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Investigation of the formation mechanism of a-axis oriented grains in GdBa₂Cu₃O_y coated conductors deposited by pulsed laser deposition

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GdBa₂Cu₃O_y (GdBCO) coated conductors is one of the most promising candidates due to its high critical temperature over 90 K and high critical current density of the order of 1×10^6 A/cm² at 77 K. The presences of a-axis-oriented grains has been known to cause the worsening current characteristics, so that it is important to investigate the formation mechanism of a-axis-oriented grains. In this study, the influence of film growth factor on a-axis grains in the GdBCO film was investigated. GdBCO films were deposited on CeO₂/Gd₂Zr₂O₇/Hastelloy substrates by a pulsed laser deposition (PLD) technique. Substrate temperature was varied from 700°C to 800°C at a constant oxygen pressure condition. The proportions of a-axis grains were estimated by the peak intensity ratio in XRD measurement. It was found that the proportions of a-axis grains were influenced greatly by the substrate temperature, 71% at 700°C and 3.0% at 760°C. Furthermore, XRD analysis revealed the presence of Gd₂CuO₄ (Gd₂14) in the film with high proportions of a-axis grains. Then, we assumed that GdBCO grain grows on Gd₂14 grain in the film and considered the orientation of GdBCO crystal grains in viewpoint of Gibbs free energy for the nucleation. As a result, a-axis grains tend to form at any substrate temperature when GdBCO grain grows on Gd₂14 grain. Also, a-axis grains tend to form at lower temperature than 740°C when GdBCO grain grows on GdBCO grain. It was found that it is essential to suppress the formation of Gd₂14 to prevent the formation of a-axis grains of GdBCO.

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