Three-Dimensional Metal-Catecholate Frameworks and Their Ultrahigh Proton Conductivity

Nhung T. T. Nguyen,† Hiroyasu Furukawa,† Felipe Gándara,§ Christopher A. Trickett,† Hyung Mo Jeong,† Kyle E. Cordova,‡ and Omar M. Yaghi*†‡∥

†Department of Chemistry, University of California—Berkeley; Materials Sciences Division, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory; Kavli Energy NanoSciences Institute at Berkeley; and Global Science Institute at Berkeley, Berkeley, California 94720, United States
‡Center for Molecular and NanoArchitecture (MANAR), Vietnam National University—Ho Chi Minh City, Ho Chi Minh City 721337, Vietnam
§Department of New Architectures in Materials Chemistry, Instituto de Ciencia de Materiales de Madrid, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Madrid 28049, Spain
∥King Abdulaziz City of Science and Technology, Riyadh 11442, Saudi Arabia

Supporting Information

ABSTRACT: A series of three-dimensional (3D) extended metal catecholates (M-CATs) was synthesized by combining the appropriate metal salt and the hexatopic catecholate linker, H₆THO (THO₆⁻ = triphenylene-2,3,6,7,10,11-hexakis(olate)) to give Fe(THO)·Fe(SO₄)·(DMA)₃, Fe-CAT-5, Ti(THO)·(DMA)₂, Ti-CAT-5, and V(THO)·(DMA)₂, V-CAT-5 (where DMA = dimethylammonium). Their structures are based on the srs topology and are either a 2-fold interpenetrated (Fe-CAT-5 and Ti-CAT-5) or noninterpenetrated (V-CAT-5) porous anionic framework. These examples are among the first catecholate-based 3D frameworks. The single crystal X-ray diffraction structure of the Fe-CAT-5 shows bound sulfate ligands with DMA guests residing in the pores as counterions, and thus ideally suited for proton conductivity. Accordingly, Fe-CAT-5 exhibits ultrahigh proton conductivity (5.0 × 10⁻² S cm⁻¹) at 98% relative humidity (RH) and 25 °C. The coexistence of sulfate and DMA ions within the pores play an important role in proton conductivity as also evidenced by the lower conductivity values found for Ti-CAT-5 (8.2 × 10⁻⁴ S cm⁻¹ at 98% RH and 25 °C), whose structure only contained DMA guests.

Although a large number of metal–organic frameworks (MOFs) are known, surprisingly only five are based on the catechol linking functionality with two having 3D framework structures. Usually, it is a challenge to find suitable conditions under which a new linking functionality would yield an extended porous structure in crystalline form, thus impeding progress in expanding the realm of frameworks available for study. Here, we report the synthesis and characterization of crystalline 3D anionic frameworks of metal-catecholates (M-CATs) constructed from H₆THO (THO₆⁻ = triphenylene-2,3,6,7,10,11-hexakis(olate)) and Fe(II,III), Ti(IV), and V(IV), termed Fe-CAT-5, Ti-CAT-5, and V-CAT-5, respectively, Figure 1. We find that the first member of this series, Fe-CAT-5, exhibits ultrahigh proton conductivity rivaling that of the best MOFs and comparable to Nafton. We believe that since the linkage type in MOFs determines, to a large extent, their architectural, physical, and chemical properties, our success here in making the catecholate frameworks expands the scope of this chemistry and offers the promise of accessing improved or new properties.

Figure 1. Fe-, Ti-, and V-CAT-5 are constructed from triangular M(C₂O₄)₃ (DMF)₃ single metal secondary building units (a) linked together through triangular THO₆⁻ organic linkers (b). The resulting structure is an interpenetrated srs-2c framework. It is noted that V-CAT-5 forms a noninterpenetrated srs framework. Inset: Simplified representation of srs-2c topology. Atom colors: M, blue; C, black; O, red; second interpenetrated framework, gray; all H atoms are omitted for clarity.

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representative example, Fe-CAT-5 was prepared by dissolving iron(II) sulfate, H₄THO, tetrabutylammonium nitrate, and amylamine in a solvent mixture of DMF/water/methanol (10/1/1, v/v, respectively) in a Teflon vessel, which was then sealed and placed in a stainless steel Parr autoclave. The autoclave was placed in an oven preheated at 180 °C under autogenerated pressure for 48 h (Section S2, SI). Black, truncated octahedron-shaped crystals, of suitable size for single crystal X-ray diffraction (SXRD) analysis, were isolated in 36% yield based on the linker. Although, crystals of appropriate quality for SXRD could not be obtained for Ti-CAT-5 and V-CAT-5 (Section S3, SI), their framework structures were determined to be similar to Fe-CAT-5 using powder X-ray diffraction (PXRD) and the charge flipping method.

The single crystal structure of Fe-CAT-5 was solved in the cubic space group, Pa3 (No. 205), with a lattice parameter of \( a = 17.7594(7) \) Å (Table S1, Section S4, SI). Each organic linker is coordinated to three, crystallographically equivalent, octahedral iron atoms, Fe(THO), to generate a 3D architecture with srs topology (Figure 1). Due to a relatively large pore space, interpenetration by a second framework was observed, in which the center-to-center distance between two THO linkers from neighboring nets is ca. 6.6 Å. Additionally, these two frameworks were found to be connected through an Fe₂(SO₄)₂(H₂O)₂ cluster, whereby each Fe atom in this cluster adopts an octahedral geometry as a result of three \( \mu_2 \)-O atoms from the organic linkers, two bridging SO₄²⁻ anions, and one H₂O ligand (Figure 2). The Fe–O bond distance is slightly longer in the Fe₄(SO₄)₄(H₂O)₄ bridging cluster (2.138 Å) than in the Fe(THO) unit comprising the frameworks (1.998 Å), indicating that the Fe atoms of the bridging cluster are weakly bound to the organic linkers. Indeed, the coordinated Fe atoms to the oxygen atoms of catecholate linkers observed in Fe-CAT-5 is similar to that observed in Na₄[Ho(benzene-1,2,4,5-tetraakis(olate))₂]·7H₂O.²⁰

Based on SXRD analysis alone, the oxidation and protonation states of the Fe atoms and THO linker,³ respectively, could not be fully resolved. Therefore, a combination of Fourier-transform infrared spectroscopy (FT-IR), proton nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy (¹H NMR), Mössbauer spectroscopy, and elemental microanalysis were utilized to determine a plausible chemical formula for Fe-CAT-5. Prior to these analyses, guest-free, activated materials for all members of this series were prepared by washing thoroughly with DMF and anhydrous acetonitrile before evacuation (10⁻⁴ Torr) at room temperature for 24 h (Section S2, SI). The crystallinity of the activated materials was subsequently confirmed by PXRD analyses (Section S5, SI). The protonation state of the THO linker was first examined by FT-IR, in which there were no significant peaks observed in the spectrum that could be attributable to O–H stretching vibrations. Accordingly, the THO linker was presumed to be fully deprotonated (Section S6, SI). Furthermore, the presence of DMA cations in an integrated ratio of 3:1 with the THO linker was established by ¹H NMR spectroscopy on an acid digested sample of activated Fe-CAT-5 (Section S7, SI). Taking into account these results along with the SXRD analysis, it is evident that the Fe atoms in Fe-CAT-5 must have oxidation states of both 2+ and 3+. As expected, Mössbauer spectroscopy measurements confirmed the existence of both Fe²⁺ and Fe³⁺ in a ratio of nearly 1:1 (Section S8, SI). Although the distribution of these iron atoms in different oxidation states cannot be specifically assigned within the structure, elemental analysis data (calc'd, C, 43.05; H, 4.25; N, 7.06; S, 4.43%; found, C, 43.28; H, 4.81; N, 7.25; S, 5.00%) further supported the chemical formula of Fe-CAT-5 as Fe(THO)-Fe(SO₄)₂(DMA)₃(DMF)₅·4H₂O (Section S2, SI).

PXRD analysis was performed on microcrystalline powders of Ti-CAT-5 and V-CAT-5 to elucidate the structural features of these frameworks. First, the diffraction patterns for both members were indexed in primitive cubic systems (P2₁,3 and P4₁,32 for Ti-CAT-5 and V-CAT-5, respectively) with the resulting unit cell parameters being similar to Fe-CAT-5 (\( a = 17.986 \) and 17.795 Å for Ti-CAT-5 and V-CAT-5, respectively) (Section S4, SI). A full Pawley refinement was then performed to extract the refined unit cell parameters and integrated intensities, from which the charge-flipping algorithm was employed to obtain electron density maps of Ti-CAT-5 and V-CAT-5 (Figures S5 and S6, SI)⁹. The positions of the metal ions and THO linkers were clearly observed in the electron density maps, indicating a doubly interpenetrated and a noninterpenetrated srs framework for Ti-CAT-5 and V-CAT-5, respectively (Figures S5 and S6, SI). Accordingly, computational models of both structures were constructed, and full pattern refinements were performed (Rietveld method)¹⁰ against the experimental powder patterns resulting in converging refinements and low residual values (\( a = 17.996 \) Å, \( R_p = 5.66\% \), \( R_{wp} = 8.05\% \) for Ti-CAT-5; \( a = 17.765(8) \) Å, \( R_p = 5.85\% \), \( R_{wp} = 9.03\% \) for V-CAT-5) (Figure 3 and Table S2, SI). It is noted that additional electron density was observed in the pores of both structures, which were attributed to DMA cations. These molecules were included in the computational models and refined with rigid body constraints.

A similar procedure as that described for Fe-CAT-5 was undertaken to formulate Ti-CAT-5 and V-CAT-5. From the absence of O–H stretching modes in the FT-IR spectra of both members, it was presumed that the H₂THO linker is fully deprotonated (Section S6, SI). When considering that the molar ratio of metal ion (Ti and V) and organic linker in the crystal structure is unity, it is likely that counterions are accommodated within the framework to compensate the negative charge from the linker. Indeed, the ¹H NMR spectra
of the acid-digested samples displayed the presence of two DMA
cations per THO linker (Section S7, SI). Consequently, the
chemical formula of Ti-CAT-5 and V-CAT-5 must be described
as Ti((THO)·(DMA))2 and V((THO)·(DMA))2, respectively,
where Ti and V have the same oxidation state of 4+. Elemental
analysis for Ti-CAT-5 (calcd, C, 56.16; H, 3.99; N, 6.13%; found,
C, 56.02; H, 4.19; N, 6.05%) and for V-CAT-5 (calcd, C, 52.25;
H, 4.77; N, 8.08%; found, C, 51.75; H, 4.90; N, 7.68%) further
confirmed these formulations (Section S2, SI).

To evaluate the architectural stability and porosity of all
members of this series, thermal gravimetric analysis (TGA) and
N2 isotherms at 77 K were performed on activated samples. The
TGA curves displayed no significant weight loss up to 200 °C,
indicating high thermal stability and that successful and proper
activation was achieved for Fe-CAT-5, Ti-CAT-5, and V-CAT-5
(Section S9, SI). N2 gas adsorption isotherms at 77 K were then
performed (Section S10, SI). The Brunauer–Emmett–Teller
(BET) surface areas for Ti-CAT-5 and V-CAT-5 were calculated
to be 450 and 725 m2 g−1, respectively (Section S10, SI). The N2
adsorption isotherm at 77 K for Fe-CAT-5 revealed no significant
uptake (BET < 10 m2 g−1). In spite of this, the water sorption
isotherm at room temperature for Fe-CAT-5 demonstrated a
high uptake capacity around 30 mol mol−1 at P/P0 = 0.9, which was similar to that found also for Ti-CAT-5 (Section
S11, SI). Finally, both Fe-CAT-5 and Ti-CAT-5 are stable in air
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uptake (BET < 10 m2 g−1). In spite of this, the water sorption
isotherm at room temperature for Fe-CAT-5 demonstrated a
high uptake capacity around 30 mol mol−1 (235 cm3 g−1) at P/P0
= 0.14, which was similar to that found also for Ti-CAT-5 (Section
S11, SI). Finally, both Fe-CAT-5 and Ti-CAT-5 are stable in air
after 24 h of exposure, as evidenced by PXRD analysis (Section
S12, SI). In contrast, the crystallinity of V-CAT-5 was slightly
diminished after only 3 h of exposure to an open-air environment
(Section S12, SI).

The high water uptake capacity at elevated RH and the
presence of DMA cations within the pores points to the possible
utility of Fe-CAT-5 and Ti-CAT-5 as proton conducting
materials (Section S4 and S11, SI). Accordingly, the proton
conductivity properties of these two structures were investigated
by subjecting the appropriate pelleted samples to ac impedance
spectroscopy measurements under varying RH (50–98%) at 25
°C (Section S13, SI). The Nyquist plots for Fe-CAT-5 and Ti-
CAT-5 confirm that the proton conductivity values of these
materials were strongly dependent on RH, with increasing
conductivity observed when the RH was increased as well
(Section S13, SI). This led to maximum proton conductivity
values of 5.0 × 10−2 and 8.2 × 10−4 S cm−1 for Fe-CAT-5 and Ti-
CAT-5, respectively, being reached at 98% RH and 25 °C (Figure
4). Lower values, 2.1 × 10−3 and 4.3 × 10−6 S cm−1 for Fe-CAT-5
and Ti-CAT-5, respectively, were obtained when the RH was
decreased to 50% (Figure 4). It is noted that Fe-CAT-5 exhibited
a proton conductivity value of 2.4 × 10−4 S cm−1 at 60% RH,
which is over 1 order of magnitude higher than Ti-CAT-5 under
identical conditions (Figure 4). Furthermore, the proton
conductivity of Fe-CAT-5 is 60 times higher than Ti-CAT-5 under
98% RH and at 25 °C (Figure 4). Indeed, this value is
comparable to that of Nafion as well as several of the highest
performing MOF materials under similar conditions (Table 1).

Table 1. Proton Conductivity (σ) at 25 °C and 98% RH and
Activation Energy (Ea) Values for Nafion and Several of the
Highest Performing MOFs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material</th>
<th>σ (S cm−1)a</th>
<th>Ea (eV)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fe-CAT-5</td>
<td>5.0 × 10−2</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ti-CAT-5</td>
<td>8.2 × 10−4</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(NH4)2(adp)[Zn2(ox)3·3H2O]bc</td>
<td>8.0 × 10−3</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[(DMA3)(SO4)]2[2Zn2(ox)2]c</td>
<td>4.2 × 10−2</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nafion</td>
<td>1.0 × 10−1</td>
<td>0.14–0.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a98% RH, 25 °C. bAdp = adipate. cOx = oxalate.

PXRD analysis was performed in order to prove the structural
integrity of both samples after ac impedance measurements. As
expected, the crystallinity of both Fe-CAT-5 and Ti-CAT-5 was
retained (Section S13, SI).

The dependency of the proton conductivity on temperature
was investigated by performing ac impedance measurements on
pelleted samples of Fe-CAT-5 and Ti-CAT-5 over a temperature
range of 15–65 °C at 95% RH. The Arrhenius plot establishes the
fact that the proton conductivity of both materials increases
with increasing temperature (Section S13, SI). The calculated
activation energies, as determined by linear regression analysis,
were found to be 0.24 and 0.43 eV for Fe-CAT-5 and Ti-CAT-5,
respectively (Table 1). These activation energies indicate that
the proton conduction behaviors occur through a Grotthuss
It is noted that Fe-CAT-5 exhibits significantly higher proton conductivity than Ti-CAT-5 over the entire RH range measured, even though the latter structure effectively adsorbs more water molecules per formula unit (22 water molecules at P/P₀ = 0.6) than Fe-CAT-5 (7.7 water molecules at P/P₀ = 0.6) as evidenced by the water sorption isotherms (Section S11, SI). This observation implies that, at least comparatively, the proton conductivity in these materials is not simply governed by the water concentration, but rather, it is influenced by other ionic species within the pores (i.e., DMA and sulfate ions). Furthermore, by considering the fact that Fe-CAT-5 has a larger amount of both DMA and sulfate ions per formula unit (3 DMA and 2 sulfates for Fe-CAT-5, and only 2 DMA for Ti-CAT-5), it is deduced that the sulfate and DMA ions in Fe-CAT-5 play an important role in achieving higher proton conductivities over the entire RH range examined.

**REFERENCES**


