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INFLUENCE OF COMPOSITION ON THE THERMAL STABILITY OF CERIA-ZIRCONIA MIXED OXIDES

M. Pijolat, G. Colon, K. Kenevey, F. Valdivieso, M. Soustelle, R. Baker[§], S. Bernal[§]

Laboratoire de Procédés des Milieux Granulaires URA 2021 CNRS, Centre SPIN,
Ecole nationale supérieure des mines de Saint-Etienne, 158 cours Fauriel
42023 Saint-Etienne Cedex (France)
Fax : 33 (0)4 77 42 00 00, E-mail: mpijolat@emse.fr

[§] Departamento de Ciencia de Materiales, Ingeniería Metalúrgica y Química Inorgánica. Facultad
de Ciencias, Universidad de Cádiz. Apdo. 40, Puerto Real
11510 Cádiz (Spain)

Ceria-zirconia mixed oxides are essential components in the three-way catalytic converters for automotive exhaust gas treatment and they must offer a good thermal stability in severe operating conditions. It is thus important to have a precise knowledge of the influence of the composition of the mixed oxide on the textural and structural properties of the catalytic materials. The behaviour of ceria-zirconia high surface area materials of nominal composition between CeO_2 and $\text{Ce}_{0.50}\text{Zr}_{0.50}\text{O}_2$, either bare or loaded with low (<1% wt/wt) amounts of noble metals, palladium and platinum, was studied under oxidising conditions at 950°C. Calcination treatments were carried out under controlled oxidising atmosphere for periods of up to 96 hours. Powder X-ray diffraction and BET surface area data are reported.

A maximum in the kinetic rate of surface area decrease is observed for the composition $\text{Ce}_{0.80}\text{Zr}_{0.20}\text{O}_2$ for which the initial fluorite structure remains unchanged during all the thermal treatment. Phase demixing is observed as sintering progresses for $\text{Ce}_{0.68}\text{Zr}_{0.32}\text{O}_2$ and $\text{Ce}_{0.50}\text{Zr}_{0.50}\text{O}_2$ with some differences regarding the composition of the new phases, or the presence of the noble metals. The results are discussed from a thermodynamic viewpoint, which puts in evidence the important contribution of surface energy to the stability domain of the mixed oxides.