Reactivity differences of Sc$_3$N@C$_{2n}$ ($2n = 68$ and $80$). Synthesis of the first methanofullerene derivatives of Sc$_3$N@D$_{5h}$-C$_{80}$.
The semiquinone radical anion of 1,10-phenanthroline-5,6-dione: synthesis and rare earth coordination chemistry

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Reduction of 1,10-phenanthroline-5,6-dione (pd) with CoCp²⁺ resulted in the first molecular compounds of the pd⁻² semi-quinone radical anion, [CoCp⁶]⁻²(pd)⁻² (R = H, (1); R= Me₂, (2)). Furthermore compounds 1 and 2 were reacted with Y[hfac]₃(thf)₂ (hfac = 1,1,1−5,5,5-hexafluoroacetylacetonate) to synthesise the rare earth-transition metal heterometallic compounds, [CoCp⁶]⁻²[Y[hfac]₃(M,N’−pd)]⁻² (R = H, (3); R= Me₂, (4)).

Electron transfer reactions are fundamental to chemical processes. Stable organic and organometallic radicals are widely utilised, particularly in small molecule activation and catalysis. Redox-active ligands can act as electron reservoirs to achieve two electron processes, such as oxidative addition or reductive elimination, that would otherwise be inaccessible. This is a successful strategy in transition metal chemistry for the replacement of precious metals with earth abundant metals and has also been demonstrated for the f-elements.

The most common use of a f-element radical is the use of samarium diiodide in organic chemistry. However, organometallic complexes of the f-elements have proved particularly suited for the reductive activation and stabilisation in well-defined molecular complexes, of some of the most unusual and biologically relevant radical species e.g. CO₂⁻, CO₂⁻, and NO₂⁻. The number of examples of f-elements complexed to redox-active ligands or radical anions is still modest but this is a growing area of research activity; for magnetism, multi-electron transfer chemistry and functional materials. Heterobimetallic complexes remain a particular synthetic challenge. In order to realise mixed-metal complexes, a bridging ligand with different coordination sites is needed so that metal ions can be selected and installed stepwise to acquire the desired properties. However, the bridging ligands used in f-element chemistry have identical binding sites that lead near exclusively to homobimetallic complexes.

Phenanthroline dione (pd) is a commercially available yet highly underutilised redox-active ligand. It constitutes a three-membered electron transfer series, where the neutral form can be sequentially, one-electron reduced to give the monoaionic and dianionic forms (Scheme 1). The terminal members are diamagnetic, whereas the monoaionic form is a radical with an S = 1/2 ground state. The most prized features of this ligand are its two binding sites. In the dianionic form of the ligand (right, Scheme 1), the N,N’-pocket is a π-accepting dianion unit analogous to 2,2’-bipyridine, and distinct from the O,O-pocket which is a π-donating diolate, akin to a catecholate.

There is literature precedent for the formation of multi-metallic complexes using the dianionic form of the ligand. We also recently reported heterometallic rare earth-transition metal complexes utilising pd as a template. Our two-step route was necessary because although pd is reported to react with a number of reducing agents, the products are insoluble in common solvents, precluding collection of spectroscopic data and definitive assignment of redox state, but more importantly further reactivity.

In contrast to the well-developed chemistry of transition metal semiquinones, there are only three reports of the in situ characterisation of pd⁻². These include two spectro-electrochemical studies in combination with EPR, and an EPR study.

![Scheme 1](https://example.com/scheme1.png)

Scheme 1. Three-membered electron transfer series for pd showing calculated bond distances
Here we report the first organometallic syntheses of the radical anion of pd, [CoCp$_3$][pd]$^-$ (R = H, (1); R = Me, (2)). Furthermore, we demonstrate the coordination chemistry of 1 and 2, with [Y(hfac)$_3$(thf)$_2$] (hfac = 1,1,1,5,5,5-hexafluoroacetacetonate) to synthesise the rare earth-transition metal heterometallic compounds, [CoCp$_3$][Y(hfac)$_3$(N,N'-pd)]$^-$ (R = H, (3); R = Me, (4)). Our first choice of synthon for this chemistry was the potassium salt of generated pd$^-$. Time dependant (TD) density functional (DFT) calculations have been used to assign the electronic spectra (vide infra).

Single crystals of 1 suitable for X-ray diffraction were grown from acetonitrile solution at –35 °C, over two weeks. The solid state molecular structure and selected parameters are shown in Fig. 1. The metrics important for assessing the redox state of the ligand are those of the O,O'-pocket. In particular the bond distances of C5–O1 1.268(4) Å and C6–O2 1.24(2) Å; Scheme 1). Likewise, the C5–C6 bond distance of 1.456(5) Å in (see ESI). We were unable to obtain single crystals of 3 and 4 suitable for X-ray diffraction. However, we assign the N,N'-binding mode in 3 and 4 on the basis of NMR, IR and EPR data. We see no evidence of linkage isomerism. Furthermore, the electronic spectra of 3 and 4 are well reproduced by the TD-DFT calculations (vide infra). We have therefore retained selectivity in binding the coordination chemistry precursor into the stronger donor N,N'-pocket, and thus directed future reactivity of this bridging ligand to the radical-O,O'-pocket.
Fig. 1 Molecular structure of 1. One ion pair of the four crystallographically independent pairs in the unit cell shown and hydrogen atoms omitted for clarity. Thermal ellipsoids drawn at 50% probability. Selected distances (Å): C5–C6 1.456(5), C5–O1 1.268(4), C6–O2 1.278(4), Co–C(Cp) 2.021(3)–2.034(4).

To confirm the isolated radical form of pd, we measured the EPR spectra of 1 and 3 in MeCN solution at ambient temperature (Fig. 2). Spectral simulation of 1 was achieved with $g_{luv} = 2.0053$ consistent with a heterocyclic organic radical. The spectrum has rich hyperfine structure that was reproduced by including coupling to three pairs of protons in the ortho, meta and para positions of the aromatic ring (attached to C1–C3 in Fig 1). These yielded couplings of 1.40, 1.08, and 1.56 $\times 10^{-4}$ cm$^{-1}$, respectively. In addition, coupling to the $^{14}$N (I = 1) nuclei was estimated at 0.51 $\times 10^{-4}$ cm$^{-1}$. These spin-Hamiltonian parameters are very similar to previously reported spectra of pd$.^{17-19}$ Coordination of the pd$^{\cdot}$ to the Y$^{III}$ d$^2$ ion results in a slightly wider spectrum with broader lines. The increase in line width is a consequence of slightly perturbed molecular tumbling commensurate with the inclusion of the bulky [Y(hfac)$_3$] moiety. The centre of the spectra shifts to $g_{luv} = 2.0041$ with a minor change in the magnitude of the $^1$H hyperfine interaction to 1.41, 0.52, 1.56 $\times 10^{-4}$ cm$^{-1}$ (cf. 1 above), and an invariant $^{14}$N hyperfine splitting at 0.45 $\times 10^{-4}$ cm$^{-1}$. Thus, the most profound change is the halving of the coupling to the proton in the meta position. The absence of $^{89}$Y (I = 1/2) coupling is likely a result of the polarised bonding with this Lewis acidic metal as well as its small nuclear moment ($g_H = -0.275$) such that it is less than the experimental linewidth. Moreover, both spectra are consistent with a pd$^{\cdot}$ radical where the spin is nearly exclusively localised to the O,O' end of the molecule as supported by computational data.

Fig. 2 Comparison of the X-band EPR spectrum of 1 (experimental conditions: frequency, 9.8461 GHz; power, 0.63 mW; modulation, 0.007 mT), and 3 at 293 K (experimental conditions: frequency, 9.8653 GHz; power, 0.63 mW; modulation, 0.02 mT) recorded in MeCN solution at 293 K. Experimental data are represented by the black lines and simulation.

The structure of the anion in 1 was geometry optimised using the BP86 functional and is consistent with the radical pd$^{\cdot}$ (S = 1/2) form of the heterocycle (Scheme 1). The calculated C–O and C–C bond distances of the O,O'-pocket of 1.266 and 1.478 Å nicely match to the solid state structure (Fig. 1). In addition the C–C and C–N bond lengths exhibit a noticeable long-short-long pattern symptomatic of a quinoidal distortion commensurate with the addition of an unpaired electron to the aromatic system (Scheme 1).$^{16, 20}$ This effect diminishes the further the bond is from the O,O'-pocket. The Mulliken spin population analysis reveals 74% on the spin localised to this C$_2$O$_2$ unit, with a modest amount scattered over the phenanthroline part (Fig. S20). The optimised structure of the complex ion in 3 depicts a square antiprism geometry adopted by the one pd$^{\cdot}$ and three hfac$^{-}$ ligands coordinated to the central Y$^{II}$ ion (Fig. 3). The intraligand bond distances with the pd$^{\cdot}$ are nearly identical to those observed for the free radical in 1. Its attachment to the Y$^{II}$ ion results in very little change in the structural change to the redox-active ligand. The Mulliken spin population shows an identical spin distribution for the coordinated pd$^{\cdot}$ with the lion's share of the spin residing around the O,O'-pocket remote from the Y$^{II}$ centre (Fig. 3) No spin density is found on the Y$^{II}$ metal ion consistent with the weakly covalent bond diagnosed by EPR. These data are also consistent with N,N'-binding (vide supra) and in contrast to the perturbation to spin density and $^{89}$Y coupling, expected to result from O,O'-binding of the Y$^{III}$ centre.

Intensely coloured solutions of 1 and 3 are the result of a dominant absorption band at 558 and 639 nm, respectively. To gain insight into the nature of this transition, we have calculated the electronic spectra based on the electronic structure for the anion in 1 and 3. Time-dependent (TD) DFT calculations were performed on the geometry optimised
structures using MeCN as solvent in order to assign the electronic spectra. The vis-NIR spectra of both contain two transitions: 401 and 558 nm for 1, and 364 and 639 nm for 3 (Fig. 4). These bands are well reproduced, in particular the intensity, using the TD-DFT protocol though are blue-shifted ca. 1200 cm$^{-1}$ compared to the experiment. For 1, the bands which are π → π$^*$ transitions appear at 411 and 522 nm, result from HOMO-2 → LUMO+4 excitations, respectively (Fig. S22); the latter MOs are shown in the inset of Fig. 4. The analogous bands in 3 are calculated at 405 and 567 nm, respectively (Fig. 4). These are also assigned as π → π$^*$ transition within the pd$^-$, although in this instance as the organic radical is coordinated to a metal ion, they are specified as intraligand charge transfer (ILCT) transitions. Analysis of the donor and acceptor molecular orbitals (MO) shows the band at 567 is the SOMO → LUMO+1 excitation, respectively (Fig. S22); the latter MOs are shown in the inset in Fig. 4. The analogous bands in 3 are calculated at 405 and 567 nm, respectively (Fig. 4). These bands are well reproduced, in particular the higher energy band at 405 nm is predominantly a HOMO-2 → LUMO transition (Fig. S23); the order is different to as it includes contributions from the [Y(hfac)$_2$] moiety. Again, the intensity of these two transitions is nicely reproduced by the TD-DFT calculations. These transitions are diagnostic of the singly-reduced radical pd$^-$, as also observed for related 9,10-phenanthrosemiquinone (pq$^-$) complexes [MX(pq$^-$)]($\text{PPh}_3$(CO)) (M = Ru, X = Cl; M = Os, X = Br) where the dominant feature is also assigned as a π → π$^*$ ILCT. In conclusion, this work represents the discovery and success of a novel approach to the synthesis of rare earth-transition metal complexes. The stability of the bridging pd$^-$ ligand, and the selectivity of N,N$^2$-binding for Y(III) have been demonstrated. It is anticipated that compounds 1-4 will be useful synths in pursuit of mixed-metal radical-bridged f-element complexes in the future.

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**Conflicts of interest**

There are no conflicts to declare.

**Notes and references**

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The redox-active ligand as a route to heterobimetallic rare earth-transition metal compounds containing a semiquinone radical anion.