particles made of copper and the balance consisting of unavoidable impurities, the copper particles containing copper in an amount of preferably 50 mass% or more, more preferably 70 mass% or more, and even more preferably 90 mass% or more. Also, from a similar viewpoint, the copper powder preferably contains the particles in any of the forms of (i) an assemblage of copper particles made only of copper and the balance consisting of unavoidable impurities; (iii) an assemblage of copper alloy particles containing 50 mass% or more of copper and another metal; and (iv) an assemblage of the above-described copper particles and the above-described copper alloy particles, or more preferably in the form of (i) an assemblage of copper particles made only of copper and the balance consisting of unavoidable impurities. In the case where the copper powder contains a plurality of types of metal particles, the copper content in the copper powder is calculated with respect to all the types of metal particles constituting the copper powder.

[0025]

The metal particles constituting the copper powder may have, for example, a spherical shape, a flat (flake-like) shape, a dendritic (branching tree-like) shape, a rod-like shape, or the like, and one of these shapes may be used alone, or a plurality of shapes of these shapes may be used in combination. The shape of the metal particles depends on the method for producing the metal particles. For example, spherical particles are likely to be obtained when a wet reduction process or an atomizing process is employed as the method for producing the metal particles. Dendritic or rod-shaped particles are likely to be obtained when an electrolytic reduction process is employed. Flat particles can be obtained by, for example, plastically deforming spherical particles by applying a mechanical external force thereto.

[0026]

It is preferable that the copper powder contains spherical metal particles containing copper. In this case, the particle size of the spherical metal particles can be measured by performing image analysis on a scanning electron microscope image. Specifically, with the user of Mac-View manufactured by Mountech Co., Ltd., image data