

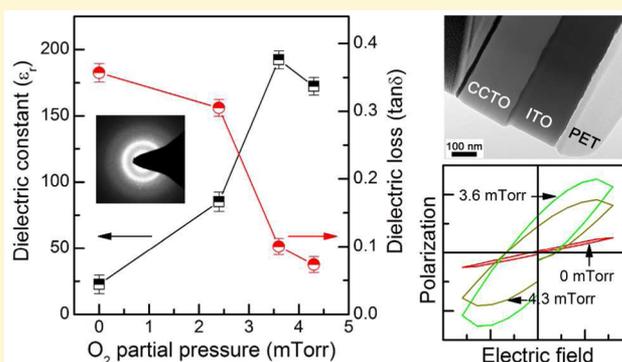
# Origin of Abnormal Dielectric Behavior and Chemical States in Amorphous $\text{CaCu}_3\text{Ti}_4\text{O}_{12}$ Thin Films on a Flexible Polymer Substrate

Chan Su Han,<sup>†</sup> Hong Rak Choi,<sup>†</sup> Hong Je Choi, and Yong Soo Cho\*<sup>‡</sup>

Department of Materials Science and Engineering, Yonsei University, Seoul 03722, Korea

**S** Supporting Information

**ABSTRACT:** High dielectric constant thin films processable at nearly room temperature have been demanded for various flexible electronic devices. Here, we explore the origin of abnormal dielectric behavior of amorphous  $\text{CaCu}_3\text{Ti}_4\text{O}_{12}$  (CCTO) thin films having an exceptionally high dielectric constant, in conjunction with chemical states and unusual ferroelectricity in the amorphous state. As an optimal example, the amorphous CCTO film sputtered at room temperature under an oxygen partial pressure of 3.6 mTorr exhibits a dielectric constant of  $\sim 192$  and a dielectric loss of  $< 0.1$  at 100 Hz. The promising dielectric characteristics are unexpectedly found to originate from the evolution of ferroelectric domains, even in the amorphous state. Strong dependence of oxygen partial pressure on chemical states, vacancy formation, and ferroelectric polarization is very critical for the unexpected dielectric behavior. This may be the very first example of exploring the origin of amorphous dielectric behavior for a material that possesses space charge polarization.



## INTRODUCTION

High dielectric constant  $\epsilon_r$  thin films have been studied to realize better device performance in various passive and active components. These devices require high capacitance mainly for storing more charges and/or for reducing the operating voltage.<sup>1–5</sup> In the past decade, there has been increased interest in accommodating high  $\epsilon_r$  thin films, particularly for flexible electronic systems that require low-temperature processing compatible with most polymer-based substrates. The direct deposition of high  $\epsilon_r$  thin films on polymer substrates is the ideal case since it does not necessitate the expensive and size-limited transfer process of separately prepared thin films. Most of the high  $\epsilon_r$  thin films remain as amorphous state at the polymer-compatible processing temperatures even though the crystallinity of the films depends on the type of material and deposition method.<sup>6,7</sup> Therefore, there have always been limitations in realizing competitive performance in the flexible electronic devices incorporating capacitive thin films. The reported amorphous high  $\epsilon_r$  thin films, including  $\text{BaTiO}_3$ ,<sup>8</sup>  $\text{Pb}(\text{Zr},\text{Ti})\text{O}_3$ ,<sup>9</sup>  $\text{Y}_2\text{CuTiO}_6$ ,<sup>10</sup>  $\text{ZrTiO}_4$ ,<sup>11</sup>  $\text{HfO}_2$ ,<sup>12</sup>  $\text{Hf-LaO}_x$ ,<sup>13</sup> and  $\text{YScO}_3$ ,<sup>14</sup> exhibit dielectric constants typically in the range of  $\sim 10$  to  $\sim 130$ , which originates from ionic or dipolar (orientational) polarization. Interestingly, there have been very limited reports dealing with high  $\epsilon_r$  thin films deposited on flexible polymer substrates.<sup>15,16</sup> Most of the studies on the amorphous dielectric thin films were conducted on the basis of a rigid substrate like Si.

On the other hand, body-centered cubic perovskite  $\text{CaCu}_3\text{Ti}_4\text{O}_{12}$  (CCTO) has unique advantages of a giant dielectric

constant ( $> 10^4$ ) as well as minimal temperature dependence of  $\epsilon_r$  between 100 and 600 K.<sup>17,18</sup> Numerous efforts have been undertaken to understand the properties of crystalline  $\text{CaCu}_3\text{Ti}_4\text{O}_{12}$  and to explore the origin of the unusually high  $\epsilon_r$  in the form of bulk and crystalline thin films.<sup>17–22</sup> An internal barrier layer capacitor (IBLC) model based on n-type semiconducting grains and insulating grain boundaries in polycrystalline CCTO is known to be responsible for the giant dielectric permittivity.<sup>20–22</sup> The structural complexity is associated with the defect chemistry and the mixed chemical states of cations. For example, the n-type conductivity of grains is known to come from the potential reduction of  $\text{Ti}^{4+}$  to  $\text{Ti}^{3+}$ , which occurs as the electrons released from oxygen vacancies are accepted by the conduction band of  $\text{Ti}^{4+}$ .<sup>23</sup> A potential barrier at the grain boundary inhibits the electronic transport and induces a larger polarization with accumulated charges. The interfacial polarization mechanism by larger dipoles across the grain boundaries is understood as the main contributor to the giant  $\epsilon_r$ , which is very rare since many other perovskite ferroelectrics do not possess the intrinsic nature of interfacial polarization. Typically, interfacial polarization is induced in ferroelectric  $\text{BaTiO}_3$  for a giant dielectric constant by post-heat-treating in a reducing atmosphere to control the chemical states of grain boundaries.<sup>24,25</sup> From this point of view, studies on amorphous CCTO

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thin films would be very interesting since grain boundaries do not exist in the amorphous state.

This work introduces amorphous high  $\epsilon_r$  thin films of  $\text{CaCu}_3\text{Ti}_4\text{O}_{12}$  (CCTO) sputter-deposited at room temperature, which possess  $\epsilon_r$  close to 200 with reasonably low loss tangent and good transparency of >80% at visible wavelengths. The dielectric properties of amorphous CCTO thin films have not been reported so far. As a main parameter, oxygen partial pressure is varied to control the chemical states of the films and thus to modulate their dielectric properties. Unexpected ferroelectricity is assumed to be responsible for the unusually high  $\epsilon_r$  in spite of the amorphous state. The ferroelectric state was recently reported to exist in the bulk CCTO ceramics, which originates potentially from the electronic density modulations and the physical displacement of Ti ions in the  $\text{TiO}_6$  octahedra.<sup>26,27</sup> Here, the origin of such abnormal dielectric behavior in the amorphous state is explored in conjunction with the potential polarization mechanism on the basis of supporting evidence for the changed chemical states and domain formation

## EXPERIMENTAL SECTION

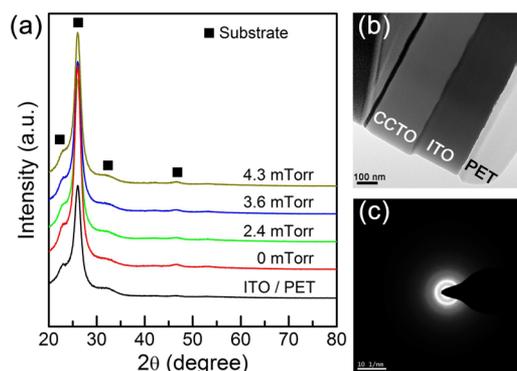
**Preparation of Amorphous CCTO Thin Films.**  $\text{CaCu}_3\text{Ti}_4\text{O}_{12}$  thin films were grown at room temperature on indium thin oxide (ITO:  $\sim 210$  nm thick)-coated polyethylene terephthalate (PET) substrates by rf magnetron sputtering using a 2 in. stoichiometric CCTO target. The target was prepared by the conventional solid state reaction of  $\text{CaCO}_3$  (99.5%, Showa Chemicals, Tokyo, Japan),  $\text{CuO}$  (99.0%, High Purity Chemicals, Tokyo, Japan), and  $\text{TiO}_2$  (99.8%, Ferro Co., Cleveland, OH) at 1000 °C, followed by hot-pressing at 1100 °C under a pressure of 15 MPa in a  $\text{N}_2$  atmosphere. The substrates were tilted by  $\sim 30^\circ$  with respect to the target normal.<sup>28</sup> The distance between the centers of target and substrate was kept at 7 cm. The sputtering chamber was evacuated to a base pressure of  $5 \times 10^{-6}$  Torr using a turbomolecular pump backed by a rotary pump. A constant working pressure of 7.2 mTorr was maintained by adjusting the throttle valve while allowing different argon–oxygen gas mixtures through a mass-flow controller. The different gas mixtures are expressed in terms of the oxygen partial pressure from 0 to 4.3 mTorr. For example, an oxygen partial pressure of 4.3 mTorr was obtained by using an  $\text{Ar}/\text{O}_2$  ratio of 30/45 in sccm. Prior to the deposition, presputtering was carried out for 10 min. The film with a thickness of  $\sim 300$  nm was obtained as a result of rf magnetron sputtering with a constant rf power of 100 W at 13.56 MHz at room temperature for 90 min. The substrate holder was rotated at 8 rotations per min about its axis during the deposition.

**Characterization.** Crystal structures of the thin films were examined using an X-ray diffractometer (XRD: Ultima IV, Rigaku) with  $\text{Cu-K}\alpha$  radiation in Bragg-Bretano ( $\theta/2\theta$ ) geometry in range of  $2\theta = 20\text{--}80^\circ$ . Cross-sectional transmission electron microscopy (TEM) specimens were prepared using a standard focused ion beam (FIB) technique. The detailed microstructural investigations were performed using high-resolution TEM (HRTEM; Tecnai G2 F30 S-Twin, FEI) equipped with a high-angle annular dark-field (HAADF) detector. High-resolution X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (Escalab 220i-XL, VG Scientific Instrument) using Al  $\text{K}\alpha$  photons (1486.6 eV) was carried out at a base pressure of  $\sim 1.1 \times 10^{-10}$  Torr in an ultra-high-vacuum (UHV) chamber after Ar etching of the sample. The shifts of the core-level spectra were corrected by calibration with the C 1s peak at 285 eV. The thickness of the films was determined by direct observation of the cross-sectional image obtained by field emission scanning electron microscopy (FESEM: S-4700, Hitachi). The films were further characterized by piezoresponse force microscopy (PFM: Nanoscope V multimode, Bruker) at a resonant frequency of 330 kHz, and typically, at a force constant of  $42 \text{ N m}^{-1}$  using a Pt/Ir-coated Si cantilever. Piezoelectric response amplitude over the local surface area of the films was measured using PFM incorporating a lock-in

technique with an applied AC voltage (driving amplitude: 4000 mV). Optical transmittance of the films was measured by a UV–visible spectrophotometer (V-530, JASCO). A metal–insulator–metal sandwich structure on which a Pt top electrode of  $\sim 250$  nm was deposited by DC sputtering was fabricated, and the dielectric properties were evaluated at room temperature by an impedance analyzer (4294A, Agilent). Ferroelectric hysteresis loops and leakage currents were measured by using an RT66A ferroelectric test system (236, Keithley) and an electrometer (6517A, Keithley), respectively.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

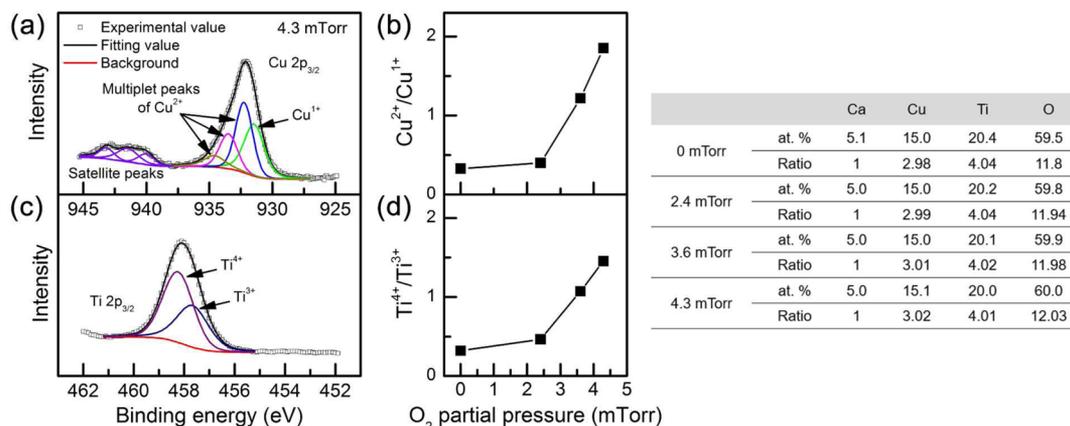
Figure 1a shows the XRD patterns of the thin films deposited at different oxygen partial pressures from 0 to 4.3 mTorr. For



**Figure 1.** (a) XRD patterns of CCTO thin films sputter-deposited at different oxygen partial pressures, (b) a cross-sectional TEM image representing individual CCTO and ITO layers on a PET substrate, and (c) a condensed diffraction pattern of the CCTO thin film deposited at the oxygen partial pressure of 4.3 mTorr, indicating the amorphous state of the films.

comparison, the XRD pattern of the ITO/PET substrate is included. It is clearly seen that the deposition at room temperature does not induce crystallization, regardless of the oxygen partial pressure. An example of a cross-sectional TEM for the 4.3 mTorr sample is illustrated in Figure 1b, which reveals the clear interface between the dielectric layer and the ITO electrode. The condensed diffraction pattern in Figure 1c confirms the amorphous nature of the CCTO film. Additional TEM results for the 0 mTorr sample can be referred to Figure S1 of the Supporting Information. We also confirmed the amorphous state from the Raman spectra of the CCTO films as shown in Figure S2, where the symmetry peaks associated with the rotation/vibration of  $\text{TiO}_6$  octahedra are not present at any level of oxygen partial pressure. It should be mentioned that the films are kept highly transparent regardless of oxygen pressure, as seen in the transmittance curves of Figure S3.

High-resolution XPS spectra of the Cu 2p and Ti 2p regions for the CCTO thin films deposited at different oxygen partial pressures were investigated to confirm the variations in the chemical states. All XPS results are shown in Figure S4. Figure 2 presents examples of the XPS spectra for the films deposited at 4.3 mTorr, with the variations in the charge valence ratios of  $\text{Cu}^{2+}/\text{Cu}^{1+}$  and  $\text{Ti}^{4+}/\text{Ti}^{3+}$  with increasing oxygen flow. The binding energy values were calibrated using the C 1s peak at 285 eV as an internal standard. The XPS spectra in Figure 2a include two peaks at  $\sim 932$  and  $\sim 941$  eV, which originate from the binding energy of the Cu 2p<sub>3/2</sub> states. The curves were fitted by using Lorentzian–Gaussian functions and Shirley backgrounds. The fitted curves suggest the coexistence of the  $\text{Cu}^{1+}$  and  $\text{Cu}^{2+}$  valence states. The  $\text{Cu}^{2+}/\text{Cu}^{1+}$  ratio was



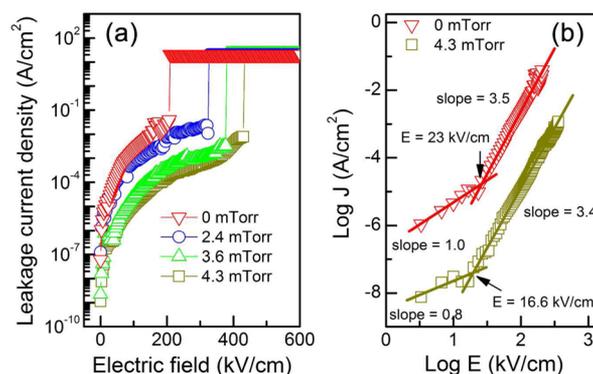
**Figure 2.** (a, c) High-resolution XPS spectra of the Cu 2p and Ti 2p regions for the CCTO thin films deposited at 4.3 mTorr and the variations in the valence ratios of (b)  $\text{Cu}^{2+}/\text{Cu}^{1+}$  and (d)  $\text{Ti}^{4+}/\text{Ti}^{3+}$  as a function of oxygen partial pressure. The inserted table represents the atomic concentration in percentage and the ratio of Ca:Cu:Ti:O for the samples processed with different oxygen partial pressures.

calculated from the peak areas to trace the changes in the Cu valence state as a function of oxygen flow, as shown in Figure 2b. The  $\text{Cu}^{2+}/\text{Cu}^{1+}$  ratio increased gradually from 0.33 to 1.89 as the oxygen partial pressure increased. The gradual transition into the  $\text{Cu}^{2+}$  state is believed to be associated with the sacrificing of oxygen vacancies with the incremental supply of oxygen, as expected by the simple reaction  $V_{\text{O}}^{\bullet\bullet} + \text{O}^{2-} = \text{O}_\text{o}$ .<sup>29</sup> Oxygen vacancies were reported to exist in crystalline CCTO films prepared by rf sputtering under low oxygen pressures.<sup>30</sup> The decrease in the number of oxygen vacancies might contribute largely to minimizing the charge imbalance toward the stoichiometric CCTO structure in the amorphous structure and, thus, to influencing chemical states of cations.<sup>31,32</sup>

As another example, Figure 2c also shows the Ti 2p<sub>3/2</sub> states of the XPS spectra for the films deposited at 4.3 mTorr pressure. The spectra could be divided into the contributions from  $\text{Ti}^{3+}$  and  $\text{Ti}^{4+}$  as a result of the identical curve fitting. The  $\text{Ti}^{4+}/\text{Ti}^{3+}$  ratios were also estimated from the peak areas for the samples processed at different oxygen partial pressures, as shown in Figure 2d. A gradual increase in the  $\text{Ti}^{4+}/\text{Ti}^{3+}$  ratio was observed with increasing oxygen flow. The gradual dominance of  $\text{Ti}^{4+}$  is similarly assumed to result from the expected oxidation of  $\text{Ti}^{3+}$  during rf sputtering, with the increased oxygen supply.

In addition, the atomic concentration and the ratio of Ca:Cu:Ti:O are presented in the inserted table of Figure 2. The values were estimated from the relative area of each element's curve in the XPS spectra according to different oxygen partial pressures as reported elsewhere.<sup>32</sup> The result suggests that the increase of oxygen partial pressure approaches the stoichiometric ratio (Ca:Cu:Ti:O = 1:3:4:12) of CCTO even in the amorphous state, particularly with the gradual increase of oxygen concentration.

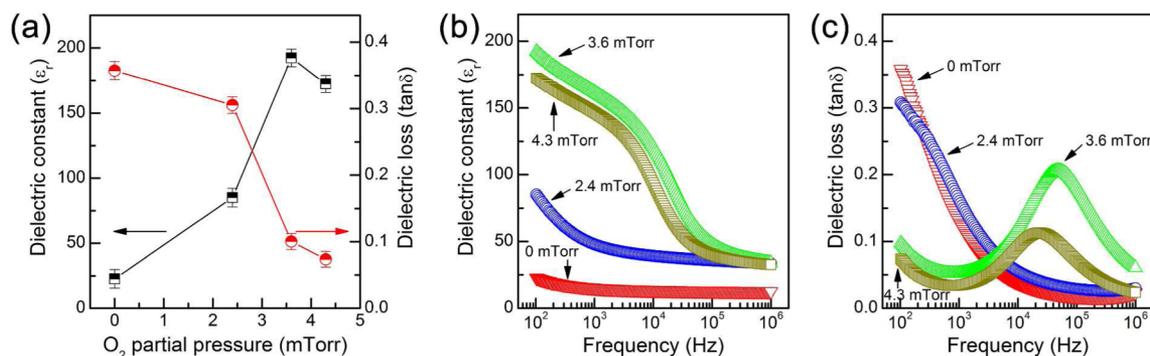
Figure 3a shows the plots of leakage current density  $J$  versus electric field  $E$  for the amorphous CCTO thin films deposited under various oxygen flows. At a given electric field, the leakage current density considerably decreased upon increasing the oxygen flow. In addition, the breakdown voltage increased from 207 to 430 kV/cm upon increasing the oxygen partial pressure up to 4.3 mTorr. There is no reported value of leakage current for amorphous CCTO thin films, but crystalline CCTO films are reported to show a leakage current of 1250 kV/cm.<sup>33</sup> It is about one-third of the crystalline value, which is still meaningful



**Figure 3.** (a) Leakage current density ( $J$ ) versus electric field ( $E$ ) curves of the CCTO thin films deposited at various oxygen partial pressures, and (b) the corresponding  $(\log J)$ – $(\log E)$  plots of the CCTO thin films deposited at 0 and 4.3 mTorr oxygen partial pressures, as examples.

compared to the typical leakage currents (200–500 kV/cm) for amorphous high  $\epsilon_r$  thin films.<sup>34,35</sup>

The leakage current was further investigated by examining the slopes of the  $\log J$  versus  $\log E$  plots, as shown in Figure 3b. Regardless of the oxygen partial pressure, both curves demonstrate two distinguishable regions depending on the slope change with the electric field. At low bias fields, the slopes are close to 1, indicating the Ohmic conduction behavior, which is typically observed at low voltage or high temperature, where current is dominantly carried by the bulk-generated carriers in dielectric thin films, and not by the injected carriers from the electrodes.<sup>36–38</sup> At high electric fields, both the curves exhibit larger slopes of  $\sim 3.5$ , indicating a change in the conduction mechanism from Ohmic conduction to Schottky emission, where the injected carriers are dominant, as reported for other amorphous dielectric thin films.<sup>39</sup> The film grown in the absence of oxygen flow exhibits a change in the conduction mechanism at a higher field of 23 kV/cm as compared to that (16.6 kV/cm) for the film deposited at 4.3 mTorr. The late transition at 0 mTorr may be associated with the presence of oxygen vacancies.<sup>37,40</sup> Oxygen vacancies contribute to the creation of additional free carriers for the bulk conduction of films. This observation agrees well with previous reports that demonstrated different conduction mechanisms in  $\text{BiFeO}_3$  films depending on the density of oxygen vacancies.<sup>40,41</sup>

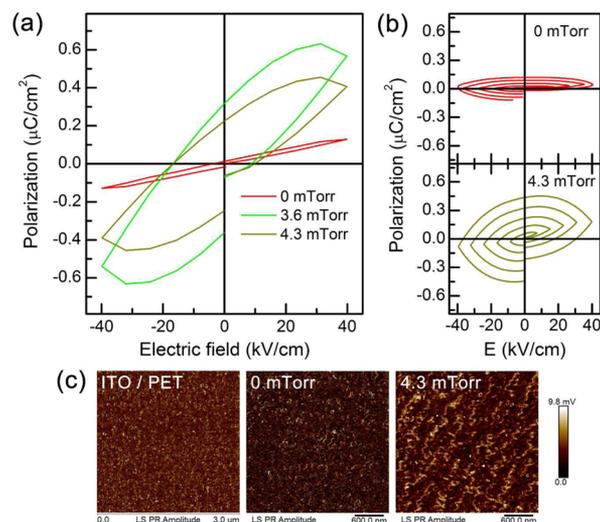


**Figure 4.** (a) Dielectric constant and dielectric loss of the CCTO thin films as a function of oxygen partial pressure, which were measured at 100 Hz, and the frequency dependence of (b) dielectric constant and (c) dielectric loss of the CCTO thin films deposited at different oxygen partial pressures in the frequency range of  $\sim 10^2$  to  $10^6$  Hz, demonstrating dielectric relaxation and resonance behaviors.

Figure 4a shows the oxygen partial pressure dependence of the dielectric permittivity and dielectric loss of the amorphous CCTO thin films at 100 Hz. The dielectric properties depended on the level of oxygen flow. With an increase in oxygen flow, the dielectric constant increased up to  $\sim 192$  at 3.6 mTorr and then slightly decreased to  $\sim 170$  at 4.3 mTorr. The origin of the unexpectedly high permittivity will be discussed later. The dielectric loss decreased from 0.357 at zero oxygen to 0.073 at 4.3 mTorr pressure. The  $\epsilon_r$  and  $\tan\delta$  values are very noticeable since they can be useful for various capacitive and transistor applications specifically requiring room temperature processing. There is no dielectric value reported for amorphous CCTO films so far. Particularly, the loss value of less than 0.1 is very meaningful since most of the amorphous colossal  $\epsilon_r$  thin films have shown higher  $\tan\delta$  values of  $>0.10$ .<sup>42,43</sup>

Figure 4b,c shows the frequency dependence ( $10^2$  to  $10^6$  Hz) of the dielectric permittivity and dielectric loss of the amorphous CCTO thin films at room temperature. The dielectric behavior with frequency was strongly dependent on the oxygen partial pressure. The dielectric constant of the 3.6 and 4.3 mTorr films (Figure 4b) shows an abrupt decrease in the frequency range of  $\sim 10^4$ – $10^5$  Hz, while no such relaxation behavior is noticeable at low oxygen partial pressures of 0 and 2.4 mTorr. This observation indicates that the polarization mechanisms differ depending on the oxygen partial pressure, which determines the relative permittivity of the amorphous samples. The relaxation process observed for the 3.6 and 4.3 mTorr films is very similar to the reported frequency dependency for crystalline CCTO thin films or bulk CCTO. The distinct resonance peaks in the dielectric loss curves of the 3.6 and 4.3 mTorr films well support the dielectric relaxation behavior.

To explore the origin of the abnormal dielectric behavior, we measured the polarization–electric field ( $P$ – $E$ ) hysteresis loop curves of the amorphous CCTO thin films deposited at different oxygen partial pressures, as shown in Figure 5a. With an increase in the oxygen partial pressure, the  $P$ – $E$  loops of the amorphous CCTO thin films exhibited characteristics typical of ferroelectric materials. In order to ensure the reliability of the ferroelectric behavior, the  $P$ – $E$  hysteresis loops were measured at different electric fields for the amorphous CCTO thin films deposited at 0 and 4.3 mTorr, as shown in Figure 5b. With increasing applied electric field, the remnant polarization and coercive field increased, which implies that these films possess a ferroelectric nature. The distinct ferroelectric hysteresis behavior with the increased oxygen partial pressure is assumed



**Figure 5.** (a) Polarization ( $P$ )–electric field ( $E$ ) hysteresis loop curves of the CCTO thin films deposited at different oxygen partial pressures, (b) cycling  $P$ – $E$  hysteresis loops of the CCTO thin films deposited at 0 and 4.3 mTorr, and (c) the piezoresponse images of amplitude distribution over the CCTO thin films deposited at 0 and 4.3 mTorr, with the image of ITO/PET as a reference.

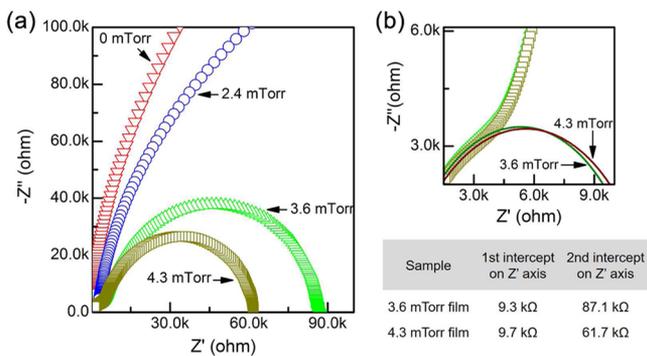
to be associated with the reduction in oxygen vacancy and the changed chemical states of cations.<sup>44,45</sup> It is known that the existence of an oxygen vacancy affects polarization negatively by acting as a clamping center against the domain wall movement.<sup>46,47</sup> Here, the increase in oxygen partial pressure reduces the concentration of oxygen vacancy and thus facilitates the domain movement. On the other hand, the origin of ferroelectricity itself is likely due to structural instabilities resulting from off-centered displacements of Ti ions in  $\text{TiO}_6$  octahedra even in the amorphous state.<sup>48</sup> It is reported that the displacement by Ti ions is about 0.04 Å in polycrystalline CCTO ceramics and contributes to the spontaneous polarization by  $\sim 0.4 \mu\text{C}/\text{cm}^2$ .<sup>49</sup> In addition, the increased concentration of  $\text{Ti}^{4+}$  relative to  $\text{Ti}^{3+}$  with increasing the oxygen partial pressure is assumed to produce greater polarization because the smaller ionic size of  $\text{Ti}^{4+}$  (0.605 Å) than that of  $\text{Ti}^{3+}$  (0.67 Å) may induce a larger dipole moment.<sup>26</sup>

In order to further ensure the intrinsic nature of the observed ferroelectric behavior for the amorphous CCTO thin films, piezoresponse force microscopy (PFM) studies were performed, as shown in Figure 5c. The PFM image of the thin film

deposited without oxygen flow exhibited no image contrast. However, the PFM image of the film deposited at 4.3 mTorr clearly shows a bright and dark contrast-mixed state, which was extracted by different piezoresponse amplitudes, indicating the presence of electric domains with  $\sim 10$  nm scale. It is very interesting to observe the formation of domains in amorphous states from the hysteresis loops and direct amplitude images. The assumed ferroelectric behavior may also be due to the higher  $\text{Ti}^{4+}$  concentration, as observed from the XPS results for the CCTO film deposited at the oxygen partial pressure of 4.3 mTorr.

From the dielectric relaxation behavior in conjunction with the  $P$ - $E$  curves and PFM results, the samples processed at 3.6 and 4.3 mTorr seem to have the ferroelectric nature even in the amorphous state. Accordingly, the dielectric relaxation at  $10^4$ – $10^5$  Hz for the 3.6 and 4.3 mTorr films (Figure 4b,c) is likely to be related to the dipolar polarization. This behavior in the amorphous state is surely abnormal since this characteristic, known as Debye-like dielectric relaxation, is generally expected for crystalline CCTO films.<sup>20,50,51</sup> Additionally, we assume that the low frequency rises of dielectric constant and loss at  $\sim 10^2$  Hz in Figure 4b,c come from the space charge polarization at the interface between the films and electrodes.

Figure 6 shows the complex impedance curves of the amorphous CCTO thin films deposited at different oxygen



**Figure 6.** (a) Complex impedance curves of the CCTO thin films deposited at different oxygen partial pressures and (b) highlighted low impedance regions of the 3.6 and 4.3 mTorr samples. The inserted table presents the real resistance values as the intercepts on the  $Z'$  axis.

partial pressures. The plots of the films deposited under oxygen partial pressures of 0 and 2.4 mTorr may assume a very large semicircle beyond the measurable frequency as shown in Figure 6a. However, the amorphous thin films deposited above 3.6 and 4.3 mTorr exhibited clear semicircles with near zero intercepts on the  $Z'$  axis at high frequency. The intercepts correspond to the resistance at the interface between the film and electrode as reported for the other amorphous films.<sup>52</sup> The increased oxygen partial pressure definitely reduced the interface resistance. It may be related to less defects and chemical states in the interface regions depending on the oxygen pressure.

Interestingly, the 3.6 and 4.3 mTorr films showed additional small arcs as illustrated in Figure 6b. It is very rare to observe the two arcs in the amorphous state since the first intercept on the  $Z'$  axis may indicate the existence of grain boundary resistance. Even if we assume no existence of grain boundary since it is in the amorphous state, it is presumable that there is still a certain irregularity which is acting similarly like a grain boundary. Note that the high oxygen pressure films possessed

ferroelectric domains. The first and second intercept values of the samples are represented in the inserted table of Figure 6: the second intercept values correspond to the interface resistance. The first intercept value of resistance is around 9.3–9.7 k $\Omega$ , which is interestingly very close to the 9.3 k $\Omega$  value reported as a grain boundary resistance for polycrystalline  $\text{CaCu}_3\text{Ti}_4\text{O}_{12}$  thin films.<sup>22</sup> Accordingly, domain boundary or short-range grain boundary may explain the unusual observation of resistance contributor. All the facts point out the unexpected existence of ferroelectricity and thus dipolar polarization, which must be the origin of the high dielectric constant.

In addition, we conducted extra experiments by annealing the deposited CCTO thin films up to 850  $^\circ\text{C}$  to verify whether the as-deposited films create a pure crystalline CCTO phase or not. For the crystalline state of CCTO thin films, the phase development and basic properties,  $\epsilon_r$ ,  $P_s$ , and effective piezoelectric coefficient,  $d_{33,\text{eff}}$  can be referred to Figures S5 and S6, respectively, in the Supporting Information. Table S1 compares particularly the reported  $\epsilon_r$  values for the cases of thin films prepared with different processing conditions.

## CONCLUSIONS

We report the unusually high dielectric constant of amorphous CCTO thin films, which is very interesting since the CCTO material is known to possess space-charge polarization driven by a high resistance grain boundary in the crystalline state. As an optimal example, a dielectric constant of  $\sim 192$ , with a reasonably low dielectric loss  $< 0.1$ , is obtained for amorphous CCTO thin films sputter-deposited at room temperature. Dielectric properties are strongly dependent on oxygen partial pressure, as the chemical states of ions close to stoichiometric CCTO exhibit the optimal dielectric characteristics. Strong evidence of ferroelectricity even in the amorphous state, as confirmed by a hysteresis loop and domain formation, is regarded as the origin of the high dielectric constant at the specific oxygen pressure. Dielectric relaxation behavior and complex impedance analysis further support the potential dipolar polarization along with the interfacial polarization of film/electrode. The excellent dielectric characteristics are extensively applicable for flexible passive and active electronic devices requiring high dielectric constant and near room temperature processing.

## ASSOCIATED CONTENT

### Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge on the ACS Publications website at DOI: 10.1021/acs.chemmater.7b01346.

Additional TEM images, Raman spectra, transmittance curves, XPS curves, XRD patterns, PFM images, and performance comparison chart in full scale (PDF)

## AUTHOR INFORMATION

### Corresponding Author

\*E-mail: ycho@yonsei.ac.kr.

### ORCID

Yong Soo Cho: 0000-0002-1601-6395

### Author Contributions

<sup>†</sup>C.S.H. and H.R.C. contributed equally to this work.

## Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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