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P.M. Nigay, T. Cutard, A. Nzihou



PII: S0272-8842(16)31850-8
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ceramint.2016.10.084>
Reference: CERI13963

To appear in: *Ceramics International*

Received date: 3 June 2016
Revised date: 12 October 2016
Accepted date: 13 October 2016

Cite this article as: P.M. Nigay, T. Cutard and A. Nzihou, The impact of heat treatment on the microstructure of a clay-based ceramic and its thermal and mechanical properties, *Ceramics International*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ceramint.2016.10.084>

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**The impact of heat treatment on the microstructure of a clay-based ceramic and its
thermal and mechanical properties**

P.M. NIGAY^{1,2*}, T. CUTARD¹, A. NZIHO²

¹Université de Toulouse, Mines Albi, CNRS, Institut Clément Ader, Campus Jarlard, Route de Teillet, F-81013 Albi Cedex 09, France.

²Université de Toulouse, Mines Albi, CNRS, Centre RAPSODEE, Campus Jarlard, Route de Teillet, F-81013 Albi Cedex 09, France.

*Corresponding author: +33 (0) 5 63 49 32 28. pmnigay@mines-albi.fr;

Abstract

This paper presents the results of an experimental study on the microstructure, the thermal and the mechanical properties of a clay-based ceramic used in building applications. The X-ray tomography analysis showed a layered microstructure of clay with 200 μ m sheets of porosity after the extrusion process. The gas release from the dehydration, dehydroxylation and decarbonation induced a 7vol% formation of porosity during the heat treatment of the clay-based ceramic up to 850°C. The porosity increase and the development of metakaolin led to a 38% decrease in the thermal conductivity. On the other hand, the Young's modulus of the clay-based ceramic was conserved due to the formation of smaller pores than the 200 μ m sheets of porosity. The densification and the crystallization of amorphous phases also led to a 110% increase of the Young's modulus from 850°C to 1050°C. The Young's modulus of the clay-based ceramic was only decreased by the $\beta \rightarrow \alpha$ quartz inversion of the cooling due to sand addition. Hence, this study provided a useful insight into how the microstructure of fired clay bricks can be specifically transformed by the porosity during the heat treatment to control the thermal and mechanical properties.

Keywords: clay; ceramic; porosity; Young's modulus; thermal conductivity.

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