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Bi$^{3+}$ Luminescence in ABiO$_2$Cl ($A = \text{Sr, Ba}$) and BaBiO$_2$Br

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Abstract

Trivalent bismuth luminescence is reported in three Sillen bismuth oxyhalide phases, SrBiO$_2$Cl, BaBiO$_2$Cl, and BaBiO$_2$Br. These compounds exhibit Bi 6s$^6p$ $\rightarrow$ 6s$^2$ emission under UV and X-ray radiation. At room temperature, BaBiO$_2$Cl shows the most intense light emission, with spectral and decay properties similar to those found in Bi$_4$Ge$_3$O$_{12}$ (BGO). At low temperatures, each phase show an increase in the photoluminescence intensities and a narrowing of the emission peaks. In contrast to the temperature dependence of BGO, X-ray excited luminescence intensities of all three phases remain relatively constant throughout the temperature range 10 – 295 K. This result indicates that the Sillen phases undergo less thermal quenching than BGO. The low temperature and room temperature radio-luminescence decay times were determined from pulsed x-ray measurements. At room temperature, SrBiO$_2$Cl exhibits faster decays than BGO, while, BaBiO$_2$Cl and BaBiO$_2$Br have decay times similar to BGO.
1. Introduction

Trivalent bismuth cations in inorganic compounds or hosts commonly exhibit interesting luminescence properties originating from the excitation and relaxation of its 6s\(^2\) inert lone pair electrons [1-7]. In this regard, an investigation of compounds containing Bi\(^{3+}\) has great potential towards the discovery of new intrinsically luminescent materials. We present three bismuth oxyhalide phases, SrBiO\(_2\)Cl, BaBiO\(_2\)Cl, and BaBiO\(_2\)Br, that exhibit such Bi\(^{3+}\) luminescence. In general, the Sillen bismuth oxyhalide phases (ABi\(^{3+}\)O\(_2\)X, where A = divalent cation and X = Cl, Br, I) have garnered significant attention with interests centered around their catalytic properties [8, 9] and interesting crystal structures [10-15]. This work introduces photo- and radio-luminescence properties of these three members of the Sillen bismuth oxyhalide family. Their luminescence properties are compared to Bi\(_4\)Ge\(_3\)O\(_{12}\) (BGO), an important material with electro-optic [16, 17], nonlinear optic [18], and scintillation [2, 7] capabilities. The preparation, photoluminescence, and time resolved x-ray luminescence of these compounds are detailed in this report.

2. Experimental

The oxychlorides, SrBiO\(_2\)Cl and BaBiO\(_2\)Cl, were synthesized from 1:1 molar ratios of the corresponding alkali earth carbonate, SrCO\(_3\) (99.999 %, Strem) or BaCO\(_3\) (99.8 %, Alfa Aesar) and BiOCl (99.999 %, Alfa Aesar). BaBiO\(_2\)Br was synthesized from 3:1:1 molar ratio of BaCO\(_3\), Bi\(_2\)O\(_3\) (99.999 %, Strem), and BiBr\(_3\) (98+ %, Strem). For each sample, the reactant powders were thoroughly ground together into a
homogeneous mixture using a mortar and pestle, transferred to an alumina boat, and subsequently heated in air at 800 °C for 10 hours in a tube furnace. White (SrBiO$_2$Cl and BaBiO$_2$Cl) or light yellow (BaBiO$_2$Br) polycrystalline powders were obtained from these reactions.

Crystal phase identifications were performed on a Siemens D500 powder X-ray diffractometer using 1.540510 Å Cu Kα radiation, a range of 10 – 50° (2θ), a scan interval of 0.09°/step, and a step rate of 1°/sec. All luminescence measurements were conducted on samples consisting of 5 – 20 µm sized particles contained in quartz cuvettes. Low temperature (10 – 250 K) and room temperature (295 K) photo- and radio-luminescence spectra were measured for each Sillen phase, along with a standard Bi$_4$Ge$_3$O$_{12}$ (BGO) sample. Photoluminescence excitation and emission spectra were collected on a Horiba Fluorolog 3 fluorescence spectrometer within the spectral range of 250 nm – 800 nm using excitation and emission slit widths of 3 nm. Each excitation spectrum was taken while observing emission at the predetermined emission wavelength maxima, and likewise, the emission spectra was taken while exciting at the sample’s excitation wavelength maxima. Radio-luminescence decay measurements were performed utilizing an in-house pulsed X-ray system that produces 80 ps (fwhm) pulses of X-rays having a mean energy of 18 keV. Fluorescent photons from the sample are detected by a microchannel phototube with 35 ps (fwhm) response [19]. The luminescence decay times were determined by fitting the data to multiexponential decay curves [19]. An Advanced Research Systems, Inc. ARS2-A closed-cycle helium refrigerator was used for the low temperature measurements.
3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Photoluminescence

The energy levels of interest for luminescent ns\(^2\) cations (e.g., Pb\(^{2+}\), Sn\(^{2+}\), and Bi\(^{3+}\)) are the ground state, \(^1S_0\), and the four excited states (in order of increasing energy), \(^3P_0\), \(^3P_1\), \(^3P_2\), and \(^1P_1\) (see Fig. 1). Transitions between \(^1S_0\) and \(^3P_0\), \(^3P_1\), or \(^3P_2\) are spin forbidden, however, the \(^3P_1\) level undergoes mixing with \(^1P_1\) by spin-orbit coupling, allowing the \(^1S_0 \leftrightarrow ^3P_1\) transitions that are frequently observed in photoluminescence measurements[1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 20]. The \(^1S_0 \rightarrow ^1P_1\) transition is also observed in some materials. In the case of Bi\(^{3+}\), broad emission peaks, whose number and positions depend on the crystal field around the cation, and large Stokes shifts are commonly observed [1, 3, 4, 7, 20, 21]. All three Sillen phases are isostructural, crystallizing in the orthorhombic space group Cmcm [13]. Each bismuth cation has \(C_4v\) site symmetry with coordination to eight substituents (4O + 4Cl) in a square antiprismatic arrangement. Excitation and emission spectra of each Sillen phase is presented in Fig. 2. A broad, undefined excitation peak and one emission peak are observed for each Sillen phase and BGO. As reported in Table 1, at 295 K, the excitation peak maxima and emission peak maxima of SrBiO\(_2\)Cl, BaBiO\(_2\)Cl, and BaBiO\(_2\)Br occur at 280 and 430; 300 and 490; and 305 and 500 nm, respectively. The Stokes shifts of SrBiO\(_2\)Cl, BaBiO\(_2\)Br, and BaBiO\(_2\)Cl are calculated to be 12,500, 12,800, and 12,900 cm\(^{-1}\), are as expected from the heterotypic bonding of the bismuth cations in these phases. The strontium compound exhibits slightly bluer excitation and emission bands owing to the nephelauxetic effect [1, 22]. In this case, the Sr - O(X) bonds are more ionic than the Ba – O(X) bonds contributing to the shorter excitation wavelength for SrBiO\(_2\)Cl. Following this trend, the lower
Electronegativity of bromine correlates to the smaller Stokes shift found for BaBiO$_2$Br in comparison to BaBiO$_2$Cl. For all three Sillen phases, the excitation and emission bands are assigned to transitions between the $^1S_0$ ground state and the $^3P_1$ excited state.

The intensities of the photoemission peaks of the Sillen phases, SrBiO$_2$Cl, BaBiO$_2$Cl, and BaBiO$_2$Br, are shown in Fig. 3 for temperature range 10 K - 295 K. At low temperatures, the emission peaks narrow and the emission intensities increase for Bi$_4$Ge$_3$O$_{12}$ (BGO) [2, 5, 7] and for the three Sillen phases. From 10 – 77 K the emission intensities are relatively constant. As the temperature increases from 77 K to 295 K, the emission intensities decrease by 29%, 73%, and 88% for SrBiO$_2$Cl, BaBiO$_2$Br, and BaBiO$_2$Cl, respectively. In BaBiO$_2$Cl and BaBiO$_2$Br, the highest photoluminescence intensities occur at 77 K, while the largest intensity for SrBiO$_2$Cl occurred at 20 K. At temperatures < 295 K, the emission wavelengths shift to 545 nm for BaBiO$_2$Cl and 550 nm for BaBiO$_2$Br, whereas in SrBiO$_2$Cl, the emission maxima stays the same. This nonshift indicates that the photoemissive states of SrBiO$_2$Cl are less thermally influenced relative to the other two Sillen phases. This observation was further confirmed by the stability of the emission intensities with variation of temperature for SrBiO$_2$Cl, (see Fig. 3). Of the Sillen phases investigated, BaBiO$_2$Cl exhibits the most intense photoluminescence, 1.73 times that of BGO, at room temperature, however, as described below, it does not translate into high radioluminosity (see Table 1).

3.2 X-ray Luminescence

Pulsed x-ray measurements were performed on polycrystalline samples of the three Sillen phases and BGO. The room temperature x-ray excited luminosities of
SrBiO$_2$Cl, BaBiO$_2$Br, and BaBiO$_2$Cl are found to be 24 %, 27 %, and 81 % of the luminescence found for BGO (Table 1). As shown in Fig. 4, the two barium bismuth oxyhalides exhibit consistent luminosities throughout the temperature range 10 K - 250 K. SrBiO$_2$Cl behaves in a manner similar to BGO at temperatures >100 K, where nonradiative thermal quenching processes compete with radiative transitions. However, the x-ray excited emissive states of BaBiO$_2$Cl and BaBiO$_2$Br are temperature dependent only at temperatures > 250 K, where the luminosities decrease slightly.

The time resolved decay measurements yield multiexponential decays for all three Sillen phases (see Fig. 5). At low temperatures, the majority of the X-ray excited emission have decay times > 1000 ns. As the temperature increases, the decay time components for all three Sillen compounds decrease, as shown for BaBiO$_2$Cl in Fig. 6. A complete listing of the three largest decay components and their fractions for SrBiO$_2$Cl, BaBiO$_2$Cl, BaBiO$_2$Br, and BGO measured at various temperatures can be found in Appendix A. The strontium compound, SrBiO$_2$Cl, exhibits relatively fast decay times of 50, 200, and 300 ns at 295 K for its most significant decay components when compared to the other two Sillen compounds and BGO. The shorter decay times observed at higher temperatures are attributed to nonradiative quenching commonly found in Bi$^{3+}$-activated materials. This is usually accompanied by significantly lower luminosities at high temperatures, however, the radio-luminescence observed in BaBiO$_2$Cl and BaBiO$_2$Br are not as temperature dependent in comparison to the luminosities found in SrBiO$_2$Cl and BGO.
5. Conclusion

Three Sillen bismuth oxyhalides, SrBiO$_2$Cl, BaBiO$_2$Cl, and BaBiO$_2$Br were found to exhibit photo- and radio-luminescence. Their luminosities originate from the $^3P_1 \rightarrow ^1S_0$ emission of the Bi$^{3+}$ luminescent ion. At low temperatures, the radio-luminescence decay times increase, the photo-emission wavelengths shift to lower energy (in the case of the barium phases only), and the photo-emission bands narrow. These features are explained by the decrease in thermal population of the excited states at low temperatures. The three Sillen compounds have been characterized for their optical and scintillation properties and compared to Bi$_4$Ge$_3$O$_{12}$ (BGO).

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Appendix A. Radio-luminescence decay constants and fractional contributions at various temperatures for SrBiO$_2$Cl, BaBiO$_2$Cl, BaBiO$_2$Br, and Bi$_4$Ge$_3$O$_{12}$.

<table>
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<th>Temperature (K)</th>
<th>SrBiO$_2$Cl</th>
<th>BaBiO$_2$Cl</th>
<th>BaBiO$_2$Br</th>
<th>Bi$_4$Ge$<em>3$O$</em>{12}$</th>
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References


Figure Captions

Fig. 1. Sketch of Bi$^{3+}$ energy levels and possible electronic transitions.

Fig. 2. Room temperature excitation and emission spectra of SrBiO$_2$Cl, BaBiO$_2$Cl (and BaBiO$_2$Br, and Bi$_4$Ge$_3$O$_{12}$ (BGO). Intensities normalized to the emission peak maxima of BGO. Note: $\lambda$ - emission and excitation wavelengths used in measurements.

Fig. 3. Temperature dependence of the photoluminescence of SrBiO$_2$Cl, BaBiO$_2$Cl and BaBiO$_2$Br. (Excitation wavelengths identical to those used in Fig. 2)

Fig. 4. Temperature dependence of radio-luminescence of SrBiO$_2$Cl, BaBiO$_2$Cl, BaBiO$_2$Br, and Bi$_4$Ge$_3$O$_{12}$.

Fig. 5. Radio-luminescence decay curves of SrBiO$_2$Cl, BaBiO$_2$Cl, BaBiO$_2$Br, and Bi$_4$Ge$_3$O$_{12}$ at room temperature.

Fig. 6. Temperature dependence of the multiexponential decay of BaBiO$_2$Cl.
Table 1. Densities, relative radioluminescence intensities, and emission wavelengths of ABiO$_2$Cl ($A = \text{Sr, Ba}$), BaBiO$_2$Br, and Bi$_4$Ge$_3$O$_{12}$ at room temperature.

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<th>Density</th>
<th>Relative Radioluminescence</th>
<th>Emission maxima (nm)</th>
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Fig. 1
Fig. 2.
Fig. 3.
Fig. 4.
Fig. 5.
Fig. 6.