# Subsolidus Phase Relations in the System Dy<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>-Rh<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>

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**Abstract**—The  $Dy_2O_3$ –Rh<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> system is studied by thermal analysis, x-ray diffraction, and chemical analysis of annealed and quenched samples. The results are used to construct a schematic subsolidus phase diagram of the system. Only one double oxide,  $DyRhO_3$ , is obtained. Some of its physicochemical properties are reported.

## INTRODUCTION

This article presents the continuation of our studies concerned with phase relations in  $Ln_2O_3$ -Rh<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> (Ln = rare-earth metal) systems [1–6], which are motivated by the interesting properties of compounds in these systems. First, compounds with the general formula LnRhO<sub>3</sub> are used in catalysis and electrochemistry. In particular, LaRhO<sub>3</sub> is a catalyst for the hydrogenation of carbon monoxide to methane, acetaldehyde, and ethanol [7]. In addition, electrolytic cells with  $LuRhO_3$ ceramic cathodes achieve powers and photovoltages sufficient for water photoelectrolysis by solar radiation, with no applied potential [8]. Second, both LnRhO<sub>3</sub> and  $LnM_{1-r}Rh_rO_3$  (M = 3d transition metal) phases have perovskite-like structures and offer a wide variety of electrical and magnetic properties. For example, LaNi<sub>1/2</sub>Rh<sub>1/2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> is a semiconductor exhibiting Pauli paramagnetism in the range 40-300 K and passes into a spin glass state below 10 K [9], whereas LaMn<sub>1/2</sub>Rh<sub>1/2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> combines semiconducting and ferromagnetic properties [10]. LaMn<sub>0.976</sub>Rh<sub>0.024</sub>O<sub>3.15</sub> effectively catalyzes three reactions in NO + CO +  $C_3H_6$ mixtures: reduction of NO and oxidation of CO and  $C_{3}H_{6}$  [11]. Third, some of the mixed oxides in Ln–M– Rh-O (M = alkaline-earth metal) systems possess unusual crystal-chemical, electrical, and magnetic properties (see, e.g., [12–14]), which suggest that such systems may contain superconductors.

The first report that the Dy–Rh–O system contains a mixed oxide of composition DyRhO<sub>3</sub> appeared in 1970 [15]. Later, the synthesis, crystal chemistry, and physicochemical properties of this compound have been the subject of many studies [15–21], but the phase relations in the Dy–Rh–O system have yet not been investigated.

The purpose of this work was to study the phase relations in the  $Dy_2O_3$ -Rh<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> system in air at temperatures of up to 1600°C and to construct the subsolidus phase diagram of this system.

#### EXPERIMENTAL

The starting materials used were 99.9+%-pure  $Dy_2O_3$  and pure-grade  $RhCl_3 \cdot 4H_2O$ . When exposed to atmospheric oxygen for a long time at temperatures from 650 to 700°C, the latter compound oxidizes to the metastable phase  $\alpha$ -Rh<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>, which has the corundum (hexagonal) structure [22]. The stable high-temperature polymorph  $\beta$ -Rh<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>, which has an orthorhombic corundum-like structure [23], was prepared by two procedures. In one of them,  $\alpha$ -Rh<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> was heat-treated in air at 800–950°C. In the other procedure, fine-particle rhodium metal was oxidized at 950–1000°C in air or flowing oxygen for at least 20 h. Fine-particle rhodium (rhodium black) was prepared by reducing an RhCl<sub>3</sub> solution in HCl with metallic zinc.

In our phase-diagram studies, we used mixtures of  $Dy_2O_3$  and  $\alpha$ -Rh<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> in the molar ratios 9 : 1, 4 : 1, 3 : 1, 2:1,3:2,1:1,3:5,1:2,1:3,1:4, and 1:9 and also an equimolar mixture of Dy<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> and fine-particle rhodium. After grinding and homogenization in a jasper mortar with ethanol, the mixtures were dried in air and then fired in corundum crucibles between 600 and 1600°C in 100°C steps. Some of the mixtures, including the equimolar composition, were fired and quenched in 10 to 20°C steps. The firing duration was 150 h at 1000°C and 75 h at higher temperatures. Every 20 h, the samples were reground and homogenized. At 1000°C and lower temperatures, we used an SNOL-I4 electric furnace. At higher temperatures, the samples were fired in a Pt-30% Rh wound quenching electric furnace. The firing and quenching steps were performed in air. The temperature was monitored with standard Pt/Pt-10% Rh (TPP-0555) or Pt-6% Rh/Pt-30% Rh (TPR-0679-01) thermocouples. During firing, the temperature was maintained constant with an accuracy of ±5°C or better using a VRT-3 temperature controller.

The phase composition of the starting mixtures and samples after firing and quenching was determined on a DRON-3 (Ni-filtered  $CuK_{\alpha}$  radiation) or Siemens D 500 HS ( $CuK_{\alpha}$  radiation, graphite monochromator) diffractometer. Measurements were made in the range  $2\theta = 10^{\circ}-95^{\circ}$  with a scan step of 0.02° and a counting time of 1 s per data point.

Thermal analysis (DTA + TG + DTG) was carried out in air with a MOM C system (Hungary) at temperatures of up to 1200°C and with a SETARAM V-70 system (France) at temperatures of up to 1600°C. The heating/cooling rate was 7.5 to 10°C/min. As a reference substance, we used alumina powder. The sample weight was 50 to 150 mg. In addition, thermal analysis below 1400°C was performed with a Netzsch STA 449 system (Germany), which simultaneously recorded differential scanning calorimetry (DSC) curves and their derivatives. Powder samples weighing  $30.00 \pm 0.05$  mg were loaded into a fused corundum crucible, heated in air from 20 to 1400°C at a rate of 10°C/min, and then cooled to 100°C at the same rate. As a reference, we used an empty corundum crucible of the same weight. The use of air instead of a reference substance was justified because the sample weight was smaller than the crucible weight by more than a factor of 6. In addition, this precluded the effects of the state of reference powder (particle size and tap density) and possible changes in its properties in the course of thermal analysis. The DSC curves obtained with no sample also indicated that the use of air as a reference had a positive effect at small sample weights. This approach was substantiated by Speyer [24].

The composition of DyRhO<sub>3</sub> was checked by gravimetry. We determined the weight of a DyRhO<sub>3</sub> sample and then the weight of the thermolysis products, Dy<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> and Rh. To this end, the mixture of Dy<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> and Rh was treated with concentrated nitric acid. The Dy<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> fully dissolved, while rhodium metal remained intact, which allowed us to determine its weight and then calculate the weight of Dy<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>.

Full details of our experiments were described elsewhere [3, 5].

#### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The figure shows a schematic diagram of subsolidus phase relations in the  $Dy_2O_3$ -Rh<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> system as a combination of two pseudobinary systems,  $Dy_2O_3$ -Rh and  $Dy_2O_3$ -Rh<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>, in the Dy-Rh-O ternary. A key feature of this representation is that the reversible dissociation of solid oxides is thought of as a phase transition, but the gas phase (oxygen) is left out of consideration. Phase equilibria in a ternary system can then be represented by a combination of two binaries, which makes it possible to obtain a clear schematic phase diagram in two dimensions. This approach to representing phase relations was first used by Muan and Gee [25] in studies of systems containing iron oxides. Schneider *et al.* [26] were the first to apply this method to systems containing platinum-metal oxides. According to the phase diagram in the figure, the stable phases in the subsolidus region of the  $Dy_2O_3$ - $Rh_2O_3$  system are  $Dy_2O_3$  (*C* form),  $\beta$ - $Rh_2O_3$ , Rh, and  $DyRhO_3$ . There is also a metastable phase,  $\alpha$ - $Rh_2O_3$ . The ternary system Dy-Rh-O is monovariant when three solid phases are in equilibrium with the gas phase (oxygen). In that case, at a fixed oxygen partial pressure, three condensed phases coexist only at a certain temperature. In connection with this, three-phase equilibria in the phase diagram are represented by horizon-tal solid lines. The dashed line in the figure represents the monotropic polymorphic transition

$$\alpha - Rh_2O_3 \longrightarrow \beta - Rh_2O_3. \tag{1}$$

The metastable polymorph  $\alpha$ -Rh<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>, which has the corundum (hexagonal) structure [22], transforms irreversibly into the stable polymorph  $\beta$ -Rh<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>, whose orthorhombic structure is also derived from the corundum structure [23]. The main features of this monotropic phase transition were studied earlier [21, 27–31]. The temperature range and rate of transformation (1) depend on the chemical composition, structure, and particle size of the starting  $\alpha$ -Rh<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>, which, in turn, are determined by the synthesis procedure and conditions. For the rhodium oxide synthesized in this work, transformation (1) is detected easily after firing  $\alpha$ -Rh<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> above 750°C. Above 1030°C, we observe irreversible thermal dissociation according to the scheme

$$3-Rh_2O_3 = 2Rh + \frac{3}{2}O_2.$$
 (2)

Equilibrium (2) and some of its thermodynamic features have been studied in detail [27–33]. Using earlier data [28, 32], one can evaluate the dissociation temperature of  $\beta$ -Rh<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> in air at normal pressure, i.e., at an oxygen partial pressure of 0.21 × 10<sup>5</sup> Pa. The values thus obtained, 1034 and 1033°C, agree well with the 1042°C reported by Jacob and Sriram [33]. According to the DTA, DSC, and high-temperature x-ray diffraction (XRD) results obtained in [29–31], the temperature of equilibrium (2) in air is 1030 ± 5°C.

At temperatures of up to  $1600^{\circ}$ C, DyRhO<sub>3</sub> also undergoes only one chemical transformation: reversible thermal dissociation according to the scheme

$$DyRhO_3 = \frac{1}{2}Dy_2O_3 + Rh + \frac{3}{4}O_2.$$
 (3)

The thermal dissociation of dysprosium rhodite shows up as a large endotherm in the DTA curve and a sharp weight loss of 7.58% in the TG curve. This values agrees well with the 7.66% following from scheme (3). The weight loss is well seen in the TG curve starting at 1345°C and in the DTG curve starting at 1320°C. In the DSC and derivative curves, the endothermic event begins at 1345°C. After annealing single-phase



Schematic diagram of subsolidus phase relations in the  $Dy_2O_3$ -Rh<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> system; the dashed line represents the irreversible polymorphic phase transition of Rh<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>.

DyRhO<sub>3</sub> samples above 1350°C, XRD patterns show sharp peaks due to large, well-crystallized rhodium particles and the so-called *C*-form of Dy<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>, which has a cubic structure [34]. In the range 1345–1600°C, these substances are nonreactive with one another and atmospheric oxygen. At the same time, after long-term (more than 100 h) firing of a mixture of Dy<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> and fineparticle rhodium at 1320°C in air, XRD indicated the formation of DyRhO<sub>3</sub>. Thus, our XRD and thermal analysis results for annealed and quenched samples confirm scheme (3) and indicate that the temperature of this equilibrium is  $1345 \pm 10$ °C.

Note that the thermal decomposition of DyRhO<sub>3</sub> by reaction (3) is similar to that of  $\beta$ -Rh<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> by reaction (2). The two oxides dissociate reversibly with the formation of rhodium metal and oxygen, but the decomposition temperature of DyRhO<sub>3</sub> is substantially higher than that of Rh<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>.

Also of importance are the following findings: After heating rhodium(III) oxide to above 1030°C, XRD indicated the presence of well-crystallized, large-particle rhodium: the diffraction peaks from rhodium were much sharper than those from fine-particle rhodium. Fine-particle rhodium can easily be oxidized to singlephase  $\beta$ -Rh<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>, while well-crystallized, large-particle rhodium cannot be oxidized to Rh<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>, even at very long (500 h) annealing times in air or flowing oxygen at temperatures of up to 1000°C. The same was observed for equilibrium (3). These results indicate that the equilibration time for equilibria (2) and (3) depends significantly on the particle size of metallic rhodium. Thus, the Dy<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>–Rh<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> system contains only one mixed oxide: DyRhO<sub>3</sub>. The chemical analysis data for DyRhO<sub>3</sub> agree well (to within 0.2%) with the nominal composition. Our powder XRD results confirm earlier reports [15–21] that DyRhO<sub>3</sub> crystallizes in the GdFeO<sub>3</sub> structure (orthorhombically distorted perovskite). Single-phase DyRhO<sub>3</sub> samples consist of homogeneous, dark brown powder which is insoluble in water, mineral acids (HCl, HNO<sub>3</sub>, H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>, H<sub>3</sub>PO<sub>4</sub>), and caustic alkalies (NaOH, KOH), as are other LnRHO<sub>3</sub> compounds [3–6]. Note that Rh<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> also has extremely high acid and alkali stability.

The proposed subsolidus phase diagram of the  $Dy_2O_3$ -Rh<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> system is similar in topology to the  $Ln_2O_3-Rh_2O_3$  (Ln = La, Ho, Er, Yb, Lu) phase diagrams [1–6]. These phase diagrams differ only in the dissociation temperature of LnRhO<sub>3</sub>, which decreases from 1450 to 1275°C in going from LaRhO<sub>3</sub> to LuRhO<sub>3</sub> [1–6]. The phase diagram in the figure represents phase relations in air at normal pressure, i.e., at an oxygen partial pressure of  $0.21 \times 10^5$  Pa. Clearly, the dissociation temperatures of  $\beta$ -Rh<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> and DyRhO<sub>3</sub> depend on the oxygen partial pressure. According to Bayer and Wiedemann [28], increasing the oxygen partial pressure from  $10^3$  to  $0.96 \times 10^5$  Pa increases the equilibrium dissociation temperature of rhodium(III) oxide from 900 to 1126°C. For DyRhO<sub>3</sub>, such experimental data are not available in the literature. As reported by Jacob and Waseda [2], the dissociation temperature of the analogous perovskite oxide LaRhO<sub>3</sub> rises from 1455 to 1570°C as the oxygen partial pressure is raised from  $0.21 \times 10^5$  to  $10^5$  Pa. Thus, as pointed out in many studies [1–6, 27–33, 35–37], the dissociation temperature of rhodium oxides in such systems depends significantly on oxygen partial pressure, as do their temperature and composition stability limits.

### CONCLUSIONS

The present results confirm the close physicochemical similarity between the platinum metal–oxygen and base metal–platinum metal–oxygen systems and some inherent features of oxides in such systems [1–6, 18, 21, 26, 29–31, 35–38].

Subsolidus phase relations in binary oxide systems containing platinum-metal oxides are dominated by the physicochemical nature of the noble-metal oxide and depend much weaker on the base-metal oxide.

Most simple and double oxides of platinum metals exhibit polymorphism and/or undergo reversible thermal dissociation. Melting is atypical of both simple and double oxides of platinum metals.

Simple oxides of platinum metals decompose reversibly into the metal and oxygen (of the 15 solid simple oxides of platinum metals, the only exceptions are  $RuO_4$ ,  $OsO_4$ , and  $OsO_2$ ). Double oxides of platinum metals typically dissociate into the metal, oxygen, and a base-metal oxide. In most cases, the double oxides dissociate at higher temperatures than do the corresponding simple oxides. The highest thermal stability is offered by ruthenium, rhodium, and iridium oxides.

The great majority of the double oxides existing in base metal-platinum metal-oxygen systems inherit their physicochemical properties from the corresponding simple oxides of platinum metals. In particular, there is a strong correlation between the chemical and thermal stabilities of simple and mixed oxides of platinum metals.

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