Influence of bilayer periodic thickness ratios on the mechanical properties and corrosion resistance of AlCrNbSiTiN/AlCrN high-entropy alloy nitride multilayer thin films

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Abstract

High entropy alloy (HEA) nitride thin films have attracted considerable attention from the global industrial and academic communities due to their excellent mechanical properties. HEA multilayer nitride films also exhibit good interfacial stability, outstanding mechanical performance, and superior corrosion resistance. In this study, AlCrNbSiTiN/AlCrN nitride multilayer thin films were deposited using a high power impulse magnetron sputtering (HiPIMS) system with AlCrNbSiTi and AlCr targets in a mixed argon and nitrogen atmosphere. By adjusting the residence time of the substrates in the plasma regions of the AlCrNbSiTi and AlCr targets, multilayered thin films with varied bilayer periodic thicknesses ranging from 6 to 40 nm were fabricated. For the multilayer thin film with 15 nm bilayer period thickness, the thickness ratios of AlCrNbSiTiN and AlCrN single layer were adjusted to evaluate their influence on the hardness and corrosion resistance of films. XRD analysis indicated that all AlCrNbSiTiN/AlCrN multilayer films, as well as single-layer AlCrNbSiTiN and AlCrN films, exhibited a face-centered cubic crystal structure. Notably, the AlCrNbSiTiN/AlCrN multilayer film with a 15 nm bilayer period demonstrated a high hardness of 28 GPa and excellent corrosion resistance in 0.5 M H_2SO_4 aqueous solution, with a corrosion impedance value of 1.19×10^6 $\Omega.cm^2$. The influence of AlCrNbSiTiN to AlCrN thickness ratios on the mechanical properties and corrosion resistance of AlCrNbSiTiN/AlCrN multilayer thin film with 15 nm bilayer period was explored in this work.

Keywords: AlCrNbSiTiN/AlCrN, high power impulse magnetron sputtering (HiPIMS), multilayer films, mechanical properties, corrosion resistance