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# **Design and Fabrication of a C-band Dielectric Resonator Antenna with Novel Temperature Stable $\text{Ce}(\text{Nb}_{1-x}\text{V}_x)\text{NbO}_4$ ( $x = 0 - 0.4$ ) Microwave Ceramics**

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**Abstract:** Vanadium (V)-substituted cerium niobate ( $\text{Ce}(\text{Nb}_{1-x}\text{V}_x)\text{O}_4$ : CNV<sub>x</sub>) ceramics were prepared to explore their structure-microwave property relations and application in C-band dielectric resonator antennas (DRAs). X-ray diffraction and Raman spectroscopy revealed CNV<sub>x</sub> ( $0.0 \leq x \leq 0.4$ ) ceramics exhibited a ferroelastic phase transition at critical content of V ( $x_c = 0.3$ ) from a monoclinic fergusonite to a tetragonal scheelite structure ( $T_{\text{F-S}}$ ) which decreased in temperature as a function of x according to thermal expansion analysis. Optimum microwave dielectric performance was obtained for CNV0.3 with permittivity ( $\epsilon_r$ )  $\sim 16.81$ , microwave quality factor ( $Qf$ )  $\sim 41,300$  GHz (at  $\sim 8.7$  GHz), and temperature coefficient of the resonant frequency, TCF  $\sim -3.5$  ppm/ $^\circ\text{C}$ .  $\epsilon_r$  is dominated by Ce-O phonon absorption in the microwave band;  $Qf$  is mainly determined by porosity, grain size and the proximity of  $T_{\text{F-S}}$ , and TCF is controlled by the structural distortions associated with  $T_{\text{F-S}}$ . THz (0.20 - 2.00 THz,  $\epsilon_r \sim 12.52 \pm 0.70$ ,  $\tan\delta \sim 0.39 \pm 0.17$ ) and infrared measurements are consistent, demonstrating that CNV<sub>x</sub> ( $0.0 \leq x \leq 0.4$ ) ceramics are effective in the sub-millimeter as well as MW regime. A cylindrical DRA prototype antenna fabricated from CNV0.3 resonated at 7.02 GHz ( $|S_{11}| = -28.8$  dB), matching simulations, with  $> 90\%$  radiation efficiency and 3.34 - 5.93 dB gain.

**Keywords:** microwave dielectric ceramics,  $\text{CeNbO}_4$ , phase transition, thermally stable, C-band dielectric resonator antenna

## Introduction

C-band (4 - 8 GHz) antennas are used in satellite communications, point to point wireless, search & track radars and fire control & imaging radars. Modern wireless

technology present new demands and challenges for antennas, necessitating high data transmission rates, high reliability and quality of transmission link to facilitate the development and improvement of Multiple-Input-Multiple-Output (MIMO) systems.<sup>1-</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Dielectric Resonators Antennas (DRAs) are distinguished by their inherent advantages of low profile, low loss, high radiation efficiency, low metal loss, and omnidirectional response.<sup>3-5</sup> Microwave dielectric ceramics modulate antenna performance through optimization of 3 selective parameters: permittivity ( $\epsilon_r$ ), quality factor ( $Qf$ ), and temperature coefficient of resonant frequency (TCF) which regulate the size and transmission speed, transmission loss and frequency selectivity and operating temperature stability, respectively.<sup>6-8</sup>

Rare earth niobate ( $\text{RENbO}_4$ , RE = La to Lu, Y) show promise for various applications due to their unique crystal chemistry.<sup>9-11</sup>  $\text{RENbO}_4$  compounds undergo a ferroelastic phase transition (monoclinic fergusonite-type  $\rightarrow$  tetragonal scheelite-type,  $T_{F-S}$ ), accompanied by a distortion from  $[\text{NbO}_6]$  to  $[\text{NbO}_4]$  polyhedral coordination. The distortion is not only controlled by the RE ion radius ( $\text{Bi}^{3+}$  also substitutes on the A-site) but is also affected by the B-site ion radius of pentavalent substituents such as V, Sb and Ta, in a manner analogous to  $\text{BiVO}_4$ <sup>8, 11-20</sup>, Figure 1. Most importantly, the structural distortion of the Nb-polyhedra associated with  $T_{F-S}$  is instrumental in controlling the dielectric properties of  $\text{RENbO}_4$  compounds.<sup>11</sup> TCF may therefore be regulated by substitution of Nb with V ions in the  $\text{RENbO}_4$  systems, approaching zero in the phase transition region, where  $T_{F-S}$  is close to room temperature.<sup>11, 17, 21-22</sup>

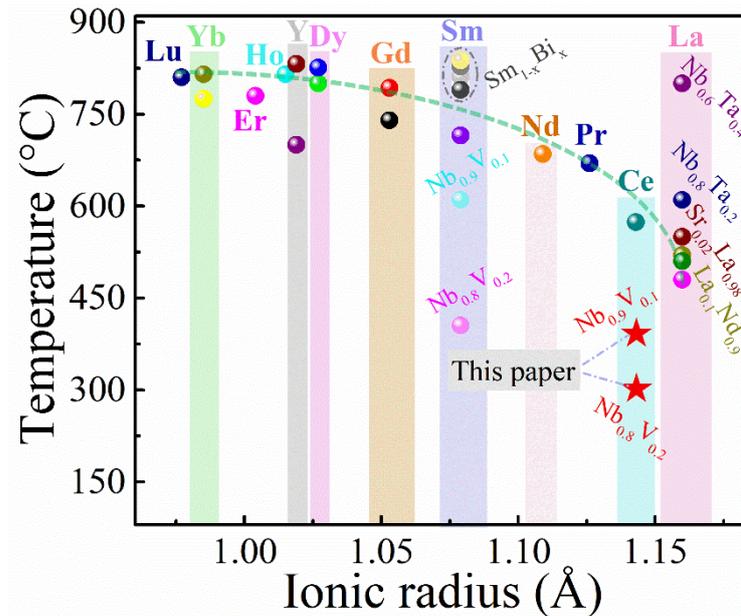


Figure 1 The onset temperature of the transition to the tetragonal scheelite phase in the rare-earth niobates as a function of the radius of the rare-earth ion.<sup>8, 11, 13-14, 17, 19-20, 23-27</sup>

Cerium niobite (CeNbO<sub>4</sub>: CN) is an important member of the RENbO<sub>4</sub> family due to its potential for use in solid oxide fuel cells (SOFCs)<sup>24</sup> and many studies report RE and V substitution on the Ce- and Nb-sites, respectively.<sup>28-29</sup> However, there are fewer studies which report their MW properties. Kim et al<sup>11</sup> presented data for most members of the RENbO<sub>4</sub> family but omitted CeNbO<sub>4</sub>. Subsequently, Zhang et al<sup>30</sup> reported CeNbO<sub>4</sub> to have  $\epsilon_r \sim 20.00$  and  $Qf \sim 13,000$  GHz at MW frequencies but did not mention TCF nor did they describe the underpinning mechanisms that control MW properties.

Our previous study revealed that the crystal structure and T<sub>F-S</sub> in the RENbO<sub>4</sub> (RE = La and Sm) system<sup>17, 21</sup> is controlled by the B-site substitution with V<sup>5+</sup> ions, which optimize the microwave dielectric properties such that they are ideally suited for MW applications. The crystal structure, microstructures, thermal properties, and microwave dielectric properties of the Ce(Nb<sub>1-x</sub>V<sub>x</sub>)O<sub>4</sub> (CNV<sub>x</sub>) (x = 0 - 0.4) ceramics are therefore

investigated in this work with a view to optimizing their use in the design and fabrication of a C-band dielectric resonator antenna (DRA) for MIMO. The antenna is fabricated using CNV0.3 ( $\epsilon_{DR} = 16.81$ ), mounted on a Rogers RT5880 polymer board ( $\epsilon_{r,sub} = 2.20$ ;  $\tan\delta = 0.0009$ )<sup>2,31-33</sup> for potential use in point to point wireless (5.925 - 8.5 GHz)<sup>34</sup> and C-band radar applications.

## Results and discussions

Figure 2 displays the XRD patterns and crystal structures of CNV<sub>x</sub> ( $x = 0 - 0.4$ ) ceramics at optimum sintering temperature. At room temperature, compositions with  $0 \leq x \leq 0.25$  have the monoclinic fergusonite structure (12/c, JCPDS # 83-1912) but transform at critical content of V ( $x_c = 0.3$ ) to a tetragonal scheelite structure (14<sub>1</sub>/a, JCPDS # 79-2240), as evidenced by the merging of the diffraction peaks (-121) and (031) (Figure 2a), in agreement with Aldred et al.'s work.<sup>35</sup> V<sup>5+</sup> substitution for Nb<sup>5+</sup> generally stabilizes the high-temperature tetragonal scheelite phase of RENbO<sub>4</sub> at room temperature<sup>35-36</sup> as shown in Figure S1 (Supporting Information) with the extent of stabilization a function of the RE ion radius<sup>17, 21, 35</sup>.

Rietveld refinements of CN and CNV0.3 are displayed in Figure 2(c, d) with crystallographic structural parameters provided in Table S1 and S2 (Supporting Information), respectively. The results for CNV<sub>x</sub> ( $x = 0.1, 0.2, \text{ and } 0.25$ ) are presented in Figure S2 (Supporting Information) and Table S1 and S2. As  $x$  increases, the monoclinic  $\beta$  angle decreases from 94.58° to 90° for  $x \geq 0.3$  (Figure 2b), where the tetragonal structure is stable at room temperature. Following standard crystallographic

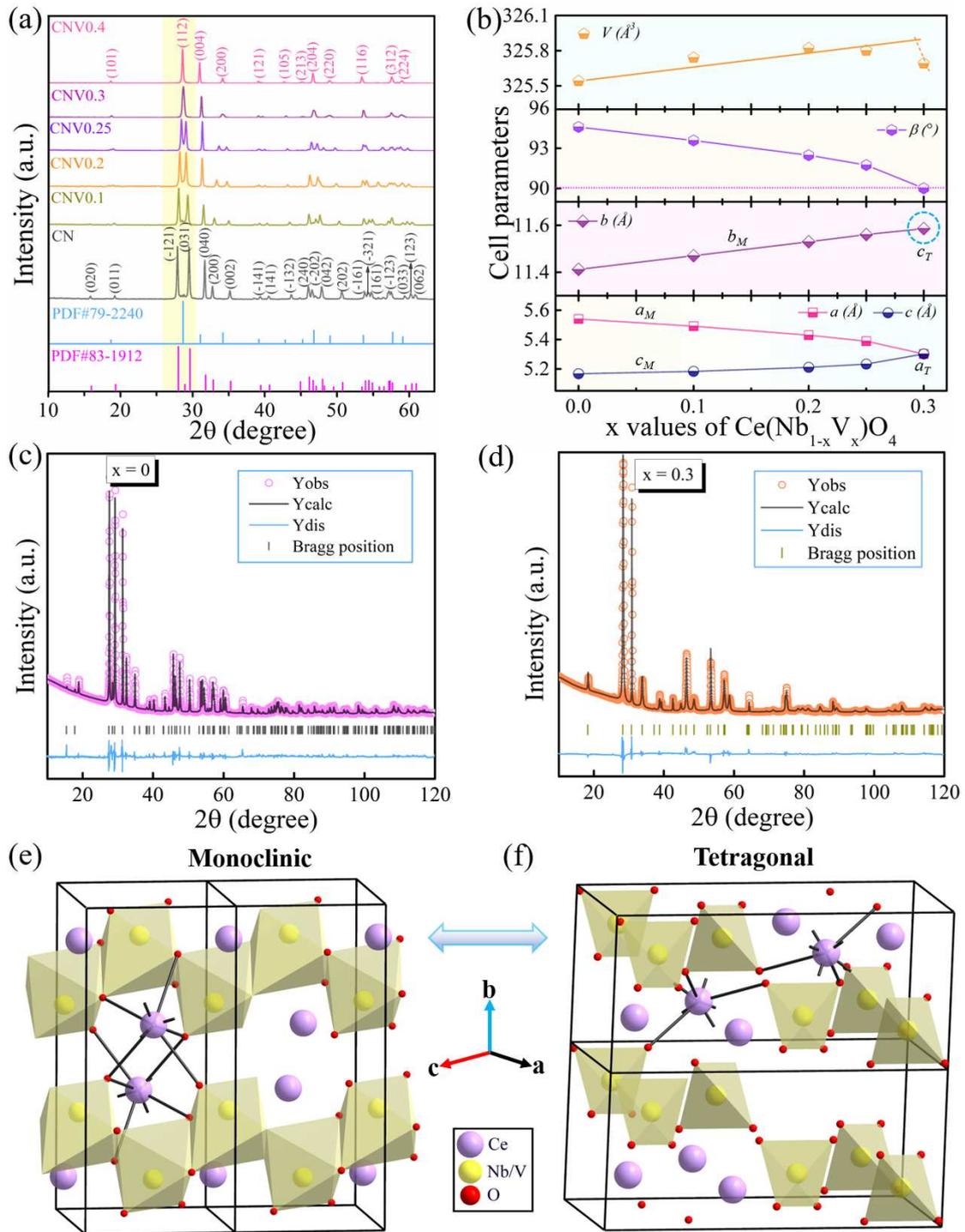


Figure 2 (a) X-ray diffraction patterns of the  $\text{Ce}(\text{Nb}_{1-x}\text{V}_x)\text{O}_4$  ( $x = 0 - 0.4$ ) ceramics. (b) Lattice constants as a function of  $x$  values. (c, d) Rietveld refinement plot of  $\text{Ce}(\text{Nb}_{1-x}\text{V}_x)\text{O}_4$  ( $x = 0, 0.3$ ) ceramics. (e, f) Schematic of crystal structure for  $\text{Ce}(\text{Nb}_{1-x}\text{V}_x)\text{O}_4$  ( $x = 0, 0.3$ ) ceramics.

conventions, the unit-cell dimensions  $a_m$  and  $c_m$  parameters of the monoclinic ( $m$ ) cell become  $b_t$  and  $a_t$  in the tetragonal ( $t$ ) structure with  $b_m \equiv c_t$ . Both  $c_m$  and  $b_m$  increased continuously before transformation to tetragonal, suggesting that the transition is

second order and accomplished through internal shear parallel to the z-axis as x increases<sup>13</sup>. The strain parameters, ( $e_1-e_2$ ) and  $e_6$  and the monoclinic angle  $\beta$  respectively, Figure S3 (Supporting Information), approach zero at the same value of x ( $x_c = 0.3$ ). Surprisingly however, substitution of a smaller  $V^{5+}$  ( $r = 0.54 \text{ \AA}$ , CN = 6) for a larger  $Nb^{5+}$  ( $r = 0.64 \text{ \AA}$ , CN = 6)<sup>12</sup> ion leads to an increase rather than a decrease in the unit cell volume, principally due to the increase in the long axis ( $b_m/c_t$ ).<sup>35</sup> The fergusonite lattice exhibits layers of edge-sharing octahedra  $[NbO_6]$ , with the Ce ions, shown as spheres, dodecahedral in an eight-coordinate environment (Figure 2e). In contrast, the scheelite lattice consists of isolated  $[NbO_4]$  tetrahedra with the  $[SmO_8]$  units housed in chains of O ions shared with  $[NbO_4]$  (Figure 2f).

Evidence of the phase transition is also demonstrated by Raman spectroscopy in Figure S4 (Supporting Information). There are 18 ( $8A_g + 10B_g$ ) (space group I2/a) and 15 Raman modes ( $3A_g + 5B_g + 5E_g$ ) for the fergusonite scheelite structure (space group I4<sub>1</sub>/a), respectively, predicted by Group theory.<sup>37-40</sup> The Raman modes of CNVx ( $x < 0.3$ ) in fergusonite phase remain largely unchanged as a function of x, with only the  $A_g$  band at 801.3 and 321.5  $cm^{-1}$  (stretching vibration of Nb-O bond), showing an increase in full width half maximum (FWHMs), attributed to the substitution of  $V^{5+}$  for  $Nb^{5+}$  which affects the rigidity of  $[NbO_6]$  polyhedra. The Raman spectra of CNVx ( $x \geq 0.3$ ) ceramics correspond well with those reported,<sup>41</sup> confirming a tetragonal scheelite structure, consistent with XRD data.

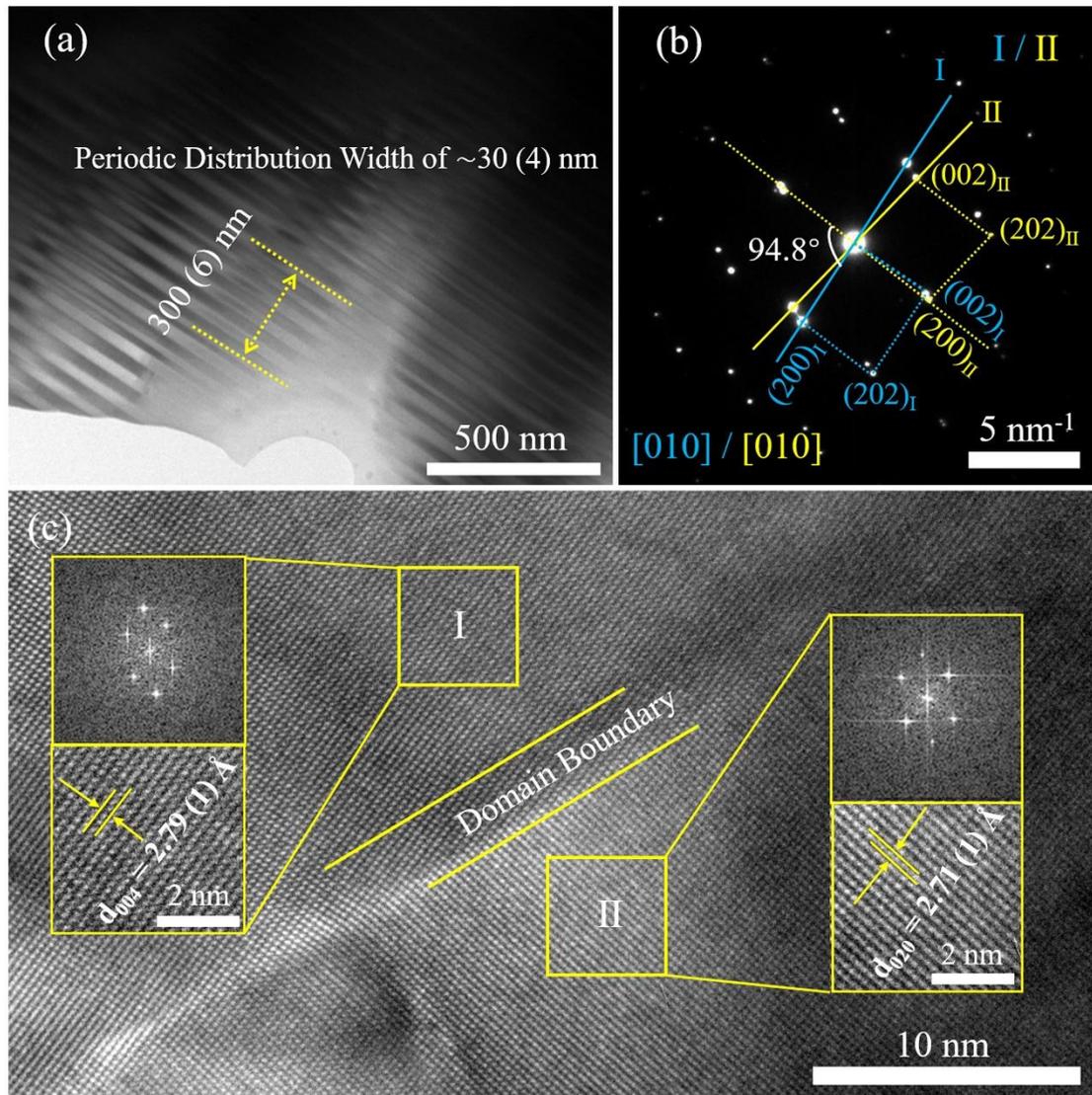


Figure 3. The HRTEM images of CeNbO<sub>4</sub> ceramic. (a) A section showing the parallel domains. (b) SAED patterns correspond to CeNbO<sub>4</sub> ceramic. (c) Magnified HRTEM image of the domain section.

Figure 3 shows room temperature TEM images of an undoped CN ceramic. Domains (30(4) nm) with a periodic distribution (Figure 3a) and lattice fringes (Figure 3c) are observed in the images, respectively. The domains arise due to the second-order ferroelastic phase transition from the scheelite (4/m) to fergusonite (2/m) structure. Alternate domains are described by different orientations (I and II) in the monoclinic fergusonite phase<sup>8, 17, 42-46</sup>, as illustrated in the adjacent [010]<sub>m</sub> selected area electron diffraction pattern, Figure 3b. Each alternate domain has a 94.8° rotation, equivalent to the monoclinic  $\beta$  angle. The lattice fringes of the HRTEM images of the domains,

Figure 3c, were determined as 2.79(1) Å and 2.71(1) Å for zone I (004) and zone II (020) plane, respectively, consistent with XRD data.

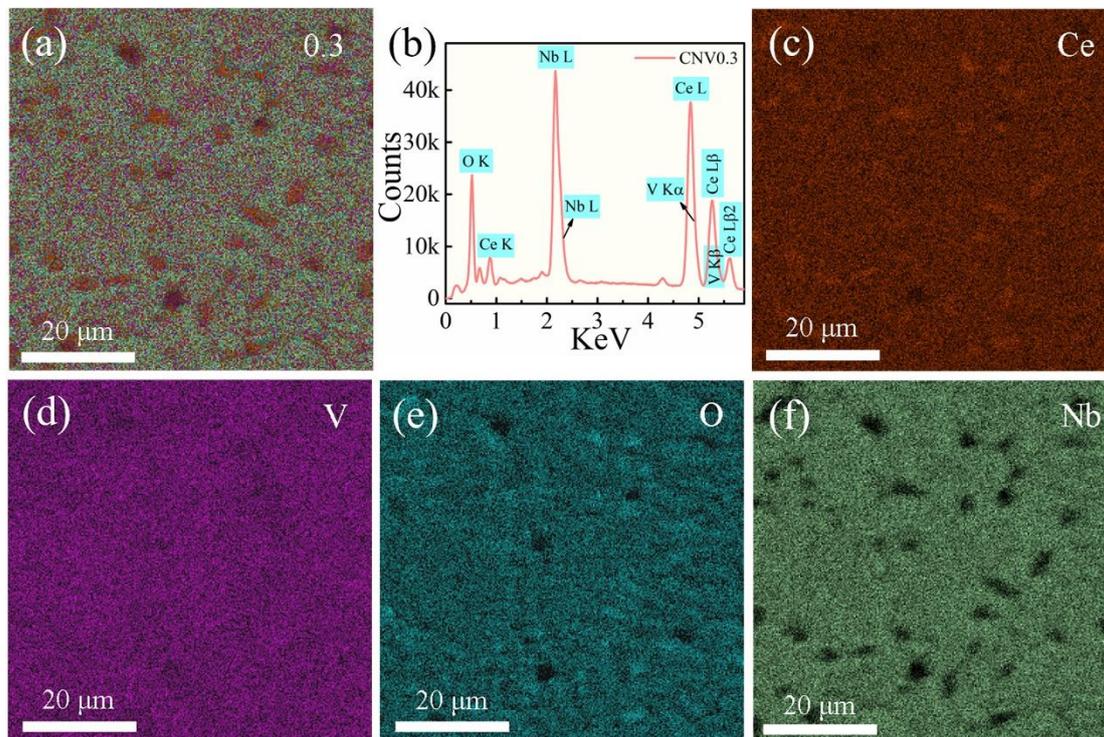


Figure 4 Sintered  $\text{Ce}(\text{Nb}_{0.7}\text{V}_{0.3})\text{O}_4$  ceramic at optimal temperatures for (a) EDS elemental maps, (b) Spectra of EDS and (c-f) Elements are marked as their abbreviations.

SEM images of the polished surface microstructure of  $\text{CNV}_x$  ( $x = 0 - 0.4$ ) ceramics are shown in Figure S5 (Supporting information) which demonstrate a large grain size with some porosity. The mean grain size increased from 9.92 μm (CN) to 14.73 μm (CNV0.3) with increase in  $x$ , Figure S6 (Supporting information). Ce, Nb, V and O elements are uniformly distributed according to EDS analysis, Figure 4(a-f).

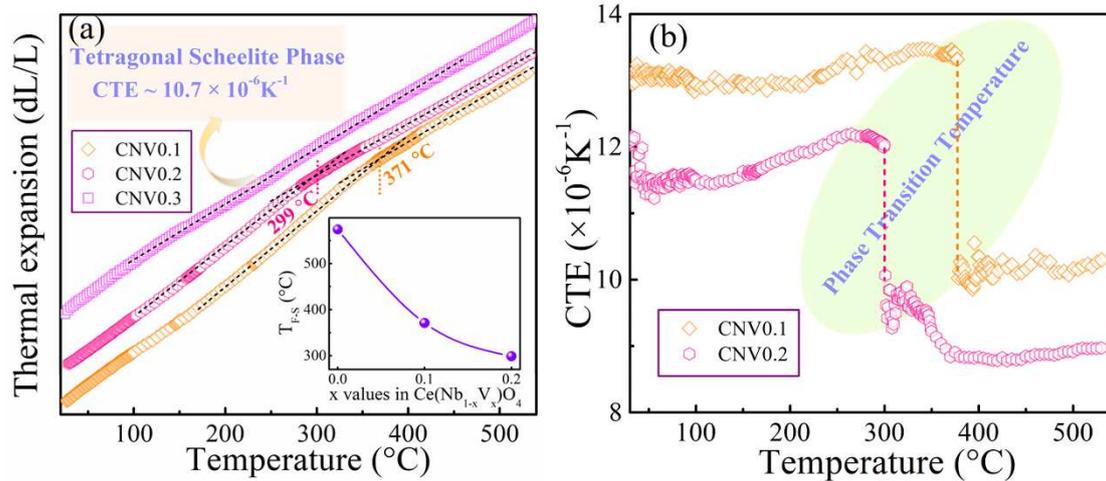


Figure 5 The thermal properties of  $\text{Ce}(\text{Nb}_{1-x}\text{V}_x)\text{O}_4$  ( $x = 0.1, 0.2,$  and  $0.3$ ) ceramics: (a) deformation variation (phase transition temperatures vs. contents of V are shown in the inset), (b) coefficients of thermal expansion.

The phase transition of undoped CN from scheelite to fergusonite has been reported at  $574\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ <sup>24</sup>, at which temperature there is a discontinuity in the coefficient of thermal expansion (CTE). For CNV0.1 and CNV0.2, Figure 5a, the deformation varies linearly with temperature below and above  $T_{\text{F-S}}$ , and the  $T_{\text{F-S}}$  decreases as the V content increases (inset in Figure 5a), a phenomenon similar to the SNV<sub>x</sub> system.<sup>17</sup> The CTEs of CNV0.1 and CNV0.2 change abruptly at  $T_{\text{F-S}}$  (Figure 5b) and are larger in the fergusonite- ( $\sim 11 - 13$ ) than scheelite-type structures ( $\sim 9 - 10$ ). Rooksby reported that the distortion of  $[\text{NbO}_4]$  tetrahedra determines the onset of  $T_{\text{F-S}}$ .<sup>14</sup>  $\text{V}^{5+}$  substitution decreases this distortion and thus the driving force for the fergusonite to scheelite transition reduces, along with  $T_{\text{F-S}}$ .

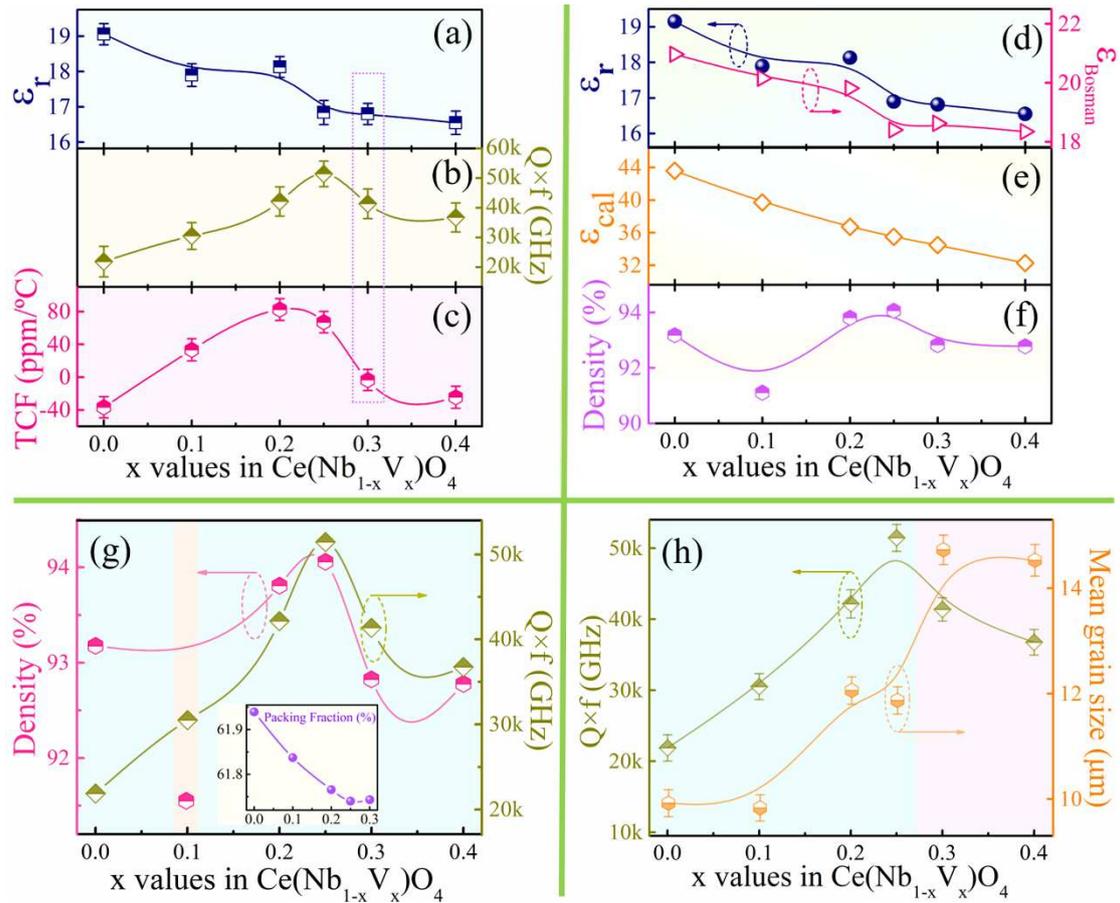


Figure 6 The properties of  $\epsilon_r$  (a, d and e),  $Q \times f$  (b, g and h), TCF (c), relative density (f, g), packing fraction (g), and mean grain size (h) of  $\text{Ce}(\text{Nb}_{1-x}\text{V}_x)\text{O}_4$  ceramics as the functions of  $x$ .

The microwave dielectric properties and relative densities of optimized CNV $x$  ceramics are displayed in Figure 6. We note that  $\epsilon_r$  and  $Qf$  saturate in the sintering range, 1460-1500 °C, and then decrease marginally at higher temperatures. MW properties vs. sintering temperature are shown in Figure S7 (supporting information). For optimized composition,  $\epsilon_r$  monotonously decreased from 19.15 to 16.55 as a function of  $x$  (Figure 6a, d), following a similar trend to the relative density (Figure 6f, g). Corrections for porosity using Bosman and Havinga's method<sup>47-48</sup> revealed that porosity has a limited effect on  $\epsilon_r$  (Figure 6d).  $\text{V}^{5+}$  ( $2.92 \text{ \AA}^3$ ) has a smaller ionic polarizability than  $\text{Nb}^{5+}$  ( $3.97 \text{ \AA}^3$ )<sup>49</sup> and thus its concentration, in principle, should be the dominant factor in  $\epsilon_r$ . The measured  $\epsilon_r$  and calculated  $\epsilon_{cal}$  values are shown in

Figure 6(d, e) and follow the anticipated trend based on Shannon's additive rule and the Clausius-Mosotti relation, as in Eqs. (1) and (2).

$$a_x = a_{Ce^{3+}} + (1 - x)a_{Nb^{5+}} + xa_{V^{5+}} + 4a_{O^{2-}} \quad (1)$$

$$\varepsilon_s = \frac{3Vm + 8\pi a_x}{3Vm - 4\pi a_x} \quad (2)$$

where  $\alpha_{Ce^{3+}}$ ,  $\alpha_{Nb^{5+}}$ ,  $\alpha_{V^{5+}}$ , and  $\alpha_{O^{2-}}$  are the polarizabilities of  $Ce^{3+}$ ,  $Nb^{5+}$ ,  $V^{5+}$ , and  $O^{2-}$ , respectively, and  $V_m$  is the molecular molar volume. The measured  $\varepsilon_r$  values (16.55 - 19.15) are smaller than  $\varepsilon_{cal}$  (32.27 - 43.57), possibly due to the complex distortions within the fergusonite structure<sup>11</sup> that suppress the polarizability of  $Nb^{5+}$  (effectively CN4 not CN6) and errors in the polarizabilities of lanthanides which may be lower than that reported by Shannon ( $Ce^{3+} = 6.15 \text{ \AA}^3$ ), in comparison with Feteira ( $Ce^{3+} = 4.46 \text{ \AA}^3$ ), whose values are taken from rare-earth aluminates<sup>49-50</sup>. Nonetheless, it can be concluded that as predicted  $\varepsilon_r$  is primarily modified through substitution of  $V^{5+}$  for  $Nb^{5+}$  in CNVx system. For compositions with  $0.0 \leq x \leq 0.25$ ,  $Qf$  increased from 21,100 to 55,400 with an abrupt decrease at  $x_c = 0.3$  (Figure 6b), consistent with the onset of the transition from fergusonite to scheelite<sup>17, 21</sup>.  $Qf$  is determined by a combination of intrinsic (fundamental interactions of the EM wave with the allowed phonon modes in the crystal structure) and extrinsic losses, such as porosity, point defects and grain boundaries.  $Qf$  increases with grain size for  $0.0 \leq x \leq 0.25$  suggesting that extrinsic losses have been minimized (Figure 6h). The anomaly at  $x_c = 0.3$  may relate only to the decrease in density for  $x \geq 0.3$  but we also note that the packing fraction<sup>51</sup>, Figure 6g, of the fergusonite and scheelite structures differ and  $Qf$  is inversely proportional to the packing fraction in the fergusonite region (inset of Figure 6g). This empirical

observation may be coincidental but requires further investigation. TCF increased with increasing  $x$  within the monoclinic-type region (Figure 6c), then abruptly decreased to become negative at  $x_c = 0.3$ , associated with the transition to the tetragonal scheelite structure.<sup>21</sup> TCF is a function of the temperature coefficient of  $\epsilon_r$  ( $\tau_\epsilon$ ) and the linear thermal expansion coefficient ( $a_L$ ), as shown in Eq. (3):

$$TCF = -\left(\frac{\tau_\epsilon}{2} + a_L\right) \quad (3)$$

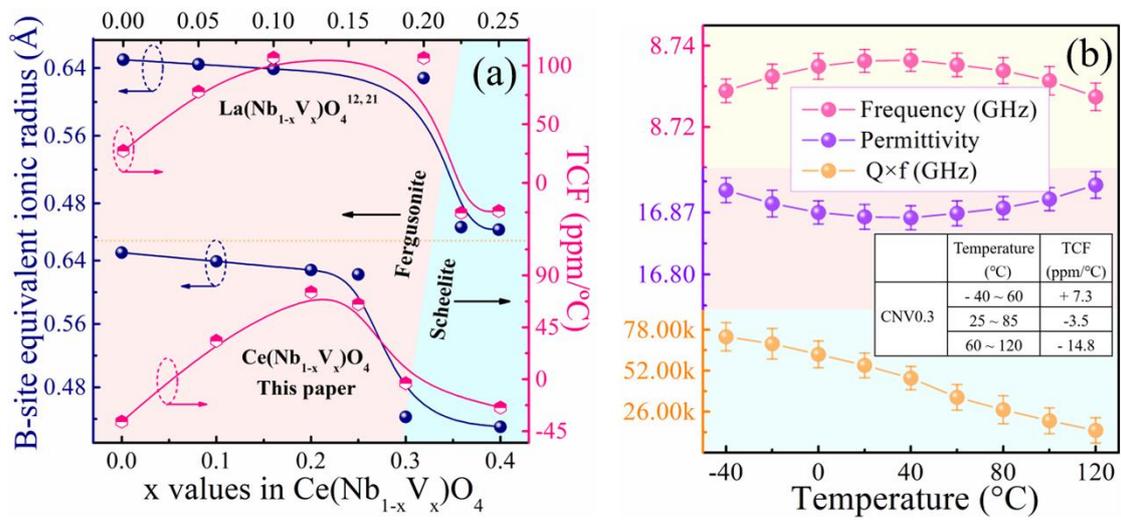


Figure 7 (a) The B-site equivalent ion radius and TCF of RE(Nb<sub>1-x</sub>V<sub>x</sub>)O<sub>4</sub> (RE = La, Ce) ceramics as the functions of  $x$ . (b) Variation of TCF for the Ce(Nb<sub>0.7</sub>V<sub>0.3</sub>)O<sub>4</sub> ceramic as a function of temperature (from -40 to +120 °C).

$a_L$  of CNV $x$  ceramics varies from +11~13 and +9~10 ppm/°C for fergusonite and scheelite structure (Figure 5b), respectively, suggesting that the effect of  $a_L$  on the abrupt anomaly in TCF is limited which is mainly attributed to changes of  $\tau_\epsilon$ , dominated by the onset of  $T_{F-S}$ ,<sup>41</sup> as shown in Figure 7a. To ensure the performance of MW devices at high temperature, the thermal stability of CNV0.3 ceramics was measured from -40 - +120 °C. As temperature increased, Figure 7b, the resonant frequency increased and then decreased, with  $\epsilon_r$  exhibiting the opposite trend.  $Qf$  decreased with temperature but nonetheless was sufficiently high for the fabrication of

MW devices. The optimal microwave dielectric properties of the CNV0.3 ceramic is  $\epsilon_r \sim 16.81$ ,  $Q \times f \sim 41,300$  GHz (at  $\sim 8.7$  GHz), and TCF  $\sim -3.5$  ppm/ $^{\circ}$ C, ideal for the design and fabrication of MW devices.

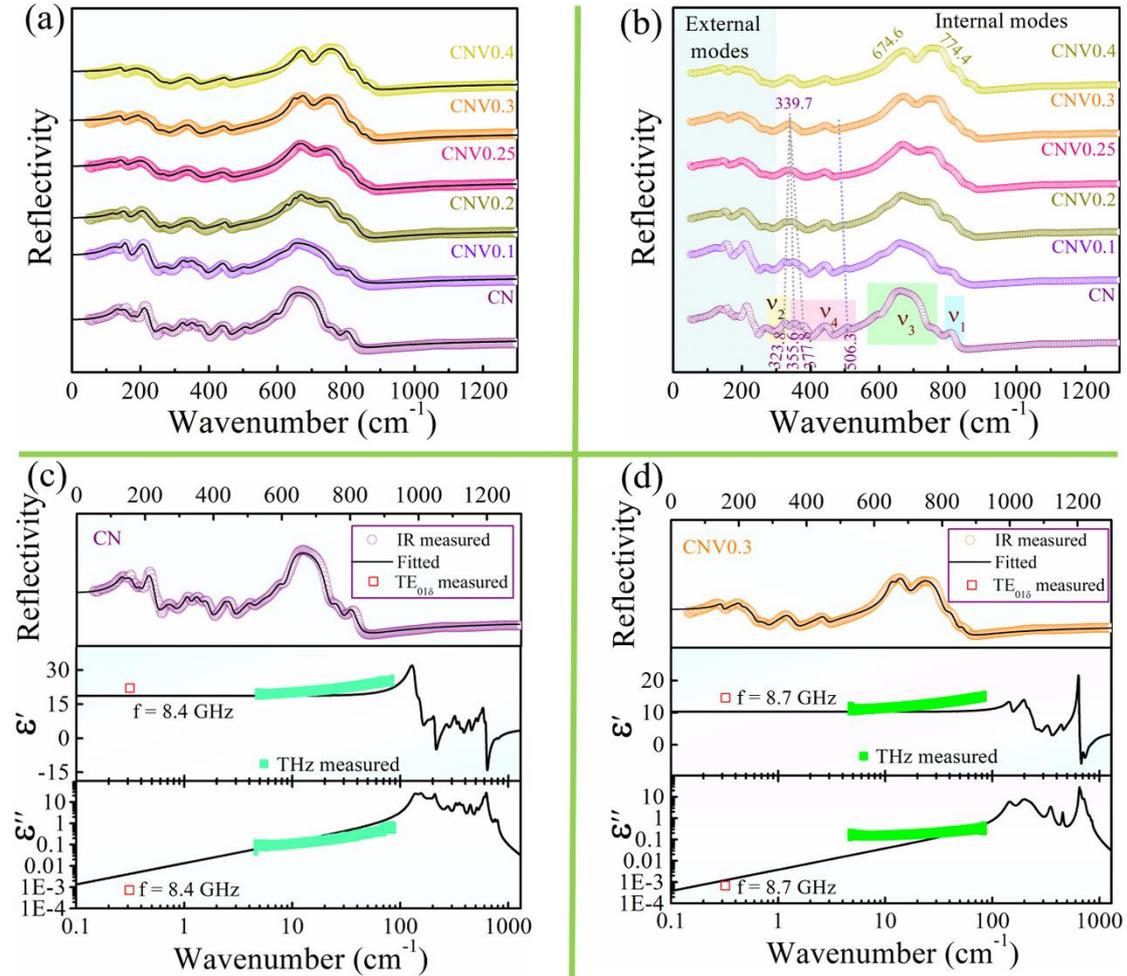


Figure 8 (a, b) Experimental and fitted infrared reflection spectra of  $\text{Ce}(\text{Nb}_{1-x}\text{V}_x)\text{O}_4$  ( $x = 0 - 0.4$ ) ceramics. (c, d) The complex dielectric spectrum of  $\text{CeNbO}_4$  and  $\text{Ce}(\text{Nb}_{0.7}\text{V}_{0.3})\text{O}_4$  ceramics (solid line —, circle  $\circ$  and square  $\square$  are fitted, experimental and measured values in microwave band. Square  $\blacksquare$  is measured values in THz band;  $\nu_1$ ,  $\nu_2$ ,  $\nu_3$ , and  $\nu_4$  corresponding to symmetric stretch, symmetric bending, antisymmetric stretch, and antisymmetric bending, respectively).

The measured and calculated infrared reflectance spectra of CNV $x$  ( $x = 0 - 0.4$ ) ceramics are displayed in Figure 8. Spectra are calculated according to Eqs. (4) and (5):

$$\epsilon^*(\omega) - \epsilon(\infty) = \sum_{j=1}^n \frac{\omega_{pj}^2}{\omega_{oj}^2 - \omega^2 - j\gamma_j\omega} \quad (4)$$

$$R(\omega) = \left| \frac{1 - \sqrt{\varepsilon^*(\omega)}}{1 + \sqrt{\varepsilon^*(\omega)}} \right|^2 \quad (5)$$

The relevant parameters in Eqs. (4) and (5) were described in previous work.<sup>8</sup> All IR reflection spectra of CNV<sub>x</sub> ceramics in Figure 8a fit well using Eqs. (4) and (5). As *x* increases, some vibrational modes (Nb/V-O) below 400 cm<sup>-1</sup> are merged as T<sub>F-S</sub> is approached whereas the band at ~ 506.3 cm<sup>-1</sup> progressively disappears. Figure 8(c, d) display the fitted complex dielectric spectrum of CN and CNV0.3 with the relevant phonon parameters shown in Table S3 (Supporting Information).  $\varepsilon_r$  of CN and CNV0.3 at optical frequencies are 4.38 and 3.78, and 18.54 and 10.24 at lower frequencies respectively, values close to those measured at MW frequencies, 19.15 at 8.4 GHz and 16.81 at 8.7 GHz, respectively, and indicating that ionic polarization dominates dielectric properties. External modes attributed to the Ce-O bond at < 300 cm<sup>-1</sup> contribute most to  $\varepsilon_r$  indicating that the dielectric polarization depends on the phonon absorption of Ce-O bond in the microwave regime. Nb/V-O vibrational modes associated with the ferroelastic phase transition observed in the Raman and IR spectra give only a weak contribution to the microwave  $\varepsilon_r$  and their influence is neglected. The real part ( $\varepsilon'$ ) of the permittivity obtained from the THz (0.2-2 THz) measurement agrees well with the experimental value as well as the IR, while the imaginary part ( $\varepsilon''$ ) is still acceptable in the millimeter waves regime.

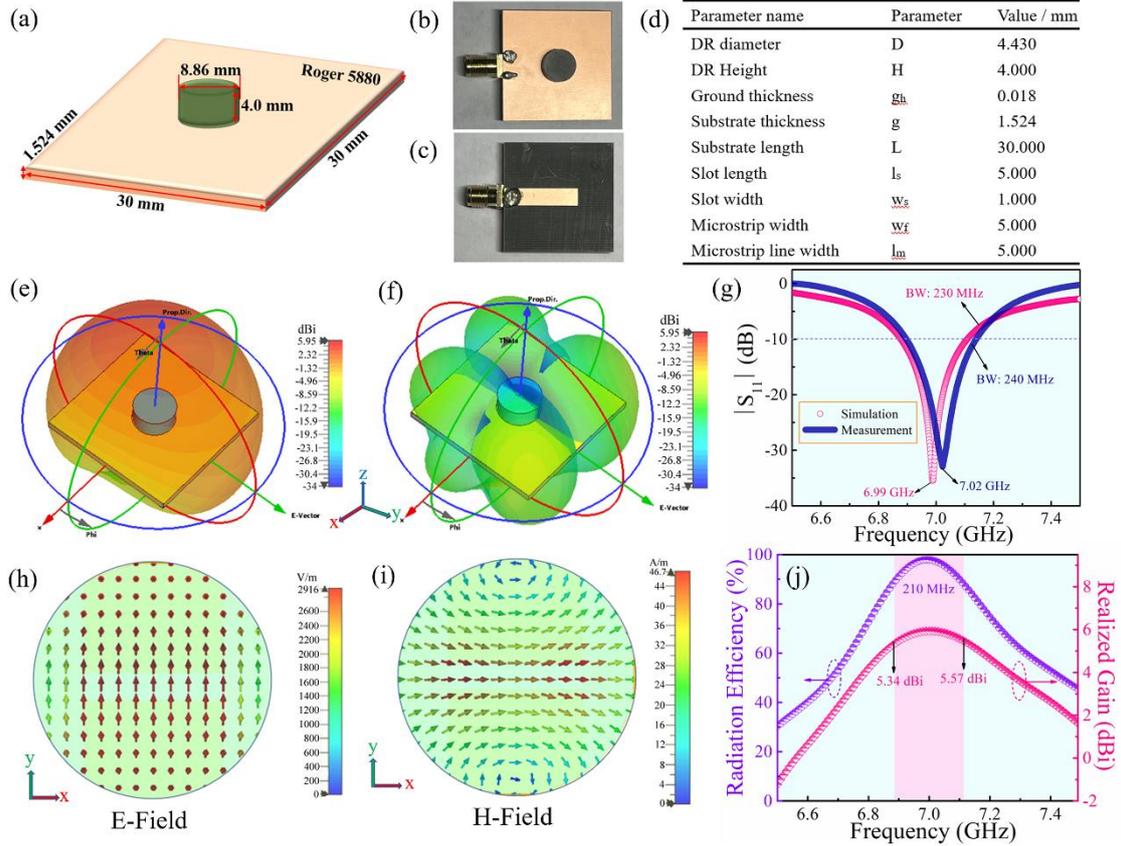


Figure 9 The geometries (unit: millimeter) of (a), top (b), bottom (c) views and design size (d) for the fabricated cylindrical dielectric resonator antenna (CDRA). The 3D simulated radiation patterns of co-polarized and cross-polarized (e-f) of the CDRA at the resonant frequency (6.99 GHz). The simulated and measured return loss  $|S_{11}|$  of the proposed antenna (g). The simulation results of electric field (h) and magnetic field (i) at 6.99 GHz. Simulated antenna radiation efficiency and realized gain (j) of the CDRA.

A cylindrical DRA was fabricated using CNV0.3 ceramic as the dielectric resonator block/substrate ( $\epsilon_{DR} = 16.82$ ) mounted on a Rogers RT5880 polymer board ( $\epsilon_{r,sub} = 2.20$ ;  $\tan\delta = 0.0009$ ). Figures 9(a-d) show images of the design dimensions and prototype antenna. The 3D simulated radiation pattern of the DRA at the center frequency (6.99 GHz) of the C-band is shown in Figure 9(e, f). Figure 9g shows the measured and simulated return loss value ( $|S_{11}|$ ) curves. The simulated  $|S_{11}|$  of -35.45 dB at 6.99 GHz has return loss bandwidth of 230 MHz (6.88 - 7.11 GHz) compared with measured  $|S_{11}|$  of -28.78 dB at 7.02 GHz with a return loss bandwidth of 240 MHz (6.91 - 7.15 GHz), confirming that CNVx ceramics are good candidates for commercial

satellite television transmission above 6 GHz in the C-band<sup>2, 32-33</sup>, point to point wireless applications (5.925 - 8.5 GHz)<sup>34</sup>, and C-band radar. The measured resonant frequency is displaced relative to the simulated value, potentially due to inaccurate placement of the DR, the presence of adhesive material, and connector mismatch.<sup>1, 52-</sup>  
<sup>53</sup> Figure 9(h, i) display the internal E- and H-fields of the HE<sub>11δ</sub> mode at 6.99 GHz. The E-field is along the y-axis direction and H-field is a semi-circular magnetic field within the DRA (*xoy*-plane), indicating that the cylindrical CNV0.3 ceramic HE<sub>11δ</sub> mode is activated. The simulated gain curve of the antenna and the radiation efficiency in the operating frequency range are shown in Figure 9j. The radiation efficiency of the designed antenna is > 90% from 6.89-7.20 GHz owing to the presence of a ceramic dielectric, with a corresponding gain range of 3.34 to 5.93 dB and 5.93 dB at the central resonant frequency (6.99 GHz).

## Conclusions

The crystal structures of the CNV<sub>x</sub> ( $x = 0 - 0.4$ ) ceramics were monoclinic fergusonite-type in the range of  $x < 0.3$  and tetragonal scheelite-type for  $x \geq 0.3$  according to XRD and Raman spectroscopy data. TEM revealed a ferroelastic domain structure formed on cooling from the high temperature scheelite to the low temperature fergusonite structure.  $\epsilon_r$  at microwave frequencies is dominated by phonon absorption of the Ce-O vibrational modes.  $\epsilon_r$  and  $Qf$  measured at 0.2 - 2 THz are consistent with the experimental MW as well as the infrared values, indicating that the ceramic is effective in the 5G and sub-millimeter wave regions. Control of TCF is achieved by tuning the structural distortion of the Nb polyhedra at  $T_{F-S}$  through the substitution of

$V^{5+}$  for  $Nb^{5+}$  with temperature stable compositions attained for  $x_c = 0.3$  when the phase transition is close to room temperature. Optimal microwave dielectric properties were obtained for CNV0.3 ceramic with  $\epsilon_r \sim 16.81$ ,  $Qf \sim 41,300$  GHz (at  $\sim 8.7$  GHz), and TCF  $\sim -3.5$  ppm/ $^{\circ}C$ . A cylindrical prototype DRA antenna with resonance at 7.02 GHz ( $|S_{11}| = -28.78$  dB) was designed and fabricated using CNV0.3 ceramic as the DR. Good agreement was observed between simulated and measured results with high radiation efficiency ( $> 90\%$ ) and gain (3.34 - 5.93 dB) achieved within the range of 6.89 - 7.10 GHz, which satisfies the working requirements of a C-band antenna.

### **Supporting Information**

Experimental materials, methods, and characterization of CNV $_x$  ( $x = 0 - 0.4$ ) ceramics; Dependence of the  $x_c$  of  $V^{5+}$  at phase transition on the ionic radius of the A- or B-site (Figure S1); Crystallographic structural parameters of CNV $_x$  ( $x = 0 - 0.3$ ) ceramics (Table S1 and Table S2); Rietveld refinement plot of CNV $_x$  ( $x = 0.1, 0.2, 0.25$ ) ceramics (Figure S2); Variation of strain and lattice parameters as a function of  $x$  (Figure S3); Raman spectra of CNV $_x$  ( $x = 0 - 0.4$ ) ceramics (Figure S4); SEM images and mean grain size of the CNV $_x$  ( $x = 0 - 0.4$ ) specimens (Figure S5 and Figure S6); microwave dielectric properties ( $\epsilon_r$  and  $Qf$ ) of CNV $_x$  ( $x = 0 - 0.4$ ) ceramics as a function of temperature (Figure S7) and phonon parameters obtained by fitting the infrared reflection spectrum of CNV $_x$  ( $x = 0, 0.3$ ) ceramics (Table S3).

### **Author contributions**

D. Zhou and F. F. Wu: Carried out laboratory research, wrote the draft of the manuscript;

C. Chao: Carried out design and performance measurement of antenna; D. M. Xu:

Carried out characterization of TEM; R. T. Li, L. Zhang and F. Qiao: Carry out characterization of dielectric performance; Z. Q. Shi, M. A. Darwish and T. Zhou: Carried out characterization of microstructural; H. Jantunen and I. M. Reaney reviewed the manuscript, improved the quality of English and corrected scientific inaccuracies and explanations.

### **Competing interests**

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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ToC Figure:

