

The rovibronic energies of the SiNSi radical in its $\tilde{X}^2\Pi_g$ electronic state

P.R. Bunker^{a,*}, R. Guérout^a, Z.J. Jakubek^a, Per Jensen^b, S.N. Yurchenko^c

^a Steacie Institute for Molecular Sciences, National Research Council of Canada, Ottawa, Ont., Canada K1A 0R6

^b Theoretische Chemie, Bergische Universität, D-42097 Wuppertal, Germany

^c Max-Planck-Institut für Kohlenforschung, D-45470 Mülheim an der Ruhr, Germany

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In honor of Dr Gisbert Winnewisser for his many contributions to Science.

Abstract

We present the results of a calculation of the rovibronic energies of the SiNSi radical in its $\tilde{X}^2\Pi_g$ electronic ground state. At bent geometries, the electronic degeneracy is split to give a lower state of A_2 symmetry and an upper state of B_2 symmetry; each state is linear at equilibrium. The rovibronic calculation involves consideration of the Renner effect, and we initially made the calculation using ab initio A_2 and B_2 potential surfaces. The term values obtained were of help in making vibronic assignments in a newly obtained spectrum of the molecule. Having vibronically assigned the spectrum, we refined the potentials in a fitting to the vibronic term value separations. The optimized potentials allow us, in principle, to predict all rovibronic energies of the $\tilde{X}^2\Pi_g$ state.

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1. Introduction

There is considerable contemporary interest in determining the properties of small gaseous silicon nitrides for the purpose of understanding how silicon nitride films are formed in chemical-vapour deposition processes, and for optimizing the production of high performance silicon nitride materials such as Si_3N_4 . In this paper, we focus on SiNSi. Previous experimental and theoretical studies [1–5] show that the SiNSi molecule has a linear electronic ground state, $\tilde{X}^2\Pi_g$, but no detailed analysis of spectra involving this state has been made (Section 3 of [4]). We provide the basis for that analysis here using the results of a low resolution (experimental precision $3\text{--}7\text{ cm}^{-1}$) dispersed laser induced fluorescence spectrum, and of a higher resolution (experimental precision $0.5\text{--}1.0\text{ cm}^{-1}$) laser excitation spectrum of SiNSi, both recently obtained by Jakubek et al. [6].

When the SiNSi molecule is bent the $\tilde{X}^2\Pi_g$ state splits into two, giving rise to an upper (B_2) electronic state and a lower

(A_2) electronic state; both states being linear at equilibrium. To calculate the rovibrational energies in such a situation it is necessary to allow for the Renner effect, and in the work reported here we have used our Renner computer program [7–9] with, initially, ab initio A_2 and B_2 potential energy surfaces. This assisted in the assignment of the vibronic structure in the spectrum, and as a result we assigned 36 vibronic term value separations for the \tilde{X} state. We adjusted the potential surfaces in order to achieve an optimum least squares fitting to the separations. The optimized surfaces that we have obtained can be used to make predictions of any \tilde{X} state rovibronic term value.

2. The calculations

Using the program system MOLPRO [10], we made ab initio calculations using the CCSD(T) method [11], with an aug-cc-pVTZ/frozen-core basis set [12,13], at 49 geometries on the lower (A_2) state surface and at 40 geometries on the upper (B_2) state surface. The calculations covered bending angles from 180 to 80° , and bond lengths from 1.4 to 2.0 \AA . The RENNER program uses the analytical expressions given in Eq. (1) below for the two surfaces; we determine the parameters f_{\dots}^0 in these expressions by adjusting them to

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 613 990 0738; fax: +1 613 947 2838.

E-mail address: philip.bunker@nrc.ca (P.R. Bunker).

optimize the fitting of the surfaces through the 89 ab initio points.

For SiNSi, the lower and upper potential energy surfaces, $V_-(\Delta r_1, \Delta r_3, \bar{\rho})$ and $V_+(\Delta r_1, \Delta r_3, \bar{\rho})$, respectively, are written

$$V_{\pm}(\Delta r_1, \Delta r_3, \bar{\rho}) = V_0^{(\pm)}(\bar{\rho}) + \sum_j F_j^{(\pm)}(\bar{\rho}) y_j + \sum_{j \leq k} F_{jk}^{(\pm)}(\bar{\rho}) y_j y_k + \sum_{j \leq k \leq m} F_{jkm}^{(\pm)}(\bar{\rho}) y_j y_k y_m + \sum_{j \leq k \leq m \leq n} F_{jkmn}^{(\pm)}(\bar{\rho}) y_j y_k y_m y_n, \quad (1)$$

with

$$y_j = 1 - \exp(-a_1 \Delta r_j), \quad (2)$$

$$F_{jk\dots}^{(\pm)}(\bar{\rho}) = f_{jk\dots}^{(0)} + \sum_{i=1}^N f_{jk\dots}^{(i\pm)} (1 - \cos \bar{\rho})^i, \quad (3)$$

and

$$V_0^{(\pm)}(\bar{\rho}) = V_e + \sum_{i=1}^8 f_0^{(i\pm)} (1 - \cos \bar{\rho})^i. \quad (4)$$

In Eq. (1), $\bar{\rho}$ is the instantaneous value of the bond angle supplement (see Figs. 14 and 15 of Ref. [14]), and $\Delta r_j = r_j - r_e$, where the r_j are the instantaneous N–Si_j bond lengths and r_e is the equilibrium bond length; the indices j , k , m , and n can each be 1 or 3. In Eq. (2), a_1 is a molecular parameter. In Eq. (3), the parameters $f_{jk\dots}^{(0)}$ are common for the two potential energy surfaces and this ensures that the functions are degenerate at linearity when $\bar{\rho} = 0$; the function $F_j^{(\pm)}(\bar{\rho})$ has $N=4$, $F_{jk}^{(\pm)}(\bar{\rho})$ has $N=3$, $F_{jkl}^{(\pm)}(\bar{\rho})$ has $N=2$, and $F_{jklm}^{(\pm)}(\bar{\rho})$ has $N=1$. In Eq. (4), V_e is the value of the two potential energy functions at equilibrium. The adjustable parameters $f_{\dots}^{(0)}$ in V_- and V_+ are constrained to ensure that V_- and V_+ are totally symmetric under the interchange of Δr_1 and Δr_3 which they must be for a symmetrical molecule like SiNSi.

We experienced some difficulty in adjusting the parameters $f_{\dots}^{(0)}$ and a_1 to fit the surfaces through the ab initio points. The problem was not with the precision of the fitting but rather with the shape of the obtained surfaces; they had unreasonable multiple inflexion points (i.e. ‘wiggles’) and they extrapolated to wildly high or low values. As a result, we decided to sacrifice the precision of the fitting in order to maintain acceptable smooth surfaces having appropriate qualitative behaviour. With this limitation we found that we could determine 27 parameters and obtain a root mean square deviation of 25 cm^{-1} . The values of these parameters are given in Table 1.

We next used these parameters in our Renner program to calculate rovibronic energies and wavefunctions. In the calculation, we took the spin-orbit coupling constant $A_{\text{SO}} = 150 \text{ cm}^{-1}$, based on a preliminary experimental determination of the vibronic splittings in the (0 0 0) and (0 1 0) states. The Morse oscillator rigid bender basis set was

Table 1

The ab initio potential energy parameters^a obtained for the A_2 and B_2 surfaces of the $\tilde{X}^2\Pi_g$ state of SiNSi (Eqs. (1)–(4))

V_e/E_h	–632.7397742 (14) ^b	
r_e (Å)	1.648294 (5)	
a_1 (Å ^{–1})	1.8 ^c	
$f_1^{(0)}$	0.0	
$f_{11}^{(0)}$	35071.6 (7.2)	
$f_{13}^{(0)}$	22724 (12)	
$f_{111}^{(0)}$	–9101 (97)	
$f_{113}^{(0)}$	8766 (97)	
$f_{1111}^{(0)}$	14359 (23)	
$f_{1113}^{(0)}$	–13265 (21)	
	A_2 ($\sigma = -$)	B_2 ($\sigma = +$)
$f_0^{(1,\sigma)}$	3273.1 (6.7)	12181 (10)
$f_0^{(2,\sigma)}$	9100 (30)	8715 (72)
$f_0^{(3,\sigma)}$	–9441 (43)	317 (167)
$f_0^{(4,\sigma)}$	12953 (19)	7281 (116)
$f_1^{(1,\sigma)}$	–3852.0 (6.8)	–8253 (17)
$f_1^{(2,\sigma)}$	–7436 (11)	–8553 (74)
$f_{11}^{(1,\sigma)}$	1539 (40)	–8609 (37)
$f_{11}^{(2,\sigma)}$	–12098 (103)	
$f_{13}^{(1,\sigma)}$	–3815 (57)	17222 (63)
$f_{13}^{(2,\sigma)}$	23070 (151)	

^a Units are cm^{-1} unless otherwise indicated.

^b One standard error given in parentheses in units of the last figure quoted for the parameter.

^c Held fixed after a preliminary determination in the least squares fitting.

chosen after making convergence tests to ensure that all states of interest were converged to within 1 or 2 cm^{-1} . For the lower surface we used the $N_{\text{Bend}} = 11$ lowest bending basis functions, and for the upper surface we used the $N_{\text{Bend}} = 7$ lowest bending basis functions. The stretching function basis was selected using Morse oscillator functions $|n_1 n_3\rangle$ having $n_1 + n_3 \leq N_{\text{stretch}} = 15$. Of these functions we used the $N_A = 6$ lowest stretching basis functions of A_1 symmetry, and the $N_B = 3$ lowest stretching basis functions of B_2 symmetry for both electronic states. In column 7 of Table 2 we compare the ab initio term value separations with experiment.

After successive partial vibronic assignments and optimizations of the potential we arrived at what we considered to be our ‘final’ optimized potential by fitting the 36 observed vibronic term value separations given in Table 2. In the fitting, six term value separations (from the laser excitation spectrum) were given a weight five times larger than the rest (from the dispersed fluorescence spectrum) because they were determined more precisely; the weights are given in column 8 of Table 2. Test fittings showed that only four parameters can be determined by the data set to be significantly different (in a statistical sense) from their ab initio values, and the optimized values of these four parameters are given in Table 3. The rest of the parameters were kept at their ab initio values in the final term value calculation. The comparison of the term value

Table 2
The comparison of the ab initio and fitted term value separations (cm^{-1}) with the observations

J	N	Sym	$(v_1 v_2 v_3)$	$(\mu\kappa)K_P$	Obs.	Ab initio	Fitted	
						O–C	Weight	O–C
Relative to the $[1/2, 0, A_1 (0 1 0) \mu\Sigma_{1/2}]$ state								
1/2	0	B_1	(0 1 0)	$\kappa\Sigma_{1/2}$	230	–3.4	0.2	–1.9
1/2	0	B_1	(1 1 0)	$\kappa\Sigma_{1/2}$	856	3.5	0.2	–5.7
1/2	0	B_1	(2 1 0)	$\kappa\Sigma_{1/2}$	1499	29.9	0.2	10.1
1/2	0	A_1	(0 3 0)	$\mu\Sigma_{1/2}$	289	–5.8	0.2	–11.5
1/2	0	A_1	(1 3 0)	$\mu\Sigma_{1/2}$	946	25.3	0.2	6.5
1/2	0	A_1	(2 1 0)	$\mu\Sigma_{1/2}$	1261	32.9	0.2	8.8
3/2	2	A_1	(0 1 0)	$\Delta_{3/2}$	32.4	–1.2	1.0	2.7
3/2	2	A_1	(0 3 0)	$\mu\Delta_{3/2}$	297	6.5	0.2	–0.6
3/2	2	A_1	(1 1 0)	$\Delta_{3/2}$	631	–9.8	0.2	–16.3
3/2	2	A_1	(2 1 0) ^a	$\Delta_{3/2}$	1261	10.9	0.2	–7.8
5/2	2	A_1	(0 1 0)	$\Delta_{5/2}$	151.7	5.4	1.0	–0.8
5/2	2	A_1	(0 3 0)	$\mu\Delta_{5/2}$	350	9.8	0.2	2.7
5/2	2	A_1	(1 1 0)	$\Delta_{5/2}$	791	22.8	0.2	5.5
5/2	2	A_1	(2 1 0)	$\Delta_{5/2}$	1410	20.9	0.2	–7.1
Relative to the $[1/2, 1, B_2 (0 0 0) \Pi_{1/2}]$ state								
1/2	1	B_2	(0 2 0)	$\mu\Pi_{1/2}$	286.0	11.5	1.0	0.4
1/2	1	B_2	(0 4 0)	$\mu\Pi_{1/2}$	568	23.2	0.2	6.1
1/2	1	B_2	(0 2 0) ^b	$\kappa\Pi_{1/2}$	618	19.3	0.2	11.4
1/2	1	B_2	(1 0 0) ^b	$\Pi_{1/2}$	632	14.6	0.2	8.8
1/2	1	B_2	(1 2 0)	$\mu\Pi_{1/2}$	910	14.0	0.2	–9.1
1/2	1	B_2	(1 4 0)	$\mu\Pi_{1/2}$	1204	26.6	0.2	–1.8
1/2	1	B_2	(2 0 0)	$\Pi_{1/2}$	1225	22.8	0.2	1.0
1/2	1	B_2	(3 0 0)	$\Pi_{1/2}$	1830	33.9	0.2	–3.7
3/2	1	B_2	(0 0 0)	$\Pi_{3/2}$	141.5	7.4	1.0	–1.8
3/2	1	B_2	(0 2 0)	$\mu\Pi_{3/2}$	309.0	10.0	1.0	–0.4
3/2	1	B_2	(0 2 0) ^c	$\kappa\Pi_{3/2}$	530	7.3	0.2	–4.2
3/2	1	B_2	(0 4 0) ^c	$\mu\Pi_{3/2}$	627	0.2	0.2	–8.5
3/2	1	B_2	(1 0 0)	$\Pi_{3/2}$	768	27.8	0.2	6.8
3/2	1	B_2	(1 2 0)	$\mu\Pi_{3/2}$	940	21.8	0.2	–0.6
3/2	1	B_2	(1 2 0)	$\kappa\Pi_{3/2}$	1183	27.6	0.2	5.5
3/2	1	B_2	(1 4 0)	$\mu\Pi_{3/2}$	1268	17.2	0.2	–4.5
3/2	1	B_2	(2 0 0)	$\Pi_{3/2}$	1380	35.9	0.2	3.1
3/2	1	B_2	(2 2 0)	$\mu\Pi_{3/2}$	1572	36.4	0.2	2.0
3/2	1	B_2	(3 0 0)	$\Pi_{3/2}$	1984	36.6	0.2	–7.9
5/2	3	B_2	(0 2 0)	$\Phi_{5/2}$	340	13.5	0.2	6.5
7/2	3	B_2	(0 2 0)	$\Phi_{7/2}$	438.0	18.1	1.0	0.9
7/2	3	B_2	(1 2 0) ^d	$\Phi_{7/2}$	1093	37.8	0.2	10.9

The quantum number v_2 is that appropriate for a linear molecule.

^a Heavily mixed with (1 3 0) $\kappa\Delta_{3/2}$; gains that label using the ab initio potential.

^b Heavily mixed pair; both labeled (1 0 0) $\Pi_{1/2}$ using the ab initio potential.

^c Heavily mixed pair; gain each others label using the ab initio potential.

^d Heavily mixed with (0 4 0) $\kappa\Phi_{7/2}$; gains that label using the ab initio potential.

separations obtained using the optimized potentials with experiment is given in column 9 of Table 2. In Table 2 the state labels are those obtained using the optimized potentials; each label is that of the basis function having the largest coefficient in the eigenfunction. When there is heavy mixing of basis states, as is the case here in many places, more than one state can gain the same label.

In Table 4, we list some calculated rovibronic energies chosen to show the bending and stretching vibronic energy level structure. In Table 5 we list some calculated rovibronic energies chosen to show how the bending energy level pattern depends on the level of stretching excitation.

3. Conclusion

We hope that the results in Tables 4 and 5 will prove helpful in further experimental work on this fascinating molecule.

Table 3
The optimized parameters (in cm^{-1}) obtained by fitting to the data

A_{SO}	158.2(2.5)	
$f_{11}^{(0)}$	36924 (179)	
	$A_2 (\sigma = -)$	$B_2 (\sigma = +)$
$f_0^{(1,\sigma)}$	3525 (46)	11960 (210)

The remaining parameters are as in Table 1.

Table 4
Bending and stretching term values F (in cm^{-1}) calculated using the optimized parameters

$(v_1 v_2 v_3)$	$(\mu/\kappa)K_P$	N	J	Sym	F	$(v_1 v_2 v_3)$	$(\mu/\kappa)K_P$	N	J	Sym	F	
(0 5 0)	$\kappa\Sigma_{1/2}$	0	1/2	B_1	1242.2	(0 3 0)	$\kappa\Sigma_{1/2}$	0	1/2	B_1	831.8	
	$\kappa\Delta_{3/2}$	2	3/2	B_1	1280.0		$\kappa\Delta_{3/2}$	2	3/2	B_1	835.3	
	$\kappa\Delta_{5/2}$	2	5/2	B_1	1221.5		$\kappa\Delta_{5/2}$	2	5/2	B_1	823.2	
	$\kappa\Gamma_{7/2}$	4	7/2	B_1	1265.9		$\Gamma_{9/2}$	4	9/2	B_1	582.8	
	$\kappa\Gamma_{9/2}$	4	9/2	B_1	1241.7		$\Gamma_{7/2}$	4	7/2	A_1	494.1	
	$I_{2/2}$	6	13/2	B_1	878.8		$\mu\Delta_{5/2}$	2	5/2	A_1	486.4	
	$I_{2/2}$	6	11/2	A_1	812.0		$\mu\Delta_{3/2}$	2	3/2	A_1	436.6	
	$\mu\Gamma_{9/2}$	4	9/2	A_1	825.1		$\mu\Sigma_{1/2}$	0	1/2	A_1	439.5	
	$\mu\Gamma_{7/2}$	4	7/2	A_1	753.9		(0 2 0)	$\kappa\Pi_{1/2}$	1	1/2	B_2	606.6
	$\mu\Delta_{5/2}$	2	5/2	A_1	697.4			$\kappa\Pi_{3/2}$	1	3/2	B_2	534.2
	$\mu\Delta_{3/2}$	2	3/2	A_1	713.0			$\Phi_{7/2}$	3	7/2	B_2	437.1
	$\mu\Sigma_{1/2}$	0	1/2	A_1	696.7			$\Phi_{5/2}$	3	5/2	B_2	333.5
	(0 4 0)	$\kappa\Pi_{1/2}$	1	1/2	B_2			1053.0	$\mu\Pi_{3/2}$	1	3/2	B_2
$\kappa\Pi_{3/2}$		1	3/2	B_2	1039.5	$\mu\Pi_{1/2}$		1	1/2	B_2	285.6	
$\kappa\Phi_{5/2}$		3	5/2	B_2	961.8	(0 1 0)	$\kappa\Sigma_{1/2}$	0	1/2	B_1	370.9	
$\kappa\Phi_{7/2}$		3	7/2	B_2	1008.2		$\Delta_{5/2}$	2	5/2	B_1	291.5	
$H_{11/2}$		5	11/1	B_2	729.9		$\Delta_{3/2}$	2	3/2	A_1	168.7	
$H_{9/2}$		5	9/2	B_2	653.8		$\mu\Sigma_{1/2}$	0	1/2	A_1	139.0	
$\mu\Phi_{7/2}$		3	7/2	B_2	659.7		(0 0 0)	$\Pi_{3/2}$	1	3/2	B_2	143.3
$\mu\Phi_{5/2}$		3	5/2	B_2	594.1			$\Pi_{1/2}$	1	1/2	B_2	0.0
$\mu\Pi_{3/2}$		1	3/2	B_2	635.5	(1 0 0)		$\Pi_{1/2}$	1	1/2	B_2	623.2
$\mu\Pi_{1/2}$		1	1/2	B_2	561.9	(0 0 1)		$\Pi_{1/2}$	1	1/2	A_1	997.1
					(2 0 0)	$\Pi_{1/2}$		1	1/2	B_2	1224.0	
					(1 0 1)	$\Pi_{1/2}$		1	1/2	A_1	1610.9	
					(3 0 0)	$\Pi_{1/2}$		1	1/2	B_2	1833.7	
					(0 0 2)	$\Pi_{1/2}$		1	1/2	B_2	1997.0	

Table 5
Bending term values F (in cm^{-1}) in the (1 0 0) and (2 0 0) stretching states calculated using the optimized parameters

$(v_1 v_2 v_3)$	$(\mu/\kappa)K_P$	N	J	Sym	F	$(v_1 v_2 v_3)$	$(\mu/\kappa)K_P$	N	J	Sym	F
(1 3 0)	$\kappa\Sigma_{1/2}$	0	1/2	B_1	848.8	(2 3 0)	$\kappa\Sigma_{1/2}$	0	1/2	B_1	887.0
	$\kappa\Delta_{3/2}$	2	3/2	B_1	855.8 ^a		$\kappa\Delta_{3/2}$	2	3/2	B_1	808.8 ^a
	$\kappa\Delta_{5/2}$	2	5/2	B_1	845.4		$\kappa\Delta_{5/2}$	2	5/2	B_1	773.7 ^a
	$\Gamma_{9/2}$	4	9/2	B_1	566.7		$\Gamma_{9/2}$	4	9/2	B_1	590.8
	$\Gamma_{7/2}$	4	7/2	A_1	509.5		$\Gamma_{7/2}$	4	7/2	A_1	546.0
	$\mu\Delta_{5/2}$	2	5/2	A_1	503.1		$\mu\Delta_{5/2}$	2	5/2	A_1	540.1
	$\mu\Delta_{3/2}$	2	3/2	A_1	455.2		$\mu\Delta_{3/2}$	2	3/2	A_1	495.5
	$\mu\Sigma_{1/2}$	0	1/2	A_1	455.3		$\mu\Sigma_{1/2}$	0	1/2	A_1	492.7
(1 2 0)	$\kappa\Pi_{1/2}$	1	1/2	B_2	632.2	(2 2 0)	$\kappa\Pi_{1/2}$	1	1/2	B_2	666.9
	$\kappa\Pi_{3/2}$	1	3/2	B_2	554.3		$\kappa\Pi_{3/2}$	1	3/2	B_2	597.0
	$\Phi_{7/2}$	3	7/2	B_2	458.9		$\Phi_{7/2}$	3	7/2	B_2	434.3
	$\Phi_{5/2}$	3	5/2	B_2	427.0 ^a		$\Phi_{5/2}$	3	5/2	B_2	366.5
	$\mu\Pi_{3/2}$	1	3/2	B_2	317.4		$\mu\Pi_{3/2}$	1	3/2	B_2	346.0
	$\mu\Pi_{1/2}$	1	1/2	B_2	295.9		$\mu\Pi_{1/2}$	1	1/2	B_2	326.3
(1 1 0)	$\kappa\Sigma_{1/2}$	0	1/2	B_1	377.5	(2 1 0)	$\kappa\Sigma_{1/2}$	0	1/2	B_1	404.0
	$\Delta_{5/2}$	2	5/2	B_1	301.3		$\Delta_{5/2}$	2	5/2	B_1	332.1
	$\Delta_{3/2}$	2	3/2	A_1	163.2		$\Delta_{3/2}$	2	3/2	A_1	183.9
	$\mu\Sigma_{1/2}$	0	1/2	A_1	142.6		$\mu\Sigma_{1/2}$	0	1/2	A_1	167.2
(1 0 0)	$\Pi_{3/2}$	1	3/2	B_2	138.0	(2 0 0)	$\Pi_{3/2}$	1	3/2	B_2	152.8
	$\Pi_{1/2}$	1	1/2	B_2	(623.2)		$\Pi_{1/2}$	1	1/2	B_2	(1224.0)

^a Heavily perturbed level.

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