The Maximum of the Conductivity of an Ionic Melt from MD Simulations at Various Temperatures

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Molecular dynamics simulations of molten TICl are performed at 7 temperatures between 800 and 2600 K. The self-exchange velocity of neighbouring unlike ions divided by the molar volume, a quantity corresponding to the specific conductivity, is found to have a maximum as a function of temperature. The reason for the existence of the maximum is discussed.

Granath and Yosim had discovered that the specific conductance vs. temperature curve of some molten salts shows a maximum [1, 2]. Also thallous chloride shows this phenomenon [3].

The main aim of this study was to check whether the maximum for TICl can be reproduced by molecular dynamics (MD) simulations. In a previous MD simulation of molten (Li-Rb)Cl, we have shown that the internal mobilities are strongly related with the self-exchange velocities (SEV) of neighbouring unlike ions [4]. Since it takes extensive time to compute conductivities with MD simulations [5—8], we have tried to reproduce the maximum by calculating SEV’s. Pair potentials of the Born-Mayer-Huggins type with the parameters presented by Mayer for the TICl crystal [9] were adopted. The properties obtained by the simulation do not agree quantitatively with the experimentally obtained ones, perhaps partly because the parameters of the pair potentials are not quite adequate. Therefore, the melt dealt with in the present simulation should be regarded as a model ionic melt rather than molten TICl.

The adopted pair potentials are expressed by

\[ u_{ij}(r) = \frac{z_i z_j e^2}{r} + b_{ij} \exp \left( - \frac{r}{\eta} \right) - \frac{c_{ij}}{r^6} - \frac{d_{ij}}{r^8} \]  

where \( z \) is the charge number, \( e \) the elementary charge, and \( b, c, d \) and \( \eta \) are parameters whose values are given in Table 1.

The side length of a basic cell, \( L \), was set as 5 fs. The MD simulation was performed at 3 temperatures shown in Figure 1. The height of the first peak in \( g_+ \) has a minimum around 1600 K. In general, the first peak is higher in the solid and gaseous states than in the liquid state. Therefore, this minimum implies that the structure of the ionic melt is more “solid-like” and “gas-like” at lower and higher temperatures, respectively. The position of the first peak moves slightly towards the origin with rising temperature.

Some other computational data are tabulated in Table 2. The pressure was calculated from the virial expression

\[ P = \frac{1}{3} \sum_i \sum_j \left( \frac{2}{r_{ij}} \right) \sum_k \langle \mathbf{r}_{ijk} \rangle \mathbf{r}_{ijk} \]  

Table 1. Parameters in the pair potentials (\( \rho = 35.6 \text{ pm} \)).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pair</th>
<th>( b ) (10(^{-19}) J)</th>
<th>( c ) (10(^{-79}) J m(^6))</th>
<th>( d ) (10(^{-99}) J m(^8))</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>++</td>
<td>1272</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+—</td>
<td>2429</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>——</td>
<td>4508</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The SEV, \( v \), is defined as [4]
\[
v = \frac{(R_2 - \bar{R})}{\tau},
\]
where \( \bar{R} \) is the average distance of unlike ions with distances \(< R_2 \), and \( \tau \) the average time in which the average distance of these ions becomes \( R_2 \). The SEV was averaged for unlike ions surrounding totally 3240 reference ions.

It has been found that the internal mobility, \( b_1 \), is approximately proportional to \( v \) [4]:
\[
b_1 \approx k v,
\]
where \( k \) is a constant.

The combination of (3) with the equation \( \kappa = F b_1 / V \) (\( \kappa \): specific conductivity, \( V \): molar volume, \( F \): Faraday's constant) yields
\[
\kappa \approx k F v / V.
\]
Therefore, as long as (3) holds, \( \kappa \) is approximately proportional to \( v / V \). The SEV may be represented in the form
\[
v = C \exp\left(-\frac{d_e}{T}\right),
\]
where \( C \) and \( d_e \) are constants. In the present case \( C \) and \( d_e \) are evaluated to be \( 400 \text{ m}^{-1} \) and \( 1975 \text{ K} \), respectively, while from the experimental internal mobility of molten TiCl \( (720—1160 \text{ K}) \) at ambient pressure \( d_e \) is found to be \( 1720 \text{ K} \) [14].

Since \( V = M/(a_d - b_d T) \) (\( M \): molecular weight), it follows from (4) and (5) that
\[
\kappa \approx A (a_d - b_d T) \exp\left(-\frac{d_e}{T}\right),
\]
where \( A \) is a constant; consequently, \( \kappa \) has a maximum at
\[
T_{\text{max}} = \left\{ \frac{d_e}{2} \right\} \left\{ \sqrt{1 + (4a_d/b_d d_e)} - 1 \right\}.
\]
This is calculated to be 1930 K, while the experimental specific conductivity of molten TICl at an unknown elevated pressure has a maximum around 1600 K [3].

For $T_{\text{max}}$ to be detectable experimentally, it is required that both $(a_d/b_d)$ and $d_e$ be small. The quantity $1/[(a_d/b_d) - T]$ is the relative thermal volume expansion. A comparison of the literature values of $(a_d/b_d)$ [10] reveals that for the salts for which a conductivity maximum has been detected these values are considerably smaller than for the other salts. The value of $d_e$ would generally be small if the attraction between cation and anion is strong. Because the volume expansion is particularly unfavourable for the mobility if the ions are strongly attracted by the counter ions [4]. In the present case, the attraction is relatively strong owing to the large values of $c_{+-}$ and $d_{+-}$ in the pair potential, and the value of $(a_d/b_d)$ is relatively small. These would be the reasons why the maximum occurs at a relatively low temperature.

An alternative equation to (5) is

$$v = g\sqrt{T} - f,$$  \hfill (8)

where $f$ and $g$ are constants. The values of $v$ in the present case are expressed by (8) with $g = 6.90 \text{ m s}^{-1} \text{ K}^{-1/2}$ and $f = 161 \text{ m s}^{-1}$. The experimental internal mobilities are well expressed by (8), even better than by (5) e.g. in the case of molten LiCl [14]. If (8) holds, it follows that

$$T_{\text{max}} = \frac{1}{9} \left[ \frac{f}{g} + \sqrt{\left(\frac{f}{g}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{3a_d}{b_d}\right)^2} \right].$$  \hfill (9)

According to (9), $T_{\text{max}}$ is 1960 K. If $f$ equals zero, the temperature dependence of $v$ becomes that of the thermal velocity of motion.

The calculated self-diffusion coefficients of the cation and anion ($D_+$ and $D_-$, respectively) are nearly equal and about one third of the measured ones [15—17]. The value of $(D_+ + D_-)/vT$ increases with rising temperature, which suggests that the Nernst-Einstein relation does not hold.

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