

Author's Accepted Manuscript

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PII: S0921-5093(18)31346-7
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.msea.2018.10.025>
Reference: MSA37020

To appear in: *Materials Science & Engineering A*

Received date: 10 September 2018

Accepted date: 4 October 2018

Cite this article as: Shilei Li, Tiancheng Wang, Qing Tan, Runguang Li, Yanli Wang, Xitao Wang, Yang Ren and Yandong Wang, A brittle fracture mechanism in thermally aged duplex stainless steels revealed by in situ high-energy X-ray diffraction, *Materials Science & Engineering A*, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.msea.2018.10.025>

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**A brittle fracture mechanism in thermally aged duplex stainless steels revealed
by in situ high-energy X-ray diffraction**

Shilei Li^{a,b}, Tiancheng Wang^a, Qing Tan^a, Runguang Li^a, Yanli Wang^a, Xitao Wang^c,
Yang Ren^d, Yandong Wang^{a,*}

^aBeijing Advanced Innovation Center for Materials Genome Engineering, State Key Laboratory for Advanced Metals and Materials, University of Science and Technology Beijing, Beijing 100083, China

^bApplied Materials Division, Argonne National Laboratory, Argonne, Illinois 60439, USA

^cCollaborative Innovation Center of Steel Technology, University of Science and Technology Beijing, Beijing 100083, China

^dX-ray Science Division, Advanced Photon Source, Argonne National Laboratory, Argonne, Illinois 60439, USA

*Corresponding author: ydwang@ustb.edu.cn

Abstract

A direct relationship between the microstructural evolution and macroscopic fracture behaviors of a thermally aged (at 475 °C for 400 h) duplex stainless steel (DSS) has been established with experimental results from atom probe tomography (APT), nanoindentation and in situ synchrotron-based high-energy X-ray diffraction (HE-XRD). The APT experiments demonstrate that ferrite in DSS spinodally decomposes into Cr-enriched and Cr-depleted domains during thermal aging, which leads to a severe hardening effect in ferrite. The lattice strain development during deformation acquired with the in situ HE-XRD measurements confirms the cleavage fracture of $\alpha\{110\}$ and $\alpha\{200\}$ ferrite grains aligned perpendicular to loading direction. The thermally aged DSS can be readily fractured by connecting the cleavage cracks in ferrite. The spinodal-decomposition-induced hardening in ferrite and the premature failure of ferrite control the final brittle fracture in the aged DSS.

Keywords

High-energy X-ray diffraction; Duplex stainless steels; thermal aging; spinodal decomposition

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