Ti₂SnC and Ti₂InC Nanolaminates by Low Energy Ion Facility (LEIF) and Their Resistance Towards Ar⁺ Ion Bombardment

Snejana Bakardjieva^{1*}, Jiri Vacik², Robert Klie³ and Xue Rui³

- ^{1.} Institute of Inorganic Chemistry of the Czech Academy of Sciences, 250 69 Rez, Czech Republic.
- ² Nuclear Physics Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Rez 205 68, Czech Republic.
- ³ University of Illinois at Chicago, Department of Physics, 845 W Taylor Str., 60 607 Chicago, USA.
- * Corresponding author: snejana@iic.cas.cz

MAX phases are known as nanolaminated ternary carbides and nitrides of chemical formula $M_{n+1}A_x$ (n=1-3), where M is an early transition metal, A is an A-group element, X is carbon or nitrogen [1]. Their damage tolerance and high resistance to oxidation and corrosion predicte that these compounds should be of interest for applications in harsh environmental conditions. Ti_3SiC_2 was first mentioned as a possible constituent for the cladding in fuel rods [2]. It was confirmed that Ti_3SiC_2 is insensitive to electronic losses also and the behavior of MAX phases under ion irradiation has found a growing interest in the last five years. It was documented that the key parameter determined the properties of MAX phases is A element since replacing Si by Al in the Ti_3AC_2 system highly improves the irradiation induced amorphization tolerance of the nanolaminates [3]. Nevertheless, different behaviors under ion irradiation observed for MAX phases, and the origins of these differences remain unclear.

Here we describe the advantages offered by an unconventional method utilizing sputtering of individual elements by LEIF to prepare Ti₂SnC and Ti₂InC nanolaminates. The LEIF facility was utilized without a separation magnet, which means that the M₂AX phase targets were bombarded with a mixture of Ar⁺ and Ar²⁺ ions. the Ar⁺ ions were accelerated to the energy 25 kV, the beam current was kept on a high level of 400 µA. The target holder was designed in a specific way in order to (i) keep the M₂AX phase elements separated and (ii) rotate the holder with a variable rotation speed based on a sputtering yield of each M₂AX phase element. After sputter deposition, the samples were subsequently annealed in vacuum at 120 °C for 24 hrs in order to induce interphase chemical interaction and complete formation of the stoichiometric corrected M2AX compounds. The as obtained Ti2SnC and Ti2InC nanolaminates were further investigated for structural and controlled modification by energy ion beams. In order to analyze the radiation stability in the terms of damage profile, the Ar⁺ ions irradiation was performed. Asprepared samples were irradiated by 35 keV Ar⁺ ions in order to analyze the radiation induce structural deformation and radiation stability in the terms of damage profile. The fluence of the ions was picked to 10¹⁴ ions cm⁻². The aim was to compare our results with recently synthesized Ti₂InC and Ti₂SnC thin films, which are good templates to investigate the influence of the chemistry on the A site in these Tibased compounds, because of the large mass difference between In and Sn elements.

Figure 1 reveals nanocrystalline 2D Ti₂SnC phase with hexagonal structure (SG = P6₃/mmc) and isotropic contribution of grains with size of about 10 nm. Ar ion irradiation led to accelerate shrinking process as a function of point defects within the grains and deformation in grain boundaries. Figure 2 shows uniform nanocrystalline film of Ti₂InC with *wormlike* microstructure and regular hexagonal anisotropic grains before Ar irradiation. After Ar⁺ irradiation we observed mixture of Ti₂InC and cubic Ti₃InC and high degree of polygonization. Our results confirmed extremely stable Ti₂SnC

and Ti₂InC nanolaminates without amorphization suggesting their high tolerance with respect to Ar⁺ bombardment.

References:

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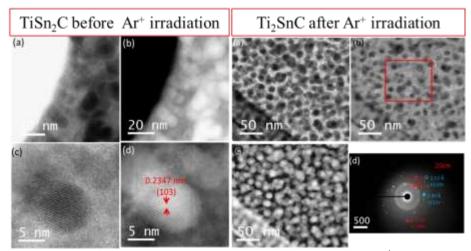


Figure 1. STEM observation of Ti₂SnC before and after Ar⁺ irradiation

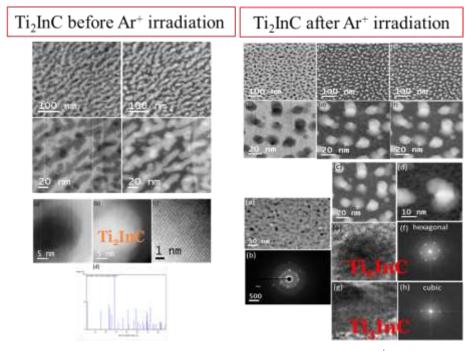


Figure 2. STEM observation of Ti₂InC before and after Ar⁺ irradiation