

# The interactions between the sterically demanding trimesitylphosphine oxide and trimesitylphosphine with scandium and selected lanthanide ions.

Andrew W.G.Platt<sup>1\*</sup> and Kuldip Singh<sup>2</sup>

1. School of Sciences, Staffordshire University, Leek Road, Stoke on Trent, ST4 2DF, UK
2. Chemistry Department, The University, Leicester, LE1 7RH, UK

## Abstract

The reactions between lanthanide nitrates,  $\text{Ln}(\text{NO}_3)_3$  and scandium and lanthanide trifluoromethane sulfonates,  $\text{Ln}(\text{Tf})_3$  with trimesitylphosphine oxide,  $\text{Mes}_3\text{PO}$  show that coordination to the metal ions does not lead to crystalline complexes. Investigation of the reactions by  $^{31}\text{P}$  NMR spectroscopy shows that weak complexes are formed in solution. The crystal structures of  $\text{Mes}_3\text{PO}\cdot 0.5\text{CH}_3\text{CN}$  (**1**) and  $[\text{Mes}_3\text{PO}]_3\text{H}_3\text{O}\cdot 2\text{CH}_3\text{CN}\cdot \text{Tf}$  (**2**), formed in the reaction between  $\text{ScTf}_3$  and  $\text{Mes}_3\text{PO}$ , are reported. Trimesitylphosphine,  $\text{Mes}_3\text{P}$ , is protonated by scandium and lanthanide trifluoromethane sulfonates and lanthanide nitrates in  $\text{CD}_3\text{CN}$  and the structure of  $[\text{Mes}_3\text{PH}]\text{Cl}\cdot \text{HCl}\cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$  (**3**) is reported.

## Introduction

The coordination chemistry of phosphine oxides with lanthanide ions has attracted interest for a number of years because of the potential the complexes have in a variety of applications [1,2].

Complexes of lanthanide nitrates have been studied in some detail in the solvent extraction separation of lanthanide from actinides carried out in nitric acid solutions [3-5]. We have previously studied the effect on structures and solution properties of increasing the size of the R group in  $\text{R}_3\text{PO}$  where we found that solid state structures and solution properties depend on a balance between steric and electronic effects of the phosphine oxides and the size of the lanthanide ions [6-8]. Cone angles, are not available for phosphine oxides, and as a result we have used the cone angles of the parent phosphine [9] as a proxy for the steric demands of the oxides. Previous studies on trialkyl phosphine oxides  $\text{R}_3\text{PO}$  (R = Et [6],  $^i\text{Bu}$  [7], cyclohexyl [10] and  $^t\text{Bu}$  [8]) have shown that significant differences in the properties of the lanthanide nitrate complexes result with changes in the steric and electronic properties of the ligands.

We have extended our studies to include the more highly sterically demanding trimesitylphosphine oxide, for which the cone angle of the parent phosphine is  $212^\circ$ . [9]

Lanthanide ions do not form complexes with soft donors such as phosphines in the presence of competition from hard donor ligands such as water. We have previously found that sterically crowded phosphine oxides are able to hydrogen bond to lanthanide-coordinated water molecules [11, 12]. Theoretical studies of hydrogen bonding between phosphines and a variety of hydrogen donors have indicated that such bonding can give rise to stable complexes [13-15] and an HF-PH<sub>3</sub> dimer has been identified in the gas phase [16]. In view of this we have conducted a brief investigation into the interaction of the sterically demanding Mes<sub>3</sub>P with hydrated lanthanide salts to investigate whether hydrogen bonding to coordinated water occurred.

## **Results and Discussion**

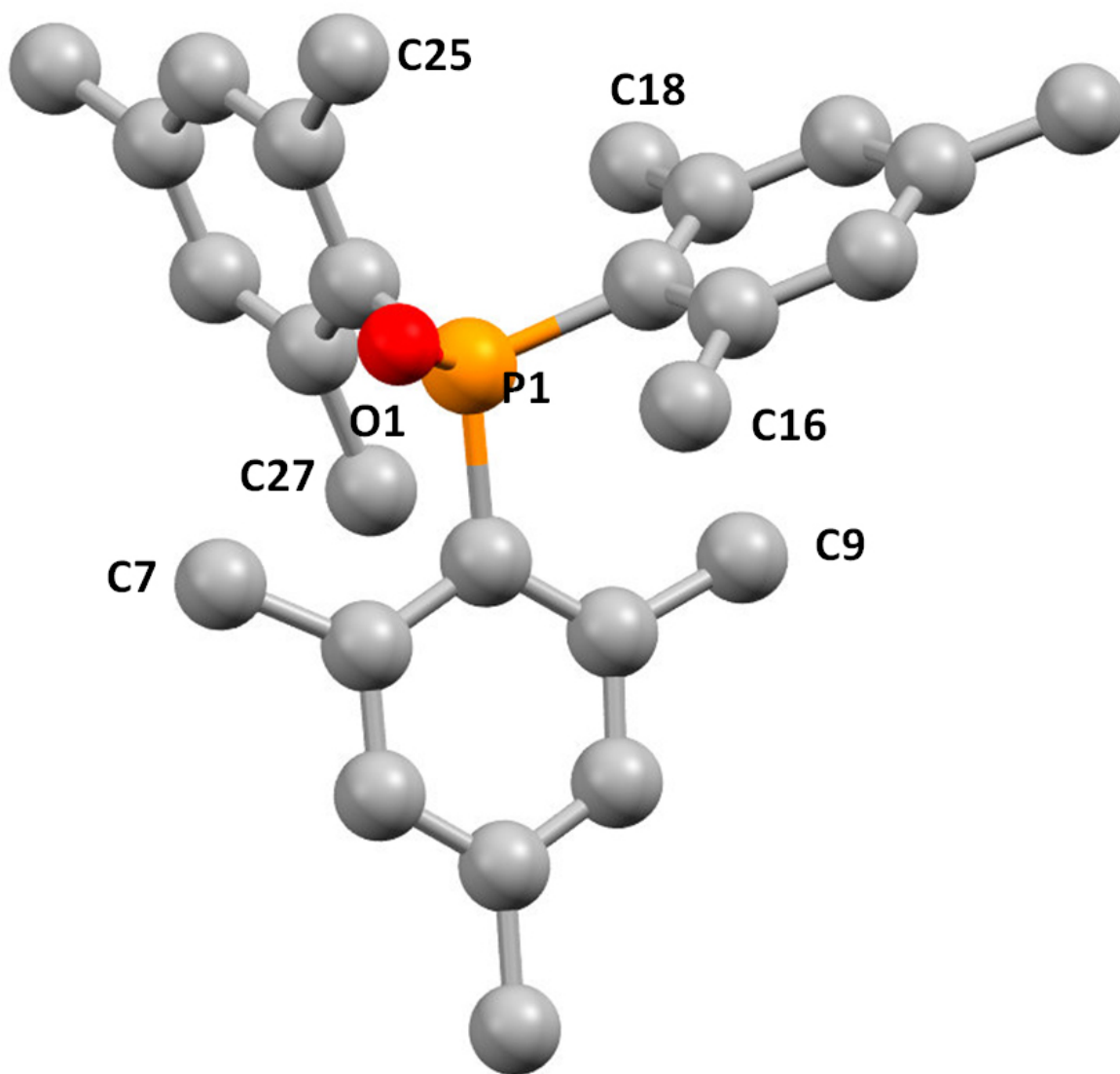
Attempted synthesis of complexes of Mes<sub>3</sub>PO with representative lanthanide nitrates across the series (Ln = Pr, Nd, Gd, Ho, Er, Lu) was carried out in ethanol solution. The phosphine oxide is poorly soluble in warm ethanol but on addition of solutions of lanthanide nitrates clear solutions were obtained which implied that interaction with the metal had taken place. Attempts to obtain crystalline materials from these reactions by slow evaporation, cooling to  $-30^\circ\text{C}$  or slow diffusion with diethylether or toluene followed by cooling were not successful. The reactions led to either recovery of unreacted Mes<sub>3</sub>PO, no solid materials or to the formation of oils. The reason for the apparent lack of coordination with Ln(NO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>3</sub> is probably a combination of the high affinity of lanthanide ions for nitrate and the increased steric demands of the

ligand limiting access of the phosphoryl oxygen to the coordination sites on the metal.

Clearly there is some interaction between  $\text{Mes}_3\text{PO}$  and the lanthanide nitrates in solution, but this does not result in the formation of complexes which are sufficiently stable to permit isolation. The reactions of lanthanide and scandium trifluoromethane sulfonates (triflates) were examined as the triflate ion has a low coordinating ability and might thus lead to a less crowded coordination environment around the metal. In reactions with  $\text{LnTf}_3$   $\text{Ln} = (\text{Ln} = \text{La}, \text{Nd}, \text{Eu}, \text{Er}, \text{Lu})$  in ethanol the initial suspensions of  $\text{Mes}_3\text{PO}$  cleared on addition of the lanthanide salt, again implying some complex formation. The reaction mixtures, however, failed to yield characterisable materials.

In order to assess the steric congestion around the oxygen in trimesitylphosphine oxide the crystal structure of  $\text{Mes}_3\text{PO} \cdot 0.5\text{CH}_3\text{CN}$  (**1**) was determined. The structure is shown in Figure 1 details of the data collection and refinement are given in Table 1

**Figure 1** The structure of  $\text{Mes}_3\text{PO}\cdot\text{CH}_3\text{CN}$  The acetonitrile molecule is omitted for clarity.



**Table 1 Data Collection and Refinement for (1) and (2)**

	$\text{Mes}_3\text{PO} \cdot 0.5\text{CH}_3\text{CN}$ C <sub>56</sub> H <sub>69</sub> N O <sub>2</sub> P <sub>2</sub>	$[\text{Mes}_3\text{PO}]_3\text{H}_3\text{O} \cdot \text{CF}_3\text{SO}_3$ C <sub>86</sub> H <sub>107</sub> F <sub>3</sub> N <sub>2</sub> O <sub>7</sub> P <sub>3</sub> S
Empirical formula		
Formula weight	850.06	1462.71
Temperature	150(2) K	150(2) K
Wavelength	0.71073 Å	0.71073 Å
Crystal system	Triclinic	Triclinic
Space group	P-1	P-1
Unit cell dimensions	$a = 8.101(5) \text{ \AA}$ $\alpha = 75.593(11)^\circ$ . $b = 16.449(10) \text{ \AA}$ $\beta = 83.298(12)^\circ$ . $c = 19.055(12) \text{ \AA}$ $\gamma = 79.329(13)^\circ$ . 2410(3) Å <sup>3</sup>	$a = 16.176(4) \text{ \AA}$ $\alpha = 105.682(5)^\circ$ . $b = 16.621(4) \text{ \AA}$ $\beta = 106.410(6)^\circ$ . $c = 17.233(4) \text{ \AA}$ $\gamma = 106.253(5)^\circ$ . 3948.1(17) Å <sup>3</sup>
Volume		
Z	2	2
Density (calculated)	1.171 Mg/m <sup>3</sup>	1.230 Mg/m <sup>3</sup>
Absorption coefficient	0.132 mm <sup>-1</sup>	0.164 mm <sup>-1</sup>
F(000)	916	1562
Crystal size	0.35 x 0.23 x 0.15 mm <sup>3</sup>	0.25 x 0.20 x 0.18 mm <sup>3</sup>
Theta range for data collection	1.89 to 26.00°.	1.38 to 25.00°.
Index ranges	-19 ≤ h ≤ 13, -19 ≤ k ≤ 19, -20 ≤ l ≤ 20	-19 ≤ h ≤ 13, -19 ≤ k ≤ 19, -20 ≤ l ≤ 20
Reflections collected	18854	19947
Independent reflections	9325 [R(int) = 0.0682]	13161 [R(int) = 0.0960]
Completeness to theta = 26.00°	98.8 %	94.6 %
Absorption correction	Empirical	Empirical
Max. and min. transmission	0.981 and 0.762	0.862 and 0.548
Refinement method	Full-matrix least-squares on F <sup>2</sup>	Full-matrix least-squares on F <sup>2</sup>
Data / restraints / parameters	9325 / 0 / 569	13161 / 0 / 948
Goodness-of-fit on F <sup>2</sup>	0.932	0.839
Final R indices [I > 2σ(I)]	R1 = 0.0606, wR2 = 0.1203	R1 = 0.0818, wR2 = 0.1372
R indices (all data)	R1 = 0.0978, wR2 = 0.1329	R1 = 0.1951, wR2 = 0.1730
Largest diff. peak and hole	0.367 and -0.441 e.Å <sup>-3</sup>	0.403 and -0.401 e.Å <sup>-3</sup>

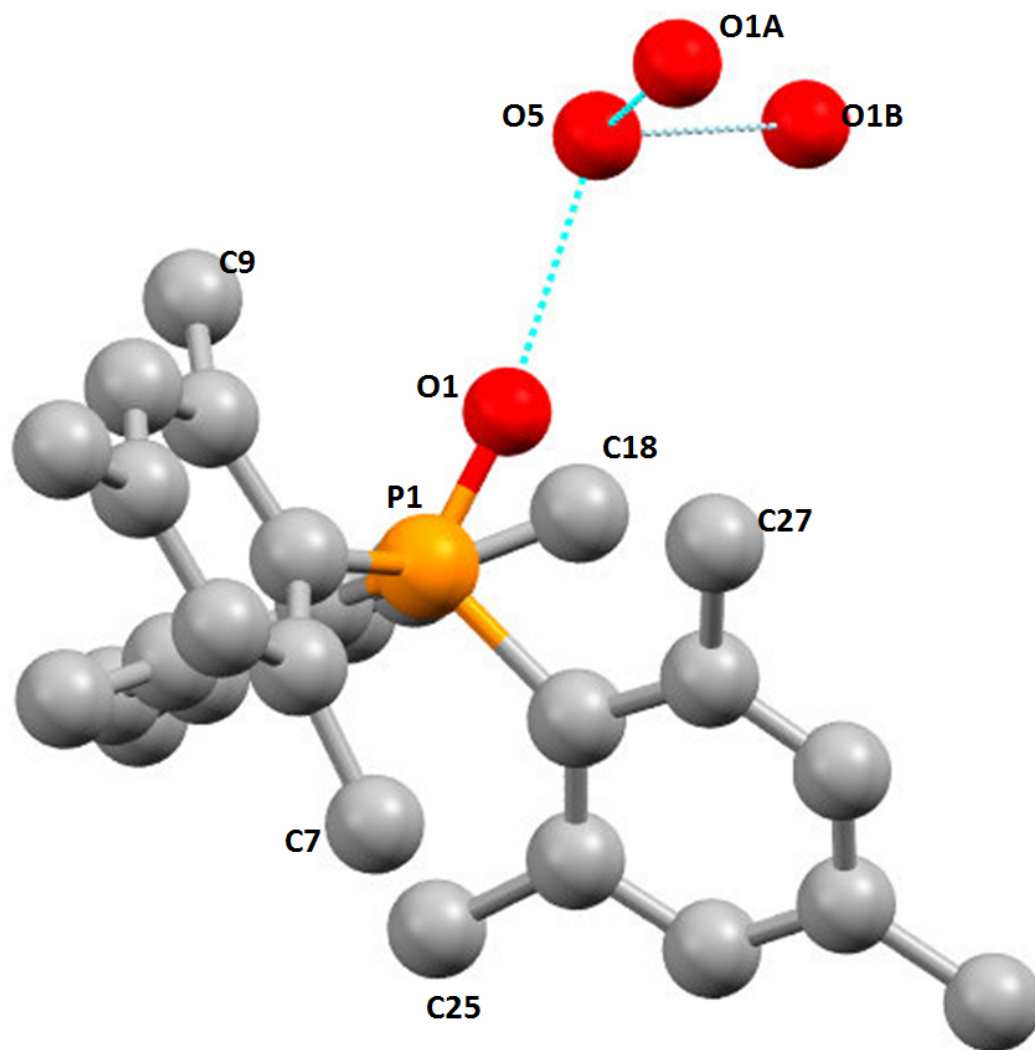
**Table 2 Selected Bond Distances and angles for (1) and (2)**

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
P(1)-O(1)	1.4858(18)	1.492(4)
P(1A)-O(1A)	1.4858(19)	1.500(4)
P(1B)-O(1B)		1.490(3)
P(1)-C(1)	1.831(3)	1.815(6)
P(1A)-C(1A)	1.826(3)	1.833(5)
P(1B)-C(1B)		1.843(6)
P(1)-C(10)	1.826(3)	1.808(6)
P(1A)-C(10A)	1.831(3)	1.831(6)
P(1B)-C(10B)		1.799(6)
P(1)-C(19)	1.825(3)	1.831(6)
P(1A)-C(19A)	1.828(3)	1.812(6)
P(1B)-C(19B)		1.821(6)
O(1)-P(1)-C(1)	107.65(12)	107.0(2)
O(1A)-P(1A)-C(1A)	108.94(11)	108.2(2)
O(1B)-P(1B)-C(1B)		108.4(2)
O(1)-P(1)-C(10)	109.86(11)	108.6(2)
O(1A)-P(1A)-C(10A)	108.02(12)	108.7(2)
O(1B)-P(1B)-C(10B)		107.9(2)
O(1)-P(1)-C(19)	108.60(11)	107.9(2)
O(1A)-P(1A)-C(19A)	108.94(11)	107.3(2)
O(1B)-P(1B)-C(19B)		109.2(2)
C(1)-P(1)-C(10)	108.92(12)	113.5(3)
C(1A)-P(1A)-C(10A)	111.10(11)	108.3(3)
C(1B)-P(1B)-C(10B)		113.0(3)
C(1)-P(1)-C(19)	111.07(12)	112.9(3)
C(1A)-P(1A)-C(19A)	108.94(11)	113.3(3)
C(1B)-P(1B)-C(19B)		106.9(3)
C(10)-P(1)-C(19)	110.69(12)	113.0(3)
C(10A)-P(1A)-C(19A)	110.06(11)	111.0(3)
C(10B)-P(1B)-C(19B)		111.5(3)

and selected bond distances and angles in Table 2. The compound crystallises with two Mes<sub>3</sub>PO molecules and one CH<sub>3</sub>CN in the unit cell. There are no close contacts between the acetonitrile and the phosphine oxide. Comparison of this structure with Ph<sub>3</sub>PO, which forms stable complexes with all simple lanthanide salts, indicates that the structure of Mes<sub>3</sub>PO changes to reduce steric interactions between the methyl groups and in doing so increases the crowding of the environment around the O-atom, as described below. The P=O bond distance is 1.486 Å which is very similar to those reported for Ph<sub>3</sub>PO, for example 1.483 [13] and 1.487[14]. The C-P-C angles widen to reduce steric interactions between the methyl groups in Mes<sub>3</sub>PO with an average of 110.2° compared to 106.4° in Ph<sub>3</sub>PO. There is also a significant increase in the P-C bond distance compared with Ph<sub>3</sub>PO from 1.800 Å to 1.828 Å which will further reduce steric crowding between the methyl groups. The structure shows that, compared to Ph<sub>3</sub>PO, reduction in steric strain by widening of the C-P-C angle has the effect of making the methyl groups effectively shield the phosphoryl oxygen and this probably limits the availability of the P=O group to coordinate to the lanthanide ion, where the environment around the metal will already contain coordinated nitrate ions and / or water molecules.

The reaction with scandium triflate in CH<sub>3</sub>CN did produce crystalline material which was suitable for x-ray diffraction study. The solid does not, however, contain scandium but is [Mes<sub>3</sub>PO]<sub>3</sub>H<sub>3</sub>O<sup>+</sup> CF<sub>3</sub>SO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup>.2CH<sub>3</sub>CN (**2**). The hydronium ions are formed almost certainly by acid hydrolysis of hydrated Sc<sup>3+</sup>. The structure is shown in Figure 2 and details of the data collection and refinement are included in Table 1.

**Figure 2** The structure of  $[\text{Mes}_3\text{PO}]_3\text{H}_3\text{O}^+$   $\text{CF}_3\text{SO}_3^-$  hydrogen atoms and acetonitrile are omitted for clarity. The dashed lines represent hydrogen bonds.

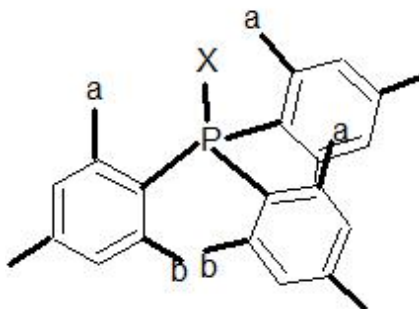


Three  $\text{Mes}_3\text{PO}$  molecules are coordinated to  $\text{H}_3\text{O}^+$  via hydrogen bonding and the  $\text{CH}_3\text{CN}$  and triflate ions are not involved in hydrogen bonding interactions. The  $\text{P}=\text{O}$  bonds are slightly longer (average 1.493 Å) than in  $\text{Mes}_3\text{PO}$  as expected on coordination to a positively charged centre. Larger increases in bond distances in similar structures such as  $\text{Ph}_3\text{PO}\cdot\text{HBr}$  (1.550 Å) [15] and  $\text{Ph}_3\text{PO}\cdot\text{HNO}_3$  (1.499 Å) [16]



are probably due to the proton being coordinated to one phosphine oxide rather than three as in this study.

Trimesitylphosphine oxide is bulkier than trialkylphosphine oxides such as  $t\text{Bu}_3\text{PO}$  (the cone angle  $t\text{Bu}_3\text{P}$  is  $182^\circ$ ) which forms only 1:2 complexes with lanthanide nitrates [8]. Trimesitylphosphine itself forms complexes with a number of metals and coordination compounds with Hg [21], Ag [22], Pt [23] and Au [24] have been characterised. The inability of  $\text{Mes}_3\text{PO}$  to form stable complexes might thus be considered to be surprising as the cone angle of the oxide will certainly be lower than that of the phosphine. A comparison of some of the parameters which might be relevant to their relative coordinating ability are given in Table 3.

**Table 3 Structural Parameters for Mes<sub>3</sub>P-X**

	Mes <sub>3</sub> P	Mes <sub>3</sub> PO	[Mes <sub>3</sub> PO] <sub>3</sub> H <sub>3</sub> O <sup>+</sup>
P-C	1.837(3)	1.828(3)	1.821(14)
Me(a)...Me(a)	4.76(12)	4.97(3)	4.96(14)
C(a)...P	2.72(5)		
C(a)...O		2.89(1)	2.89(3)
C-P-C	105.9 (3.7)	110.2(1.1)	111.5(2.3)

The approach of Mes<sub>3</sub>PO to the metal centre will be restricted by steric interaction with the methyl groups. The proximity of the methyls to the coordinating atoms indicates that the environments in Mes<sub>3</sub>P and Mes<sub>3</sub>PO are similar with P...O and C...O distances relatively short. Although the distances could be considered as indicative of hydrogen bonding (C...O average in Mes<sub>3</sub>PO is 2.89 Å compared to a sum of Van der Waals radii for C and O of 3.2 Å and C...P average in Mes<sub>3</sub>P is 2.72 Å compared to a sum of Van der Waals radii for P and C of 3.5 Å), it is more likely that these distances are imposed by the geometrical constraints of the molecules [25].

The differences in coordinating ability probably lies in the strong hydration of the lanthanide and scandium ions which combines with the steric congestion of the ligand to make coordination impossible under the conditions employed. In addition the metal

ions coordinated to Mes<sub>3</sub>P are likely to be less strongly solvated (for example using CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>/ THF as the reaction medium) and hence the effective size of the metal ions will be lower than hydrated lanthanide or scandium ions.

#### Solution NMR investigation

Given that there is clearly some interaction between the lanthanide ions and Mes<sub>3</sub>PO several lanthanide triflate / Mes<sub>3</sub>PO systems were investigated by <sup>31</sup>P NMR spectroscopy.

The results are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4 <sup>31</sup>P NMR data for lanthanide triflate / Mes<sub>3</sub>PO in CD<sub>3</sub>CN**

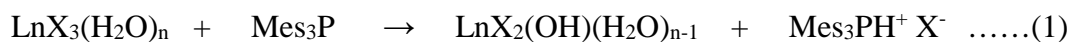
a.	$\delta$ /ppm	$W_{1/2}$ /Hz <sup>a</sup>	Temperature dependence <sup>b</sup> /ppmK <sup>-1</sup>
b.			
c.			
d.			
Ln			
e.			
Nd	31.9	71	0.04
f.			
Eu	29.9	135	-0.14
g.			
Ho	38.4	63	-0.15
h.			
Er	28.8	220	-0.17
i.			
Yb	29.1	13	-0.04
j.			
Lu	32.3	10	-0.001
k.			
Mes <sub>3</sub> PO	26.9	5	0.003
l.			

a. At 30°C b. temperature range 30 – 70°C

The absence of any large coordination shifts with the paramagnetic lanthanide ions indicates that there is no direct interaction between the phosphine oxide and the metal.

However, the lines are broad and show a significant temperature dependence of the chemical shifts which whilst smaller than that observed for Ln-O=P systems, is an order of magnitude greater than that of free Mes<sub>3</sub>PO. We recently reported the structures of [Ln(H<sub>2</sub>O)<sub>5</sub>(Cy<sub>3</sub>PO)<sub>2</sub>].2Cy<sub>3</sub>PO.3X (X = Cl, Br) [11, 12] where Cy = cyclohexyl, C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>11</sub> in which the Cy<sub>3</sub>PO are either directly bonded to the metal ion or through hydrogen bonding to the coordinated water molecules. In these systems the temperature dependence of the <sup>31</sup>P NMR shifts depends on whether the Cy<sub>3</sub>PO is directly bonded to the metal for example +0.7 ppmK<sup>-1</sup> for P=O-Eu and -0.1 ppmK<sup>-1</sup> for P=O...H<sub>2</sub>O-Eu. The same reversal in the sign of the temperature dependence is also found for Yb and seems to be indicative of the differing nature of the interaction. It is interesting that the temperature dependence in the Mes<sub>3</sub>PO / Ln<sup>3+</sup> systems is opposite of that found for <sup>31</sup>P shift for phosphine oxides directly bonded to lanthanides [7,8], but the same as for phosphine oxides hydrogen bonded to lanthanide coordinated water molecules. In the absence of crystallographic data from isolated compounds it is not possible to be certain of the nature of this interaction, but hydrogen bonding to the coordinated water molecules, as previously observed with other sterically crowded phosphine oxides [11, 12] seems reasonable. The reaction between scandium and lanthanide triflates (Ln = Eu, Lu) and lanthanide nitrates (Ln = La, Ce, Eu, Yb and Lu) and Mes<sub>3</sub>P in CD<sub>3</sub>CN was carried out to examine the possible formation of hydrogen bonded phosphine complexes. If such an interaction were to occur a larger paramagnetic shift might be expected than is observed for hydrogen bonded R<sub>3</sub>PO as the effect would be transmitted through 3 bonds rather than 4. The NMR spectra show in addition to a signal from unreacted phosphine at -36.5 a peak at -26.9 ppm <sup>1</sup>J<sub>PH</sub> 510 Hz which was independent of the metal ion used. This has very similar shift and coupling constant to that reported for

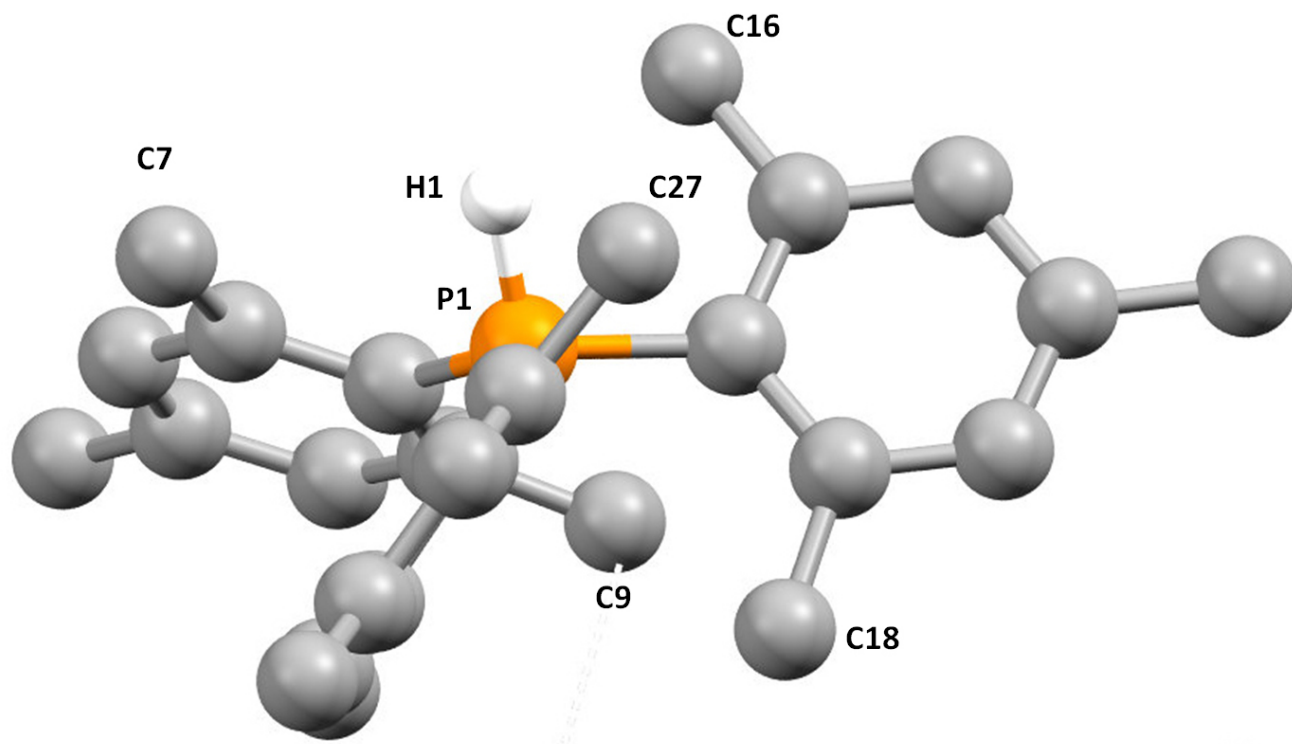
Mes<sub>3</sub>PH<sup>+</sup>[26]. The formation of the phosphonium salt undoubtedly proceeds via the protonation of the phosphine by the acidic hydrogens of the coordinated water molecules as indicated in equation 1.



This was confirmed by carrying out the reaction with ScTf(D<sub>2</sub>O)<sub>6</sub> which produced a characteristic 1:1:1 triplet (<sup>1</sup>J<sub>PD</sub> = 76 Hz) expected from P-D coupling. Further confirmation was obtained by preparing a fully characterised Mes<sub>3</sub>PH<sup>+</sup> salt by reaction of Mes<sub>3</sub>P with aqueous HCl in CH<sub>3</sub>CN. Single crystals of Mes<sub>3</sub>PH<sup>+</sup> Cl<sup>-</sup> ·HCl·2H<sub>2</sub>O formed spontaneously from the reaction mixture. The <sup>31</sup>-P NMR spectrum showed the expected single signal at -25.6 <sup>1</sup>J<sub>PH</sub> = 511 Hz. Hydrogen bonding of the phosphine to the coordinated water is probably the first step in this reaction.

The structure of Mes<sub>3</sub>PH<sup>+</sup>Cl<sup>-</sup>·HCl·2H<sub>2</sub>O is shown in Figure 3, details of the data collection and refinement in Table 5 and selected bond distances and angles in Table 6.

**Figure 3 The Structure of [Mes<sub>3</sub>PH]Cl·HCl·2H<sub>2</sub>O Chloride ions, water, HCl and carbon and hydrogen atoms omitted for clarity**



**Table 5. Crystal data and structure refinement for Mes<sub>3</sub>PH<sup>+</sup>·Cl<sup>-</sup>·HCl·2H<sub>2</sub>O**

Empirical formula	C <sub>27</sub> H <sub>39</sub> Cl <sub>2</sub> O <sub>2</sub> P	
Formula weight	497.45	
Temperature	150(2) K	
Wavelength	0.71073 Å	
Crystal system	Orthorhombic	
Space group	P2(1)2(1)2(1)	
Unit cell dimensions	a = 11.6750(19) Å	α = 90°.
	b = 14.603(2) Å	β = 90°.
	c = 15.704(2) Å	γ = 90°.
Volume	2677.4(7) Å <sup>3</sup>	
Z	4	
Density (calculated)	1.234 Mg/m <sup>3</sup>	
Absorption coefficient	0.324 mm <sup>-1</sup>	

F(000)	1064
Crystal size	0.16 x 0.09 x 0.04 mm <sup>3</sup>
Theta range for data collection	1.90 to 26.00°.
Index ranges	-14<=h<=14, -18<=k<=17, -19<=l<=19
Reflections collected	21143
Independent reflections	5255 [R(int) = 0.1783]
Completeness to theta = 26.00°	100.0 %
Absorption correction	Empirical
Max. and min. transmission	0.862 and 0.488
Refinement method	Full-matrix least-squares on F <sup>2</sup>
Data / restraints / parameters	5255 / 4 / 298
Goodness-of-fit on F <sup>2</sup>	0.748
Final R indices [I>2sigma(I)]	R1 = 0.0622, wR2 = 0.0854
R indices (all data)	R1 = 0.1223, wR2 = 0.0980
Absolute structure parameter	0.01(9)
Largest diff. peak and hole	0.337 and -0.330 e.Å <sup>-3</sup>

**Table 6. Bond lengths [Å] and angles [°] for (3).**

---

P(1)-C(10)	1.785(4)
P(1)-C(1)	1.806(5)
P(1)-C(19)	1.810(5)
P(1)-H(1)	1.3117
C(10)-P(1)-C(1)	117.4(2)
C(10)-P(1)-C(19)	113.8(2)
C(1)-P(1)-C(19)	113.4(2)
C(10)-P(1)-H(1)	101.7
C(1)-P(1)-H(1)	105.0
C(19)-P(1)-H(1)	103.3

---

The structure is similar to those reported for the  $\text{Mes}_3\text{PH}^+$  with other anions [27-30].

The P-C distances, at an average of 1.799 Å, are slightly below the lower end of the range reported for other structures where the P-C distance ranges from 1.801 to 1.896 Å with an average of 1.833 Å. The C-P-C bond angles vary considerably in the previously reported structures from 106 to 118° (average 112.4°) and the average of 114.8° found here lies within that range. There are no interactions between the P-H and  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$ , HCl and  $\text{Cl}^-$  but hydrogen bonding is found between the lattice water, HCl and chloride ions. Details are given as supplementary information in Table S1. In the absence of short contacts with the phosphonium hydrogen the P-H distance of 1.311 Å lies within the range of 1.341 – 1.263 Å (average 1.301 Å) reported for the  $\text{Mes}_3\text{PH}^+$  ion reported in other compounds [27-30].



## Conclusion

Strong complexes between Mes<sub>3</sub>PO and lanthanide ions do not form due to a combination of steric factors related to the congestion around the donor atom and probably the strong solvation of the lanthanide starting materials. The interaction which leads to increased solubility of Mes<sub>3</sub>PO observed in reactions with the lanthanide ions is probably due to hydrogen bonding with coordinated water molecules in Ln(NO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>3</sub>·6H<sub>2</sub>O and Ln(CF<sub>3</sub>SO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>3</sub>·6H<sub>2</sub>O used in the reactions.

Trimesitylphosphine itself reacts with hydrated lanthanide ions to form the well-defined phosphonium salt rather than forming hydrogen bonded complexes.

## Experimental

Data for x-ray structures were collected on a Bruker APEX 2000 CCD diffractometer using graphite-monochromated Mo-K<sub>α</sub> radiation,  $\lambda = 0.71073 \text{ \AA}$ .

The data were corrected for Lorentz and polarisation effects and empirical absorption corrections applied. Structure solution by direct methods and structure refinement based on full-matrix least-squares on  $F^2$  employed SHELXTL version 6.10 [31].

Hydrogen atoms were included in calculated positions (C-H = 0.95 – 0.98 Å) riding on the bonded atom with isotropic displacement parameters set to 1.5  $U_{eq}(C)$  for methyl H atoms and 1.2  $U_{eq}(C)$  for all other H atoms. All non-H atoms were refined with anisotropic displacement parameters.

Infrared spectra were recorded with a resolution of  $\pm 2 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  on a Thermo Nicolet Avatar 370 FT-IR spectrometer operating in ATR mode. Samples were compressed onto the optical window and spectra recorded without further sample pre-treatment.

NMR spectra were obtained on a JEOL ECX – 400

Trimesitylphosphine oxide Trimesitylphosphine (5.08 g 13 mmol) was suspended in 25 mL acetone and 2.59 g 30% aqueous hydrogen peroxide was added over 10 minutes. The suspension was heated to 50°C for 10 minutes and stirred at room temperature for 2 d. The mixture was filtered, washed with methanol and dried at the pump to give 5.06 g white solid. Recrystallisation from acetonitrile gave crystals of  $[\text{Mes}_3\text{PO}]_2\text{CH}_3\text{CN}$  suitable for x-ray diffraction.

#### Synthesis $\text{Mes}_3\text{PH}^+\text{Cl}^-\text{HCl}\cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$

Trimesitylphosphine 0.50 g (1.25 mmol) was suspended in  $\text{CH}_3\text{CN}$  (4.0 g) and 0.22 g 36% aqueous HCl, (2.17 mmol) was added. The mixture cleared on addition and crystals were deposited on standing overnight. The yellow crystals were filtered, washed with  $\text{CH}_3\text{CN}$  and dried at the pump to give 0.39 g (63%)

Analysis Expected(found) C 65.19(65.00) H7.90(8.04)

NMR  $^1\text{H}$  (400 MHz) 1.90(s) 9H  $\text{CH}_3$ , 2.33(s) 9H  $\text{CH}_3$  2.52(s) 9H  $\text{CH}_3$ , 6.94(s) 3H CH, 7.07(s) 3H CH, 9.4(d)  $^1J_{\text{PH}}$  510 Hz 1H PH;  $^{31}\text{P}$  (161 MHz)  $\text{CDCl}_3$  d -25.6  $^1J_{\text{PH}}$  510 Hz,

$\text{ScTF}_3\cdot 6\text{D}_2\text{O}$  was prepared by recrystallising the hydrated salt once from  $\text{D}_2\text{O}$

#### Supplementary data

CCDC 1419070 - 1419072 contain the supplementary crystallographic data for (1) – (3) respectively. These data can be obtained free of charge via

<http://www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/conts/retrieving.html>, or from the Cambridge

Crystallographic Data Centre, 12 Union Road, Cambridge CB2 1EZ UK: fax (+44+

1223-336-033 or e-mail: [deposit@ccdc.cam.ac.uk](mailto:deposit@ccdc.cam.ac.uk)

## References

1. D.A.Atwood (Ed) The Rare Earth Elements: Fundamentals and Applications, John Wiley &sons Ltd (2012)
2. X.Sun, H.Luo, S.Dai, Chem. Rev. 112 (2012) 2100
3. X-M.Gan, R.T.Paine, E.N.Duesler, H. Noth, J. Chem. Soc. Dalton Trans. (2003) 153
4. J.R.Klaehn, D.R.Peterman, M.K.Harrup, R.D.Tillotson, T.A.Luther, J.D.Law, L.M.Daniels, Inorg. Chim. Acta 361 (2008) 2522
5. J.H.Matonic, M.P.Neu, A.E.Enriquez, R.T.Paine, B.C.Scott, J. Chem. Soc. Dalton Trans. (2002) 2328
6. A. Bowden, K. Singh A. W.G.Platt Polyhedron **42**, 30, (2012)
7. A.Bowden, P.N.Horton, A.W.G.Platt Inorganic Chemistry **50**, 2553, (2011)
8. A.Bowden, S.J. Coles, M.B. Pitak, A.W. G. Platt; Inorganic Chemistry **51**, 4379, (2012)
9. C.A.Tolman, Chem. Rev. 77 (1977) 345
10. A.P.Hunter, A.M.J.Lees, A.W.G.Platt Polyhedron **26**, 4865, (2007)
11. A.M.J.Lees, A.W.G.Platt Polyhedron 67 (2014) 368
12. A.Bowden, A.M.J.Lees, A.W.G.Platt Polyhedron 91 (2015) 110
13. Q.Li, H.Zhu, H.Zhu, X.Yang, W.Li, J.Cheng Spectrochim. Acta 132 (2014) 271
14. A.Zabardasti A.Kakanejadifard, H.Goudarziafshar, M.Salehnassaj, Z.Zohrehband, F.Jaberansari, M.Solimannejad Comp. Theor. Chem. 1014 (2013) 1
15. S.X.Tian, X.X.Chi, K.Z.Xu Chem. Phys. 276 (2002) 263
16. A.C.Legon, L.C.Willoughby Chem. Phys. 74 (1983) 127
17. G.Bandoli, G.Bartolozzo, D.A.Clemente, U.Croatto, C.Pannattoni J. Chem. Soc. A 1970, 2778
18. A.Thomas, T.A.Hamor, Acta Cryst. Sect. C 1993, 49, 355
19. C.A.McCauliffe, R.G.Pritchard Acta Cryst. Sect. C 1992, 48, 2002
20. R.V.Blatt, R.G.Bullivant, K.E.Ellington, S.E.Hill, J. Hilton, T.J.Houghton, M.Hovell, S.C.Wallwork Polyhedron, 1998, 17, 2173
21. E.C. Alyea, S.A.Dias, G.Ferguson, M. Parvez, Inorg. Chim. Acta 37,(1979) 45
22. E.C.Alyea, S.A.Dias, S.Stevens Inorg. Chim. Acta 44 (1980) L203
23. J.Malito, E.C.Alyea Inorg. Chim. Acta 144 (188) 155
24. A.Bayer, G.A.Bowmaker, H. Schmidtbauer Inorg. Chem. 35 (1996) 5959
25. G.P.Schiemenz Z. Naturforsch. 62b (2007) 235
26. E.C.Alyea, J.Malito Phosphorus, Sulfur and Silicon, 1989 46, 175

27. G.Menard, L.Tran, D.W.Stephan J. Chem. Soc. Dalton Trans. 2013, 42, 13685  
 28. T.Xu, E.Y.-X Chem J. Amer. Chem. Soc. 2014 136, 1774  
 29. G.Menard, D.W.Stephan J. Amer. Chem. Soc. 2010 132, 1796  
 30. C.Jiang, O.Blacque, H.Berke Organometallics 2009 28 5233  
 31. G. M. Sheldrick, SHELXTL Version 6.10. Bruker AXS, Inc. Madison, Wisconsin, USA, 2000.

**Table S1 Hydrogen bonding interactions in (3)**

Hydrogen bonds with  $H..A < r(A) + 2.000 \text{ \AA} >$  and  $\langle DHA \rangle > 110^\circ$ .

D-H	d(D-H)	d(H..A)	$\langle DHA \rangle$	d(D..A)	A
O1-H1A	0.873	2.272	156.56	3.093	C11 [ -x+1, y+1/2, -z+1/2 ]
O1-H1B	0.889	2.172	171.14	3.053	C12
O2-H2A	0.837	2.121	175.00	2.956	C11 [ -x+1/2, -y+1, z+1/2 ]
O2-H2B	0.858	1.860	122.93	2.435	O1

R1 = 0.0620, wR2 = 0.0824.





