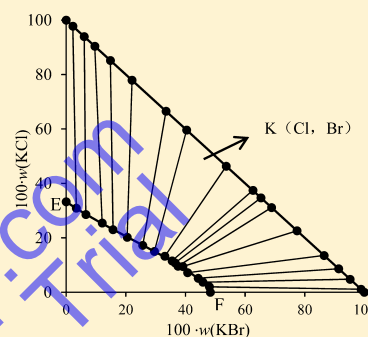


Solid–Liquid Equilibria in the Ternary System KCl–KBr–H<sub>2</sub>O at 348 KYong-Xia Hu,<sup>†,‡</sup> Shi-Hua Sang,<sup>\*,†,‡</sup> Rui-Zhi Cui,<sup>†,‡</sup> and Si-Yao Zhong<sup>†,‡</sup><sup>†</sup>College of Materials Chemistry & Chemical Engineering and <sup>‡</sup>Mineral Resources Chemistry Key Laboratory of Sichuan Higher Education Institutions, Chengdu University of Technology, Chengdu 610059, Sichuan, P. R. China

**ABSTRACT:** Phase equilibria in the ternary system KCl–KBr–H<sub>2</sub>O at 348 K were studied by the isothermal solution dissolution equilibrium method. The solubilities of salts and densities of saturated solutions in the ternary system were determined experimentally. The equilibrium solid phases were also determined by chemical analysis and X-ray powder diffraction. Using the experimental data, the phase diagram of the ternary system was obtained, which comprises one univariant curve and one stationary phase in the crystallization field of K(Cl,Br). The ternary system was a solid solution type. The density transformation rules were discussed simply, and the relationship equations of equilibrium liquid phase and the solid phase composition data were fitted with a cubic equation.

Equilibrium phase diagram of the ternary system KCl–KBr–H<sub>2</sub>O at 348 K.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

There is mounting concern about high-salinity liquid mineral resources because of the gradual consumption of solid resources. In particular, China has very abundant liquid mineral resources, which are mainly concentrated in Qinghai, Tibet, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, and the Sichuan Basin. Especially, the brine resources in the west of Sichuan Basin of China are very rare liquid mineral resources in the world. The underground brine is mainly composed of Na<sup>+</sup>, K<sup>+</sup>, Cl<sup>−</sup>, Br<sup>−</sup>, SO<sub>4</sub><sup>2−</sup>, B<sub>4</sub>O<sub>7</sub><sup>2−</sup>·H<sub>2</sub>O, etc.<sup>1</sup> The potassium, boron, and bromine contents in the hydrochemistry of brines are far beyond the lower grades of the comprehensive industrial utilization. The highest content of potassium (K<sup>+</sup>) in the brines is up to 53.27 g·L<sup>−1</sup>, much higher than those in the Searles salt lake brine (USA) (23.1 g·L<sup>−1</sup>), the Zabuye salt lake brine in Tibet, China (27.0 g·L<sup>−1</sup>), and the Qarhan salt lake brine in Qinghai (12.1 g·L<sup>−1</sup>).<sup>2,3</sup> These rare liquid mineral resources have very good exploitation prospects. Generally speaking, phase equilibria and phase diagrams are the theoretical basis of the exploitation and utilization of the underground brine resources. A number of experimental and theoretical studies have been carried out in recent decades on K-bearing phase equilibria such as in the ternary system K–Li–B<sub>4</sub>O<sub>7</sub>–H<sub>2</sub>O at 288 K, K–SO<sub>4</sub>–B<sub>4</sub>O<sub>7</sub>–H<sub>2</sub>O at 348 K, the quaternary system Na–K–Ca–Cl–H<sub>2</sub>O at 288.15 K,<sup>4–6</sup> the quinary system Na–K–Cl–SO<sub>4</sub>–B<sub>4</sub>O<sub>7</sub>–H<sub>2</sub>O at 298 K and 323 K, and Ca–Sr–K–Na–Cl–H<sub>2</sub>O at 316 K to 412 K;<sup>7–9</sup> as well, the measurements and calculation of the solid–liquid equilibria of the quaternary system Na–K–Br–SO<sub>4</sub>–H<sub>2</sub>O at 323 K have also been studied by our group.<sup>10</sup>

Recently, study on phase equilibria with Br-bearing systems has been attracted more and more attention. Christov has made a series of research work in predicting the solubilities of bromides and solution behavior in solid–liquid equilibrium systems, and the thermodynamic modeling was made with Pitzer equations, having comparatively high calculating precision and good practicability.<sup>11–16</sup> In addition, the Br-bearing phase equilibria

of some ternary, quaternary, and quinary subsystems of the underground brine in the Western Sichuan basin have been carried out in a systematic research program by our group: K–B<sub>4</sub>O<sub>7</sub>–Br–H<sub>2</sub>O at 298 K,<sup>17</sup> K–Cl–Br–H<sub>2</sub>O at 373 K,<sup>18</sup> Na–K–Br–SO<sub>4</sub>–H<sub>2</sub>O at 323 K,<sup>10</sup> Na–Cl–Br–SO<sub>4</sub>–H<sub>2</sub>O at 323 K and 348 K,<sup>19,20</sup> K–Cl–Br–SO<sub>4</sub>–H<sub>2</sub>O at 323 K, 348 K and 373 K,<sup>21–23</sup> Na–Cl–Br–B<sub>4</sub>O<sub>7</sub>–H<sub>2</sub>O at 348 K, and K–Cl–Br–B<sub>4</sub>O<sub>7</sub>–H<sub>2</sub>O at 373 K.<sup>23,24</sup> Furthermore, we will make further calculations on the basis of experiments in the near future. In terms of these Br-bearing systems, we have found that they can form solid solutions while containing Cl<sup>−</sup> and Br<sup>−</sup>.

The solid phases in salt–water systems are usually pure salts, complex salts, or salt hydrates, but solid solutions are rarely met.<sup>25</sup> Since chlorine and bromine have similar ion radii, their chemical properties as salts are closely related. When the coexistence of Cl<sup>−</sup> and Br<sup>−</sup> precipitates a concentrated salt solution, the bromine does not form an independent mineral, and most of it cannot remain in the mother liquor; only a small number replace the chlorine ion in the form of isomorphism, entering the lattice of salt and other chloride.<sup>26</sup> Data on structural arrangement, crystal imperfection, and thermodynamic stability of natural and synthesized crystals of variable compositions, obtained in complex experimental and theoretical researches, formed a solid basis for a fundamental theory, though interpretations of some phenomena still remain ambiguous. The equilibrium data of the KCl–KBr–H<sub>2</sub>O system are numerous, as presented by the authors.<sup>27–29</sup> However, the solubility data involving solid solutions have not been reported very frequently especially at superoptimal temperatures. Hence, it is very necessary to conduct more in-depth study.

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By now, a series of efforts describing solid solutions containing  $\text{Cl}^-$  and  $\text{Br}^-$  have been reported for such ternary systems as  $\text{K}-\text{Cl}-\text{Br}-\text{H}_2\text{O}$  at 298 K, 313 K, 323 K and 333 K and  $\text{Na}-\text{Cl}-\text{Br}-\text{H}_2\text{O}$  at 313 K and 333 K.<sup>30–32</sup> In early studies, corresponding solid phase composition data had been seldom reported; however, aiming at those solid solution phase systems, we concluded that there is a correlation between the solid solution composition and the liquid phase composition. For this reason, our research work focuses on the ternary system  $\text{KCl}-\text{KBr}-\text{H}_2\text{O}$  at 348 K, which is one subsystem of the underground brines. So far, the ternary system at 373 K has been reported by us,<sup>18</sup> but there is no research report about the phase equilibrium of the ternary subsystem at 348 K, which is just the object of this work. It is important to note that the relationship equation of equilibrium liquid phase and the solid phase composition data were presented by a cubic equation.

Consequently, the research work reported in this article includes three parts: (1) Measure the densities and solubilities in the equilibrium solution for the ternary system at 348 K. (2) Identify the equilibrium solid phases and give the experimental phase diagram of the ternary system. (3) Construct the relationship equation of equilibrium liquid phase and the solid phase composition data with a cubic equation.

## 2. EXPERIMENTS

**2.1. Reagents and Instruments.** Deionized water, with conductivity less than  $1.2 \cdot 10^{-4} \text{ S} \cdot \text{m}^{-1}$  and  $\text{pH} = 6.6$  at 298.15 K, was used to prepare synthesized brines and for chemical analysis. The reagents used were of analytical purity grade (Chengdu KeLong Chemical Reagent Factory, China):  $\text{KCl}$  (99.5 wt %), and  $\text{KBr}$  ( $\geq 99.0$  wt %).

An SHA-GW type thermostatted vibrator (Jintan Guowang Instrument Factory) with a precision  $\pm 0.1 \text{ K}$  was used for the equilibrium measurements.

A standard analytical balance of 110 g capacity and 0.0001 g resolution (AL104, the Mettler Toledo Instruments Co., Ltd.) was used to determine the solution densities.

**2.2. Experimental Methods.** The solid–liquid equilibria in this work were studied by the method of isothermal solution saturation. The system points of the ternary system were prepared by adding the other salt component gradually on the basis of the binary invariant points at 348 K. Then the samples were poured into 50 mL of water in a sealed glass bottle and placed in the oil-bath vibrator (SHA-GW). The sealed glass bottles were kept in the vibrator, which was controlled at  $348 \pm 0.1 \text{ K}$ . The solid–liquid systems in sealed tubes were stirred for over a week. The clarification of the solutions needs about 5 days. The solutions were taken out periodically for chemical analysis. When the composition of a solution does not change any more, the system should have reached the thermodynamic equilibrium state. After equilibrium, the pure solid phases were obtained by taking out the wet crystals from the sealed glass bottles, filtering the liquid phase, and washing the crystals first with an alcohol–water mixture and finally with pure alcohol, followed by air drying. The compositions of the solutions were determined by chemical analysis, and the solid phases were analyzed by X-ray diffraction (XRD; Siemens D500 X-ray diffractometer) and observed under SEM at 20.0 KV (SEM; Hitachi-S-3000N Japan) after drying. The densities of saturated solutions were measured using a density bottle with an uncertainty of  $0.0002 \text{ g} \cdot \text{cm}^{-3}$ .

**2.3. Analytical Methods.** The  $\text{K}^+$  concentration was evaluated from an ion charge balance and assisted by sodium tetraphenylborate–hexadecyl trimethyl ammonium bromide

titration (precision:  $\pm 0.5 \%$ ). The concentration of  $\text{Br}^-$  was determined by iodometry with a sodium thiosulfate standard solution (uncertainty:  $\pm 0.5 \%$ ). The total concentration of  $\text{Cl}^-$  and  $\text{Br}^-$  was determined by Mohr's method using a silver nitrate standard solution (uncertainty:  $\pm 0.3 \%$ ). The concentration of  $\text{Br}^-$  was determined by iodometry with a sodium thiosulfate standard solution (uncertainty:  $\pm 0.5 \%$ ). The concentration of  $\text{Cl}^-$  was determined from the total concentration of  $\text{Cl}^-$  and  $\text{Br}^-$  minus  $\text{Br}^-$  concentration.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**3.1. Results.** The stable equilibrium experimental data of the solubilities, densities and equilibrium solids of the ternary system  $\text{KCl}-\text{KBr}-\text{H}_2\text{O}$  at 348 K are given in Table 1. The

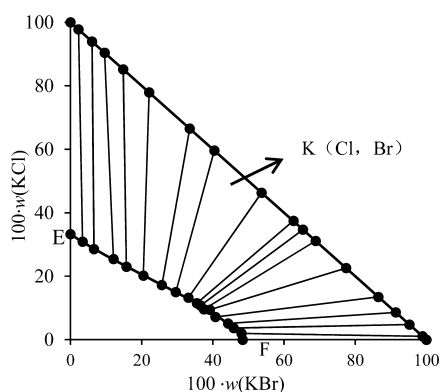
**Table 1. Experimental Composition of Salts and Densities of Solution in the Ternary System  $\text{KCl}-\text{KBr}-\text{H}_2\text{O}$  at 348 K<sup>a</sup>**

no. (point)	Composition of liquid phase		Composition of solid phase		equilibrium solid phases	Solution density $\rho$ (g·cm <sup>-3</sup> )
	100·w(B) <sup>b</sup>		100·w(B) <sup>c</sup>			
	KBr	KCl	KBr	KCl		
1(E)	0.00	33.26	0.00	100	KCl	1.2498
2	3.38	30.90	2.23	97.77	K(Cl,Br)	1.2825
3	6.59	28.55	6.04	93.96	K(Cl,Br)	1.3224
4(C)	12.07	25.43	9.59	90.41	K(Cl,Br)	1.3365
5	15.71	23.01	14.81	85.19	K(Cl,Br)	1.3490
6	20.46	20.22	22.08	77.92	K(Cl,Br)	1.3739
7	25.65	17.22	33.49	66.51	K(Cl,Br)	1.4097
8	29.58	15.03	40.40	59.60	K(Cl,Br)	1.4343
9(G)	33.10	13.24	53.68	46.32	K(Cl,Br)	1.4472
10	35.51	11.53	62.64	37.46	K(Cl,Br)	1.4261
11	36.52	10.76	65.31	34.69	K(Cl,Br)	1.4299
12	37.47	9.57	68.87	31.13	K(Cl,Br)	1.4456
13	39.12	9.44	77.41	22.59	K(Cl,Br)	1.4425
14	40.69	7.18	86.49	13.51	K(Cl,Br)	1.4486
15(D)	44.27	5.15	91.38	8.62	K(Cl,Br)	1.4602
16	45.85	3.68	95.22	4.78	K(Cl,Br)	1.4682
17	48.04	1.99	98.91	1.09	K(Cl,Br)	1.4753
18(F)	48.35	0.00	100	0.00	KBr	1.4865

<sup>a</sup>Standard uncertainties:  $u(T) = 0.1 \text{ K}$ ,  $u(\rho) = 0.0002 \text{ g} \cdot \text{cm}^{-3}$ ,  $u(w) = 0.005$ . <sup>b</sup>w(B) is the mass fraction of liquid phase component. <sup>c</sup>w(B) is the mass fraction of solid phase component.

concentrations of all components (salts and water) in solutions are expressed in mass fractions [w(B), where B is a component, i.e., salt or water]. The solution density ( $\rho$ ) is given in  $\text{g} \cdot \text{cm}^{-3}$ . The isothermal solubility diagram is given in Figure 1 and the density–composition diagram of the ternary system  $\text{KCl}-\text{KBr}-\text{H}_2\text{O}$  at 348 K is given in Figure 2. The X-ray diffraction photograph of point G [ $w(\text{KCl}) = 0.4632$ ,  $w(\text{KBr}) = 0.5368$ ] of this system is presented in Figure 3, which indicate that the ternary system  $\text{KCl}-\text{KBr}-\text{H}_2\text{O}$  at 348 K has no complex salt, but contains the solid solution, that is,  $\text{K}(\text{Cl,Br})$ .

Figure 1 shows that the ternary system has one crystallization region [solid solution  $\text{K}(\text{Cl,Br})$ ], one univariant curve (EF), but no invariant point. Points E and F are the invariant points of the binary subsystems  $\text{KCl}-\text{H}_2\text{O}$  and  $\text{KBr}-\text{H}_2\text{O}$  at 348 K, respectively. At point E [ $w(\text{KCl}) = 0.3326$ ], the solution is saturated with KCl. At point F [ $w(\text{KBr}) = 0.4835$ ], the solution is saturated with KBr.



**Figure 1.** Equilibrium phase diagram of the ternary system KCl–KBr–H<sub>2</sub>O at 348 K.

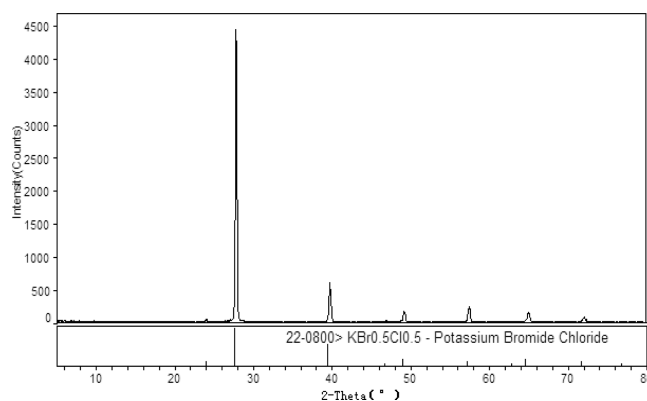
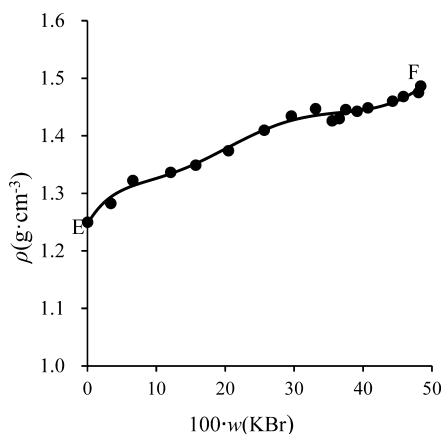
According to Figure 2, it can be stated that the solution density changes monotonically with  $w(\text{KBr})$ , or the Br concentration. In addition, the presence of KBr in the solid phase decreases the chemical potential of KCl in the solid phase, and this must also decrease the solubility of KCl in the aqueous solution liquid phase. Figures 4 and 5 are scanning electron microscopy (SEM) images that show a close-up view at point C and point D of the solid solution after drying in the air. The experimental results indicate that the solid solutions [K(Cl,Br)] are dense and well crystallized, and close to different cuboctahedral geometry shapes.

Compared with previous studies on the ternary systems K–Cl–Br–H<sub>2</sub>O at 298 K, 313 K, 323 K, and 333 K,<sup>30,31</sup> the solid–liquid equilibria of KCl–KBr–H<sub>2</sub>O at 348 K is a similar type of solid solution, where the crystallization region area is a solid solution K(Cl,Br). Otherwise, the crystallization region gradually reduced with the increasing temperature, which may probably be caused by the changing solubilities of KCl and KBr associated with rising temperature.

**3.2. Discussion.** The solid phase compositions of the ternary system KCl–KBr–H<sub>2</sub>O at 348 K are in the crystallization field of K(Cl,Br). On the basis of the equilibrium data presented in Table 1, the isotherm of solubility and the dependence of the equilibrium solid phase compositions have been described by mathematic equations. Available mathematical software is used to describe the data and determine a regression model among the parameters.

The equation of solubility isotherm:

$$x_1 = 50.20 - 1.22x_2 - 0.01(x_2)^2 \quad (R^2 = 0.9970) \quad (1)$$



**Figure 3.** X-ray diffraction photograph of a data point G of the ternary system KCl–KBr–H<sub>2</sub>O at 348 K [solid solution, K(Cl,Br)].

where  $x_1$  is the KBr mass percentage of the solution,  $x_2$  is the KCl mass percentage of the solution, and  $R^2$  is the coefficient of determination.

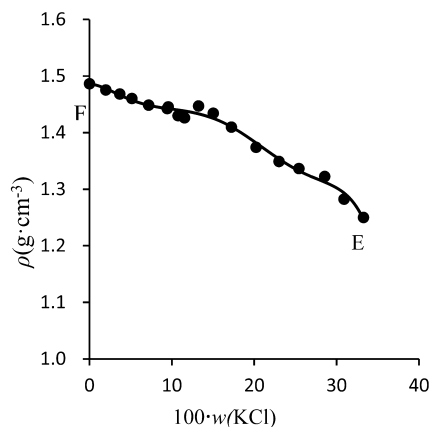
Equation 2 is applied to describe the relationship equation of the equilibrium liquid phase and the solid phase composition.

$$y = a_0 + a_1x_1 + a_2x_2 + a_3(x_1)^2 + a_4(x_2)^2 + a_5(x_1)^3 + a_6(x_2)^3 \quad (2)$$

where,  $y$  is the KBr mass percentage of the solid phase and  $a_0, a_1, \dots$  are regression coefficients. The main concern in this work was with the effects of the KBr ( $x_1$ ) and KCl ( $x_2$ ) mass percentage of the liquid phase on the KBr mass percentage of the solid phase. This resulted in a final equation of the form

$$y = 261.4474 - 12.7323x_1 + 1.8700x_2 + 0.2627(x_1)^2 - 0.2599(x_2)^2 - 0.0014(x_1)^3 + 0.0010(x_2)^3 \quad (R^2 = 0.9969) \quad (3)$$

The regression eq 3, expressing the relationship equation of equilibrium liquid phase and the solid phase composition data, together with the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) is 0.9969. And the experimental composition of the solid phase and the calculated composition of solid phase are summarized in Table 2. The maximum relative deviation is 4.12 %, and as well, the average relative deviation is 1.43 % in the ternary system KCl–KBr–H<sub>2</sub>O at 348 K, indicating that calculated results from the regression of eq 3 are reliable.



**Figure 2.** Density–composition diagram of the ternary system KCl–KBr–H<sub>2</sub>O at 348 K.

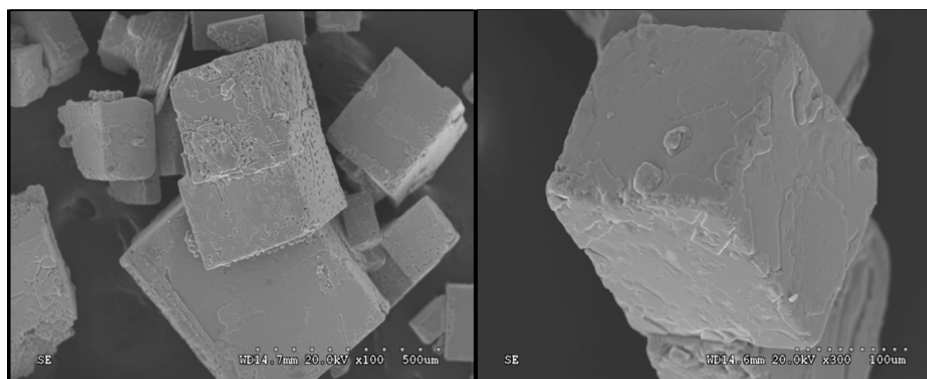


Figure 4. Scanning electron microscopic view of the solid solution particles at point C after drying [solid solution, K(Cl,Br)].

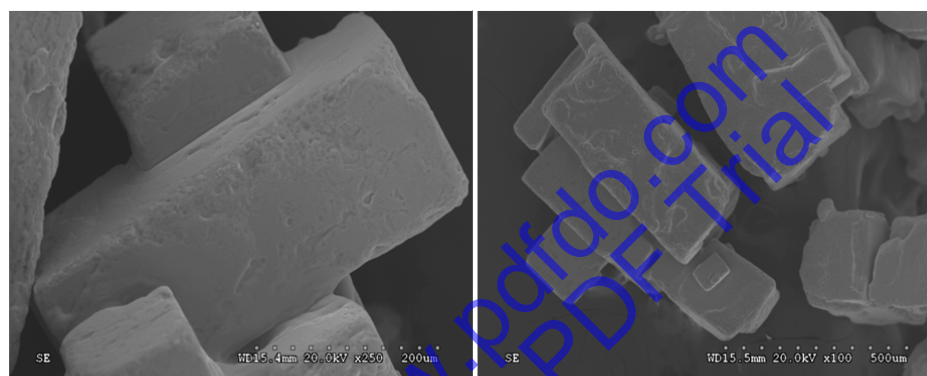


Figure 5. Scanning electron microscopic view of the solid solution particles at point D after drying. [solid solution, K(Cl,Br)].

Table 2. Experimental Composition of Solid Phase and Calculated Composition of Solid Phase in the Ternary System KCl–KBr–H<sub>2</sub>O at 348 K<sup>a</sup>

no.(point)	experimental composition of solid phase		calculated composition of solid phase		equilibrium solid phases	relative deviation $ y_0 - y_1 $
	100·w(B) <sup>b</sup>		100·w(B) <sup>c</sup>			
	KBr (y <sub>0</sub> )	KCl	KBr (y)	KCl		
1(E)	0.00	100	0.03	99.97	KCl	0.03
2	2.23	97.77	2.04	97.96	K(Cl,Br)	0.19
3	6.04	93.96	7.29	92.71	K(Cl,Br)	1.25
4(C)	9.59	90.41	6.99	93.01	K(Cl,Br)	2.60
5	14.81	85.19	14.23	85.77	K(Cl,Br)	0.58
6	22.08	77.92	22.24	77.76	K(Cl,Br)	0.16
7	33.49	66.51	33.88	66.12	K(Cl,Br)	0.39
8	40.40	59.60	44.05	55.95	K(Cl,Br)	3.65
9 (G)	53.68	46.32	53.28	46.72	K(Cl,Br)	0.40
10	62.64	37.46	62.53	37.47	K(Cl,Br)	0.11
11	65.31	34.69	66.52	33.48	K(Cl,Br)	1.21
12	68.87	31.13	71.78	28.22	K(Cl,Br)	2.91
13	77.41	22.59	74.10	25.9	K(Cl,Br)	3.31
14	86.49	13.51	82.37	17.63	K(Cl,Br)	4.12
15(D)	91.38	8.62	92.11	7.89	K(Cl,Br)	0.73
16	95.22	4.78	96.43	3.57	K(Cl,Br)	1.21
17	98.91	1.09	101.38	−1.38	K(Cl,Br)	2.47
18(F)	100	0.00	99.54	0.46	KBr	0.46

<sup>a</sup>Standard uncertainties:  $u(T) = 0.1$  K,  $u(\rho) = 0.0002$  g·cm<sup>−3</sup>,  $u(w) = 0.005$ . <sup>b</sup>w(B) is the mass fraction of solid phase component. <sup>c</sup>w(B) is the mass fraction of calculated solid phase component by eq 3.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

The solid–liquid equilibria of the ternary KCl–KBr–H<sub>2</sub>O system at 348 K were studied by the isothermal solution saturation method. Solubilities, densities, and corresponding

equilibrium solids were determined. The results show that the ternary system contains solid solution K(Cl,Br). The ternary diagram has no invariant point, one univariant curve, and one crystallization region. The experimental results show that KBr



has obvious common-ion effects on KCl, and can obviously increase the solution density.

## AUTHOR INFORMATION

### Corresponding Author

\*Tel.: 13032845233. E-mail: sangshihua@sina.com.cn.

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### Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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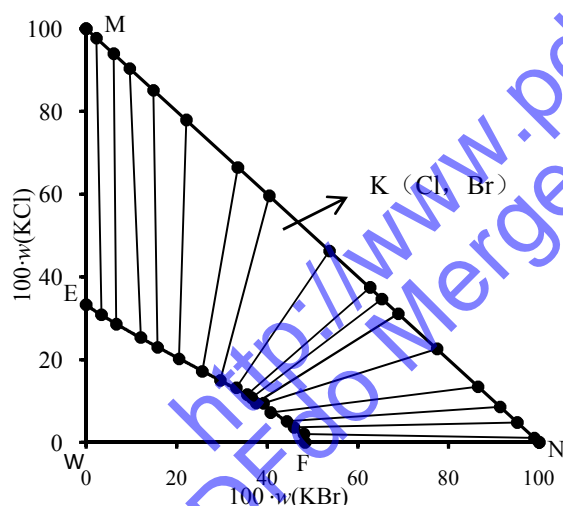
# 三元体系KCl-KBr-H<sub>2</sub>O在 348K时固液相平衡研究

胡咏霞<sup>a,b</sup>, 桑世华<sup>a,b</sup>, 崔瑞芝<sup>a,b</sup>, 钟丝摇<sup>a,b</sup>

(<sup>a</sup> 成都理工大学材料与化学化工学院, 四川成都 610059)

(<sup>b</sup> 矿产资源化学四川省高校重点实验室, 四川成都 610059)

**摘要:** 采用等温溶解平衡法研究了三元体系KBr-KCl-H<sub>2</sub>O在348K时的相平衡关系, 测定了相应温度条件下饱和溶液的溶解度及密度, 通过化学分析和X-射线粉晶衍射的方法确定了相应的平衡固相; 根据溶解度数据绘制了相应的三元体系平衡相图, 研究发现, 三元体系KBr-KCl-H<sub>2</sub>O在348 K下的等温溶解度图有一条单边度曲线和一个固相结晶区K(Cl, Br), 该三元体系相平衡关系为固溶体类型, 讨论了该三元体系平衡溶液密度的变化规律, 建立了固溶体平衡固相组成和液相组成对应的方程。



三元体系 KCl-KBr-H<sub>2</sub>O 在 348K 时相图