

## Reaction Process of Zirconium Tetrachloride with Ammonia in the Vapor Phase and Properties of the Zirconium Nitride Formed

Akimasa YAJIMA, Yutaka SEGAWA, Ryoko MATSUZAKI, and Yuzo SAEKI\*

Research Laboratory of Resources Utilization, Tokyo Institute of Technology,  
4259, Nagatsuta-cho, Midori-ku, Yokohama 227

(Received March 24, 1983)

The reaction products of gaseous  $\text{ZrCl}_4$  with ammonia were  $\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3$  at 300 °C;  $\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3$ ,  $\text{ZrClN}$ , and  $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$  at 350—700 °C;  $\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3$ ,  $\text{ZrClN}$ ,  $\text{ZrN}_x$ ,  $\text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4$ , and  $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$  at 750 °C;  $\text{ZrClN}$ ,  $\text{ZrN}_x$ ,  $\text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4$ , and  $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$  at 800—950 °C;  $\text{ZrN}_x$ ,  $\text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4$ , and  $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$  at 1000—1050 °C; and  $\text{ZrN}_x$ ,  $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$ , and  $\text{HCl}$  at 1100—1400 °C. The N/Zr atomic ratios,  $x$ , of the  $\text{ZrN}_x$  formed was 1.28 at 1100 °C, 1.24 at 1200 °C, 1.18 at 1300 °C, and 1.12 at 1400 °C. The lattice constants of the  $\text{ZrN}_x$  formed were shown. The reaction process of gaseous  $\text{ZrCl}_4$  with ammonia can be represented as follows: The reaction of gaseous  $\text{ZrCl}_4$  with ammonia to form  $\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3$  occurs first. Above ca. 330 °C, the  $\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3$  reacts with ammonia to form  $\text{ZrClN}$ . Above ca. 750 °C, the  $\text{ZrClN}$  reacts with ammonia to form  $\text{ZrN}_x$  and  $\text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4$ . Above ca. 1000 °C,  $\text{ZrN}_x$  was also formed by the thermal decomposition of the  $\text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4$ . On heating the  $\text{ZrN}_{x(x=1.28)}$ , formed by the vapor-phase reaction, at temperatures higher than 700 °C in an argon atmosphere, the value of  $x$  decreased and became close to that of the stoichiometric nitride, being 1.03 at 1100—1300 °C.

The vapor-phase reaction of transition metal chlorides with ammonia has recently become important for the preparation of fine powders of transition metal nitrides, which are acquiring importance as new industrial materials. Concerning the formation of zirconium nitride from zirconium tetrachloride ( $\text{ZrCl}_4$ ) by the vapor-phase reaction, Okabe *et al.*<sup>1)</sup> have reported the preparation of zirconium nitride powders by a vapor-phase reaction of the  $\text{ZrCl}_4\text{--NH}_3\text{--N}_2\text{--H}_2$  system at 1000—1500 °C with emphasis on the effect of reaction conditions on the conversion of the  $\text{ZrCl}_4$  to zirconium nitride. However, no information is at present available on the reaction process of  $\text{ZrCl}_4$  with ammonia in the vapor phase.

In this paper, the reaction products of gaseous  $\text{ZrCl}_4$  with ammonia at 300—1400 °C were examined in detail. The possible reactions which were considered to occur during the reaction process on the basis of the above experiments were examined. The N/Zr atomic ratios, lattice constants, and thermal stability of the zirconium nitrides formed were also examined. The zirconium nitrides which formed were also examined by electron microscopy.

### Experimental

**Materials.** The  $\text{ZrCl}_4$  used was prepared by the reaction of zirconium sponge (Reactor grade, Nippon Mining Co., Ltd.) with chlorine at 330 °C and purified by fractional sublimation. The chemical analysis gave Zr, 39.1; Cl, 60.8% (calcd for  $\text{ZrCl}_4$ : Zr, 39.14; Cl, 60.86%). The ammonia was dried by passing it over sodium hydroxide granules and barium oxide powders.

**Experimental Procedures.** A transparent quartz or alumina tube (1000 mm length) was used for examining the reaction products of gaseous  $\text{ZrCl}_4$  with ammonia. Gaseous  $\text{ZrCl}_4$  was formed by heating solid  $\text{ZrCl}_4$  (14 g) at 280 °C and was carried by a stream of argon (50 cm<sup>3</sup>/min) into the reaction zone (28 mm i.d., 250 mm length) held at a specified temperature. The  $\text{ZrCl}_4$  inlet tube consisted of two concentric tubes. Gaseous  $\text{ZrCl}_4$  carried by argon was introduced through the inner tube and the outer tube was utilized for introducing argon (50 cm<sup>3</sup>/min) as a sheath gas to prevent formation of the product deposits at the chloride inlet tube. Ammonia was simultaneously intro-

duced at a flow-rate of 100 cm<sup>3</sup>/min into the reaction zone through a separate tube. The mean flow-rate of gaseous  $\text{ZrCl}_4$  was 6.0 cm<sup>3</sup>/min. A quartz or alumina tube was inserted inside the reaction tube to make the removal of the reaction product easier. The reaction was allowed to proceed for 2 h.

The by-product ammonium chloride ( $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$ ) which deposited outside the reaction zone together with the zirconium nitride formed was separated by heating the mixture *in vacuo* at 400 °C.

**Analytical.** Chemical analyses of the reaction products were performed as follows: The zirconium content of the  $\text{ZrCl}_4\text{--NH}_3$  adduct was gravimetrically determined as  $\text{ZrO}_2$  using mandelic acid as a precipitating agent, after dissolving the sample in water. The chlorine and ammonia contents were determined by a gravimetric method as  $\text{AgCl}$  and by the Kjeldahl method from the aqueous solution. The zirconium content of zirconium chloride nitride ( $\text{ZrClN}$ ) was gravimetrically determined as  $\text{ZrO}_2$  after hydrolyzing the sample in water. The chlorine and nitrogen contents were determined by the gravimetric method and by the Kjeldahl method, respectively, from the filtrate.

X-Ray analysis of the product was performed with an X-ray powder diffractometer equipped with a proportional counter using Ni filtered Cu radiation. The sample chamber of the diffractometer was maintained under a dry nitrogen atmosphere, if necessary, to prevent any contamination of the sample with atmospheric moisture during the irradiation.

The sensitivity of the quartz helix used for thermogravimetry (TG) was approximately 113 mm/g. The sample (0.2 g) was heated at a rate of 2.5 °C/min and the flow-rate of ammonia was maintained at 50 cm<sup>3</sup>/min.

The N/Zr atomic ratio of the zirconium nitride formed was evaluated as follows: The sample zirconium nitride was oxidized to  $\text{ZrO}_2$  by heating in an oxygen atmosphere to 700 °C, using a Shimadzu high-sensitive thermal balance, Model TGA31. The zirconium content of the sample was calculated from the amount of  $\text{ZrO}_2$  formed. The amount of nitrogen was determined as the difference between the amount of the initial sample and that of the zirconium. The value of the N/Zr atomic ratio was evaluated with an accuracy within  $\pm 0.01$ .

The lattice constant of the zirconium nitride was calculated based on the X-ray diffraction data obtained by using silicon powders as an internal standard and under the scanning speed of 1/2—1/4° min<sup>-1</sup>.

Throughout this work, the  $\text{ZrCl}_4$  and the reaction products were handled in an argon atmosphere or *in vacuo* to prevent contamination by atmospheric moisture.

## Results and Discussion

### Reaction Products of Gaseous Zirconium Tetrachloride with Ammonia.

The products formed by heating gaseous  $\text{ZrCl}_4$  in an ammonia stream at various temperatures were examined by both X-ray analysis<sup>2-5)</sup> and chemical analysis. Reaction temperatures above 300 °C were employed, because gaseous  $\text{ZrCl}_4$  was generated at 280 °C.

The product formed at 300 °C showed a hitherto unknown X-ray diffraction pattern which was clearly different from those of known zirconium compounds. The chemical analysis of the product gave Zr, 34.1; Cl, 53.0;  $\text{NH}_3$ , 12.8%. The ratio of Zr:Cl: $\text{NH}_3$  was calculated to be 1:4.00:2.01. This was considered to indicate that the product formed at 300 °C had a composition of  $\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3$  (calcd for  $\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3$ : Zr, 34.15; Cl, 53.10;  $\text{NH}_3$ , 12.75%). The X-ray diffraction data of the  $\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3$  formed are shown in Table 1. Based on these data,  $\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3$  could be indexed on cubic lattice with  $a_0 = 10.13 \text{ \AA}$ , as shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1. X-RAY DIFFRACTION DATA OF  $\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3$

$d/\text{\AA}$	$I/I_0$	$hkl$	$d_{\text{calcd}}/\text{\AA}$
5.83	100	111	5.849
5.07	80	200	5.065
3.58	10	220	3.581
3.06	50	311	3.054
2.92	60	222	2.924
2.53	90	400	2.532
2.33	15	331	2.324
2.27	45	420	2.265
1.949	20	333	1.950
1.791	45	440	1.791
1.713	12	531	1.712
1.689	20	600, 442	1.688
1.461	12	444	1.462

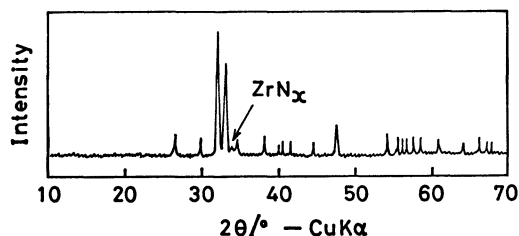


Fig. 1. X-Ray diffraction pattern of the product obtained inside the reaction zone at 950 °C.

X-Ray analysis of the product formed at 750—1050 °C showed a hitherto unknown X-ray diffraction pattern in addition to those of the known  $\alpha\text{-ZrClN}$ ,<sup>2)</sup>  $\beta\text{-ZrClN}$ ,<sup>3)</sup>  $\text{ZrN}_x$ ,<sup>4)</sup>  $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$ ,<sup>5)</sup> and the above  $\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3$ . As shown in Fig. 1, the product obtained at 950 °C inside the reaction zone showed an X-ray diffraction pattern consisting of the unknown pattern and a very weak diffraction line corresponding to the strongest line of  $\text{ZrN}_x$  ( $2\theta = 34.0^\circ$ ). The product was thus examined by chemical analysis. The chlorine content of the product was first checked after heating the sample in molten sodium carbonate. The result showed that the product contained no chlorine. This indicated that the product was zirconium nitride. The N/Zr atomic ratio of the product was found to be 1.33. As described above, this product contained a slight amount of  $\text{ZrN}_x$ . As seen from the results shown in Table 5 described later, the N/Zr atomic ratio of  $\text{ZrN}_x$  formed by the vapor-phase reaction increased with the decrease in the reaction temperature, the N/Zr atomic ratio of  $\text{ZrN}_x$  formed at 1100 °C being 1.28. Considering these facts and the accuracy of the measurement of the N/Zr atomic ratio ( $\pm 0.01$ ), the presence of a slight amount of  $\text{ZrN}_x$  caused no significant error in the measurement of the N/Zr atomic ratio of the product showing the unknown X-ray diffraction pattern. From these results and the fact that the presence of  $\text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4$  in addition to  $\text{ZrN}_x$  had been reported<sup>6-8)</sup> as zirconium nitride, the product showing the unknown X-ray pattern, formed at 750—1050 °C, was found to be  $\text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4$ .

TABLE 2. REACTION PRODUCTS OF GASEOUS  $\text{ZrCl}_4$  WITH AMMONIA AT VARIOUS TEMPERATURES

Temp/°C	Products	
	In the reaction zone	Outside the reaction zone
300	$\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3$	$\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3$
350—400	$\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3 \gg \text{ZrClN}[\alpha]$	$\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3$ ; $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$
500—550	$\text{ZrClN}[\alpha]$	$\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3$ ; $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$
600	$\text{ZrClN}[\alpha \gg \beta]$	$\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3 \gg \text{ZrClN}[\alpha]$ ; $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$
650	$\text{ZrClN}[\alpha > \beta]$	$\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3 \gg \text{ZrClN}[\alpha]$ ; $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$
700	$\text{ZrClN}[\beta > \alpha]$	$\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3 \gg \text{ZrClN}[\alpha]$ ; $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$
750	$\text{ZrClN}[\beta > \alpha] \gg \text{ZrN}_x$ , $\text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4$	$\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3 > \text{ZrClN}[\alpha]$ ; $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$
800	$\text{ZrClN}[\beta > \alpha] \gg \text{ZrN}_x$ , $\text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4$	$\text{ZrClN}[\alpha > \beta]$ ; $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$
850	$\text{ZrClN}[\beta > \alpha] \gg \text{ZrN}_x$ , $\text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4$	$\text{ZrClN}[\alpha, \beta]$ ; $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$
900	$\text{ZrClN}[\beta] > \text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4 \gg \text{ZrN}_x$	$\text{ZrClN}[\alpha, \beta]$ ; $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$
950	$\text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4 \gg \text{ZrN}_x$	$\text{ZrClN}[\alpha, \beta] \gg \text{ZrN}_x$ , $\text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4$ ; $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$
1000—1050	$\text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4 > \text{ZrN}_x$	$\text{ZrN}_x \gg \text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4$ ; $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$
1100—1400	—	$\text{ZrN}_x$ ; $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$ , $\text{HCl}$

TABLE 3. EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS FOR  $\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3$  ON HEATING IN AN AMMONIA STREAM

Heating temp/ $^{\circ}\text{C}$	Products		Unreacted $\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3/\%$
	In the boat	Outside the boat	
350	$\text{ZrClN}[\alpha](25)$	$\text{ZrClN}(3)$ , $\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3(6)$ , $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$	66
400	$\text{ZrClN}[\alpha](60)$	$\text{ZrClN}(25)$ , $\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3(15)$ , $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$	—

The value in parentheses is mole percentage of  $\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3$  converted to the product.

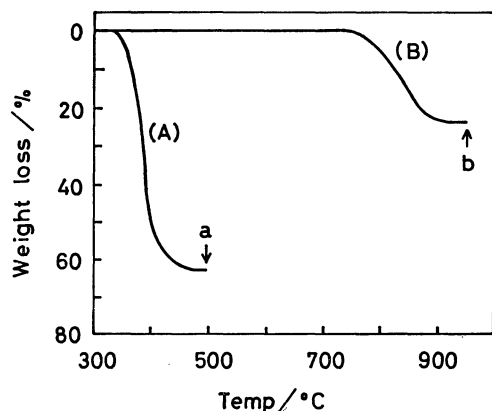


Fig. 2. TG curves of  $\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3$  and  $\text{ZrClN}$  in an ammonia stream.

(A):  $\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3$ , (B):  $\text{ZrClN}$ .

The reaction products of gaseous  $\text{ZrCl}_4$  with ammonia at various temperatures above  $300^{\circ}\text{C}$  are summarized in Table 2. The symbols  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  in the parentheses represent the modifications of  $\text{ZrClN}$ .

Unreacted  $\text{ZrCl}_4$  was not observed throughout the temperature range of this work. The products which formed below  $750^{\circ}\text{C}$  were obtained inside and outside the reaction zone. Above  $800^{\circ}\text{C}$ , a large portion of the products were obtained outside the reaction zone, and above  $1100^{\circ}\text{C}$ , all the products were obtained outside the reaction zone. Above  $1100^{\circ}\text{C}$ ,  $\text{HCl}$  was formed in addition to by-product  $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$ . The percentage of  $\text{HCl}$  formed to the total amount of chlorine introduced as  $\text{ZrCl}_4$  was  $<1\%$  at  $1100^{\circ}\text{C}$ ,  $10\%$  at  $1200^{\circ}\text{C}$ ,  $25\%$  at  $1300^{\circ}\text{C}$ , and  $60\%$  at  $1400^{\circ}\text{C}$ . The value is nearly the same as that of the  $\text{HCl}$  formed by the thermal decomposition of  $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$  at each temperature under the experimental conditions in this work.<sup>9)</sup> This was considered to indicate that the  $\text{HCl}$  formed was due to the decomposition of the by-product  $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$ .

**Reaction Process of Gaseous Zirconium Tetrachloride with Ammonia.** To elucidate the reaction process of gaseous  $\text{ZrCl}_4$  with ammonia, the behavior of the  $\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3$ , the  $\text{ZrClN}$ , and the  $\text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4$ , which had been formed during the reaction process, on heating in an ammonia stream were examined.

**Behavior of  $\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3$  on Heating in an Ammonia Stream:** The TG curve of  $\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3$  in an ammonia stream is shown in Fig. 2 (A).

$\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3$  lost weight above  $330^{\circ}\text{C}$ . It was observed that  $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$  and a small amount of  $\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3$  deposited outside the heating zone during the weight loss. The sample after the heating to point a was found to be  $\alpha\text{-ZrClN}$  by X-ray analysis. The final

weight loss was  $62.8\%$ . This value was considerably larger than the calculated value,  $47.33\%$ , based on the reaction,  $\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3 + 2\text{NH}_3 \rightarrow \text{ZrClN} + 3\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$ . This was considered to be due to the vaporization of a part of the  $\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3$ .

In order to obtain more detailed information on the behavior of  $\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3$  on heating in an ammonia stream,  $\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3$  (1.0 g) in a quartz boat (70 mm length, 15 mm width, 7 mm depth) was placed in a straight reaction tube (28 mm i.d., 1000 mm length). Ammonia was introduced into the reaction tube at a flow-rate of  $100 \text{ cm}^3/\text{min}$ . The sample part was then placed in the centre of an electric furnace (300 mm heating length) maintained at a specified temperature for 1 h. The products obtained inside and outside the boat were examined by X-ray analysis and chemical analysis. The results are shown in Table 3.

From these results, it was found that on heating  $\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3$  in an ammonia stream,  $\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3$  reacted with ammonia above about  $330^{\circ}\text{C}$  to form  $\text{ZrClN}$  and  $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$  and that the reaction was accompanied by the vaporization of a part of  $\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3$ . The formation of  $\text{ZrClN}$  outside the boat was considered to indicate that the reaction of gaseous  $\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3$  with ammonia to form  $\text{ZrClN}$  also occurred.

**Behavior of  $\text{ZrClN}$  on Heating in an Ammonia Stream:** The TG curve of  $\text{ZrClN}$  in an ammonia stream is shown in Fig. 2(B).  $\alpha\text{-ZrClN}$  obtained inside the reaction zone by the reaction of gaseous  $\text{ZrCl}_4$  with ammonia at  $500^{\circ}\text{C}$  was used.  $\text{ZrClN}$  lost weight above  $750^{\circ}\text{C}$ . The sample after the heating to point b was found to be a mixture of  $\text{ZrN}_x$  and a small amount of  $\text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4$  by X-ray analysis. It was observed that  $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$  alone was deposited outside the heating zone during the weight loss.

In order to obtain more detailed information on the behavior of  $\text{ZrClN}$  on heating in an ammonia stream, the products obtained by heating  $\text{ZrClN}(\alpha)$  (0.5 g) in a quartz boat in an ammonia stream ( $100 \text{ cm}^3/\text{min}$ ) for 1 h at a specified temperature were examined by X-ray analysis and chemical analysis. The results are shown in Table 4.

These results showed that, on heating  $\text{ZrClN}(\alpha)$  in an ammonia stream, the transition of  $\alpha\text{-ZrClN}$  to  $\beta\text{-ZrClN}$  occurred above about  $600^{\circ}\text{C}$  and that the reaction of  $\text{ZrClN}$  with ammonia occurred above about  $750^{\circ}\text{C}$  to form  $\text{ZrN}_x$ ,  $\text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4$ , and  $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$  at  $750\text{--}1000^{\circ}\text{C}$  and  $\text{ZrN}_x$  and  $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$  at  $1100^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

**Behavior of  $\text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4$  on Heating in an Ammonia Stream:** The products obtained by heating  $\text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4$  (0.2 g) in an ammonia stream ( $100 \text{ cm}^3/\text{min}$ ) for 1 h at various temperatures were examined. The sample  $\text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4$  used was the  $\text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4$  containing a slight amount of  $\text{ZrN}_x$ ,

TABLE 4. EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS FOR  $\text{ZrClN}$  ON HEATING IN AN AMMONIA STREAM

Heating temp/ $^{\circ}\text{C}$	Products		Unreacted $\text{ZrClN}/\%$
	In the boat	Outside the boat	
550	$\text{ZrClN}[\alpha]$	—	100
600—700	$\text{ZrClN}[\alpha > \beta]$	—	100
750	$\text{ZrClN}[\alpha > \beta], \text{ZrN}_x > \text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4$	$\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$	64
800	$\text{ZrN}_x > \text{ZrClN}[\beta], \text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4$	$\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$	25
850	$\text{ZrN}_x > \text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4 > \text{ZrClN}[\beta]$	$\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$	10
900	$\text{ZrN}_x > \text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4$	$\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$	—
1000	$\text{ZrN}_x \gg \text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4$	$\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$	—
1100	$\text{ZrN}_x$	$\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$	—

TABLE 5. N/Zr ATOMIC RATIOS AND LATTICE CONSTANTS OF THE  $\text{ZrN}_x$  FORMED

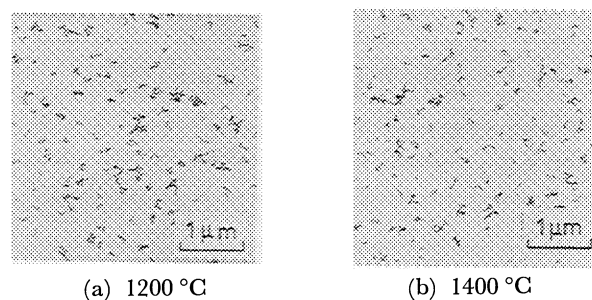
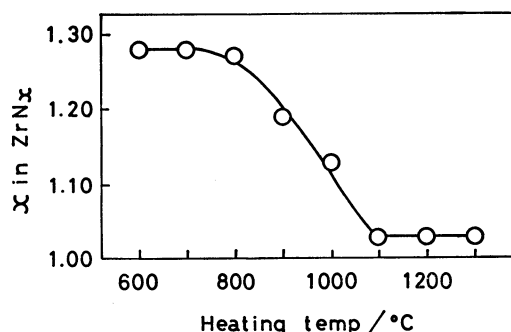
Formation temp/ $^{\circ}\text{C}$	$x$ in $\text{ZrN}_x$	$a_0/\text{\AA}$
1100	1.28	4.560
1200	1.24	4.564
1300	1.18	4.568
1400	1.12	4.571

which was formed by the reaction of gaseous  $\text{ZrCl}_4$  with ammonia at  $950^{\circ}\text{C}$ , because  $\text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4$  alone was not obtained throughout the experiments in this work. X-Ray analysis of the sample after the heating at each temperature showed it to be  $\text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4 \gg \text{ZrN}_x$  (unchanged) at  $900^{\circ}\text{C}$ ,  $\text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4, \text{ZrN}_x$  at  $1000^{\circ}\text{C}$ , and  $\text{ZrN}_x > \text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4$  at  $1100^{\circ}\text{C}$ . The results showed that  $\text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4$  decomposed to  $\text{ZrN}_x$  above about  $1000^{\circ}\text{C}$  in an ammonia stream.

From the results, it was considered that  $\text{ZrN}_x$  formed by heating  $\text{ZrClN}$  in an ammonia stream at temperatures lower than  $1000^{\circ}\text{C}$  (Table 4) was formed without passing through  $\text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4$ . Consequently, it may be concluded that on heating  $\text{ZrClN}$  in an ammonia stream, it reacts with ammonia above about  $750^{\circ}\text{C}$  to form  $\text{ZrN}_x$  and  $\text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4$ . Above about  $1000^{\circ}\text{C}$ ,  $\text{ZrN}_x$  was also formed by the thermal decomposition of the  $\text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4$  formed.

Based on the above experimental results, the reaction process of gaseous  $\text{ZrCl}_4$  with ammonia was discussed. As shown in Table 2,  $\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3$  alone was formed at  $300^{\circ}\text{C}$ . This fact indicates that the reaction of gaseous  $\text{ZrCl}_4$  with ammonia to form  $\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3$  occurs first. The  $\text{ZrClN}$  formed at  $350$ – $950^{\circ}\text{C}$  is considered to be due to the reaction of  $\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3$  with ammonia, because the  $\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3$  reacts with ammonia above about  $330^{\circ}\text{C}$  to form  $\text{ZrClN}$ , as described above. The  $\text{ZrN}_x$  and  $\text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4$  formed above  $750^{\circ}\text{C}$  are considered to be due to the reaction of  $\text{ZrClN}$  with ammonia, because the  $\text{ZrClN}$  reacts with ammonia to form  $\text{ZrN}_x$  and  $\text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4$  above about  $750^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Above about  $1000^{\circ}\text{C}$ ,  $\text{ZrN}_x$  is considered to be formed also by the thermal decomposition of  $\text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4$ , because  $\text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4$  decomposes to  $\text{ZrN}_x$  in an ammonia stream above about  $1000^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

From the above-mentioned results, the reaction process of  $\text{ZrCl}_4$  with ammonia in the vapor phase can be represented as follows: The reaction of gaseous

Fig. 3. Electron micrographs of the  $\text{ZrN}_x$  formed at various temperatures.Fig. 4. N/Zr atomic ratios of  $\text{ZrN}_x$  obtained after heating  $\text{ZrN}_{1.28}$  at various temperatures in an argon atmosphere.

$\text{ZrCl}_4$  with ammonia to form  $\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3$  occurs first. Above about  $330^{\circ}\text{C}$ , the  $\text{ZrCl}_4 \cdot 2\text{NH}_3$  reacts with ammonia to form  $\text{ZrClN}$ . Above about  $750^{\circ}\text{C}$ , the  $\text{ZrClN}$  reacts with ammonia to form  $\text{ZrN}_x$  and  $\text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4$ . Above about  $1000^{\circ}\text{C}$ ,  $\text{ZrN}_x$  is also formed by the thermal decomposition of the  $\text{Zr}_3\text{N}_4$ .

**Properties of the  $\text{ZrN}_x$  Formed.** The N/Zr atomic ratios of  $\text{ZrN}_x$  formed outside the reaction zone by the reaction of gaseous  $\text{ZrCl}_4$  with ammonia at  $1100$ – $1400^{\circ}\text{C}$  are shown in Table 5. Prior to this examination, the presence of residual  $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$  in the  $\text{ZrN}_x$ , obtained after the removal of  $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$  at  $400^{\circ}\text{C}$  *in vacuo*, was checked by chemical analysis,<sup>10</sup> after the heating of the  $\text{ZrN}_x$  sample in molten sodium carbonate. The  $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$  content in the  $\text{ZrN}_x$  was 1.5% for the  $\text{ZrN}_x$  formed at  $1100^{\circ}\text{C}$ , 0.9% at  $1200^{\circ}\text{C}$ , 0.4% at  $1300^{\circ}\text{C}$ , and  $<0.1\%$  at  $1400^{\circ}\text{C}$ . For the evaluation of the N/Zr atomic ratio of the  $\text{ZrN}_x$  formed, the initial weight of the sample was corrected by subtracting the amount of  $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$  contained, because the  $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$  was

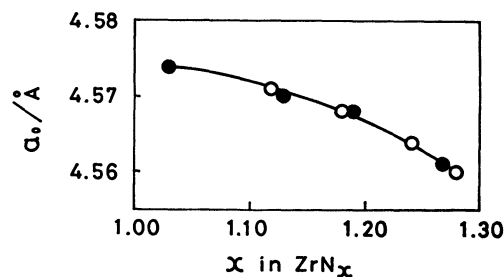


Fig. 5. Lattice constants of the  $\text{ZrN}_x$  with various  $x$  values.

○: From  $\text{ZrN}_x$  formed by the reaction of gaseous  $\text{ZrCl}_4$  with ammonia, ●: From  $\text{ZrN}_x$  obtained after the heating of  $\text{ZrN}_{1.28}$ .

vaporized during the oxidation.<sup>9)</sup>

It has been known that the  $\text{ZrN}_x$  phase has a NaCl structure.<sup>4)</sup> The lattice constant of  $\text{ZrN}_x$  formed at each temperature is also shown in Table 5.

The  $\text{ZrN}_x$  formed by the reaction of gaseous  $\text{ZrCl}_4$  with ammonia above 1100 °C were examined by electron microscopy. Typical micrographs of the  $\text{ZrN}_x$  are shown in Fig. 3.

As seen from Fig. 3, the  $\text{ZrN}_x$  formed is uniform, ultrafine powders with the particle diameters of the order of 1/100  $\mu\text{m}$ .

Finally, to obtain knowledge of the thermal stability of the  $\text{ZrN}_x$  formed, the N/Zr atomic ratios of the samples obtained by heating  $\text{ZrN}_{x(x=1.28)}$  at various temperatures in an argon atmosphere for 1 h were examined. The results are shown in Fig. 4. In addition,

it was found that the residual  $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$  in the  $\text{ZrN}_x$  was completely removed by the heating above 900 °C.

The results indicated that when the  $\text{ZrN}_x$  formed was heated in an argon atmosphere at temperatures higher than 700 °C, the N/Zr atomic ratio decreased and became close to that of the stoichiometric nitride. The value of  $x$  was 1.03 at the heating temperatures of 1100–1300 °C.

The lattice constants of the  $\text{ZrN}_x$  with various  $x$  values, obtained in this work, are shown in Fig. 5.

The present work was partially supported by a Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research No.56470058 from the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.

## References

- 1) Y. Okabe, J. Hojo, and A. Kato, *Yogyo Kyokai Shi*, **85**, 173 (1977).
- 2) R. Juza and J. Heners, *Z. Anorg. Allg. Chem.*, **332**, 159 (1964).
- 3) JCPDS, Powder Diffraction File 18-1493.
- 4) ASTM, X-Ray Powder Data File 2-956.
- 5) ASTM, Powder Diffraction File 7-7.
- 6) R. Juza, A. Gabel, H. Rabenau, and W. Klose, *Z. Anorg. Allg. Chem.*, **329**, 136 (1964).
- 7) R. Juza, A. Rabenau, and I. Nitschke, *Z. Anorg. Allg. Chem.*, **332**, 1 (1964).
- 8) V. P. Orlovskii, N. V. Rudenko, and B. V. Ivanov-Emin, *Russ. J. Inorg. Chem.*, **12**, 1217 (1967).
- 9) Y. Saeiki, R. Matsuzaki, A. Yajima, and M. Akiyama, *Bull. Chem. Soc. Jpn.*, **55**, 3193 (1982).
- 10) JIS H 1615 (1973), p. 2.