Hafnium and zirconium are very similar, with almost identical sizes and chemical bonding characteristics. However, they behave differently when alloyed with Ti and Ni. A sharp phase formation boundary near 18-21 at.% Hf is observed in rapidly-quenched and as-cast Ti$_{45}$Zr$_{38-x}$Hf$_x$Ni$_{17}$ alloys. Rapidly-quenched samples that contain less than 18 at.% Hf form the icosahedral quasicrystal phase, while samples containing more than 21 at.% form the 3/2 rational approximant phase. In cast alloys, a C14 structure is observed for alloys with Hf lower than the boundary concentration, while a large-cell (11.93 Å) FCC Ti$_2$Ni-type structure is found in alloys with Hf concentrations above the boundary. To better understand the role of Hf on phase formation, the structural evolution with supercooling and the solidification behavior of liquid Ti$_{45}$Zr$_{38-x}$Hf$_x$Ni$_{17}$ alloys (x=0, 12, 18, 21, 38) were studied using the Beamline Electrostatic Levitation (BESL) technique using 125keV x-rays on the 6ID-D beamline at the Advanced Photon Source, Argonne National Laboratory. For all liquids primary crystallization was to a BCC solid solution phase; interestingly, an increase in Hf concentration leads to a decrease in the BCC lattice parameter in spite of the chemical similarity between Zr and Hf. A Reitveld analysis confirmed that as in the cast alloys, the secondary phase that formed was the C14 below the phase formation boundary and a Ti$_2$Ni-type structure at higher Hf concentrations. Both the liquidus temperature and the reduced undercooling change sharply on traversing the phase formation boundary concentration, suggesting a change in the liquid structure. Structural information from a Honeycutt-Anderson index analysis of reverse Monte Carlo fits to the S(q) liquid data will be presented to address this issue.
Introduction

- Initial studies revealed a sharp boundary in phase formation around 21 at% Hf (x=21) in the Ti45Zr38-xHfxNi17 system. In quenched alloys the i-phase forms below the boundary, while a 3/2 rational approximant to the quasicrystal forms above. In cast alloys, the C14 Laves phase forms below and a T2Ni-type (cF96) forms above. Further study of the liquid structure and evolution and the influence of Hf on phase formation and physical properties were studied using the Bainline Electro-Static Levitation (BESL) technique.

Experimental methods

- Transparent, high vacuum processing
- Synchrontron XRD throughout entire phase space (incl. supercooled liquid)
- 125 kHz X-ray beam; 6ID-D beamline, Advanced Photon Source, Argonne National Laboratory
- Primary crystallization to BCC solid solution (beta) remaining liquid crystalizes to C14 or cF96
- Remarable supercooling yet beta phase indicates increased barrier to nucleation due to structural differences between liquid and solid
- Frank’s hypothesis supposes icosahedral order in liquid metals to account for nucleation barrier

Mean studies

- High resolution scattering data collected to 14.5 inverse Å
- S(q) and g(q) generated by PDFguiX2 software
- Evolution of g(q) at constant reduced temperature indicates local expansion (1st neighbor) and expansion then contraction upon traversing phase formation boundary at 2nd neighbor distances
- What effects are causing the structural changes at near and extended length scales?

- Liquid density measured using a photographic technique with droplet edge-fitting
- Normalized density, coefficient of thermal expansion measured at boundary composition
- Heat of mixing for a regular solution
- Estimates of the enthalpy of mixing favor mixing of Ni-Hf below the phase boundary; Ni-Zr above
- Atomic volumes (cm^3/mole)
- In cooling liquids below the phase boundary, Hf will tend to mix with Ni and Ti in the inner shell, above the boundary Zr is more likely

Quantifying structure

- BOO parameter uses quadradic and third order invariants formed from bond spherical harmonics to quantify order
- Characteristic distribution of Q_i's identify cluster types
- 13 atom icosahedral, 10 atom bcc and 7 atom simple cubic
- Icosahedral order is most prominent in all and little change is observed with supercooling
- HA and BOO are describing only dynamics of the local order, and are not capturing the dynamics of longer length scales

Conclusions

- Remarkable undercooling has been observed, and can be attributed to increasing mismatch of undercooled liquid and BCC solid solution, due to increasing bond strength of Hf
- Local cluster size is expanding with increased Hf due to strain effects, while extended cluster size changes dramatically upon traversing phase boundary
- Below the boundary icosahedral order increases, allowing i-phase formation in quenching; above the boundary the local order is jammed allowing formation of the 3/2 RA
- Chemical effects, heats of mixing, cluster dynamics

References and acknowledgments

- Full list of references
- Acknowledgments