Self-propagating high temperature synthesis and magnetic properties of Ni$_{0.35}$Zn$_{0.65}$Fe$_2$O$_4$ powders

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Abstract. Ni–Zn ferrite powders were synthesized by self-propagating high temperature synthesis (SHS) method. X-ray diffraction, TEM and vibrating sample magnetometry (VSM) were used to characterize the phase composition, microstructure and magnetic properties of the combustion products. The effect of the combustion temperature ($T_c$), the major parameter of the SHS process, on particle size, phase composition and magnetic properties of the products was also studied. The results showed that particle size grew with the increasing combustion temperature. The maximum saturation magnetization, $M_s$, increased with combustion temperature indicating the growth of grain size and high degree of ferritization, while residual magnetization, $M_r$, and coercive force, $H_c$, decreased. Compared with other methods, Ni$_{0.35}$Zn$_{0.65}$Fe$_2$O$_4$ ferrite powders with improved magnetic properties can be obtained by SHS at 1000°C.

Keywords. SHS; Ni–Zn ferrite powders; combustion temperature; particle size; magnetic properties; phase composition.

1. Introduction

Nickel–zinc ferrites are considered as one of the most versatile soft ferrites because of their high resistivity and low eddy current losses (Taylor et al 1995; Stoppels 1996). Ni–Zn ferrites have been commercially used in radio frequency circuits, high-quality filters, rod antennas and transformer cores.

In recent years, self-propagating high-temperature synthesis of ferrites attracted the interest of many researchers (Komarov et al 1993; Avakyan et al 1994; Bowen and Derby 1997). Compared with the conventional ceramic process, SHS method has some advantages, such as high productivity, low external energy consumption, short synthesis time, simple facility and high quality of the products. Although there have been many attempts to obtain various ferrites through SHS methods, no systematic study about the effect of the combustion temperature on microstructure and magnetic properties of Ni–Zn ferrite powders was reported in the literature. In this paper, we report on the SHS process, the characterization and the magnetic properties of Ni–Zn ferrite powders. In addition, we also investigated the effect of the combustion temperature on particle size, phase composition and magnetic properties of combustion products.

2. Experimental

2.1 Materials

The raw materials used in preparation of Ni$_{0.35}$Zn$_{0.65}$Fe$_2$O$_4$ are iron, iron oxide, nickel oxide and zinc oxide. The purity of the raw materials is more than 99%. Table 1 shows the average particle size and purity of the raw materials.

2.2 Procedure and property measurements

The starting materials were weighed according to the required stoichiometric proportion, mixed and pressed into 20 ~ 40 mm thick pellets (diameter 12 ~ 15 mm) and then were put into a quartz container. The experiments were carried out in a water-cooled tube. A schematic diagram of high pressure SHS chamber is shown in figure 1. A tungsten wire was used to initiate the SHS reaction. The combustion reaction which utilized the heat released from iron oxidation reaction was self-sustained

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substances</th>
<th>Fe</th>
<th>Fe$_2$O$_3$</th>
<th>NiO</th>
<th>ZnO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average size (µm)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purity (%)</td>
<td>99.0</td>
<td>99.0</td>
<td>99.5</td>
<td>99.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
until the reactants were completely converted to the products. The loose green body was then milled and Ni–Zn ferrite powders were obtained. The flow chart of SHS process is shown in figure 2.

The major parameter of the SHS process, combustion temperature \( (T_c) \), was measured with Pt/Rh thermocouples pressed into the mixture and registered by a recorder.

X-ray diffraction analysis (XRD) was used to investigate the phase composition and the ferritization degree of the products. The magnetic characterization of the products was conducted on an vibrating sample magnetometer (VSM, M-9500, USA). A laser diffraction analyser was used to measure the average grain size of the raw material and the products. The size and shapes of the particles were analysed by transmission electron microscopy (TEM, Philips CM12/STEM, Holland).

3. Results and discussion

Figure 3 shows the effect of combustion temperature on particle size of Ni–Zn ferrite powders. As the figure illustrates, the particle size grows with the increasing com-
bustion temperature. When combustion temperature is above 1100°C, the particle grain size will grow substan-
tially.

Figure 4 shows the particle size distribution of Ni–Zn ferrite powder obtained at 1000°C. The average particle size of the powders is about 0.5 μm.

Figure 5 shows the XRD patterns of the combustion products obtained at different combustion temperatures. It is evident that as the combustion temperature increased from 700–1200°C, the intensity of diffraction peaks of the raw materials, NiO, ZnO, Fe and Fe₂O₃ phases, decreased considerably, while the intensity of the combustion products increased. At 1000°C, the diffraction peaks of Fe, NiO, ZnO disappeared and spinel peaks of ferrites were observed clearly in the X-ray spectra of the combustion products. At 1200°C, the XRD can be indexed as a spinel-type phase with no additional lines corresponding to any other phase. However, the diffraction peaks are fairly sharp, due to the grain growth of the crystallites at higher combustion temperature.

The products prepared at different combustion temperatures are shown in figure 6. It clearly shows spherical-shaped particles with an average particle size of about 0.5 μm at low combustion temperature (1000°C) and with a tendency towards an anomalous shape for higher combustion temperature (1200°C). The combustion products at 1200°C are too hard to be ground easily and such products cannot be used for sintering. At 1000°C the distribution of the particle grain size is homogeneous.

Table 2. Comparison between the $M_s$ of Ni–Zn ferrite powders obtained by SHS and other processing methods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Synthesis methods</th>
<th>$M_s$ (A·m²·kg⁻¹)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present work</td>
<td>SHS</td>
<td>66-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anil Kumar (1997)</td>
<td>Wet chemical</td>
<td>45-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guo and Feng (1990)</td>
<td>Solid reaction</td>
<td>48-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hayashi et al (1986)</td>
<td>Molten salt synthesis</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The room temperature magnetic properties of Ni$_{0.35}$Zn$_{0.65}$Fe$_2$O$_4$ ferrite powders prepared under different combustion temperatures are determined. The results of the studies are summarized in figures 7 and 8. The maximum saturation magnetization, $M_s$, increases with combustion temperature indicating the growth of grain size and high degree of ferritization, while residual magnetization, $M_r$, and coercive force, $H_c$, decrease. Figure 9 shows the room temperature hysteresis loops of the combustion products obtained at different combustion temperatures.

The values of $M_s$ are also compared with those of the literature. Table 2 shows the $M_s$ of SHS products and other ferrite powders having similar compositions and obtained by different ceramic processing methods. We verified that the SHS process leads to nickel–zinc ferrite powders with improved magnetic properties, when compared with those obtained by other methods.

4. Conclusions

Ni$_{0.35}$Zn$_{0.65}$Fe$_2$O$_4$ ferrite powders were synthesized by SHS method. With the increase of combustion temperature, particle size of the powders increased. The results of XRD and TEM showed that at 1000°C, the crystal structure of the combustion product was a spinel-type phase and the distribution of the particle size was homogeneous and with an average particle size of about 0.5 µm. Compared with other methods, Ni–Zn ferrite powders with improved magnetic properties can be obtained by SHS method at 1000°C.

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