

# Formation of an amorphous product phase during the solid state reaction between a vitreous SiO<sub>2</sub> thin film and a (001) BaTiO<sub>3</sub> substrate

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Received 5 August 1999; received in revised form 7 April 2000; accepted 11 April 2000

## Abstract

The solid state chemical reaction of a thin SiO<sub>2</sub> film with a single-crystal (001) BaTiO<sub>3</sub> substrate has been investigated as a model system for processes occurring during the sintering of BaTiO<sub>3</sub> ceramics with the sintering additive SiO<sub>2</sub>. Thin amorphous SiO<sub>2</sub> films on (001) BaTiO<sub>3</sub> substrates react with the substrate during annealing at 1000°C for 5 to 15 min. Transmission electron microscopy (TEM) has revealed the formation of a glassy reaction product after 5 min of heating. The composition of this glass has been analyzed by energy dispersive X-ray spectrometry (EDX), showing mainly SiO<sub>2</sub> and about 16 at.% of BaTiO<sub>3</sub>. The Ba:Ti ratio of the glass is 1:1. During prolonged heating, or if the initial BaTiO<sub>3</sub> surface is decorated with Pt markers, the reaction product crystallizes, with the fersnoite Ba<sub>2</sub>TiSi<sub>2</sub>O<sub>8</sub> forming as the dominant crystalline phase. © 2000 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

*Keywords:* BaTiO<sub>3</sub>; Electron microscopy; Films; Glass; Reaction sequence; SiO<sub>2</sub>

## 1. Introduction

Liquid phase sintering has become a common technique, offering the advantages of a decreased sintering temperature, a better development of the microstructure and a larger reproducibility. Of the numerous additives creating liquid phases silica, besides titania, is one of the most important sintering aids for BaTiO<sub>3</sub>.<sup>1–4</sup> If the additive SiO<sub>2</sub> is used to sinter BaTiO<sub>3</sub>, the lowest melting point in the Ba–Ti–Si–O system is around 1250°C; thus rapid sintering at temperatures below the sintering temperatures of pure BaTiO<sub>3</sub> (melting point 1625°C) becomes possible.

A homogeneous distribution of the additive in the grain boundaries is essential. The grain size distribution can be influenced by rapidly growing grains which form in places where the concentration of the additive is high.<sup>2</sup> To improve the homogeneity of the microstructure after sintering, new techniques have been developed to coat each grain of the green body uniformly before sintering.<sup>3</sup> The coating can be performed by spray hydrolysis or by

an emulsion technique.<sup>4</sup> For the hot pressing of BaTiO<sub>3</sub> ceramics at 1350°C, the initial densification has been described as a grain boundary sliding process promoted by the presence of a viscous grain boundary phase.<sup>5</sup> A Ba-rich composition retards the densification, whereas a Ti-rich composition enhances it. The phase diagram of BaO–TiO<sub>2</sub><sup>6</sup> shows the formation of a liquid phase above 1332°C for Ti-rich BaTiO<sub>3</sub>. On the other hand, Ba-rich BaTiO<sub>3</sub> (in thermal equilibrium) consists of Ba<sub>2</sub>TiO<sub>4</sub> and BaTiO<sub>3</sub> with a higher melting temperature (> 1560°C).

As shown by Abicht et al.,<sup>4</sup> the highest densification rate in the system BaTiO<sub>3</sub>–SiO<sub>2</sub> occurs between 1100 and 1200°C, i.e. well below the temperature range where a liquid appears (> 1250°C). This densification is perhaps to be attributed to the existence of an amorphous grain boundary phase. Thin intergranular amorphous films have been reported for a SiO<sub>2</sub> film deposited on a single-crystal TiO<sub>2</sub> substrate<sup>7</sup> and for chlorine-doped silicon nitride ceramics.<sup>8</sup>

The present paper describes a model experiment to study some of the processes occurring during the sintering of BaTiO<sub>3</sub> with the sintering additive SiO<sub>2</sub>. For the work, (001) BaTiO<sub>3</sub> single crystals are covered with thin films of SiO<sub>2</sub> before they are annealed to induce

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solid state reactions. The product phases are then investigated by X-ray diffraction<sup>9</sup> and transmission electron microscopy.

## 2. Experimental

SiO<sub>2</sub> films of 100 nm in nominal thickness are electron-beam deposited onto well-polished (001) BaTiO<sub>3</sub> single crystal surfaces. During deposition, the crystals are heated to 500°C to enhance the adherence of the film. During deposition the oxygen pressure is kept at 10<sup>-2</sup> Pa by introducing additional oxygen through a needle valve. In some samples, the original BaTiO<sub>3</sub> surface is marked by small crystals of Pt, the BaTiO<sub>3</sub> crystal being first covered with a Pt film of a few nanometers in thickness at room temperature. Heating at 900°C in air results in a coagulation of the Pt film into small islands. Subsequently, the marked surface is covered with a SiO<sub>2</sub> film as described above.

The oxygen content of the film has not been determined. In general, the oxygen content of amorphous SiO<sub>x</sub> films can vary within a wide range, viz. from SiO<sub>0.9</sub> to SiO<sub>2.25</sub> depending on the deposition conditions.<sup>10</sup> As can be deduced from Ref. 11, under our deposition conditions, the dominant molecular species in the gas phase are SiO, SiO<sub>2</sub> and O<sub>2</sub>. Since surplus O<sub>2</sub> is added through the needle valve, the composition of our films is certainly close to SiO<sub>2</sub> (though some small oxygen deficiency cannot be excluded). Hence the films are called SiO<sub>2</sub> throughout this paper.

The reaction experiments have been performed in a laboratory furnace in air. The samples were heated to the process temperature of 1000°C at a rate of 20 K/min and kept at a constant temperature for the specified time. Then the furnace was allowed to cool down at an initial cooling rate of 50 K/min. Cross-sections of the annealed samples have been prepared routinely by grinding, polishing and ion beam thinning. A Philips CM20FEG transmission electron microscope equipped with a Noran Ge EDX detector and a Gatan magnetic imaging filter (GIF) has been used for subsequent analyses.

## 3. Results

Examples of the prepared samples have been heated in air at a temperature of 1000°C for 5, 10, 15, and 30 min. Fig. 1 shows TEM cross-section bright-field images of a specimen without Pt markers (Fig. 1a, 5 min) and of two specimens with Pt markers (Fig. 1b, 10 min; Fig. 1c, 15 min). The non-marked sample (a) clearly shows a change in the contrast of the glass along a well-defined interface, indicating the presence of elements heavier than Si and O in the darker region. Tilting the specimen in the electron microscope proved that no crystalline

phase had formed: While the substrate contrast changes rapidly, which is usual for a crystalline material, the film is *amorphous*, not showing any change of the image intensity. Prolonged heating for 2 h led to the formation of crystalline fresnoite Ba<sub>2</sub>TiSi<sub>2</sub>O<sub>8</sub>, identified by X-ray diffraction.<sup>12</sup> The samples containing a Pt marker show a different behaviour. After only a *short* heating time the Pt markers are located in the middle of a crystalline product phase (Fig. 1b). The latter is covered with unreacted SiO<sub>2</sub>. Electron diffraction identified the crystalline phase as fresnoite Ba<sub>2</sub>TiSi<sub>2</sub>O<sub>8</sub>. After 15 min of heating at 1000°C (Fig. 1c) the SiO<sub>2</sub> film is consumed by the reaction with the BaTiO<sub>3</sub> substrate. The position of the Pt marker in the middle of the product phase confirms that the diffusion processes during the reaction are transporting material in both directions, viz. inward (into the BaTiO<sub>3</sub> crystal) and outward (into the SiO<sub>2</sub> film). The relative contribution of both indiffusion and outdiffusion depends on the local conditions. Furthermore, there is a strong diffusion across the substrate surface. The reaction starts from a continuous SiO<sub>2</sub> film and ends with separated islands of fresnoite. After the reaction, the surface of the sample in Fig. 1c is covered with a gold film at room temperature. This gold film proves that the complex morphology of the film surface is not an artefact of thinning. The surface of BaTiO<sub>3</sub> on the right of the fresnoite island is about 50 nm below the Pt marker line. In this place, BaTiO<sub>3</sub> seems to be removed and to be transported to the remaining fresnoite islands owing to surface diffusion. Since originally, the SiO<sub>2</sub> film covered the whole surface, Si–O must have also been transported across the surface. The size of the fresnoite grains increases during prolonged annealing. While most of the Pt grains shown in Fig. 1c are embedded into one large fresnoite grain, the fresnoite grains in Fig. 1b are smaller. The reason for this different growth behaviour might be that the Pt islands are acting as nucleation sites for the formation of crystalline product phases. Initially, a large number of small fresnoite grains starts to grow at the (nucleation-promoting) Pt surfaces. Prolonged heating makes them recrystallize into larger fresnoite grains. X-ray diffraction of the Pt-marked reaction films shows the strongest lines of Ba<sub>2</sub>TiSi<sub>2</sub>O<sub>8</sub> (fresnoite) after 10 min of heating only. The sample heated for 30 min additionally contains well-oriented, topotaxially formed Ti-rich phases like Ba<sub>4</sub>Ti<sub>13</sub>O<sub>30</sub>. The Ti-rich phases grow with a direct contact interface to the BaTiO<sub>3</sub> substrate.<sup>12</sup> They are located below the Pt marker line.

The chemical composition of the glassy product phase shown in Fig. 1a is determined by an EDX line scan (shown in Fig. 3). The Ba and Ti reference spectra supplied from the EDX software as well as an experimental spectrum of the BaTiO<sub>3</sub> substrate are depicted in Fig. 2. The strongest lines, i.e. Ba Lα1 (at 4.466 keV) and Ti Kα (at 4.509 keV) overlap due to the limited EDX

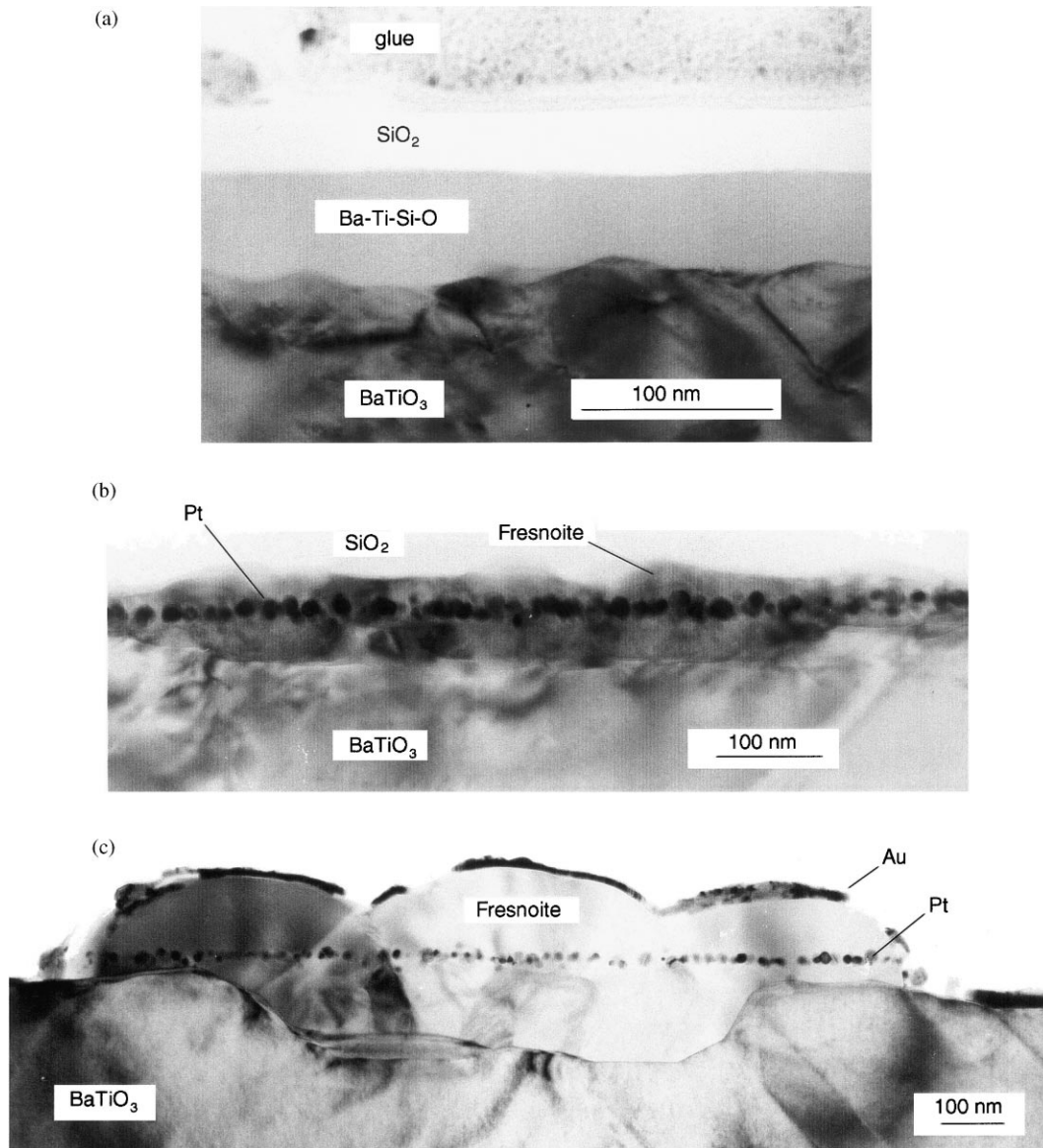


Fig. 1. TEM bright-field images of amorphous  $\text{SiO}_2$  films after the reaction with a  $\text{BaTiO}_3$  substrate at  $1000^\circ\text{C}$ : (a) 5 min, (b) 10 min, with Pt marker, (c) 15 min, with Pt marker.

energy resolution of about 140 eV (Fig. 2). (The spectra have been normalized with respect to the amplitude of the strongest line.) Fortunately, the Ba L spectrum also contains a series of weaker lines with higher energies, which do not overlap with the Ti  $\text{K}\alpha$  and  $\text{K}\beta$  lines.

The line scan software offers pre-defined channels centred around the strongest line of the element chosen. In the following, these pre-defined channels are marked by brackets [ ], while the physical X-ray lines are indicated by plain letters. Since the Ba-to-Ti concentration ratio cannot be determined from the intensities of the respective physical X-ray lines due to the above-mentioned overlap, this ratio has to be obtained in a more indirect way, viz. from the different X-ray intensities falling into some of the pre-defined channels. Due to their position with respect to the  $\text{Ba}_L$  and  $\text{Ti}_K$  reference spectra, the pre-defined

channels [ $\text{Ba}_L + \text{Ti}_K$ ], [ $\text{Ce}_L$ ] and [ $\text{Nd}_L$ ] turned out to be suitable, as shown in Fig. 2, with the lower and upper edges of each of these three pre-defined channels indicated by broken lines.

Indeed, the ratio of Ba to Ti can approximately be obtained from the following three channels: (i) [ $\text{Ba}_L + \text{Ti}_K$ ] ranging from 4.40 to 4.58 keV and covering the physical X-ray lines Ba  $\text{L}\alpha_1$  (4.466 keV) and Ti  $\text{K}\alpha_1$  (4.509 keV), (ii) [ $\text{Ce}_L$ ] ranging from 4.76 to 4.89 keV and covering the physical X-ray lines Ba  $\text{L}\beta_1$  (4.828 keV) and Ti  $\text{K}\beta_1$  (4.932 keV), and (iii) [ $\text{Nd}_L$ ] ranging from 5.16 to 5.28 keV covering *only* the physical X-ray line Ba  $\text{L}\beta_2$  (5.156 keV). Comparing the intensity of the [ $\text{Ba}_L + \text{Ti}_K$ ] channel with that of the [ $\text{Ce}_L$ ] and [ $\text{Nd}_L$ ] channels approximately reveals the Ba to Ti ratio in the glass as, for instance, the [ $\text{Nd}_L$ ] channel does not include

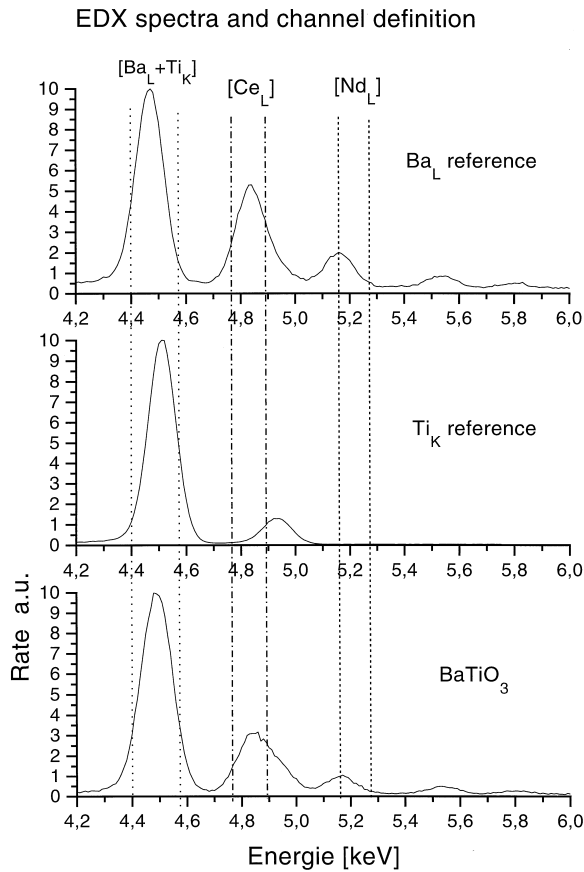


Fig. 2. Ba-L and Ti-K EDX reference spectra with overlapping lines, experimental BaTiO<sub>3</sub> substrate spectrum, and definition of the three pre-defined channels used for the line scans.

a titanium signal (for details see below). Fig. 3 shows line scans and calculated ratios of the channels [Ba<sub>L</sub> + Ti<sub>K</sub>], [Nd<sub>L</sub>] and [Ce<sub>L</sub>], corresponding to the lines of higher energy, as well as the [Si<sub>K</sub>] channel. The relative contribution of Ba and Ti to the three channels varies: Ba lines fall into all of the channels, whereas Ti is strong only in the [Ba<sub>L</sub> + Ti<sub>K</sub>] channel, weak in the [Ce<sub>L</sub>] channel and absent in the [Nd<sub>L</sub>] channel. Thus the ratio of the weaker [Ce<sub>L</sub>] and [Nd<sub>L</sub>] channels to the [Ba<sub>L</sub> + Ti<sub>K</sub>] channel implies some information about the element ratio Ba:Ti. Within the limits set by the statistical noise the ratio Ba:Ti does not change on moving from BaTiO<sub>3</sub> to the glassy product phase, i.e. the Ba:Ti ratio in the reacted glass is also about 1. From the change of the signal of the [Ba<sub>L</sub> + Ti<sub>K</sub>] channel at about 4.5 keV and the change of the [Si<sub>K</sub>] channel at 1.74 keV the molar ratio of (Ba plus Ti) to Si in the glassy product phase can be estimated at 15–18 mol%.

Though the oxygen O<sub>K</sub> line at 525 eV overlaps with the Ti<sub>L</sub> lines at 452 and 458 eV, the oxygen signal can be used to monitor the specimen thickness, because it dominates the intensity of the overall line formed by the overlap. Hence, the specimen proved to be quite flat, because scanning from the BaTiO<sub>3</sub> substrate into the

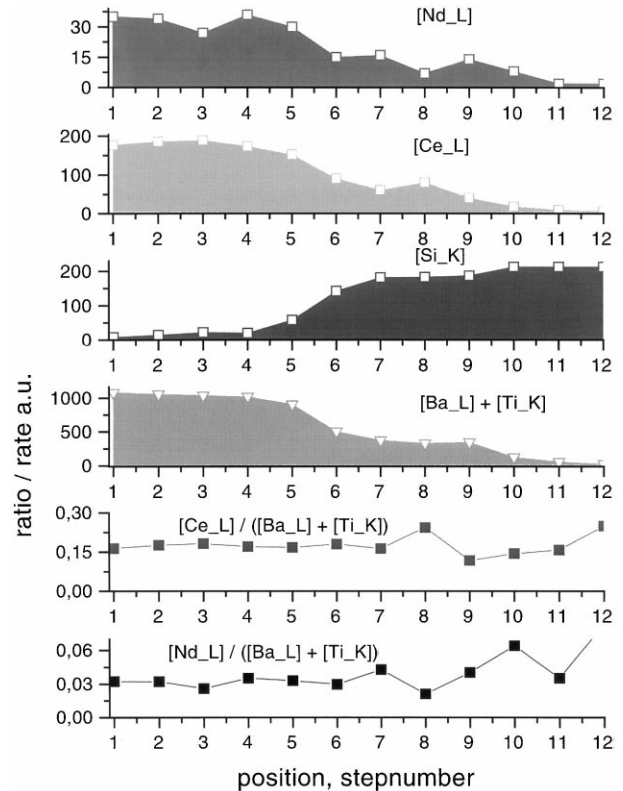


Fig. 3. EDX line scans across an amorphous SiO<sub>2</sub> film after the reaction with the BaTiO<sub>3</sub> substrate for 5 min at 1000°C. The scan started in the BaTiO<sub>3</sub> substrate (left). One step corresponds to a distance of 14

glass (not shown here) yielded a constant oxygen count rate. Only the upper part of the non-reacted SiO<sub>2</sub> film is wedge-shaped.

#### 4. Discussion

The discussion is divided into three parts. The first and second parts are concerned with our two main observations of (i) the formation and subsequent crystallization of a metastable Ba-Ti-Si-O glass during the reaction of a BaTiO<sub>3</sub> crystal with a SiO<sub>2</sub> film at 1000°C, and (ii) the fact that the element distribution in this glass is flat, i.e. the diffusion profiles of Ba and Ti in the reacted glass are identical in the limits of our experimental resolution. The third part discusses (iii) the influence of the above glass (and similar ones) on the densification of the ceramics at the initial stage of sintering.

(i). The formation of bulk samples of Ba-Ti-Si-O glass from oxide and carbonate precursors as well as their properties have been investigated by several authors. After Köppen and Dietzel, the melting temperature of Ba-Ti-Si-O glasses shows a flat minimum (≈1250°C) for Ba/Ti/Si compositions close to 25/25/50 at.%.<sup>13</sup> A glass with a lower content of Ba and Ti, viz. 16.6/16.6/66.6%, melts only at about 1600°C.<sup>13</sup> Ba-Ti-Si-O glasses are metastable and can be heated for some time

before they start to crystallize. The crystallization of fresnoite  $\text{Ba}_2\text{TiSi}_2\text{O}_8$  from glasses has been studied before with the aim to produce ultrasonic transducers consisting of a glass ceramic<sup>14</sup> and also to obtain pyroelectric glass ceramics.<sup>15</sup> Heating a glass of the composition of 18%  $\text{BaO}$ , 18%  $\text{TiO}_2$  and 64%  $\text{SiO}_2$  at a rate of 10 K/min revealed an exothermic crystallization peak at 860°C. Yamauchi et al. proved that a thin film was amorphous that had been obtained by sputtering a stoichiometric  $\text{Ba}_2\text{TiSi}_2\text{O}_8$  target at substrate temperatures lower than 170°C.<sup>16</sup> The film was poor in Ba, i.e. rich in Ti. The activation energy for the crystallization of the film was 370 kJ/mol. While heated at 850°C for up to 30 min, the film remained amorphous during an X-ray diffraction measurement. However, after 75 min of heating, sharp crystalline fresnoite reflections occurred. All these observations explain the crystallization of our Ba–Ti–Si–O glass after prolonged heating reasonably well.

In general, a reaction process resulting in a crystalline product phase requires the formation of a nucleus of a size above a critical minimum value. In our case, the reaction between the  $\text{BaTiO}_3$  substrate and the amorphous  $\text{SiO}_2$  film can, however, proceed without any nucleation, because the initial phase is amorphous, as is the intermediate product phase. A similar, even stronger preference of a glassy product phase is known from solid state amorphization: Two crystalline metals can react to form an intermediate glassy product phase, which crystallizes only upon prolonged annealing. In this case, too, the formation of the crystalline product phase is delayed because of the nucleation. In our system, one of the reactants is a glass, and the reaction at the  $\text{SiO}_2/\text{Ba–Ti–Si–O}$  interface can be considered a dissolution of Ba and Ti ions into the  $\text{SiO}_2$  glass. As discussed below, the diffusion of the *network modifier*  $\text{Ba}^{2+}$  into the  $\text{SiO}_2$  glass is certainly faster, whereas the  $\text{Ti}^{4+}$  ions should move more slowly owing to their *network-preserving* character and their higher charge. The necessity that both Ba and Ti ions dissolve into the glass determines the time evolution of the reaction. From the concentrations measured of Ba and Ti in the glass, which are rather low compared to the composition of the crystalline product phase  $\text{Ba}_2\text{TiSi}_2\text{O}_8$ , it can be concluded that the solubility of Ba and Ti in  $\text{SiO}_2$  is limited. Both ions are metastable in a  $\text{SiO}_2$  glass: at higher concentrations crystalline precipitates are formed, viz. barium silicate and  $\text{TiO}_2$  precipitates.

After the reaction, the surface of the  $\text{BaTiO}_3$  substrates shows a lateral waviness of several hundred nanometer in wavelength. Since the surface had initially been flat this waviness can be interpreted to result from the reaction partly propagating also into the  $\text{BaTiO}_3$  substrate. To elucidate this, the marker experiment has been performed, with a different reaction occurring, however: the product phase now immediately crystallizes, and the marker shows that the reaction proceeds now in both directions, viz. into the substrate and into the  $\text{SiO}_2$

film. If the  $\text{SiO}_2$  film is grown on top of a thin Pt layer, the surface of the Pt grains offers nucleation sites of a high density. Thus the product phase immediately crystallizes, with a polycrystalline film of fresnoite forming.

ii. The observed fact, according to which the Ba-to-Ti ratio in the glassy product phase is close to one, deserves a detailed discussion, because the diffusion coefficients of  $\text{Ba}^{2+}$  and  $\text{Ti}^{4+}$  in  $\text{SiO}_2$  are certainly different. As will be explained below, the former fact may be understood as the result of concentration-dependent diffusion coefficients.

The  $\text{Ba}^{2+}$  and  $\text{Ti}^{4+}$  ions differ in their behaviour in the  $\text{SiO}_2$  glass matrix:  $\text{Si}^{4+}$  can be replaced by  $\text{Ti}^{4+}$  without the need to break the network, whereas  $\text{Ba}^{2+}$  is a network modifier. In their study of Ti–Si–O glasses, Henderson and Fleet showed that low concentrations of Ti are indeed incorporated into the network of the glass, with  $\text{Ti}^{4+}$  being four-fold coordinated by oxygen.<sup>17</sup> Higher Ti concentrations resulted in a modified neighbourhood of Ti, with a mixture of four- and five-fold coordination occurring. A partial replacement of Si by Ti has also been observed in the crystalline solid solution  $\text{Ba}_2\text{Ti}_{1+x}\text{Si}_{2-x}\text{O}_8$  ( $0 < x < 0.14$ ).<sup>18</sup> Infra-red spectra proved that the excess Ti is indeed tetrahedrally coordinated in this substituted fresnoite crystal.

Contrary to  $\text{Ti}^{4+}$ ,  $\text{Ba}^{2+}$  does not fit into the network of the glass and locally changes the network into a state of weaker bonding. In such a glass of modified structure, the ions diffuse certainly faster than in a pure  $\text{SiO}_2$  glass. Accordingly, the diffusion coefficient of barium  $D_{\text{Ba}} = f_1(c_{\text{Ba}}, c_{\text{Ti}})$  increases with the Ba content  $c_{\text{Ba}}$  in the glass, at least for low concentrations. As a consequence, Ti should now also move faster in the Ba-modified glass:  $D_{\text{Ti}} = f_2(c_{\text{Ba}}, c_{\text{Ti}})$ . As a result, the titanium diffusion front is coupled to the barium front, which is the first precondition for the observed Ba-to-Ti ratio being close to one. Another prerequisite is that the solubilities of Ba and Ti, that depend on the respective concentrations and on temperature, are similar. Since these dependencies are not known, only a general shape of the functions can be used to interpret the element profile in the product phase as follows.

The reaction of  $\text{BaTiO}_3$  and  $\text{SiO}_2$  can be considered an indiffusion of Ba and Ti ions into the  $\text{SiO}_2$  glass matrix. In the literature, there are no results providing quantitative data about the simultaneous indiffusion of  $\text{Ba}^{2+}$  and  $\text{Ti}^{4+}$  into a  $\text{SiO}_2$  glass. *Self-diffusion* experiments of pure  $\text{SiO}_2$  show a relatively high activation energy. The activation energy for *viscous flow* in pure  $\text{SiO}_2$  glass is 6 eV,<sup>19</sup> which is identical with the activation energy of 6 eV of the self-diffusion of Si in vitreous glass.<sup>20</sup> The Si diffusion in  $\beta$ -quartz along the c-axis has an activation energy of 7.6 eV,<sup>21</sup> similar to the above values of the glass. Remarkably, the activation energies for the Si self-diffusion and viscous flow in pure  $\text{SiO}_2$  glass were thus found to be similar at temperatures between 1180 and 1400°C, which is above the glass temperature  $T_g$

( $\approx 1200^\circ\text{C}$ ) of  $\text{SiO}_2$ . At these temperatures,  $\text{SiO}_2$  has a high viscosity of the order of  $10^{10}$  to  $10^{12}$  Pa·s. The viscosity can be reduced by introducing network modifiers: A glass with  $\text{SiO}_2$ ,  $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$ ,  $\text{MgO}$ , and  $\text{CaO}$  as its main constituents (called a haplobasaltic silicate melt) has a viscosity of the order of only 1 Pa·s around  $1400^\circ\text{C}$ .<sup>22</sup> The activation energies of the self-diffusion of several elements ( $\text{Ba}^{2+}$ : 181 kJ/mol,  $\text{Ti}^{4+}$ : 206 kJ/mol) in this haplobasaltic silicate melt were similar to that of the viscous flow in the melt. The diffusion coefficients depended on the ionic radius and charge only weakly, decreasing by a factor of ten from  $\text{Mg}^{2+}$  to  $\text{U}^{5+/6+}$ . This correspondence of the activation energies of diffusion and viscosity over several orders of magnitude of the viscosity is valid only for ions that are incorporated into the network of the glass. Strong network modifiers like alkali elements, for instance, diffuse in a different way. Since the above silicon self-diffusion data for pure  $\text{SiO}_2$  had been measured above the glass temperature  $T_g$ , a diffusion temperature higher than the glass temperature seems to be necessary for a close relation between the activation energies of diffusion and viscosity.

Assuming that the diffusion in our silica-based glass proceeds via a mechanism obeying this relation, the increase of the diffusion coefficients can be described by the decrease of viscosity as soon as the network modifier  $\text{Ba}^{2+}$  is added to the  $\text{SiO}_2$  glass. Moreover, the glass temperature  $T_g$  decreases as soon as network modifiers are introduced. (For example,  $T_g$  of a glass of 35.7 mol%  $\text{BaO}$  and 64.3 mol%  $\text{SiO}_2$  is low, viz. near  $700^\circ\text{C}$ .<sup>23</sup>) After the reaction, the glass in our film contains about 8%  $\text{BaO}$  and 8%  $\text{TiO}_2$  so that most probably,  $T_g$  of this glass is below the reaction temperature of  $1000^\circ\text{C}$ . Thus, for our films the  $\text{Ba}^{2+}$  and  $\text{Ti}^{4+}$  diffusion can be considered a process with an activation energy similar to that of viscous flow. Compared to pure  $\text{SiO}_2$  glass, the viscosity of our  $\text{Ba-Ti-Si-O}$  glass is certainly several orders of magnitude lower, the diffusivities of  $\text{Ba}$  and  $\text{Ti}$  being considerably higher.

The mean diffusion coefficient  $D$  of  $\text{Ba}$  and  $\text{Ti}$  in the  $\text{Ba-Ti-Si-O}$  glass can be estimated from the observed width of the reaction zone  $x$  after time  $t$  from the relation  $x^2 = D \cdot t$ . With  $x = 50$  nm and  $t = 300$  s it follows that  $D = 8 \times 10^{-18}$  m<sup>2</sup>/s. Of course, this estimation at the best presents the order of magnitude of the diffusion coefficient, because the real processes cannot be modelled by applying Fick's first law. A better description would require the knowledge of other terms like the interface-flux resistance and the integration of concentration-dependent diffusion coefficients.

Quantitatively, the self-diffusion of network formers in a glass melt is described by the Eyring equation. It relates the diffusion coefficient  $D$  to the viscosity  $\eta$ :  $D = k \cdot T / (\eta \cdot \lambda)$ ;  $k$  is the Boltzmann constant and  $\lambda$  the diffusional jump distance. Using the diameter of an oxygen anion (0.27 nm) as an estimate of  $\lambda$  and the

above-estimated diffusion coefficient  $D$  results in the viscosity  $\eta \approx 8 \times 10^6$  Pa·s at  $1000^\circ\text{C}$ . This estimated value of the viscosity is of the same order of magnitude as that of  $10^5$  Pa·s of a glass containing 35.7 mol%  $\text{BaO}$  and 64.3 mol%  $\text{SiO}_2$  at  $1000^\circ\text{C}$  extrapolated from measurements around  $750^\circ\text{C}$ .<sup>20</sup> The glass formed in our thin film contained fewer network modifiers, thus probably implying a slightly higher viscosity. Hence, the simultaneous in-diffusion of the network modifiers  $\text{Ba}^{2+}$  and  $\text{Ti}^{4+}$  into  $\text{SiO}_2$  showing a viscosity of  $\eta \approx 10^7$  Pa·s seems to fulfil the Eyring equation, which originally had been established for the self-diffusion of network formers in a highly polymerized melt.

iii. The sintering of  $\text{BaTiO}_3$  ceramics can be modified by coating the  $\text{BaTiO}_3$  grains with a sintering aid prior to sintering. Abicht et al.<sup>4</sup> compared the compaction of green bodies with coatings of  $\text{Ba-Ti-Si-O}$ ,  $\text{Ti-O}$  and  $\text{Ti-Si-O}$  precursors. All these coatings reduced the activation energy of the initial sintering. Compared to the sintering of pure  $\text{BaTiO}_3$  the shrinking was faster and occurred at a lower temperature. The time/shrinking exponent during the first 10 min of heating was 1, thus pointing to a viscous mechanism during the initial sintering. The coating was about 10 nm thick, provided it was homogeneous. On the other hand, the experiments described here show the formation of a glassy reaction product during the first minutes of heating. Accordingly, the results of Abicht et al.<sup>4</sup> can be explained by a process similar to that observed in the present work. Since the coatings Abicht et al. used had been produced from precursors at low temperatures, most probably, they were amorphous. The crystallization of these glasses seems to be delayed, just as in our films. As a consequence, the glassy coating reduced the friction forces during the gliding of grains within the first minutes of sintering.

## 5. Conclusions

A glassy  $\text{Ba-Ti-Si-O}$  thin-film product phase is forming intermediately during the solid state reaction between an amorphous  $\text{SiO}_2$  film and a (001)  $\text{BaTiO}_3$  single crystal substrate. The incorporation of ions of both different valency ( $\text{Ba}^{2+}$  vs.  $\text{Ti}^{4+}$ ) and behaviour relative to the network of the glass (network modification vs. preservation) reduces the viscosity of this glassy  $\text{Ba-Ti-Si-O}$  film as compared to the initial, amorphous  $\text{SiO}_2$  film.

This model experiment suggests that, most probably, there is a similar process going on on the surfaces of the individual  $\text{BaTiO}_3$  grains during the sintering of  $\text{BaTiO}_3$  electroceramics using the sintering additive  $\text{SiO}_2$ . Thus the high densification rate Abicht et al. observed at temperatures well below the respective eutectic temperatures can now be explained by grain sliding processes made possible by the intermediate formation of a glassy mixed oxide film of low viscosity.

## Acknowledgements

Work performed within the framework of the Collaborative Research Center SFB 418 at the Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg. This work was supported by Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) via Sonderforschungsbereich 418. The authors are thankful to Professor U. Gösele for his valuable support and to Dr. E. Pippel for critically reading the manuscript.

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