

Low Thermal Resistance (0.5 K/W) Ga_2O_3 Schottky Rectifiers with Double-Side Packaging

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Abstract— The low thermal conductivity of Ga_2O_3 has arguably been the most serious concern for Ga_2O_3 power and RF devices. Despite many simulation studies, there is no experimental report on the thermal resistance of a large-area, packaged Ga_2O_3 device. This work fills this gap by demonstrating a 15-A double-side packaged Ga_2O_3 Schottky barrier diode (SBD) and measuring its junction-to-case thermal resistance (R_{0JC}) in the bottom-side- and junction-side-cooling configurations. The R_{0JC} characterization is based on the transient dual interface method, i.e., JEDEC 51-14 standard. The R_{0JC} of the junction- and bottom-cooled Ga_2O_3 SBD was measured to be 0.5 K/W and 1.43 K/W, respectively, with the former R_{0JC} lower than that of similarly-rated commercial SiC SBDs. This low R_{0JC} is attributable to the heat extraction directly from the Schottky junction instead of through the Ga_2O_3 chip. The R_{0JC} lower than that of commercial SiC devices proves the viability of Ga_2O_3 devices for high-power applications and manifest the significance of proper packaging for their thermal management.

Index Terms— ultra-wide bandgap, gallium oxide, packaging, Schottky barrier diodes, thermal resistance.

I. INTRODUCTION

Ultra-wide-bandgap semiconductor gallium oxide (Ga_2O_3) has been promoted for years as a promising candidate for power electronics and RF applications, due to its high critical electrical field, controllable n-type doping, and the availability of large-diameter wafers by the melt growth [1]–[5]. Whereas a fundamental limitation of Ga_2O_3 is its low thermal conductivity ($k_T = 0.1\text{--}0.3 \text{ Wcm}^{-1}\text{K}^{-1}$ [1]), which is about 1/6 of the k_T of Si, 1/10 of GaN, and 1/20 of SiC. The resulting high thermal resistance of Ga_2O_3 chip has brought serious concerns regarding the current and power scalability of Ga_2O_3 devices and their competitiveness in industrial power and RF applications.

The thermal resistance is an essential metric in the datasheet of any power device. Despite some simulation and modeling works [6]–[11], there has been no experimental reports of the thermal resistance of a large-area, packaged Ga_2O_3 device. The lack of this data makes it difficult to compare Ga_2O_3 with commercial device technologies (e.g., Si, SiC, GaN) and evaluate the application space of Ga_2O_3 devices. Some recent works characterized the channel (or junction) temperatures in Ga_2O_3 devices [12]–[15] and studied different approaches to lower device temperatures, e.g., heterogenous integration [16]–[20] and substrate thinning [21]. However, all of these devices

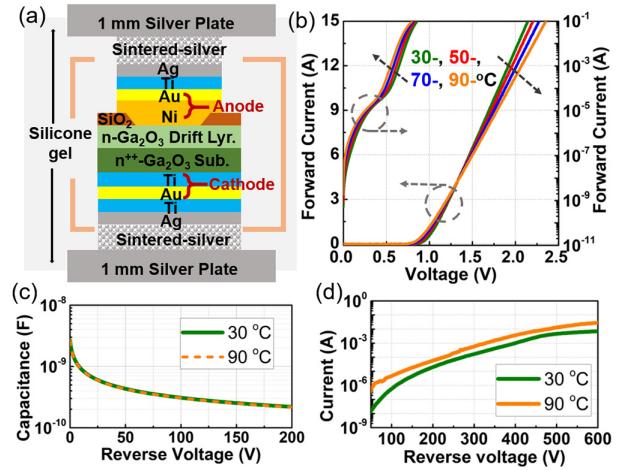


Fig. 1 (a) Schematic of the double-side packaged Ga_2O_3 SBD encapsulated in silicone gel. Temperature-dependent (b) forward I-V, (b) C-V and (c) reverse I-V (up to 600 V) characteristics of the packaged device.

have small areas with a current much lower than 1 Amp, and none of these devices are packaged.

This work fills this critical knowledge gap by demonstrating a 15-A double-side-packaged vertical Ga_2O_3 Schottky barrier diode (SBD) and characterizing its junction-to-case thermal resistance (R_{0JC}) following the JEDEC 51-14 standard [22]. The R_{0JC} of the same device were measured in the bottom-side- and junction-side-cooling schemes, where the bottom-side cooling is dominant in the packages of commercial devices. The R_{0JC} of the junction-cooled Ga_2O_3 SBD was found to be smaller than that of similarly-rated commercial SiC SBDs. These results remove some of the key thermal concerns for Ga_2O_3 devices.

II. DEVICE FABRICATION AND PACKAGING

Fig. 1(a) shows the schematic of the packaged Ga_2O_3 SBD. The Ga_2O_3 wafer consists of a 10- μm $n\text{-Ga}_2\text{O}_3$ drift layer ($\text{Si}: \sim 10^{16} \text{ cm}^{-3}$) grown on a 2-inch $n^+-\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3$ substrate. The substrate was thinned down to 500 μm [23]. The device fabrication is similar to the ones in [23], [24]. The cathode ohmic contact was formed by Ti/Au, and the anode Schottky contact by Ni/Au. A planar field plate was made by 1- μm SiO_2 . A Ti/Ag (100/200 nm) stack was deposited on both contacts as adhesion layers to the sintered nanosilver bond-line. Ti also serves as a barrier layer to prevent the metal diffusion in the sintering process.

The device packaging process was similar to that in [25]. For

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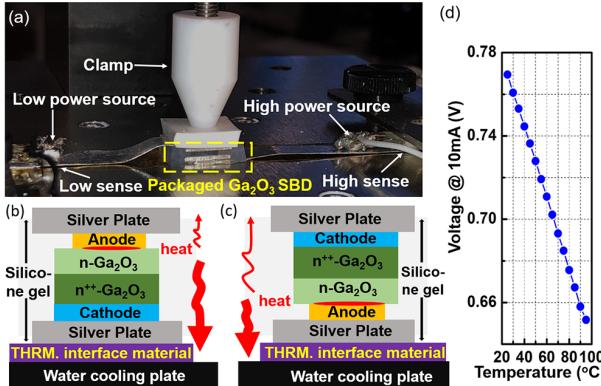


Fig. 2. (a) Photo of the test setup. Schematic of R_{θ} measurements under (b) bottom-side cooling and (c) junction-side cooling. (d) The forward voltage at 10 mA current as a function of temperature of the packaged Ga_2O_3 SBD.

die attach, a 50- μm -thick nanosilver paste was sintered without pressure at 250 °C [26]. Each side of the chip was bonded to a 1-mm-thick silver (Ag) plate. Some low- k_{T} silicone gel was applied to encapsulate the chip. The Schottky contact area was 3×3 mm², the total Ga_2O_3 chip size was 4.6×4.6 mm², and the Ag plate size was 7.3×7.3 mm².

Fig. 1(b)-(d) show the forward I-V, reverse C-V, and reverse I-V characteristics of the packaged Ga_2O_3 SBD, revealing a turn-on voltage (V_{ON}) of 0.83 V extracted at 1 A/cm², a forward current of 15 A at 2.15 V, an on/off ratio of $\sim 10^{10}$ extracted at 2 V/-50 V, and a breakdown voltage (BV) over 600 V. Note that a simple planar field plate was used in this work, hence the BV and reverse leakage current have much room for improvement. By adding a mesa, a BV up to 1100 V was demonstrated on a similar wafer in small-area devices [23]. The N_{D} extracted from the C-V characteristics is $\sim 2 \times 10^{16}$ cm⁻³, and it shows small temperature dependence.

III. THERMAL RESISTANCE MEASUREMENTS

The $R_{\theta\text{JC}}$ measurement was based on the transient dual interface method (TDIM) (i.e., JEDEC 51-14 standard [22]). This TDIM method relies on two transient thermal impedance curves ($Z-t$) measured with different contact thermal resistances between the package case surface and the ambient. The Z value at the separation point of the two curves is close to the device steady-state $R_{\theta\text{JC}}$ [22]. This method avoids the errors caused by traditional thermocouple methods [27], and has been widely used for Si [28], [29], SiC [30], and GaN [31] devices.

Fig. 2(a) shows our $R_{\theta\text{JC}}$ measurement set-up using an Analysis Tech Phase 12 Semiconductor Thermal Analyzer. The Ga_2O_3 SBD was placed on a water-cooling cold plate with a 26°C constant temperature. An indium foil was attached to each Ag plate to conduct electric signals. A top plastic clamp applied a ~ 15 -psi pressure to ensure good and consistent contacts. As this clamp has very low thermal conductivity, this setup allows heat extraction dominantly towards the bottom water-cooling plate. Fig. 2(b) and (c) show the bottom- and junction-cooling measurements of the same double-side packaged Ga_2O_3 SBD.

In the TDIM method, the junction temperature (T_j) is usually monitored by continuously measuring a thermo-sensitive electrical parameter (TSEP) [32]. The forward voltage at 10 mA was selected as the TSEP for our Ga_2O_3 SBDs, which shows an

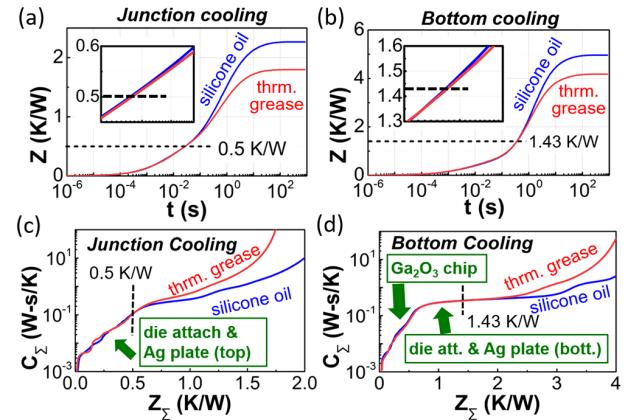


Fig. 3. Transient thermal impedance curves of the Ga_2O_3 SBD measured with two TIMs under the (a) junction- and (b) bottom-side cooling. The insets show the zoom-in plot of the separation point. Calculated structure function with two TIMs in the (c) junction- and (d) bottom-side cooling.

excellent linearity with the temperature (Fig. 2(d)). This test was performed in an oven with the thermocouple and electrical wires placed into the oven via small holes on the oven surface to allow the TSEP and temperature measurements.

The $R_{\theta\text{JC}}$ measurements started by applying a forward dc bias to the SBD for self-heating, producing a power (P_H), until the steady state was reached with a constant T_j (T_{j0}). Subsequently, the dc power was cut off, and the TSEP was monitored to obtain the evolution of $T_j(t)$ in the cooling phase. The $Z-t$ curve was calculated by $Z_{\theta\text{JC}}(t) = (T_{j0} - T_j(t))/P_H$ [22], [27]. As our TSEP is in the SBD subthreshold region, minimal heating is produced in its testing (< 7.6 mW), and a high signal-to-noise ratio are ensured in the Z measurement.

For each $R_{\theta\text{JC}}$ test, two $Z-t$ curves were acquired by using two different thermal interface materials (TIMs) between the indium foil and the cold plate, i.e., some silicone oil (lower k_{T}) and some thermal grease (higher k_{T}). The separation point of the two heating $Z-t$ curves was extracted as $R_{\theta\text{JC}}$ by the Analyzer software following the JEDEC standard [22]. The $R_{\theta\text{JC}}$ of a commercial SiC SBD (SCS220KGHR) was first measured. The measured value (0.6 K/W) agreed with the datasheet value (0.62 K/W), validating our test setup and procedure.

Fig. 3(a) and (b) show the measured $Z-t$ curves of our packaged Ga_2O_3 SBD in the bottom-side- and junction-side-cooling schemes, respectively, revealing a much lower $R_{\theta\text{JC}}$ (0.5 K/W) under the junction-side cooling as compared to the $R_{\theta\text{JC}}$ (1.43 K/W) under the bottom-side cooling.

A *cumulative structure function* can be calculated from each $Z-t$ curve [22], which gives the sum of thermal capacitances (C_{Σ}) with respect to the sum of thermal resistances (R_{Σ}) in the packaged device structure, measured from the point of heating excitation (i.e., junction) toward the ambient. Each slope in this function represents either a new material or an increase in the cross sectional area of the heat flow or both [29].

Fig. 3(c) and (d) show the calculated *structure function* of the packaged Ga_2O_3 SBD in the bottom- and junction-side-cooling schemes, respectively, each scheme with two TIMs. The separation points show good consistence with those extracted from $Z-t$ curves. The function before the separation point provides the structure information within the package case.

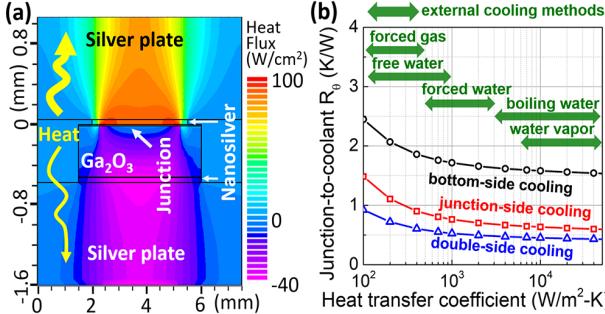


Fig. 4. (a) Simulated heat flux contours in the Ga₂O₃ SBD cross-section under the double-side cooling. The positive and negative values represent the upwards and downwards flux, respectively. The bottom and top case temperatures are set as 26 °C (i.e., HTC = ∞). (b) Simulated junction-to-coolant thermal resistance of the Ga₂O₃ SBD as a function of HTC at the case surface, under the bottom-, junction- and double-side cooling. The HTC ranges for different external cooling techniques are marked in green.

The key difference between the junction- and bottom-cooling functions is that the former shows an almost constant slope before the separation point while the latter shows two regions with different slopes. The slope in the junction-cooling function corresponds to the nano-Ag attach and Ag plate (Fig. 3(c)). The almost constant slope suggests little heat up into the Ga₂O₃ chip. The first slope in the bottom-cooling function corresponds to the Ga₂O₃ chip (Fig. 3(d)), as its span (~ 0.8 K/W) is close to the calculated R_0 using the Ga₂O₃ k_T and chip geometries ($R_0 = 0.5\text{-mm}/0.25\text{-Wcm}^{-1}\text{K}^{-1}/22\text{-mm}^2 = 0.9\text{-K/W}$). The second slope corresponds to the bottom attach and Ag plate. Its R and C spans (~ 0.5 K/W and ~ 0.1 Ws/K) before the separation point are similar to the counterparts in the junction-cooling function.

Based on the measured R_{0JC} , 3-D TCAD simulations were performed in Silvaco Atlas to evaluate the device R_0 in various external cooling conditions. The electrothermal models were similar to [33], [34], and the material models (e.g., k_T of Ga₂O₃ and nano-Ag, interface R_0) were based on [25]. A copper plate with a geometry similar to the experimental setup was added to the package surface where the external cooling is applied. The simulated R_{0JC} and I-V characteristics were calibrated with the experimental data. The calibration revealed that the k_T of the sintering region is ~ 1 Wcm⁻¹K⁻¹ [25], implying the room for further improvement of the sintering process.

Fig. 4(a) shows the simulated heat flux contours in a double-side-cooled SBD with 26 °C fixed on both package surfaces [i.e., infinite heat transfer coefficient (HTC)]. Most heat flows via the junction side of the package, agreeing with the expectation from the much lower junction-cooled R_{0JC} .

Fig. 4(b) shows the simulated junction-to-coolant (-ambient) R_0 as a function of HTC (representing different cooling methods) for our Ga₂O₃ SBD in the bottom-, junction- and double-side cooling schemes. The results suggest that the junction-cooling is essential for Ga₂O₃ devices and the double-side-cooling can further reduce R_0 by 30~40%. An HTC over 10^3 W/m²K (e.g., forced water cooling) is preferable for external cooling; a lower HTC may lead to a fast increase in R_0 for Ga₂O₃ devices.

Table I benchmarks the R_{0JC} of our Ga₂O₃ SBDs against commercial 600-V SiC SBDs with a similar current rating and different TO-series packages (the dominant packages for commercial power devices), as well as a small-area unpackaged

TABLE I. Thermal resistance comparison between Ga₂O₃ SBDs and commercial SiC SBDs with similar current ratings and package sizes.

Device	Package	Package Size [*] (mm ²)	V_{ON} (V)	I_F (A) ^{**} @ 2 V	Cooling	R_{0JC} (K/W)
Ga ₂ O ₃ SBD (this work)	Double-side	7.3×7.3	0.83	13	Junction Bottom	0.5
SiC SBD (C3D10060G)	TO-263-2	6.5×7.9	0.85	18	Bottom	1.2
SiC SBD (E3D08065G)	TO-263-2	6.5×7.9	0.85	14.5	Bottom	1.47
SiC SBD (C6D04065E)	TO-252-2	5.2×4.3	0.85	12	Bottom	2.89
Ga ₂ O ₃ SBD [14]	no package	~1	~0.02		Bottom	~4.5

*Size of the die-attached thermal pad. **Forward current at 2 V.

Ga₂O₃ SBD reported previously [14]. The R_{0JC} of our junction-side cooled Ga₂O₃ SBD is lower than that of commercial SiC SBDs with a similar package size and current rating. As a more direct comparison, if TO-263-2 package is used for our Ga₂O₃ SBDs, R_{0JC} is estimated to be 0.61 and 1.54 K/W for the anode facing up and down, respectively. This estimation assumes the use of solder alloy (150-μm thick, k_T of 0.23 Wcm⁻¹K⁻¹) as the die attach instead of the nano-Ag sintering.

IV. SUMMARY

This work presents the first R_{0JC} data of large-area, packaged Ga₂O₃ devices measured following the JEDEC standard. The packaged Ga₂O₃ SBD shows over 15 A current and 600 V BV . The R_{0JC} under the junction-side- and bottom-side-cooling is 0.5 W/K and 1.43 W/K, respectively. The difference is primarily attributable to the low- k_T Ga₂O₃ chip. The R_{0JC} of our Ga₂O₃ SBD under the junction cooling is lower than R_{0JC} of similarly-rated commercial SiC SBDs, suggesting the feasibility of the proper packaging to overcome the low k_T of Ga₂O₃ and thereby enable Ga₂O₃ devices for high-power applications.

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