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## CURRENT-VOLTAGE CHARACTERISTICS OF MAPBI<sub>3</sub> PEROVSKITE FILMS FORMED BY THE SINGLE-STAGE SPIN-COAT METHOD

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Abstract. In the paper, the properties of MaPbI<sub>3</sub> films made with or without a precipitant have been investigated. The samples had a planar geometry based on ceramic substrates with interdigitated gold electrodes and also based on glass substrates. The samples were irradiated with green light from an LED source, and a special setup was used to measure current-voltage (I-V) characteristics. The polycrystalline films exhibited high sensitivity (an increase in current by about 2 orders upon irradiation). The width of their optical band gap was the same regardless of the use of the precipitant but the maximum trap-filling voltages turned out to be very sensitive to such use. According to optical microscopy, the film microstructure was characterized by a growth of large long dendritic structures, i.e., the nucleation occurred in the solution mass during the films' making. This growth mechanism may be convenient for the use of MaPbI<sub>4</sub>, films in photodetectors.

Keywords: organometallic perovskite, semiconducting polymer, transport mechanism, solar cell

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## ВОЛЬТАМПЕРНЫЕ ХАРАКТЕРИСТИКИ ПЕРОВСКИТНЫХ ПЛЕНОК МАРВІ<sub>3</sub>, СФОРМИРОВАННЫХ ОДНОСТАДИЙНЫМ МЕТОДОМ ЦЕНТРИФУГИРОВАНИЯ

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Аннотация. В работе исследованы свойства пленок MaPbI<sub>3</sub>., изготовленных с применением осадителя либо без него. Образцы обладали планарной геометрией на основе керамических подложек со встречно-штыревыми золотыми электродами, а также на основе стеклянных подложек. Образцы облучали зеленым светом от светодиодного источника, а для измерения вольтамперных характеристик использовали специальную установку. Поликристаллические пленки продемонстрировали высокую фоточувствительность (увеличение тока примерно на 2 порядка при облучении). Ширина их оптической запрещенной зоны была одинаковой вне зависимости от использования осадителя, однако предельные напряжения заполнения ловушек оказались весьма чувствительными к такому использованию. По данным оптической микроскопии, для микроструктуры пленки характерно образование крупных дендритных структур, т.е. при ее изготовлении происходило зародышеобразование в толще раствора. Этот механизм может быть удобным для использования пленок MaPbI<sub>3</sub> в фотодетекторах.

**Ключевые слова:** металлорганический перовскит, полупроводящий полимер, механизм транспорта, солнечный элемент

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#### Introduction

Organometallic perovskites such as  $(Fa)(Ma)MX_3$ , where Fa is formamidinium  $CH(NH_2)_2$ , Ma is methylammonium  $CH_3NH_3$ , metal M = Pb, halogen X = Br or I, have been attracting increasing attention recently for applications in solar cells (SC) and photodetectors, X-ray detectors as well as memristor structures [1–3]. SC based on organometallic perovskites exhibit efficiency comparable to silicon solar cells (25.8%) [4]. In addition to organometallic perovskite films, films of inorganic perovskites CsPbX<sub>3</sub> are used for SE [5]. In this case, CsPbX<sub>3</sub> perovskite films are formed not only from a solution, but also from suspensions of

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colloidal quantum dots, allowing to control the absorption spectrum of the SC by adjusting the size of the quantum dots [6-8]. Interest is also growing towards lead-free perovskite materials, primarily due to their low toxicity [9]. Even though SC based on lead-free perovskites exhibit lower efficiencies compared to lead-based ones (by about 6%), their stabilities are close to 2,000 hours of operation in a nitrogen atmosphere [10]. Finally, a promising direction is fabrication of tandem structures based on various SC combined with perovskite photovoltaic elements [11].

One of the best materials with a perovskite structure for creating SC is organometallic perovskite CH<sub>3</sub>NH<sub>3</sub>PbI<sub>3</sub> (referred to as MaPbI<sub>3</sub> from now on), also widely used to create photodetectors and X-ray detectors. Single-crtstal MaPbI<sub>3</sub> perovskite has been used for these detectors, demonstrating trap densities of the order of  $10^{10}$  cm<sup>-3</sup> and a carrier diffusion length exceeding 175 µm [12, 13]. Although single-crystal MaPbI<sub>3</sub> perovskite is also applicable for photovoltaic structures, it is economically impractical to use it for SC, as it is too difficult to produce a single crystal with a large diameter. Polycrystalline films are used to create SC, deposited from a solution by such methods as spray-coating, inkjet and screen printing, spin-coating and others [14].

As a rule, polycrystalline layers of  $MaPbI_3$  are deposited by spin-coating in two steps if  $PbI_2$  and  $CH_3NH_3I$  solutions are deposited separately, or in one step if  $CH_3NH_3PbI_3$  solution is deposited. Studies producing the materials discovered that the two-step method allows to obtain more homogeneous films, but it is more technologically complex, while films made by two different methods yield comparable characteristics, some (for example, grain size) even better for films prepared by the one-step method [15, 16].

Analyzing the available data, we opted for the one-step method. A precipitator is often used for depositing the film, allowing to considerably improve the quality of the film [17–19]. Many reagents can be used as precipitators, but ethyl acetate (EA) stands out in that it allows to achieve a sufficiently high efficiency of the photosensitive layer (up to 19.53%). In addition, this layer can preserve up to 84.8% of the initial efficiency in an SC operating in an open air environment for a long time (over 1900 hours) [20]. Additionally, ethyl acetate has low cost and low toxicity, offering greater prospects for commercial applications.

In this paper, we considered the influence of the technology for manufacturing the MaPbI perovskite film on its current–voltage characteristics in planar structures was investigated; ethyl acetate was deposited in a one-step procedure in this case.

#### Materials and methods

Powders of MaPbI<sub>3</sub> organometallic perovskites purchased from Xi'an Polymer Light Technology Corp. (China) were used to prepare the samples. The films were applied by spin-coating from a solution of dimethylformamide and dimethyl sulfoxide (4:1 volume ratio) with a MaPbI<sub>3</sub> mass concentration of 300 mg/ml with subsequent annealing at a temperature of 110 °C for 10 minutes. The spin-coating rate was 3000 rpm (for 30 s) with pre-centrifugation at 1000 rpm (10 s). The samples were obtained by two techniques: using ethyl acetate as a precipitator and without it. The



Fig. 1. Photo of ceramic substrate with interdigitated NiCr/Ni/Au electrodes (sensor platform, Tesla Blatná) The size of the region with these electrodes is  $4.2 \times 4.2$  mm precipitator was introduced at the acceleration stage of spin coating.

The current-voltage characteristics were measured by depositing the perovskite films on ceramic substrates with interdigitated gold electrodes (sensor platform from Tesla Blatná, Czech Republic). The thickness of the electrodes and the distance between them was 25  $\mu$ m (Fig. 1).

The sample morphology was studied by optical and scanning electron microscopy, also depositing layers of MaPbI<sub>3</sub> perovskite film on silicon substrates. To determine the band gap width by processing the optical absorption spectra, such layers were deposited on glass substrates with ITO coating. The latter is a solution consisting of indium, oxygen and tin, i.e., indium oxide  $In_2O_3$  and tin oxide  $Sn_2O_3$ . The current-voltage (I-V) characteristics of the samples were measured with a Keithley 6487 picoammeter (USA) in the dark and under illumination with an LED source at a wavelength of 535 nm. The absorption spectra were measured with a PE-5400UF spectrophotometer (Russia). The microstructure of the objects was studied with a POLAM-312 polarizing microscope (Russia). The morphology of the coatings was also studied with a Zeiss Supra 25 scanning electron microscope (Germany).

#### **Results and discussion**

The samples of thin polycrystalline MaPbI<sub>3</sub> films obtained in this study exhibit a characteristic optical absorption spectrum (curve *1* in Fig. 2,*a*). The optical band gap of the samples was determined as a Tauc plot,  $(\alpha hv)^{1/r}$  versus hv, by extrapolating the linear section to the abscissa axis, where the value of *r* expresses the type of dependence of the semiconductor's absorption coefficient on the irradiation wavelength (greater than the semiconductor's absorption edge). Since MaPbI<sub>3</sub> is a direct band gap semiconductor, the absorption coefficient is described by the root dependence on the wavelength (r = 1/2).



Fig. 2. Analysis of MaPbI<sub>3</sub> layers (curve 1 in Fig. 2, a, curves 3, 4 in Fig. 2,b), and LED source (curve 2 in Fig. 2,a):

typical optical absorption spectrum *1*; optical absorption spectra *3*, *4* as Tauc plots for determining the optical band gap; dependences are shown for samples prepared with a precipitator (*3*) and without it (*4*); *2* is the electroluminescence spectrum of a green LED used to record the photo response of samples

According to the results obtained, the optical band gap  $E_g$  of the manufactured films was  $E_g \approx 1.58$  eV, and this value did not depend on whether a precipitator was used; it is characteristic for polycrystalline MaPbI<sub>3</sub> films.

The results of I-V measurements in the dark and under illumination are shown in Figs. 3 and 4. The samples exposed to irradiation with green light leads exhibit a change in the current by about two orders of magnitude, while using a precipitator does not have a noticeable effect. The current-voltage characteristics in the dark exhibit hysteresis, which is associated with migration of ions (primarily I<sup>-</sup>), as well as the space-charge limited current (SCLC) [20]. The influence of the technology by which the samples were prepared is also observed: the maximum trap-filling voltages  $V_{\text{TFL}}$  differ for samples obtained with and without the precipitator.

We also found a slight increase in  $V_{\text{TFL}}$  after the samples were irradiated with light (a green LED was used), pointing to an increase in trap concentration during exposure.

It was found in [20] that such irradiation can significantly accelerate or induce ion migration, and such migration is observed over a wide temperature range. A five-fold decrease in the activation energy of ion migration is also reported (from 0.82 to 0.15 eV with an increase in the irradiation intensity from 0 to 20 MW/cm<sup>2</sup>) [21].



Fig. 3. I-V curves of the samples prepared without precipitator (a) and with it (b) in the dark (lower curves) and under irradiation with green light (upper curves) The arrows indicate the variation modes of the voltages applied to the samples



Fig. 4. Fragments of I-V curves of the samples prepared without precipitator (a) and with it (b) in the dark, obtained before (black curves) and after (red curves) irradiation with light. A difference in  $V_{\text{TFL}}$  values is observed.

The maximum trap-filling voltage  $V_{\rm TFL}$  is directly proportional to their concentration:

$$V_{\rm TFL} = \frac{eN_t L^2}{2\epsilon\epsilon_0},\tag{1}$$

where *e* is the electron charge,  $N_t$  is the trap concentration, *L* is the distance between the electrodes (25 µm for our case),  $\varepsilon$  is the permittivity of the material ( $\varepsilon = 32$  for MaPbI<sub>3</sub>),  $\varepsilon_0$  is the dielectric constant [18].

The concentration of traps can be calculated from this using the formula

$$N_t = \frac{2\varepsilon\varepsilon_0 V_{\rm TFL}}{eL^2}.$$
 (2)

 $N_t$  values equal to 3.68, 3.81, 6.09 and 7.01 (10<sup>14</sup> cm<sup>-3</sup>), respectively, were obtained for a voltage  $V_{\text{TFL}}$  of approximately 0.65–0.70 V for a sample without precipitator and about 1.13 – 1.30 V for a sample with precipitator.

The values of  $V_{\text{TFL}}$  and, consequently, the trap concentrations turned out to be lower for the sample obtained without precipitator, which is inconsistent with the literature data [16, 22].

The results obtained by scanning electron microscopy (Fig. 5, *c*, *d*) indicate that using the precipitator (ethyl acetate) under these conditions produces an increase in the size of film crystallites, compared with the film prepared without the precipitator. There are also pores in the films due to the conditions of solvent evaporation. The optical microscopy data (Fig. 5,*a*) for the sample obtained with a precipitator indicate that some substrate regions are not covered by the perovskite film, however, the regions covered by the MaPbI<sub>3</sub> film are homogeneous. On the other hand, not only heterogeneous nucleation is observed for the sample obtained without precipitator at the interface with the substrate, but also growth of large elongated (~50 µm) dendritic structures (Fig. 5,*d*).



Fig. 5. Micrographs of MaPbI<sub>3</sub> layers for samples prepared with precipitator (a,c) and without it (b,d) obtained by optical (a, b) and scanning electron (c, d) microscopy

Evidently, as the solvent evaporates from the MaPbI<sub>3</sub> solution under heating, this can lead to an increase in the solute concentration near the surface. Moreover, the temperature gradient from the substrate surface to the film surface leads to a decrease in the solubility of the MaPbI<sub>3</sub> film in the near-surface region.

Thus, the conditions for nucleation are fulfilled near the surface of the solution film, with subsequent growth of dendritic structures. Nucleation at the phase boundary is energetically favorable, inducing growth of polycrystalline film directly on the surface of the substrate (Fig. 5,*b*). Consequently, the precipitator leads to an increase in the size of the film crystallites formed at the phase boundary, however, the conditions of film growth without precipitator lead to growth of elongated MaPbI<sub>3</sub> structures of a larger scale.

Although the conditions for film growth are different if polished surfaces of silicon substrates and ceramic substrates are used, due to the different concentrations of nucleation sites on the substrate surface and hydrophobicity, we assume that the character of film formation should be similar. Thus, the film consisting of elongated structures has a lower concentration of grain boundaries, which leads to a decrease in the trap concentration and the voltage  $V_{TFL}$ . Although this growth mechanism hinder the application of polycrystalline films in photovoltaic structures, it may be convenient for using MaPbI<sub>3</sub> films in photodetectors. On the other hand, using a precipitator is preferable from the standpoint of morphology of such a film for creating photovoltaic structures.

#### Conclusions

Films of organometallic perovskite MaPbI<sub>3</sub> produced for the study exhibit a high response to visible-light irradiation (with a green LED) as well as to the characteristic mode of space charge limited current. The dark current–voltage (I-V) characteristics exhibit hysteresis due to ion migration.

We found that  $MaPbI_3$  films prepared by the described procedure without the precipitator contain large dendritic structures providing a decrease in the maximum trap-filling voltage We believe that films with such morphology can be successfully used as photodetectors.

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