

CrystEngComm

rsc.li/crystengcomm



ISSN 1466-8033


Cite this: *CrystEngComm*, 2021, 23, 7380

Received 24th September 2021,
Accepted 30th September 2021

DOI: 10.1039/d1ce01286j

rsc.li/crystengcomm

Selectivity of hosts for guests by liquid-assisted grinding: differences between solution and mechanochemistry†

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Selectivity for particular guests in two host–guest systems has been investigated using both solution-based and mechanochemical methods. Selectivity was shown to occur in both systems when using mechanochemistry. The selectivity profile obtained using mechanochemistry can be different from that observed when carrying out analogous selectivity experiments in solution.

The selectivity of host–guest systems for particular guests has long been a topic of interest to solid-state chemists.¹ Hosts that exhibit selectivity for one guest over another have potential use in for example separation,² or removal of impurities or toxins.³ Understanding, and ultimately controlling, such selectivity is an essential part of developing such systems for applications.

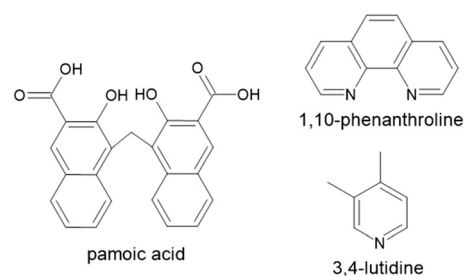
Recently, our group has become interested in host–guest systems based on the pamoate ion. We have studied the porosity^{4,5} of one such system, 3,4-lutidine pamoate hemihydrate (crystallised as its THF solvate), and have also investigated the selectivity of this material with respect to the sorption of particular guests from both the gas and liquid phases.⁶ We have also studied the selectivity behaviour of a related system, the isostructural solvates of 4-phenylpyridinium pamoate, when crystallised from mixtures of particular solvents.⁷

Mechanochemical synthesis is known to result in different chemical reactivity, different reaction pathways and different selectivity in terms of the product of the reaction when compared to solution methods.⁸ Control of polymorphic form can also be achieved using mechanochemical methods,⁹ and mechanochemistry is becoming an essential screening

tool for different solid forms in the pharmaceutical industry.¹⁰ There have been several reports on competitive selection of co-former in co-crystals using mechanochemistry.¹¹ However, there have been very few studies reported investigating the selectivity of hosts for particular guests using mechanochemistry. In fact we are aware of only one such study: Caira *et al.* reported the selectivity behaviour of an organic host molecule (1,1,6,6-tetraphenylhexa-2,4-diyne-1,6-diol) towards 2-, 3- and 4-aminobenzonitrile.¹² The authors reported similar selectivity profiles from solution and solid-state methods for two solvents, and somewhat different selectivity profiles for the third solvent. The authors comment that the mechanochemical reactions ‘follow the trends obtained in the solution experiments’.¹²

Our combined interest in the host–guest chemistry of pamoate salts, and in mechanochemistry, led us to further investigate the selectivity behaviour of a new pamoate-based host system, 1,10-phenanthroline pamoate (**1**, Scheme 1) using mechanochemistry.

Salt **1**, 1,10-phenanthroline pamoate, was first crystallised in our group as its THF solvate, **1·THF**, from a THF-water mixture. Analysis of the crystal structure revealed that **1·THF** is isostructural to its previously reported DMF solvate, **1·DMF** (CSD refcode QEXJEJ¹³). Further investigations resulted in the characterisation of two more isostructural



Scheme 1 The acid and bases used to make salts **1** and **2**.

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† Electronic supplementary information (ESI) available: Experimental details, crystallographic data, PXRD, selectivity results. CCDC 2111529–2111532. For ESI and crystallographic data in CIF or other electronic format see DOI: 10.1039/d1ce01286j



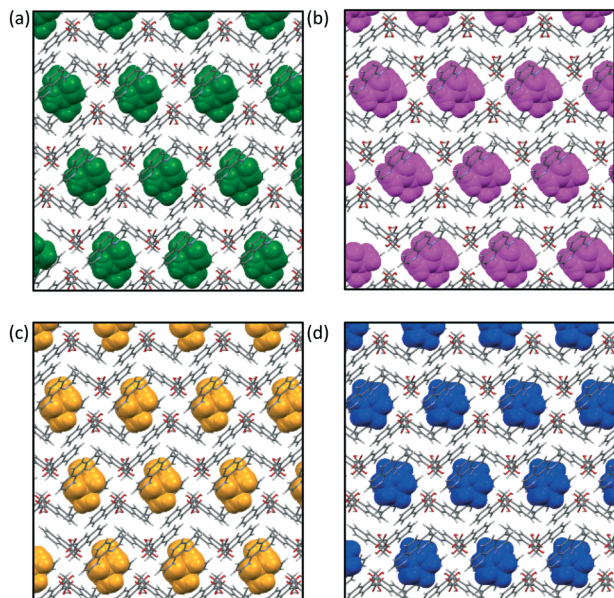


Fig. 1 The isostructural solvates of **1** (1,10-phenanthronium pamoate). (a) **1-DMF**, (b) **1-DMA**, (c) **1-DMSO** and (d) **1-THF**. The host ions are shown in stick representation, whilst the guest molecules are shown in spacefill representation with each guest in a different colour.

solvates, **1·DMA** and **1·DMSO**. Details of the crystallography are given in the ESI.†

The crystal structures of this isostructural series of solvates consist of hydrogen-bonded chains of pamoate anions which pack alongside one another to give layers. The cation hydrogen bonds to the solvent (not the anion), and these units pack in columns between the layers of anions. The solvent molecules are in pockets in this structure, with two solvent molecules in each pocket (Fig. 1).

The characterisation of this isostructural series of salts prompted us to investigate whether the material would show selectivity for one solvent over another during the crystallisation process. We therefore carried out a series of crystallisations from mixtures of solvents of different mole ratios (see ESI† for details). This revealed some degree of concentration-dependent selectivity, with the preference of solvents in the order DMA>DMSO>DMF (Fig. 2, blue lines).¹⁴ The selectivity for particular solvents could not easily be rationalised: there is no apparent trend in density of the solvates, or in the strength of hydrogen bonding between the cation and the solvent (see ESI†).

All four isostructural solvates of **1** could easily be synthesised mechanochemically, *via* liquid-assisted grinding (LAG) in a mortar and pestle (PXRD in ESI†). The selectivity for one solvent over another using mechanochemical synthesis was thus investigated. The selectivity observed by mechanochemistry is not pronounced, and neither is the difference in selectivity between synthetic methods. There is, nonetheless, a reproducible difference between the selectivity profiles obtained from solution and those obtained using mechanochemical methods (Fig. 2, red lines).

These interesting results, showing that selectivity during mechanochemical synthesis of a host-guest system can differ

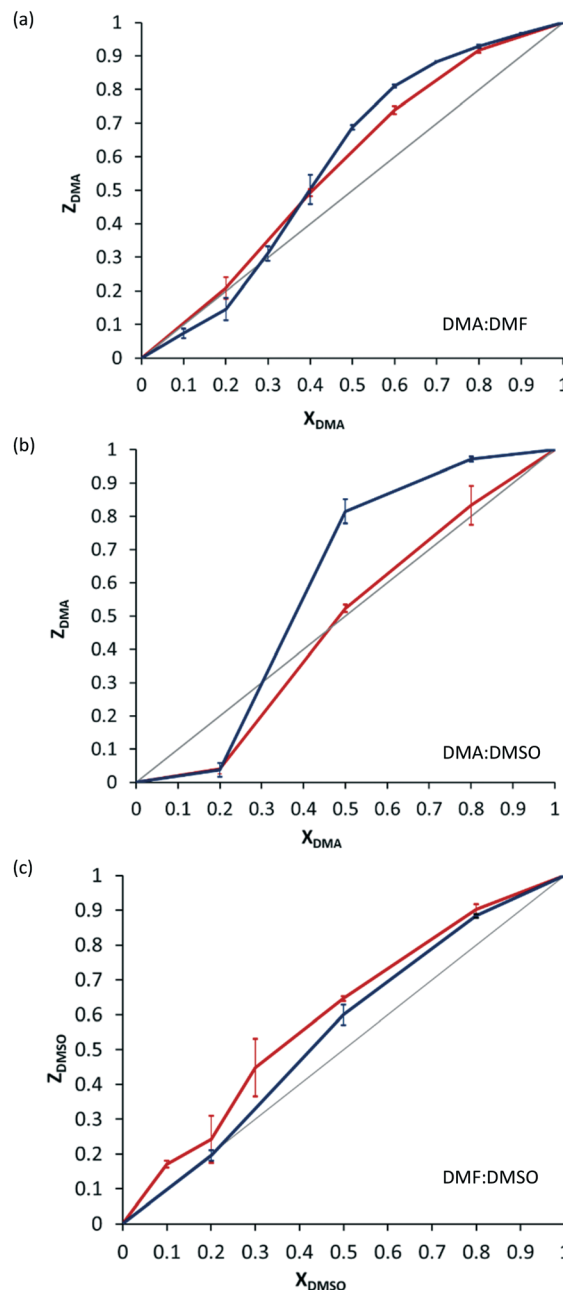


Fig. 2 Selectivity plots for 1-sol (sol = solvent = DMA or DMF or DMSO). Lines have been added as a guide to the eye. The grey line indicates zero selectivity. Blue lines are selectivity profiles determined by crystallisation from solution, red lines are selectivity profiles generated using mechanochemical competition experiments. X_{sol} is the mole fraction of the solvent in question in solution, Z_{sol} is the mole fraction of the solvent in the crystals. (a) Mixtures of DMA and DMF, (b) mixtures of DMA and DMSO, (c) mixtures of DMF and DMSO. Error bars are represented as \pm one standard deviation.

from the selectivity in solution synthesis, prompted us to extend the investigation to a second system.

We selected 3,4-lutidinium pamoate hemihydrate (2), which crystallises as its THF solvate. We have investigated this system extensively, and have found that the THF can be exchanged for a variety of solvents and volatile solids, leading

to a series of crystallographically-characterised isostructural solvates.⁵ We also found that exposure of **2·THF** to mixtures

of solvents in either solution or the gas phase shows preferential inclusion of some solvents over others (note that in this case, selectivity is observed during solvent exchange, rather than during crystallisation, as is the case for salt **1**).⁶ This system therefore seemed an ideal candidate to further our investigation, specifically by investigating whether selectivity *via* guest exchange would also differ if experiments are carried out mechanochemically.

Crystals of **2·THF** were immersed in mixtures of ethanol and toluene, propanol and toluene and ethanol and propanol with varying mole fractions. Analysis of the crystals after exposure to solvent mixtures showed that the system preferentially includes toluene over ethanol at all mole ratios (Fig. 3a, blue line). There is a marked preference for inclusion of toluene over propanol (Fig. 3b, blue line), and a preference for propanol over ethanol (Fig. 3c, blue line). Attempts to determine the crystal structures of crystals isolated from mixed solvent systems were inconclusive – we were unable to convincingly model both solvents in the channels.

When the experiments are carried out mechanochemically in a ball mill, by grinding crystalline **2·THF** with solvent mixtures, the selectivity profiles are quite different (Fig. 3, red lines). The preferential inclusion of toluene over ethanol is still observed, but it is less pronounced. The preferential inclusion of propanol over ethanol is far more pronounced. Most surprisingly, the preference for toluene over propanol is reversed at some mole ratios: when the material is prepared mechanochemically, there is a slight preference for inclusion of propanol over toluene when the mole fraction of toluene is low.

Preferential inclusion of toluene over other solvents can be explained on the basis of shape-filling: toluene molecules fill space more effectively in the solvate, resulting in a higher-density more stable crystal. Why the selectivity profile should change when synthesis is carried out mechanochemically is more difficult to explain. The most likely situation is that one solvate is kinetically favoured over the other. This would then be the solvate that is isolated in greater quantities from mechanochemical experiments.

A link between solvent volatility and preferential inclusion in mechanochemistry was also considered on the grounds that perhaps whichever solvent evaporates more rapidly is included in lower amounts during a mechanochemical exchange experiment. The boiling points of toluene, ethanol and propanol are 110.6, 78.4 and 97 °C respectively. One might expect toluene to be preferentially included to a larger degree when using mechanochemistry, however in our experiments the opposite is observed: in both cases the preference for inclusion of toluene is less pronounced, and in some cases even reversed.

Conclusions

A series of isostructural solvates, which can all be synthesised by crystallisation from solution as well as mechanochemically by LAG, were investigated in terms of their selectivity for



Fig. 3 Selectivity plots for **2·sol** (sol = solvent = toluene or PrOH or EtOH). Lines have been added as a guide to the eye. The grey line indicates zero selectivity. Blue lines are selectivity profiles determined by crystallisation from solution, red lines are selectivity profiles generated using mechanochemical competition experiments. X_{sol} is the mole fraction of the solvent in question in solution, Z_{sol} is the mole fraction of the solvent in the crystals. (a) Mixtures of toluene and EtOH, (b) mixtures of toluene and PrOH, (c) mixtures of PrOH and EtOH. Error bars are represented as \pm one standard deviation. There are no error bars on the solution data for PrOH–EtOH mixtures, because with all repetitions of the initial experiment the crystals were observed to dissolve and recrystallise, and further reliable data could not be obtained.



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