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Manipulating the Relaxation of Quasi-\(D_{4d}\) Dysprosium Compounds through Alternation of the O-donor Ligands

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ABSTRACT: Three mononuclear \(D_{4d}\) complexes with the same auxiliary ligand Lz (2,4-diamino-6-pyridyl-1,3,5-triazine), \([\text{Dy}(	ext{TTA})_3\text{Lz}] (1\text{Dy})\) (TTA = 4,4,4-trifluoro-1-(2-thienyl)-1,3-butanedionate), \([\text{Dy}(	ext{acac})_3\text{Lz}]\cdot\text{CH}_3\text{OH}\cdot0.5\text{H}_2\text{O} (2\text{Dy})\) (acac = acetylacetone), and \([\text{Dy}(\text{MQ})_2\text{Lz}_2]\cdot\text{CH}_3\text{OH} (3\text{Dy})\) (MQ = 2-methyl-8-quinolinol), have been synthesized through alteration of the ligands containing O donors. In all three complexes, the \(D_{4d}\) ions are eight-coordinate and submitted to pseudo-\(D_{4d}\) symmetry in the first coordination sphere. It is noteworthy that the TTA ligands in 1Dy are easily substituted by other bidentate capping ligands with O donors, leading to distinct magnetic properties, which were studied experimentally and via ab initio calculations. All three complexes were found to exhibit single-molecule magnets behavior with \(U_{\text{eff}}\) of 22 cm\(^{-1}\) (1Dy), 112 cm\(^{-1}\) (2Dy), and 56 cm\(^{-1}\) (3Dy) under zero applied dc field. Complex 1Dy demonstrates inferior SIM properties compared with 2Dy and 3Dy, which can be attributed to the strong electron-withdrawing effects of TTA ligands, as confirmed by theoretical calculations. However, butterfly-shaped magnetic hysteresis in 1Dy and 3Dy were observed at 1.9 K, while not in 2Dy.

INTRODUCTION

Single-ion magnets (SIMs) with only one spin centre within a molecule have flourished as an important class of single-molecule magnets (SMMs) in recent years.\(^7\) Contrary to transition-metal single-ion magnets,\(^2\) such as the linear [Fe(C(SiMe\(_3\))\(_3\))]\(_n\)\(^1\) showing energy barrier of 226 cm\(^{-1}\) (325 K) in a zero applied dc field,\(^3\) lanthanide-based single-ion magnets\(^4\) with strong internal single-ion anisotropy, especially those complexes containing Dy\(^3\), Tb\(^3\) and Er\(^3\) ions, demonstrate great potential in enhancing SMM properties. Remarkably, a dysprosium metalloccenium cation \([\text{Cp}^m\text{Dy}]^+\) (\(\text{Cp}^m = 1,2,4\text{-tri(tert-butyl)cyclopentadienide}\)) SIM exhibits a record blocking temperature, \(T_B\) up to 60 K.\(^5\) Two versions of the anisotropy barrier are 1277 cm\(^{-1}\) (1837 K)\(^6\) and 1223 cm\(^{-1}\) (1760 K),\(^7\) which are comparable to that of the \([\text{Dy}(\text{O}’\text{Bu})_2(\text{py})] [\text{BP}’\text{H}_2]\) complex (1261 cm\(^{-1}\), 1815 K).\(^8\)

For the great majority of lanthanide-based SMMs, QTM relaxation behavior occurs under zero-dc applied field, especially in SIMs.\(^9\) Considering that the fast QTM will shortcut the Orbach relaxation process in the low-temperature regime, reducing the anisotropy barriers \(U_{\text{csh}}\), therefore the suppression of QTM is a crucial issue for realizing the application of spin-based devices.\(^10\) Up to now, among the methods adopted to suppress QTM as efficiently as possible, one can cite the modulation of ligand field to obtain an ideal axial symmetry,\(^11\) applying a dc magnetic field,\(^12\) magnetic dilution\(^13\) or isotopic enrichment.\(^14\) For dinuclear and multinuclear lanthanide SMMs, strong magnetic exchange coupling between the spin centers can hinder zero-field fast relaxation pathway,\(^15\) while for mononuclear lanthanide SMMs, high symmetry systems, such as \(D_{4d}\) and \(D_{5h}\), have been widely investigated, in which the vanishing off-diagonal crystal field parameters \(B_q (q \neq 0)\) can control the mixing \(m_j\) levels.\(^16\)

Lanthanide \(\beta\)-diketone complexes with quasi square antiprismatic (SAP) geometry \((D_{4d})\) behave as promising systems to design high anisotropy barrier SIMs.\(^17\) The first significant development of this kind of complexes was reported by Gao et al., where the complex \([\text{Dy}’\text{acac})_3(\text{H}_2\text{O})_2]\) showed a typical SIM behavior.\(^18\) When the two \(\text{H}_2\text{O}\) molecules in the complex \([\text{Dy}’\text{acac})_3(\text{H}_2\text{O})_2]\) were replaced by diverse auxiliary ligands, such as 1,10-phenanthroline (phen) and its large aromatic derivatives, the properties of the corresponding SIMs have changed obviously.\(^19\) In addition to the \(\beta\)-diketone ligand, the nitrogen-enriched ligand \(L_2\)\(^20\) was used as co-ligands to construct SMMs with \(D_{4d}\) symmetry and better magnetic properties. Among the \(D_{4d}\) symmetry Dy-based SMMs reported to date, \([\text{Dy}(\alpha-\text{vanillin})\cdot\text{NO}_3]’\cdot\text{solvent}\) complex represents the most successful example that enhances the anisotropy barrier \(U_{\text{csh}} = 615\) K and the hysteresis loop \((T_B = 7\) K), which can be attributed to strong axial anisotropy resulted from the rotation of the plane of the square-antiprismatic geometry.\(^21\)

According to the above studies, we synthesized three new complexes based on the \(L_2\) ligand, i.e. \([\text{Dy}’\text{TTA})_3(\text{Lz}’)] (1\text{Dy}), [\text{Dy}’\text{acac})_3(\text{Lz}’)] \cdot\text{CH}_3\text{OH} \cdot0.5\text{H}_2\text{O} (2\text{Dy}), and [\text{Dy}(\text{MQ})_2(\text{Lz})_2]\cdot\text{Br}’\text{CH}_3\text{OH} (3\text{Dy})\). The \(\text{Dy}^{3+}\) centers in all three
complexes adopt the eight-coordinated $N_xO_{8-x}$ coordination environment showing the distorted $D_{4d}$ local symmetry. Contrary to previous studies, herein, we investigate the relaxation dynamics of three dysprosium complexes with quasi-$D_{4d}$ coordination symmetry through fixing the N-containing ligands while modification of the ligands containing O donors (Scheme 1). In these complexes, the effective energy barrier varies remarkably due to change of the ligands containing O donors. Magneto-structural studies and theoretical calculations reveal that the alternation of the O-donor ligands induces significant impact on the Dy-based single-ion magnets.

**EXPERIMENTAL SECTION**

**Materials and Methods.** The ligand Lz was synthesized by the literature procedure previously published. Other materials were commercially available and used as received without further purification. IR spectra were obtained using a Nicolet 6700 FTIR spectrometer with ART module in the range from 500 to 4000 cm$^{-1}$. Elemental analysis for C, N and H were performed via a Perkin-Elmer 2400 analyzer.

**Scheme 1.** Schematic structures of compounds 1Dy, 2Dy and 3Dy.

**Synthesis of [Dy(TTA)$_3$Lz] (1Dy).** Dy$_2$(TTA)$_3$·2H$_2$O (0.1 mmol) was added to a solution of Lz (0.1 mmol) in mixture of MeOH/CH$_2$Cl$_2$ (5 mL/10 mL). The solution was stirred for 4 h, and the filtrate was allowed to crystallize by slow evaporation. Colorless crystals of 1Dy were obtained after few days. Yield: ~60%. Selected IR (cm$^{-1}$): 3327 (w), 3288 (br), 1597 (s), 1579 (s), 1538 (s), 1458 (m), 1409 (m), 1352 (m), 1300 (s), 1250 (s), 1190 (w), 1012 (s), 921 (m), 797 (m), 655 (s), 579 (m). Anal. Calcd. for [Dy(acac)$_3$Lz]·CH$_3$OH·0.5H$_2$O (C$_{37}$H$_{36}$DyN$_{14}$O$_{3}$, MW = 967.21): C, 45.94%; H, 3.75%; N, 20.27%. Found: C, 46.02%; H, 3.77%; N, 20.34%.

**X-ray Crystallography.** Crystallographic data of three complexes were collected using a Bruker Apex II CCD diffractometer equipped with graphite-monochromatized Mo-K$_\alpha$ radiation ($\lambda = 0.71073$ Å). Data processing was accomplished with the SAINT processing program. The structures were solved by direct methods and refined by full-matrix least-squares methods on $F^2$ using SHELXTL-2014. All non-hydrogen atoms were refined anisotropically. The H atoms were introduced in calculated positions and refined with fixed geometry with respect to their carrier atoms. In 2Dy, the hydrogen atoms of the water solvent (O15) were not modelled and the hydrogen atoms have been placed on a disordered O atom (O13). The solvent accessible VOIDS in 3Dy are due to a large amount of disordered solvents in this structure.

**Magnetic Measurements.** Magnetic susceptibility measurements were recorded on a Quantum Design MPMS-XL7 SQUID magnetometer equipped with a 7 T magnet. Direct-current (dc) measurements were collected with an external magnetic field of 1 kOe in the temperature range of 1.9–300 K. The alternating-current (ac) measurements were investigated in a 3.0 Oe ac oscillating field with frequencies between 1 and 1500 Hz. The experimental magnetic susceptibility data for all compounds were corrected for diamagnetic contributions estimated using Pascal’s constants.

**Computational details.** *Ab initio* calculations based on multi-configurational wavefunction method and spin-orbit coupling (SOC) were performed on the experimental structures of 1–3Dy to rationalize their magnetic properties. At first, a set of spin eigenstates of different multiplicities are obtained by the CASSCF method. Then the SOC matrix in the space spanned by these spin eigenstates are further diagonalized to obtain various Kramers doublets (KD). In the CASSCF step, the active space, consisted of 9 electrons in 7 orbitals, is utilized to obtain the wavefunctions of 21 spin sextets, 224 quartets as well as 490 doublets. In the step of the diagonalization of the SOC matrix, only 21 sextets, 128 quartets and 98 doublet states were included due to the hardware limitations. The ANO-RCC basis sets were used with Dy described by VTZP, O and N described by VDZP as well as other atoms described byVDZ. The g-tensors and other parameters describing the magnetic anisotropy of the low-lying KDs were obtained according to the procedure by Chibotaru et al. All the calculations were carried out with the MOLCAS@UU code, a freely distributed version of MOLCAS 8.0 program.
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Crystallography. Single-crystal X-ray diffraction investigation revealed that 1Dy (Figures 1 and 2) and 2Dy (Figure 3) crystallize in the monoclinic $P_2_1/c$ space group with $Z = 4$, whereas complex 3Dy (Figures 4 and S1) crystallizes in the triclinic $P\overline{1}$ space group with $Z = 2$. Details of the crystallographic data and the structure solution are summarized in Table S1, whereas selected bond distances and angles are listed in Table S2. The complexes 1Dy and 2Dy were isolated through the change of the coordinated water molecules of [Dy(TTA)$_3$·2H$_2$O] and [Dy(acac)$_3$·2H$_2$O] by capping ligand Lz.

The asymmetric unit of 1Dy consists of one Dy$^{III}$ ion, three TTA ligands providing six O-donor atoms, and one ligand Lz with two N atoms coordinated to Dy$^{III}$ ion, giving rise to a distorted square-antiprismatic geometry. The unit cell of 2Dy contains two crystallographically independent molecules, 2Dya and 2Dyb (Figure 3). The Dy$^{III}$ ions of complex 2Dy are in the same N$_2$O$_5$ square-antiprismatic coordination environment with two N atoms from the one Lz ligand and six O atoms from the three acac ligands. The basal planes are constructed by atoms O1, O2, O5, O6 and N1, N6, O4, O3 for 1Dy (Figure 1), and O1, O2, O5, O6 and O3, O4, N1, N2 for 2Dya, and O9, O10, O11, O12 and O7, O8, N3, N4 for 2Dyb (Figure 3). The analysis of the exact geometry of complexes by using the SHAPE 2.1 software reveals that all Dy$^{III}$ ions reside in the square-antiprismatic coordination geometry ($DA_0$) with CshMs (the Continuous Shape Measures values) of 0.572, 0.906, 0.828 for 1Dy, 2Dya and 2Dyb, respectively (Table S3). The Dy–O distances range from 2.301(7) to 2.346(7), 2.300(3) to 2.346(3), and 2.308(8) to 2.326(4) Å, while the average Dy–N distances of 2.553(5), 2.596(9), and 2.583(9) Å for 1Dy, 2Dya and 2Dyb, respectively (Table S2). The angles between the pseudo $S_4$ axis and the Dy–L direction (Figure 2), $\alpha$ (54.74° for the ideal $\alpha$ value), vary from 57.5° to 60.5°, 56.5° to 62.5°, and 56.8° to 58.7° for 1Dy, 2Dya and 2Dyb, respectively, indicating an axial compression of the coordinating environment in all three crystal structures.\footnote{25 Besides, the $\theta$ angle (Figure 2) between two basal planes is 3.3°, 2.4°, and 4.4° for 1Dy, 2Dya and 2Dyb, respectively. The shortest intermolecular Dy⋯Dy distance is 8.02 Å for 1Dy, suggesting the possible existence of intermolecular interactions. The distance between the Dy1 and Dy2 is 10.57 Å in complex 2Dy, which does not necessarily preclude any intermolecular exchange interactions.}

For complex 3Dy, the Dy$^{III}$ ion is in a N$_6$O$_8$ square-antiprismatic coordination geometry with two N atoms and two O atoms from the two 2-methyl-8-quinolinol ligands, and four N atoms from the two Lz ligands. Complex 3Dy is further charge balanced by an anion Br$^-$ as counter ion in the lattice. The basal planes of the square-antiprisms are constructed by O1, N13, N7, N12 and O2, N6, N1, N14 (Figure 4a). Ligands 2-methyl-8-quinolinol are almost perpendicular to the ligand Lz, which is different with the reported complexes, [DyLz[o-vanillin]$_2$]·X·solvent (X = Br$^-$, NO$_3^-$, CF$_3$SO$_3^-$)\footnote{29} and [DyLz$_2$(salicylaldehyde)$_2$]·X·solvent (X = OH$^-$, Cl$^-$, Br$^-$),\footnote{29} in which the two sorts of ligands are relatively parallel. The $\phi$ value, defined as the space angle between the two Lz ligands or two 2-methyl-8-quinolinol ligands, is relatively large (38.45°) for two Lz ligands (Figure 4b) and very small (2.59°) for two 2-methyl-8-quinolinol ligands (Figure S1). However, the $\pi$⋯$\pi$ distance of 4.039 Å for two 2-methyl-8-quinolinol ligands is larger than the value of 3.433 Å for two Lz ligands, which means the very weak $\pi$⋯$\pi$ stacking effects. The SHAPE 2.1 software reveals that Dy$^{III}$ ion resides in the square-antiprismatic coordination geometry ($DA_0$) with CshM of 1.434 for 3Dy, which is larger than those of 1Dy and 2Dy (Table S3). The Dy–N distances range from 2.511(4) to 2.587(4) Å, while the two Dy–O distances are 2.214(3) and 2.217(3) Å, respectively (Table S2). The angles $\alpha$ vary from 49.2° to 66.6° and the $\theta$ angle between two basal planes is 8.7°, indicating the larger deviation of the ideal $DA_0$ symmetry, which is consistent with the SHAPE calculation. The $\angle$ O1-Dy-O2 angle of 137.46° for 3Dy is smaller than 140.46° for perfect $DA_0$ geometry.\footnote{29} The shortest intermolecular Dy⋯Dy distance is 9.14 Å, here again suggesting the potential presence of intermolecular interactions.}

Figure 1. Molecular structure of 1Dy. H atoms are omitted for clarity.

Figure 2. Angle $\alpha$ between the $S_4$ axis and a Dy–L vector, and angle $\theta$ between the upper and lower coordination planes of complex 1Dy.

Figure 3. Molecular structures of 2Dya (left) and 2Dyb (right). H atoms and solvent molecules are omitted for clarity.
Magnetic properties. Direct-current (dc) magnetic susceptibilities were studied for all three compounds under an applied field of 1 kOe from 2 to 300 K. As shown in Figure 5, the \( \chi_M T \) values at room temperature of 14.29, 14.14, and 14.40 cm\(^{-3}\) K mol\(^{-1}\) for 1Dy, 2Dy and 3Dy, respectively, close to the expected value of 14.17 cm\(^{-3}\) K mol\(^{-1}\) for Dy\(^{III}\) ion (\( g = 4/3 \)) of the \( ^{1}H_{15/2} \) ground state of the Dy\(^{III}\) ion. For all three complexes, upon cooling, the \( \chi_M T \) values remain constant in the range of 300–140 K, and then decrease slowly before a sharp drop below 8 K, reaching values of 11.06, 12.22 and 12.57 cm\(^{-3}\) K mol\(^{-1}\) at 1.9 K for 1Dy, 2Dy and 3Dy, respectively. The slow decrease can be attributed to the depopulation of stark sublevel, and the sharp decrease may arise from non-negligible intermolecular interactions between the Dy\(^{III}\) ions. The magnetization data (Figures S2–S4) of all three complexes show a steep increase in the range of 0–10 kOe field and then reach 6.52, 6.24 and 5.99 \( H_{Bos} \), respectively, at 1.9 K and 7 kOe. In addition, the superimposition of the \( M \) vs. \( H/T \) plots (Figures S2–S4, Inset) suggests the presence of significant magnetic anisotropy and/or low-lying excited states.

The ac susceptibility measurements were performed on three complexes in zero applied dc field to probe the dynamics of the magnetization. Both the in-phase (\( \chi' \)) and out-of-phase (\( \chi'' \)) susceptibilities display a frequency (Figure 6) and temperature (Figures S5–S7) dependence for three complexes. Frequency-dependent out-of-phase (\( \chi'' \)) susceptibilities signals show that the peak maxima shift to a lower frequency when lowering the temperature, and then the frequency-independent regimes are observed for all three complexes, which could be attributed to quantum tunneling relaxation effects at zero dc field. Besides, the temperature-dependent magnetic susceptibility data show a rapid increase of \( \chi'' \) signals in the lower temperature region, which are coincident with the \( \chi'' \) vs \( v \) plots. The Cole-Cole plots (Figure S8) exhibit semi-circular shape which can be fitted to the generalized Debye model, giving \( \alpha \) values in the ranges of 0.11–0.19, 0.01–0.15, and 0.02–0.11 for 1Dy, 2Dy, and 3Dy, respectively, indicating a relatively small distributions of relaxation times.

The magnetization relaxation times \( \tau \) obtained by fitting \( \chi'' \) (\( \nu \)) plots are plotted as a function of \( 1/T \) in Figure 7. In the high-temperature regime, Arrhenius analyses of the dynamic susceptibilities give Orbach process. However, the low temperature regimes become temperature-independent, characteristic of the QTM process. The intermediate regime may be dominated by Raman processes. In order to understand the whole relaxation mechanisms, a combination of relaxation processes has to be taken into account and then fitted the \( \tau \) vs \( 1/T \) plots in the entire temperature range using the equation

\[
\tau^{-1}_{obs} = \tau^{-1}_{QTM} + CT^\alpha + \tau^{-1}_{0} \exp\left(-\frac{U_{eff}}{T}\right)
\]

Where the first and second terms account for quantum tunneling, and Raman processes, respectively, the third term represents the Orbach relaxation process. It’s noteworthy that the direct process is not considered because the corresponding contribution is nullified in the zero dc field. The best fits gave parameters of \( U_{eff} = 22 \text{ cm}^{-3} \) (32 K), \( \tau_0 = 5.55 \times 10^{-5} \text{ s} \) (1Dy); \( U_{eff} = 112 \text{ cm}^{-3} \) (162 K), \( \tau_0 = 4.38 \times 10^{-5} \text{ s} \) (2Dy); \( U_{eff} = 56 \text{ cm}^{-3} \) (80 K), \( \tau_0 = 1.25 \times 10^{-5} \text{ s} \) (3Dy). The other parameters obtained from the fitting are shown in Table S4. Remarkably, butterfly-shaped magnetic hysteresis (Figure 7) in 1Dy and 3Dy are observed with a time-averaged sweep rate of 2.3 mTs\(^{-1}\). While complex 2Dy with highest effective energy barrier shows no hysteresis loop at 1.9 K, which may be attributed to the complication of the relaxations due to the presence of two crystallographically different molecules in one asymmetric unit.

Magnetic properties are sensitive to subtle differences in the coordination environment. Though all complexes presented herein show similar local \( D_{4d} \) coordination geometry, the magnetic relaxation barriers of the three complexes vary dramatically. The effective barrier of 1Dy was extracted to be only 22 cm\(^{-1}\), which is far less than that of 2Dy. Contrary to the acac ligand, the TTA ligand having strong electron-withdrawing fluorne groups is probably a key factor to reduce the SMMs behavior of 1Dy. For complex 3Dy, the 2-methyl-8-quinolinol ligands are almost perpendicular to the basal planes, which results in the large deviation from the ideal \( D_{4d} \) symmetry in the first coordination sphere compared with complex 2Dy. Besides, the weak \( \pi \cdot \pi \) stacking between the ligands may introduce transversal components as a result of the change of the electronic structure and coordination geometry. Those two reasons mentioned above for complex 3Dy lead to the fast QTM at low-temperature regions. Theoretical analyses were performed in order to understand this difference.

Theoretical analysis. The inherent large magnetic anisotropy and crystal field splitting of lanthanide complexes have attracted the attention of many researches on single ion magnets. However, compared with polynuclear SMMs based on TM ions, the relaxation of magnetization of SIMs is quite complicated due to the existence of several possible processes including Orbach, Raman, direct as well as QTM. Therefore, besides large crystal field splitting, other features in the aspect of electronic structure, which facilitate the suppression of unwanted fast relaxation, need to be achieved too. The most important fast relaxation is the QTM of which the rate scales as the square of the tunnel splitting \( \Delta_{eff} \). Clearly the effective suppression of QTM is the necessary condition for the observation of SMM behavior. Due to the time-reversal symmetry, the microstates of Kramers systems, e.g., Dy\(^{III}\) ion, will be grouped into various degenerate doublets (KD) \( |\pm n\rangle \) and the tunnel splitting \( \Delta_{eff} \) could not exist for a KD under the...
condition of strictly zero magnetic field. However, small internal field actually exists in the real world and its transversal components, i.e., $H_{XY}$, will create $\Delta_{an}$ via Zeeman interaction (eqn. 1a) with the corresponding magnetic moment of the KD, i.e., $\mu_{XY}$ (eqn. 1b).

$$\Delta_{an} = \left(\mu_x H_x + \mu_y H_y\right)^2 = 1/2 \mu_b \left(g_x H_x^2 + g_y H_y^2\right)^2 \quad (1a)$$

$$\mu_n = -\left(-\alpha \mu_b g_x \xi_x - \mu_b g_y \xi_y\right) = -1/2 \mu_b g \alpha = X, Y, Z \quad (1b)$$

$$g_n = 2\left(-\alpha \mu_B n\right) / \mu_B \quad (1c)$$

The three main values $(g_{XY}, g_{X}, g_{Y})$ of the effective $g$ factor of each KD are related with the components of the magnetic moment along various directions (eqn. 1b-1c). Clearly, to effectively suppress QTM, the parameter $g_{XY}$, ab initio calculations also provide $\mu_{QTM}$ (eqn. 2b), which could be used to estimate the strength of QTM too.

$$g_{XY} = \left(g_x^2 + g_y^2\right)^{1/2} \quad (2a)$$

$$\mu_{QTM} = 1/2 \left|\mu_x + \mu_y + \mu_z\right| \quad (2b)$$

As listed in Table S5, the calculated $g_x$ values for the ground KDs approach the Ising limit of 20, verifying the easy-axis type of magnetic anisotropy. All the $g_{XY}$ values of the KDs here are smaller than 0.015 which has been suggested to be a criterion for zero-field Dy$^{3+}$/SIM. Thus $ab$ initio results are consistent with the appearance of SMM behavior of all the compounds here without the application of external dc field. However, when compared with recent reports on Dy$^{3+}$/SIMs of $U_{eff}$ higher than 1000 K, the $g_{XY}$ values here are higher than previous results ($0.8 \times 10^{03} \sim 0.5 \times 10^{06}$) by at least two orders of magnitude. Thus, it could be theoretically predicted that, although effectively suppressed to allow the observation of zero-field SMM behavior, residual QTM still exists for all the compounds here. This implication is experimentally echoed by the existence of rising tail in the imaginary part of the temperature dependence of the ac susceptibility (Figures S5-S7). Due to the existence of residual QTM as a live shortcut through the ground state, the possibility of magnetic relaxation via KDs higher than the first excited one (KD1) should be negligible and thus the experimentally determined $U_{\text{eff}}$ is clearly lower than the theoretical energy of KD1 (Tables S4-S5).

As shown in Table S5, the QTM of 2Dy should be weaker than those of 1Dy and 3Dy since 2Dy has the smallest $g_{XY}$ and $\mu_{QTM}$. This is in accord with the fact that the variance between the experimental $U_{\text{eff}}$ of 2Dy (112 cm$^{-1}$) and theoretical energy of KD1 (158.05 cm$^{-1}$) is the smallest one among all three compounds. Although 3Dy attains the largest crystal field splitting as its energy of KD1 (238.41 cm$^{-1}$) is the highest, the existence of QTM stronger than that of 2Dy leads to the lower value of the fitted $U_{\text{eff}}$ (56 cm$^{-1}$). It is not hard to understand the lowest $U_{\text{eff}}$ of 1Dy (22 cm$^{-1}$) since it has the strongest residual QTM as evidenced by the largest value of $g_{XY}$ and $\mu_{QTM}$.

Although possessing similar first coordination sphere, both $g_{XY}$ and $\mu_{QTM}$ of 2Dy are smaller than those of 1Dy by one order of magnitude. Therefore significant difference in the aspect of electronic structure does exist and this should be the main reason for the fact that the experimental $U_{\text{eff}}$ of 1Dy is only one sixth of that of 2Dy. Based on the theoretical orientation of the magnetic easy axis (Figure 8), the atoms of the first spheres of 1Dy and 2Dy can be classified into two groups: (1) the axial ones comprising of the four oxygen atoms lying close to the direction of easy axis and (2) the equatorial ones consisting of two nitrogen atoms and two oxygen atoms that approximately compose the equatorial plane assumed to be perpendicular to the easy axis.

![Figure 6. Frequency-dependent of $\chi'$ and $\chi''$ ac susceptibility data for 1Dy (left), 2Dy (middle), and 3Dy (right) under a zero dc field.](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compound</th>
<th>$U_{\text{eff}}$ (a.u.)</th>
<th>$\mu_{QTM}$</th>
<th>$g_{XY}$</th>
<th>$g_{X}$</th>
<th>$g_{Y}$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1Dy</td>
<td>0.748</td>
<td>-1.129</td>
<td>-0.845</td>
<td>-0.712</td>
<td>-0.692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2Dy</td>
<td>0.724</td>
<td>-1.164</td>
<td>-0.844</td>
<td>-0.730</td>
<td>-0.734</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^a$ESP(ax)/ESP(equ), $^b$Q(O_{ax}) is the averaged charge of the four axial O atoms, $Q(O_{equ})$ is the averaged charge of the two equa-
torial O atoms and Q(Nequ) is the averaged charge of the two equatorial N atoms.

![Figure 7](image_url)

**Figure 7.** Plots of $\tau$ vs $1/T$ (top) and magnetic hysteresis loop (bottom) for 1Dy, 2Dy, and 3Dy, respectively.

![Figure 8](image_url)

**Figure 8.** Orientation of the easy axis of the ground KD obtained from ab initio calculations for complexes 1Dy (a), 2Dy (b), and 3Dy (c), respectively. (For the sake of clarity, only the first spheres are indicated and the equatorial atoms are shown in shade).

When only the eight atoms of the first sphere are included, the electrostatic potential (ESP) around the central Dy$^{III}$ ion consists of two components: ESP(ax) which is the total contribution of the axial atoms and the collective contribution of the equatorial atoms, denoted as ESP(equ). With the calculated atomic charges, both ESP(ax) and ESP(equ) could be estimated.

As seen from Table 1, the ratio of ESP(equ)/ESP(ax) is smaller than 1 for both 1Dy and 2Dy. This result indicates the excess of axial electrostatic repulsion around the central Dy$^{III}$ ion over the equatorial one. Previous results on Dy$^{III}$-SIMs of both SAP$^{37}$ and other coordination geometries$^{35}$ have shown that this type of excess of axial repulsion will favor the electronic structure necessary for the ideal SMM properties. Thus the ESP analysis here is consistent with both the experimental observation and ab initio calculations. Furthermore, the ratio of 2Dy (0.724) is clearly lower than that of 1Dy (0.748) which implies the electronic structure of 2Dy is closer to the ideal one. Once again, this result is in line with the experimental result of better SMM property of 2Dy over that of 1Dy.

Detailed analysis demonstrates that the better SMM property of 2Dy over 1Dy mainly arises from its larger magnitude of axial ESP (-1.164 a.u. vs -1.129 a.u.) since the ESP(equ) is nearly the same. In the aspect of structure, 1Dy contains electron-withdrawing group, -CF$_3$, in the axial ligand providing the axial O atoms. As shown in Table 1, the -CF$_3$ group clearly depletes the magnitude of the negative charge of axial O atoms of 1Dy (-0.712 a.u.) when compared with that of 2Dy (-0.730 a.u.). Apparently, this reduction of the negative charge of axial O atoms, due to the introduction of electron-withdrawing group, accounts for the difference between 1Dy and 2Dy in the aspect of their magnetic properties. That is to say, the alternation of the O-donor ligands could induce significant impact on the Dy$^{III}$-SIM.

**CONCLUSION**

To summarize, using nitrogen-enriched ligand Lz here as auxiliary ligand, three mononuclear dysprosium complexes were synthesized through variation of the ligands with O donors. All complexes possess similar distorted molecular symmetry $D_{4d}$. However, subtle structural differences between the three complexes leads to different dynamic magnetic properties. The dynamic magnetic investigations show that all
complexes exhibit SMM behavior in a zero-dc field, while the effective magnetization relaxation barriers increased progressively from 22 cm\(^{-1}\) (1Dy) to 56 cm\(^{-1}\) (3Dy) and 112 cm\(^{-1}\) (2Dy). These distinct magnetic properties can be attributed to two main factors: (1) the introduction of fluorine atoms in 1Dy generated the strong electronic-withdrawing effects which reduce the magnetic axially as verified by \textit{ab initio} results; (2) the large deviation from the ideal \(D_{4d}\) symmetry geometry and the weak π···π stacking effects between ligands in 3Dy induced the quantum tunneling of magnetizations in zero dc field. This work provides a means to modulate the magnetic properties of lanthanide-based SMMs with \(D_{4d}\) coordination geometry, highlighting the importance of electronic effect of ligands and the subtle changes of geometries.

ASSOCIATED CONTENT

Supporting Information

Crystallographic data and selected bond lengths and angles (Tables S1–S2), \textit{SHAPE} calculations (Table S3), parameters of Arrhenius Plot Fitting (Table S4), \textit{Ab initio} results (Table S5), crystal structure (Figure S1), magnetic measurements (Figures S2–S8). CCDC 1513750 (1Dy), 1513751 (2Dy), 1513749 (3Dy) contain supplementary crystallographic data for this article. These data can be obtained free of charge from the Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre via www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/data_request/cif.

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Manipulation of the magnetic relaxation was demonstrated in a series of mononuclear Dy$^{III}$ complexes with the same auxiliary ligand Lz through alteration of the ligands containing O donors.