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Synthesis and Crystal and Electronic Structures of the $\text{Na}_2(\text{Sc}_4\text{Nb}_2)(\text{Nb}_6\text{O}_{12})_3$ Octahedral Niobium Cluster Oxide. Structural Correlations between $\text{A}_n\text{BM}_6\text{L}_{12}(\text{Z})$ Series and Chevrel Phases

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Received July 28, 2005

We report here the synthesis and crystal and electronic structures of the $\text{Na}_2(\text{Sc}_4\text{Nb}_2)(\text{Nb}_6\text{O}_{12})_3$ niobium oxide whose structure is related to that of $\text{Ti}_2\text{Nb}_6\text{O}_{12}$. It constitutes a new member of the larger $\text{A}_n\text{BM}_6\text{L}_{12}(\text{Z})$ families (A = monovalent cation located in tetrahedral cavities of units, B = monovalent or trivalent cations located in octahedral cavities of units, M = rare earth, Zr, or Nb, Z = interstitial except for M = Nb). The structural relationships between the $\text{A}_n\text{BM}_6\text{L}_{12}(\text{Z})$ series ($\text{M}_6\text{L}_{12}\text{L}_6^{\text{a}}$ unit-based compounds with a $\text{M}_6\text{L}_6\text{L}^{\text{i-a}}\text{L}^{\text{i-6/2}}$ cluster framework) and Chevrel Phases ($\text{M}_6\text{L}_8\text{L}_6^{\text{a}}$ unit-based compounds with a $\text{M}_6\text{L}_2\text{L}^{\text{i-a}}\text{L}^{\text{i-6/2}}$ cluster framework) are shown in terms of M_6L_{18} and M_6L_{14} unit packing. Despite a topology similar to that encountered in Chevrel Phases, intercalation properties are not expected in the $\text{Nb}_6\text{O}_6\text{O}^{\text{i-a}}\text{O}^{\text{i-6/2}}$ cluster framework-based compounds. Finally, it is shown, from theoretical LMTO calculations, that a semiconducting behavior is expected for a maximum VEC of 14 in the $\text{Nb}_6\text{O}_6\text{O}^{\text{i-a}}\text{O}^{\text{i-6/2}}$ cluster framework.

Introduction

Metallic octahedral clusters are characterized by metal–metal bond lengths close to those found in the corresponding metals. They are formed via solid state synthesis with early transition metal elements in their low oxidation states.^{1,2} The $[(\text{M}_6\text{L}_{12})\text{L}_6^{\text{a}}]^{n-}$ (L = F, Cl, Br, O) and $[(\text{M}_6\text{L}_8)\text{L}_6^{\text{a}}]$ (L = Cl, Br, I, S, Se, Te) units (a = apical and i = inner, according to the Schäfer and Schnering notation³) constitute the basic building blocks in the solid-state octahedral cluster chemistry. These octahedral clusters are bonded to six terminal ligands (L^{a}) in both types of unit, but they are either edge-bridged by twelve inner ligands (L^{i}) in the $[(\text{M}_6\text{L}_{12})\text{L}_6^{\text{a}}]^{n-}$ entity or face-capped by eight inner ligands (L^{i}) in the $[(\text{M}_6\text{L}_8)\text{L}_6^{\text{a}}]$ unit.⁴ The physical properties of these cluster compounds are related to the strength of the interaction between cluster units and to the number of electrons available for metal–

metal bonding within the cluster, the so-called valence electron count (VEC). The molecular orbital (MO) diagrams show a set of eight metal–metal bonding molecular orbitals (a_{1g} , t_{1u} , t_{2g} , and a_{2u} in O_h symmetry) for the $\text{M}_6\text{L}_{12}\text{L}_6^{\text{a}}$ unit and a set of twelve metal–metal bonding molecular orbitals (a_{1g} , t_{1u} , t_{2g} , t_{2u} , and e_g in O_h symmetry) for the $\text{M}_6\text{L}_8\text{L}_6^{\text{a}}$ unit. Consequently, their full occupation leads to a closed-shell configuration with a VEC of 16 for the former⁵ and a VEC of 24 for the latter.

Transition metal halides and chalcogenides based on discrete $\text{M}_6\text{L}_8\text{X}_6^{\text{a}}$ (M = Mo, Re, W; L = halogen or chalcogen, X = halogen) units or $\text{X}^{\text{a-a}}$ interconnected units, ($\text{M}_6\text{L}_8\text{X}^{\text{a-a}}\text{X}_{6-x}^{\text{a-x}}$ ($x = 2, 4, 6$)) exhibit a strong molecular character characterized by a VEC of $24 \text{ e}^-/\text{M}_6$ and insulating properties. On the other hand, the progressive condensation of $\text{M}_6\text{L}_8\text{L}_6^{\text{a}}$ units via $\text{L}^{\text{i-a}}/\text{L}^{\text{i-i}}$ chalcogen ligands in one,⁶ two,⁷ and three directions⁸ (1-, 2-, 3D) engenders stronger

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Table 1. Properties, VEC Values, and Developed Formulas of Selected Examples of Compounds Composed of M_6L_{14} Units (L = halogen or chalcogen)

| compound | ref | unit | VEC | transport properties |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-------------------------------------------|
| compounds based on discrete units or units interconnected by L^{i-a} ligands | | | | |
| $Cs_2Mo_6Br_{14}$ | 13 | $Mo_6Br_8Br^a_6$ | 24 | insulating |
| $NaMo_6Br_{13}$ | 14 | $Mo_6Br_8Br^{a-}_{2/2}Br^a_4$ | 24 | insulating |
| Mo_6Br_{12} | 15 | $Mo_6Br_8Br^{a-}_{4/2}Br^a_2$ | 24 | insulating |
| $Mo_6Br_{10}S$ | 16 | $Mo_6S^iBr_7Br^{a-}_{6/2}$ | 24 | insulating |
| compounds containing L^{i-a} and L^{a-i} interconnections developed in 1D, 2D, and 3D | | | | |
| $Mo_6Br_6S_3$ | 6 | $Mo_6Br_4S^{i-}_{2/2}S^{i-a}_{2/2}Br^{a-}_{4/2}S^{a-i}_{2/2}$ (1D) | 24 | semiconducting |
| $Re_6Se_8Cl_2$ | 7 | $Re_6Se_4Se^{i-a}_{4/2}Cl^a_2Se^{a-i}_{4/2}$ (2D) | 24 | semiconducting |
| $Mo_6S_6Br_2$ | 8 | $Mo_6Br_2S^{i-a}_{6/2}S^{a-i}_{6/2}$ (3D) | 22 | metallic, superconducting, $T_c = 13.8$ K |
| $PbMo_6S_8$ | 17 | $Mo_6S^{i-}_2S^{i-a}_{6/2}S^{a-i}_{6/2}$ (3D) | 22 | metallic, superconducting, $T_c = 14$ K |
| $Cs_{0.6}Mo_6S_7$ | 18 | $Mo_6S^{i-}_{2/2}S^{i-a}_{6/2}S^{a-i}_{6/2}$ (3D) | 22 | metallic, superconducting, $T_c = 8$ K. |

electronic interactions between neighboring units (Table 1). These interactions are mainly the result of short M–L interunit distances, not direct M–M intercluster bonding. The ultimate term of condensation by L^{i-a}/L^{a-i} ligands is reached for the $Mo_6L_2L^{i-a}_{6/2}L^{a-i}_{6/2}$ (L = S, Se, Te) 3D framework that appears in the so-called Chevrel Phases, discovered in the early seventies by Sergent's group in Rennes.^{9a} These latter series have only been obtained for Mo with the exception of the mixed metal clusters found in $Mo_2Re_4L_8$ and $Mo_4Ru_2L_8$.^{9b} Many research works have been devoted to this class of compounds because of their remarkable physicochemical properties such as superconductivity at high-critical magnetic fields,¹⁰ catalysis,¹¹ or redox intercalation.¹² In these compounds, the molecular character has disappeared to the benefit of a band structure with broadened valence bands and VEC values that can vary from 20 to 24. For 22 electrons per cluster, the Fermi level corresponds to a half-filled narrow band, and the superconducting properties of these compounds are optimum (i.e., $PbMo_6S_8$, $T_c = 14$ K).

A recent challenge was to obtain similar series based on M_6L_{18} units instead of M_6L_{14} units to learn more about the influence of the nature of the metal, ligand, and type of unit (M_6L_{18} or M_6L_{14}) on the electronic structures and physical properties. This goal has been reached in Nb_6 chemistry in which the replacement of inner halogens by oxygens favors stronger connections between $M_6L_{12}L^a_6$ units and enables a condensation by double O^{i-a}/O^{a-i} bridges similar to the L^{i-a}/L^{a-i} ones (L = S, Se, Te) observed for $M_6L_8L^a_6$ units. A large number of Nb_6 oxyhalides have been obtained¹⁹ since the discovery of $ScNb_6Cl_{13}O_3$.²⁰ The presence of oxygen and

halogen within the $Nb_6X_{18-x}O_x$ unit (X = Cl or Br) leads to important distortions of the cluster and to various electron counts (from 13 to 16) in relation to the significant discrepancy between the ionic radii and the charges of the oxygen and halogen atoms.²¹ Furthermore, the condensation of Nb_6 oxychloride units through O^{i-a} , O^{a-i} , and O^{i-i} bridges stabilizes structures with topologies similar to those found in molybdenum chalcogenide chemistry. This is the case for $Na_{0.21}Nb_6Cl_{10.5}O_3$ that exhibits a O^{i-a}/O^{a-i} layered unit condensation,^{19j} for $CsNb_6Cl_{12}O_2$ based on a O^{i-a}/O^{a-i} unit chain condensation,^{19f} and more recently for $Nb_{10}Cl_{16}O_7$ based on Nb_6 octahedral clusters and Nb_2 pairs.²² The ultimate term of condensation by O^{i-a}/O^{a-i} ligands has been obtained in $Ti_2Nb_6O_{12}$ which exhibits the same topology as Chevrel Phases with a O^{i-a}/O^{a-i} condensation in the three directions of space.²³

We report here the synthesis and the crystal and electronic structures of the new $Na_2(Sc_4Nb_2)(Nb_6O_{12})_3$ niobium oxide whose structure is related to that of $Ti_2Nb_6O_{12}$. It is a new member of the larger $A_nBM_6L_{12}(Z)$ family (A = monovalent cation lying in tetrahedral cavities, B = monovalent or trivalent cations lying in octahedral cavities, M = rare earth, Zr, or Nb, Z = interstitial except for Nb). The structural relationships between the $A_nBM_6L_{12}(Z)$ series ($M_6L_{12}L^a_6$ unit-based compounds with a $M_6L_6L^{i-a}_{6/2}L^{a-i}_{6/2}$ cluster framework) and Chevrel Phases ($Mo_6L_8L^a_6$ unit-based compounds with a $Mo_6L_2L^{i-a}_{6/2}L^{a-i}_{6/2}$ cluster framework) are shown in terms of the M_6L_{18} and M_6L_{14} unit packing models. We particularly focus on the location of counteranions within the cluster framework in relation to the type of units (M_6L_{14} or M_6L_{18}) and the compactness within the unit layer, as well as on the inner ligands involved in the inner–apical bridges.

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We also show that despite a topology similar to that encountered in Chevrel Phases, intercalation properties are not expected in the Nb₆O₁₂(Nb₆O₁₂)₃ cluster framework-based compounds. Finally, it is shown, from theoretical LMTO calculations, that a maximum VEC of 14 can be reached in a Nb₆O₁₂(Nb₆O₁₂)₃ cluster framework, leading to semiconducting behavior.

Experimental Section

Synthesis and Chemical Analyses. Na₂(Sc₄Nb₂)(Nb₆O₁₂)₃ was prepared from Nb₂O₅, NbO, Sc₂O₃, and NaF starting materials with a 1:4:1:3 ratio. Powders were weighed, ground, formed into a pellet under inert atmosphere, and placed into an open niobium container (Plansee). The tube was encapsulated in an evacuated silica ampule which was subsequently placed in a furnace and brought up to 950 °C in 24 h. After 96 h, the tube was cooled to room temperature within 12 h. At this stage the quartz ampule was white and very brittle because of the attack and crystallization of silica. The remaining bulk product, inside the niobium tube, was then washed with distilled water and HF in an ultrasonic bath to eliminate the excess NaF and soluble impurities. The X-ray powder diffraction patterns of the resulting powder revealed supplementary lines attributed to the presence of NbO as an impurity. Many experiments were performed to improve the yield of the reaction. Unfortunately, it turned out that the modification of the loaded stoichiometries did not lead to purer samples since the increase of the Nb₂O₅ starting composition favored the formation of ScNbO₄ ternary oxide.²⁴ On the other hand, the use of an alumina container instead of a niobium crucible strongly decreased the yield of the reaction. Further attempts to synthesize other Na_y(Sc_{2-x}Nb_x)Nb₆O₁₂ oxides starting from NaNbO₄ mineralizers²⁵ failed. The attack of the glass container clearly indicated a reaction between the niobium container and SiO₂ to form Nb₅Si₃²⁶ and NbO. However, no trace of Nb₅Si₃ was found in the X-ray powder pattern of the bulk compound or the presence of the remaining fluoride. The presence of NbO in the final compound could not be avoided even by modification of the starting loaded stoichiometries.

Accurate WDS-EPMA (wavelength dispersive X-ray spectrometers—electron probe microanalyzer) measurements have been performed using a Camebax SX 50 microprobe, equipped with five spectrometers and a variety of crystals to make the radiation characteristics of the full range of elements (atomic weight greater than that of He) accessible. Several single-crystals of the title compound from several preparations were embedded in epoxy resin and polished down to 0.25 mm diamond grade to obtain a perfect plane surface. The measurements were performed on several points of each crystal (total 75 points). Each of them exhibits Na, Sc, Nb, and O, but no trace of fluorine was detected. The experimental average composition determined from these measurements is Na_{2.3(1)}Sc_{3.5(1)}Nb_{19.4(3)}O_{36.7(3)}. This formula is close to Na₂Sc₄Nb₂₀O₃₆ (Na₂(Sc₄Nb₂)(Nb₆O₁₂)₃) and was confirmed by structural determination and electronic considerations. As already observed for several other niobium cluster oxides, the presence of fluoride salt as a mineralizer does not lead to the incorporation of fluorine into the crystal lattice. Some exceptions have to be mentioned for example KNb₈O_{14-x}F_x ($x \approx 1.0$)²⁷ and K₄Al₂Nb₁₁O₂₁F.²⁸

Table 2. Crystal Data and Conditions of Data Collection for Na₂Sc₄Nb₂₀O₃₆ (Na₂(Sc₄Nb₂)(Nb₆O₁₂)₃)

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| formula | Na ₂ Sc ₄ Nb ₂₀ O ₃₆ |
| temp (K) | 298 |
| fw (g/mol) | 2660.02 |
| cryst size (mm ³) | 0.025 × 0.024 × 0.02 |
| crystal syst | trigonal |
| space group | R $\bar{3}$ (No. 148) |
| <i>a</i> (Å) | 8.0335(3) |
| <i>c</i> (Å) | 14.5718(5) |
| <i>V</i> (Å ³) | 814.43(5) |
| <i>Z</i> | 1 |
| <i>d</i> _{calcd} (g/cm ³) | 5.424 |
| μ (mm ⁻¹) | 7.642 |
| no. of reflns integrated | 5688 |
| <i>R</i> _{int} | 0.0442 |
| no. of independent reflns | 925 |
| no. of independent reflns $I > 2\sigma(I)$ | 728 |
| Θ_{\min} , Θ_{\max} | 3.24°, 36.96° |
| <i>h</i> | −13 → 13 |
| <i>k</i> | −12 → 13 |
| <i>l</i> | −24 → 24 |
| data/restraints/paramrs | 925/0/44 |
| <i>R</i> ₁ ($I > 2\sigma(I)$) ^a | 0.028 |
| <i>R</i> ₂ (all data) ^a | 0.050 |
| GOF | 1.09 |
| $\Delta\rho$ max, min (e/Å ³) | 1.90, −1.61 |

$$^a R_1 = \sum |F_o| - F_c / \sum |F_o|; R_2 = [\sum [w(F_o^2 - F_c^2)^2] / \sum [w(F_o^2)^2]]^{1/2}.$$

Structure Determination by Single-Crystal X-ray Diffraction.

A suitable single-crystal of the title compound was mounted on a Nonius KappaCCD X-ray area-detector diffractometer with Mo K α radiation ($\lambda = 0.71073$ Å). Details of the data collection are reported in Table 2. Once the data processing was performed by the KappaCCD analysis software,²⁹ the cell parameters were refined as follows: *a* = 8.0335(3) Å, *c* = 14.5718(5) Å, *V* = 814.43(5) Å³. Let us note that the analysis of several other single crystals from different batches led to the same refined lattice parameters within the standard errors. The calculation of E statistics³⁰ performed on the data suggested a centrosymmetric space group. According to the observed systematic extinctions, the structure was solved in the R $\bar{3}$ space group by direct methods using SIR97.³¹ Structural refinements against *F*² by least-squares techniques, combined with Fourier difference syntheses, were performed using SHELXL-97.³² Nb from the Nb₆ cluster and oxygen atoms fully occupy three 18*f* positions and have been refined anisotropically. In a first step, it was assumed that scandium fully occupied a 6*h* position, but after several cycles of refinements, it turned out that an electronic peak remained close to this position. Nb2 was then introduced on this residue with the same atomic displacement parameter as Sc2. The sum of the occupancies of Sc2 and Nb2 was restricted to the value corresponding to a fully occupied 6*h* position. Afterward, the first two restraints were progressively relaxed during the convergence, leading to final positions in agreement with reliable Sc—O and Nb—O interatomic distances. Because of the lower occupancy of Nb2 compared to Sc2, this atom was refined isotropically. The structure was then solved for several crystals from different

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Table 3. Atomic Coordinates and Atomic Displacement Parameters

| atom | Wyckoff | occupancy | x | y | z | $U_{eq} (\text{\AA}^2)^a$ |
|------|---------|-----------|------------|------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| Nb1 | 18f | 1 | 0.21522(3) | 0.18934(3) | 0.077003(17) | 0.00444(8) |
| O1 | 18f | 1 | 0.0284(3) | 0.2124(3) | 0.17160(13) | 0.0072(3) |
| O2 | 18f | 1 | 0.2453(3) | 0.1616(3) | 0.33814(12) | 0.0085(4) |
| Nb2 | 6c | 0.327(5) | 0 | 0 | 0.2675(7) | 0.0053(14) |
| Sc2 | 6c | 0.673(5) | 0 | 0 | 0.2746(8) | 0.0043(9) |
| Na | 18f | 0.11 | 0.261(6) | 0.614(14) | 0.1560(19) | 0.024(5) |

^a $U_{eq} = 1/3 \sum_i \sum_j (U^{ij} a^i a^j \hat{a}_i \cdot \hat{a}_j)$ except for Nb2, refined isotropically, in which case the isotropic displacement parameter is given.

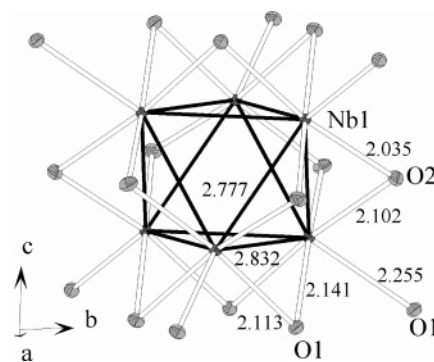
Table 4. Selected Interatomic Distances (Å) in $\text{Na}_2\text{Sc}_4\text{Nb}_{20}\text{O}_{36}^a$

| | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-------------------|------------|
| Nb1–Nb1 $\times 6$ | 2.7766(4) | Sc2–O2 $\times 3$ | 1.967(6) |
| Nb1–Nb1 $\times 6$ | 2.8318(4) | Sc2–O1 $\times 3$ | 2.197(8) |
| Nb1–O2 | 2.035 (2) | Nb2–O2 $\times 3$ | 2.017(6) |
| Nb1–O2 | 2.102(2) | Nb2–O1 $\times 3$ | 2.128(7) |
| Nb1–O1 ⁱ | 2.113(2) | Nb1–Nb2 | 3.2128(6) |
| Nb1–O1 ⁱ | 2.141(2) | Nb1–Nb2 | 3.222(9) |
| Nb1–O1 ^a | 2.254(2) | Nb1–Sc2 | 3.2197(10) |
| Nb1–Nb1 _{intercluster} | 3.213 | Nb1–Sc2 | 3.2198(9) |

^a O1ⁱ and O1^a refer to the inner and apical ligands, respectively.

preparations, and the Sc/Nb ratio on the tetrahedral site of units (see discussion below) did not deviate within the standard errors to 2/3:1/3. The niobium, scandium, and oxygen contents correspond to $\text{Sc}_4\text{Nb}_{20}\text{O}_{36}$. The Na cation was found to be statistically distributed on six equivalent crystallographic positions, almost merged with the *ab* plane, around the origin of the unit cell, and corresponding to each other by a -3 symmetry operation. Because of the partial occupation and small weight of Na cation, the combined refinement of its occupation and atomic displacement parameters led to unrealistic physical values. According to the chemical analyses, the occupation was subsequently restricted to 2 Na atoms per formula. This strategy led to reasonable atomic displacement parameters. Moreover, the value of two sodium atoms per formula corresponds to an electron count that has been corroborated by LMTO calculations. Positional parameters and interatomic distances are given in Tables 3 and 4, respectively.

DFT Computations. Self-consistent *ab initio* band structure calculations were performed on $\text{Ti}_2\text{Nb}_6\text{O}_{12}$ and $\text{Na}_2(\text{Sc}_4\text{Nb}_2)(\text{Nb}_6\text{O}_{12})_3$ with the scalar relativistic tight-binding linear muffin-tin orbital (LMTO) method in the atomic spheres approximation including the combined correction.³³ Because of the fractional occupation of the Nb2 and Sc2 crystallographic positions, several $\text{Na}_2(\text{Sc}_4\text{Nb}_2)(\text{Nb}_6\text{O}_{12})_3$ model compounds were considered. Exchange and correlation were treated in the local density approximation using the von Barth–Hedin local exchange correlation potential.³⁴ Within the LMTO formalism interatomic spaces were filled with interstitial spheres. The optimal positions and radii of these additional “empty spheres” (ES) were determined by the procedure described in ref 35. Six and forty-nine nonsymmetry-related ES with $0.76 \leq r_{ES} \leq 2.40$ Å and $0.81 \leq r_{ES} \leq 2.39$ Å were introduced for the calculations of $\text{Ti}_2\text{Nb}_6\text{O}_{12}$ and $\text{Na}_2(\text{Sc}_4\text{Nb}_2)(\text{Nb}_6\text{O}_{12})_3$, respectively. The full LMTO basis set consisted of 5s, 5p, 4d, and 4f functions for Nb spheres, 4s, 3p, and 3d for Sc and Ti spheres, 3s, 2p, and 3d functions for O spheres, and s, p,

**Figure 1.** Representation of the Nb_6O_{18} unit. Displacement ellipsoids are shown at the 50% probability level. Bond lengths are in angstroms.

and d functions for ES. The eigenvalue problem was solved using the following minimal basis set obtained from the Löwdin downfolding technique: Nb 5s, 5p, and 4d; Sc 4s and 3d; Ti 4s, 4p, and 3d; Na 3s; O 2p; and interstitial 1s LMTOs. The *k*-space integration was performed using the tetrahedron method.³⁶ Charge self-consistency and average properties were obtained from 90 and 72 irreducible *k* points for the calculations of $\text{Ti}_2\text{Nb}_6\text{O}_{12}$ and $\text{Na}_2(\text{Sc}_4\text{Nb}_2)(\text{Nb}_6\text{O}_{12})_3$, respectively. A measure of the magnitude of the bonding was obtained by computing the crystal orbital Hamiltonian populations (COHP) which are the Hamiltonian population weighted density of states (DOS).³⁷ As recommended, a reduced basis set (in which all ES LMTO's were downfolded) was used for the COHP calculations.³⁸ Bands, DOS, and COHP curves were shifted so that ϵ_F lies at 0 eV.

Results and Discussion

Description of the Structure. The $\text{Na}_2(\text{Sc}_4\text{Nb}_2)(\text{Nb}_6\text{O}_{12})_3$ oxide crystallizes in the trigonal system, rhombohedral lattice, space group $R\bar{3}$. Within the associated hexagonal unit cell, the stoichiometry is $\text{Na}_2\text{Sc}_4\text{Nb}_{20}\text{O}_{36}$ written as $\text{Na}_2(\text{Sc}_4\text{Nb}_2)(\text{Nb}_6\text{O}_{12})_3$ to show the cluster unit. On the other hand, within the rhombohedral unit cell, the latter stoichiometry becomes $\text{Na}_{0.66}(\text{Sc}_{1.33}\text{Nb}_{0.66})\text{Nb}_6\text{O}_{12}$ and will be used in the following for the sake of comparison to that of $\text{Ti}_2\text{Nb}_6\text{O}_{12}$. The structure is built up from Nb_6O_{18} anionic units of symmetry -3 centered on a $3b$ Wyckoff position (Figure 1). The Nb_6O_{18} units are stacked according to a cubic-close-packed mode following an ABC sequence that generates the tetrahedral and octahedral cavities of units occupied by the cations. In $\text{Ti}_2\text{Nb}_6\text{O}_{12}$, the tetrahedral cavities are occupied by titanium cations (Ti^{IV}), whereas the octahedral cavities are empty. In $\text{Na}_{0.66}(\text{Sc}_{1.33}\text{Nb}_{0.66})\text{Nb}_6\text{O}_{12}$, the tetrahedral cavities are randomly occupied by scandium and niobium (Nb^V), and the octahedral ones are statistically occupied by sodium. The units shared common oxygen ligands to form a tri-dimensional framework with the $\text{Nb}_6\text{O}_i\text{O}^{i-a}_{6/2}\text{O}^{a-i}_{6/2}$ developed formula. Note that this framework is topologically related to that of $\text{Mo}_6\text{L}_2\text{L}^{i-a}_{6/2}\text{L}^{a-i}_{6/2}$, based on Mo_6L_{14} units, obtained in Chevrel Phases. Compared to $\text{Ti}_2\text{Nb}_6\text{O}_{12}$, the analysis of the intraunit distances reported in Table 4 for

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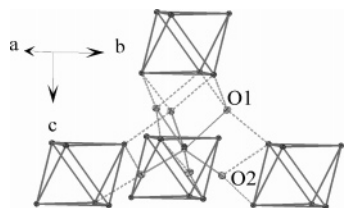


Figure 2. Local environment of the Sc³⁺ and Nb⁵⁺ cations in the tetrahedral cavity. For clarity, only the ligands involved in the coordination sphere of the cations are represented. Displacement ellipsoids are shown at the 50% probability level.

Na_{0.66}(Sc_{1.33}Nb_{0.66})Nb₆O₁₂ reveals an elongation of the Nb–O^a bond lengths and a contraction of the Nb–Nb bond lengths, whereas the Nb–Oⁱ distances are fairly similar (Ti₂Nb₆O₁₂: Nb–Nb = 2.8502(4) Å, Nb–Nb = 2.7896(4) Å, Nb–Oⁱ = 2.076(2) Å, Nb–Oⁱ = 2.142(2) Å, Nb–O^a = 2.212(2) Å, Nb–O² = 2.051(2) Å, Nb–O² = 2.113(2) Å). Thus, the slight variation of bond lengths going from Ti₂Nb₆O₁₂ to Na_{0.66}(Sc_{1.33}Nb_{0.66})Nb₆O₁₂ must be attributed to a different repartition of the cationic charges within the Nb₆O₆O^{i-a}_{6/2}O^{a-i}_{6/2} anionic framework, as already found for M₆X₁₈-based compounds, as well as a distortion of the unit cell. Let us recall that a complete study of the evolution of bond lengths in M₆X₁₈ anionic units versus the charge repartition was performed for the A_xREM₆X₁₈ series (A = alkaline earth; RE = rare earth; M = Nb, Ta; X = Cl, Br).³⁹

Substitution of Sc and Nb atoms for Ti atoms as well as occupation of the octahedral cavities by Na, which are not occupied in Ti₂Nb₆O₁₂, leads to an increase of the cell parameters (*a* = 7.9364(5) Å, *c* = 14.4339(10) Å and *a* = 8.0335(3) Å, *c* = 14.5718(5)) Å for Ti₂Nb₆O₁₂ and Na_{0.66}(Sc_{1.33}Nb_{0.66})Nb₆O₁₂, respectively). Nb₂ and Sc₂ are randomly distributed according to a 1/3:2/3 ratio on the ternary axis in the tetrahedral cavities of units on two close 6*c* Wyckoff positions shifted above the centroid of the tetrahedron (0 0 1/4). The atomic coordination level of these cations is not tetrahedral but octahedral. Indeed, the distorted octahedral coordination of Sc₂ and Nb₂ (Figure 2) is built up from three inner oxygen ligands belonging to three adjacent clusters and from three other inner–apical ligands

belonging to one adjacent cluster (Nb₂–O¹ = 2.129 Å × 3 and Nb₂–O² = 2.017 Å × 3; Sc₂–O¹ = 2.198 Å × 3 and Sc₂–O² = 1.967 Å × 3). The site of Nb₂ is then less distorted than that of Sc₂. Na⁺ cations statistically occupy the octahedral cavities of units (Figure 3a and b) generated by the stacking of the cluster units. A large twelve coordination site of ligands is generated around the origin of the unit cell by the oxygen ligands belonging to the six units building the octahedral cavity (Figure 3). The sodium cation is shifted from the origin that merges with the centroid of the octahedral cavity and statistically (11.11%) occupies a 18*f* Wyckoff position. Because of the statistical occupancy of the sodium positions, the bond lengths obtained by X-ray structural investigation correspond to an average between empty and full sites. As indicated in Table 6, if Na was located on the centroid of the octahedral cavity, it will be surrounded by six Oⁱ and six O^{i-a} units (O–Oⁱ = 2.928 Å and O–O^{i-a} = 3.218 Å, respectively). The shift from the centroid allows shorter Na–O contacts and a lower coordination number. Such complex coordination is usual for alkali ions and has been already observed in the A_xREM₆L₁₈ series (A = alkali ion, RE = rare earth, M = Nb or Ta, L = halogen or (halogen and oxygen)).^{4,5}

Theoretical Considerations. A previous theoretical study on the electronic structure of Ti₂Nb₆O₁₂ using extended Hückel theory (EHT) calculations has been reported.²³ In this compound, the metallic electron count of the octahedral Nb₆ cluster is equal to 14. The total density of states (DOS) computed depicts narrow peaks that are typical of weak interactions between the Nb₆ clusters. Indeed insignificant Ti–Nb and intercluster Nb–Nb bondings have been computed. Because of the nonbonding character of the empty band that lies around half an electronvolt above the Fermi level, the authors suggested that the reduction of this compound could be achieved.

To analyze the role of the isolated Sc₂, Nb₂, and Na atoms in the title compound, periodic density functional theory (DFT) calculations were carried out. For the sake of comparison, similar calculations were performed on Ti₂–

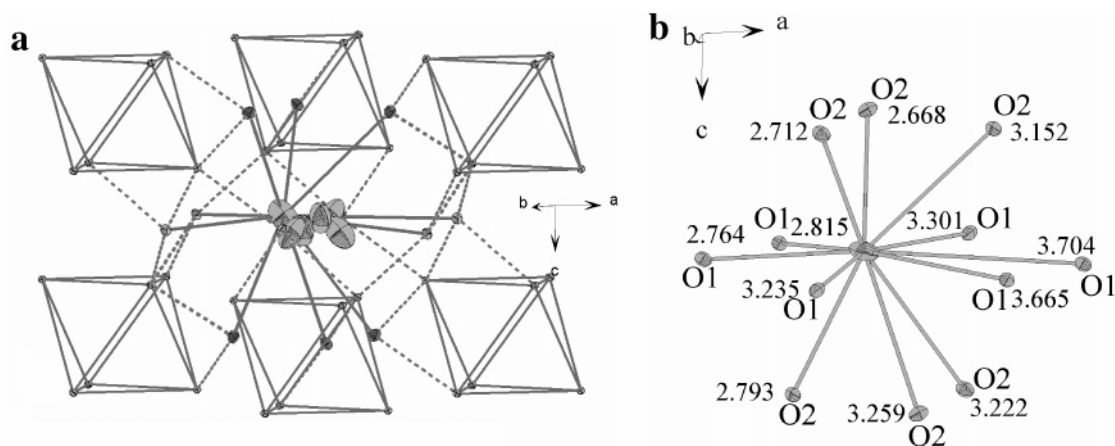


Figure 3. (a) Local environment of the Na⁺ cation in the octahedral cavity. The crystallographic positions represented are statistically occupied by Na⁺ (11.11% in the whole structure). For clarity, only the ligands involved in the coordination sphere of the cation are represented. Displacement ellipsoids are shown at the 50% probability level. (b) Local coordination sphere of Na⁺. Note that, because of the statistical occupancy of the sodium positions, the indicated bond lengths (Å) correspond to an average between the empty and full sites.

Table 5. Unit-Cell Parameters and Selected Distances (Å) in Binary and Ternary Chevrel Phases^a

| compound ref | VEC | rhombohedral unit-cell params | hexagonal unit-cell params | L ⁱ –L ⁱ | O–ccluster | O–fccluster | O–L ⁱ | O–L ^{i-a} | T–L ⁱ |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-----|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------|-------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Mo ₆ S ₈ 44 | 20 | <i>a</i> = 6.432 α = 91.57 | <i>a</i> = 9.220 <i>c</i> = 10.831 <i>c/a</i> = 1.17 | 4.703 (2rS ²⁻ = 3.68) | 5.621 | 5.416 | 2.352 | 3.154 | 0.356 |
| Mo ₆ Se ₈ 45 | 20 | <i>a</i> = 6.658 α = 91.58 | <i>a</i> = 9.544 <i>c</i> = 11.208 <i>c/a</i> = 1.17 | 4.792 (2rSe ²⁻ = 3.96) | 5.819 | 5.605 | 2.396 | 3.191 | 0.407 |
| Mo ₆ Te ₈ 46 | 20 | <i>a</i> = 7.048 α = 92.472 | <i>a</i> = 10.179(1) <i>c</i> = 11.674(2) <i>c/a</i> = 1.14 | 4.877 (2rTe ²⁻ = 4.42) | 6.191 | 5.837 | 2.438 | 3.369 | 0.480 |
| PbMo ₆ S ₈ 17 | 22 | <i>a</i> = 6.544 α = 89.48 | <i>a</i> = 9.212 <i>c</i> = 11.436 <i>c/a</i> = 1.24 | 5.752 | | 5.718 | 2.786 | 3.121 | |
| PbMo ₆ Se ₈ 17 | 22 | <i>a</i> = 6.810 α = 89.23 | <i>a</i> = 9.565 <i>c</i> = 11.951 <i>c/a</i> = 1.24 | 5.790 | | 5.975 | 2.895 | 3.205 | |
| Cu _{1.38} Mo ₆ S ₈ 47 | 22 | <i>a</i> = 6.559 α = 95.512 | <i>a</i> = 9.713 <i>c</i> = 10.213 <i>c/a</i> = 1.05 | 4.126 | 5.860 | 5.107 | 2.063 Cu1 2.430, 2.453 Cu2 2.246 | 3.442 Cu1 2.354, 2.349 Cu2 2.295, 2.383, 2.577 | 0.490 |

^a The O and T labels define the centroids of the octahedral and tetrahedral cavities.

Table 6. Unit-Cell Parameters and Selected Distances in A_nM₆L₁₂(Z) Compounds

| compound ref | rhombohedral unit-cell params | hexagonal unit-cell params | O–ccluster | O–fccluster | O–X ⁱ | T–X ⁱ | T–M |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|------------|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| NaLa ₆ I ₁₂ Os 43 | <i>a</i> = 10.07 α = 107.1° | <i>a</i> = 16.214 <i>c</i> = 11.172 <i>c/a</i> = 0.72 | 9.545 × 6 | 5.586 × 2 | 3.214 × 6 | 2.785 × 3 | 2.591 × 3 |
| CsEr ₆ I ₁₂ C 42 | <i>a</i> = 9.41 α = 72.47° | <i>a</i> = 11.120 <i>c</i> = 20.38 <i>c/a</i> = 1.85 | 7.285 × 6 | 10.31 × 2 | 4.20 ^{i-a} × 6 4.161 ^{a-i} × 6 | 2.958 ^{ia} × 3 2.985 ⁱ × 3 | 4.514 × 3 4.267 × 3 |
| Ti ₂ Nb ₆ O ₁₂ 23 | <i>a</i> = 6.64 α = 73.31° | <i>a</i> = 7.9364 <i>c</i> = 14.4339 <i>c/ac/a</i> = 1.82 | 5.175 | 7.217 | 2.919 ⁱ × 6 3.217 ^{i-a} × 6 | 1.901 × 3 2.059 × 3 | 2.798 × 3 3.165 × 3 |
| Na _{0.66} (Sc _{1.33} Nb _{0.66})Nb ₆ O ₁₂ this work | <i>a</i> = 6.78 α = 72.61° | <i>a</i> = 8.03 <i>c</i> = 14.845 <i>c/a</i> = 1.85 | 5.233 × 6 | 7.273 × 2 | 2.928 ⁱ × 6 3.218 ^{i-a} × 6 | 1.973 × 3 2.156 × 3 | 3.000 × 3 3.210 × 3 |

Nb₆O₁₂. Total and various atom-projected DOS curves for Ti₂Nb₆O₁₂ are sketched in Figure 4. Both the DFT and EHT DOS computed for Ti₂Nb₆O₁₂ are very comparable.²³ In the vicinity of the Fermi level, the main difference lies in the relative position of the vacant peak that derives from the “a_{2u}” molecular orbital (MO) of the octahedral Nb₆ cluster as well as the d orbitals of Ti. They overlap in energy according to DFT calculations, whereas they are somewhat separated by a small energy gap of ca. 0.2 eV with the EHT calculations. The COHP curves, sketched in Figure 4, show that the lower part of these lowest-unoccupied bands present a Nb–Nb bonding character, as already noticed with the EHT method. On the other hand, an Nb–Ti antibonding character is also computed for these bands as well as a weak antibonding Nb–O character and a strong Ti–O antibonding character. Therefore, assuming a rigid band model, occupation of these bands is unfavorable. This partly explains why attempts to reduce this compound have been unsuccessful so far.²³

Because of the fractional occupation of the Na, Nb₂, and Sc2 crystallographic positions, a lower symmetry had to be considered for the calculations of the band structure of Na₂(Sc₄Nb₂)(Nb₆O₁₂)₃. All of the different atomic distributions of the Sc2 and Nb2 atoms were computed. Because of the similarity of the results, only one is discussed. Total and various atom-projected DOS and COHP computed for several atomic contacts in the structure are sketched in Figures 5 and 6, respectively. The bands that lie between –1.5 eV and

the Fermi level are mainly centered on the Nb₆ octahedra with metal–metal bonding character. A small energy gap of ca. 0.25 eV separates these occupied bands from the lowest-vacant bands that show a major Nb₂ contribution and a minor Nb₆ character. These latter bands are overall metal–metal nonbonding in the Nb₆ octahedron but significantly Nb₂–Nb (octahedron) antibonding. Moreover, these bands show an antibonding metal–oxygen character (not shown here). Therefore, their occupation is unfavorable leading to an idealized electron count of 14 per cluster. This is consistent with the fractional occupation of the Na site as well as the refined value of 1/3 for the Sc2/Nb₂ ratio to reach this optimized electron count. Because of the occurrence of a small band gap, semiconducting behavior is expected for this compound.

Unit Stacking in A_nM₆L₁₂(Z) Series and in Chevrel Phases (A_xMo₆L₈). Na_{0.66}(Sc_{1.33}Nb_{0.66})Nb₆O₁₂ is a new member of the large A_nBM₆L₁₂(Z) family (A = monovalent cation lying in tetrahedral unit cavities, B = monovalent or trivalent cations lying in octahedral unit cavities, M = rare earth, Zr, or Nb, Z = interstitial when M = rare earth or Zr). We propose here to show the structural correlation between the Na_{0.66}(Sc_{1.33}Nb_{0.66})Nb₆O₁₂ oxide and more generally between the A_nBM₆L₁₂(Z) series (M₆L₁₂L^a₆ units building a M₆Lⁱ₆L^{i-a}_{6/2}L^{a-i}_{6/2} cluster network) and the Chevrel Phases (Mo₆Lⁱ₈L^a₆ units building a Mo₆Lⁱ₂L^{i-a}_{6/2}L^{a-i}_{6/2} cluster

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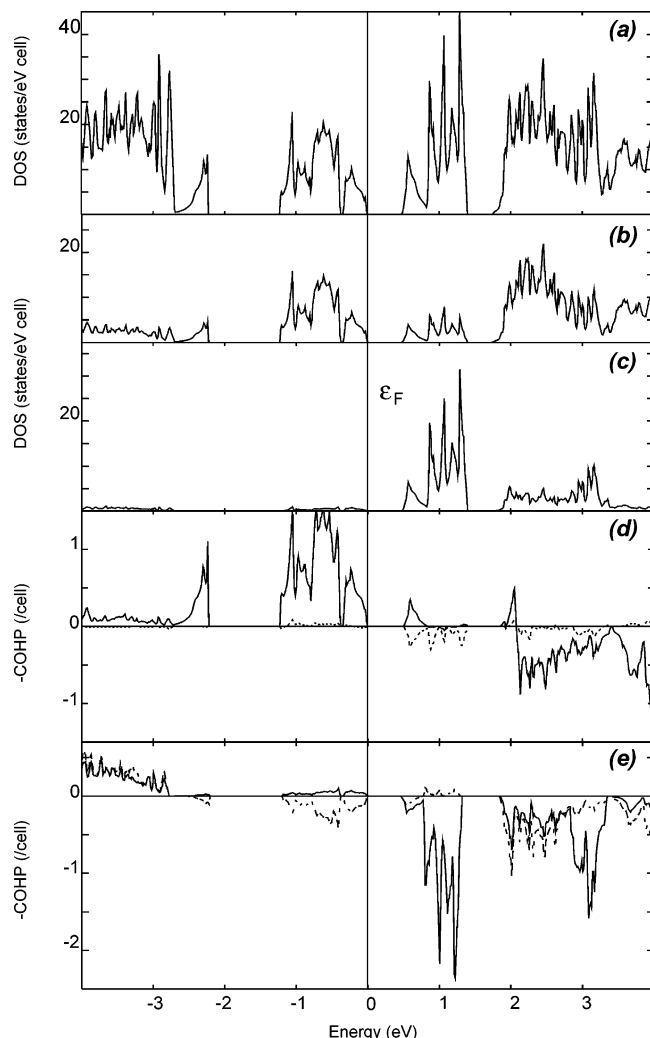


Figure 4. LMTO calculations for $\text{Ti}_2\text{Nb}_6\text{O}_{12}$: (a) Total DOS, (b) Nb-projected DOS, (c) Ti-projected DOS, (d) COHP curves for Nb–Nb contacts within the Nb₆ cluster (plain) and for Nb–Ti contacts (dotted) ranging from 3.18 to 3.27 Å, and (e) COHP curves for Ti–O contacts (plain) ranging from 1.87 to 2.12 Å and for Nb–O contacts (dotted) ranging from 2.05 to 2.21 Å.

network) in terms of M_6L_{18} and M_6L_{14} unit packing models. Let us note that the packing in the structures of $\text{Zr}_6\text{L}_{12}(\text{Z})$ ^{40,41} and related $\text{A}_n\text{M}_6\text{L}_{12}(\text{Z})$ series^{42,43} have already been described in term of a L anion packing.²³ However, since the L ligands are bonded to the clusters to form larger rigid anionic units, this model is not fully satisfactory for discussion.

Both Chevrel Phases and $\text{A}_n\text{BM}_6\text{L}_{12}(\text{Z})$ series are based on octahedral M_6 clusters centered on the apexes of a rhombohedral unit cell (Figure 7). Each cluster is linked to six adjacent clusters, three above and three below, via six inner–apical and six apical–inner bridges along the edges of the rhombohedral unit cell. This latter results from a cubic close packing of unit layers (ABCA sequences) along the 3-fold axis that generates two tetrahedral cavities and one

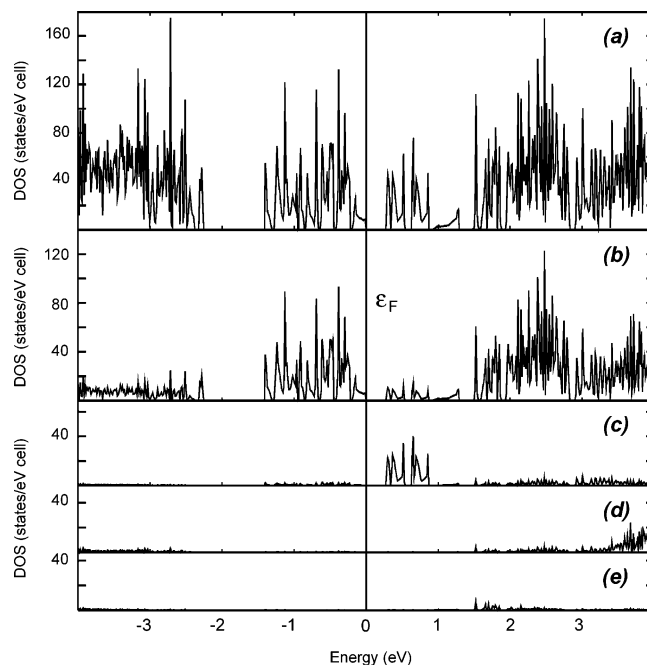


Figure 5. LMTO calculations for $\text{Na}_2(\text{Sc}_4\text{Nb}_2)(\text{Nb}_6\text{O}_{12})_3$: (a) Total DOS, (b) Nb of Nb₆ cluster contribution, (c) Nb₂ contribution, (d) Sc contribution, and (e) Na contribution.

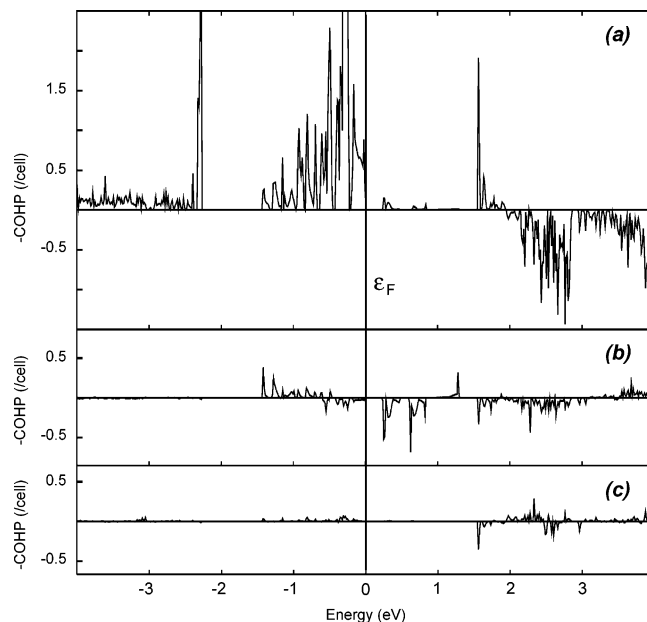


Figure 6. LMTO calculations for $\text{Na}_2(\text{Sc}_4\text{Nb}_2)(\text{Nb}_6\text{O}_{12})_3$: COHP curves for (a) Nb–Nb contacts within Nb₆ cluster, (b) Nb₂–Nb of the Nb₆ cluster ranging from 3.21 to 3.22 Å, and (c) Sc–Nb of the Nb₆ cluster ranging from 3.21 to 3.31 Å.

octahedral cavity of cluster units in the rhombohedral unit cell (Figure 7). In the following, the clusters building the octahedral cavity will be labeled c-cluster and the two additional ones which face-cap the octahedron to build the rhombohedral unit cell will be labeled fc-cluster. A useful tool for comparison of the compactness in the rhombohedral unit cell is the distance between the O or T positions with the center of adjacent c-clusters and fc-clusters (O and T define the centroids of the cavities generated by the units). Counteranions are located in the tetrahedral and octahedral cavities and their positions can either merge with those of

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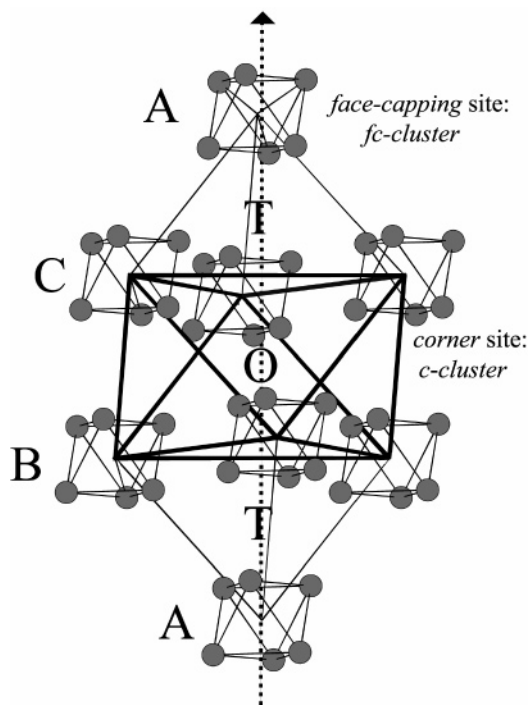


Figure 7. Representation of the common skeleton in Chevrel Phases and in the $A_n M_6 L_{12}(Z)$ series. This cell is built up from six c-clusters at the corner of the octahedron and two additional fc-clusters. Two tetrahedral cavities and one octahedral cavity are generated in this rhombohedral cell. The T and O labels refer to the centroids of these cavities.

the T and O centroids or be slightly shifted. The occupation of these cavities by counteranions depends on the distortion of the rhombohedral unit cell in relation with the type of units ($M_6 L_{14}$ or $M_6 L_{18}$), the compactness within the unit layer, and the type of ligands involved in the coordination sphere of cations.

Unit Condensation and Octahedral and Tetrahedral Cavities in Chevrel Phases. In the following, we will focus on the matrix and steric effects of ligands on the stacking and cavity sizes. The VEC variations that influence the Mo—Mo intracluster distances can be neglected compared to the aforementioned effects. The condensation mechanism between two adjacent units in Chevrel Phases (rhombohedral unit cell) is represented in Figure 8a. The unit of -3 symmetry is oriented in such a way that the two inner X^i ligands located on the ternary axis are not involved in the interunit bridges. Selected interatomic distances in Chevrel Phases and in the $A_n M_6 L_{12}(Z)$ series are reported in Tables 5 and 6, respectively.

Binary Compounds: $Mo_6 S_8$, $Mo_6 Se_8$, and $Mo_6 Te_8$. In binary compounds of general formula $Mo_6 L_8$ ($Mo_6 L_{12} L^{i-a}_{6/2} L^{a-i}_{6/2}$), the position of the T centroid quasi-merges with that of the L^i inner ligands, and consequently, no vacant cationic site can be considered in the tetrahedral cavity even by a shift of cations. The layers, stacked along the ternary axis, are strongly interpenetrated as shown by the values of the c/a ratio (see Table 5) which are lower than those theoretically observed in close compact structures (1.73). The O—c-cluster distances are longer than the O—fc-cluster ones. The first coordination sphere around the O centroid is formed by two L^i ligands belonging to the two fc-clusters and six

X^{i-a} ligands belonging to the six c-clusters. As expected, the L^i-L^i interatomic distance decreases going from Te to S, but this decrease is smaller than expected when considering only the ionic radii of the chalcogens. In other words, the smaller the chalcogen, the larger the size of the vacant site. Indeed, in $Mo_6 S_8$, the separation between the two S^i atoms is large in comparison to twice ionic radii of S. This feature explains the poor stability of this binary sulfide that cannot be obtained by direct solid-state routes at high temperature in contrast to the selenium and tellurium homologs, $Mo_6 Se_8$ and $Mo_6 Te_8$. It can however be obtained in soft conditions by deintercalation of $A_x Mo_6 S_8$ ternary sulfides.⁴⁴ The “ $Mo_6 S_8$ ” framework can also be stabilized by the replacement of the two S^i atoms belonging to the two fc-clusters by two Br^i atoms leading to $Mo_6 S_6 Br_2$ which is prepared in a manner similar to that of $Mo_6 Se_8$ or $Mo_6 Te_8$.⁸ Indeed, the stabilization of the $Mo_6 S_6 Br_2$ structure is related to the short Br^i-Br^i interatomic distance that corresponds to the sum of ionic radii.

$A_x Mo_6 L_8$ Ternary Compounds. The difference between the $A_x Mo_6 L_8$ and $Mo_6 L_8$ series is the occupation of the octahedral cavity by A the cation. For further relevant comparisons with the $A_n M_6 L_{12}(Z)$ series, among the numerous examples of ternary $A_x Mo_6 L_8$ compounds, we will only consider those obtained with the large Pb^{2+} cation and with the smallest Cu^+ cation. In all of these compounds, the L^i ligands from the fc-clusters are always involved in the coordination sphere of the cations. In $PbMo_6 S_8$ or $PbMo_6 Se_8$, the position of the Pb^{2+} cation merges with that of the O centroid.¹⁷ The $Pb-L^{i-a}$ distances are close to the $O-L^{i-a}$ ones (O, centroid of the octahedral cavity) in the corresponding $Mo_6 L_8$ binary chalcogenides, but the $Pb-L^i$ distance is larger than the $O-X^i$ ones. This results in an elongation of the c parameter while a remains unchanged. Note that “ $PbMo_6 Te_8$ ” has not been reported probably because the presence of Pb on the O centroid would distort the $Mo_6 Te_{12} Te^{i-a}_{6/2} Te^{a-i}_{6/2}$ framework too much along the c axis. In $Cu_{1.38} Mo_6 S_8$, the copper is shifted from the O centroid position.⁴⁷ Indeed, the localization of Cu^+ on the O centroid would induce unrealistic $Cu-S$ interatomic distances. The shift from the O position toward the edges of the c-cluster octahedron enables the stabilization of the copper cation in the tetrahedral sites of sulfur that correspond to two independent crystallographic positions: Cu1 (coordination, two S^i from the fc-clusters and two S^{i-a} from the c-clusters) and Cu2 (coordination, one S^i from the fc-clusters and three S^{i-a} from the c-clusters). This shift of the copper from the O position induces a distortion of the octahedral cavity leading to a S^i-S^i interatomic distance of 4.126 Å, which is shorter than that found in $Mo_6 S_8$ (4.703 Å). Finally, the ability of the $M_6 S_{12} S^{i-a}_{6/2} S^{a-i}_{6/2}$ (or Se) skeleton to be reduced in a reversible way (variation of the VEC) combined with its elasticity versus the replacement of large divalent cations

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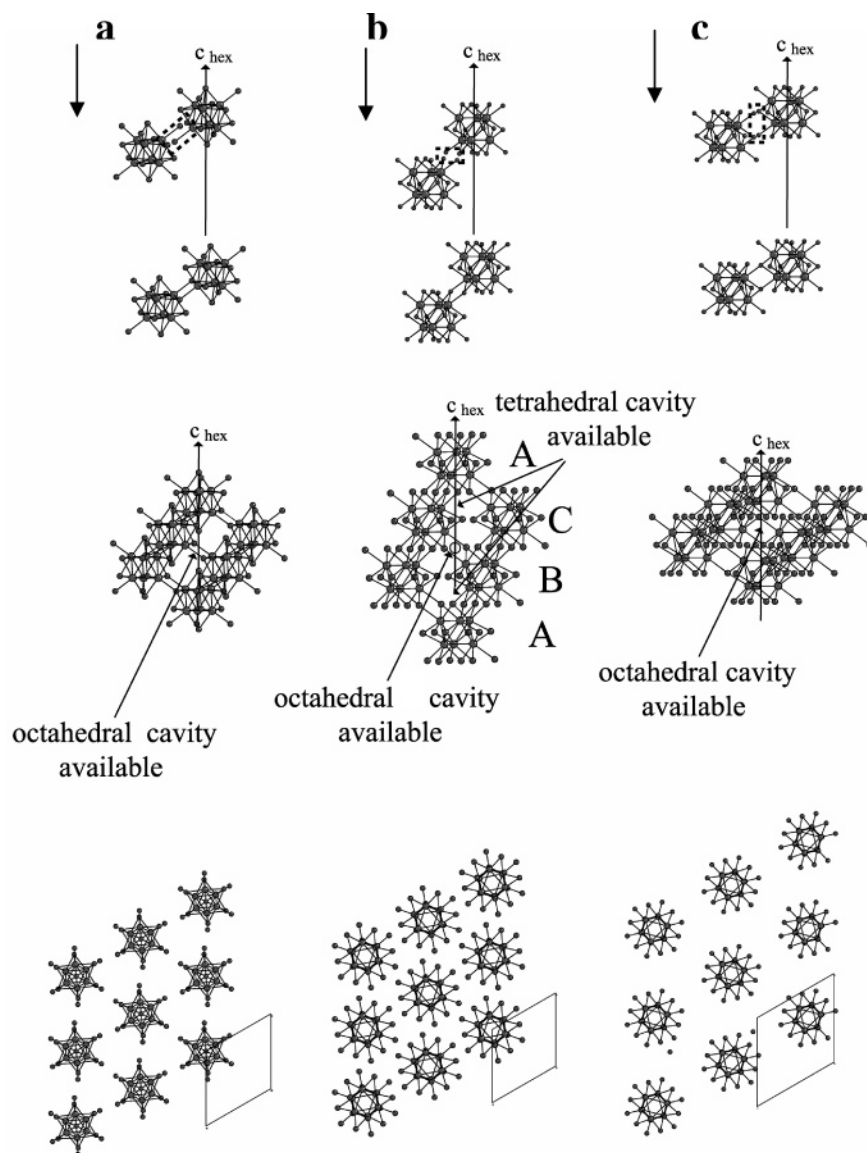


Figure 8. Representation of the condensation of M_6L_{14} and M_6L_{18} units via isotropic inner–apical and apical–inner bridges. On a same column, projection of the structure along $[1\ 0\ 0]$, projection of a cluster layer along $[0\ 0\ 1]$ with its bonded ligands: (a) Chevrel Phase, (b) $CsEr_6I_{12}C$ and $Na_{0.66}(Sc_{1.33}Nb_{0.66})-Nb_6O_{12}$, and (c) $NaLa_6I_{12}Os$.

by smaller monovalent cations explain the interesting intercalation properties of Chevrel Phases. One can conclude that the $Mo_6S_2^{i-a}S_{6/2}^{i-a}S_{6/2}^{a-i}$ framework is stabilized by the occupation of the octahedral O cavity, while no cation can occupy the tetrahedral cavity.

$A_nM_6L_{12}(Z)$ Series: $CsEr_6I_{12}C$ and $NaLa_6I_{12}Os$. As observed in Chevrel Phases, the $A_nM_6L_{12}(Z)$ series are based on octahedral clusters centered at the apexes of a rhombohedral unit cell (Figure 8b and c). $CsEr_6I_{12}C$ ⁴² and $NaLa_6I_{12}Os$ ⁴³ have been chosen among the members of the $A_nM_6L_{12}(Z)$ series as relevant examples for the discussion of unit condensation and cationic site sizes. First, these two compounds are both based on $M_6L_{18}(Z)$ units sharing inner–apical ligands in the three directions of the space with a same developed formula $M_6L_6^iL_{12}^{i-a}L_{6/2}^{a-i}L_{6/2}^{a-i}(Z)$. Another similarity is a cubic close packing of units with an ABCA sequence leading to octahedral and tetrahedral cavities. However, their structures differ from each other by two different condensation mechanisms between adjacent $M_6L_{18}(Z)$ units in the

rhombohedral unit cell represented in Figure 8b and c. In Chevrel Phases, the geometry of the Mo_6L_{14} unit and its disposition along the 3-fold axis make only one mechanism of condensation via isotropic inner–apical bridges between one unit and six adjacent ones (three below and three above) (Figure 8a) possible. As it can be seen in Figure 9, the condensation of units through three inner–apical bridges cannot involve the inner ligand located on the 3-fold axis of the rhombohedral unit cell. On the other hand, the $M_6L_{18}(Z)$ unit offers two possibilities for such inner–apical connections (Figure 8b and c). Indeed, in $NaLa_6I_{12}Os$ (Figure 8c), the inner–apical connections involve the inner ligands from the equatorial plane of the M_6L_{18} units, while in $CsEr_6I_{12}C$ (Figure 8b), the inner–apical connections involve the external inner ligands of the units. This results in interpenetrated layers in $NaLa_6I_{12}Os$ with a c/a ratio of 0.72, while the c/a ratio is 1.85 in $CsEr_6I_{12}C$. Consequently, in the latter iodide, the units are compacted within the layers according

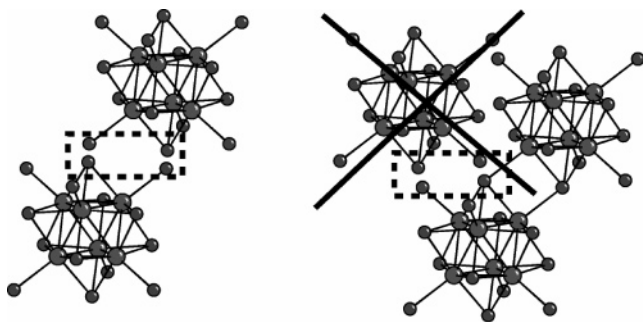


Figure 9. Condensation of units through three inner–apical bridges cannot involve the inner ligand located on the 3-fold axis of the rhombohedral unit cell.

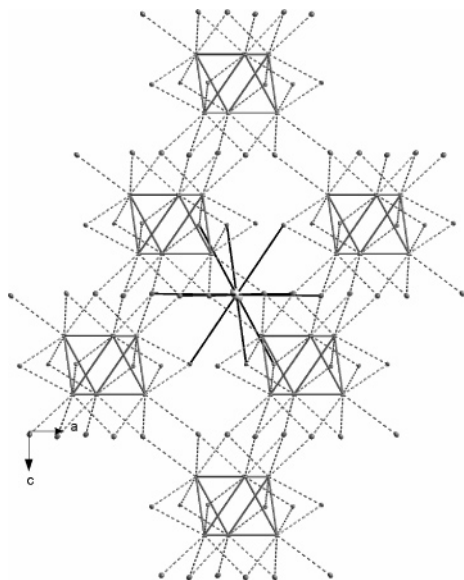


Figure 10. Representation of the environment of Cs in $\text{CsEr}_6\text{I}_{12}\text{C}$.

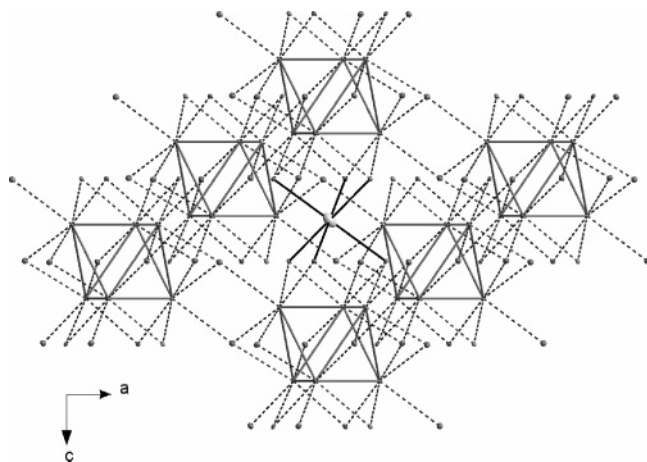


Figure 11. Representation of the environment of Na in $\text{NaLa}_6\text{I}_{12}\text{Os}$.

a “hard-sphere” model but not in $\text{NaLa}_6\text{I}_{12}\text{Os}$ for which the successive layers are embedded in each other (Figure 8c).

The positions of Cs and Na merge with that of the O centroid in $\text{CsEr}_6\text{I}_{12}\text{C}$ and $\text{NaLa}_6\text{I}_{12}\text{Os}$, respectively (Figures 10 and 11). However, because of the two different mechanisms of condensation discussed above, their coordination spheres for the ligands are completely different. Cs lies in a ligand site built up from twelve ligands belonging to the c-clusters. On the other hand, Na lies in a regular site of

ligands built up from inner ligands belonging to two fc-clusters. Similar to what has been observed in Chevrel Phase, the T centroid is sandwiched between a M_3 triangle and inner ligands with $\text{T}-\text{X}^{\text{i}}$ and $\text{T}-\text{M}$ distances that prevent the localization of additional cations, even small ones, in the tetrahedral cavity in $\text{NaLa}_6\text{I}_{12}\text{Os}$. On the other hand, in $\text{CsEr}_6\text{I}_{12}\text{C}$, the T centroid is surrounded by three inner ligands belonging to a same unit and to three inner–apical ligands belonging to three other units. Moreover, the $\text{T}-\text{I}$ distances are compatible with an additional small counteraction in the tetrahedral cavities. From the topological point of view, it turns out that the structure of $\text{NaLa}_6\text{I}_{12}\text{Os}$ is more closely related to that of the Chevrel Phase than that of $\text{CsEr}_6\text{I}_{12}\text{C}$ to which $\text{Ti}_2\text{Nb}_6\text{O}_{12}$ and $\text{Na}_{0.66}(\text{Sc}_{1.33}\text{Nb}_{0.66})\text{Nb}_6\text{O}_{12}$ are related.

$\text{A}_x\text{BNb}_6\text{L}_{12}(\text{Z})$ Series: $\text{Ti}_2\text{Nb}_6\text{O}_{12}$ and $\text{Na}_{0.66}(\text{Sc}_{1.33}\text{Nb}_{0.66})\text{Nb}_6\text{O}_{12}$. As stressed in the preceding section, the structures of $\text{Ti}_2\text{Nb}_6\text{O}_{12}$ and $\text{Na}_{0.66}(\text{Sc}_{1.33}\text{Nb}_{0.66})\text{Nb}_6\text{O}_{12}$ are related to that of $\text{CsEr}_6\text{I}_{12}\text{C}$. The inner–apical connections are achieved via the inner external ligands of the clusters that enable the occupation of the tetrahedral cavity in the oxides by small counteractions, such as titanium $\text{Ti}_2\text{Nb}_6\text{O}_{12}$ or niobium and scandium in $\text{Na}_{0.66}(\text{Sc}_{1.33}\text{Nb}_{0.66})\text{Nb}_6\text{O}_{12}$. In $\text{Ti}_2\text{Nb}_6\text{O}_{12}$, the octahedral cavity is empty, while it is occupied by Na^+ in $\text{Na}_{0.66}(\text{Sc}_{1.33}\text{Nb}_{0.66})\text{Nb}_6\text{O}_{12}$. Because of its large size, the position of Cs^+ in $\text{CsEr}_6\text{I}_{12}\text{C}$ merges with that of the O centroid in manner similar to that of Pb^{2+} in Chevrel Phases. On the other hand, the small size of Na^+ compared to that of Cs^+ induces a shift from the O centroid within the octahedral cavity. This shift of Na toward the edges of the octahedron of the c-clusters is comparable to the shift of Cu1 in $\text{Cu}_x\text{Mo}_6\text{S}_8$ (see above). Because of a similar topology of the cluster frameworks between the members of the $\text{A}_x\text{Mo}_6\text{S}_8$ series and $\text{Na}_{0.66}(\text{Sc}_{1.33}\text{Nb}_{0.66})\text{Nb}_6\text{O}_{12}$, as well as the occupation of the octahedral cavity in both compounds, one could suspect the presence of intercalation properties in the title oxide. Several attempts have been made to deintercalate Na from $\text{Na}_2(\text{Sc}_4\text{Nb}_2)(\text{Nb}_6\text{O}_{12})_3$ either by direct solid-state reaction with I_2 or in refluxing acetonitrile as previously successfully performed with the $\text{Na}_x\text{Mo}_6\text{L}_8$ ($\text{L} = \text{S}$ and Se) series.⁴⁸ From the electronic point of view, such a deintercalation should have been successful since it corresponds to the loss of less than one electron from the Nb–Nb bonding states (14 to 13.33). Moreover, a niobium cluster compound has already been reported with a VEC of $13e^-/\text{Nb}_6$ ($\text{KNb}_8\text{O}_{14}$ ²⁷). A closer look at the structure and, in particular, at the second neighboring ligands of sodium has shown that this cation is imprisoned in a cage of ligands in which the O–O distances vary from 2.952 to 3.559 Å. In Chevrel Phases, the disposition of the octahedral cavity allows the formation of channels from which cations can be easily deintercalated. This difference can be attributed to the steric hindrance of the 12 inner ligands in the M_6L_{18} units compared to that of the 8 inner ligands in the M_6L_{14} ones, as well as to a different mode of condensation as discussed above.

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Concluding Remarks

To conclude, despite similar topologies between the Chevrel Phase and A_nBNb₆O₁₂ series, intercalation properties are not expected in the niobium oxides. LMTO calculations suggest that for the Nb₆O₁₂ framework the optimum VEC value is 14 and that reduction cannot be achieved. A semiconducting behavior is therefore expected as previously measured in Ti₂Nb₆O₁₂. Metallic properties could be obtained for VEC ranging from 13 to 14 e⁻/Nb₆, but such oxides could be obtained only by direct solid-state synthesis and not by a deintercalation process.

Acknowledgment. The Centre de Diffractométrie de l'Université de Rennes 1 is acknowledged for the data collection on the Nonius KappaCCD X-ray diffractometer.

In particular, we greatly thank the useful advice of Dr. T. Roisnel. We are also indebted to M. Bohn (IFREMER, Brest) for his assistance with the EPMA studies. S.C. and C.P. are grateful to "Fondation Langlois" for its financial support. B.F., R.G., and J.-F.H. thank the Pôle de Calcul Intensif de l'Ouest (PCIO), the Institut de Développement et de Ressources en Informatique Scientifique (IDRIS-CNRS), and the Centre Informatique National de l'Enseignement Supérieur (CINES) for the use of their computing facilities.

Supporting Information Available: An X-ray crystallographic file of Na₂(Sc₄Nb₂)(Nb₆O₁₂)₃, in CIF format is available. This material is available free of charge via the Internet at <http://pubs.acs.org>.

IC0512678