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Molecular Motion in Supramolecular Ionic Crystal of Swiss Cheese Structure

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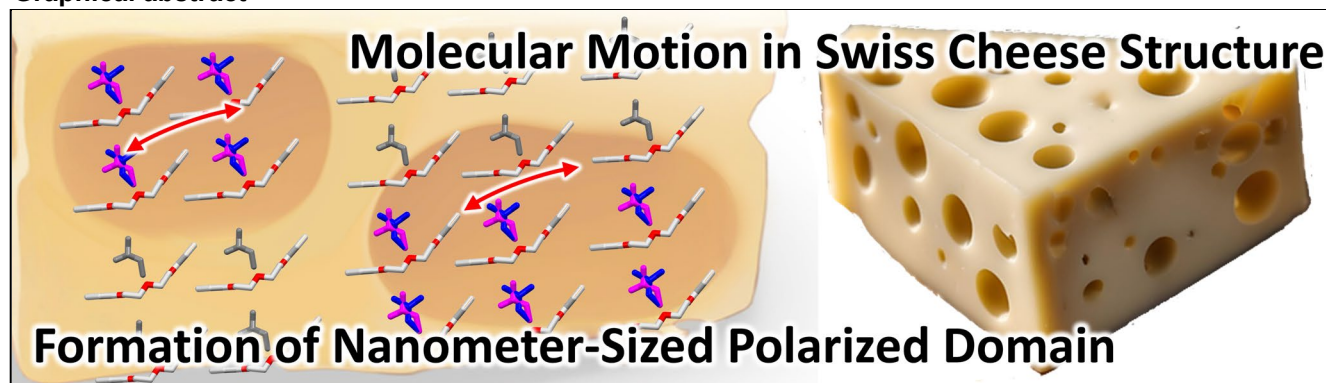
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Abstract

In most molecular crystals, crystal structure collapses when solvent molecules are removed. We report the crystal of (isobutylammonium)⁺(dibenzo[18]crown-6)[Ni(dmit)₂]⁻•0.4CH₃CN with Swiss cheese-like structure, in which 60% of the CH₃CN sites are voids. The motion of isobutylammonium⁺ adjacent to the void sites maintains the single crystallinity, which occupy an apparently larger volume than in the static state. This study opens up the possibility of developing novel relaxor dielectrics based on molecular motion in the crystal of partially occupied voids.

Keywords: molecular motion in solid state, crystal engineering, dielectric property

Graphical abstract



Crystals are usually closely packed and it isn't easy to achieve molecular motion in crystals.¹ If a densely packed structure is difficult to obtain due to the imbalance between the size and shape of the packing molecules, solvent molecules often enter the remaining space and the crystalline structure is maintained.²⁻⁵ As ordinary molecular crystals do not have a strong backbone like metal-organic frameworks, the crystal structure almost always collapses when solvent molecules are removed by heating or other treatments.⁶ If the crystalline nature is maintained even after solvent desorption, the space can be used to realize molecular motion within the crystal, opening up the possibility of developing various functionalities originating from molecular motion.

Conversely, the collapse of crystals may be prevented by the dynamic filling of crystal vacancies by molecular motions within the crystals.⁷⁻⁹ For example, crystals of [Fe^{II}₂(*o*-NTrz)₅(NCS)₄]•3CH₃OH (*o*-NTrz = 4-(*o*-nitrobenzyl)imino-1,2,4-triazole) retain their single crystallinity even when three molecules of CH₃OH per composition are removed. In the presence of solvent molecules, all *o*-NTrz ligands are ordered. When the solvent molecules are removed, one $\mu_{1,2}$ -bridging ligand located at the center of the *C*₂ axis is disordered at two equivalent sites and dynamically fills the space.⁷ A mixed crystal composed of durene and *p*-dibromobenzene, which has a smaller molecular volume, has the same crystal structure as durene. In the mixed crystal, the crystal structure is maintained by the rotation of *p*-dibromobenzene, which achieves

1 an average structure of durenes and fills the spaces
2 within the crystal.¹⁰

3 We have proposed the supramolecular approach
4 to realize molecular motion in the solid phase and
5 developed variety of electrical and magnetic
6 functions.^{11–15} For example, in (*m*-
7 FAni⁺)(DB18C6)[Ni(dmit)₂]⁻ (*m*-FAni⁺, DB18C6, and
8 dmit²⁻ are *m*-fluoroanilinium⁺, dibenzo[18]crown-6, and
9 1,3-dithiole-2-thione-4,5-dithiolate, respectively), *m*-
10 FAni⁺ can undergo flip-flop rotational motion in the
11 crystal with the C-N bond as the rotational axis. The
12 dipole moment originating from the *meta*-fluoro group
13 is inverted as the rotation takes place. Since this
14 motion occurs cooperatively in the crystal, the crystal
15 shows ferroelectricity. Here, the phenylene group
16 introduced into DB18C6 secures the rotational space
17 for the *m*-FAni⁺ based on the C-H... π interaction
18 between the DB18C6 molecules.¹⁵

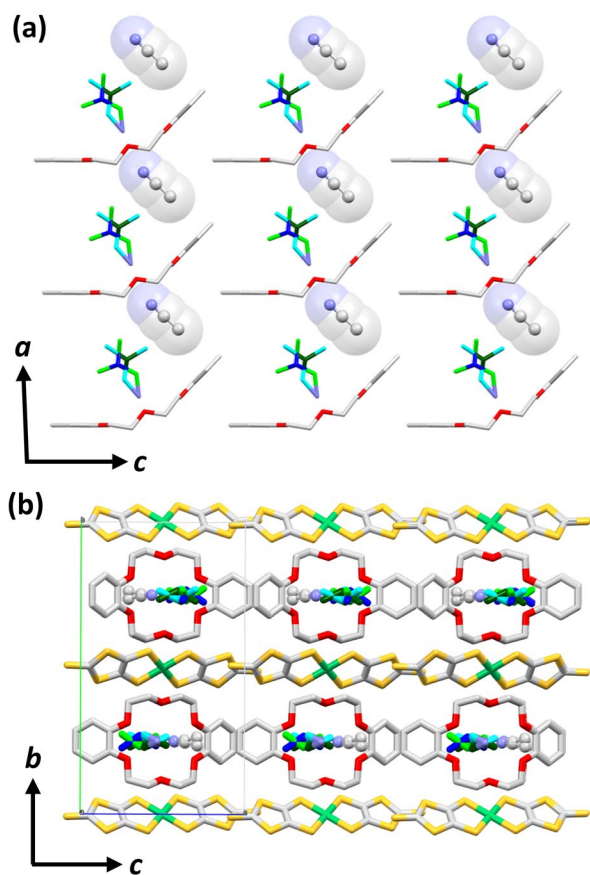


Fig. 1. Packing structure of 1•0.4CH₃CN at 200 K. CH₃CN are depicted as ball and stick model and the others are modeled by stick. Carbon, nitrogen, oxygen, sulfur, and nickel are colored by gray, light-blue, red, yellow, and light-green, respectively, except iBA⁺ cations showing disorder. Hydrogen atoms are omitted for clarity. (a) Supramolecular cation layer viewed along the *b* axis. (b) Packing structure viewed along the *a* axis.

29

30 In crystals where molecular motion spatially
31 occupies solvent-free defect sites and keeps the
32 single-crystallinity, the change in polarity caused by
33 molecular motion may open up new dielectric
34 properties. In this study, we introduced a
35 supramolecular cation composed of DB18C6 and the
36 branched-chain alkylammonium, isobutylammonium⁺
37 (iBA⁺), into the [Ni(dmit)₂]⁻ salt. The resulting
38 (iBA⁺)(DB18C6)[Ni(dmit)₂]⁻•0.4CH₃CN (1•0.4CH₃CN)
39 maintained its single-crystal nature even though 60%
40 of the CH₃CN sites were CH₃CN-free void, due to the
41 dynamic behavior of iBA⁺ cations adjacent to the void
42 sites in crystal. Void sites are randomly arranged like
43 Swiss cheese in the crystal. Polarization originating
44 from the molecular motion of iBA⁺ in Swiss cheese-
45 like void domains showed relaxor-like dielectric
46 anomalies.

47 **Fig. 1** shows the structure of crystal 1•0.4CH₃CN
48 at 200 K. The crystal system and space group are
49 monoclinic and *P*2₁/*m*, respectively (Table S1). In the
50 crystal, one molecule each of iBA⁺ and CH₃CN
51 (occupancy about 0.4), and half structure each of
52 DB18C6 and [Ni(dmit)₂]⁻ are crystallographically
53 independent (Fig. S1). As-grown crystals were stable
54 up to 340 K and lost 1.9wt% before decomposition at
55 430 K by thermogravimetry analysis (Fig. S2). This
56 weight corresponds to 0.4 molecules of CH₃CN
57 (1.8wt%) per crystal composition. iBA⁺ and DB18C6
58 formed N-H...O hydrogen bonds to form
59 supramolecular cations with a composition ratio of 1:1.
60 The supramolecular cations and CH₃CN are stacked
61 alternately along the *a* axis and arranged in a one-
62 dimensional (1D) chain. The 1D chains aligned parallel
63 to adjacent 1D chains in the $\pm c$ axis direction, forming
64 a two-dimensional (2D) layer on a plane parallel to the
65 *ac* plane (Fig. 1a). There are no molecular contacts
66 between the supramolecular cations below the van der
67 Waals (vdW) radius. The [Ni(dmit)₂]⁻ is in close
68 contact with the neighboring [Ni(dmit)₂]⁻ in a side-by-
69 side manner with the nearest sulfur interatomic
70 distance of 3.380(2) Å, forming a 2D layer on a plane
71 parallel to the *ac* plane. 2D layers composed of
72 supramolecular cations and CH₃CN alternate with 2D
73 layers composed of [Ni(dmit)₂]⁻ along the *b* axis (Fig.
74 1b).

75 The structure of disorder sites in crystal
76 1•0.4CH₃CN is summarized in Fig. 2. iBA⁺ is
77 disordered at four sites and two sites are
78 crystallographically independent. The sites with iBA⁺
79 occupancies of 0.396(9) and 0.104(9) at 200 K are
80 denoted as **A** and **B**, respectively, and the sites
81 crystallographically equivalent to **A** and **B** are **A'** and **B'**,
82 respectively (Fig. 2b). As shown in Fig. 2c, the CH₃CN
83 molecule is arranged across the crystallographic mirror
84 plane, so that the composition of CH₃CN per crystal
85 composition is about 0.4. The nearest-neighbor
86 carbon...carbon atomic distance between the CH₃CN
87 and iBA⁺ at the **B** or **B'** sites is 2.39(6) Å, indicating

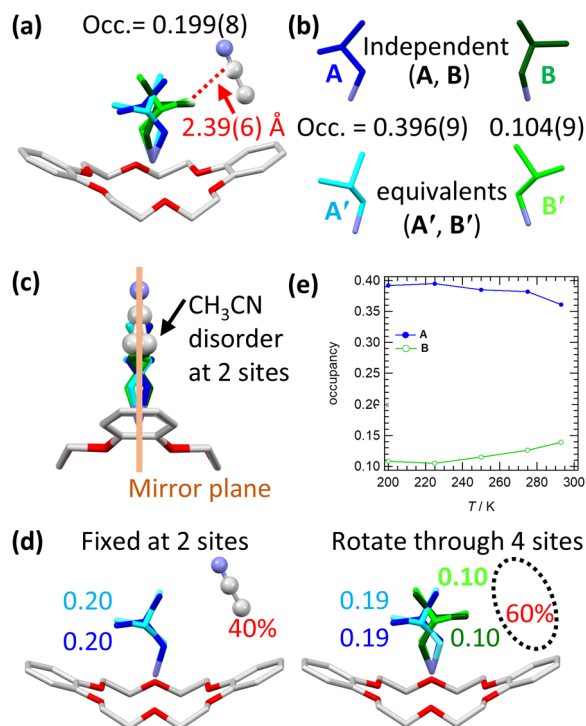


Fig. 2. Disorder sites in **1•0.4CH₃CN** at 200 K.

(a) Structure of supramolecular cation and nearest CH₃CN. Red dotted line corresponds to the nearest C...C distance between CH₃CN and B site of iBA⁺. (b) Disordered sites of iBA⁺ and their occupancy. (c) Supramolecular cation and the nearest CH₃CN viewed along the c axis. CH₃CN showed two-site disordering due to the mirror plane. (d) Structure of disordered sites with and without CH₃CN. Almost 40% of iBA⁺ are fixed at A and A' sites due to the steric hindrance (left), while 60% of iBA⁺ disordered through 4 sites (right). (e) Temperature dependence of occupancy for A and B sites of iBA⁺.

that the CH₃CN and iBA⁺ at the B and B' sites are approximately 1 Å closer than the sum of the vdW radii of the two carbon atoms, 3.4 Å (Fig. 2a). Therefore, due to steric hindrance between CH₃CN and B-site iBA⁺, CH₃CN and the B and B' sites of iBA⁺ cannot exist simultaneously. iBA⁺ adjacent to CH₃CN is always at the A or A' site. In the crystal, about 40% of the CH₃CN-assigned sites are occupied, while 60% are voids. The A and A' occupancies of iBA⁺ adjacent to CH₃CN are both about 0.2 (left in Fig. 2d). iBA⁺ adjacent to 60% vacant sites can also take B and B' sites (right in Fig. 2d). The occupancy of the B site is 0.106(9) at 200 K. The occupancy of the A next to the vacant site can be regarded as about 0.2. In other words, 40% of the iBA⁺ adjacent to CH₃CN is at the A site, and 40% of the 60% adjacent to the void site is at the A site. The remaining 20% is present at the B site to fill the missing hole of CH₃CN. Molecular

crystals containing crystalline solvent usually have difficulty in maintaining single crystallinity due to the rearrangement of the molecules as the crystalline solvent is desorbed. In crystal **1•0.4CH₃CN**, despite the presence of 60% solvent-free defect sites, the single-crystalline nature is maintained because iBA⁺ is disordered between the four sites and fills the space.

To evaluate the molecular volume occupied by disordered iBA⁺, the size of voids was compared for model crystals with CH₃CN removed, when iBA⁺ was present only at the A site and when iBA⁺ was disordered at all sites. Voids were calculated using Mercury software in contact surface mode with 1.2 Å of probe radius and 0.1 Å of grid spacing. In the case where iBA⁺ is present only at the A site of the crystal, the size of the void is 77.36 Å³ per crystal composition, corresponding to 7.6% of the unit cell. In contrast, the model with iBA⁺ disordered at four sites has 38.89 Å³ of voids per crystal composition, which corresponds to 3.8% of the unit cell. Disordered iBA⁺ occupies an extra space of about 40 Å³, which plays an important role in stabilizing defect sites. The 38.89 Å³ per crystal composition of the **1•0.4CH₃CN** crystal is within a reasonable range, given that several examples of molecular ionic crystals with voids of around 40-140 Å³ per crystal composition have been reported.^{16,17}

To evaluate the molecular motion of iBA⁺, single-crystal X-ray structure analysis of **1•0.4CH₃CN** was performed every 25 K from 200-293 K. The results of the occupancy of the A and B sites are summarized in Fig. 2e. The occupancy of CH₃CN is almost independent of temperature, with negligible desorption of CH₃CN from the crystals on the time scale of X-ray diffraction measurements in the temperature range up to 293 K (Fig. S3). The occupancy of the A and B sites was almost constant below 225 K, but the occupancy of the B site gradually increased above 225 K, reaching 0.139(5) at 293 K. Occupancy changes with increasing temperature above 225 K suggests that iBA⁺ is in motion at least above 225 K.

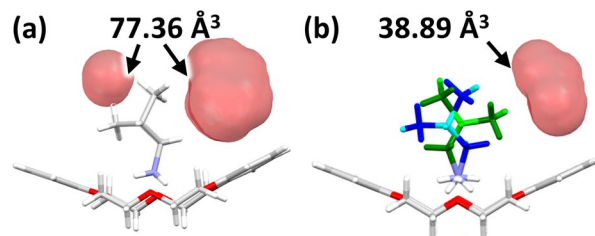


Fig. 3. Void space in model crystals with CH₃CN removed. (a) Supramolecular cation model with ordered iBA⁺. Void space is 77.36 Å³ / formula. (b) In the model with disordered iBA⁺ at four positions, the space is 38.89 Å³ / formula.

The molecular motion was also supported by temperature-dependent measurements of dielectric constant (Fig. S4). The real part of the dielectric constant (ϵ_1) sharply increased from around 230 K, which correspond to the temperature dependence of iBA⁺ occupancy. This result indicates that the molecules in the crystal are in motion above this temperature. It should be noted that ϵ_1 has peaks around 270 K, unlike the usual Debye-type relaxation. These peaks strongly suggest a relaxor-like dielectric behavior originating from nanometer-sized polarized domains within the crystal.^{11,18,19} Since the voids in the crystal are randomly distributed, Swiss cheese-like void domains should exist in the crystal. If the iBA⁺ cations in the domains move cooperatively, nano-sized polarized domains should form.

The temperature dependence of the molar magnetic susceptibility (χ_m) of **1**•0.4CH₃CN under a static magnetic field of 1 T was measured in the range from 1.8 K to 300 K (Fig. 4). The decrease in the value of $\chi_m T$ with decreasing temperature at low temperatures suggests the antiferromagnetic interactions between [Ni(dmit)₂][−]. Indeed, the temperature dependence of $\chi_m T$ followed the Curie-Weiss law with a Curie constant of 0.392(1) cm³ K mol^{−1} and a Weiss temperature of −4.96(9) K.

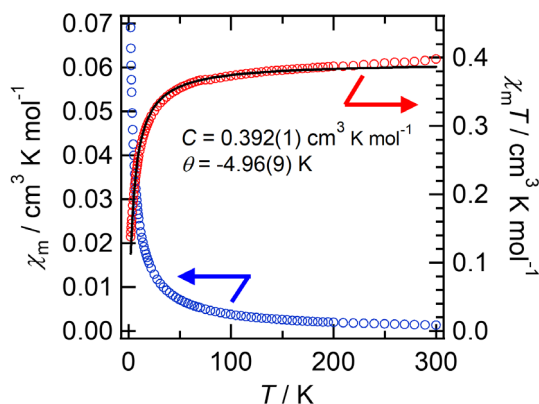


Fig. 4. Temperature dependence of the molar magnetic susceptibility of **1**•0.4CH₃CN, Blue and red circles and black line correspond to the experimental χ_m and $\chi_m T$ values and the best fitting described in the text. C and θ are the Curie constant and the Weiss temperature for fitting, respectively.

A supramolecular cation consisting of the branched-chain alkylammonium isobutylammonium⁺ (iBA⁺) and dibenzo[18]crown-6 was introduced into [Ni(dmit)₂][−] salt, and (iBA⁺)(dibenzo[18]crown-6)[Ni(dmit)₂][−]•0.4CH₃CN (**1**•0.4CH₃CN) was prepared. In crystal, 60% of the sites occupied by CH₃CN are voids; iBA⁺ with molecular motion occupies about 40 Å³ extra space per crystal composition compared to

that without molecular motion, thus preserving single-crystal nature. In most molecular crystals, void sites created by solvent desorption are the main cause of crystalline collapse. In crystal **1**•0.4CH₃CN, not only was the structure maintained by the motion of iBA⁺ cations adjacent to the voids, but also the polarization was reversed as a result of molecular motion. Furthermore, randomly distributed voids within the crystal formed Swiss cheese-like domains, and the cooperative motion of the iBA⁺ cations formed polarized nanodomains that exhibited a relaxor-like dielectric response. The active use of molecular motion in crystals with random voids provides a new perspective for the design of molecular dielectrics that exhibit relaxor responses.

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Supplementary data

Supplementary material is available at *Chemistry Letters*.

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Conflict of interest statement. None declared.

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Supporting Information for

Molecular Motion in Supramolecular Ionic Crystal of Swiss Cheese Structure

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§1. Experimental Section

Synthesis

All reagents purchased were used without further purification. Precursor of $(\text{TBA}^+)[\text{Ni}(\text{dmit})_2]^-$ (TBA^+ = tetra-*n*-butylammonium⁺) was prepared using a procedure reported in the literature.^{S1} A solution of $(\text{TBA}^+)[\text{Ni}(\text{dmit})_2]^-$ (40 mg, 0.0576 mmol) in CH_3CN (10 mL) was added to a solution of dibenzo[18]crown-6 (350 mg, 0.97 mmol) and isobutylammonium chloride (66 mg, 0.0602 mmol) in the mixture of CH_3OH (2 mL) and CH_3CN (20 mL). Crystal **1**•0.4 CH_3CN was obtained by slow diffusion over a period of 7-14 days.

Crystal structure determination

Temperature-dependent structural analysis of the single crystal **1**•0.4 CH_3CN was performed using a Rigaku XtaLAB-Synergy diffractometer with a HyPix-6000 area detector and multilayer mirror-monochromated Mo K α radiation ($\lambda = 0.71073 \text{ \AA}$). A single crystal was mounted on a MicroMountsTM tip (MiTeGen) with Paratone 8277 (Hampton Research). For the reflection data, multi-scan absorption corrections were applied to the crystal. Data collection was performed and processed using the CrysAlisPRO interface (Oxford Diffraction, Agilent Technologies UK Ltd). The initial structure was solved using SHELXT,^{S2} and structural refinement was performed using

OLEX2 software.^{S3} Anisotropic refinement was applied to all atoms, except for the hydrogen atoms. Crystallographic data was deposited at Cambridge Structural Database Center with CCDC deposition numbers 2392008, 2392009, 2392010, 2392011, and 2392012 for crystal **1**•0.4CH₃CN at 200, 225, 250, 270, and 293 K, respectively.

Magnetic Properties

The temperature-dependent magnetic susceptibility for a polycrystalline sample of **1**•0.4CH₃CN was measured using a Quantum Design MPMS-3 SQUID magnetometer. Prior to sample measurement, the magnetic susceptibility of the sample holder (aluminum foil) was measured under identical conditions, then the susceptibility of the holder was subtracted from the gram susceptibility as the paramagnetic contribution. The diamagnetic contribution of the diamagnetic component in the sample was subtracted based on Pascals constant, $-5.124 \times 10^{-4} \text{ cm}^3 \text{ mol}^{-1}$.^{S4} A magnetic field of 1 T was applied for all temperature-dependent measurements. Molecular weight of 902.3 g mol⁻¹ (the molar susceptibility for one [Ni(dmit)₂]⁻ molecule) was used for calculation of the molar magnetic susceptibility of crystal **1**•0.4CH₃CN.

Thermal Analysis

Thermogravimetric-differential thermal analysis (TG-DTA) was conducted using a *Rigaku* Thermo Plus TG8120 with 10 K/min heating rate under nitrogen gas flow.

Dielectric Measurements

Temperature- and frequency-dependent dielectric constants were measured using an impedance analyzer 4294A (Agilent) using the four-probe AC impedance method at a frequency range of 10^2 – 10^5 Hz. The temperature was controlled using cryostats with temperature controller models 331 (Lake Shore Cryotronics Inc.). Electrical contacts were prepared using a gold paste to attach the 25 μm ϕ gold wires to the pelletized sample.

§2. Crystallographic Data

Table S1. Crystal data, data collection, and reduction parameters for crystal **1**•0.4CH₃CN.

Crystal	1 •0.4CH ₃ CN		
Temperature / K	200	225	250
Chemical formula, Formula Weight	C _{30.80} H _{37.19} N _{1.40} Ni O ₆ S ₁₀ , 902.26		
Crystal system, space group	Monoclinic, <i>P</i> 2 ₁ / <i>m</i>		
<i>a</i> , Å	8.5981(7)	8.6152(2)	8.6462(3)
<i>b</i> , Å	20.4774(17)	20.5252(6)	20.5807(8)
<i>c</i> , Å	11.5423(8)	11.5562(3)	11.5555(4)
<i>α</i> , deg	90	90	90
<i>β</i> , deg	93.495(7)	93.698(2)	93.522(3)
<i>γ</i> , deg	90	90	90
<i>V</i> , Å ³	2028.4(3)	2039.21(9)	2052.36(13)
<i>Z</i>	2		
<i>D</i> _{calc} , g·cm ⁻³	1.477	1.469	1.459
<i>μ</i> , (Mo <i>K</i> _α) cm ⁻¹	1.034	1.029	1.022
2 <i>θ</i> _{max} , deg	58.094	59.594	62.324
Reflections measured	17853	23152	42521
Independent reflections	4279	4301	42521
Reflections used	4279	4301	42521
<i>R</i> ₁ ^a	0.0614	0.0460	0.0639
<i>R</i> _w (<i>F</i> ²) ^b	0.1710	0.1263	0.1926
GOF	1.126	1.169	1.119
CCDC No.	2392008	2392009	2392010

Crystal	1•0.4CH ₃ CN	
Temperature / K	275	293
Chemical formula, Formula Weight	C _{30.80} H _{37.19} N _{1.40} Ni O ₆ S ₁₀ , 902.26	
Crystal system, space group	<i>Monoclinic, P2₁/m</i>	
<i>a</i> , Å	8.6595(3)	8.6787(3)
<i>b</i> , Å	20.5863(7)	20.6346(6)
<i>c</i> , Å	11.5513(3)	11.5615(3)
<i>α</i> , deg	90	90
<i>β</i> , deg	93.707(3)	93.755(3)
<i>γ</i> , deg	90	90
<i>V</i> , Å ³	2054.91(11)	2066.01(11)
<i>Z</i>	2	
<i>D_{calc}</i> , g·cm ⁻³	1.458	1.449
<i>μ</i> , (Mo <i>K_α</i>) cm ⁻¹	1.021	1.015
2 <i>θ</i> _{max} , deg	58.366	56.23
Reflections measured	23363	37571
Independent reflections	4332	4352
Reflections used	4332	4352
<i>R</i> ₁ ^a	0.0474	0.0355
<i>R</i> _w (<i>F</i> ²) ^b	0.1285	0.0994
GOF	1.162	1.033
CCDC No.	2392011	2392012

^a $R_1 = \sum ||F_o| - |F_c|| / \sum |F_o|$ and ^b $R_w = (\sum \omega(|F_o| - |F_c|)^2 / \sum \omega F_o^2)^{1/2}$.

§3. Crystallographically independent structure

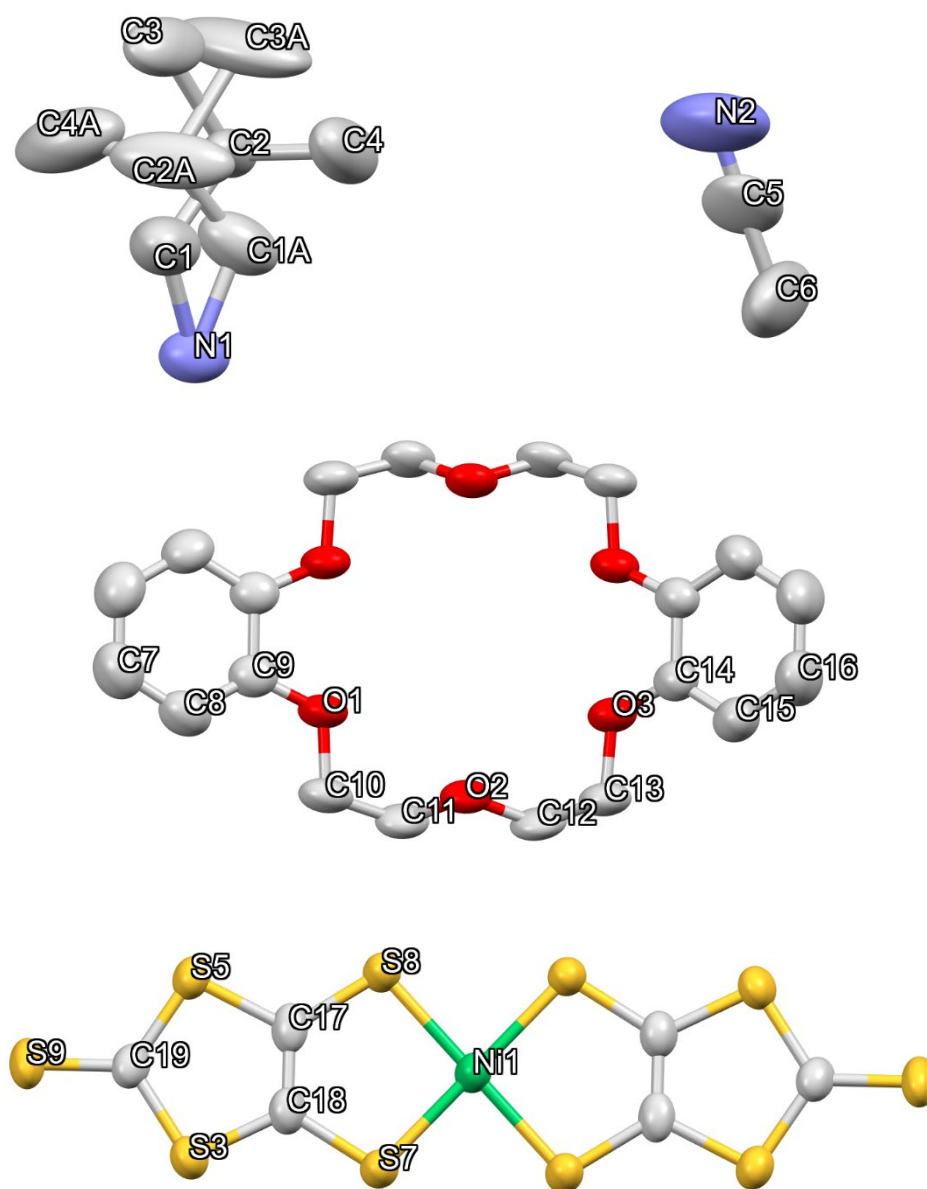


Fig. S1. Molecular structures in $1 \cdot 0.4\text{CH}_3\text{CN}$ with thermal ellipsoid model with 50% probability. Labeled atoms are crystallographically independent. Hydrogen atoms are omitted for clarity.

§4. Thermal Stability

To evaluate the thermal stability, thermogravimetry analysis was applied to the polycrystalline sample of $1 \cdot 0.4\text{CH}_3\text{CN}$ and summarized in **Fig. S2**.

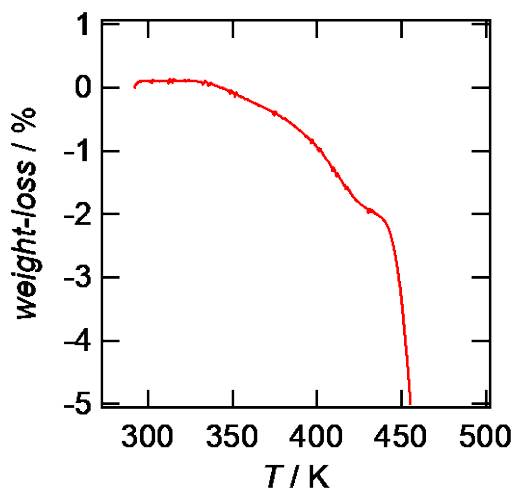


Fig. S2. Thermogravimetry of $1 \cdot 0.4\text{CH}_3\text{CN}$.

Crystal $1 \cdot 0.4\text{CH}_3\text{CN}$ was thermally stable below 340 K. Weight loss was observed above 340 K, reached to 1.9 wt% at 430 K, and decomposed above 430 K. Weight loss of 1.9 wt% correspond to the desorption of 0.4 molecules of CH_3CN per crystal composition of $1 \cdot 0.4\text{CH}_3\text{CN}$.

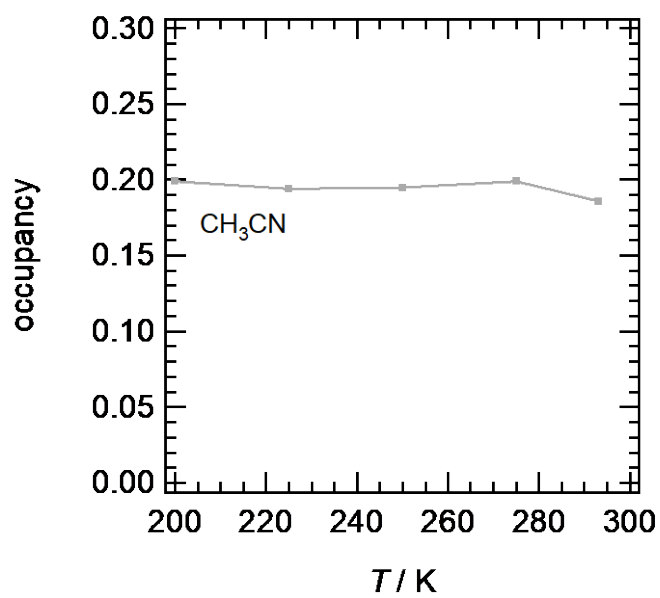


Fig. S3. Temperature dependence of occupancy of CH_3CN in crystal $\mathbf{1} \cdot 0.4\text{CH}_3\text{CN}$.

§5. Dielectric Property

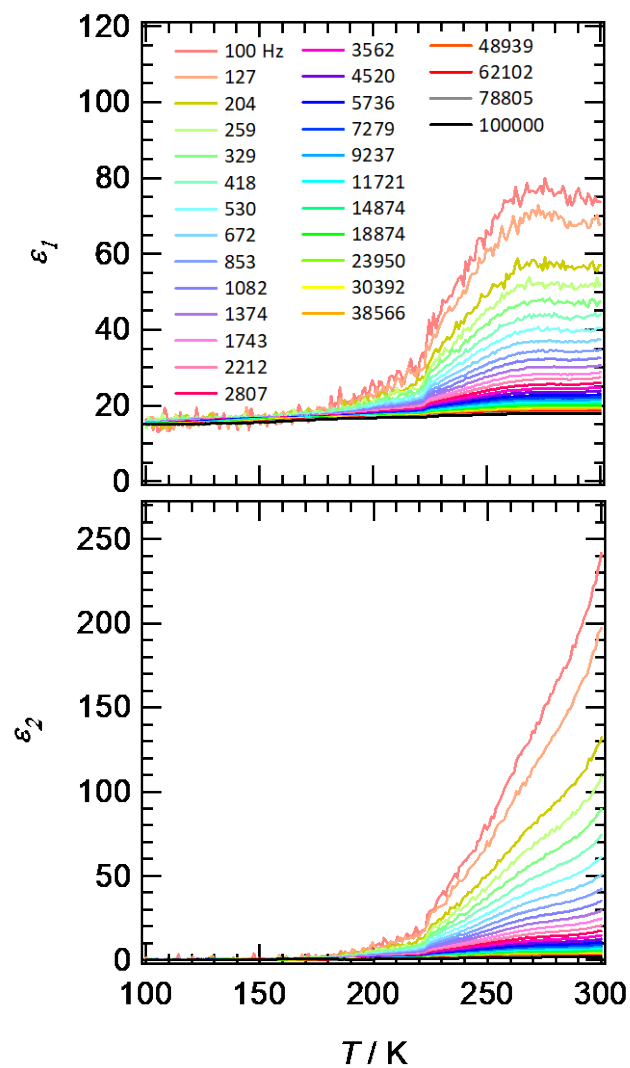


Fig. S4. Temperature- and frequency-dependent real and imaginary part of dielectric permittivity (ϵ_1 and ϵ_2 , respectively) of pelletized sample of **1**•0.4CH₃CN.

§6. Reference

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