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# Influence of Particle's Deformation on The Optical Properties of Silica Opal Photonic Crystals

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**Abstract**: The opal photonic crystals were fabricated with silica colloidal particles. These opal photonic crystal samples were annealed at 150  $\,$ 300  $\,$ 450  $\,$ °C separately. For the photonic crystals annealed at 450  $\,$ °C , the central wavelength of photonic band gap( PBG) was measured at 572.5 nm , which was greatly different from the calculated result at 605 nm. In addition , the samples showed a blue shift for 22.5 nm and a reduction of the photonic band gap width upon increasing the annealing temperature. The shrink and deformation of silica colloidal particles were observed by SEM. The influence mechanism of the deformation was analyzed quantitatively , and the theoretical model was amended. The central wavelength of PBG re-calculated with the amended dodecahedron model was 558 nm , which fit the measured result much better than that calculated with the old sphere model. The new dodecahedron model provides a way to analyze the optical properties of the deformed opal PCs in theory , and shall be of significant value on the fabrication and application of photonic crystals devices.

Key words: photonic crystals; self-assembly; photonic band gap

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#### 1 Introduction

Photonic crystals (PCs) are ordered nanostructures in which mediums with different dielectric constants [1-2] were arranged periodically. Much scientific and technological attention has been attracted for the unique optical properties of PCs. The dielectric materials in PCs act like the periodical nuclei in crystalline solids. Like the semiconductor, the PCs provide photonic band respect to the electronic band in semiconductor. The PCs can yield a photonic band gap, in which electromagnetic waves with certain frequency are forbidden to propagate. If the electromagnetic waves are forbidden in all the possible direction, the complete PBG is achieved. The

phenomenon of photonic band gap can be used to control the flow of light<sup>[34]</sup>. PCs can be used to fabricate optoelectronic devices, such as near-zero threshold lasers<sup>[5]</sup>, waveguides<sup>[6]</sup>, antennas<sup>[7]</sup>, couplers<sup>[8]</sup>, filters<sup>[9]</sup>, which will be of significant value in the future photonic/optical circuits.

For the 1D and 2D PCs, it can be achieved by programmed deposition of different dielectric material layers, holographic exposure, and etching through a mask and some other MEMS technics [10-13]. Some precision machinery methods are the conventional way to fabricate 3D PCs in the microwave and terahertz wave band. However, in near infrared or the visible light wave band, the period of PCs is usually in several hundreds nanometers, which takes great

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challenges to the precision machinery technics. Thereupon , new methods such as direct writing [14] , multi-beam interference [15] , and self-assembling [15-47] were proposed. Self-assembly methods are developed as an inexpensive and simple way to fabricate 3D PCs in a large area mimic the opal in nature. Compared with the opal PCs , the inverse opal PCs show a complete photonic band gap (PBG). Using the opal PCs as template , the inverse opal PCs can be fabricated [18-20]. The self-assembly of colloidal crystals can be achieved by gravity sedimentation [21] , vertical deposition [22] , electrophoresis [23] , and spin coating [24] etc. Similar to crystal in solid state , the opal PCs fabricated by these methods will bring some kinds of defects inevitably.

Vlasov et al. introduced the temperature gradient field, which provides an effective way to decrease the defects of the colloidal crystals<sup>[25]</sup>. Yan et al. fabricated metallic opal PCs by double templa-ting method<sup>[26]</sup>. The work by Meng *et al.* proposed a new method to fabricate high-quality large-scale inverse opal PCs through controling the temperature, pressure and infrared intensity in 15 to 30 min<sup>[27]</sup>. Sun et al. fabricated non-spherical colloidal crystals by thermo-pressing spherical polymer colloidal crystal chips<sup>[28]</sup>. These works provide novel ways for the fabrication of the colloidal PCs. In the work of Sun et al., because of the thermo-pressing, the deformation of the colloidal particles is observed. Besides the deformation widely appears in some other works, though many samples were fabricated without heat treatment or pressing<sup>[29-30]</sup>. The deformation comes from the compression of the internal stress. The internal stress makes the particles arrange closely to each other, which enhances the mechanical strength and density of the opal PCs greatly. Therefore, the deformation of the particles makes it possible to fabricate devices using colloidal PCs. However, little attention has devoted to the application of the deformed PCs. Besides, until recently, there is some lack of knowledge about the influence mechanism of the deformation. In this paper, the silica colloidal crystals are fabricated with vertical deposition, and we focus on the influence of the deformation on the

optical properties and photonic band structure.

## 2 Theoretical Calculation

In calculation , silica colloidal particle is deemed to sphericity (sphere model) . The diameter (D) of silica colloidal particle is 275 nm (standard deviation < 5%) , and the refractive index ( $n_{\rm s}$ ) of silica is 1.45 approximately. The central wavelength of the PBG is calculated with the Bragg's law , and the width of the PBG is calculated with plane wave expansive (PWE) method.

#### 2.1 Bragg's Law

The central wavelength of PBG in face centre cube (FCC) PCs was calculated though a modified form of Bragg's law , which provides a simple relation between the central wavelength ( $\lambda$ ) , the spacing of (111) domains ( $d_{\rm nkl}$ ) , the effective refractive index ( $n_{\rm eff}$ ) and the incident angle ( $\theta$ ):

$$\lambda = 2d_{\rm nkl} \sqrt{n_{\rm eff}^2 - \sin^2 \theta} \quad . \tag{1}$$

where  $d_{\rm nkl}$  = 0.816d, d is the spacing of the adjacent two spheres. The effective refractive index ( $n_{\rm eff}$ ) is related to the volume fraction (f), the refractive index of silica colloidal particles ( $n_s$ ) and the refractive index of air ( $n_o$ ):

$$n_{\text{eff}} = \sqrt{n_s^2 \times f + n_0^2 \times (1 - f)}$$
 (2)

For ideal FCC PCs , d=D , f=0.74. The calculated  $n_{\rm eff}$  is 1.348 5. Inserting f and  $d_{\rm eff}$  into the Eq. 1 ,  $\lambda=605$  nm is gained theoretically.

#### 2.2 Plane Wave Expansive

Using PWE, the width of the photonic crystal band gap is calculated theoretically. Fig. 1. shows the PBG of the silica colloidal opal PCs. A pseudo gap is found in calculated result as shown in Fig. 1. The normalized frequency ( $F = \omega a/2\pi c = a/\lambda$ ) of the PBG is ranged from 0.632 to 0.666. Using the

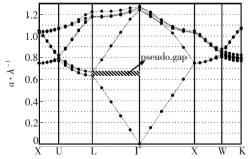


Fig. 1 The PBG of the silica colloidal opal PCs

equation  $F = \omega a/2\pi c = a/\lambda$ , the PBG ranged from 583 nm to 615 nm is gained.

### 3 Experimental Section

The silica colloidal particles is bought from Chinese university of petroleum (Beijing). The slides on which the opal PCs were fabricated were cleaned strictly according to the following process steps: Firstly, marinated in the chromic acid for not less than 24 h. Secondly, ultrasonic cleaned in acetone, ethanol and deionized water for ten minutes in sequence. The end, dried on the hot plate for several minutes. The colloidal suspension was diluted to 1% by ethanol. Vertical deposition was used to fabricate the opal PCs in room temperature for several days until the solution evaporated completely. Finally, the opals PCs samples were annealed under 150, 300 450 °C respectively. The samples were characterized with HITACHI S-4800 scanning electron microscopy and UV3101PC UV-VIS-NIR scanning spectrophotometer.

#### 4 Results and Discussion

#### 4.1 The SEM Images of The Colloidal PCs

The SEM images of the opal PCs samples are

shown in Fig. 2. In some region of the colloidal photonic crystals, both (111) and (100) orientation are observed on the same samples, as shown in Fig. 2 (a). It is still unclear why (100) orientation forms, although the thermodynamic stability of the (111) orientation is stronger than that of the (100) orientation<sup>[31]</sup>. We believe that the temperature fluctuation and the shock of the samples during the progress are important reasons. The (100) orientation in the samples influences the optical properties of the colloidal PCs. Because there is no barrier exists in the (100) domains for the whole wave band when electromagnetic wave incidents on the samples. In most region of the PCs, the (111) orientation occupies dominant. The thickness of the colloidal PCs is about 16 µm, which means the colloidal particles are deposited for several hundreds layers, as shown in Fig. 2(b). Some of the line-defects, point-defects and dislocations are observed in the SEM images of the samples as shown in the Fig. 2(c). Since the experimental conditions are impossible to be controlled perfectly, it is difficult to avoid all the structural defects. The factors such as the fluctuation of the temperature and humidity, the vibration of the samples during the growth of the PCs influence the

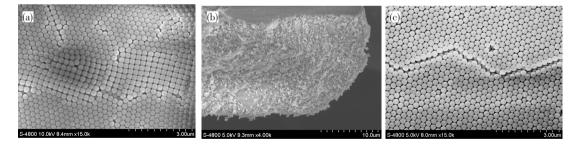


Fig. 2 SEM images of the PCs, (a) the (111) and (100) orientation in the PCs; (b) the thickness of the PCs; (c) the defects in the PCs.

quality of the opal PCs.

The shrink and deformation of the particles were observed. After annealed at 450 °C , the diameter of colloidal particles decreased from 275 nm to 250 nm approximately , as shown in Fig. 3. The deformation of the particles is found not only in the annealed PCs , but also in the PCs fabricated without any heat treatment , as shown in Fig. 4. On the surface of the (111) , the particle is compressed to

nearly hexagon as shown in Fig. 4 (a) and Fig. 4 (b). Fig. 4 (c) indicates that the deformation was found not only on the surface of the PCs, but also in the crack position. Therefore, we can conclude that the compression comes from all the orientation of the PCs, and the particles deform omnidirectionally. And also, the deformation phenomenon is observed in some other researchers´ works, though the samples without annealing in their works [29-30]. The deformation of the

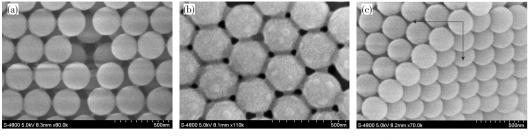


Fig. 3 The shrink of the particles annealed in 450 °C

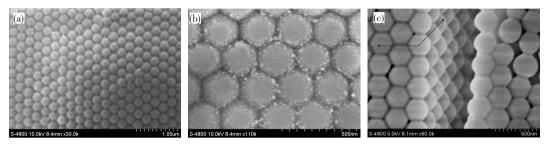


Fig. 4 The deformation of the particles: (a), (b) the deformation of the particles in the (111) orientation; (c) the deformation of the particles in the crack position.

particles comes from the internal stress, which makes the particles arrange closely. The deformation enhances the mechanical strength and density of the colloidal PCs greatly, which makes it possible to fabricate photonic crystal optical devices using the colloidal PCs. For example, wet etching is usually used in the fabrication of the photonic crystal devices, the deformation can reduce the lateral erosion in wet etching during the fabrication of the photonic crystal devices owing to the close arrangement of the particles.

Width of PBG/nm Annealing temperature/℃ PBG/nm Central wavelength/nm Absorption 575 ~613.5 38.5 595 0.2792 Non-annealing 150 564.5 ~ 600 35.5 580 0.6185 300  $561 \sim 598$ 37 576.5 0.7059 0.734 2 400 560.5 ~ 588.5 28 572.5 583 ~615 32 605 Theoretical

Table 1 The optical properties of the samples

The optical properties of opal PCs samples were measured using the UV3101PC UV-VIS-NIR scanning spectrophotometer. Fig. 5 presents the absorption rate of the opal PCs in visible waveband. Upon increasing the annealing temperature, the width of the PBG decreases from 38.5 nm to 28 nm, and a blue shift of the central wavelength from 595 nm to 572.5 nm is observed. At the same time, the absorption rate enhances from 0.279 2 to 0.734 2. The optical properties are shown in Table 1.

Compared the test results of opal PCs samples without annealing to the PBG calculated in theoretical, the width of PBG of samples broadens for several

nanometers. The PBGs of opal OPs overlap together due to silica particles with different diameters. these overlaps broaden the width of the PBG. The broadening

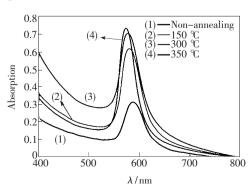


Fig. 5  $\,$  The absorption rate of the opal PCs in visible waveband

degree is determined by the uniformity of the particle diameters.

From Table 1 , it could be seen that the central wavelength of opal PCs sample blue shift to 572. 5 nm after annealed in 450  $^{\circ}$ C. The width of the PBG decreases to 28 nm. The blue shift and the reduction of the width of the PBG come form the shrink and the deformation of the particles. Obviously , there are difference between experimental results and calculated results by sphere model. In order to explain the phenomenon above , the theoretical model is amended.

#### 4.2 The Amendment of The Theoretical Model

After annealing , the diameter of the particles shrank from 275 nm to 250 nm. The volume fraction is declined from 0. 74 to 0. 556. The effective refractive index is  $n_{\rm eff}=1.27$  calculated through Eq. 2. The shrink of the particles dose not change the interval of the particles and the lattice structure. the spacing of (111) dominions is still  $d_{\rm nkl}=0.816d$ . Inserts the above parameters into Eq. 1 , the central wavelength of the PBG is calculated about 570 nm finally. The width of the PBG is calculated through PWE. The normalized frequency of the PBG is ranged from 0.677 1 to 0.724 9. The wavelength of the PBG is calculated from 536 nm to 574 nm approximately through  $F=\omega a/2\pi c=a/\lambda$ .

Because of the deformation of the particles illustrated in Fig. 4, the silica colloidal particles compressed together closely by the internal stress, which leads to the deformation of the particles from sphere to dodecahedron as shown in Fig. 6(a). At the same time, the volume of the particles decreased with the deformation of the particles, which leads to the increasing of the filling rate. The change of the filling rate is the most important reason for the blue shift of the PBG and the decrease of the width of the PBG when increasing the annealing temperature.

In (111) orientation, the cross section of the particles changes form circle to hexagon as shown in Fig. 6(b), which leads to the change of the radius. The parameters change as the deformation of the colloidal particles, as is shown in Table 2.

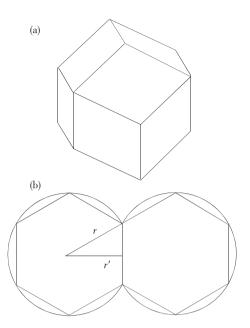


Fig. 6 The deformation of the colloidal particles ,(a) the particles deformed from sphere to dodecahedron;(b) in the (111) orientation, the cross section of the particles is compressed from circle to hexagon.

Table 2 The changes of the parameters

	r/nm	D/nm	a/nm
Ex-deformation	137.5	275	388.85
Deformation	119.08	238.15	336.76

The central wavelength can be calculated through Eq. 1 and Eq. 2 , For FCC structure , the volume fraction is defined as the volume of the spheres  $v_{\rm a}$  divided by the volume of the primitive cell  $\nu_{\rm cell}$ :

$$f = \frac{v_{\rm a}}{v_{\rm cell}} \,, \tag{3}$$

After the annealing of opal PCs samples , the spheres are compressed to dodecahedrons , the volumes of the dodecahedrons  $\nu_a$  replace the volumes of the spheres  $\nu_a$ . Because of the deformation of the spheres ,  $\nu_a$  is smaller than  $\nu_a$ . The different value is the volume of the twelve spherical segments  $\nu_s$ :

$$\nu'_{\rm a} = \nu_{\rm spheres} - \nu_{\rm s} \,, \tag{4}$$

The  $v_s$  is given by:

$$v_{\rm s} = 6\pi h^2 \times \left(r - \frac{h}{3}\right) \,, \tag{5}$$

where h is the height of the spherical segment ,  $h = \left(1 - \frac{\sqrt{3}}{2}\right)\!r$  .

Inserting Eq. 4 and Eq. 5 into Eq. 3 , f = 0.963 6 is obtained. Inserting f = 0.963 6 into Eq. 2 ,  $n_{\rm eff} = 1.436$  1 is obtained. The spacing of the (111) domains  $d_{\rm nkl} = 0.816d$  , as the deformation of the spheres , d is the spacing of the adjacent dodecahedrons which is  $\sqrt{3}\,r = 238.15$  nm here. So inserting the results above into Eq. 1 , the calculating central wavelength is 558 nm.

Using the PWE, the width of the PBG is gained. A pseudo gap is found as shown in Fig. 7. The normalized frequency of the PBG is ranged from 0.598 99 to 0.608 48. We can gain the wavelength of the PBG ranged from 553 nm to 562 nm approximately, and the width of the PBG is 9 nm.

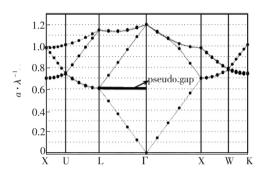


Fig. 7 The PBG of the deformed sample

For the central wavelength of the PBG, the results calculated with the amended model is 558 nm, which fits the measured results better than that calculated with sphere model. For the width of the PBG, the results calculated with new theoretical mode is much smaller than the measured results. The deviation between calculated results with the

amended model and experimental results comes from the assumption during establishing mode. In the amended model, we hypothesize that the particles were compressed from spheres to dodecahedrons. In practical, many of the particles are compress to nonstandard dodecahedrons. In the nonstandard dodecahedrons, some surfaces are spherical surfaces yet, which means that the degree of the deformation is lower than predicated. As a response, the filling rate f is smaller than predicated too. Despite this, the amendment of the theoretical model provides a much better prediction before the experiment.

### 5 Conclusion

The silica colloidal PCs were fabricated and annealed. The shrink and deformation of the colloidal particles were observed. Upon increasing the annealing temperature, the samples showed a blue shift of the center wavelength of PBG for 22.5 nm, and the width of the PBG decrease for 10.5 nm. The optical influence of the deformation was discussed quantitatively, and the theoretical model was amended according to experimental results. The central wavelength of the PBG calculated with the amended model was 558 nm, which fit the experimental results much better than that calculated with sphere model. The deformation of the particles makes it available to fabricate 3D photonic crystal device with artificial opal PCs. The new model makes the more precise theoretical calculation possible, which provides convenience for the growth and application of the colloidal photonic crystals.

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## 二氢化硅蛋白石光子晶体中粒子重构对光学性质的影响

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摘要:使用自组装法制备了蛋白石结构二氧化硅纳米球三维光子晶体,并对样品在 150, 300, 450  $^{\circ}$  温度下进行了热处理。随热处理温度的升高,光子晶体禁带中心波长出现 22.5 nm 的蓝移,且禁带宽度变窄。对于在 450  $^{\circ}$  热处理的样品,其测量的禁带中心波长为 572.5 nm ,与理论计算结果有较大差异。引起样品光学特性变化的原因是热处理后二氧化硅球体形变和重构。进一步分析了小球形变对样品光学特性的影响,根据实验结果,修正了计算模型。利用修正后的模型计算样品禁带中心波长为 558nm 和实验结果符合良好。

关键词:光子晶体;自组装;光子禁带

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