

## Piezoelectric properties of undoped and titanium or barium-doped lead metaniobate ceramics

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### Abstract

Ferroelectric materials with high Curie temperature are highly desirable to construct transducers for high temperature piezoelectric applications. Among the ferroelectric materials  $\text{PbNb}_2\text{O}_6$  (PN) is one that display such characteristic. However, the fabrication of high density PN ceramics is very difficult, which limited the use in piezoelectric transducers. In this paper high density ( $\sim 95\%$ ) Ti- and Ba-doped PN ceramics were prepared through the conventional ceramic method. The electromechanical coefficients, such as coupling ( $k_{31}$ ,  $k_{33}$ ) and quality factors ( $Q_m$ ), were measured and compared in the investigated materials. The properties of “pure” PN were comparable to those observed in Ti- and Ba-modified PN ceramics. The addition of Ba to the PN ceramics decreased the Curie temperature (as compared to the pure PN), limiting the applicability in piezoelectric transducers for temperatures below  $350^\circ\text{C}$ . On the other hand, the addition of titanium not only increases the Curie temperature, but also contributes to the increase of the densification of the PN ceramics. Results showed that Ti doped PN ceramics present a high potential to be used in high temperature applications as piezoelectric transducers.

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### 1. Introduction

Lead metaniobate  $\text{PbNb}_2\text{O}_6$  (PN) is a ferroelectric material with a tungsten–bronze structure and orthorhombic symmetry in the ferroelectric phase.<sup>1–3</sup> Due to its high Curie temperature ( $T_c$ ) and low quality factor ( $Q$ ), this material has potentiality to be used in the fabrication of ultrasonic transducers, for high temperature applications, such as flow detectors devices (where the  $\text{Pb}(\text{Zr,Ti})\text{O}_3$  and other piezoelectric materials can not be used).<sup>4</sup>

Although the PN ceramics have excellent industrial applicability, they fabrication is extremely difficult. First, because the orthorhombic ferroelectric phase is only obtained after appropriate heat treatments.<sup>3,5,6</sup> Second, abnormal grain growth, cracks and the formation of undesirable phases (promoted by the PbO losses) may affect the densification of

the PN ceramics, difficulting the polarization<sup>5,6</sup> and, consequently, their use in ultrasonic transducers.

In order to avoid the aforementioned difficulties some elements may be used as additives in the PN structure. For example, the addition of barium<sup>7–9</sup> ( $\text{Pb}_x\text{Ba}_{1-x}\text{Nb}_2\text{O}_6$  or PBN<sub>x</sub>) contributes for the densification of this material, but highly reduce the Curie temperature, harming the high temperature applications. Others elements also added to the PN structure, such as Pb, Ca, Mn La and Ti,<sup>3,4,10</sup> have been used to increase the densification rate of the PN. An important characteristic is that the addition of Ti, not only increases the densification of the PN ceramic, but also increases the  $T_c$ ,<sup>3</sup> which is a desirable property for high temperature transducers. However, to obtain a single phase compound with orthorhombic ferroelectric phase, some authors<sup>5,6</sup> needed to use a quenching by dropping the sample into an empty beaker surrounded by pieces of ice. This procedure may be inconvenient in high quantities processing.

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In this work, highly densified Ti- and Ba-doped PN ceramics were prepared. The main piezoelectric properties were measured and compared between the studied materials, viewing the potential of these materials for high temperature applications.

## 2. Experimental

Ceramic powders with nominal formula  $\text{PbNb}_2\text{O}_6$  (PN),  $\text{Pb}_{0.75}\text{Ba}_{0.25}\text{Nb}_2\text{O}_6$  (PBN75) and  $\text{Pb}_{1+x}\text{Ti}_x\text{Nb}_{2-x}\text{O}_6$  (PTNx) were prepared by the solid-state reaction method. Analytical graded precursors (with an excess of 2 wt.%  $\text{PbO}$ , in the case of PN and PTN), were mixed in a ball mill, containing isopropyl alcohol and stabilized  $\text{ZrO}_2$  cylinders, during 20 h. The mixture was dried, and calcined at  $1050^\circ\text{C}$  for 3.5 h and ball milled again for 20 h. The powders of PN and PTN were heat treated at  $1300^\circ\text{C}$  for 1 h in order to obtain the room temperature orthorhombic ferroelectric phase. After the thermal treatment, 3 wt.% of  $\text{PbO}$  was added to compensate the lead losses during the sintering process, at  $1270^\circ\text{C}/4.5$  h. Similar sintering process was used for the PBN75 sample, where the addition of  $\text{PbO}$  excess and thermal treatment was not necessary to obtain the ferroelectric phase. This sample was prepared mainly to compare the effect of both dopants. X-ray diffraction technique was performed to a qualitative phase analysis and to determinate the lattice parameters at room temperature, using a Rigaku diffractometer and  $\text{Cu K}\alpha$  radiation. Computer assisted dielectric characterization was realized as a function of the temperature, using an HP 4194A impedance gain phase analyzer. The measurements were performed over a temperature range of  $24^\circ\text{C} < T < 650^\circ\text{C}$ , during heating and cooling process, at a constant rate of  $2^\circ\text{C}/\text{min}$ . The samples were cut with different geometries (bars and discs) to enable the piezoelectric characterization through the Gain–Bandwidth method.<sup>11</sup> Measurements of electrical resistivity versus temperature allowed to choose the poling temperature, which was  $150^\circ\text{C}$ . All samples were poled in this temperature with an electric field of  $4\text{ kV}/\text{mm}$  for 30 min.

## 3. Results and discussion

As mentioned in Section 1, the fabrication of a PN ceramic with a single phase is a difficult task. Lee and Kimura<sup>5,6</sup> studied the phase evolution of the PN ceramics, obtaining the ferroelectric phase through a thermal treatment at  $1300^\circ\text{C}$  and an appropriate quenching before the sintering of the ceramic bodies. In this work, the orthorhombic phase was obtained without the quenching. The addition of  $\text{PbO}$  in excess, during the fabrication process, allowed us to obtain PN ceramics with a single orthorhombic phase, as illustrated in Fig. 1.

In Fig. 2 can be observed the variation of the Curie temperature and the density of the sintered samples as a function of the Ti content. The density of PTN ceramics increases gradually with the increasing of the Ti content. The Curie

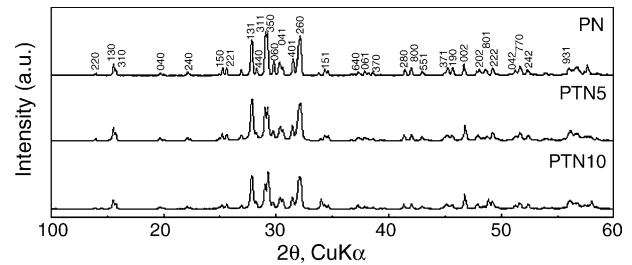


Fig. 1. X-ray diffraction patterns of the PN and PTN powders, heat treated at  $1300^\circ\text{C}$  during 1 h, with orthorhombic structure.

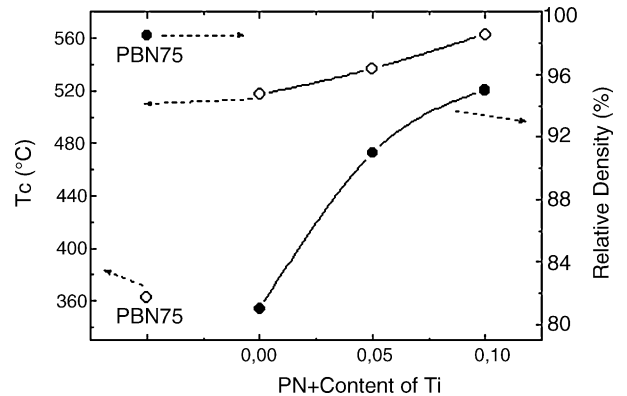


Fig. 2. Curie temperature ( $T_c$ ) and relative density, as a function of the Ti content, for the PTN ceramics and for PBN75.

temperature also increases with the Ti content, from approximately  $520^\circ\text{C}$  (for  $x=0$ ) up to  $560^\circ\text{C}$  (for  $x=0.1$ ). On the other hand, the addition of Ba ( $x=0.25$ ) allows the fabrication of higher densified ceramics when compared with PTNs, but decreases, in considerably form, the Curie temperature ( $\sim 360^\circ\text{C}$ ). This result, as mentioned above, practically destroys the high temperature potentiality of PN as piezoelectric materials.

Fig. 3 illustrates the behavior of the room temperature mechanical quality factor, for the thickness vibration mode, of a thin disc ( $Q_m$ ) and the relative dielectric permittivity ( $\epsilon_{33}/\epsilon_0$ ),

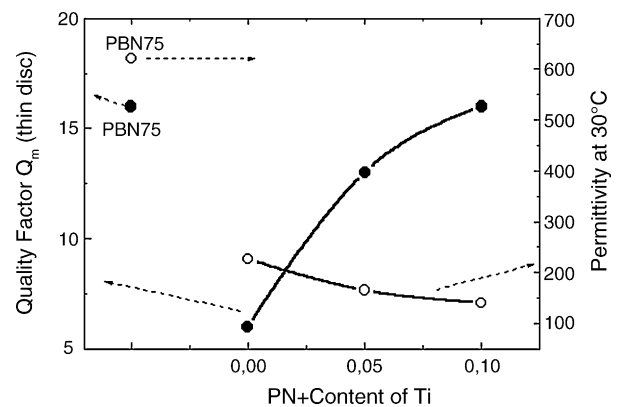


Fig. 3. Quality factor ( $Q_m$ ) and permittivity at room temperature, as a function of the Ti content, for the PTN ceramics and for PBN75.

Table 1

Dielectric and electromechanical properties for  $\text{Pb}_{1+x}\text{Ti}_x\text{Nb}_{2-x}\text{O}_6$  and  $\text{Pb}_{0.75}\text{Ba}_{0.25}\text{Nb}_2\text{O}_6$  ceramics

	Relative density	$k_{31}$	$k_{33}$	$k_{33}/k_{31}$	$Q_m$	$T_c$ (°C)	$\epsilon_{rt}$	$\epsilon_{max}$
PN	81.0	–	0.35	–	6	517	227	6960
PTN5	91.2	0.016	0.36	22.5	13	537	165	6133
PTN10	94.9	0.031	0.35	11.3	16	563	140	5621
PBN75	98.5	0.063	0.34	4.9	16	363	622	7584
Ref. <sup>6 a</sup>	~93	–	–	7.1 <sup>c</sup>	10	534	340	4000
Ref. <sup>6 b</sup>	~96	–	–	6.2 <sup>c</sup>	32	540	430	4700
Ref. <sup>4</sup>	–	–	4.1	–	22	540	–	–

$k_{31}$ : transverse coupling factor,  $k_{33}$ : longitudinal coupling factor,  $Q_m$ : mechanical quality factor, for the thickness vibration mode, of a thin disc,  $T_c$ : Curie temperature,  $\epsilon_{rt}$ : permittivity at room temperature,  $\epsilon_{max}$ : permittivity at the Curie temperature.

<sup>a</sup> Sample PN HT (C), sintered at 1250 °C.

<sup>b</sup> Sample: PN HT (F), sintered at 1250 °C.

<sup>c</sup>  $k_t/k_p$ .

as a function of the Ti content, for the PTN and PBN75 ceramics. It can be observed that the room temperature permittivity decreases as the Ti content is increased. This characteristic is particularly desirable for high frequencies applications. It can be also observed, that the permittivity remains nearly constant, from room temperature up to approximately 400 °C, which provide a high stability when used in transducers. Otherwise, the addition of Ba increases the permittivity when compared to those doped with Ti. The permittivity at room temperature for PBN75 is about four times higher than that for PTN10. On the other hand, the quality factor is low for all samples (<20), comparable with those of soft piezoceramics. Materials with a low quality factor are suitable for wide band ultrasonic transducers.

Table 1 summarizes the main dielectric and piezoelectric properties for the studied ceramics. As can be observed, the longitudinal coupling factor ( $k_{33}$ ) remains invariant, around 0.35, independently of the Ti or Ba content. The transverse coupling factor ( $k_{31}$ ) could not be measured in the pure PN sample, because the piezoelectric activity is very small, inhibiting the necessary signals to the calculation. Nevertheless, this property experiments a progressive increase when the Ti content is increased, diminishing the  $k_{33}/k_{31}$  ratio. On the other hand, the maximal permittivity (at the Curie temperature), decreases with increasing Ti content, contrary to the Ba doping, that favors the increase of this property. A large piezoelectric anisotropy ( $k_{33}/k_{31}$ ) is desirable to improve the performance ultrasonic transducers that work in thickness mode, because of the practically absence of the planar vibrations influence. As can be observed in Table 1, although the addition of Ti or Ba in PN ceramics decreases the piezoelectric anisotropy, it remains considerably higher than that observed in the conventional piezoceramics (for example, for PZT's, where  $k_{33}/k_{31} \sim 1$ ).

#### 4. Conclusions

High densities PN ceramics were fabricated using Ti and Ba, as doping elements. An alternative method was followed to obtain the room temperature ferroelectric orthorhombic

phase. The addition of PbO excess, before calcination and sintering, compensated the lead mass losses during thermal treatments. In addition, an appropriate heat treatment at 1300 °C, during 1 h, allowed the obtaining of the orthorhombic phase, without the need of a quenching stage. Also, it was observed that the addition of Ti and Ba increased the densification degree. PN ceramics with  $x=0.1$  of Ti, reached the 95% of the theoretical density. This value is very difficult to obtain in the pure PN, by using conventional method. On the other hand, Ti doping increases the Curie temperature and the quality factor and decreases the permittivity. Our results showed that PTN ceramics present high potential to be used in piezoelectric transducers to operate in high temperature and high frequencies. The improved piezoelectric anisotropy of the PTN ceramics is an additional feature for their potential for ultrasonic applications.

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