological detection.

Received 19th April 2024,  
Accepted 16th June 2024

DOI: 10.1039/d4qi00991f

rsc.li/frontiers-inorganic

## Introduction

The template strategy with the ingenious use of anions to achieve selective assembly has emerged as a versatile and valuable route to discover new reaction phenomena and access intricate molecular structures.<sup>1–6</sup> A large number of examples have demonstrated that the template strategy can promote the ordered arrangement of building blocks (BBs) around them and is critical in influencing the overall architectures (nuclearity, size, and geometry) and physicochemical properties (stability, redox properties, acidity, *etc.*).<sup>1–9</sup> Heteropolyoxotungstates (HPOTs) are a class of heteroatom (HA)-templated metal oxides and have been extensively applied in luminescence, catalysis, medicine, magnetism, materials science, *etc.*<sup>10–15</sup>

Within HPOTs, HA species are wide ranging (from III to VI main groups such as B<sup>III</sup>, Si<sup>IV</sup>, Ge<sup>IV</sup>, P<sup>III/V</sup>, As<sup>III/V</sup>, Sb<sup>III</sup>, Bi<sup>III</sup>, Se<sup>IV</sup> and Te<sup>IV</sup>), and the combination of diverse HA templates with tungstates leads to a large library of extraordinary HPOTs,<sup>16–20</sup> denoting a versatile subclass of the polyoxometalate (POM) family.

Apart from the common function of HAs as interior structure-directing templates for generating BBs to capture metal ions [transition metal (TM) or lanthanide (Ln)], they can also work as extra linkers to control metal or inter-cluster aggregation.<sup>21–32</sup> For example, Cronin *et al.* isolated a series of gigantic pure HPOTs [(H<sub>8</sub>W<sub>100</sub>Se<sub>16</sub>O<sub>364</sub>)WO(H<sub>2</sub>O)<sub>2</sub>]<sup>52-</sup> (Fig. S1a†), [W<sub>28</sub>Te<sub>8</sub>O<sub>112</sub>]<sup>24-</sup>, [W<sub>28</sub>Te<sub>9</sub>O<sub>115</sub>]<sup>26-</sup> and [W<sub>28</sub>Te<sub>10</sub>O<sub>118</sub>]<sup>28-</sup>, where the *in situ*-formed [Se<sub>3</sub>W<sub>25</sub>O<sub>91</sub>]<sup>20-</sup> or [TeW<sub>7</sub>O<sub>28</sub>]<sup>8-</sup> BBs are connected by additional Se<sup>IV</sup> or Te<sup>IV</sup> linkers.<sup>23,24</sup> Later, Wang *et al.* showed the effectiveness of P<sup>V</sup> linkers in gathering Co<sup>2+</sup> ions for the formation of the high-nuclear-Co<sup>2+</sup> substituted HPOT [(Co<sub>4</sub>(OH)<sub>3</sub>(PO<sub>4</sub>)<sub>4</sub>(PW<sub>9</sub>O<sub>34</sub>)<sub>4</sub>]<sup>28-</sup> (Fig. S1b†).<sup>26</sup> Noteworthy, besides the discrete HA linkers, the HA cluster linkers utilized for constructing HPOT BBs have also been discovered.<sup>27–32</sup> For instance, Long and Kong *et al.* obtained a heterometallic tetramer [Ln<sub>3</sub>(H<sub>2</sub>O)<sub>5</sub>Ni(H<sub>2</sub>O)<sub>3</sub>(Sb<sub>4</sub>O<sub>4</sub>)(SbW<sub>9</sub>O<sub>33</sub>)<sub>3</sub>(NiW<sub>6</sub>O<sub>24</sub>)(WO<sub>2</sub>)<sub>3</sub>(CH<sub>3</sub>COO)]<sup>17-</sup> (Ln = La<sup>3+</sup>, Pr<sup>3+</sup>, Nd<sup>3+</sup>) (Fig. S1c†), featuring three [SbW<sub>9</sub>O<sub>33</sub>]<sup>9-</sup> and one

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[Ni<sup>II</sup>W<sub>9</sub>O<sub>33</sub>]<sup>10-</sup> BB linked by a tetrahedral [Sb<sub>4</sub>O<sub>4</sub>]-connected metal core [Ln<sub>3</sub>(H<sub>2</sub>O)<sub>5</sub>Ni(H<sub>2</sub>O)<sub>3</sub>(Sb<sub>4</sub>O<sub>4</sub>)(CH<sub>3</sub>COO)]<sup>14+ 29</sup>. Recently, Zheng *et al.* have reported a POM species [Sb<sub>15</sub>Tb<sub>7</sub>W<sub>3</sub>O<sub>29</sub>(OH)<sub>3</sub>(DMF)(H<sub>2</sub>O)<sub>6</sub> (SbW<sub>8</sub>O<sub>30</sub>)(SbW<sub>9</sub>O<sub>33</sub>)<sub>5</sub>]<sup>27-</sup> with the highest-nuclear Sb<sup>III/IV</sup> centers, in which the Sb-rich cluster cores contain dimeric {Sb<sub>2</sub>O<sub>6</sub>} and {Sb<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub>}<sub>2</sub>, trimeric {Sb<sub>3</sub>O<sub>10</sub>} and pentameric {Sb<sub>5</sub>O<sub>12</sub>(OH)} linkers (Fig. S1d†).<sup>30</sup> Besides, Bi<sup>III</sup> cluster linkers generally in the form of {Bi<sub>6</sub>O<sub>x</sub>} were also used to obtain Ln<sup>3+</sup> ions and BBs, which have been previously seen in HPOTs such as [(BiW<sub>9</sub>O<sub>33</sub>)<sub>4</sub>(WO<sub>3</sub>){Bi<sub>6</sub>(μ<sub>3</sub>-O)<sub>4</sub>(μ<sub>2</sub>-OH)<sub>3</sub>}(Ln<sub>3</sub>(H<sub>2</sub>O)<sub>6</sub>CO<sub>3</sub>)]<sup>22-</sup> (Fig. S1e†) and {[(W<sub>14</sub>Ce<sup>IV</sup>O<sub>61</sub>)([W<sub>3</sub>Bi<sub>6</sub>Ce<sup>III</sup>(H<sub>2</sub>O)<sub>3</sub>O<sub>14</sub>][B-α-BiW<sub>9</sub>O<sub>33</sub>]<sub>2</sub>)]<sup>34-</sup> (Fig. S1f†).<sup>31,32</sup>

Based on these innovative works, particular attention has been paid to the designed fabrication of novel HPOTs by judiciously choosing mixed-HA components. In principle, the synergetic assembly of two or more types of HAs can not only give access to novel HPOTs with diverse architectures, but also provide a great opportunity for generating novel BBs or functionalities. Hitherto, some unprecedented dual-HA-directed HPOTs have been synthesized by reasonably selecting HA pairs.<sup>33-43</sup> However, those reported species are generally predominated by one kind of HA linker, and those with two kinds of HA linkers remain underexplored. Therefore, exploring mixed-HA-bridged HPOTs is still a challenging task.

In this work, a multicomponent self-assembly system by applying two kinds of HA materials (K<sub>2</sub>TeO<sub>3</sub> and Bi(NO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>3</sub>·5H<sub>2</sub>O) to react with tungstates and Ln ions in the presence of organic components (1,3-bis[tris(hydroxymethyl)methylamino]propane (H<sub>6</sub>BTHMMAP), 2-pyridinic acid (Hpdca), and dimethylamine hydrochloride) in acidic aqueous medium was established. The selection of Te<sup>IV</sup> and Bi<sup>III</sup> HAs is largely due to their flexibility in structural regulation and ease of crystallographical differentiability. To be specific, the lone-electron-pair stereochemical effect of Te<sup>IV</sup> and Bi<sup>III</sup> HAs can to some extent impede the closure of *in situ*-generated BBs. Another reason is that they can work as bridges individually or together to integrate Ln centers or BBs into larger aggregates. In terms of organic ligands, the polydentate H<sub>6</sub>BTHMMAP and Hpdca molecules with flexible N and O binding sites are excellent synthons as potential chelating and bridging units by coordinating N or O donors to Ln or W centers, which can effectively control Ln hydrolysis. The protonated species of organic molecules can also serve as counteranions. With this strategy, an inorganic-organic Hpdca-ornamented dual-HA-Ln cluster-bridged HPOT trimer [H<sub>8</sub>BTHMMAP]<sub>1.5</sub>[H<sub>2</sub>N(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>]<sub>4</sub>Na<sub>3</sub>H[Eu<sub>2</sub>Bi<sub>3</sub>(Hpdca)<sub>3</sub>(H<sub>2</sub>O)<sub>3</sub>Te<sub>2</sub>W<sub>3</sub>O<sub>14</sub>][(W<sub>5</sub>O<sub>18</sub>)(B-α-BiW<sub>9</sub>O<sub>33</sub>)<sub>2</sub>]<sub>4</sub>·44H<sub>2</sub>O (**1**) was achieved. Polyanion **1** is composed of two [B-α-BiW<sub>9</sub>O<sub>33</sub>]<sup>9-</sup> and one [W<sub>5</sub>O<sub>18</sub>]<sup>6-</sup> BBs unified by one neoteric decanuclear heterometallic [Eu<sub>2</sub>Bi<sub>3</sub>(Hpdca)<sub>3</sub>(H<sub>2</sub>O)<sub>3</sub>Te<sub>2</sub>W<sub>3</sub>O<sub>14</sub>]<sup>13+</sup> cluster, which represents an extremely rare case that contains mixed HA cluster linkers in POM chemistry. **1** was preliminarily characterized by infrared (IR) and thermogravimetric (TG) analyses (Fig. S2 and S3†), and the powder X-ray diffraction (PXRD) analysis confirmed the good phase purity of **1** (Fig. S4†). Furthermore, an “ON-OFF-ON” system was proposed by developing **1** as a luminescent probe for the

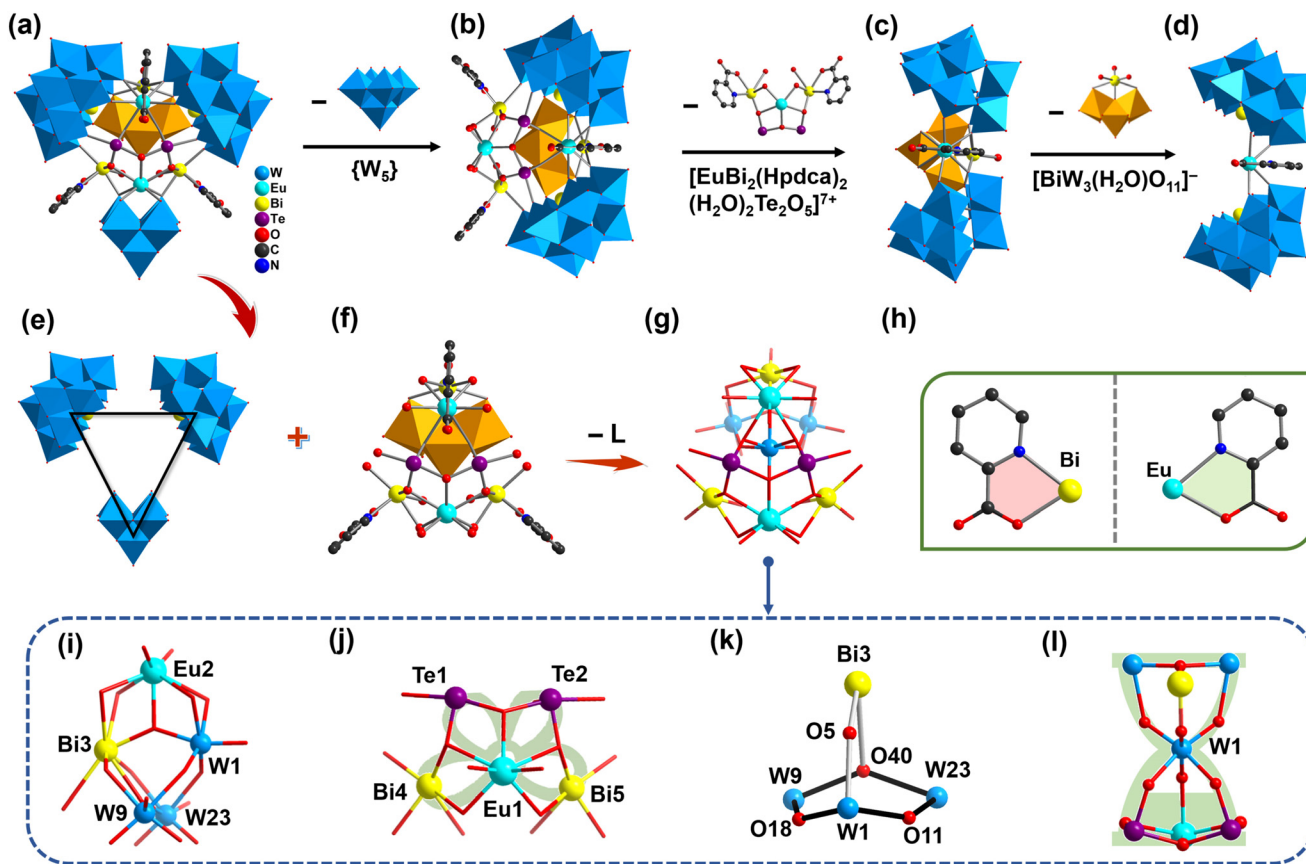
sensitive and selective detection of Fe<sup>3+</sup> and pyrophosphate (P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub><sup>4-</sup>, PPI) in an aqueous environment. Specifically, the emission of **1** was significantly quenched by Fe<sup>3+</sup> owing to the dynamic quenching and competitive absorption, while the selective binding effect of PPI with Fe<sup>3+</sup> could gradually restore the luminescence with a recovery rate of about 78%. Such a probe can be practically employed in water and serum sample analyses.

## Results and discussion

### Structural description

**1** crystallizes in the monoclinic space group *P*21/*c* (Table S1†) and its molecular skeleton comprises a trimeric polyoxoanion [Eu<sub>2</sub>Bi<sub>3</sub>(Hpdca)<sub>3</sub>(H<sub>2</sub>O)<sub>3</sub>Te<sub>2</sub>W<sub>3</sub>O<sub>14</sub>][(W<sub>5</sub>O<sub>18</sub>)(B-α-BiW<sub>9</sub>O<sub>33</sub>)<sub>2</sub>]<sup>11-</sup> (**1a**). **1a** displays a triangular arrangement of two trivalent Keggin [B-α-BiW<sub>9</sub>O<sub>33</sub>]<sup>9-</sup> ({BiW<sub>9</sub>}) BBs and one monovacant Lindqvist [W<sub>5</sub>O<sub>18</sub>]<sup>6-</sup> ({W<sub>5</sub>}) BB connected by an intriguing three-bladed “propeller-shaped” [Eu<sub>2</sub>Bi<sub>3</sub>(Hpdca)<sub>3</sub>(H<sub>2</sub>O)<sub>3</sub>Te<sub>2</sub>W<sub>3</sub>O<sub>14</sub>]<sup>13+</sup> ({Eu<sub>2</sub>Bi<sub>3</sub>(Hpdca)<sub>3</sub>Te<sub>2</sub>W<sub>3</sub>}) cluster (Fig. 1a, e and f). As exhibited in Fig. 1a, **1a** can be viewed as one {W<sub>5</sub>} BB capped on a dimeric [Eu<sub>2</sub>Bi<sub>3</sub>(Hpdca)<sub>3</sub>(H<sub>2</sub>O)<sub>3</sub>Te<sub>2</sub>W<sub>3</sub>O<sub>14</sub>][(B-α-BiW<sub>9</sub>O<sub>33</sub>)<sub>2</sub>]<sup>5-</sup> fragment, where the Eu<sup>13+</sup> ion in {Eu<sub>2</sub>Bi<sub>3</sub>(Hpdca)<sub>3</sub>Te<sub>2</sub>W<sub>3</sub>} is just inserted into the vacant position of {W<sub>5</sub>} BB and two metal-organic [Bi(Hpdca)]<sup>3+</sup> (Bi4 and Bi5) cations simultaneously work as connectors to link one {W<sub>5</sub>} and two {BiW<sub>9</sub>} BBs (Fig. 1a and b), producing four Eu–O–W and two Bi–O–W bonds to reinforce the structural stability of **1a**. Remarkably, in the [Eu<sub>2</sub>Bi<sub>3</sub>(Hpdca)<sub>3</sub>(H<sub>2</sub>O)<sub>3</sub>Te<sub>2</sub>W<sub>3</sub>O<sub>14</sub>][(B-α-BiW<sub>9</sub>O<sub>33</sub>)<sub>2</sub>]<sup>5-</sup> dimer, one peculiar dual-HA-participated multi-nuclear [EuBi<sub>2</sub>(Hpdca)<sub>2</sub>(H<sub>2</sub>O)<sub>2</sub>Te<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>]<sup>7+</sup> cluster is anchored onto the “open” [EuBi(Hpdca)(H<sub>2</sub>O)W<sub>3</sub>O<sub>9</sub>][(B-α-BiW<sub>9</sub>O<sub>33</sub>)<sub>2</sub>]<sup>12-</sup> dimeric midbody by coordinating two Bi<sup>III</sup> (Bi4<sup>III</sup>, Bi5<sup>III</sup>) and two Te<sup>IV</sup> (Te1<sup>IV</sup>, Te2<sup>IV</sup>) atoms with four terminal-O (O<sub>t</sub>) atoms from two {BiW<sub>9</sub>} BBs as well as coordinating two Te<sup>IV</sup> (Te1<sup>IV</sup>, Te2<sup>IV</sup>) atoms and one Eu<sup>13+</sup> ion with three vertex O<sub>2</sub>, O<sub>1</sub> and O<sub>25</sub> atoms from one bridging {WO<sub>6</sub>} octahedron (Fig. 1b and c). For the [EuBi(Hpdca)(H<sub>2</sub>O)W<sub>3</sub>O<sub>9</sub>][(B-α-BiW<sub>9</sub>O<sub>33</sub>)<sub>2</sub>]<sup>12-</sup> fragment, it can be explicitly observed that two {BiW<sub>9</sub>} BBs are firstly interlinked by one [Eu<sub>2</sub>(Hpdca)]<sup>3+</sup> unit *via* four O<sub>t</sub> atoms (O<sub>33</sub>, O<sub>41</sub>, O<sub>17</sub>, O<sub>56</sub>) into an open [Eu(Hpdca)][(B-α-BiW<sub>9</sub>O<sub>33</sub>)<sub>2</sub>]<sup>15-</sup> dimer, followed by the accommodation of one [BiW<sub>3</sub>(H<sub>2</sub>O)O<sub>11</sub>]<sup>-</sup> BB *via* four Bi–O<sub>t</sub>–W (O<sub>t</sub>: O<sub>23</sub>, O<sub>41</sub>, O<sub>9</sub>, O<sub>56</sub>) and four W–O<sub>t</sub>–W (O<sub>23</sub>, O<sub>54</sub>, O<sub>9</sub>, O<sub>20</sub>) bonds (Fig. 1c, d and S5†).

A prominent characteristic of **1a** is the intricate three-bladed propeller-shaped {Eu<sub>2</sub>Bi<sub>3</sub>(Hpdca)<sub>3</sub>Te<sub>2</sub>W<sub>3</sub>} core (Fig. 1f). Interestingly, three Hpdca ligands, like blades, are aligned in three different directions around the “propeller shaft” [Eu<sub>2</sub>Bi<sub>3</sub>(H<sub>2</sub>O)<sub>3</sub>Te<sub>2</sub>W<sub>3</sub>O<sub>14</sub>]<sup>13+</sup> ({Eu<sub>2</sub>Bi<sub>3</sub>Te<sub>2</sub>W<sub>3</sub>}) cluster (Fig. 1g) by fixing to Eu<sub>2</sub>, Bi<sub>4</sub> and Bi<sub>5</sub> atoms through N and carboxyl-O sites, giving rise to two five-membered “–Eu–O–C–C–N–” and “–Bi–O–C–C–N–” rings (Fig. 1h). Noticeably, the phenomenon of Hpdca ligands in tethering with the Bi atom is rarely encountered. {Eu<sub>2</sub>Bi<sub>3</sub>Te<sub>2</sub>W<sub>3</sub>} can be viewed as a combination



**Fig. 1** (a) The structure of **1a**. (b) The  $[\text{Eu}_2\text{Bi}_3(\text{Hpdca})_3(\text{H}_2\text{O})_3\text{Te}_2\text{W}_3\text{O}_{14}][(\text{B}-\alpha\text{-BiW}_9\text{O}_{33})_2]^{5-}$  fragment formed by removing the  $\{\text{W}_5\}$  BB from **1a**. (c) The  $[\text{EuBi}(\text{Hpdca})(\text{H}_2\text{O})\text{W}_3\text{O}_9][(\text{B}-\alpha\text{-BiW}_9\text{O}_{33})_2]^{12-}$  fragment formed by removing one  $[\text{EuBi}_2(\text{Hpdca})_2(\text{H}_2\text{O})_2\text{Te}_2\text{O}_5]^{7+}$  cluster from the  $[\text{Eu}_2\text{Bi}_3(\text{Hpdca})_3(\text{H}_2\text{O})_3\text{Te}_2\text{W}_3\text{O}_{14}][(\text{B}-\alpha\text{-BiW}_9\text{O}_{33})_2]^{5-}$  dimer. (d) The  $[\text{Eu}(\text{Hpdca})][(\text{B}-\alpha\text{-BiW}_9\text{O}_{33})_2]^{15-}$  fragment formed by removing one  $[\text{BiW}_3(\text{H}_2\text{O})\text{O}_{11}]^-$  BB from the  $[\text{EuBi}(\text{Hpdca})(\text{H}_2\text{O})\text{W}_3\text{O}_9][(\text{B}-\alpha\text{-BiW}_9\text{O}_{33})_2]^{12-}$  fragment. (e) The arrangement of two  $\{\text{BiW}_9\}$  and one  $\{\text{W}_5\}$  subunits showing the triangular motif. (f) The three-bladed “propeller-shaped”  $\{\text{Eu}_2\text{Bi}_3(\text{Hpdca})_3\text{Te}_2\text{W}_3\}$  cluster. (g) The  $\{\text{Eu}_2\text{Bi}_3\text{Te}_2\text{W}_3\}$  cluster by removing three Hpdca ligands, where L represents the Hpdca ligand. (h) Two five-membered “-Bi-O-C-C-N-” and “-Eu-O-C-C-N-” rings. (i) and (j) The  $[\text{EuBi}(\text{H}_2\text{O})\text{W}_3\text{O}_{10}]^{4+}$  and  $[\text{EuBi}_2(\text{H}_2\text{O})_2\text{Te}_2\text{O}_4]^{9+}$  fragments constituting the  $\{\text{Eu}_2\text{Bi}_3\text{Te}_2\text{W}_3\}$  cluster. (k) The  $\{\text{BiW}_3\text{O}_4\}$  fragment showing the bridged hydrocarbon-shaped geometry. (l) The “hourglass-shaped”  $[\text{EuBiW}_3(\text{H}_2\text{O})\text{Te}_2\text{O}_{14}]^{4+}$  fragment.

of  $[\text{EuBi}(\text{H}_2\text{O})\text{W}_3\text{O}_{10}]^{4+}$  and  $[\text{EuBi}_2(\text{H}_2\text{O})_2\text{Te}_2\text{O}_4]^{9+}$  clusters (Fig. 1i and j). In the  $[\text{EuBi}(\text{H}_2\text{O})\text{W}_3\text{O}_{10}]^{4+}$  cluster, the  $[\text{BiW}_3(\text{H}_2\text{O})\text{O}_{11}]^-$  BB comprises three vertex-shared  $\{\text{WO}_6\}$  octahedra in a triangle motif, in which Bi3 and W1 atoms are ligated to the Eu2 atom *via* five O atoms (Fig. 1i). Besides, a unique octa-membered  $\{\text{BiW}_3\text{O}_4\}$  segment with a novel bridged hydrocarbon-shaped geometry such as bicyclo[2,2,2]-octane was noticed in  $[\text{BiW}_3(\text{H}_2\text{O})\text{O}_{11}]^-$  BB (Fig. 1k), quite distinct from the well-known cubane structure. The  $[\text{EuBi}_2(\text{H}_2\text{O})_2\text{Te}_2\text{O}_4]^{9+}$  cluster comprises a centric Eu1 atom surrounded by outward two Te and two Bi atoms in the order of “Bi4-Te1-Te2-Bi5” *via* five O bridges, and each Te or Bi atom is in conjunction with the Eu1 atom by sharing two  $\mu_3\text{-O}$  atoms, generating a petal-like motif with one side opening (Fig. 1g). This arrangement also gives rise to a folded  $[\text{EuTe}_2\text{O}_3]^{5+}$  quadrangle along the “Eu1-O3” line (Fig. S6<sup>†</sup>). Actually, two Te and two Bi atoms are almost coplanar to build a trapezoid plane whereas the Eu1 atom is located above the plane with a distance of 1.992 Å (Fig. S7<sup>†</sup>). A close inspection

into the  $\{\text{Eu}_2\text{Bi}_3\text{Te}_2\text{W}_3\}$  cluster unveils a peculiar “hourglass-shaped”  $[\text{EuBiW}_3(\text{H}_2\text{O})\text{Te}_2\text{O}_{14}]^{4+}$  fragment based on  $[\text{BiW}_3(\text{H}_2\text{O})\text{O}_{11}]^-$  BB and  $[\text{EuTe}_2\text{O}_3]^{5+}$  section, which can be reasonably divided into the upper  $\{\text{BiW}_3\text{O}_4\}$  and the lower  $\{\text{EuTe}_2\text{O}_6\}$  parts sharing one middle W1 atom (Fig. 1j).

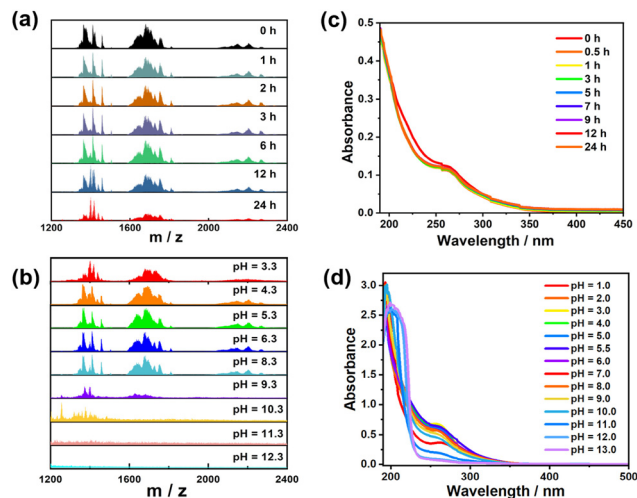
Noteworthy, five crystallographically independent Bi<sup>III</sup> atoms in a **1a** polyoxoanion play two roles: Bi1<sup>III</sup> and Bi2<sup>III</sup> atoms as templates are embedded in  $\{\text{BiW}_9\}$  BBs while Bi3<sup>III</sup>-Bi5<sup>III</sup> atoms as linkers are situated between BBs. In particular, Bi3<sup>III</sup>-Bi5<sup>III</sup> linkers are involved in different binding environments: the Bi3<sup>III</sup> atom is surrounded by seven O-coordinate spheres with four from two adjacent  $\{\text{BiW}_9\}$  BBs, two from the  $\{\text{BiW}_3\}$  BB, and one from the water ligand (Fig. S8<sup>†</sup>); Bi4<sup>III</sup> and Bi5<sup>III</sup> atoms are coordinated by Hpdca ligands *via* N and carboxyl O sites and then encircled by two  $\text{O}_t$  atoms from  $\{\text{BiW}_9\}$  and  $\{\text{W}_5\}$  BBs, one  $\mu_3\text{-O}$  atom from the  $[\text{EuTe}_2\text{O}_3]^{5+}$  fragment and one from the water ligand, both displaying the hexa-coordinate configuration (Fig. S8<sup>†</sup>). Three Bi<sup>III</sup> linkers have an average Bi-O and Bi-N bond lengths of 2.421 and 2.372 Å, and

the Bi–O bond lengths are a bit longer than those in BBs (2.133 Å). Both Te<sup>IV</sup> atoms play the bridging role and are in a four-coordinate geometry defined by two, one and one O atoms from [EuTe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>]<sup>5+</sup>, [BiW<sub>3</sub>(H<sub>2</sub>O)O<sub>11</sub>]<sup>−</sup> and {BiW<sub>9</sub>} BBs with Te–O distances of 1.857(8)–2.223(9) Å (Fig. S9<sup>†</sup>). The Eu<sup>3+</sup> ion displays the octa-coordinate bicapped triangular prism geometry completed by four O<sub>t</sub> atoms from the {W<sub>5</sub>} BBs, three μ<sub>3</sub>-O atoms from the [EuTe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>]<sup>5+</sup> fragment and one μ<sub>2</sub>-O atom from the [BiW<sub>3</sub>(H<sub>2</sub>O)O<sub>11</sub>]<sup>−</sup> BBs, whilst the Eu<sup>2+</sup> ion adopts a nona-coordinate mono-capped square antiprism geometry defined by four O<sub>t</sub> atoms from two {BiW<sub>9</sub>} BBs, three μ<sub>3</sub>-O atoms from the {W<sub>10</sub>} octahedron as well as one carboxyl O and N atoms from the Hpdca ligand (Eu–O: 2.277(9)–2.776(9) Å) (Fig. S10<sup>†</sup>).

In the stacking diagram, trimeric **1a** polyoxoanions are packed together to form an interesting supra-molecular architecture through intermolecular interactions, where the charge compensating cations ([H<sub>8</sub>BTHMMAP]<sup>2+</sup>, [H<sub>2</sub>N(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>]<sup>+</sup>, H<sup>+</sup> and Na<sup>+</sup>) and water molecules fill in the pores among **1a** polyoxoanions. For clarity, countercations and water molecules are omitted, and the stacking framework along the *c* axis reveals that neighboring layers (named layer A and B) are stacked in an –ABAB– sequence (Fig. S11<sup>†</sup>). Hereinto, two adjacent **1a** polyoxoanions are intersected and distributed in a “face-to-face” pattern, constituting a repeating unit in each layer. Unlike the “back–front” order of two **1a** polyoxoanions in the repeating unit in layer A, the **1a** polyoxoanion in layer B shows a converse “back–front” order. The simplified graph by visualizing **1a** as a triangle (built by Bi1, Bi2 and W15 atoms) makes us more clearly understand the arrangement of **1a** polyoxoanions (Fig. S11<sup>†</sup>).

### Stability studies of **1a** in solution

The stability of **1a** in water was explored by electrospray ionization mass spectrometry (ESI-MS) in negative mode and UV-vis absorption spectra. As shown in Fig. S12 and Table S2,<sup>†</sup> there are three groups of charged peaks with negative charges of 6– (*m/z* values: 1364.31, 1410.49, 1457.82), 5– (*m/z* values: 1680.28, 1755.27) and 4– (*m/z* values: 2151.93, 2203.94). The peak at *m/z* 1364.31 can be assigned to {[H<sub>2</sub>N(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>]<sub>2</sub>Na<sub>3</sub>[Eu<sub>2</sub>Bi<sub>3</sub>(H<sub>2</sub>O)<sub>4</sub>Te<sub>2</sub>W<sub>3</sub>O<sub>14</sub>][(W<sub>5</sub>O<sub>18</sub>)(BiW<sub>9</sub>O<sub>33</sub>)<sub>2</sub>]}<sup>6−</sup>, implying that three Hpdca ligands are released from **1a**. The remaining peaks correspond to the species of [Eu<sub>2</sub>Bi<sub>3</sub>(Hpdca)<sub>3</sub>(H<sub>2</sub>O)<sub>*n*</sub>Te<sub>2</sub>W<sub>3</sub>O<sub>14</sub>][(W<sub>5</sub>O<sub>18</sub>)(BiW<sub>9</sub>O<sub>33</sub>)<sub>2</sub>]<sup>11−</sup> poly-anions with different numbers of counter cations ([H<sub>2</sub>N(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>]<sup>+</sup>, H<sup>+</sup>, [H<sub>8</sub>BTHMMAP]<sup>2+</sup>, or Na<sup>+</sup>). These results corroborate that the skeleton of **1a** is basically stable in water. By extending time, the first two groups (*m/z* values less than 2000) of signal peaks gradually weakened while the third group (*m/z* values between 2000–2400) gradually disappeared at 24 h (Fig. 2a). By contrast, **1a** is more sensitive to pH because partial peaks have completely vanished when pH is lower than 3.3 or higher than 9.3 (Fig. 2b). Besides, UV-vis spectra were also recorded to explore its stability in water. Evidently, one strong absorption band at 192 nm and one weak absorption band around 260 nm were observed, respectively corresponding to O<sub>t</sub> → W and O<sub>b(c)</sub> → W π–π charge-transfer tran-



**Fig. 2** (a) Time-dependent ESI-MS spectra of **1** in water. (b) The pH-dependent ESI-MS spectra of **1** in water. (c) Time-dependent UV-vis spectra of **1** in water. (d) The pH-dependent UV-vis spectra of **1** in water.

sitions. Notably, the UV-vis spectra of **1** didn't show obvious changes by prolonging time to 24 h, indicating that **1a** is basically stable for 24 h (Fig. 2c). However, the intensity of O<sub>b(c)</sub> → W and O<sub>t</sub> → W bands slowly shifted and decreased when the pH is out of the 3–10 range, as revealed in pH-dependent UV-vis spectra (Fig. 2d). Overall, the UV-vis result basically matches with ESI-MS data. Thus, the structural stability of **1a** can be maintained for 24 h, or in the pH range of 3.3–8.3.

### Photoluminescence (PL) sensing properties

Ferric ion (Fe<sup>3+</sup>) is an essential trace element for the human body, and is also an important component of hemoglobin, many enzymes and immune system compounds.<sup>44–46</sup> However, the abnormalities of Fe<sup>3+</sup> in the human body can lead to various diseases such as anemia, renal failure, liver damage and hemochromatosis. In addition, an excess of Fe<sup>3+</sup> threatens the ecological environment.<sup>47,48</sup> Hence, the detection of Fe<sup>3+</sup> is vital to the early warning of underlying diseases or environmental damage. Among the diverse detection strategies, PL sensing methods have aroused great interest owing to their high selectivity and sensitivity, convenient operation, and low sample consumption. As a water-stable and easy-to-prepare Eu-based PL material, **1** could be developed as a probe to detect Fe<sup>3+</sup>.

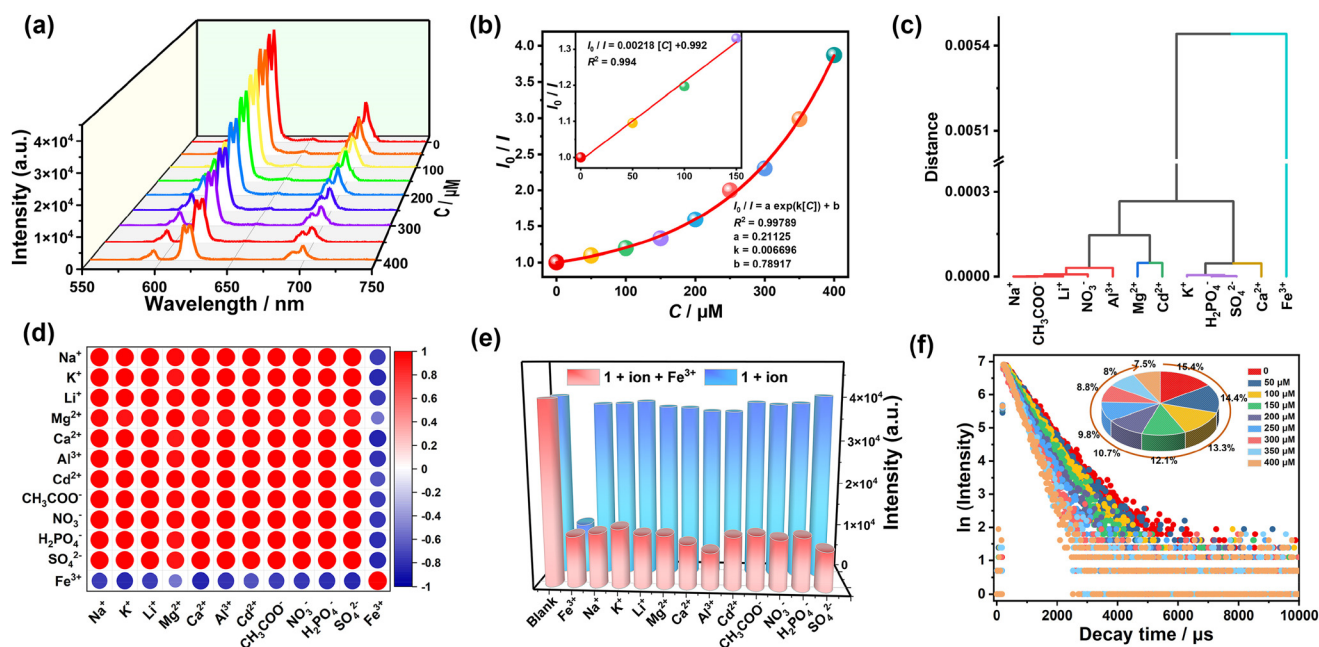
Motivated by this idea, the PL behaviors of **1** in water were studied. Five well-resolved emission peaks at 578, 594, 620, 654 and 699 nm were observed in the spectrum of **1** (2 mg mL<sup>−1</sup>) that can be identified as the <sup>5</sup>D<sub>0</sub> → <sup>7</sup>F<sub>*J*</sub> (*J* = 0–4) transitions of Eu<sup>3+</sup> ions upon excitation at 397 nm (Fig. S13a<sup>†</sup>).<sup>49,50</sup> The <sup>5</sup>D<sub>0</sub> → <sup>7</sup>F<sub>2</sub> transition at 620 nm is dominated by a splitting peak at 618 nm. Monitored at the strongest emission, the excitation spectrum of **1** exhibits one broad band at around 350 nm attributed to the O → W charge transfer of {BiW<sub>9</sub>} and {W<sub>5</sub>} BBs, as well as five typical peaks at 363 nm (<sup>7</sup>F<sub>0</sub> → <sup>5</sup>D<sub>4</sub>), 383 nm (<sup>7</sup>F<sub>0</sub> → <sup>5</sup>G<sub>2</sub>), 397 nm (<sup>7</sup>F<sub>0</sub> → <sup>5</sup>L<sub>6</sub>), 418 nm (<sup>7</sup>F<sub>0</sub> → <sup>5</sup>D<sub>3</sub>)

and 467 nm ( ${}^7F_0 \rightarrow {}^5D_2$ ) from  $\text{Eu}^{3+}$  ions (Fig. S13b $\dagger$ ). Additionally, the decay lifetime of **1** under the 397 nm excitation peak and 620 nm emission peak can be calculated as 816.04  $\mu\text{s}$  by fitting with the mono-exponential function  $I = A \exp(-t/\tau_1)$  (Fig. S13c $\dagger$ ), where  $A$  represents pre-exponential factor and  $\tau_1$  represents the luminescence lifetime. Moreover, the time-dependent PL emission of **1** (2 mg  $\text{mL}^{-1}$ ) in water was studied (Fig. S14 $\dagger$ ). The intensity shows a slow attenuation that may be caused by dynamic exchange between water molecules in **1** and solution, and a total decrease of 9% within 10 h at 620 nm indicates the PL emission of **1** is basically stable in water for a long time.

Based on the excellent PL behavior in water, sensing experiments were carried out by employing **1** (2 mg  $\text{mL}^{-1}$ ) as a probe. As revealed in Fig. 3a, the emission evolution of **1** towards  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  triggers an “ON-OFF” response as the emission intensity gradually decreases to approximately 26% with the concentration of  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  ranging from 0 to 400  $\mu\text{M}$ . Additionally, a good linear Stern–Volmer ( $S$ - $V$ ) function fitted by  $I_0/I = 0.992 + 0.00218[C_{\text{Fe}}]$  with a correlation coefficient ( $R^2$ ) of 0.994 was obtained between intensity ratio ( $I_0/I$ ,  $I_0$  and  $I$  represent the emission intensity without or with the addition of  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ ) at 620 nm and  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  concentration ( $[C_{\text{Fe}}]$ , 0–150  $\mu\text{M}$ ) (Fig. 3b), implying that the quantitative detection of  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  by **1** is applicable over a wide  $[C_{\text{Fe}}]$  range. As  $[C_{\text{Fe}}]$  continues to increase, the fitting curve gradually deviates from linearity and bends upward, which can be perfectly fitted by an exponential function. The limit of detection (LOD) was determined to be

1.23  $\mu\text{M}$  based on the definition of  $\text{LOD} = 3s/k$ , where  $s$  indicates the standard deviation of three blank tests, and  $k$  is the slope of the linear fitting curve (Table S3 $\dagger$ ).<sup>51</sup> This LOD value is apparently lower than the permissible limit of  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  in drinking water given by the World Health Organization (WHO) (5.37  $\mu\text{M}$ ).

By comparison, other cations  $\text{M}(\text{Cl})_x$  ( $\text{M}^{x+} = \text{Na}^+$ ,  $\text{K}^+$ ,  $\text{Li}^+$ ,  $\text{Mg}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{Al}^{3+}$ , and  $\text{Cd}^{2+}$ ) or anions  $\text{Na}_x\text{N}$  ( $\text{N}^{x-} = \text{CH}_3\text{COO}^-$ ,  $\text{NO}_3^-$ ,  $\text{H}_2\text{PO}_4^-$ , and  $\text{SO}_4^{2-}$ ) with the same concentration of 400  $\mu\text{M}$  can hardly quench **1** (Fig. S15 $\dagger$ ). Furthermore, hierarchical cluster analysis (HCA) was applied for classifying analytes, which was calculated by the HCA algorithm based on PL intensity at 620 nm. Evidently,  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  can be completely recognized from other ions from the root node of the clustering tree (Fig. 3c). Fig. 3d also shows the distance of HCA between ions where blue suggests they are far away and red suggests that they are close. The coexistence of interfering species with  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  led to minor or negligible effects on the emission intensity (Fig. 3e), indicative of the remarkable anti-interference ability of **1** towards the determination of  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ . The excellent detection performances of **1** drive us to evaluate its potential utility in actual samples. A series of lake water, tap water and human serum samples were filtered and spiked with various amounts of  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  by standard addition method. And  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  concentration in the above samples was computed by PL intensity tests and compared with the actual amount added. As manifested in Table S4 $\dagger$ , the recoveries of 99.19%–100.50% with a relative standard deviation (RSD) of 0.83%–1.82% in tap water,



**Fig. 3** (a) Evolution of the emission spectra of the 1-based sensor with different concentrations of  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ . (b) Plot of PL intensity ratio vs. the concentrations of  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ . Inset: the linear variation of  $I_0/I$  with the concentration of  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  in the range of 0–150  $\mu\text{M}$ . (c) Dendrogram of different ions in hierarchical cluster analysis. (d) Heat plot of distances between different ions based on hierarchical cluster analysis. (e) Fluorescence responses of the 1-based sensor under different interferences. (f) Lifetime decay curves of the 1-based sensor under different concentrations of  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  (Inset: the pie chart of PL lifetime at different concentrations of  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ ).

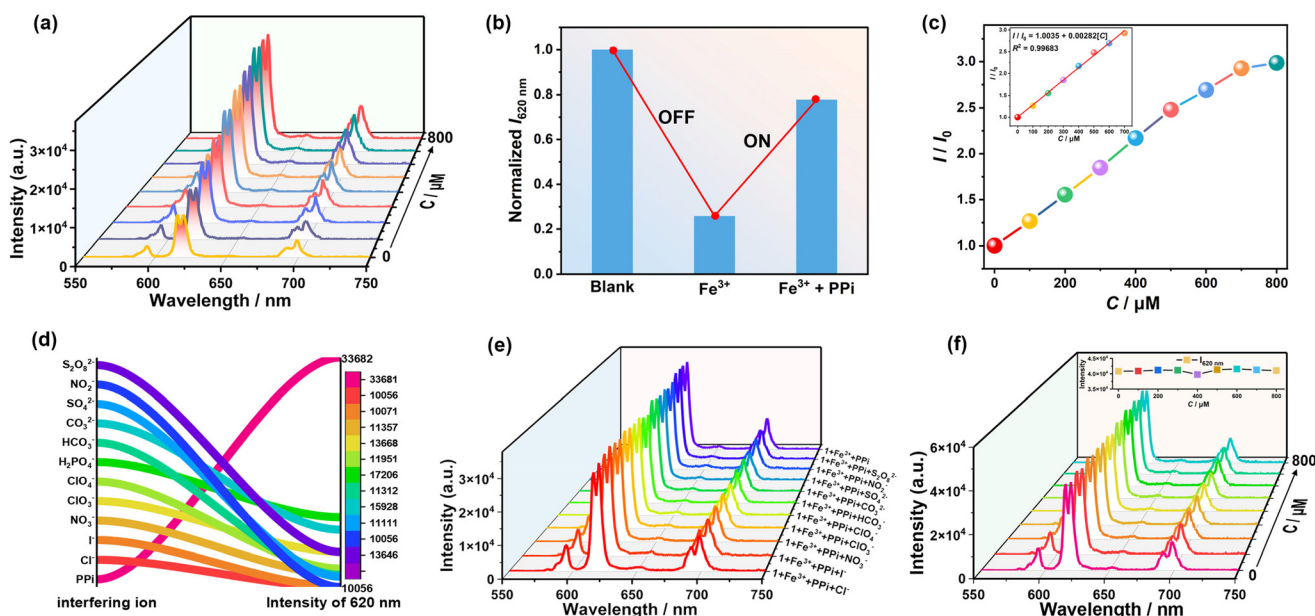
99.00%–100.18% with an RSD of 0.27%–0.94% in lake water, and 99.56%–101.78% with an RSD of 0.34%–1.23% in human serum were found, indicating that the developed sensor was viable for the quantitative detection of  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  in real samples.

To figure out the sensing mechanism, the PL decay lifetime curves of **1** were recorded at 397 nm excitation peak and 620 nm emission peak, all obeying the mono-exponential function. The lifetimes of **1** showed a definite dependency on the concentration changes, which decreased drastically from 816.04 (0  $\mu\text{M}$ ) to 400.14  $\mu\text{s}$  (400  $\mu\text{M}$ ) (Fig. 3f and Table S5<sup>†</sup>). This phenomenon suggests that dynamic quenching based on the collision between **1** and  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  may play an important role in the  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ -induced “ON–OFF” process. Generally, the quenching rate constant ( $K_q$ ) can be obtained from the equation  $K_{SV} = K_q\tau_0$  ( $\tau_0$  means the decay lifetime of **1** without  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ ), and the intermolecular collision frequency in a dynamic process is usually less than  $2.0 \times 10^{10} \text{ M}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$ .<sup>52</sup> Here,  $\tau_0$  is 816.04  $\mu\text{s}$  and the quenching rate constant ( $K_{SV}$ ) is estimated to be  $2.18 \times 10^3 \text{ M}^{-1}$  from the linear  $S$ - $V$  function of  $I_0/I = 0.992 + 0.00218[C_{\text{Fe}}]$ , therefore  $K_q$  was calculated to be  $2.67 \times 10^6 \text{ M}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$ . This value also confirms that the dynamic quenching pathway is predominant in  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  detection. Moreover, the UV–vis spectrum of  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  ion was recorded to further proclaim the quenching mechanism, which shows a broad absorption band (200–450 nm) centered around 297 nm. Clearly, the excitation spectrum of **1** exhibits large overlaps with the UV–vis absorption of  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  ions, while the emission shows negligible overlap (Fig. S16<sup>†</sup>). This result precludes the fluorescence resonance energy transfer, but suggests the existence of competitive

absorption.<sup>53,54</sup> That's to say,  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  ions show strong competition with BBs or  $\text{Eu}^{3+}$  ions for light energy, which can weaken the excitation energy of BBs or  $\text{Eu}^{3+}$  ions, thus causing significant quenching.

Pyrophosphate ( $\text{P}_2\text{O}_7^{4-}$ , PPI) is the hydrolysis product of adenosine triphosphate, and is closely related to numerous fundamental chemical and biological processes such as DNA replication, cellular metabolism and enzymatic catalysis.<sup>55,56</sup> An adequate level of PPI can block calcification in blood plasma, synovial fluid and urine, exhibiting a vital effect on arthritis and chondrocalcinosis. Therefore, accurate detection of PPI is essential.<sup>57,58</sup> On account of the intense affinity of PPI towards metal ions causing emission quenching or enhancement, the resulting  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ -quenched system might be a feasible way for recognizing PPI.

As illustrated in Fig. 4a and b, the emission intensity of  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ -quenched system was progressively recovered with the continuous addition of PPI, and a recovery rate of about 78% was ultimately achieved when PPI concentration reached 800  $\mu\text{M}$ . Thus, a bidirectional “ON–OFF–ON” PL sensing assay was developed for the successive detection of  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  and PPI. To gain more insight into the relationship between emission intensity and analyte concentration, the PL enhancement coefficient ( $K_{EC}$ ) was quantitatively analyzed from the equation  $I_0/I = 1 + K_{EC}[C]$ ,<sup>59</sup> where  $[C]$  denotes the concentration of analyte, and  $I_0$  and  $I$  are PL emission intensities without and with analyte, respectively. In the present system, the  $I/I_0$  at 620 nm shows a good linear response to PPI with the equation of  $I/I_0 = 1.0035 + 0.00282[C]$  over a wide concentration scope



**Fig. 4** (a) Evolution of the emission spectra of the  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ -quenched system with different concentrations of PPI. (b) The variation of PL intensity during the whole ON–OFF–ON process. (c) Variation of  $I_0/I$  values at 620 nm of the  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ -quenched system with the concentration of PPI ( $C_{\text{Fe}} = 400 \mu\text{M}$ ). Inset: the linear variation of  $I_0/I$  with PPI concentration in the range of 0–700  $\mu\text{M}$ . (d) Classification of different anions depending on their response patterns in the  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ -quenched system. (e) Fluorescence responses of the  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ -quenched system in the presence of PPI and other interfering anions. (f) Evolution of the emission spectra of the **1**-based sensor in different concentrations of PPI. (Inset: the PL intensity at 620 nm).

between 0 and 700  $\mu\text{M}$  (Fig. 4c). The  $K_{\text{EC}}$  of the  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ -quenched system for detecting PPI was found to be  $2.82 \times 10^3 \text{ M}^{-1}$ , suggestive of the effective interaction between  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  and PPI. The LOD of PPI was calculated to be 2.16  $\mu\text{M}$  by the  $3s/k$  rule (Table S6<sup>†</sup>), comparable to the previously reported sensors for detecting  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  and PPI (Table S7<sup>†</sup>).

Next, the selectivity and anti-interference of  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ -quenched system were studied by measuring its response to various anions including  $\text{Cl}^-$ ,  $\text{I}^-$ ,  $\text{NO}_3^-$ ,  $\text{ClO}_3^-$ ,  $\text{ClO}_4^-$ ,  $\text{HCO}_3^-$ ,  $\text{CO}_3^{2-}$ ,  $\text{SO}_4^{2-}$ ,  $\text{NO}_2^-$  and  $\text{S}_2\text{O}_8^{2-}$  (Fig. 4d, e and S17<sup>†</sup>). These interfering anions induced very low recoveries in intensity of  ${}^5\text{D}_0 \rightarrow {}^7\text{F}_2$  at the same concentrations of 800  $\mu\text{M}$ , which was negligible in comparison with that of PPI. Besides, the recovery for PPI sensing was not affected by these interferents. Based on the good selectivity and anti-interference, the  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ -quenched system can be established as a potential sensor for detecting PPI. Additionally, to exclude the potential impact of PPI on the **1**-based sensor, the PL evolution of the **1**-based sensor was recorded with the introduction of different concentrations of PPI. As exhibited in Fig. 4f, the impact of PPI on PL intensity was minimal, with PL intensity keeping steady even at concentrations up to 800  $\mu\text{M}$ . As a consequence, the recovery of PL intensity is probably attributed to the affinity of  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  towards PPI, and their combination greatly reduced the content of  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  in the detection system, blocking the dynamic quenching process, thus the PL intensity of the  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ -quenched system could be recovered. The PL lifetimes of the  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ -quenched system with the addition of PPI were also investigated, which ultimately increased to 831.11  $\mu\text{s}$  when PPI concentration was 800  $\mu\text{M}$  (Fig. S18a, and Table S8<sup>†</sup>). As a comparison, the introduction of PPI alone into sensor **1** also caused the change in the lifetimes with a maximum up to 900  $\mu\text{s}$  (Fig. S18b, and Table S9<sup>†</sup>), a bit higher than the initial lifetime of 816.04  $\mu\text{s}$  of **1**, suggesting that PPI alone may also affect the recovery of PL lifetimes of the  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ -quenched system apart from its combination with  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ .

As another important criterion for evaluating sensor performance, the response times of sensor **1** towards  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  and PPI were recorded. When  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  (400  $\mu\text{M}$ ) was added into solution **1**, the emission intensity decreased immediately and quickly reached a plateau in less than 5 s (Fig. S19a<sup>†</sup>). By adding PPI (800  $\mu\text{M}$ ) into the above quenched system, the intensity dramatically increased and eventually achieved a stable level within 40 s (Fig. S19b<sup>†</sup>). These results manifest the response of **1** towards  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  and the combination of  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  with PPI are fast. Then the developed sensor was applied to detect  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  and PPI in the serum to verify its applicability. Human serum was diluted 100-fold with deionized water, and **1** (2 mg  $\text{mL}^{-1}$ ) was dissolved in the above serum. Then, a total of 400  $\mu\text{M}$   $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  was successively added to the **1**-containing serum to construct the  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ -quenched luminescence system. The standard addition method was used in this system on subsequent addition of PPI. As manifested in Table S10,<sup>†</sup> recoveries of 99.69%–102.58% with RSDs of 0.56%–1.48% were found, indicating that the developed sensor has the effectiveness and practicality of detecting PPI in real samples.

## Conclusions

In summary, a novel Bi–Te–Eu cluster embedded HPOT **1** has been fabricated, demonstrating the feasibility of combining HA pairs with Ln cations in the tungstate system to prepare mixed-HA-directed HPOTs. Particularly, the phenomenon that two types of HAs like a Bi–Te pair work together as linkers to grasp Ln and HPOT BBs has not been previously reported, and their tight connection modes endow **1** with excellent structural stability in water. Therefore, **1** was employed as a luminescence sensor to detect  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  in water with remarkable selectivity, strong anti-interference ability and a low LOD (1.23  $\mu\text{M}$ ). This  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ -quenched system was further applied to sensitively recognize PPI based on the strong affinity of  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  and PPI, thus realizing a sequential detection system. This work highlights the vast potential of designing novel HPOTs directed by judiciously selected mixed-HA components and their promising applications in luminescence sensing in biological and environmental systems. More future efforts will be devoted to the controlled synthesis of poly-HA-templated HPOTs with higher structural complexity and functional properties.

## Data availability

The data are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

## Author contributions

Siyu Zhang and Tiantian Gong contributed equally to this work. They and Jiancai Liu performed the preparation, characterization, and photoluminescence sensing property determination and wrote the manuscript. Chenyun Liu, Qiuyu Wang and Fuxiu Chen participated in IR, TG, UV-vis spectroscopy and ESI-MS studies. Lijuan Chen and Junwei Zhao are responsible for proposing research ideas, determining crystal structures and revising the manuscript.

## Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts to declare.

## Acknowledgements

This work was financially supported by the National Natural Science Foundations of China (22371066, 22101072, 22071042, and 22171070), Henan Science and Technology Research Project (242102231046), China Postdoctoral Science Foundation (2021M701067), the Program for Kaifeng Innovation Teams of Science and Technology, and the Key Project of the Youth Interdisciplinary Foundation of Henan University.

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