

# Preconcentration and Voltammetric Determination of Silver Ions On PVF<sup>+</sup>Cl<sup>-</sup> Modified Platinum Electrode

## PVF<sup>+</sup>Cl<sup>-</sup> Modifiye Platinyum Elektrotlar ile Gümüş İyonlarının Voltametrik Tayini ve Önderiştirilmesi

Research Article

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### ABSTRACT

Preconcentration of silver (I) ions on poly(vinylferrocenium)/chloride (PVF<sup>+</sup>Cl<sup>-</sup>) modified platinum electrode prior to differential pulse anodic stripping determination of the metal was reported. At the optimum conditions, a calibration curve having two linear parts with different slopes was obtained at the concentration intervals  $1 \times 10^{-3}$  M -  $5 \times 10^{-5}$  M and  $5 \times 10^{-6}$  M -  $1 \times 10^{-8}$  M. The detection limit was determined as  $1 \times 10^{-9}$  M. The relative standard deviation was calculated as 9.56 % (n = 6) for  $1 \times 10^{-6}$  M Ag<sup>+</sup> solution. Interferences of Hg<sup>2+</sup>, Fe<sup>3+</sup> and Pb<sup>2+</sup> ions which are capable of forming chloride complexes were examined. The modified electrode was applied to determination of silver ions in spiked water samples.

### Key Words

Poly(vinylferrocenium), Modified electrode, Pt disc electrode, Silver determination

### ÖZET

Gümüş(I) iyonlarının poli(vinilferrosenyum)/klorür (PVF<sup>+</sup>Cl<sup>-</sup>) ile modifiye edilmiş platin elektrotunda önderiştirilmesi ve diferansiyel puls anodik sıyırma voltametri ile tayini çalışıldı. Belirlenen optimum koşullarda  $1 \times 10^{-3}$  M -  $5 \times 10^{-5}$  M ve  $5 \times 10^{-6}$  M -  $1 \times 10^{-8}$  M derişim aralıklarında iki adet doğrusal kısmı bulunan bir kalibrasyon eğrisi elde edildi. Tayin sınırının  $1 \times 10^{-9}$  M olduğu yöntem için  $1 \times 10^{-6}$  M Ag<sup>+</sup> çözeltisiyle bağıl standart sapma 9.56 % (n = 6) olarak hesaplandı. Ayrıca klorür kompleksleri oluşturduğu bilinen Hg<sup>2+</sup>, Fe<sup>3+</sup> ve Pb<sup>2+</sup> iyonları için girişim çalışması yapıldı ve modifiye elektrot, gümüş iyonları eklenmiş çeşme suyunda test edildi.

### Anahtar Kelimeler

Poli(vinilferrosenyum), Modifiye elektrot, Pt disk elektrot, Gümüş tayini.

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## INTRODUCTION

Silver is an important element in our daily life. It is extensively utilized in the photographic and imaging industry, jewellery, mirrors, dental fillings, and other electrical and electronic applications. These widespread applications caused increased silver content of environmental water. The toxicity of silver ranges through several orders of magnitude depending on the silver forms. Monitoring of this element is crucial due to its potential toxicity even at low concentrations. As for human health, silver is suspected of being a contaminant, while it usually interacts competitively with essential nutrients, especially with selenium, copper, Vitamin E, Vitamin B12 and Ag accumulation in the body may lead to a grayish-blue skin discoloration (known as Argyria) [1]. Therefore, the development of simple and highly sensitive methods to evaluate the Ag levels is required for the sake of its utility as well as toxicity.

Determination of silver ion was widely studied using various methods such as atomic absorption spectrometry (AAS) [2-5], fluorescence spectroscopy [6-10], inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry (ICP-MS) [11,12] and electrochemical methods. Electrochemical methods generally preconcentrate silver ions by complexation prior to voltammetric determination [11-19]. Preconcentration of silver species without a complexing agent has also been studied [20,21].

Chemically modified electrodes (CMEs) are an active research area in many aspects of science and technology, having potential applications in diverse fields such as electroanalysis, chemical sensors, molecular electronics, and solar energy conversion. The metal surfaces that are coated with polymeric films are examples of chemically modified electrodes. These surfaces were intensively investigated because of the possibilities they offer in the fields of electrocatalysis and electroanalysis. One type of macrostructures which are named as redox or electroactive polymers contain a pair of reduced and oxidized groups and the hopping of electrons between these redox pairs is the reason for the electrical conductance [22]. PVF<sup>+</sup>ClO<sub>4</sub><sup>-</sup> is a good example for the latter type of conducting materials. In

addition to its own electroactivity that is caused by this redox pair, diffusion of other electroactive species through the film and subsequent charge transfer at the metallic surface underneath can also take place. The redox centers in the structure can also act as mediator for the charge transfer from substrate to some depolarizers. The type of the solvent, the nature of the electrolyte and its concentration affect the rates of the electron transfer between the electroactive sites and the diffusion of the other depolarizers through the film [19]. PVF<sup>+</sup> was used in several studies as a sensor platform [23-30].

The aim of this study is to develop a modified surface for detection of low amounts of Ag(I). The electrode was prepared by electrodeposition of PVF<sup>+</sup>ClO<sub>4</sub><sup>-</sup> film onto the platinum surface and then Cl<sup>-</sup> was incorporated into the polymer matrix via anion exchange with ClO<sub>4</sub><sup>-</sup>. Ag(I) in the solution reacted with Cl<sup>-</sup> to form AgCl. After the Ag(I) accumulation at the modified electrode, silver ions were reduced to metallic silver applying a suitable potential and determined by differential pulse anodic stripping voltammetry (DPASV).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Apparatus

The cyclic voltammetric and potential controlled coulometric studies were carried out with PAR system, which consists of Model 175 Universal Programmer, Model 173 Potentiostat and Model 179 Digital Coulometer. The differential pulse anodic stripping voltammetric studies were performed with PAR Model 174A Polarographic Analyzer. Cyclic voltammograms and differential pulse anodic stripping voltammograms were recorded with EG&G PAR Model RE0150 X-Y recorder.

A platinum (Pt) disc electrode ( $A = 7.85 \times 10^{-3} \text{ cm}^2$ ) was used as the working electrode. Before each experiment, the working electrode was polished with slurry of Cr<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> with water, then rinsed with triple distilled water, cleaned in ultrasonic bath and dried.

In the methylene chloride medium, a Ag/AgCl electrode immersed in a separate compartment containing methylene chloride/0.1 M TBAP

solution with a saturated amount of AgCl was used as the reference electrode and a Pt wire in separate compartment containing methylene chloride/0.1 M TBAP solution was used as the counter electrode.

In aqueous medium, saturated calomel electrode (SCE) was used as the reference electrode and a Pt wire electrode with a surface area of 2 cm<sup>2</sup> in spiral form was used as the counter electrode.

### Reagents and Solutions

PVF was prepared by chemical polymerization of vinylferrocene (Alfa Product) at 70°C for 24 h using 2,2'-Azo-bis(2-methyl-propionitrile) (AIBN) as the initiator [31]. Methylene chloride (Aldrich), which was used for preparing polymer solutions, was washed with concentrated H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> (Merck), triple distilled water, Na<sub>2</sub>CO<sub>3</sub> (Merck) (5%), and triple distilled water respectively. Then it was distilled over P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub> (Merck) [32].

Deionized water obtained from NANOpure Diamond Analytical ultrapure water system was used to prepare 10<sup>-3</sup> M stock solution of Ag<sup>+</sup> from AgNO<sub>3</sub> (BDH, 99.8% pure). NaCl solutions were prepared using triple distilled water with NaCl (Carlo Erba). Hg<sup>2+</sup>, Fe<sup>3+</sup> and Pb<sup>2+</sup> solutions were prepared from HgCl<sub>2</sub> (BDH, Analar), FeNO<sub>3</sub> (Merck) and Pb(NO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub> (BDH, Analar) respectively.

Tetra-n-butyl ammonium perchlorate (TBAP) was used as the supporting electrolyte in the polymer solution. TBAP was obtained by the reaction of tetra-n-butyl ammonium hydroxide (40 % aqueous solution, Merck) with perchloric acid (BDH) and recrystallised from the 1:9 mixture of water and ethyl alcohol by volume several times. It was then dried at 120 °C under vacuum for 12 hours. This salt was always kept under nitrogen atmosphere.

NaCl (Carlo Erba) was used as the supporting electrolyte in the electrochemical experiments carried out in aqueous medium without further purification.

The polymer solution and the NaCl solution that used as the supporting electrolyte were

deoxygenated by bubbling pure nitrogen gas (BOS).

### Procedure

First, PVF<sup>+</sup>ClO<sub>4</sub><sup>-</sup> film was electrodeposited onto the electrode surface by the electrooxidation of 1.0 mg/mL PVF solution in methylene chloride containing 0.1 M TBAP at +0.7 V vs. Ag/AgCl. The thicknesses of PVF<sup>+</sup>ClO<sub>4</sub><sup>-</sup> films were controlled by the charge passed during the electroprecipitation. A charge of 1x10<sup>-3</sup> C corresponded to 1.32x10<sup>-6</sup> moles of the oxidized PVF per cm<sup>2</sup> (dry thickness of ~300 μm, which corresponds to about 3x10<sup>5</sup> layers) [33].

In the second step, chloride ions were incorporated into the film via anion exchange [34], by immersing the PVF<sup>+</sup>ClO<sub>4</sub><sup>-</sup> coated electrode in NaCl solution at open circuit. However, the concentration of the NaCl solution used in this step was important because it was observed that accumulation of more than a certain amount of Cl<sup>-</sup> damaged the film and finally caused the film to rupture.

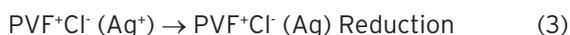
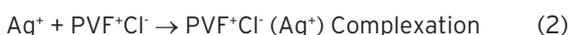
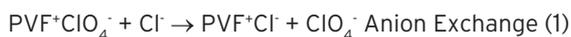
So-formed PVF<sup>+</sup>Cl<sup>-</sup> modified Pt disc electrode was rinsed with water and immersed in Ag (I) ion solution at open circuit in order to preconcentrate silver species in the polymeric matrix via complex formation with Cl<sup>-</sup>. After the preconcentration step, the electrode was rinsed with water and placed in the electrochemical cell containing 1.0 M NaCl. Finally, a suitable potential was applied to the cell for a few minutes to reduce the silver ions and differential pulse anodic stripping voltammogram was recorded.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

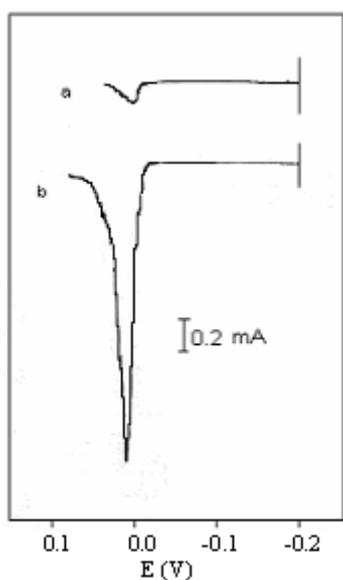
PVF<sup>+</sup>ClO<sub>4</sub><sup>-</sup> is a redox type polymer which may be capable of holding some ions with adsorption. The ability of PVF<sup>+</sup>ClO<sub>4</sub><sup>-</sup> to preconcentrate Ag (I) was investigated. The electrode was immersed into Ag (I) solution for 15 min, subjected to reduction potential of -0.2 V vs SCE for 5 min and DPASV was recorded. Figure 1a shows the stripping peak of silver. This peak was not good enough to detect low amounts of Ag (I) in solutions. However, when the PVF<sup>+</sup>ClO<sub>4</sub><sup>-</sup> film was kept in Cl<sup>-</sup> solution for 15 min before inserting into Ag(I) solution, it

was determined that nearly 20 fold increase was observed in the stripping peak current of silver (Figure 1b).

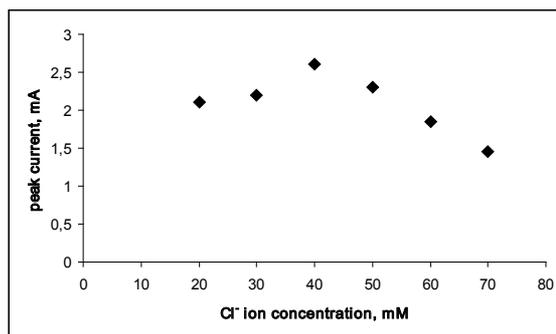
High stripping current was promising for the use of these surfaces for Ag(I) detection. The mechanism of the process can be proposed as follows.  $PVF^+ClO_4^-$  is open to anion exchange [35]. When  $PVF^+ClO_4^-$  was kept in  $Cl^-$  solution,  $Cl^-$  ions entered into polymer matrix. It is also known that, Ag(I) and  $Cl^-$  form a complex and this complex enhanced the amount of Ag(I) on the surface, consequently, stripping peak increased. The mechanism can be summarized as follows:



Several parameters such as polymeric film thickness,  $Cl^-$  concentration etc. were investigated to determine the optimum conditions for maximum sensor performance.



**Figure 1.** Differential pulse anodic stripping voltammogram of  $PVF^+ClO_4^-$  film immersed in  $1 \times 10^{-4}$  M  $Ag^+$  solution for 15 min (a),  $PVF^+ClO_4^-$  film immersed in 50 mM  $Cl^-$  solution for 15 min, then in  $1 \times 10^{-4}$  M  $Ag^+$  solution for 15 min, (b) after 5 min cathodic electrolysis at  $-0.2$  V vs. SCE.  $v = 5$  mV/s.



**Figure 2.** The effect of  $Cl^-$  ion concentration on the oxidation peak current for  $1 \times 10^{-4}$  M  $Ag^+$  (1.0 mC film thickness, 15 min immersion time in  $Cl^-$  ion solution, 15 min preconcentration time,  $-0.2$  V electrolysis potential, 5 min electrolysis time).

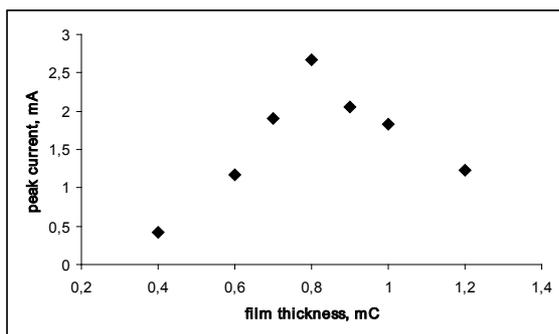
### $Cl^-$ Concentration

$Cl^-$  has a critical role in sensor performance as can be seen from mechanism given above. Figure 2 shows the effect of  $Cl^-$  concentration on the stripping peak current. Peak current initially increased with  $Cl^-$  concentration as expected but decreased surprisingly after 40 mM  $Cl^-$  concentration. There was an important visual observation during the experiments with  $Cl^-$  concentration greater than 40 mM. Polymeric films were ruptured and this rupture increased up to 80 mM  $Cl^-$  concentration and after this value, no surface coating remained. Thus, it was concluded that optimum  $Cl^-$  concentration is 40 mM and after this concentration  $Cl^-$  initiated pitting and that caused the rupture of the film.

The effect of immersion time in  $Cl^-$  solution was also important because the stripping peak current of silver decreased when an immersion time more than 15 min was used. The result supported our claim about the damaging effect of excess  $Cl^-$  ions deposited on the surface. Optimum immersion time in  $Cl^-$  solution was determined as 15 min.

### Polymeric Film Thickness

The effect of polymeric film thickness on the stripping peak current was investigated by changing the charge passed during the electrooxidation of PVF and keeping the other variables constant (Figure 3). As can be seen from Figure 3, peak current increased up to a certain value (0.8 mC), then, started to decrease. This behavior can be attributed to several reasons. One can be damaging effect of excess chloride which was already observed. As the amount of



**Figure 3.** The effect of polymeric film thickness on the stripping peak current for  $1 \times 10^{-4}$  M  $\text{Ag}^+$  (50 mM  $\text{Cl}^-$  ion concentration, 15 min immersion time in  $\text{Cl}^-$  ion solution, 15 min preconcentration time,  $-0.2$  V electrolysis potential, 5 min electrolysis time).

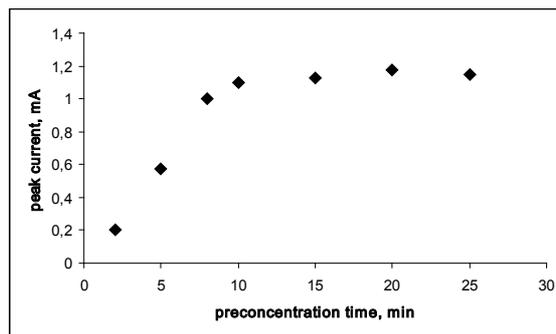
positively charged  $\text{PVF}^+$  increased with increasing film thickness, amount of the accumulated  $\text{Cl}^-$  enhanced, consequently, amount of  $\text{Ag}(\text{I})$  increased with higher  $\text{AgCl}$  formation. However, after a certain value, greater amount of  $\text{Cl}^-$  degraded the polymeric matrix and decrease was observed. Another reason can be porosity effect. The change in the porosity of the polymer matrix at elevated film thicknesses might have caused observed decrease after 0.8 mC.

#### Preconcentration time

The change in stripping peak current of silver with increasing preconcentration time was investigated (Figure 4). The stripping peak current remained constant after 10 min because of diffusion limitations. The optimum preconcentration time was chosen as 5 min in order to ensure that the electrode is not saturated with silver ions at this time.

#### Reduction Potential

The choice of reduction potential for  $\text{Ag}(\text{I})$  was considerably important. Because, both  $\text{Ag}^+$  and  $\text{PVF}^+$  could be reduced during the reduction at constant potential electrolysis. The latter is an unwanted process because when the amount of  $\text{PVF}^+$  in the polymer matrix decreases, the amount of the negatively charged complex bound to ferrocenium form of the polymer also decreases. Different reduction potentials were applied in the range of 0.2 V to  $-0.5$  V vs. SCE and it was determined that,  $-0.2$  V is the optimum reduction potential.



**Figure 4.** The effect of preconcentration time on the stripping peak current for  $1 \times 10^{-4}$  M  $\text{Ag}^+$  (0.8 mC film thickness, 40 mM  $\text{Cl}^-$  ion concentration, 15 min immersion time in  $\text{Cl}^-$  ion solution,  $-0.2$  V electrolysis potential, 5 min electrolysis time).

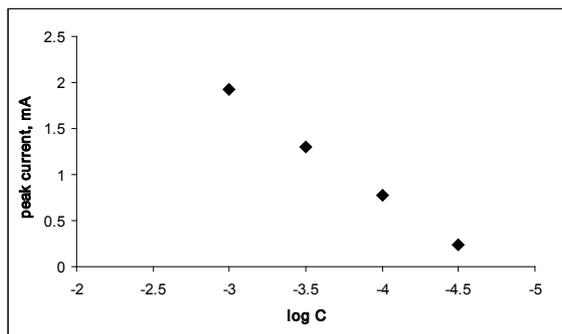
#### Electrolysis Time

The change in stripping peak current with electrolysis time for reduction of  $\text{Ag}(\text{I})$  to  $\text{Ag}$  was also studied to obtain the optimum time needed for reduction of metal ions. Up to 4 min, stripping peak current increased with increasing electrolysis time. However, when the electrolysis time exceeded 4 min, it was thought that the formed neutral metallic species released from the polymer matrix. The effect of this release, which caused the stripping peak currents to decrease, competed with the effect of electrolytic reduction of metal ions. When an electrolysis time was more than 4 min the optimum value is used the release of metallic species became dominant. Optimum electrolysis time was therefore determined as 4 min.

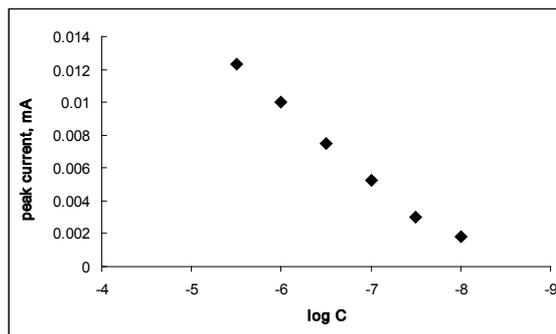
#### Analytical Characteristics

The change in stripping peak current with  $\text{Ag}(\text{I})$  ion concentration was investigated applying optimum conditions (0.8 mC polymer film thickness, 40 mM  $\text{Cl}^-$  ion concentration, 15 min immersion time in  $\text{Cl}^-$  ion solution, 5 min preconcentration time,  $-0.2$  V electrolysis potential vs. SCE, 4 min electrolysis time). Every stripping peak current used in the calibration curves was obtained by subtracting the current obtained with  $\text{PVF}^+\text{ClO}_4^-$  film from the current obtained with  $\text{PVF}^+\text{Cl}^-$  film. Thus, stripping peak currents resulting from complex-formation of the silver ion with  $\text{Cl}^-$  ion were used (Figure 5 and Figure 6).

At the optimum conditions, a calibration curve having two linear parts with different slopes was



**Figure 5.** Calibration curve for Ag(I) solution at the concentration interval  $1 \times 10^{-3}$  M -  $5 \times 10^{-5}$  M at optimum conditions (0.8 mC film thickness, 40 mM  $\text{Cl}^-$  ion concentration, 15 min immersion time in  $\text{Cl}^-$  ion solution, 5 min preconcentration time,  $-0.2$  V electrolysis potential, 4 min electrolysis time)



**Fig. 6.** Calibration curve for Ag(I) solution at the concentration interval  $5 \times 10^{-6}$  M -  $1 \times 10^{-8}$  M at optimum conditions (0.8 mC film thickness, 40 mM  $\text{Cl}^-$  ion concentration, 15 min immersion time in  $\text{Cl}^-$  ion solution, 5 min preconcentration time,  $-0.2$  V electrolysis potential, 4 min electrolysis time).

**Table 1.** % Interferences of some ions to the response of the electrode in 1:1 and 1:10 concentration ratios with respect to  $\text{Ag}^+$ .

Interfering ion	% Interference	
	1:1	1:10
$\text{Hg}^{2+}$	no interference	18.6
$\text{Fe}^{3+}$	89.3	99.0
$\text{Pb}^{2+}$	83.5	98.7

obtained at the concentration intervals  $1 \times 10^{-3}$  M -  $5 \times 10^{-5}$  M (Figure 5) and  $5 \times 10^{-6}$  M -  $1 \times 10^{-8}$  M (Figure 6). The detection limit at the optimum conditions was determined as  $1 \times 10^{-9}$  M for silver(I) ion.

The relative standard deviation was calculated as 9.56 % ( $n = 6$ ) for  $1 \times 10^{-6}$  M  $\text{Ag}^+$  solution. Interferences of  $\text{Hg}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  and  $\text{Pb}^{2+}$  ions which are capable of forming chloride complexes on the response of the electrode were examined. For this purpose, the voltammograms of  $1 \times 10^{-3}$  M  $\text{Ag}^+$  solution were recorded in the presence of ions in 1:1 and 1:10 concentration ratios with respect to  $\text{Ag}^+$ . Results are presented in Table 1.

The proposed modified electrode was tested using water samples by spiking known concentrations of silver to water samples. The results are given in Table 2.

## CONCLUSIONS

An easy to prepare, relatively inexpensive and sensitive electrode was developed for silver determination.  $\text{Ag}^+$  ions were found to be readily preconcentrated in the polymeric matrix without applying any potential during the preconcentration step. The accumulation of silver ions was due to the formation of negatively charged silver-chloride complexes which should easily be kept in the polymeric matrix. Experimentally, it was shown that the linear response range of the electrode was between the concentration intervals  $1 \times 10^{-3}$  M -  $5 \times 10^{-5}$  M and  $5 \times 10^{-6}$  M -  $1 \times 10^{-8}$  M and the detection limit at the optimum conditions was determined as  $1 \times 10^{-9}$  M. The validity of the method was tested using spiked water samples.

**Table 2.** Determination of  $\text{Ag}^+$  ions in spiked water samples.

Sample	$\text{Ag}^+$ added ( $\text{ng mL}^{-1}$ )	$\text{Ag}^+$ found ( $\text{ng mL}^{-1}$ )	% Recovery
Natural Spring Water	-	n.d. <sup>a</sup>	-
	50	48.6	96.1
Tap water	-	n.d.	-
	50	51.63	103.3

<sup>a</sup> Not detected

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