

Thin film fabrication of organic-inorganic halide perovskite by bar-coating method and its blend effect of ammonium chloride

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Abstract

Thin films of organic-inorganic halide perovskite, $\text{CH}_3\text{NH}_3\text{PbI}_3$ (MAPbI₃), were fabricated by a bar-coating method, which is a candidate technique for large-scale production. Using the bar-coating method, the large grains and uniaxial orientation of crystal axis of MAPbI₃ were realized. In addition, the grain boundaries in the thin film were suppressed by blending NH_4Cl .

1. Introduction

Organic-inorganic halide perovskite photovoltaics have been intensively studied, because of their high performance, cost effectiveness and easy fabrication process. A typical material used in the active layer are described by ABX_3 perovskite structure (A = organic cation, B = metal cation, X = halide anion) as showed in Fig. 1, and possesses the outstanding optoelectronic and carrier transport properties [1][2]. Recently, the power conversion efficiency of the photovoltaic cells using this kind of material achieved to be 24.2% [3], which is comparable to crystalline Si solar cells. Spin-coating method is used to obtain a uniform perovskite active layer in general. Since rotating a substrate at high speed must be necessary in the spin-coating method, there are difficulties in adapting to large-size substrates. Hence, the appropriate method for the industrial mass-production should be developed.

In this study, we adopted a bar-coating method to fabricate thin films of $\text{CH}_3\text{NH}_3\text{PbI}_3$ (MAPbI₃), because of the effectiveness for large-scale production. In addition, NH_4Cl was blended to precursor solution in order to improve the film quality. The film formation mechanism was discussed by taking the crystallinity of MAPbI₃ films and grain structure into consideration.

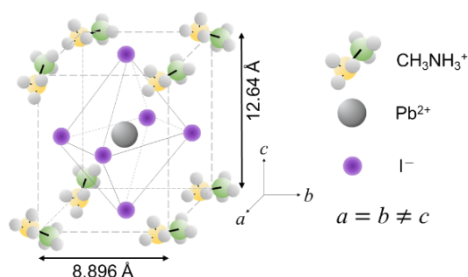


Fig. 1 Unit cell of MAPbI₃ in tetragonal phase at room temperature.

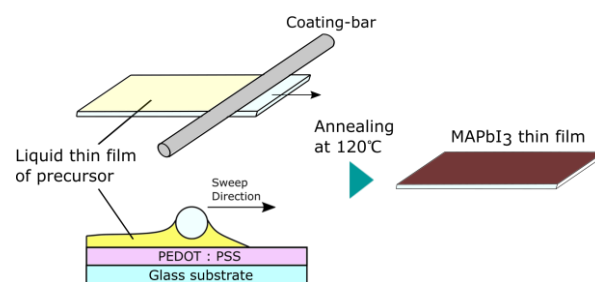


Fig. 2 Schematic diagram of fabrication processes of perovskite thin film by the bar-coating method.

2. Experimental

Thin films of MAPbI₃ were fabricated in the following process (Fig. 2). Solution of perovskite precursor was prepared by dissolving PbI_2 and $\text{CH}_3\text{NH}_3\text{I}$ in dimethyl sulfoxide at each concentration of 1 M. Glass substrates were cleaned with a cleaning agent and distilled water by ultrasonication, then UV-ozone treatment. PEDOT:PSS layer was fabricated onto the substrate by spin-coating at 3000 rpm for 60 s, then annealing at 140 °C for 10 min. The prepared precursor solution was dropped onto a coating-bar, which was set above the substrate, then moved the coating-bar in the horizontal direction at a constant speed of 200 $\mu\text{m/s}$, resulting in the liquid thin films on the substrate. Finally, MAPbI₃ thin film was obtained by annealing the substrate at 120 °C.

Absorption spectrum of the thin film was measured by UV-Vis spectrometer (Shimadzu, UV-3150). The crystal structure was confirmed by XRD (Rigaku, SmartLab), and the surface morphology was observed by a laser microscope (KEYENCE, VK9710) and FE-SEM (HITACHI, S-4300).

3. Results and discussion

The thin films fabricated by the bar-coating method was dark brown color and seemed to be uniform on the substrate. In the absorption spectrum of the thin film, typical spectrum with characteristic peaks of MAPbI₃ at 460 nm and 780 nm [4] was obtained. Therefore, it is noted that the MAPbI₃ thin films were actually fabricated by the bar-coating method and annealing process.

The out-of-plane XRD patterns of the thin films fabricated by spin-coating and by bar-coating are showed in Fig. 3. The spin-coating film exhibited the similar peaks with those observed in the powder samples [5], in contrast, the bar-coating film exhibited particularly strong peaks at 20 ° and 40.7 °.

MAPbI₃ is based on a tetragonal phase in room temperature [6], and these peaks are corresponding to the diffractions of (200) and (400) planes, respectively. It is considered, therefore, that the *a*-axis shown in Fig. 1 was oriented in the perpendicular direction to the substrate.

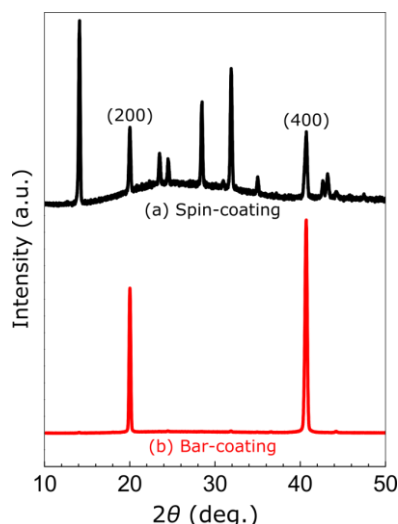


Fig. 3 XRD patterns of the MAPbI₃ thin films fabricated by spin-coating (anti-solvent process) (a) and bar-coating (b).

Observed the thin film surface shape by the laser microscope, large-size grains of approximately 100 μm as shown in Fig. 4 (a), which were much larger than those in the spin-coated films with a typical anti-solvent process, appeared. In the bar-coating process, as the poor solvent drop like the anti-solvent process was not carried out, the active nucleation could be suppressed. Therefore, the microcrystals grew from a small number of nuclei in the annealing process, resulting in the large-size grains throughout the thin film. Such expansion of the grain size should be effective for carrier transport owing to the suppression of structural defects [7]. However, the grain boundary must be a crucial problem for the solar cell performance due to the reduction of shunt resistance in equivalent circuit.

In order to eliminate the grain boundary and improve film morphology, NH₄Cl was blended to the precursor solution. It was previously reported that NH₄Cl retarded the crystallization of MAPbI₃ and interconnected the separated crystals of MAPbI₃ through forming the intermediate [8]. Figure 4 (b) shows the microscope image of the thin film surface when 0.25 M of NH₄Cl was blended.

Comparing with the case without NH₄Cl in Fig. 4 (a), the gaps between the grains disappeared, and the film surface seems to be uniform in a large area by using NH₄Cl, that might be explained by the control of nucleation. The films of MAPbI₃ should be formed by collision and coalescence of island-shaped crystals grown from nuclei according to the Volmer-Weber growth mode [9]. In the bar-coating method without blending NH₄Cl, the delayed nucleation occurred before the crystal growth and collision, that is one of the reasons for the grain boundary generation. On the other hand, the

blend of NH₄Cl was effective for suppressing the nucleation as well as crystal growth through the formation of intermediates.

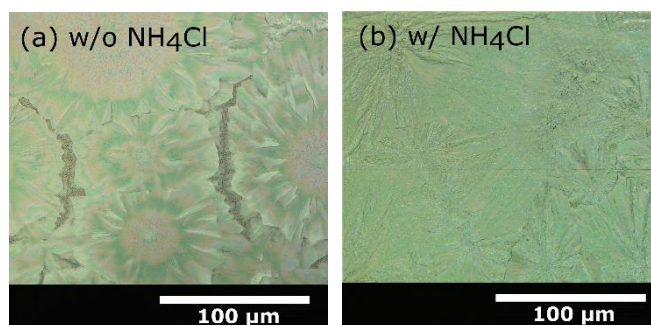


Fig. 4 Microscope images of MAPbI₃ thin films fabricated by bar-coating without NH₄Cl (a) and with NH₄Cl (b).

4. Conclusions

The MAPbI₃ thin film was fabricated by the bar-coating method, and demonstrated the uniaxial orientation of the *a*-axis. Blending NH₄Cl was effective to improve the thin film morphology owing to control the nucleation as well as crystal growth. The bar-coating method must be a suitable method for fabricating large-scale organic-inorganic halide perovskite thin films.

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