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EFFECT OF POROSITY ON PARTICLE EROSION WEAR BEHAVIOR OF LAB. SCALE SiCf/SiC COMPOSITES

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The use of silicon-based ceramics and composites as combustor liners and turbine vanes provides the potential of improving next-generation turbine engine performance, through lower emissions and higher cycle efficiency, relative to today’s use of super alloy hot-section components. As a series of research for FOD resistant, a particle erosion wear test was carried out for continuous Pre-SiC fiber-reinforced SiC matrix composites with a new concept of lab. scale fabrication by LPS process. The result shows that aperture (some form of porosity) between fiber and interface has a deleterious effect on erosion resistance. Aperture along the fiber interfaces consequently causes a severe wear in the form of fiber detachment. Wear rate increase proportional as contents of open porosity increases. For nearly full dense composite materials of about 0.5 % porosity, are about 200 % more wear-resistant than about 5 % porous composites. Grain growth and consolidate condition of matrix which directly affects to FOD resistant are also discussed.

Keywords: Erosion; wear; porosity; silicon carbide; composite; ceramic.

1. Introduction

Silicon-based advanced high-temperature ceramics and composites are prime candidates for heat engine and heat exchanger structural components. Conventional materials require a large amount of cooling, which reduces the turbine inlet temperatures, thereby reducing the thermal efficiency. Silicon carbide (SiC) has one of the highest wear resistant of all single-phase ceramics due to the high hardness and continuous SiC fiber-reinforced SiC matrix composite (SiCf/SiC) has one of the most advanced composite material system due to commercial availability and high temperature stability. Erosion, a term of progressive loss of original material by foreign object damage (FOD), is one of the key issues in application and it result in significant costs if not adequately controlled. A review of literatures found few works regarding SiCf/SiC
composites under erosion. This study examines the microstructure of hot-pressed SiCf/SiC composites not only to examine the wear behavior occurred by impingement of solid particle, but also to clarify the dominant mass loss mechanisms.

2. Experimental procedure

Pre-SiC fiber tows were employed as reinforcement, and were selected because of cost effectiveness. The pyrolytic carbon (PyC) was employed for matrix-fiber interface. Nano-powder Infiltration and Transient Eutectoid (NITE) process, a highly optimized liquid phase sintering (LPS) process which are available in commercial, has been selected to fabricate test materials for erosion resistant evaluation.

2.1. Material

Unidirectional fiber tows were impregnated in SiC nano-slurry, which is mixture of SiC nano-powder and sintering additives (Al$_2$O$_3$+Y$_2$O$_3$=10 wt % as 6:4 ratio). Each specimen has same composition and sintering conditions, such as a temperature, holding time, and applied pressure, as 1850 °C for 1.5 hr in Ar atmosphere under 20 MPa of applied pressure. Constituent variables for fabrication are amount of used PyC for interface and treatment for porosity control; a special treatment was employed to one of the fabrication process to obtain a high densification material. Three kinds of hot-pressed SiCf/SiC composite materials were fabricated by NITE process for erosion wear test; a) with thick interface: specimen thick@I, b) with thin interface: specimen thin@I, and c) with thin interface and treatment: specimen thick@I,T.

2.2. Densitometry test

Densitometry test was carried out by the Archimedean method to examine the density and content of porosity after fabrication of each specimen. Open porosity can be measured by this method and also, bulk density, and apparent density.

\[
\rho_{\text{bulk}} = \frac{W_{\text{da}}}{W_{\text{wa}} - W_{\text{ww}}} \rho_{\text{water}}(T) \cdot (1)
\]

\[
\rho_{\text{apparent}} = \frac{W_{\text{da}}}{W_{\text{da}} - W_{\text{ww}}} \rho_{\text{water}}(T) \cdot (2)
\]

\[
\psi_{\text{op}} = \frac{\rho_{\text{apparent}} - \rho_{\text{bulk}}}{\rho_{\text{apparent}}} \times 100 \cdot (3)
\]

where $W_{\text{da}}$, $W_{\text{wa}}$, and $W_{\text{ww}}$ is the weight of sample with the conditions of dry in air, wet in air, and wet in water, respectively.

Density and porosity of hot-pressed specimens are summarized in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material</th>
<th>SiCf/SiC composites materials</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interface thickness</td>
<td>Thin with treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parameter of test</td>
<td>Erosion method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td>Gas jet with solid particle</td>
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*Green carborundum (GC) is a bulk grinding compound for polishing purpose*

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Microstructure of the materials

The employed amount of PyC for specimen thick@I is more than specimen thin@I as shown in figure 2. The SE micrograph in back scattered electron imaging (BEI) mode indicates fibers and PyC in color of gray and black, respectively. specimen thick@I has the volume fraction of PyC about 3 times larger than specimen thin@I has for fiber coating.
Porosity of specimen \( \text{specimen}_{\text{thick}} \) was mainly observed in two kinds of form as shown in figure 3: one is as (a) pores between remnants agglomerates (right) compared with dense matrix (left). Other is (b) an aperture between fiber and interface, and it causes fiber pulled-out and fiber detachment. These inadequately pressurized area and insufficient grain growth are some of the dominant reason of severe mass loss.

3.2. Erosion Wear volume

SiC particles were impinged onto the specimen as erodent for three steps and at each step the wear amount was measured by surface profilometer. The results are shown in figure 4 (a). The specimen with thick interface (specimen\(_{\text{thick}}\)) shows better erosion resistibility rather than the specimen with thin interface (specimen\(_{\text{thick}}\)). The correlations of wear rate and contents of open porosity are shown in figure 4 (b). Thin interface with special treatment shows the best erosion resistant. This result indicates that the contents of open
porosity have more affects on erosion wear than the amount of employed PyC for interface in composites.

Fig. 4. Wear amount as a function of (a) number of erosion step, and (b) open porosity.

3.3. **Microscopic observation of Eroded surface**

The eroded surface of each SiC/SiC composites was examined by SEM in order to examine the dominant parameter for wear behavior.

![Microscopic observation of Eroded surface](image)

Different erosion wear behavior was observed as shown in figure 5. Because, the inadequately applied pressure area occasionally exists, phenomenon of insufficient densification and scarcity grain growth were observed as figure a) comparing with b). Consequently, the grain growth and consolidate condition has been altered for each
sample material, due to the existence of porosity after pre-pyrolysis process of fiber and PyC interface for specimen thick and specimen thin. By considering the effect of the treatment, there is a great chance that this porosity has been produced by both contractibility of PyC precursor at pre-pyrolysis process and Pre-SiC fiber at hot-press process.

4. Conclusion

Tribological studies of Pre-SiC fiber-reinforced SiC composites on particle erosion wear showed that:
- Contraction of Pre-SiC fiber during crystallization process, generates aperture between fiber and interface,
- The aperture has a deleterious effect on the resistances of materials to erosion wear,
- The aperture along the fiber interfaces, provoke a fiber detachment,
- Porosity in inadequately pressurized area act as a defect in matrix, consequently, cause easy crack propagation and grain pull out,
- It is assumed that the porosity is generated by a contractibility of PyC precursor at pre-pyrolysis process where the vaporized component of precursor generates gaseous phase in a certain temperature.

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References