

MINING AND METALLURGY INSTITUTE BOR and TEHNICAL FACULTY BOR, UNIVERSITY OF BELGRADE







# PROCÉEDINGS

Editors: Ana Kostov Milenko Ljubojev

3 – 5 October 2022. Hotel "Albo" Bor, Serbia

#### MINING AND METALLURGY INSTITUTE BOR

and



TEHNICAL FACULTY BOR, UNIVERSITY OF BELGRADE



53<sup>rd</sup> International October Conference on Mining and Metallurgy

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Editors:	Ana Kostov, Milenko Ljubojev
Publisher:	Mining and Metallurgy Institute Bor
Printed in:	"GRAFOMED-TRADE" Bor
Text printing preparation:	Vesna Simić
Disclaimer:	Authors are responsible for the content, translation and accuracy.
Circulation:	100 copies

СІР – Каталогизација у публикацији Народна библиотека Србије, Београд

622(082) 669(082)

INTERNATIONAL October Conference on Mining and Metallurgy (53 ; 2022 ; Bor) Proceedings / 53rd International October Conference on Mining and Metallurgy - IOC 2022, 3 % 5 October 2022, Bor ; [organizer] Mining and Metallurgy Bor and Technical Faculty in Bor, University of Belgrade ; editors Ana Kostov, Milenko Ljubojev. - Bor : Mining and Metallurgy Institute, 2022 (Bor : Grafomed-trade). - XV, 251 str. : ilustr. ; 25 cm

Tiraž 100. - Bibliografija uz svaki rad. - Registar.

ISBN 978-86-7827-052-9

а) Рударство - Зборници b) Металургија - Зборници

COBISS.SR-ID 74763529

Bor, October 2022

Conference is financially supported by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia



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#### MICROSTRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF CUAIAU ALLOYS

Ana Kostov<sup>1</sup>, Zdenka Stanojević Šimšić<sup>1</sup>, Aleksandra Milosavljević<sup>1</sup>, Ivan Jovanović<sup>1</sup>

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#### Abstract

Microstructural analysis of the CuAlAu alloys has been carried out experimentally using the light optical microscopy and scanning electron microscopy with the energy dispersive spectroscopy. Based on the obtained structural analysis, the existence of all expected phases was confirmed: solid solutions based on copper, aluminum and gold (Cu, Al, Au),  $\beta$  and  $\gamma$  phases, as well as the intermetallic compounds AuAl<sub>2</sub>, Al<sub>2</sub>Cu, and AlCu.

Keywords: optical microscopy, scanning electron microscopy with energy dispersive spectroscopy, CuAlAu alloys

#### **1 INTRODUCTION**

The CuAlAu alloys have not been sufficiently investigated despite the fact that the constituent metals copper, aluminum and gold have been known since the ancient times and the constitutive binary alloys CuAu, CuAl and AlAu have been studied in detail. Greater interest for these alloys emerged in the early 2000s with the appearance of papers suggesting the existence of three-component and four-component, 18-carat gold alloys characterized by a shape memory effect. [1,2]

The latest research has been focused on the study of structural changes within the  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  phases, as well as the martensitic transformation, and phenomena that occurred to these transformations in the alloys. [3,4]

These alloys are suitable for making jewelry because, thanks to their crystalline structure and characteristic phase transformations, after adequate heat treatment, their surface becomes "glittery", allowing such light refraction to achieve a bright, sparkling reflection.

The main goal of the paper is the microstructural analysis of the CuAlAu alloys by the experimentally used the light optical microscopy (LOM) and scanning electron microscopy with the energy dispersive spectroscopy (SEM-EDS).

#### **2 EXPERIMENTAL**

All samples were prepared by the inductive melting of pure metals (copper, aluminum and gold) in electric inductive furnace with a protective argon atmosphere. The used pure metals had purity greater than 99.99 wt.%. The total weight loss of prepared samples was less than 1% by weight.

The LOM method was carried put using a Reichert MeF2 microscope with a maximum magnification of up to 500 times for the microstructural analysis of samples. Sample preparation for optical microscopy was performed by grinding (abrasive papers marked 3 to 0000 ASTM), mechanical polishing with an aqueous suspension of alumina



with granulation of 0.05  $\mu m$  and immersion in the auto-polymerizing acrylate under the trade name SIMGAL.

The SEM-EDS analysis was performed on a scanning electron microscope SEM Tescan VEGA TS 5136MM, resolution 3nm at 20kV and maximum magnification up to 100,000 times, with an energy dispersive spectroscope brand Bruker.

#### **3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Cross sections with the molar ratios Au:Cu = 1:1 from the angle of aluminum was selected for the experimental investigations in the CuAlAu alloys. The as-cast alloys were used in all tests.

The microstructure of samples, taken with the light optical microscope, is presented in Figures 1-4, respectively.

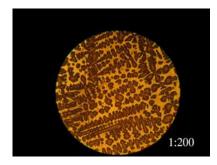


Figure 1 LOM of Cu<sub>40</sub>Al<sub>20</sub>Au<sub>40</sub> alloy



Figure 2 LOM of Cu<sub>30</sub>Al<sub>40</sub>Au<sub>30</sub> alloy

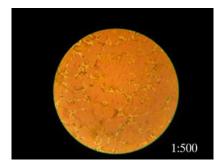


Figure 3 LOM of Cu20Al60Au20 alloy

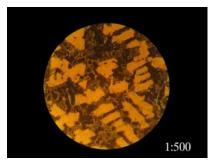


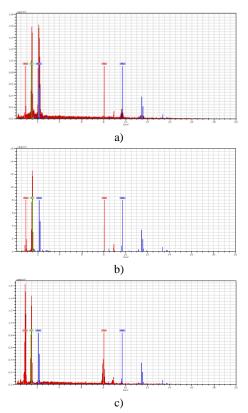
Figure 4 LOM of Cu10Al80Au10 alloy

The microstructure of  $Cu_{40}Al_{20}Au_{40}$  alloy consists of the small, oval and elongated crystals of a solid solution of copper, aluminum and gold (Cu, Al, Au), and the  $\beta$  phase as a base. The  $Cu_{30}Al_{40}Au_{30}$  alloy is characterized by a fine-grained  $\gamma$  phase structure. The microstructure of  $Cu_{20}Al_{60}Au_{20}$  alloy consists of crystals of the intermetallic compound AuAl<sub>2</sub> at the edges of which is the intermetallic compound AlCu, and  $\epsilon$  phase. The microstructure of the  $Cu_{10}Al_{80}Au_{10}$  alloy consists of the primary crystals of



the intermetallic compound  $AuAl_2$ , crystals of the intermetallic compound  $Al_2Cu$  of lamellar shape, and crystals of a solid solution of aluminum (Al).

The spectra of the  $Cu_{10}Al_{80}Au_{10}$  alloy and its characteristic phases are shown in Figures 5.



**Figure 5** *EDS analysis of Cu*<sub>10</sub>*Al*<sub>80</sub>*Au*<sub>10</sub> *alloy: a) AuAl*<sub>2</sub> (*Cu*<sub>3.5</sub>*Al*<sub>62</sub>*Au*<sub>34.5</sub>); *b) (Al) (Cu*<sub>3</sub>*Al*<sub>96</sub>*Au*<sub>1</sub>); *c) Al*<sub>2</sub>*Cu (Cu*<sub>32</sub>*Al*<sub>66</sub>*Au*<sub>2</sub>)

Based on the performed structural analysis, using the SEM-EDS method, the presence or existence of all expected phases in the CuAlAu alloys was confirmed.

The phases identified in the CuAlAu alloys from the cross section Cu:Au = 1:1, are  $\beta$ ,  $\epsilon$  and  $\gamma$  phases, solid solution based on aluminum (Al), solid solution based on gold, aluminum and copper, (Au, Al, Cu), as well as the intermetallic compounds AuAl<sub>2</sub>, Al<sub>2</sub>Cu and AlCu.

#### **4 CONCLUSION**

The results of experimental microstructural analysis of CuAlAu alloys were presented int this paper. Microstructural analysis of the investigated CuAlAu alloys was performed by the optical microscopy and SEM-EDS method. Based on the microstructural analysis, the existence of all expected phases was confirmed: solid



solutions based on copper, aluminum and gold (Cu, Al, Au),  $\beta$  and  $\gamma$  phases, as well as the intermetallic compounds AuAl<sub>2</sub>, Al<sub>2</sub>Cu, AlCu.

The importance of the obtained results is reflected in the scientific contribution to a better knowledge of the CuAlAu alloys and the assessment of their application in medicine, electronics, electrical engineering, space technology and goldsmithing.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was financially supported by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia, Contract No. 451-03-68/2022-14/200052.

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