

The reactivity of SbVO_5 with $\text{T-Nb}_2\text{O}_5$ in solid state in air

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Abstract The reactivity of SbVO_5 , a compound known since a short time, with $\text{T-Nb}_2\text{O}_5$ in solid state in air has been investigated over the whole component concentration range of a system built by these two reacting substances. The investigation results have shown that an equimolar mixture of SbVO_5 and $\text{T-Nb}_2\text{O}_5$ reacts with a subsequent formation of a hitherto unknown compound of the formula $\text{Nb}_2\text{VSbO}_{10}$. This compound has been characterized by the methods XRD, DTA/TG, and SEM. Its orthorhombic unit cell parameters have been calculated, and its stability in air up to 880 ± 10 °C has been proved. At this temperature, the compound melts incongruently with an accompanying deposition of solid $\text{Nb}_9\text{VO}_{25}$, i.e., of a compound that crystallizes in the binary oxide system $\text{V}_2\text{O}_5\text{--Nb}_2\text{O}_5$.

Keywords Niobium–vanadium–antimony-oxides · Solid–solid reaction · $\text{Nb}_2\text{VSbO}_{10}$ · XRD · DTA · SEM/WDX

Introduction

Oxides of the IIIb and Vb family elements of the periodic table as well as compounds formed in binary and ternary systems built by these oxides have been already for several decades an attractive object of various investigations which have proved that these oxides and compounds evince

properties interesting for possible applications, including catalytic, optical, electrical, and magnetic properties.

It is known, among other things, that both vanadium(V) oxide and niobium(V) oxide as well as compounds and phases formed through reactions between these oxides (i.e., NbVO_5 , $\text{Nb}_9\text{VO}_{25}$, $\text{Nb}_{18}\text{V}_4\text{O}_{55}$, and the solid solution of V_2O_5 in $\text{TT-Nb}_2\text{O}_5$) are components of effective catalysts for the ODH reactions, e.g., for dehydrogenative oxidation of propane to propylene [1–3]. Moreover, the semiconducting oxides V_2O_5 and Nb_2O_5 [4], owing to their electrical and magnetic properties, have found applications in the processes of producing novel materials used for example in medicine [5] or in lithium batteries as electrodes [6].

An ample scientific literature on the subject implies as well that vanadium–antimony oxide catalysts are active in the processes of utilizing such air pollutants as hydrogen sulfide, carbon monoxide, or the oxides of nitrogen [7, 8]. The catalysts based on the system V–Sb–O are also very active and selective in a technologically very important reaction of oxidative ammonolysis of propane to acrylonitrile [9].

The literature data suggest that attractive catalytic, electrical, or magnetic properties can be expected, too, in the case of hitherto unknown phases and compounds involving in their formation the oxides and compounds containing niobium, vanadium, and antimony. Before any investigations on application properties of these compounds and phases should be performed, it is necessary to conduct a primary research intended to find out in which systems they are formed, to establish the optimum conditions of their synthesis, and to determine their basic physicochemical properties.

The physicochemical properties of SbVO_5 and of the low-temperature polymorph of niobium(V) oxide

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(T-Nb₂O₅) are well known [10–15]. The compound SbVO₅, known only for the last 10 years, is formed in the system V–Sb–O among other ways through a reaction between V₂O₅ and α-Sb₂O₄ in air at temperatures not exceeding 650 °C [10]. It is stable in air up to ca. 710 °C, and while further heated it decomposes—with an accompanying liberation of oxygen—to a rutile-type phase of the formula Sb_{1–x}V_{1–x}O₄, where 0.08 ≤ x ≤ 0.1 [10–12]. The XRD characteristics of SbVO₅, its density, and its unit cell parameters are presented in the work [12]. It is known, too, that antimony and vanadium in SbVO₅ possess mainly the +5 oxidation state. The conducted EPR investigations have proved that the mass fraction of vanadium in the +4 oxidation state in SbVO₅ does not exceed 0.0002 [13].

The structure of T-Nb₂O₅—the other component of the investigated reacting mixtures—is well known [14, 15]. This low-temperature polymorph of niobium(V) oxide is built from pentagonal bipyramids and deformed octahedra, and a small amount of niobium ions occurs in structural voids surrounded by nine oxide ions. T-Nb₂O₅ crystallizes in the orthorhombic system [15]. It is known as well that at ca. 800 °C T-Nb₂O₅ undergoes a slow polymorphic transformation into H-Nb₂O₅, a phase crystallizing in the monoclinic system and melting at about 1480 °C [16].

It can be concluded from available literature, however, that the reactivity of SbVO₅ toward T-Nb₂O₅ has not been studied so far. The main aim of the present work was therefore investigating the mutual reactivity of SbVO₅ with T-Nb₂O₅ in the atmosphere of air. The results of these investigations will allow a statement whether any and what phases or compounds are formed through solid-state reactions between these two reacting substances in air; the acquired results will allow also a determination of the thermal stability and the basic physicochemical properties of the obtained phases or compounds.

Experimental procedure

The following reagents were used in our experiments:

T-Nb₂O₅ was a commercial pure product of Aldrich (Germany) and SbVO₅ was obtained by heating in air an equimolar mixture of V₂O₅ (p.a. product, POCh, Gliwice, Poland) with α-Sb₂O₄ (obtained by heating a pure Sb₂O₃, Merck, Germany, in air) by a method described in the work [10].

For the experiments, 10 samples were prepared (Table 1), with their compositions representing the whole components concentrations range of the system under consideration.

The reagents weighed in suitable proportions were homogenized and calcined in the atmosphere of air at 600, 620, 650, 675, 690, and 720 °C in 24 or 48 h stages by a conventional method described in the papers [10, 17–19]. After each heating stage, an XRD examination was performed and selected samples were additionally subjected to a DTA/TG investigation.

The powder diffraction patterns of obtained samples were recorded with the aid of the diffractometer DRON-3 (Bourestnik, Sankt Petersburg, Russia) using the radiation Cu Kα/Ni. Identification of phases was conducted on the basis of XRD characteristics contained in the PDF cards.

The DTA/TG investigations were performed by means of an F. Paulik–L. Paulik–L. Erdey derivatograph, product of MOM Budapest. The measurements were conducted in the atmosphere of air in the temperature range 20–1000 °C, at the DTA galvanometer sensitivity of 1/5 and a constant heating rate of 10 °C min^{−1}. The weighed amount of the samples was 500 mg in each case. The DTA/TG measurements of monophasic samples in the temperature range 20–1500 °C were carried out with the use of an SDT 2960 apparatus (TA Instruments).

Table 1 Compositions of initial mixtures and phase analysis results for samples after selected stages of heating

No.	Composition/100 x		Phase composition of samples after their heating		
	SbVO ₅	T-Nb ₂ O ₅	Stage III 650 °C—24 h	Stage V 690 °C—24 h	Stage VI 720 °C—48 h
1	95.00	5.00	T-Nb ₂ O ₅ , SbVO ₅ , Nb₂VSbO₁₀	SbVO ₅ , Nb₂VSbO₁₀	Sb _{0,92} V _{0,92} O ₄ , Nb₂VSbO₁₀
2	90.00	10.00	T-Nb ₂ O ₅ , SbVO ₅ , Nb₂VSbO₁₀	SbVO ₅ , Nb₂VSbO₁₀	Sb _{0,92} V _{0,92} O ₄ , Nb₂VSbO₁₀
3	80.00	20.00	T-Nb ₂ O ₅ , SbVO ₅ , Nb₂VSbO₁₀	SbVO ₅ , Nb₂VSbO₁₀	Sb _{0,92} V _{0,92} O ₄ , Nb₂VSbO₁₀
4	70.00	30.00	T-Nb ₂ O ₅ , SbVO ₅ , Nb₂VSbO₁₀	SbVO ₅ , Nb₂VSbO₁₀	Sb _{0,92} V _{0,92} O ₄ , Nb₂VSbO₁₀
5	60.00	40.00	T-Nb ₂ O ₅ , SbVO ₅	SbVO ₅ , Nb₂VSbO₁₀	Sb _{0,92} V _{0,92} O ₄ , Nb₂VSbO₁₀
6	50.00	50.00	T-Nb ₂ O ₅ , SbVO ₅	T-Nb ₂ O ₅ , SbVO ₅ , Nb₂VSbO₁₀	Nb₂VSbO₁₀
7	40.00	60.00	T-Nb ₂ O ₅ , SbVO ₅	T-Nb ₂ O ₅ , SbVO ₅ , Nb₂VSbO₁₀	Nb₂VSbO₁₀ , T-Nb ₂ O ₅
8	30.00	70.00	T-Nb ₂ O ₅ , SbVO ₅	T-Nb ₂ O ₅ , SbVO ₅ , Nb₂VSbO₁₀	Nb₂VSbO₁₀ , T-Nb ₂ O ₅
9	20.00	80.00	T-Nb ₂ O ₅ , SbVO ₅	T-Nb ₂ O ₅ , SbVO ₅ , Nb₂VSbO₁₀	Nb₂VSbO₁₀ , T-Nb ₂ O ₅
10	10.00	90.00	T-Nb ₂ O ₅ , SbVO ₅	T-Nb ₂ O ₅ , SbVO ₅	T-Nb ₂ O ₅

Selected samples were investigated also by means of an electron scanning microscope—SEM/WDX (JSM-1600, Jeol, Japan).

The densities of monophase samples containing only Nb₂VSbO₁₀ were determined by degassing samples and hydrostatic weighing in pycnometric liquid (CCl₄) by the method described in the paper [20].

Results and discussion

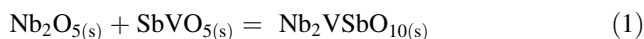
The composition of initial mixtures of the reacting substances, i.e., SbVO₅ with T-Nb₂O₅, is presented in Table 1. Table 1 lists also the phase composition of the investigated samples after selected stages of heating them.

The phase analysis of all samples, performed after the first and the second stage of heating them, showed that the heating of the samples at 600 °C (24 h) and next at 620 °C (24 h) did not cause any change in their composition, and they still contained SbVO₅ with T-Nb₂O₅.

In the diffractograms of samples 1–4, i.e., the samples that contained in their initial mixtures the mole fraction $x = 0.0500$ to $x = 0.3000$ of T-Nb₂O₅ mixed with SbVO₅, taken after the third stage of heating (650 °C for 24 h), some new diffraction lines were present beside the XRD line sets characteristic for SbVO₅ and T-Nb₂O₅. These new lines could not possibly be ascribed to any XRD characteristics of the known compounds or phases formed in the systems Sb–V–O, Nb–V–O, and Sb–Nb–O [10, 21–29]. The fourth (675 °C—48 h) and the fifth (690 °C—24 h) stage of heating caused the samples that in their initial mixtures had comprised up to $x = 0.4000$ of T-Nb₂O₅ (mixed with SbVO₅) to be diphasic and to contain only the new compound beside SbVO₅. Any presence of niobium(V) oxide was not detected in these samples any more. After these and the next (720 °C—48 h) heating cycles, the sample that had been initially an equimolar mixture of the title reacting substances was monophase and contained only the new compound. In the samples that represented the remaining concentration range of the investigated system SbVO₅–T-Nb₂O₅, i.e., samples comprising in their initial mixtures more than $x = 0.5000$ of T-Nb₂O₅, the new phase began to be formed not before the heating at 690 °C for 24 h. After a further heating stage (VI: 720 °C—48 h), these samples were diphasic (except for sample 10), and beside the new compound they contained only T-Nb₂O₅. At this stage of our research, we assumed that the absence of any diffraction lines characteristic for the new compound, beside some lines of very large intensities belonging to the line set of T-Nb₂O₅, in the diffractogram of sample 10, can be due to a very small content of the new compound, i.e., a content below its limit of detection by XRD. It cannot be excluded, as well, that in this component concentration

range of the investigated system—a range represented only by sample 10—a low-concentration solid solution with a T-Nb₂O₅-type structure is formed. In order to confirm this supposition, some separate investigations must be conducted that did not pertain to the subject of this paper, but we will perform them in the near future.

The phase composition of all investigated samples as well as our tracking of intensity changes of the diffraction lines characteristic for the new, hitherto unknown compound have indicated that in the reacting mixtures SbVO₅ + T-Nb₂O₅ a reaction occurs in accordance with the equation:



The new compound Nb₂SbVO₁₀ has a brownish sandy sort of color.

Figure 1 presents a fragment of a diffractogram of: (a) an equimolar mixture of SbVO₅ with T-Nb₂O₅; (b) the compound Nb₂VSbO₁₀ obtained from the above mixture.

It can be evidently concluded from Fig. 1 that the diffraction lines belonging to the set characteristic for the new compound Nb₂VSbO₁₀ differ both as to their positions and as to their mutual intensity relations from the XRD line sets characteristic for the components of the initial equimolar mixture SbVO₅ + T-Nb₂O₅ [10, 12, 14].

Preliminary results of this part of our research were presented during 10th CCTA in Zakopane (Poland) in 2009 [30].

In the next stage of our research, the powder diffraction pattern of Nb₂VSbO₁₀ (Cu K α /Ni) was subjected to indexing by means of the program Powder, in order to find out in which crystallographic system this compound crystallizes and to calculate its unit cell parameters. The deviation of the reflection positions in the Nb₂VSbO₁₀ diffractogram was established through XRD investigations

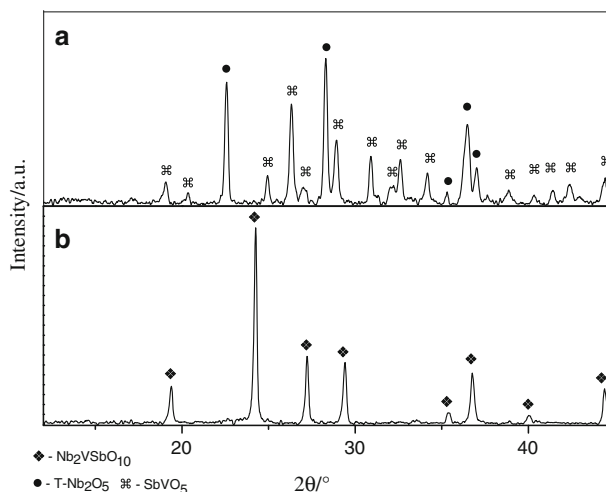


Fig. 1 X-ray diffraction patterns of: **a** initial mixture comprising $x = 0.5000$ of SbVO₅ + $x = 0.5000$ of T-Nb₂O₅ and **b** Nb₂VSbO₁₀

Table 2 Indexing results for the powder diffraction pattern of Nb₂VSbO₁₀

No.	Miller indices <i>hkl</i>	<i>d</i> _{exp} /nm	<i>d</i> _{calc} /nm	100 <i>I</i>
1	002	0.6124	0.6122	3
2	010	0.4584	0.4584	22
3	012	0.3672	0.3669	100
4	100	0.3282	0.3277	29
5	013	0.3043	0.3048	29
6	110	0.2663	0.2666	2
7	014	0.2541	0.2546	3
8	112	0.2448	0.2444	26
9	021	0.2255	0.2253	5
10	006	0.2043	0.2041	21
11	024	0.1833	0.1836	20
12	017	0.1636	0.1635	14
13	133	0.1314	0.1313	4
14	225	0.1172	0.1172	5

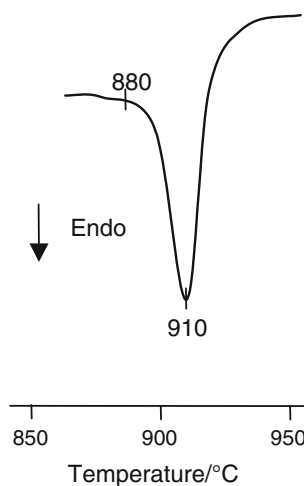
of a mixture of the new compound with an internal standard, i.e., with α -Al₂O₃. For the indexing, 14 reflections were selected from the 2θ range 4–90° (Table 2). An analysis of a series of obtained solutions, and especially a high value of FM as well as the calculated density value 4.67 g cm⁻³ very close to the experimentally measured density 4.68 ± 0.05 g cm⁻³, have indicated that the new compound Nb₂VSbO₁₀ crystallizes in the orthorhombic system. The calculated unit cell parameters are the following: $a = 0.328143$ nm, $b = 0.458946$ nm, $c = 1.22476$ nm, and $Z = 1$.

Investigations aiming at a determination of the thermal properties of the compound Nb₂VSbO₁₀ were carried out by differential thermal analysis (DTA).

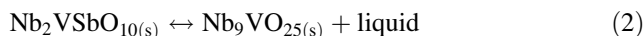
In the DTA curve of Nb₂VSbO₁₀ up to 1000 °C under air, one distinct endothermic effect was recorded, beginning at about 880 °C (Fig. 2).

In order to explain the nature of the recorded DTA effect, a monophasic sample containing Nb₂VSbO₁₀ was subjected to additional investigations. For this purpose, the sample was heated for 3 h under air, at a temperature close to the maximum temperature of the DTA effect, i.e., at 920 °C. Next the sample was rapidly cooled to room temperature and analysed with respect to its phase composition.

A phase composition analysis of this sample, conducted on the base of its diffractogram (XRD), showed the presence of Nb₉VO₂₅ [24] beside Sb_{1-x}V_{1-x}O₄ [21–23] as well as small amounts of vanadium(V) oxide. Having considered that under the conditions of the experiment, the sample underwent a partial melting and that among the identified phases only the compound Nb₉VO₂₅ exists as a

**Fig. 2** DTA curve of Nb₂VSbO₁₀ (sample 5 after heating at 720 °C—48 h)

solid phase at 920 °C [29], we concluded that the endothermic effect recorded in the DTA curve is due to an incongruent melting of Nb₂VSbO₁₀ in accordance with the peritectic reaction:



Thus, the solid product of the new compound Nb₂VSbO₁₀ melting at 880 °C is Nb₉VO₂₅, whereas Sb_{1-x}V_{1-x}O₄ and V₂O₅ are phases crystallizing from the liquid. Correctness of this statement is corroborated by the fact that in the diffractogram of Nb₂VSbO₁₀ heated at 920 °C (3 h) and next rapidly cooled to room temperature only the XRD lines belonging to the sets characteristic for Sb_{1-x}V_{1-x}O₄ and V₂O₅ differed both as to their mutual intensity relations (I/I_0) and as to the corresponding interplanar distances (d) from the XRD characteristics of these phases contained by the PDF files Nos. 9-387 and 30-1412, 16-600. These differences are due to a very quick crystallization of these phases from the liquid during the rapid cooling of the investigated sample from 920 °C to ambient temperature.

In a further part of this work, the compound Nb₂VSbO₁₀ and the samples obtained after heating this compound at 920 °C were subjected to investigations by scanning electron microscopy (SEM).

Figure 3 presents a SEM image of a monophasic sample containing only the new compound Nb₂VSbO₁₀, whereas Fig. 4a and b shows SEM images of two selected fragments of a sample obtained after melting Nb₂VSbO₁₀ at 920 °C.

The crystals of Nb₂VSbO₁₀ visible in Fig. 3, with their shape of irregular polyhedra and their size ranging from 1 to several micrometers, differ considerably both as to the shape and as to the size from the crystals produced after melting Nb₂VSbO₁₀ that exhibit three different kinds of the shape. In the images of the molten sample, apart from

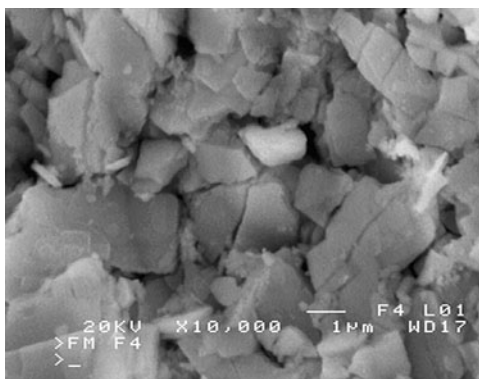


Fig. 3 SEM image of a monophase sample containing only the new compound $\text{Nb}_2\text{VSbO}_{10}$

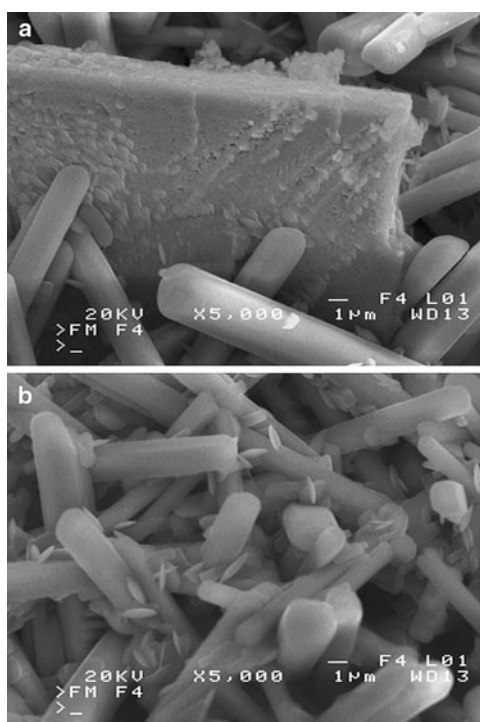


Fig. 4 SEM image of $\text{Nb}_2\text{VSbO}_{10}$ heated at $920\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ **a** during 3 h (crystals of $\text{Nb}_9\text{VO}_{25}$ and $\text{Sb}_{1-x}\text{V}_{1-x}\text{O}_4$) and **b** during 6 h (crystals of $\text{Nb}_9\text{VO}_{25}$ shaped like “massive sticks”)

crystals resembling “cuboidal plates” and very small—in comparison with them—“circular” crystals (of ca. $1\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ in diameter), some crystals can be clearly distinguished that have a shape of “massive sticks” and are several to a dozen or so micrometer long (Fig. 4a and b).

An X-ray microanalysis (SEM/EDX) of the content of niobium, vanadium, and antimony in the investigated samples was carried out in several points chosen within each sample on the biggest crystals whose one face was perpendicular to the electron beam. This chemical analysis

of $\text{Nb}_2\text{VSbO}_{10}$ crystals, performed pointwise, has proved the presence of the determined elements in the following averaged amounts (molar fractions): $x_{\text{Nb}} = 0.5054$, $x_{\text{V}} = 0.2464$, and $x_{\text{Sb}} = 0.2482$, in comparison with the contents calculated from the chemical formula of the compound: $x_{\text{Nb}} = 0.5000$, $x_{\text{V}} = 0.2500$, and $x_{\text{Sb}} = 0.2500$. Considering that the mean error of the above determination amounted to 0.003–0.008, we concluded that this analysis result is an additional corroboration of the proposed formula of the new compound. Moreover, an X-ray microanalysis (SEM/EDX) of the crystals shaped like “massive sticks” in the sample taken after heating $\text{Nb}_2\text{VSbO}_{10}$ at $920\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ has shown that they contain niobium and vanadium in amounts corresponding to $\text{Nb}_9\text{VO}_{25}$, i.e., to the solid product of the incongruent melting of the new compound.

In the next stage of our research, two selected samples (that one which after the fifth heating stage—at $690\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ for 24 h—contained SbVO_5 with $\text{Nb}_2\text{VSbO}_{10}$ as well as that one which after the sixth heating cycle—at $720\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ for 48 h—was a mixture of $\text{Nb}_2\text{VSbO}_{10}$ and $\text{T-Nb}_2\text{O}_5$) were subjected to additional DTA/TG investigations (Figs. 5 and 6).

In the DTA curve of the mixture of SbVO_5 with $\text{Nb}_2\text{VSbO}_{10}$ ($x = 0.20$ of $\text{T-Nb}_2\text{O}_5$ in the initial mixture of the reacting substances), as presented in Fig. 5, three endothermic effects were recorded up to $1000\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$.

The first effect with its onset temperature equal to $710\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ is due, according to literature data [10, 11, 13], to a thermal decomposition of SbVO_5 . It is known that under air the compound SbVO_5 decomposes—with an accompanying liberation of oxygen—to a nonstoichiometric rutile-type phase, namely to $\text{Sb}_{0.92}\text{V}_{0.92}\text{O}_4$, that melts at $\sim 820\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$. Thus, the second endothermic effect recorded in the DTA curve of the investigated sample is caused by a melting of $\text{Sb}_{0.92}\text{V}_{0.92}\text{O}_4$. The third thermal effect in this

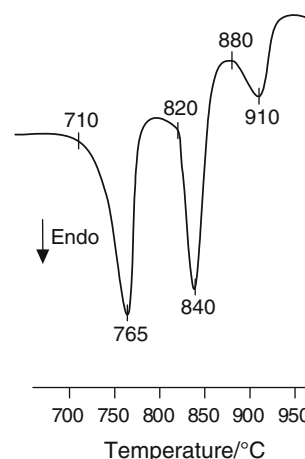


Fig. 5 DTA curve of a mixture of SbVO_5 with $\text{Nb}_2\text{VSbO}_{10}$ (sample 2 after heating at $690\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ —24 h)

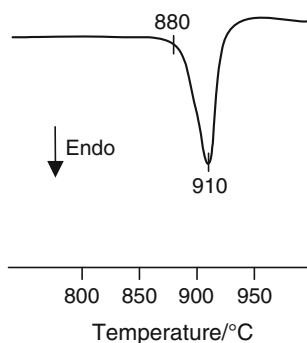


Fig. 6 DTA curve of a mixture of $\text{Nb}_2\text{VSbO}_{10}$ with $\text{T-Nb}_2\text{O}_5$ (sample 7 after heating at 720 °C —48 h)

DTA curve with its onset temperature equal to 880 °C is due, according to our research and its results described in this article, to an incongruent melting of the new compound $\text{Nb}_2\text{VSbO}_{10}$ that was present in the investigated mixture. An additional confirmation for the above interpretation of the first effect, i.e., that beginning at 710 °C , is the phase composition of those samples (comprising up to $x = 0.5000$ of $\text{T-Nb}_2\text{O}_5$ in the initial mixtures of the reacting substances) which after their heating in the sixth cycle at 720 °C were mixtures that contained the new compound $\text{Nb}_2\text{VSbO}_{10}$ with $\text{Sb}_{0.92}\text{V}_{0.92}\text{O}_4$, or in other words—with the solid product yielded by decomposing SbVO_5 . The heating of these samples at 720 °C , unlike the other stages of their roasting, was accompanied by mass losses that were associated with the liberation of oxygen during the decomposition of SbVO_5 present in the mixtures.

One endothermic effect beginning at 880 °C , recorded in the DTA curve (Fig. 6) of the sample that after the final heating cycle at 720 °C was a mixture of $\text{Nb}_2\text{VSbO}_{10}$ with $\text{T-Nb}_2\text{O}_5$ ($x = 0.6000$ of $\text{T-Nb}_2\text{O}_5$) in the initial mixture of the reacting substances), is due, according to the results of these investigations, to a melting of $\text{Nb}_2\text{VSbO}_{10}$.

Conclusions

The research results acquired within this work entitle the following conclusions to be drawn:

1. The compound SbVO_5 , known since a short time, reacts in solid state in air with $\text{T-Nb}_2\text{O}_5$ forming a new compound to which the formula $\text{Nb}_2\text{VSbO}_{10}$ has been ascribed.
2. The new compound $\text{Nb}_2\text{VSbO}_{10}$ has a brownish sandy sort of color and the density 4.67 g cm^{-3} . It is stable under air up to $\sim 880\text{ °C}$, and next it melts incongruently with an accompanying deposition of solid $\text{Nb}_9\text{VO}_{25}$.

3. $\text{Nb}_2\text{VSbO}_{10}$ crystallizes in the orthorhombic system, and the calculated parameters of its unit cell that has the volume $V = 0.184448\text{ nm}^3$ are the following: $a = 0.328143\text{ nm}$, $b = 0.458946\text{ nm}$, $c = 1.22476\text{ nm}$. The number of the stoichiometric units of the compound per such unit cell amounts to 1.
4. The new compound $\text{Nb}_2\text{VSbO}_{10}$ coexists with SbVO_5 in solid state under air up to 710 °C , and with $\text{T-Nb}_2\text{O}_5$ —up to $\sim 800\text{ °C}$.

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