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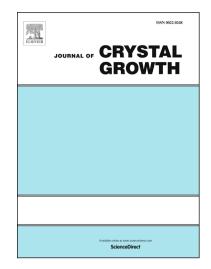
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PII:	\$0022-0248(18)30017-4
DOI:	https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrysgro.2018.01.010
Reference:	CRYS 24446

To appear in: Journal of Crystal Growth

Received Date:20 October 2017Accepted Date:14 January 2018



Please cite this article as: M. Fix, H. Schumann, S.G. Jantz, F. Breitner, A. Leineweber, A. Jesche, Iron single crystal growth from a lithium-rich melt, *Journal of Crystal Growth* (2018), doi: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrysgro. 2018.01.010

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ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT

Iron single crystal growth from a lithium-rich melt

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Abstract

 α -Fe single crystals of rhombic dodecahedral habit were grown from a Li₈₄N₁₂Fe_{~3} melt. Crystals of several millimeter along a side form at temperatures around $T \approx 800^{\circ}$ C. Upon further cooling the growth competes with the formation of Fe-doped Li₃N. The b.c.c. structure and good sample quality of α -Fe single crystals were confirmed by X-ray and electron diffraction as well as magnetization measurements and chemical analysis. A nitrogen concentration of 90 ppm was detected by means of carrier gas hot extraction. Scanning electron microscopy did not reveal any sign of iron nitride precipitates.

Keywords: growth from solutions; single crystal growth; elemental solids; magnetic materials; *PACS:* 81.10, 64.70, 75.50

1. Introduction

Iron is one of the most abundant materials in the earth's crust. As the main ingredient of steel it is still - and probably that won't change soon - of vital importance as a construction material. Even after many centuries of application and research elemental Fe is not as well understood as one might think. The lattice dynamics in α -Fe, for example, are significantly affected by many-body effects and have been properly modeled only quite recently [1].

The occurrence of structural transitions from δ -Fe to γ -Fe at $T = 1394^{\circ}$ C and γ -Fe to α -Fe at $T = 912^{\circ}$ C upon cooling does not allow for the growth of monodomain α -Fe single crystals from the liquid. The strain-anneal method [2, 3, 4, 5] works around this problem and is the standard process for the production of commercially available bulk single crystals of α -Fe. Comparatively large single crystals can be also grown in form of whiskers [6]. Various single crystalline

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