Research Article

An efficient way for the synthesis of covalent Strandberg-type phosphomolybdate compound $H_6P_2Mo_5O_{23}$



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Abstract

A covalent Strandberg-type phosphomolybdate $H_6P_2Mo_5O_{23}$ (EPM) was synthesized by applied ethanediamine (en) as a template agent. Besides, the pH value and Mn^{2+} were also the important factors in composing EPM. The structure of EPM was characterized by elemental analyses, X-ray powder diffraction, X-ray photoelectron spectra, IR spectrum, and single-crystal X-ray diffraction. Structural analysis shows that EPM consists a $H_6P_2Mo_5O_{23}$ cluster and two en molecules as lattice fillers. As a case of molybdenum oxide, EPM exhibits thermal instability even under low temperature conditions, which is more similar to covalent compound than ionic compound.

Graphic abstract A thermo-unstable covalent Strandberg-type precursor was successfully synthesized, and the synthesis method was innovative, involving pH value, catalyst and template synthesis, which provided good synthesis experience for future experiments.



 $\label{eq:constraint} \textbf{Keywords} \ \ Phosphomolybdate \cdot Strandberg-type \ cluster \cdot Thermochromism \cdot Crystal \ structure \ analysis \cdot Template \ synthesis$

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1 Introduction

Polyoxometalates (POMs) are a typical class of metal-oxygen clusters. POMs possesses multitudinous structures and fascinating properties applied in various fields such as fluorescence, magnetism, catalysis, medicine materials and nano-science [1–3].

In varieties of building blocks, Strandberg-type $([P_2Mo_5O_{23}]^{6-})$ fragment have several inherent advantages such as nano-size, nucleophilic oxygen-enriched surface and poly-bond-making sites, endowing it with the ability to serve as bulky polydentate ligands to incorporate in multiple metal ions with flexible coordination modes [4–12]. Moreover, researches have indicated recently that the POMs with Strandberg-type fragment have an excellent oxidation catalytic capacity, for example, oxidation of styrene and ketalization of cyclohexanone with glycol [13, 14]. Hence, these properties of $[P_2Mo_5O_{23}]^{6-}$ cluster may be beneficial to catalyze the production of reactive oxygen species (ROS) and have broad prospects being utilized in catalysis, medicine materials, etc.

However, In contrast to the Keggin-, Dowson- and Anderson-type structures of polyoxomolybdates (POMos), the researches on Strandberg-type POMos are lagging behind [15]. Furthermore, hitherto, the synthetic methods of Strandberg-type POMos are most rely on hydrothermal synthesis method [4, 5, 7–14], which provides us a good opportunity to exploit a simpler, less energy-intensive synthesis method in composing Strandberg-type structure containing compounds, especially the synthesis method of $[P_2Mo_5O_{23}]^{6-}$ precursor.

Herein, we report a convenient synthesis of Strandberg-type building block, $H_6P_2Mo_5O_{23}$ (abbreviated as EPM). The optimum synthesis method were verified by parallel experiments. The EPM consists a $[H_6P_2Mo_5O_{23}]$ cluster and two ethanediamine (en) molecules. Notably, EPM is thermal unstable being heated and extremely difficult to dissolve in water, which may indicate that EPM is a covalent compound rather than an ionic compound.

2 Experimental

2.1 Materials

Reagents used in this study were all of analytical grade, purchased from commercial suppliers and used as received unless otherwise stated. Methanamine,

trimethylamine, triethylamine, aniline, propane-1,3-diamine, propane-1,2-diamine, and 1,4,7,10-tetraazacyclododecane were purchased from Macklin Reagent Inc. (P. R. China). $MnCl_2 \cdot 2H_2O$, $NaMoO_4 \cdot 2H_2O$, $Na_2HPO_4 \cdot 12H_2O$, NH_4Cl and en were purchased from J & K Scientific Inc. (P. R. China). All the solutions were prepared with ultrapure water filtered through Milli-Q academic system according to previous reports [16].

2.2 Physical measurements

X-ray powder diffraction (XRPD) measurements were obtained using a Philips X'pert-MPD instrument with Cu-Ka radiation ($\lambda = 1.54056$ Å) at 293 K. IR spectra were obtained from a sample powder palletized with KBr or dissolved in chloroform on a Nicolet 170 SXFT-IR spectrophotometer over the range 4000–400 cm⁻¹. Elemental analyses for C, H and N were performed on a Perkin-Elmer 240C elemental analyzer. The single crystal data of EPM were collected on a Bruker CCD, Apex-II diffractometer with graphite monochromated Mo-K α (λ = 0.71073 Å) radiation at room temperature. Routine Lorentz and polarization corrections were applied and an absorption correction was performed using the SADABS program [17]. The structure was solved by direct methods and refined using full-matrix least squares on F^2 . All calculations were performed using the SHELXL-97 program package [18]. Elemental analysis was performed on a PQEXCell ICP-MS.

2.3 Synthesis

Two solutions were prepared separately. Solution A: $Na_2MoO_4 \cdot 2H_2O$ (2.420 g, 10.00 mmol) and $Na_2HPO_4 \cdot 12H_2O$ (2.400 g, 6.70 mmol) were dissolved in water (30 mL) under stirring. Solution B: $MnCl_2 \cdot 2H_2O$ (1.620 g, 10.00 mmol) and en (0.10 mL, 1.50 mmol) were added to water (30 mL) under stirring. The resulting mixture of B is added to solution A. The mixture was stirred for 10 min at room temperature and then the pH value was adjusted to 5.2 by adding 6 mol L⁻¹ HCl dropwise. The solution was kept at 85 °C for 1 h and filtered when it was still hot. The filtrate was allowed to evaporate in an open beaker at room temperature. About 1 day, Colorless crystal EPM formed. (Yield: ca 39% based on $Na_2MoO_4 \cdot 2H_2O$). Elemental analysis (%) calcd for { $[C_2N_2H_8]_2$ } $[H_6P_2Mo_5O_{23}]$: C 4.64, N 5.41, P 5.98, Mo 46.30; found: C 4.55, N 5.28, P 5.88, Mo 46.05.

2.4 X-ray data collection and structure refinement

Intensity data of EPM was collected on a Bruker Apex-2 diffractometer with a CCD detector using graphite

monochromatized Mo-K α radiation ($\lambda = 0.71073$ Å) at 296 K. Date integration was performed using SAINT [19]. Routine Lorentz and polarization corrections were applied. Multiscan absorption corrections were performed using SADABS [17]. The structure was solved by direct methods and refined using full-matrix least squares on F^2 . The remaining atoms were found from successive full-matrix least-squares refinements on F^2 and Fourier syntheses. All calculations were performed using the SHELXL-97 program package [18]. No hydrogen atoms associated with the water molecules were located from the difference Fourier map. Positions of the hydrogen atoms attached to the carbon and nitrogen atoms were geometrically placed. All hydrogen atoms were refined isotropically as a riding mode using the default SHELXTL parameters. A summary of crystal data and structure refinements for EPM is listed in Table S1.

3 Results and discussion

3.1 Crystal structure and Synthetic discussion

The structure of EPM was characterized by single-crystal X-ray diffraction analysis. The crystallographic data, selected bond lengths and angles are summarized in Tables S2 and S3. Detailed information has been deposited at the Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre with a CCDC number of 1920376. X-ray structural analysis (see Fig. 1) shows that the molecular structural unit of EPM consists one $\{P_2Mo_5O_{23}\}$ cluster and two en molecules. As shown in Fig. 2, the geometry of $\{P_2Mo_5O_{23}\}$ cluster can be deemed as a puckered ring of five nearly coplanar cornersharing/edge-sharing distorted MoO₆ octahedra [Mo–O:



Fig. 1 Ball-and-stick representation of $\{[C_2N_2H_8]_2\}[H_6P_2Mo_5O_{23}]$

Fig. 2 a, b Ball-and-stick representation of Strandbergtype fragment via X or Z axis. c, d Polyhedral representation of Strandberg-type fragment $\{[P_2Mo_5O_{23}]^{6-}\}$ via X or Z axis. e The anatomical view of the Strandberg-type fragment



1,4,7,10-tetraazacyclododecane

Fig. 3 Diagrams of the structures of various amines used in parallel experiments



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1.687(2)–2.393(2) Å] with two capping PO₄ tetrahedra [P–O: 1.505(5)–1.561(5) Å] on both poles of the $\{Mo_5O_{21}\}$ ring centers, which size fits the nanometer scale.

In the synthesis process, there are three key factors:

Firstly, the usage of en to be template agent is one key factor in composing EPM. A series of different types of amines (see Fig. 3) were used and tested in the same way, however, no other amines except en could achieve the target product. These results may indicated that en is the template agent inducing the formation of Strandberg-type fragment $[P_2Mo_5O_{23}]^{6-}$.

Secondly, Mn²⁺ is the most suitable catalyst. Without the presence of Mn²⁺, the reaction yield is very low, which almost no Strandberg-type fragment $[P_2Mo_5O_{23}]^{6-}$ formed. When other metal ions are used instead of Mn²⁺, the experimental phenomena are different. If s-block metal ions are used, for example Mg^{2+} , MoO_4^{2-} in the reaction will be reduced, and the solution will turn inky blue, with no target product finally formed. If metal ions in the dsblock are used to replace Mn²⁺, such as Cu²⁺ etc., although $[P_2Mo_5O_{23}]^{6-}$ can still be generated, the side effect is that they will be directly connected with the ions to generate transition-metal substituted Strandberg-type POMos [6, 15] instead of formation of isolated Strandberg-type structure. If metal ions in d-block, such as Cr³⁺, replace Mn²⁺, some impurity fuchsia crystal (CrPO₄) formed instead of the formation of $[P_2Mo_5O_{23}]^{6-}$ clusters. The results may indicate that Mn²⁺ is the most suitable ions in this reaction system.

Finally, pH is another important factor. As shown in Fig. 4, the results showed that EPM was generated from 3.5 to 7.0, and the crystal morphology was best when the initial pH was 5.2. The EPM yield was the highest when the

initial pH was 4.8–5.5. When the pH value is higher than 7.0 or lower than 3.5, no EPM crystals were obtained.

Although the synthesis method and structure of Strandberg-type POM have been reported for decades, EPM does have two characteristics compared with previous reports:

- 1. EPM was synthesized by conventional aqueous solution method instead of hydrothermal method [20, 21], which greatly reduces the requirement of EPM synthesis equipment and energy consumption.
- 2. According to the calculation of XPS and BVS, we can conclude that the ethylenediamine molecule in EPM is not protonated, that is, EPM is not an ionic compound but a covalent compound, which is the essential difference between EPM and previous reports [20, 21]. The thermal instability and poor water solubility (≤ 1 mg L⁻¹) of EPM can be verified from some aspects.

Besides, an easily available building block will greatly enhance the research prospects in this area [22]. Hence, this work may have important application prospects in the synthesis of novel Strandberg-type compounds.

3.2 X-ray powder diffraction (XRPD) and X-ray photoelectron spectra (XPS)

The phase purity of EPM was confirmed by a comparison of the experimental X-ray powder diffraction (XRPD) pattern with the simulated pattern from single-crystal X-ray diffraction (Fig. 5). Owing to the variation in the preferred orientation of the powder sample in the experimental XRPD, the intensities of the experimental and simulated XRPD patterns are different.

The investigation using X-ray photoelectron spectra (XPS) has been carried out to detect the valences of Mo and P. As shown in Fig. 6a, there are two broad peaks



Fig. 4 The relationship between the yield of EPM and pH value of the system (based on $Na_2MoO_4 \cdot 2H_2O$)

4

5

pН

ż

8

6

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2

3

40

30

20

10

0

Yield based on Mo (%)





Fig. 6 XPS spectra of Mo and P. **a** Mo⁶⁺ $3d_{5/2}$ (231.6 eV) and Mo⁶⁺ $3d_{3/2}$ (235.0 eV); **b** P⁵⁺ 2*p* (132.2 eV)

located at 235.0 and 231.6 eV, which were assigned to Mo $3d_{3/2}$ and Mo $3d_{5/2}$, respectively [23]. As shown in Fig. 6b, there is one peak located at 132.2 eV, which was assigned to P 2P [24]. The results show that the valence Mo and P are + 6 and + 5 in EPM, respectively [15].

3.3 Bond valence sums (Σs) calculation (BVS)

The bond valence sums (Σ s) and the protonation level (Σ H) of oxygen atoms in EPM were further calculated according to the reported methods [25, 26]. Briefly, the oxidation states of the oxygen atoms in EPM were calculated on the following formula, which could be used to estimate the protonation of oxygen atoms:

$$V_i = \sum_j s_{ij} = \sum_j \exp\left(\frac{r'_0 - r_{ij}}{B}\right)$$

where r'_0 represents the theoretical value of bond distance between two atoms, and r_{ij} represents the observed values of bond distance that are listed in Table S2; B was set to 0.37 [27]. The theoretical value of Mo–O and P–O from literatures, which the r'_0 (Mo⁶⁺–O) is 1.907 Å, r'_0 (P⁵⁺–O) is 1.607 Å [27]. Based on the observed value of bond distance of EPM, the Σ s and Σ H of EPM can be calculated and the results are summarized in Tables 1 and 2 and shown in Fig. 7. Thus, we can conclude that the protonation level of oxygen atoms in the EPM.

Since the POMs fragment has high negative charges and rich basic surface oxygen atoms, they can easily been protonated [25]. The 23 oxygen atoms in EPM can be classified into terminal O_t, bridging μ_2 -O, and μ_3 -O. The O atoms with **Σ**H of 0.2–0.8 could act as H-donors owing to the delocalized protons on them, whereas the O atoms with

Table 2 Σ H of O atom in EPM

Atom	ΣΗ	Atom	ΣΗ	Atom	ΣΗ
01	0.265	O5	0.369	09	0.108
02	0.057	06	0.091	O10	0.066
O3	0.163	07	0.222	011	0.408
04	0.222	08	0.320	012	0.833

Table 1 Bond valence and Σs of Mo, P in EPM	Bond	Valence	Bond	
	Mo(1)–O(1) Mo(1)–O(1)#	1.735 1.735	Mo(1)–O(2 Mo(1)–O(2	
	Mo(2)–O(2)	0.329	Mo(2)–O(3	

Bond	Valence	Bond	Valence	Bond	Valence	Atom	Σs
Mo(1)–O(1)	1.735	Mo(1)–O(2)	0.335	Mo(1)–O(3)	0.946		
Mo(1)–O(1)#	1.735	Mo(1)–O(2)#	0.335	Mo(1)–O(3)#	0.946		
						Mo1	6.034
Mo(2)–O(2)	0.329	Mo(2)–O(3)	0.891	Mo(2)–O(4)	1.778		
Mo(2)–O(5)	1.631	Mo(2)–O(6)	0.987	Mo(2)–O(10)	0.415		
						Mo2	6.032
Mo(3)–O(6)	0.922	Mo(3)–O(7)	1.778	Mo(3)–O(8)	1.680		
Mo(3)–O(9)	1.054	Mo(3)–O(10)	0.264	Mo(3)–O(11)	0.275		
						Mo3	5.972
P(1)–O(2)	1.279	P(1)–O(10)	1.255	P(1)–O(11)	1.317		
P(1)–O(12)	1.167						
						P1	5.018



Fig. 7 Protonation of oxygen atoms in the unit of EPM. The extent of protonation for each oxygen atom is indicated by different colors

ΣH of 0–0.1 possess dense electron cloud (see Table 2). The overall proton rate of EPM is 5.924, which is approximately equal to the negative charge on $[P_2Mo_5O_{23}]^{6-}$ cluster in EPM. In generally, the multiply protons usually assigned to be delocalized on the whole polyoxoanion, which the phenomenon is common in POM chemistry and has been reported in many leteratures, for example, $[Ni(enMe)_2]_3$ $[H_6Ni_{20}P_4W_{34}(OH)_4O_{136}(enMe)_8(H_2O)_6] \cdot 12H_2O$ [22], and $[H_3W_{12}O_{40}]^{5-}$ [28]. These results may indicate that most of the counter positive charges in EPM are delocalized in the $[P_2Mo_5O_{23}]^{6-}$ skeleton, making EPM not a typical ionic compound. Therefore, the molecule of EPM is designated

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as $\{[C_2N_2H_8]_2\}[H_6P_2Mo_5O_{23}]$, which is different from previous report ones [20, 21].

3.4 IR spectra and thermolability

The IR spectrum of EPM was also investigated (Fig. 8a). The spectrum exhibits characteristic peaks of the Strandberg-type POM at low wave-number regions, in which the characteristic bands between 1003 and 1120 cm⁻¹ are attributed to the v(P-O) bond and the band at 903 cm⁻¹ is assigned to v(Mo=O) bond. While the prominent bands in the range of 555–706 cm⁻¹ are attributed to v(Mo–O–Mo) bond [29]. In addition, the occurrence of characteristic vibrations at about 3435 and 1622 cm⁻¹ may be attributed to the v(N-H) bond confirms the presence of en ligands [30]. Interestingly, when EPM was heated to more than 60 °C, its appearance changed greatly, from colorless crystal to yellow opaque solid material (see Fig. 8c, d). As shown in Fig. 8b, the IR spectrum of the heated EPM showed a great change, in which the characteristic peaks of the Strandberg-type structure have declined greatly and disappeared. These results may indicate that the structure of $[H_6P_2MO_5O_{23}]$ clusters in the EPM collapsed under more than 60 °C.

The thermal stability over time was further investigated by variable temperature infrared spectra. As shown in Fig. S1, under 37 °C, the characteristic peaks of $[H_6P_2Mo_5O_{23}]$ clusters in EPM were maintained from 0.5 to 24 h, indicating that EPM was relatively thermal stable under 37 °C. While, under 50 °C, as shown in Fig. 9, the characteristic peaks of $[H_6P_2Mo_5O_{23}]$ clusters were maintained at the beginning from 0.5 to 12 h, afterwards the peaks signal attenuated, which may imply that the EPM became





unstable under 50 °C when the time exceeds 12 h. However, when heated over 60 °C (see Fig. 8b), the IR spectra of EPM changes greatly, implying that the structure of EPM was unstable over 60 °C.

As shown in Fig. S2, the characteristic peaks of the Strandberg-type structure of EPM were maintained in

water for 7 days. These results may imply that although it is thermally unstable in dry conditions, EPM can be kept in aqueous solution for a long time at room temperature, which guarantees that EPM can be applied to mild catalytic reactions and used as precursor for synthetic reactions.

4 Conclusions

A covalent Strandberg-type phosphomolybdate $\{[C_2N_2H_8]_2\}[H_6P_2Mo_5O_{23}]$ (EPM) has been synthesized and been fully characterized by elemental analyses, X-ray powder diffraction (XRPD), X-ray photoelectron spectra (XPS), IR spectrum, and single-crystal X-ray diffraction. A series of detailed work have been done to discuss the necessary and optimal conditions of EPM synthesis. Three key factors were confirmed by parallel experiments, which are en as the temple, pH and the usage of Mn²⁺. Furthermore, the thermostability of EPM was also been investigated, which indicated that EPM is thermally unstable over 60 °C. In view of the wide application prospects of Strandberg-type materials, this work will be of great help and reference to the synthesis of new Strandberg-type compounds by using the precursor of $[H_6P_2Mo_5O_{23}]$ clusters [22].

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Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest The author(s) declare that they have no competing interests.

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