

Variation of the superconducting transition temperature of hole-doped copper oxides

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(Received 7 October 2002; published 23 March 2004)

The experimentally observed difference of the superconducting critical temperature T_c of hole-doped cuprates is studied by using an extended interlayer coupling model for layered d -wave superconductors. We show that the change of the maximum T_c from series to series is determined by the next-nearest-neighbor hopping t' , while the difference of the maximum T_c among the compounds in a homogeneous series is controlled by the interlayer pairing strength. Our results also provide helpful guidelines in the search for new high- T_c superconductors.

DOI: 10.1103/PhysRevB.69.104518

PACS number(s): 74.62.-c, 74.72.-h

The nature of high-temperature superconductors is a challenging problem in condensed-matter physics. A common feature of copper-oxide superconductors is the presence of CuO_2 plane. It has been observed that the superconducting critical temperature T_c varies parabolically with the hole concentration n_H in CuO_2 plane with a maximum T_c^{max} at an optimal doping level.^{1,2} Furthermore, in the homogeneous series compounds $A_m B_2 \text{Ca}_{n-1} \text{Cu}_n \text{O}_{2n+y+\delta}$ ($A = \text{Bi, Tl, or Hg, B = Sr or Ba, } m = 2 \text{ or } 1, y = 4, 3, \text{ or } 2$), T_c^{max} initially increases with the number of CuO_2 layers (n) per unit cell, maximizes when $n = 3$, and then decreases with further increasing n ,³ as shown in Fig. 1. However, T_c^{max} attainable is different from series to series, e.g., 35 K in $\text{La}_{2-x}\text{Sr}_x\text{CuO}_4$ (Ref. 4) and 97 K in $\text{HgBa}_2\text{CuO}_{4+\delta}$.⁵ An obvious question is what is the crucial parameter that governs the T_c^{max} of each family.

Among various parameters proposed, the Madelung potential at the apical oxygen relative to that at the planar oxygens⁶ was found to correlate with T_c^{max} rather well, pointing to the primary importance of the apical oxygens for the electronic structure relevant to superconductivity. Further investigations^{7,8} revealed that the effect of the apical oxygens on high- T_c superconductivity in reality translates into a correlation between T_c^{max} and the next-nearest-neighbor hopping parameter t' in the t - t' - J model with t and J being the nearest-neighbor hopping parameter and antiferromagnetic interaction, respectively. In these approaches, t' was considered as a single parameter reflecting the main difference among various cuprates. If we consider the homologous series, the universality of such a correlation would be seriously questioned. For example, the bilayer and trilayer Tl_2 -based and Hg -based compounds have almost same t' (Ref. 8), but their T_c^{max} 's are significantly different.

Our goal in this work is to extract and identify which parameters govern the T_c behaviors in hole-doped cuprates. We apply an interlayer coupling model to CuO_2 layer systems and then calculate T_c based on the Bardeen-Cooper-Schrieffer (BCS) gap equation with d -wave symmetry. Our results suggest that the difference of T_c^{max} from family to family is the result of different next-nearest-neighbor hop-

ping t' , while the difference of T_c^{max} between the compounds in a homologous family is controlled by the interlayer coupling strength T_J .

The effective layered Hamiltonian we consider is

$$H = \sum_{lk\sigma} (\varepsilon_k - \mu) c_{k\sigma}^{\dagger l} c_{k\sigma}^l - \sum_{lkk'} V_{kk'} c_{k\uparrow}^{\dagger l} c_{-k\downarrow}^{\dagger l} c_{-k\downarrow}^l c_{k\uparrow}^l + \sum_{\langle ll' \rangle} \sum_k T_J(k) c_{k\uparrow}^{\dagger l} c_{-k\downarrow}^{\dagger l'} c_{-k\downarrow}^{l'} c_{k\uparrow}^l, \quad (1)$$

where ε_k is the quasiparticle dispersion, μ is the chemical potential, $c_{k\sigma}^{\dagger l}$ is a quasiparticle creation operator pertaining to the layer (l) with two-dimensional wave vector k and spin σ . The summation over ll' runs over the layer indices of the unit cell. The intralayer interaction $V_{kk'}$ is assumed to be independent of l . The interlayer tunneling is parametrized by $T_J(k) = T_J(\cos k_x - \cos k_y)$ ⁴ (Ref. 9).

We assume that the superconducting gap is characterized by the nonvanishing order parameter $b_k^l = \langle c_{k\uparrow}^l c_{-k\downarrow}^l \rangle$. Based on the BCS theory, the gap function Δ_k^l satisfies the following equation:

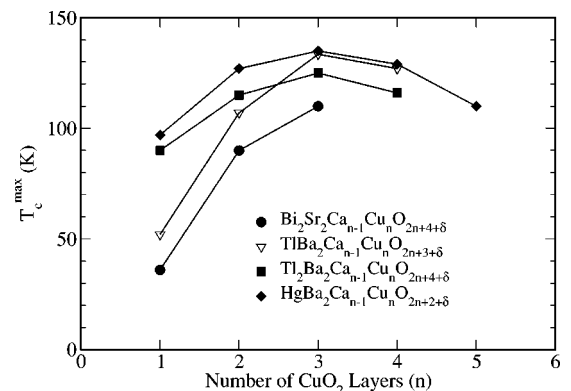


FIG. 1. Dependence of the critical temperature T_c^{max} at optimal doping as a function of the number of CuO_2 layers (n) of various homogeneous series.

$$\Delta_k^l = \sum_{k'} V_{kk'} b_{k'}^l + T_J(k)(b_k^{l+1} + b_k^{l-1}), \quad (2)$$

where $b_k^l = \Delta_k^l \chi_k^l$ and the generalized pair susceptibility is $\chi_k^l = (2E_k^l)^{-1} \tanh(\beta E_k^l/2)$ with the quasiparticle spectrum $E_k^l = \sqrt{(\varepsilon_k - \mu)^2 + |\Delta_k^l|^2}$.

The spatial dependence of the gap takes the form¹⁰ $\Delta_k^l = \Delta_k^\pm e^{\pm ial}$. Then the general solution of the homogeneous part is

$$\Delta_k^l = \Delta_k^+ e^{ial} + \Delta_k^- e^{-ial}. \quad (3)$$

Considering the fact that the gap vanishes on the layer ends $l=0$ and $n+1$, the natural boundary conditions for the gap are $\Delta_k^0 = \Delta_k^{n+1} \equiv 0$. The wave vector of the oscillating gap is then determined by

$$\begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 \\ e^{ial} & e^{-ial} \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} \Delta_k^+ \\ \Delta_k^- \end{pmatrix} = 0.$$

The vanishing determinant of the matrix provides a non-trivial solution only when $\alpha = \xi\pi/(n+1)$ with ξ being an integer. Thus we obtain $\Delta_k^+ = -\Delta_k^- \equiv \Delta_k$. The solution of spatial dependence of the gap is then given by

$$\Delta_k^l = 2i\Delta_k \sin\left(\frac{l\pi\xi}{n+1}\right). \quad (4)$$

The solution with the lowest energy is nodeless inside the n CuO₂ layers which leads to $\xi=1$ for the superconducting state. Thus, the spatial dependence of the gap has the form

$$\Delta_k^l = 2i\Delta_k \sin\left(\frac{l\pi}{n+1}\right). \quad (5)$$

Around critical temperature T_c , we can take χ_k^l in a simple form: $\chi_k^l \approx (2E_k^l)^{-1} \tanh(\beta E_k^l/2) \equiv \chi_k$ with $E_k = \sqrt{(\varepsilon_k - \mu)^2 + |\Delta_k|^2}$. In this case, Eq. (2) can be rewritten as

$$\Delta_k^l = \sum_{k'} V_{kk'} \chi_{k'} \Delta_{k'}^l + T_J(k)(\chi_k \Delta_k^{l+1} + \chi_k \Delta_k^{l-1}). \quad (6)$$

Substitution of Eq. (5) into Eq. (6) yields a simple Δ_k equation

$$\Delta_k - \sum_{k'} V_{kk'} \chi_{k'} \Delta_{k'} = f(n) T_J(k) \chi_k \Delta_k, \quad (7)$$

where $f(n) = 2 \cos[\pi/(n+1)]$.

To account for the experimental observed d -wave gap, we assume a d -wave pairing potential

$$V_{kk'} = Vg(k)g(k'), \quad g(k) = \cos k_x - \cos k_y. \quad (8)$$

The gap magnitude is thus $\Delta_k = \Delta_0 g(k)$ and the parameter Δ_0 is determined by the following self-consistent equation:

$$1 = \frac{1}{2N} \sum_k \frac{Vg^2(k) + f(n)T_J(k)}{E_k} \tanh\left(\frac{\beta E_k}{2}\right). \quad (9)$$

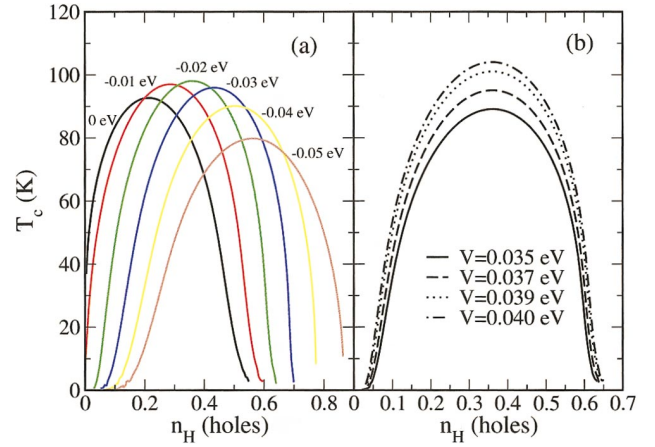


FIG. 2. (Color) The critical temperature T_c vs the hole concentration n_H for various next-nearest-neighbor hopping parameters t' with the interaction strength $V=0.038$ eV (a) and for various V with $t'=-0.02$ eV (b) in monolayer cuprates.

The value of T_c in layered d -wave superconductors is then obtained by solving Eq. (9) at $\Delta_0=0$.

In order to self-consistently calculate T_c for a given μ in conjunction with the equation determining n_H , we need an explicit form of ε_k . It has been established¹¹⁻¹⁵ that the quasiparticle excitation spectrum of cuprates can be well described by the t - t' - J model. Within the framework of the t - t' - J model, the dispersion ε_k is given by^{13,15}

$$\varepsilon_k = (J + 2t') \cos k_x \cos k_y + \frac{J}{4} (\cos 2k_x + \cos 2k_y). \quad (10)$$

For monolayer insulator La₂CuO₄, experiments¹⁶ and theoretical calculations¹⁷ give a $J=0.128$ eV. There are small variations of J among various Cu-O insulators¹⁸ but we expect a value of $J=0.128$ eV is a generally good representation for all Cu-O materials. Then one can determine T_c as a function of n_H based on Eqs. (9) and (10) once having knowledge of t' , V , or/and T_J .

First we consider the variation of T_c in monolayer ($n=1$) hole-doped cuprates. Figures 2(a) and 2(b) show the calculated T_c in monolayer superconductors as a function of n_H in some interested parameter range of t' and V . As shown, T_c initially increases with increasing n_H , takes a maximum around an optimal doping level n_H^{opt} , and then decreases with further increasing n_H . This parabolic relation between T_c and n_H agrees with general experimental observations in monolayer cuprates.^{1,2} We notice that T_c^{max} systematically changes with t' , but it monotonically increases with V , as one expects. The difference between these two parameters is that n_H^{opt} depends significantly on t' , while it scarcely changes for different values of V . These results indicate that the parameters controlling T_c^{max} would be either t' or V or both of them.

In Fig. 3 we plotted the t' dependence of both T_c^{max} and n_H^{opt} for monolayer cuprates. As t' increases, T_c^{max} increases and then decreases through a maximum for all V studied. Note that the enhancement of T_c^{max} from 25 to 100 K occurs

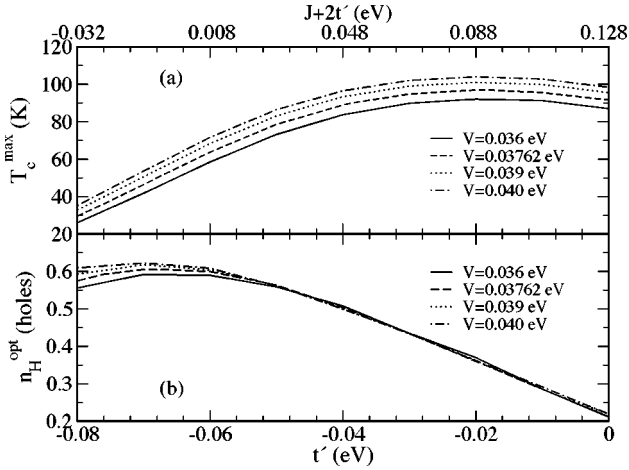


FIG. 3. The calculated maximum critical temperature T_c^{max} (a) and the optimal hole concentration n_H^{opt} (b) as a function of the next-nearest-neighbor hopping parameter t' (or $J+2t'$) for various interaction strengths V in monolayer cuprates.

over a rather wide parameter space. Such a huge enhancement completely covers the variation of T_c^{max} among the monolayer high- T_c superconductors. The occurrence of the maximum implies that the enhancement of T_c^{max} due to the increase in t' is limited. Since $J+2t'$ is the coefficient of the $\cos k_x \cos k_y$ term in Eq. (10), the effect of $J+2t'$ on T_c^{max} is obviously the same as that of t' . That means that T_c^{max} increases with increasing the coefficient of the $\cos k_x \cos k_y$ term in quasiparticle dispersion, saturates, and then decreases with the further increase of this coefficient. This nonmonotonic T_c^{max} dependence is consistent with those reported previously within the framework of the tight-binding approximation.^{19,20} We also notice that n_H^{opt} behaves in a similar manner with t' as T_c^{max} . For $J+2t' > 0$, n_H^{opt} decreases with increasing t' . Although T_c^{max} depends on V , n_H^{opt} is nearly independent of V over a wide range of t' .

To trace the clue to the change of T_c^{max} among monolayer cuprates, we list in Table I the experimental results of T_c^{max} (Refs. 2, 4, 5, 21, and 22) the distance $d_{Cu-O(a)}$ between the copper and apical oxygen atoms, and the distance $d_{Cu-O(p)}$ between the copper and in-plane oxygen atoms taken from the works in Refs. 5 and 6, the calculated values of bond

valence sums (BVS) of copper V_{Cu} and the difference in the Madelung site potential for a hole between the copper and the in-plane oxygen ΔV_M . To get effective BVS of copper, we follow the method proposed by Brown.²³ The results of ΔV_M based on the structural data are taken from the works in Refs. 6 and 24. Here we observe one important experimental fact: T_c^{max} increases systematically with enlarging $d_{Cu-O(a)}$. Band-structure calculations⁸ revealed that t' increases with $d_{Cu-O(a)}$ for the monolayer cuprates reported so far. Thus the increase of T_c^{max} with increasing t' should capture the basic physics of the monolayer cuprates.

It has been proposed^{25,26} that V_{Cu} and ΔV_M are two essential factors governing T_c and represent an essentially equivalent physical content. Materials with larger T_c^{max} tend to have a smaller V_{Cu} (Ref. 25) or ΔV_M (Ref. 26). Since the variation of V_{Cu} or ΔV_M reflects the corresponding change of n_H (Refs. 26–28) the increase of the calculated T_c^{max} with decreasing n_H^{opt} for a wide t' range is obviously consistent with the experimental data shown in Table I. This n_H^{opt} dependence of T_c^{max} is also consistent with the muon spin resonance measurements.²⁹ On the other hand, the fact that the change of T_c^{max} with V is almost independent of n_H^{opt} [Fig. 3(b)] rules out the possibility of V being a dominant factor in governing the change in T_c^{max} . The present results lead us to conclude that the increase of T_c^{max} with $d_{Cu-O(a)}$ among the monolayer cuprates is a result of the increase in t' . One prediction is that T_c^{max} decreases with further increasing t' after a saturation. Thus, materials with a relatively long $d_{Cu-O(a)}$ bond length would not always expect to have a high T_c^{max} .

The values of t' were determined in a self-consistent way as follows. From Fig. 3(a) we learned that there exists a maximum for a given V . Among the monolayer cuprates discovered so far, $HgBa_2CuO_{4+\delta}$ possesses the highest T_c^{max} of 97 K. Assuming this is the highest value in all monolayer cuprates, we derived a value of $V=0.03762$ eV from curves of T_c^{max} versus t' . Equation (9) yields $t' = -0.0183$ eV for the optimally doped $HgBa_2CuO_{4+\delta}$. For other optimally doped monolayer compounds with $T_c^{max} < 97$ K, t' should be smaller than -0.0183 eV because of their shorter $d_{Cu-O(a)}$. The relative t' is then obtained by using the experimentally observed T_c^{max} .

TABLE I. Summary of the experimental results of the critical temperature T_c^{max} at optimal doping, the distance $d_{Cu-O(a)}$ between the copper and apical oxygen atoms, the distance $d_{Cu-O(p)}$ between the copper and in-plane oxygen atoms, and the calculated values of the bond valence sums of copper V_{Cu} and the difference in the Madelung site potentials ΔV_M for a hole between the in-plane oxygen and copper atoms in some typical monolayer cuprates.

| Cuprates | T_c^{max} (K) | $d_{Cu-O(a)}$ (Å) | $d_{Cu-O(p)}$ (Å) | V_{Cu} | ΔV_M (eV) |
|--|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|
| $La_{1.85}Sr_{0.15}CuO_4$ | 35 | 2.4124 | 1.8896 | 2.539 | 49.620 |
| $Bi_2Sr_{1.61}La_{0.39}CuO_{6+\delta}$ | 36 | 2.461 | 1.901 | 2.437 | 48.437 |
| $TlBa_{1.2}La_{1.8}CuO_5$ | 52 | 2.500 | 1.9240 | 2.280 | 48.409 |
| $Tl_2Ba_2CuO_6$ | 90 | 2.714 | 1.9330 | 2.135 | 47.081 |
| $HgBa_2CuO_{4+\delta}$ | 97 | 2.780 | 1.9375 | 2.091 | 46.81 |

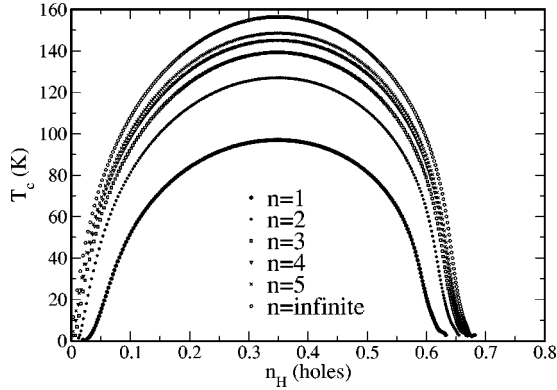


FIG. 4. The calculated critical temperature T_c vs the hole concentration n_H in $\text{HgBa}_2\text{Ca}_{n-1}\text{Cu}_n\text{O}_{2n+2+\delta}$ as a function of the number of CuO_2 layers.

Next we consider n , the number of CuO_2 layers, dependence of T_c^{max} in the layered homogeneous series. In general, T_c^{max} initially increases with n , maximizes at $n=3$, and then decreases with further increasing n .³ To calculate T_c for multilayers, we use the same dispersion ε_k and V as obtained from the monolayer. The interlayer tunneling strength T_J is determined by using the experimental values of T_c^{max} for monolayer and bilayer compounds in the same homogeneous series. As an example, in Fig. 4, we show curves of calculated T_c versus n_H as a function of layer number n in the Hg-based series. The theoretical curves exhibit the generic parabolic behavior. Previously, the relation between T_c and n_H has been well established for the monolayer, bilayer, and trilayer Hg-based superconductors.³⁰ Compared to the available experimental data, the agreement is excellent.

The calculated T_c^{max} in four typical homogeneous series are summarized in Table II. The experimental results are also listed for comparison. As can be seen, T_c^{max} initially increases with increasing n and then saturates as $n \rightarrow \infty$. This behavior is in good agreement with those obtained from both the interlayer mechanism^{10,31} and Ginzburg-Landau theory.^{32,33} The upper limit of T_c^{max} for infinite layer compound is in the range of 139.4–164.6 K. The highest T_c^{max} of 164.6 K is found in the Tl-based series. Our results for $n=3$ agree with experiments very well. The predictions made here for T_c^{max} of the trilayer compound are the best ones compared to previous theories.^{10,31–33}

The present study shows that interlayer coupling is the driving force for the enhancement of T_c^{max} for multilayer

systems. This does not conflict with the experimental fact that T_c^{max} decreases as $n \geq 3$. In fact, there exist fivefold (outer) and fourfold CuO_2 (inner) planes surrounded by pyramidal and square oxygens in the multilayer system. Investigations carried out by different experimental techniques and model calculations^{28,34–36} showed that the distribution of charge carriers is nonhomogeneous among the CuO_2 sheets and the hole concentration in the outer CuO_2 plane is larger than that in the inner CuO_2 plane. BVS analyses²⁸ and NMR studies³⁶ on the Hg-based series revealed that the highest T_c^{max} corresponds to the smallest difference in n_H between two types of CuO_2 planes. When the number of CuO_2 layer is larger than three, the reduction of T_c^{max} comes from the large difference in n_H between the outer and inner CuO_2 planes. For compounds with more than three CuO_2 planes, the enhancement of T_c^{max} seems possible at ambient pressure if one can adequately dope the inner planes.

Finally, we would like to comment on the possibility of applying Eq. (10) to the high- T_c superconducting oxides. Angle-resolved photoemission (ARPES) experiments³⁷ reveal that there exists a flat region near $(\pi, 0)$ in many high- T_c compounds. Such an extended region of flat CuO_2 -derived bands seems a universal property of the hole-doped cuprates. The hole dispersion relation of Eq. (10) derived from the t - t' - J model reproduces well the flat bands similar to those observed in ARPES experiments.³⁷ Dagotto and his co-workers¹² have shown that the effect of strong correlations can quantitatively account for such flat bands. It has been found^{12,38} that the sign, doping, and temperature dependence of the Hall coefficient, thermopower, specific heat, magnetic susceptibility is in excellent quantitative agreement with experiments when the dispersion obtained from the t - t' - J model is used. Furthermore, the momentum-dependent spectrum as a function of hole concentration has been calculated based on the t - t' - t'' - J model by using both the exact diagonalization and Monte Carlo method.^{14,15} The calculated results explain the experimental data of ARPES for hole doped $\text{Bi}_2\text{Sr}_2\text{CaCu}_2\text{O}_{8+\delta}$ from underdoped to overdoped regime. The results indicate that once the flat region around $(\pi, 0)$ has already formed, it remains almost unchanged upon additional doping. This means that the electronic structure is essentially the same in a high- T_c material with different doping level. Therefore, the dispersion relation of Eq. (10) is essential in describing the low-energy physics of high-temperature superconductors.

In summary, we have investigated the observed T_c variation in hole-doped cuprates on the basis of an extended in-

TABLE II. The critical temperature T_c^{max} and the ratio of T_J/V in homogeneous copper-oxide series at optimal doping. The brackets are the experimental data taken from the works of Refs. 2–6, 21, 22, 28, and 33.

| n | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | ∞ | T_J/V |
|--|---------|-----------|---------------|-------------|-------------|----------|---------|
| $\text{Bi}_2\text{Sr}_2\text{Ca}_{n-1}\text{Cu}_n\text{O}_{2n+4+\delta}$ | 36 (36) | 90 (90) | 115.5 (110) | 127.8 | 134.7 | 150.7 | 0.1945 |
| $\text{TlBa}_2\text{Ca}_{n-1}\text{Cu}_n\text{O}_{2n+3+\delta}$ | 52 (52) | 107 (107) | 131.3 (133.5) | 143.0 (127) | 149.5 | 164.6 | 0.1930 |
| $\text{Tl}_2\text{Ba}_2\text{Ca}_{n-1}\text{Cu}_n\text{O}_{2n+4+\delta}$ | 90 (90) | 115 (115) | 125.2 (125) | 130.1 (116) | 132.9 | 139.4 | 0.0906 |
| $\text{HgBa}_2\text{Ca}_{n-1}\text{Cu}_n\text{O}_{2n+2+\delta}$ | 97 (97) | 127 (127) | 139.2 (135) | 145.2 (129) | 148.6 (110) | 156.4 | 0.1135 |

terlayer coupling model. We demonstrate that the next-nearest-neighboring hopping t' dominates the variation of the maximum T_c from series to series and the interlayer coupling strength controls the difference of the maximum T_c among the compounds in a layered homogeneous series. These results also provide helpful guidelines in the search for new high- T_c superconductors.

The authors are grateful to O. K. Andersen, H.-U. Habermeier, R. J. Hemley, H. K. Mao, J. S. Schilling, V. V. Struzhkin, and W. G. Yin for many helpful discussions. X.J.C. would like to acknowledge the U.S. Department of Energy awards DEFG02-02ER4595 and DEFC03-03NA00144. This work was supported in part by the Earmarked Grant for Research of Project No. CUHK 4037/02P.

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