Structural Investigation of K⁺ and Tl⁺ β-Aluminas

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Structures of K^+ and Tl^+ aluminas were investigated by single-crystal X-ray diffraction. In the final refinements, corresponding to *R* values of 0.034 and 0.058, respectively, the distribution of conducting ions was found to be similar to that of Na β -alumina. In $K^+ \beta$ -alumina clear evidence of additional electronic density in the spinel-like blocks is obtained and is interpreted as due to a Frenkel defect.

Introduction

 β -Alumina compounds are double oxides with the general formula nA_2O_3 - B_2O where

$$A = Al^{3+}, Ga^{3+}, Fe^{3+}, B = Na^+, Ag^+, K^+, Rb^+, Tl^+.$$

The structure has hexagonal symmetry (space group $P6_3/mmc$). The outstanding feature is the stacking of close-packed spinel blocks separated by mirror planes perpendicular to the *c* axis and containing B^+ ions (1, 2).

The great interest in these compounds arises from their very high ionic conductivity in the solid state, which allows them to be put among superionic conductors (3). This conductivity is due to the diffusion of B^+ ions in the intermediate conduction planes; major questions to be answered concern the origin of the temperature dependance of their electrical properties and their variation with regard to temperature. An X-ray diffuse scattering investigation of the distribution conducting ions (4-6) revealed the existence of two-dimensional ordered microdomains, the size of which varies with temperature and cation type

For silver β -alumina, the average distribu-

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Copyright © 1977 by Academic Press, Inc. All rights of reproduction in any form reserved. Printed in Great Britain tion of electron density in the mirror planes, obtained by X-ray diffraction study (7), allowed a semiquantitative analysis of diffuse intensities and gave a description of cation distribution within the microdomains (8).

To account for the variations in the scattered intensity distribution (related to local order changes) which are observed for different types of B^+ ions and preparation conditions (5, 6), it is necessary to have a good knowledge of the mean structures of those different compounds.

This paper reports an X-ray diffraction investigation of the nature and mean occupancy factors of the sites occupied by conducting ions in potassium and thallium β -aluminas.

Experimental

Sodium β -alumina crystals are obtained by the slow cooling of a melt heated by direct induction at high frequency through the oxide (Kyropoulos self-crucible method). Their composition, deduced from neutron activation analysis, is about 11 Al₂O₃-1.3 ± 0.03 Na₂O. Replacement of Na⁺ by K⁺ or Tl⁺ is obtained by an exchange reaction in molten salts (9).

 β -alumina single crystals grow in the shape of easily cleavable thin platelets. The choice of

crystals for structural determination was made according to the quality of diffraction spots observed. In both studies, intensities were measured on a P2₁ Syntex four-circle diffractometer, between $2\theta = 0$ to 65° , using MoKa radiation with a graphite monochromator. A standard reflection was measured every 30 reflections. For each crystal, data was collected in a section of reciprocal space where *h*, *k*, and *l* were all >0, and equivalent reflections were averaged.

Absorption corrections were needed for crystals in platelet form (especially for Tl⁺). They were performed with the ψ scan technique using 15 reflections.

Refinement was done according to the ORXFLS III routine (10) with all the measured intensities (even zero values) by using Na β -alumina as starting positional parameters (11).

Refinement of K β -Alumina Structure

The single crystal of K β -alumina had a triangular shape (350 μ m for the side and 150 μ m for thickness). The lattice constants of the hexagonal cell have the following values: a = 5.602 Å, c = 22.734 Å. Four hundred and ninety-four independent reflections were collected on the four-circle diffractometer. The first cycles of refinement using all the variable parameters—scale factor, positional parameters, occupancy, and individual temperature factors in the intermediate planes—revealed very high terms in the correlation matrix. Therefore we employed the least number of variable parameters in the refinements.

In the first step, the scale factor, general temperature factor, and occupancy coefficient of potassium atoms located in the Beevers-Ross (BR) and mid-oxygen (mO) positions were refined (Fig. 1).

The successive cycles indicated that:

1. some K⁺ ions were located on the anti-Beevers-Ross (aBR) site,

2. some interstitial aluminum was found on the position previously mentioned by Reidinger *et al.* for Na β -alumina (12) (Fig. 2),

3. all atoms were, more or less, shifted out of the theoretical positions BR, mO, and

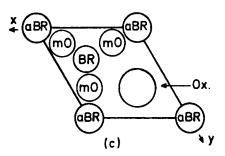


FIG. 1. Simplified site model with the conventional site denomination. BR = Beevers-Ross, aBR = anti-Beevers-Ross, mO = mid-oxygen.

aBR, and the same thing occurred for O (5) in the plane.

We then froze the scale factor and refined the occupancy coefficients of aluminum atoms in the spinel blocks together with the occupancy factors of potassium atoms, interstitial Al, and the general temperature factor. This showed that the Al₁ position was partly vacant and on the other positions the variations were within the error limits.

In the next step, refinements were attempted alternatively either on individual isotropic temperature factors or on occupancy factors,



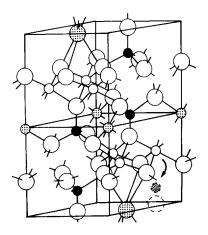


FIG. 2. Frenkel defect on $K^+ \beta$ -alumina.

K β -alumina and Tl β -alumina

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POTASSIUM β -Alumina: Position and Thermal Parameters

	Position	Number per unit cells	$x \times 10^4$	$z \times 10^4$	$\beta_{11} imes 10^5$	$\beta_{22} imes 10^5$	$\beta_{33} imes 10^5$	$\beta_{13} \times 10^5$	В
AI (1)	12(k)	11.50 (3)	8322 (1)	1052 (1)	819 (23)	743 (31)	38 (1)	3 (3)	
Al (2)	4(f)	4	3333	245 (1)	676 (32)	β_{11}	34 (1)	0	
Al (3)	4(f)	4	3333	1749 (1)	1034 (36)	β_{11}	31 (2)	0	
Al (4)	2(a)	2	0	0	773 (46)	β_{11}	30 (3)	0	
Al interstitial	12(k)	0.36 (2)	8380 (28)	1750 (10)					0.2 (2)
O (1)	12(k)	12	1571 (2)	496 (1)	880 (52)	718 (74)	38 (3)	-6 (7)	
O (2)	12(k)	12	5027 (2)	1454 (1)	721 (48)	792 (70)	46 (3)	-8 (7)	
O (3)	4(f)	4	6666	552 (2)	758 (79)	β_{11}	37 (5)	0	
O (4)	4(e)	4	0	1411 (2)	670 (74)	β_{11}	41 (5)	0	
O (5)	6(<i>h</i>)	2	3151 (10)	2500	1400 (220)	1060 (454)	32 (8)	0	
K (3)	6(<i>h</i>)	0.28 (1)	9707 (22)	2500					0.8 (2)
K (2)	6(h)	0.75 (1)	8824 (9)	2500	1995 (186)	3218 (365)	29 (8)	0	
K (1)	6(h)	1.56(1)	6887 (3)	2500	1347 (72)	1352 (68)	48 (3)	0	

	TABLE	П
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Thallium β -Alumina: Position and Thermal Parameters

		Number per						
	Position	unit cell	$x \times 10^4$	$z \times 10^4$	$\beta_{11} \times 10^5$	$\beta_{22} \times 10^5$	$\beta_{33} imes 10^6$	$\beta_{1.3} \times 10^6$
Al (1)	12(k)	12	8324 (3)	1042 (2)	795 (72)	715 (94)	440 (40)	10 (80)
Al (2)	4(f)	4	3333	246 (2)	610 (98)	β_{11}	350(60)	0
Al (3)	4(f)	4	3333	1748 (2)	845 (103)	β_{11}	250 (60)	0
Al (4)	2(<i>a</i>)	2	0	0	691 (132)	β_{11}	270 (80)	0
O (1)	12(<i>k</i>)	12	1577 (6)	488 (2)	594 (138)	582 (201)	310 (70)	260 (180)
O (2)	12(k)	12	5021 (6)	1437 (2)	649 (137)	437 (184)	440 (80)	50 (180)
O (3)	4(f)	4	6666	548 (4)	628 (216)	β_{11}	250 (140)	0
O (4)	4(e)	4	0	1397 (4)	483 (201)	β_{11}	300 (140)	0
O (5)	6(<i>h</i>)	2	3333	2500	2613 (536)	β_{11}	90 (210)	
TI (1)	6(<i>h</i>)	1.75 (2)	6807 (32)	2500	2246 (308)	2649 (765)	630 (20)	0
Tl (2)	6(h)	0.51 (2)	9099 (15)	2500	2630 (283)	5367 (746)	300 (90)	0
TI (3)	2 (<i>b</i>)	0.21 (2)	0	2500	3397 (585)	β_{11}	250 (140)	0

the general scale factor being fixed; then complete convergence was reached (R = 0.040). The very last attempt was to refine anisotropic temperature factors; a final R value of 0.034 was obtained, corresponding to the values gathered in Table I.

The last refinement cycle dealing with all the variable parameters brought no meaningful difference in the values of structural parameters and confirmed the reliability of the results.

Description of the Structure

(a) Spinel blocks. As pointed out by Reidinger, a partial occupation of the interstitial tetrahedral Al site is noticed. For this atom only a very weak thermal coefficient is obtained; thus if the partial occupation of this position is firmly established, the absolute value of the occupancy factor is not known with precision. But we observed that this occupancy factor is nearly identical to the lack of

 $(\bar{U}_{11}^2)^{1/2}$ $(\bar{U}_{22}^2)^{1/2}$ Atoms in the (Å) (Å) mirrorplane (Å) K(1) 0.127 0.127 0.112 K(2) 0.154 0.196 0.087 **Tl(1)** 0.163 0.177 0.129 Tl(2) 0.177 0.253 0.089 Tl(3) 0.201 0.201 0.082

TABLE III

COMPONENTS OF PRINCIPAL AMPLITUDES OF THERMAL VIBRATION OF ATOMS IN POTASSIUM β -Alumina, and IN THALLIUM β -Alumina^a

" \bar{U}_{11} , \bar{U}_{22} , \bar{U}_{33} are the root mean square deplacements of the vibration parallel to a*, b*, and c*.

aluminum in the Al (1) site, and this is consistent with the hypothesis of a Frenkel-type defect within the spinel blocks (Fig. 2).

(b) Mirror planes. All three possible cationic sites (BR, mO, aBR) are simultaneously occupied (but partly), and the refinement did not reveal a lack of oxygen in the O (5) position.

No pronounced anisotropy is detected for the atoms in the conducting plane (Table III).

The final formula may be written as follows:

Al_{21.86(5)}K_{2.59(3)}O₃₄,

i.e., 68.17 positive charges for 68 negative ones. This formula is not accurate enough to confirm the charge compensation model, by in-

	Number of bonds	K β-Al ₂ O ₃ (Å)	Tl β-Al ₂ O ₃ (Å)
Octahedra			
Al(1)-O(1)	2	2.023	2.025
-O(2)	2	1.841	1.840
-O(3)	1	1.968	1.965
-O(4)	1	1.823	1.817
Al(4)-O(1)	6	1.896	1.895
Fetrahedra			
Al(2)-O(1)	3	1.802	1.791
-O(3)	1	1.811	1.819
Al(3)-O(2)	3	1.775	1.784
-O(5)	1	1.716	1.723
Al(interstitial)-O(1)	2	1.762	
-O(4)	1	1.751	
$-\mathbf{O}^{a}$	1	1.758	
Polyhedron 9-coordinated			
K(1) or Tl(1)–O(2)	2	2.810	2.876
-O(2)	2	2.810	2.876
-O(2)	2	2.986	2.988
-O(5)	3(average of three)	3.192	3.232
Polyhedron 8-coordinated			
K(2) or Tl(2)–O(5)	2(average of three)	2.841	2.895
-O(4)	2	2.727	2.673
-O(2)	4	3.040	3.205
Polyhedron 9-coordinated			
K(3) or Tl(3)–O(4)	2	2.493	2.527
-O(5) -O(2)	3	3.243 3.492	3.231

TABLE IV

^a Interstitial oxygen located in the mid-oxygen position.

terstitial oxygen on mid-oxygen positions, that would be suggested by a Frenkel defect in the blocks.

Three outstanding differences are to be noticed in regard to Dernier and Remeika's (D.R.) paper (13):

1. the presence, in our crystal, of interstitial aluminium,

2. the occupation of the aBR position, as in previously described alumina structures (7, 8, 12, 14),

3. and a noticeable difference in the occupancy rate of K atoms.

	D.R.	This work
BR	1.42 (2)	1.56(1)
mO	1.22 (2)	0.75(1)
aBR	0.0	0.28 (1)
	2.64 (4)	2.59 (3)

The total amount of potassium in both cases is very similar; there is in fact a different distribution between the positions.

The divergence between Remeika's and our results is presumably due to different preparation conditions: our crystals were obtained at higher temperatures than those of Dernier and Remeika, which were prepared by flux method; in our method, the occupation of aBR sites is favored, in which the environment of the potassium ion is less favorable (K (3)-O (4) distances are short), (Table IV).

Refinement of the Tl β -Alumina Structure

The lattice constants are: a = 5.596 Å, c = 22.912 Å. Four hundred ninety-nine independent reflections were collected. (Tables V and VI). The refinement was performed in the same way as in K⁺ β -alumina.

No interstitial aluminum was detected in the spinel blocks, probably because the corresponding electron density was too low in relation to that of Tl atoms.

The final value of the R parameter was 0.058 corresponding to the parameters of Table II.

Discussion

Here again we find simultaneous partial occupation of the three possible cationic sites

in the conducting planes; these positions are all slightly shifted off the theoretical ones.

The main differences with a recent paper of Kodama and Muto (K.M.) (14) are:

1. First, no negative thermal coefficient was noticed when the necessary absorption corrections were correctly made,

2. Also, the strong correlation between the theoretical BR position $(\frac{2}{3}, \frac{1}{3}, \frac{1}{4})$ and the actual BR position $(\frac{2}{3} + \varepsilon, \frac{1}{3} - \varepsilon, \frac{1}{4})$ does not allow their simultaneous occupations as in the K.M. paper,

3. Finally occupancy factors for cationic sites are different from those of K.M.:

	K.M. ¹	This work
BR	1.86	1.76 (2)
mO	0.73	0.51 (2)
aBR	0.07	0.21 (2)
	2.66	2.48 (6)

The divergence between these results may again be related to:

1. the difference in preparation methods as for K β -alumina,

2. the lack of absorption corrections in K.M.'s work; this led to imprecise values of occupancy and thermal coefficients (especially anisotropic factors).

Conclusion

For crystals obtained in the same way, the occupancy factor of the BR position increases when Tl⁺ takes the place of K⁺, and simultaneously the mO site occupancy factor decreases. The aBR site is always weakly occupied. Also the total amount of M^+ in the conducting planes decreases when Tl⁺ substitutes for K⁺.

On the other hand, if our results are compared with the parameters of Na β -alumina the shift from the theoretical positions is related to the nature of the conducting ion.

	Theoretical position	Na ⁽¹¹⁾	K	Tl
BR	0.666	0.706	0.689	0.681
mO	0.833	0.873	0.882	0.910
aBR	1.0		0.971	1.00

¹ K.M. do not reveat the error for occupancy factors.

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<pre>F(Ges) F(CLC¹ F) F(CLC¹ F) F(CLC</pre>	1 (085	78-10	87.10	51.95	61.19			140.18	110.07	36.72	61,99	179.86	26.72	254.86	260.94	14.90	3.56	53,63	88.27	36.90	21.72	30.56	58,84	5,86	14.84	55.03	65,49	125.96	14.69	99.5	2.36			122.4		67.6														1.8	43,06		67,67
<pre>F(605) F(605) F(60</pre>	L	• -	2	n .	s 1		• •	- 1	0	•	2	3	3	3	1	2	2	5	2	1	2	21	22	2	ŝ	ŝ	26	27	59	5	2	1	32	30	-	~	n	*	n	، ت	•	•	• :	2:	1	12	12		12	5	10	2	2
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£ 4348579, 584359, 864 6488, 38856389988888588858885438 53843 33	V(CALC)	145.4021	24, 8320	154.8050	10.0587	210.040.012		74.2475	200.2721	10.6546	102.6729	104.3446	140.9662	53.7599	64.6823	11.9458	7-9067	1002	63.6882	27-5212	23,9375	12.5689	31.0807	194.5752	58.3473	39.5299	67.4596	15.5348	16.1130	52.2041	46.1298	10.00		51.671.5	47.9967	74.6219	88.9507	£720.0*	17.3177	17,9821		9265.95	2138.Y		14.7404								
 x * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *	Y (085)	155,3284	25,1425		17.9181	٠	٠	٠			٠	٠			٠	11.3040	8,9594	2.6024	66.6927	29,9329	24.9702	13.1039	32,8715	198.9477	57,9834	40.6787	66.7152	16.66.31	18.0770	50.4229	45.0077	39,8377	2120.42		47.4756	74.6963	90.5421	40.3786	17,3486	16.3111	13.0253	36.7701	101.1		20.0720			12.12					
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TABLE V

Observed and Calculated Structure Factors (K^+ β -Alumina)

COLLIN ET AL.

11.041C1 10461 ----*** CALC) ********** (CALC) ŝ CALC) (380 r(CALC) ~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

(C.4.C)	1210		9.4895	66.4500	6160.1.	2.4490	12.1322	3.4841	12.1500	1311351	1.5976	18.5212	0001-51	1.1427	4.1825	2.1479	10.00	100	0,000						1000	D. REAL		202L - 80	7.9494	60.4753	1224	191344		9.1020	2.7823	6.1385		- 924 · V	140, 140	5.287.3	1010-51		1.11.0	6.1929	2.9159	0.0024	10000101	12.25	6.90.9	9.5114
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Y (CALC)																																																200 - PO		
Y (085)			11. BOR?	20.6192	17.0429	51.4370	\$7.7701	3.1313	70.1395	44.0489	16.7616	20.0396	10.9223	300.8660	5.7468	29.3371	6.8356	31.5744	12.4504	30.3392	00000.00		6961 · 6	9/11/10				0747-04	13.1720	6.2643	11.3078	0000.	15 05 1 6		30, 8653	0000		0000	64.3153	0000	5.1375	100.00	2000-000	17.717	197.3760	244.3063	20101120	200.0077	238.0019	0497°N
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YICALC																																																		
(S80) Y			100.00	40.4720	1 M. 16.07	164.8735	305.2335	252.9905	40.4130	81.8505	186,9098	39.8163	270.3045	32,7433	162,9016	300.9264	118,8564	18.9778	142.4949	63, 4297	137.1612	23,2995	1. 1926	55.6.23	10.018	1001101		201128	5.1699	61.980.3	27,2602	105-8542	4.2770	111111111	20.6360	197.9791			1010.15	43,5396	136.0153		10411410	180.8202	1929.04	114.0397			131.6219	1284-12
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YICALC	-0		86.7255	25.0722	107.2960	12.4186	119.1953	25.1771	72. 4012	13.3669	57, 739	10.3701	112.9509	22.4404	5. 5913	188.5602	72.0831	198.1389	135.1086	20.5330	19.5906	147 3829	14.5802	226.9703			0140-112	145/ • /01	121. 1200	34.0021	112.2374	24.2047	48. 3965		15.4526	126.6641	65.9126		61.37.65	57,8740	30.4416	10,12			1100	144.441			1.274	1111 H
Y (085)	1918 14	1010.41	9060-78	24.8686	104-4103	11.9961	112.7779	20.7457	68.5426	13.7786	56.7565	10.1010	112.8227	26.8478	11.2406	182.4039	68.6124	192.4121	148.9266	31-9225	24.1047	140.06/2	19.6320	224+22		0174114			122.7433	37.4676	110.3772	21.4117	50.2240		16.0762	133.8058			57.25.62	111.65	33-3297		BAC 24		10.00	136.9600				E I
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1 STALE	I To Both		329.1066	1010.004	404.1596	244.6723	436.9772	197. 9665	133,7357	1210.180	136.6719	0001.01	255,9753	254.008	120,1286	29,6387	110,0639	19, 1524	182.1912	104.0752	149, 5046	142.50	190.0666		000.4010					02.53	71 2 MI	100.0000			139.1069	61.1378	106.961		1.20	641.9269	1342	1391960			1.2672	1291	92.9772			
(59 0) J			119.0105	2006634	17 M	246-8429	437.0671	A6.4536	133.4945	372.7165	139.0972	51.2334	266.5711	1077.165	123.7409	35.4403	114.9109	49.3304	184.4796	113.4672	155.4328		201.1792	10.002			100-1-007			64.2238	72.043.1	155.7371	12.5909		1216-041	7117	177.5429		1.1.1.1	1000-10	1016.98	63.7602			12121	-	100.4532			
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TABLE VI

Observed and Calculated Structure Factors (T1+ β -Alumina)

COLLIN ET AL.

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Both Tl and K β -alumina compounds are similar in nature to Na β -alumina, rather than to Ag β -alumina, in which aBR positions have significant occupation factors.

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