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### Microstructure and Mechanical Properties of SiC-Si<sub>3</sub>N<sub>4</sub> Composites Containing $\beta$ -Si<sub>3</sub>N<sub>4</sub> Seeds

이영일, 김영옥, 최헌진,\* 이준근\*

서울시립대학교 재료공학과, \*한국과학기술연구원 복합기능세라믹스 연구센터

The effect of  $\beta$ -Si<sub>3</sub>N<sub>4</sub> seeds on microstructure and mechanical properties of the hot-pressed SiC-Si<sub>3</sub>N<sub>4</sub> composites with an oxynitride glass as a sintering additive were investigated. A microstructure that consisted of uniformly distributed, elongated  $\beta$ -Si<sub>3</sub>N<sub>4</sub> grains, equiaxed  $\beta$ -SiC grains and an amorphous grain-boundary phase was developed. The mechanical properties of SiC-Si<sub>3</sub>N<sub>4</sub> composites increased with increasing the  $\beta$ -Si<sub>3</sub>N<sub>4</sub> seeds content, owing to the reduced defect size and enhanced bridging and crack deflection by elongated  $\beta$ -Si<sub>3</sub>N<sub>4</sub> grains. The flexural strength and fracture toughness of SiC-70 wt% Si<sub>3</sub>N<sub>4</sub> composites were 770 MPa and 62 MPa·m<sup>1/2</sup>, respectively.

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### Flaw-Tolerance and R-Curve Behavior of SiC-30 wt% TiC Composites

안현구, 김영옥

서울시립대학교 재료공학과

Flaw tolerance and R-curves for SiC-30 wt% TiC composites and monolithic SiC ceramics were characterized using indentation-strength method. Both materials exhibited rising R-curve behavior. However, SiC-30 wt% TiC composites with 62 MPa·m<sup>1/2</sup> toughness exhibited better flaw tolerance and more sharply rising R-curve behavior than monolithic SiC ceramics with 5.3 MPa·m<sup>1/2</sup> toughness. Total volume fractions of SiC key grain, which take part in toughening mechanisms such as crack bridging and crack deflection, were 0.607 for monolithic SiC ceramics and 0.614 for SiC-30 wt% TiC composites. Thus, superior performance of SiC-TiC composites was attributed to the additional contribution by TiC grains.