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# HIGH TEMPERATURE COMPOSITES $SiC$-$Al_2O_3$-CERAMICS WITH $Al_2O_3$-MATRIX

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## Abstract

Results are provided for studying preparation and some properties of an abrasive composite material of $SiC$-$Al_2O_3$-system with a corundum matrix. The material is prepared by adding molten aluminum to a charge used in exiting manufacturing technology for commercial grade silicon carbide.

## 1. Introduction

The objective of the present study has consisted in obtaining and studying the properties of the composite material based on silicon carbide and corundum. The synthesis process of the composite material is

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effected by means of adding aluminum to the traditional charge used in the technology of silicon carbide [1] obtaining by the reaction of

$$SiO_2 + 3C = SiC + 2CO. \quad (1)$$

The adding of aluminum into the said charge stipulates its flow in accordance with the reaction of

$$SiO_2 + C + 4/3Al = SiC + 2/3Al_2O_3 \leftrightarrow SiC\text{-}Al_2O_3. \quad (2)$$

The reaction (2) proceeds to form the composite material of the two-phase system $SiC\text{-}Al_2O_3$ that represents the aggregate of many grains of silicon carbide SiC allocated in the corundum matrix $Al_2O_3$ [2].

## 2. Experimental Procedure

In the experiment, the initial charge was prepared from silica sand, aluminum powder, and petroleum coke in accordance with assumed stoichiometric ratio (2). As silicon oxide quartz sand was used with $SiO_2$ content not less than 99.1% and $Fe_2O_3$ content not more than 0.25%. Aluminum and carbonaceous material was introduced into the charge in the form of aluminum powder of APV grade and low-sulphur petroleum coke with 80-85% content of active carbon. The process of obtaining the composite material out of the said charge was carried out in a laboratory resistance furnace of 160kW power capacity, the working length of which was 1300mm while its width was 1100mm (Figure 1).

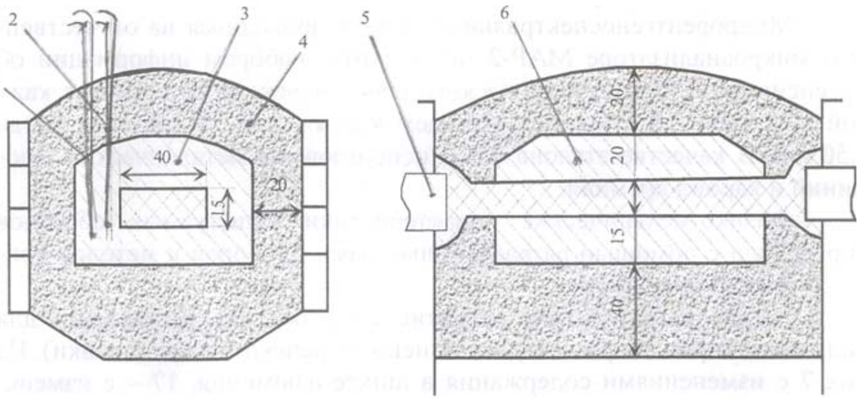



**Figure 1.** The transverse and longitudinal cut of the loaded resistance furnace: (1, 2) − thermocouple; (3) − reaction charge; (4) − thermoinsulating charge; (5) − operational electrode; and (6) − heating core.

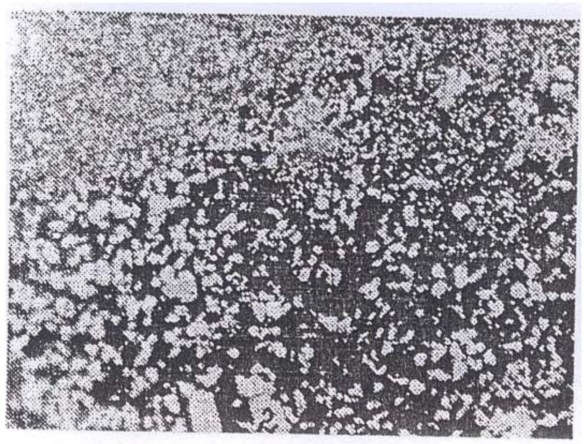
The temperature control in the furnace was performed by an optical pyrometer by means of special visual tube. From the products obtained through synthesis, the samples were prepared by the method of dry grinding in a jaw crusher and from a fraction of minus 5mm the fractions of 1600-1250 microns were plated, on which chemical, microscopic, micro X-ray spectrum analyzes were performed, micromechanical studies were carried out as well as operational characteristics of the grains of the composite material were identified in the grinding instrument according to the method set out in the works [2, 4]. X-ray structural analysis was performed by the photo-method on the apparatus URS-55 in copper, filtered radiation, in Debye camera. The study of the microstructure was performed on microsections, prepared on a cast-iron lap with the use of the diamond pastes of ASM 20/14-ASM 1/0 grades, the samples were photographed by the microscopes MIM-8 and PMT-3 with $500\times$ zoom.

When studying micro-mechanical properties of the composite material with the use of PMT-3 device, we have identified microhardness and microstrength of separate phases of silicon carbide and corundum as well as of the composite abrasive material with $SiC\text{-}Al_2O_3$ composition according to the method [2, 4] when there is load on the indenter of Vickers pyramid as 100N.

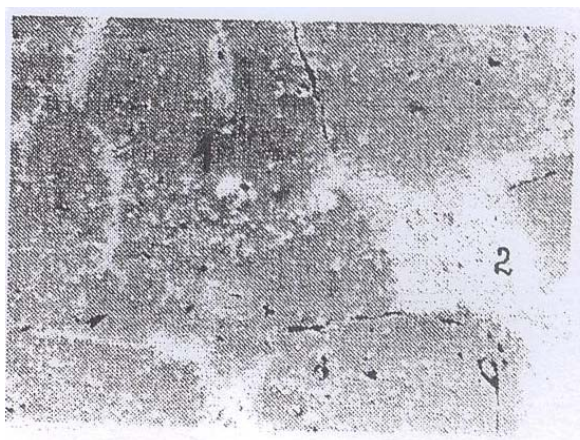
Micro X-ray spectrum analysis was performed on microanalyzer MAP-2 with the use of metallic aluminum and silicon carbide as the standard. Physical and mechanical characteristics were identified by means of instrumentation and control methods of grinding materials, those methods were developed by us [2, 3, 4].

## 3. Results and Discussion

The chemical and X-ray studies have revealed that all the objects taken from the zone of the synthesis products contain 35-40% SiC and 60-65% $Al_2O_3$. In all samples, the aluminum oxide is in the form of $\alpha$-$A_2O_3$ while silicon carbide is typically manifested as a mixture of cubic ($\beta$-SiC) and hexagonal ($\alpha$-SiC) silicon carbide. By the analysis of the microstructure and the results of micro X-ray spectrum analysis, the synthesized product represents the material with fine grained two-phase structure (the size of the phases is from 2 to 40 microns) (Figure 2(a)): grey phase – corundum, light phase – silicon carbide. The areas of fine grained two-phase structure make from 30 to 80% in total volume of the products; up to 10% is formed by the areas of large entities of corundum and silicon carbide, in which the size of phases ranges from 50 to 200 microns and more (Figure 2(b))



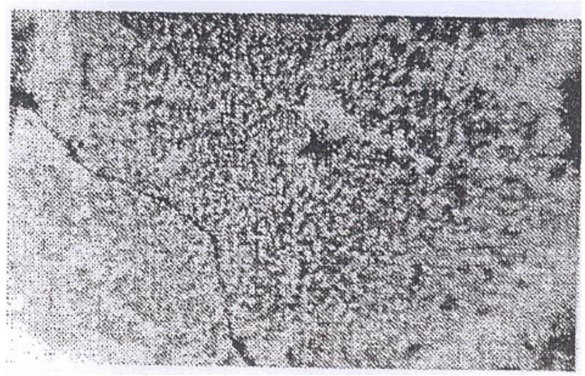
(a)



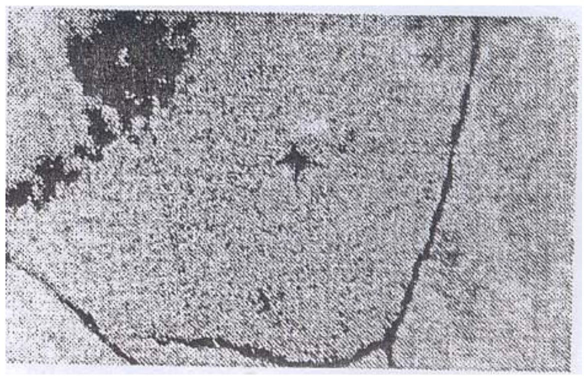
(b)

**Figure 2.** The microstructure of the two-phase material in the system of $SiC\text{-}Al_2O_3$: (1) – corundum and (2) – silicon carbide.

Figure 3 shows the microstructure of the areas with fine and coarse particles of the two-phase systems of the composite material based on $SiC\text{-}Al_2O_3$ with prints of Vickers pyramid (Figure 3, (a), (b), (c)) and areas of separate phases of corundum and silicon carbide (Figure 3 (d), (e)), at the same time among the systems of the composite material the areas of different inclusions are observed, too.



(a)



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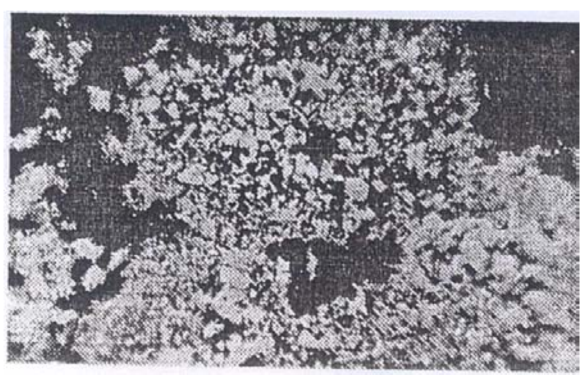
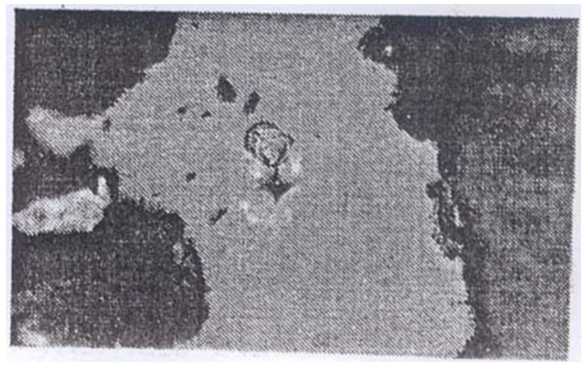
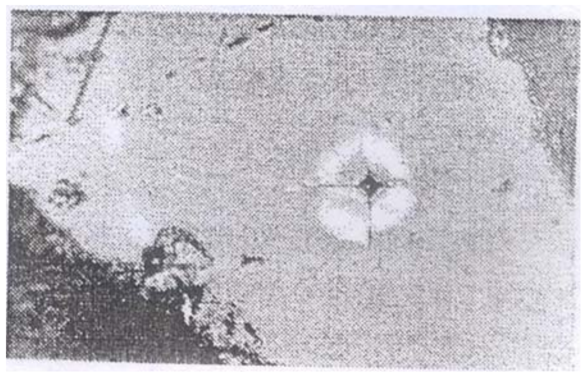


(c)



(d)



(e)

**Figure 3.** The microstructure of the samples of the composite material of $SiC\text{-}Al_2O_3$ composition with the prints of the pyramid Vickers at P = 100N, zoom 200×: (a, b) – two-phase structure; (c) – coarse-grained two-phase systems $SiC\text{-}Al_2O_3$; (d) – print of the pyramid on corundum; and (e) – print of the pyramid on silicon carbide.

Table 1 shows the data on microhardness and microstrength of the composite material $SiC\text{-}Al_2O_3$ compared to single-component constituents of the composite materials SiC and $Al_2O_3$.

**Table 1.** Comparative micromechanical indicators of the studied samples of the composite material and each of its constituent components

| Characteristics of the samples | Type of phase composition | Microhardness, hPa | Microstrength, hPa |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| SiC | – | 31,0 | 2,3 |
| $Al_2O_3$ | – | 22,0 | 2,0 |
| Composite material | Two-phase structure | 23,0 – 32,0 | 4,5 – 5,9 |
| | Light phase | 30,0 | 2,1 |
| | Dark phase | 20,0 | 1,7 |

The obtained results (Table 1) demonstrate that the composite material $SiC\text{-}Al_2O_3$ by its microhardness is close to SiC while by its microstrength it is significantly superior to both silicon carbide and corundum.

Physical and mechanical properties of the composite material $SiC\text{-}Al_2O_3$, obtained at different content of aluminum in reaction charge, are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Comparative micromechanical and operational characteristics of the composite material obtained at its synthesis from the charge, containing different amount of aluminum

| Aluminum content, % | Microhardness, hPa | Microstrength, hPa | Impact resistance (fragility), % | Strength of single grains, N | Relative cutting ability |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 33 | 23,0 – 7,0 | 2,3 – 4,8 | 31,5 | 48,0 | 1,6 |
| 26 | 20,5 – 22,5 | 2,9 – 3,3 | 34,0 | 42,0 | 1,3 |
| 18 | 22,4 – 29,0 | 2,0 – 3,3 | 39,0 | 40,0 | 1,0 |

The analysis of the data in Table 2 demonstrates that to the greater amount of aluminum in the charge the composite material of higher quality corresponds (microstrength, strength of single grains, relative cutting ability has higher values).

To assess the possibility of producing an abrasive tool from the composite material under laboratory conditions, we have made grinding abrasive wheels from it and performed tests in comparison to similar grinding wheels made only from silicon carbide and only from corundum. The analysis of the achieved results has shown that grinding wheels from the composite material $SiC\text{-}Al_2O_3$ when ShH-15 steel, iron cut and titanium alloys were processed by them they have the grinding ability is 30% higher, than the similar products made only from silicon carbide and only from corundum.

## 4. Conclusion

The results of the studies carried out in the present work allow us to conclude that we have obtained the new composite abrasive material $SiC\text{-}Al_2O_3$ with corundum matrix, the material that possesses the new properties different from both silicon carbide properties and corundum properties. That is why the composite material in question may be recommended for producing abrasive tools from it for processing (grinding) products made of S e hH-15 steel, iron-cast, and titanium alloys. The studies aimed to determine the areas of the composite material $SiC\text{-}Al_2O_3$ application will be continued.

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