SPECTRA OF COLD MOLECULAR IONS FROM HOT HELIUM NANODROPLETS

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The function of a molecule is intimately related to its structure. Accordingly, in the quest for a better understanding of molecular function, the development of spectroscopic methods to elucidate molecular structures increasingly takes central stage. The amount of detail that can be derived from spectra depends on the experimental conditions, most notably on the temperature of the sample and the intermolecular interactions a molecule experiences. Helium nanodroplets provide in this respect an almost ideal matrix [1, 2]. For neutral molecules, helium nanodroplet spectroscopy thus has led to important discoveries related to the structure of key molecular systems and has provided insight into the mechanisms underlying chemical reactions.

Compared to the level of sophistication that has been reached for neutrals, the spectroscopic exploration of ions is still in its infancy. The use of helium droplets as a cryogenic matrix could potentially solve many of the technical challenges associated with recording high-resolution spectra of cold molecular ions. Here, we will present a method to record spectra of ion containing helium nanodroplets that finds its roots in the nonthermal cooling dynamics of excited molecular ions. In addition, spectra of several molecular ions will be present and the influence of the helium environment on these spectra will be discussed.

[1] G. Scoles, and K. K. Lehmann, Science 287, 2429 (2000).
[2] J. P. Toennies, and A. F. Vilesov, Angew. Chem. Int. Ed. 43, 2622 (2004).