

VI. High permittivity microwave dielectrics

Microwave (MW) dielectric ceramics have been used in mobile communications, satellite television broadcasts, radar, Global Position System (GPS), Wireless Fidelity (WiFi) and other modern communication systems as dielectric resonator (DR), filters, duplexers and substrates, for almost half a century due to their high dielectric permittivity (ϵ_r), high Qf ($Q \sim$ MW quality factor and $f \sim$ resonant frequency) and small temperature coefficient of resonant frequency (TCF). Since the first report of MW dielectrics in the BaO – TiO₂ binary system, ceramics with a range of ϵ_r , high Qf and near-zero TCF such as the Ba(Zn, Mg, Co)_{1/3}(Nb, Ta)_{2/3}O₃, (Sr, Ca)TiO₃ – LnAlO₃ (Ln = La, Nd, Sm), (Zr, Sn)TiO₄ and BaO–Ln₂O₃–TiO₂ have been developed for use from 300MHz \sim 40GHz by leading corporations such as Murata, Kyocera, EPCOS and Trans-Tech. In general, the roadmap for the development of MW dielectric materials^{2–4,6} may be separated into the following key target areas where there is a technology pull from systems engineers and the absence suitable materials: 1) Expanding the range of ϵ_r . Currently, most high Qf, zero TCF materials have $20 < \epsilon_r < 50$ (base station resonators/antenna substrates) but there is a strong technology pull for $5 < \epsilon_r < 20$ (higher bandwidth antenna substrates), $60 < \epsilon_r < 70$ (base station resonators) and $\epsilon_r > 120$ (ultra-small GPS antenna substrates).

2) Low sintering temperature technology. The drive is to create a range of low temperature co-fired ceramics (LTCC) compatible with Ag electrodes (sintering temperature 960°) or ultra-low temperature co-fired ceramics (ULTCC) compatible with Al as inner electrodes (sintering temperature $< 660^\circ\text{C}$).

3) Ultrahigh Qf ceramics ($>200,000$ GHz).The focus here is to optimize Qf to achieve better selectivity to a specific frequency, critical for the transition from 4G to 5G technology in mobile telecommunications.

4) Compositions based on low cost, abundant constituents. Here, the technology is driven by scarcity, environmental concerns and geopolitical uncertainty surrounding raw materials such as Ta_2O_5 , Nb_2O_5 , and Ln_2O_3 (Ln = lanthanide).

Generically, MW dielectric ceramics are oxides, principally due to the large ionic polarizability of the O^{2-} ion. Binary compounds, such as MgO , TiO_2 , Bi_2O_3 , TeO_2 , Al_2O_3 and CeO_2 , possess high Q_f and in some cases useful ϵ_r but invariably have large positive/negative TCF. Hence, ternary and higher compounds or composites are often explored to obtain temperature stable microwave dielectric ceramics with high Q_f ¹⁻¹⁵. The key to success in MW ceramic development is therefore in choosing, either an adaptable crystal structure to form solid solutions or immiscible end members to form composites that have no or limited interaction. Perovskite is the most adaptable crystal structure to form solid solution for MW ceramics (ABO_3) since a large number of metallic elements may occupy the A and B sites in accordance with the Goldschmidt tolerance factor, $t = (R_A + R_B) / \sqrt{(R_B + R_O)}$ where R_A , R_B and R_O are the ionic radii of the A – B - and O -site. Perovskites dominate medium and high permittivity commercial MW dielectrics in the range $25 < \epsilon_r < 60$ and $\epsilon_r > 90$ ⁸⁻¹³. Although efforts have been made to explore novel complex perovskite-structured microwave dielectrics with $\epsilon_r \sim 65$, only limited progress has been achieved with $Q_f < 12,500\text{GHz}$.²⁸ Moreover, it is difficult to lower the sintering temperatures of perovskites and related microwave dielectrics to meet the requirements of LTCC technology. For example, commercial tungsten bronze structured compounds achieve $70 < \epsilon_r < 90$ and $8,000 < Q_f < 12,000\text{GHz}$ when sintered to full density. If the sintering temperature is lowered to $\sim 900^\circ\text{C}$ by the addition of glass, ϵ_r and Q_f decrease to ~ 65 and $< 6,000\text{GHz}$, respectively. Despite the great potential of LTCC technology and a substantial body of work in the scientific literature, suppliers such as Dupont and Ferro offer only a limited range of commercial LTCC materials.

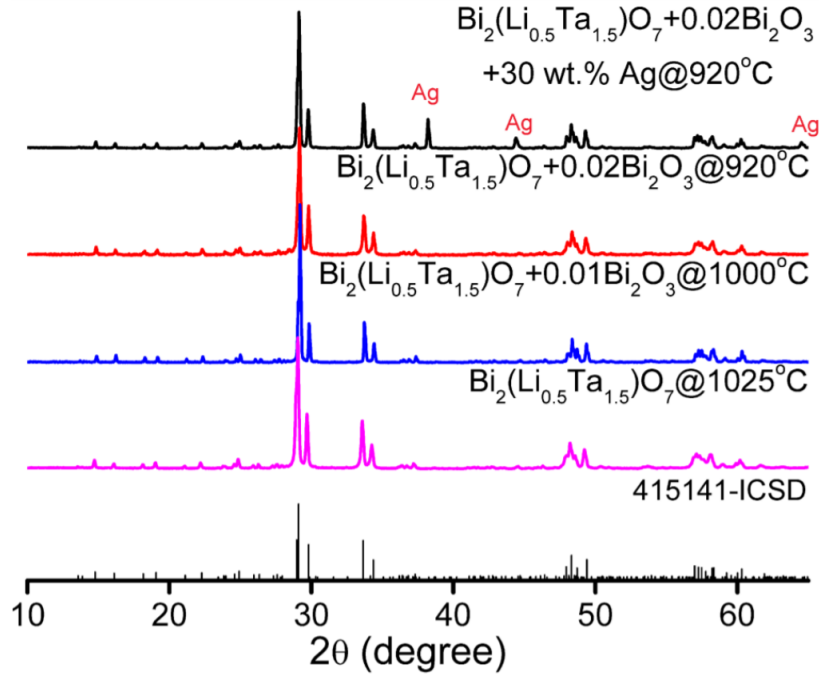


Рис. 1: XRD patterns of the $\text{Bi}_2(\text{Li}_{0.5}\text{Ta}_{1.5})\text{O}_7 + x\text{Bi}_2\text{O}_3$ ($x = 0, 0.01$ and 0.02) ceramics sintered at different temperatures and co-fired with $\text{Bi}_2(\text{Li}_{0.5}\text{Ta}_{1.5})\text{O}_7 + 0.02\text{Bi}_2\text{O}_3$ and 30 wt. % silver powders

Figure 1 shows the XRD patterns of $\text{Bi}_2(\text{Li}_{0.5}\text{Ta}_{1.5})\text{O}_7 + x\text{Bi}_2\text{O}_3$ ($x = 0, 0.01$ and 0.02) ceramics sintered at different temperatures and co-fired with 30 wt. % silver powder. As reported by Muktha et al.,³² undoped $\text{Bi}_2(\text{Li}_{0.5}\text{Ta}_{1.5})\text{O}_7$ crystalize in a variant of the Aurivillius structure with a monoclinic, $C2/c$ space group. The diffraction peaks from 415141-ICSD (Inorganic Crystal Structure Database) are also plotted in Figure 1. All peaks were attributed to a single $\text{Bi}_2(\text{Li}_{0.5}\text{Ta}_{1.5})\text{O}_7$ phase when sintered at their optimal temperatures with no evidence of second phase, despite the addition of excess Bi_2O_3 . Although it is possible that excess Bi_2O_3 becomes incorporated in the lattice, Bi-rich phases may also exist but below the detection limit of the XRD equipment used within this study. Results from Rietveld structural refinements are shown in Figure S1 of the supplementary material.