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Nano-sized zirconium carbide powder: synthesis and densification using a spark plasma sintering apparatus

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Abstract

Nano-sized zirconium carbide powder was synthesized at 1600 °C by the carbothermal reduction of ZrO₂ using a modified spark plasma sintering (SPS) apparatus. The synthesized ZrC powder had a fine particle size of approximately 189 nm and a low oxygen content of 0.88 wt%. The metal basis purity of the synthesized powder was 99.87%. The low synthesis temperature, fast heating/cooling rate and the effect of current during the modified SPS process effectively suppressed the particle growth. Using the synthesized powder, monolithic ZrC ceramics with high relative density (97.14%) were obtained after the densification at 2100 °C for 30 min at a pressure of 80 MPa by SPS. The average grain size of the densified ZrC ceramics was approximately 9.12 μm. **Key words:** zirconium carbide; nanoparticles; synthesis; spark plasma sintering; densification *Corresponding author: Sea-Hoon Lee Tel:+82-10-8992-6972. E-mail:seahoon1@kims.re.kr

1. Introduction

Due to its high melting point (3550 °C), solid-state phase stability and low evaporation rate, zirconium carbide (ZrC) is a promising material for potential ultra-high temperature applications

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