Structural and optical properties of nano-composites of wide band gap dielectric crystals doped with trivalent rare earth ions fabricated by pulsed laser deposition at 157 nm.

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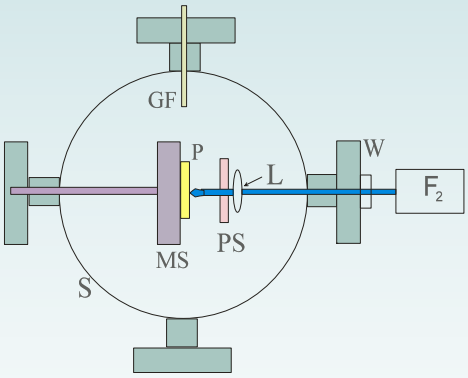
Abstract

The work is intending to micro-fabricate a *novel class of EUV/VUV solar blind detector array, (SBD), and tunable optical filters* for narrow VUV spectral windows for space applications using wide band gap (~ 10 eV) fluoride/oxide dielectric nano-crystals, doped with trivalent rare earth (RE) ions-WBGDC-RE. The overall aim will be to design and construct a *"device on chip"* state of the art integrated VUV micro-array detector, operated in narrow spectral windows from 110-180 nm and a novel class of SBD micro-array devices in the EUV/X-ray spectral regions with improved S/N ratio, sensitivity and detection efficiency. Initial work involves fabrication of thin films of CaF_2:Tm^{3+} by pulse laser deposition at 157 nm from initial CaF_2:Tm^{3+} (1% Tm) targets on Si—Au substrates. The films consist of crystalline nano-composites, which retains the initial target stochiometry and with sharp size distribution of the nano-composites, allowing thus fabrication of tunable VUV crystal filters over narrow spectral regions mainly for space vacuum ultraviolet imaging.

Experimental



➢CaF_2:Tm^{3+} (1 % Tm) crystal samples were grown with the Bridgmann-Stockbarger method and were used as targets in a laser ablative experimental configuration at 157 nm.

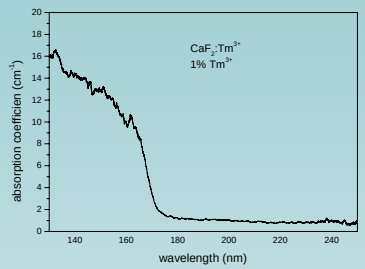
➢The ablated products were deposited on a thin Au film on a Si wafer. The targets were placed on a on a X-Y-Z translation stage in order to scan an area of 5X5 mm^2 with the focused laser beam.

➢The films were examined with scanning electron microscopy (SEM) equipped with an EDXS spectrometer with 50 nm electron beam diameter and AFM.

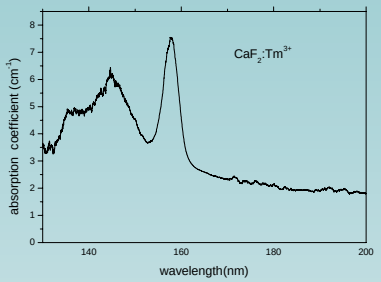
➢The film stochiometry was examined with VUV absorption spectroscopy for samples deposited on high optical quality CaF_2 substrates.

➢Initial target stochiometry was additionally analyzed with mass spectrometry and laser ablation at 213 nm using the forth harmonic of a Nd:YAG laser.

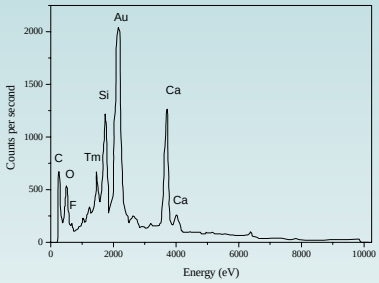
Results and discussion



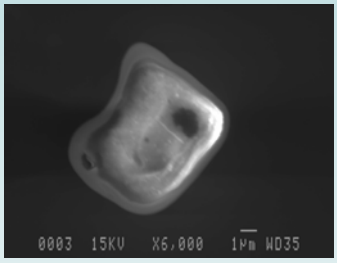
VUV absorption spectrum of CaF_2:Tm^{3+} (1% Tm) targets. The edge of the levels of the $4f^{11}5d$ electronic configuration is at 59500cm^{-1}.



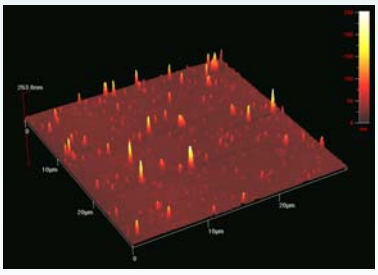
VUV absorption spectrum of CaF_2:Tm^{3+} nano-composites



X-ray spectrum of CaF_2:Tm^{3+}nano-composites. The stochiometry of the various nano-composites was analyzed by X-ray microanalysis with a 50 nm wide electron beam. Analysis of individual nano-composites reveals the presence of Ca, F, and Tm, which reflects the stochiometry of the initial target.



SEM image of CaF_2:Tm^{3+} nano-composite. The laser energy, which was delivered on the target, was 0.1-50 mJ per pulse and the laser fluence was 0.1-50 mJ/cm^2.



AFM image of CaF_2:Tm^{3+} film.

Conclusion

Thin films consisted of CaF_2:Tm^{3+} nano-composites were fabricated by pulse laser deposition at 157 nm. The films retain the initial target stochiometry allowing thus the fabrication of nano-VUV filters over a narrow spectral region.