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BARIUM TITANATE SEMICONDUCTIVE CERAMIC

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

5 The present invention relates to a barium titanate semiconductive ceramic which has positive resistance-temperature characteristics and is suitable for applications such as controlling temperature and limiting current, or exothermic devices for constant temperature.

10 Background Art

A barium titanate semiconductive ceramic has positive resistance-temperature characteristics (PTC characteristics). It has low specific resistance at room temperature and its electric resistance suddenly rises
15 when a particular temperature (the Curie temperature) is surpassed. Thus, the ceramic is widely used in a broad range of applications such as controlling temperature and limiting current, or in exothermic devices for constant temperature.

20 These applications require that titanate semiconductive ceramic have not only PTC characteristics, but also sufficiently withstand voltage to permit use under high voltage. Therefore, there is need for a semiconductive ceramic having PTC as well as high
25 withstand voltage characteristics. Particularly, overcurrent-protection devices for circuits demand that higher withstand voltage be realized.

To this end, a variety of proposals have hitherto been made in order to enhance withstand voltage

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of barium titanate semiconductive ceramics. For example, Japanese Patent Application Laid-Open (kokai) No. 4-26101 discloses a ceramic having a ceramic grain size of 6-15 μm , low specific resistance at room temperature and high withstand voltage obtained by adding Dy and Sb to a semiconductive ceramic comprising BaTiO_3 and SrTiO_3 incorporated with TiO_2 , SiO_2 , Al_2O_3 , and MnO_2 . Japanese Patent Publication (kokoku) No. 60-25004 discloses that when a powder which is obtained by crushing, mixing and calcining a barium-titanium compounded oxalate and an Sb oxide (serving as a semiconducting agent) is fired at 1350°C while the calcining conditions and compacting pressure are controlled, there is obtained ceramic having a ceramic grain size of 1-5 μm and high withstand voltage.

However, the semiconductive ceramic described in Japanese Patent Application Laid-Open (kokai) No. 4-26101 has a specific resistance of about 50 Ωcm and a withstand voltage of about 200 V/mm and such withstand voltage is still unsatisfactory. Also, the semiconductor material described in Japanese Patent Publication (kokoku) No. 60-25004 has a maximum withstand voltage of about 500 V/mm, which does not fully meet the current demand for enhancing withstand voltage.

Therefore, an object of the present invention is to provide barium titanate semiconductive ceramic having low specific resistance at room temperature and high withstand voltage, which fully meets the current demand for enhancing withstand voltage.

30 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present inventors have conducted earnest studies to attain the above object, and have found that a

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barium titanate semiconductive ceramic having an average ceramic grain size smaller than a certain value has low specific resistance at room temperature and excellent withstand voltage. The present invention was
5 accomplished based on this finding.

Accordingly, the present invention provides a barium titanate semiconductive ceramic having an average ceramic grain size of about 0.9 μm or less.

The barium titanate semiconductive ceramic of
10 the present invention is preferably obtained from a barium titanate powder or a calcined barium titanate powder having strictly limited physical properties, i.e., a grain size of about 0.1 μm or less, a cubic system crystal structure and a lattice constant of 4.02
15 angstroms or more, and containing a micro-quantity of a semiconducting agent in the form of solid solution.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION
AND PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

The barium titanate semiconductive ceramic of
20 the present invention has an average ceramic grain size of about 0.9 μm or less. The average grain size may be obtained by observing the surface of the ceramic by use of, for example, an SEM (scanning electron microscope).

In manufacture of the barium titanate
25 semiconductive ceramic of the present invention, the generally known methods may be used so long as they provide an average ceramic grain size of about 0.9 μm or less. For example, a sequential process of granulating the raw material powder with a binder, shaping, and
30 firing may be performed.

Preferably, the raw material powder is a barium titanate powder or a calcined barium titanate powder

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having strictly limited physical properties, i.e., a grain size of about 0.1 μm or less, a cubic system crystal structure and a lattice constant of 4.02 angstroms or more, and containing a micro-quantity of a semiconducting agent in the form of solid solution. When such powder is used as a raw material, barium titanate semiconductive ceramic having high withstand voltage is obtained.

No particular limitation is imposed on the methods for manufacturing the barium titanate powder so long as the ceramic having the above-described physical properties can be obtained. Examples include the hydrolysis method, sol-gel method, hydrothermal method, coprecipitation method, and solid phase method. Of these, the hydrolysis method is preferred. In order to obtain the barium titanate powder through the hydrolysis method, the following steps may be performed: preparing a solution containing a salt or an alkoxide of barium and a solution containing a salt or an alkoxide of titanium; mixing the solutions at a ratio where the desirable stoichiometry of barium and titanium is realized and causing reaction to form a slurry; aging the slurry; dehydrating; washing with water; drying; and crushing.

During manufacture, a micro-quantity of a semiconducting agent is incorporated into the barium titanate powder to be obtained, so as to form a solid solution. The term "micro-quantity" means an amount sufficient to provide semiconductive properties without significantly otherwise affecting the characteristics of the titanate. This amount is frequently less than about 0.5 m% based on Ti. Examples of the semiconducting agent which may be used include rare earth metal elements such as La, Y, Sm, Ce, Dy, or Ga; and transition elements

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such as Nb, Ta, Bi, Sb, or W. Of these, La is preferably used. A solid solution of a semiconducting agent with a barium titanate powder is formed by, for example, adding a solution containing a salt of the semiconducting agent to either of the barium-containing solution or titanium-containing solution in advance and making a powder with the barium component and the titanium component.

The thus-obtained barium titanate powder may be used as is as a raw material powder or calcined to provide the raw material powder. The calcination is performed, for example, at about 800 to about 1000°C for about 1 to about 3 hours with optional pre-heating.

The resultant barium titanate raw material powder is then granulated by use of a known binder such as vinyl acetate. The obtained granulated powder is shaped through a known method such as uniaxial pressing to form a compact, which is fired to thereby obtain the barium titanate semiconductive ceramic of the present invention. The compact is fired under the conditions, e.g., of about 1200 to about 1300°C for about 1 to about 3 hours in air.

The barium titanate semiconductive ceramic having an average ceramic grain size of about 0.9 μm or less which may be manufactured through the above method has low specific resistance at room temperature and high withstand voltage fully satisfying the demand for enhancing withstand voltage and is suitable for applications such as controlling temperature and limiting current, or for use in exothermic devices for constant temperature. The barium titanate semiconductive ceramic enables an apparatus using the same to have enhanced performance and reduced size.

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EXAMPLES

The present invention will next be described more specifically by way of examples.

Example 1

5 A 0.2 mol/l aqueous solution of barium
hydroxide (15.40 l; containing 3.079 mol barium) and a
0.35 mol/l solution of a titanium alkoxide (7.58 l;
containing 2.655 mol titanium) were individually prepared
in separate tanks. The solution of a titanium alkoxide
10 was formed by dissolving $\text{Ti}(\text{O-iPr})_4$ (titanium
tetraisopropoxide) in IPA (isopropyl alcohol). During
the preparation process, an ethanol solution of lanthanum
chloride ($\text{LaCl}_3 \cdot 6.3\text{H}_2\text{O}$) (100 ml, containing 0.00664 mol
lanthanum) was added to the solution of the titanium
15 alkoxide and the mixture was homogenized in order to form
a solid solution containing lanthanum serving as a
semiconducting agent.

 Subsequently, each of the solutions was pumped
from its respective tank by use of a gear pump for
20 feeding liquid, and the solutions were mixed by use of a
static mixer to cause a reaction to occur. The resultant
slurry was introduced to a tank for aging, and was
circulated through the static mixer to thereby allow the
slurry to age for three hours.

25 After aging, the slurry was dehydrated by use
of a centrifugal separator and the resultant cake was
washed by stirring in hot water at 80-90°C for 15 minutes
by use of a homogenization mixer. Subsequently, the
slurry was dehydrated by use of a centrifugal machine and
30 the resultant cake was further washed by stirring in
ethanol for 30 minutes by use of a homogenization mixer.
The washed slurry was dehydrated again by use of a

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centrifugal separator, and the resultant cake was dried in an oven at 110°C for three hours. After drying, the cake was crushed to obtain a powder of a La-containing barium titanate solid solution. The powder has a grain size of 0.05 μm and a lattice constant of the cubic crystal of 4.032 angstroms, as confirmed through SEM and powder X-ray diffraction, respectively. The Ba/Ti and La/Ti ratios were 0.991 and 0.0021, respectively, according to fluorescent X-ray analysis.

The thus-obtained powder of a La-containing barium titanate solid solution was calcined at 1000°C for two hours. The thus-obtained calcined powder was mixed with a binder such as vinyl acetate, to thereby manufacture a granulated powder, which was subjected to uniaxial pressing to form a disk-like compact having a diameter of 10 mm and a thickness of 1 mm. The compact was fired at 1250°C for two hours in air, to thereby obtain a barium titanate semiconductive ceramic piece.

The ceramic grain size, specific resistance at room temperature, and withstand voltage of the obtained barium titanate semiconductive ceramic piece were obtained. With regard to the ceramic grain size, there was determined an average ceramic grain size obtained by taking an SEM photograph of the surface of the ceramic piece and calculating based on image analysis of the photograph. With regard to the specific resistance at room temperature, there was determined a value of the surface of the ceramic piece coated with In-Ga that was measured through a four-probe method by use of a digital electronic voltage meter at 25°C. With regard to the withstand voltage, there was determined a value obtained by measuring a maximum applied voltage immediately before the breakage of the sample and dividing the measured

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voltage by the interelectrode distance of the sample.
The results show that the ceramic piece has a ceramic
grain size of $0.9\ \mu\text{m}$, a specific resistance at room
temperature of $50\ \Omega\text{cm}$ and a withstand voltage of 900
V/mm.

Example 2

The procedure of Example 1 was performed,
except that an ethanol solution of lanthanum chloride
containing $0.00531\ \text{mol}$ lanthanum was used, to thereby
obtain a powder of a La-containing barium titanate solid
solution. The obtained powder of a La-containing barium
titanate solid solution has a grain size of $0.05\ \mu\text{m}$, a
lattice constant of the cubic crystal of $4.029\ \text{angstroms}$,
and Ba/Ti and La/Ti ratios of 0.998 and 0.0018 ,
respectively.

The procedure of Example 1 was performed by use
of the powder --without calcination-- as a raw powder, to
thereby obtain a barium titanate semiconductive ceramic
piece.

The obtained barium titanate semiconductive
ceramic piece has a ceramic grain size of $0.8\ \mu\text{m}$, a
specific resistance at room temperature of $78\ \Omega\text{cm}$ and a
withstand voltage of $1250\ \text{V/mm}$.

Example 3

The procedure of Example 2 was performed,
except that the powder of a La-containing barium titanate
solid solution obtained in Example 2 was calcined at
 800°C for two hours to serve as a raw powder, to thereby
obtain a barium titanate semiconductive ceramic piece.

The obtained barium titanate semiconductive
ceramic piece has a ceramic grain size of $0.9\ \mu\text{m}$, a

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specific resistance at room temperature of 60 Ω cm and a withstand voltage of 1120 V/mm.

Example 4

The procedure of Example 1 was performed,
5 except that an ethanol solution of lanthanum chloride
containing 0.00398 mol lanthanum was used, to thereby
obtain a powder of La-containing barium titanate solid
solution. The obtained powder of a La-containing barium
10 titanate solid solution has a grain size of 0.05 μ m, a
lattice constant of the cubic crystal of 4.027 angstroms,
and Ba/Ti and La/Ti ratios of 0.996 and 0.0013,
respectively.

The procedure of Example 1 was performed by
calcining the powder of a La-containing barium titanate
15 solid solution under the same conditions as those of
Example 1 to serve as a raw calcined powder, to thereby
obtain a barium titanate semiconductive ceramic piece.
The obtained barium titanate semiconductive ceramic piece
has a ceramic grain size of 0.8 μ m, a specific resistance
20 at room temperature of 84 Ω cm and a withstand voltage of
1300 V/mm.

Example 5

The powder of a La-containing barium titanate
solid solution obtained in Example 1 was heat-treated at
25 600°C for two hours. The heat-treated powder has a grain
size of 0.1 μ m and a lattice constant of the cubic
crystal of 4.020 angstroms. The procedure of Example 1
was performed by calcining the heat-treated powder under
the same conditions as those of Example 1 to serve as a
30 raw calcined powder, to thereby obtain a barium titanate
semiconductive ceramic piece.

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The obtained barium titanate semiconductive ceramic piece has a ceramic grain size of $0.9\ \mu\text{m}$, a specific resistance at room temperature of $40\ \Omega\text{cm}$ and a withstand voltage of $800\ \text{V/mm}$.

5 Example 6

 The procedure of Example 1 was performed without adding an ethanol solution of lanthanum chloride ($\text{LaCl}_3 \cdot 6.3\text{H}_2\text{O}$) to the solution of the titanium alkoxide, to thereby obtain a powder of a La-free barium titanate non-solid solution. The obtained barium titanate powder has a grain size of $0.05\ \mu\text{m}$, a lattice constant of the cubic crystal of 4.028 angstroms, and a Ba/Ti ratio of 0.998.

 To the barium titanate powder, La was then added in the form of a solution of lanthanum nitrate in an amount of 0.15 mol%, and the mixture was calcined at 1000°C for two hours. The procedure of Example 1 was performed by use of the thus-obtained calcined powder as a raw powder, to thereby obtain a barium titanate semiconductive ceramic piece. The firing was performed at 1200°C for two hours. The obtained barium titanate semiconductive ceramic piece has a ceramic grain size of $0.8\ \mu\text{m}$, a specific resistance at room temperature of $90\ \Omega\text{cm}$, and a withstand voltage of $720\ \text{V/mm}$.

25 Comparative Example 1

 The powder of a La-containing barium titanate solid solution obtained in Example 1 was heat-treated at 800°C for two hours. The heat-treated powder has a grain size of $0.17\ \mu\text{m}$ and a lattice constant of the cubic crystal of 4.005 angstroms. The procedure of Example 1 was performed by calcining the heat-treated powder under

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the same conditions as those of Example 1 to serve as a raw calcined powder, to thereby obtain a barium titanate semiconductive ceramic piece.

5 The obtained barium titanate semiconductive ceramic piece has a ceramic grain size of 1-3 μm , a specific resistance at room temperature of 30 Ωcm and a withstand voltage of 400 V/mm.

Comparative Example 2

10 The slurry containing titanium, barium, and lanthanum obtained in Example 1 was introduced into an agitated autoclave and allowed to hydrothermally react at 200°C for eight hours. The procedure of Example 1 was performed to thereby obtain a powder of a La-containing barium titanate solid solution. The obtained powder of a
15 La-containing barium titanate solid solution has a grain size of 0.1 μm , a lattice constant of the cubic crystal of 4.010 angstroms, and Ba/Ti and La/Ti ratios of 0.998 and 0.0020, respectively.

20 The procedure of Example 1 was performed by calcining the powder of a La-containing barium titanate solid solution under the same conditions as those of Example 1 to serve as a raw calcined powder, to thereby obtain a barium titanate semiconductive ceramic piece.

25 The obtained barium titanate semiconductive ceramic piece has a ceramic grain size of 1-20 μm , a specific resistance at room temperature of 40 Ωcm and a withstand voltage of 300 V/mm.

The results of the thus-described Examples and Comparative Examples are shown in Table 1.

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Table 1								
	Physical properties of raw powders					Physical properties of Ba titanate semiconductive ceramic		
	Grain size (μm)	Crystal system	Lattice const. (angstrom)	Ba/Ti ratio	La/Ti ratio	Av. ceramic grain size (μm)	Specific resistance at room temp. (Ωcm)	Withstand voltage (V/mm)
Example 1	0.05	Cubic	4.032	0.991	0.0021	0.9	50	900
Example 2	0.05	Cubic	4.029	0.998	0.0018	0.8	78	1250
Example 3	0.05	Cubic	4.032	0.998	0.0018	0.9	60	1120
Example 4	0.05	Cubic	4.027	0.996	0.0013	0.8	84	1300
Example 5	0.1	Cubic	4.020	0.991	0.0021	0.9	40	800
Example 6	0.05	Cubic	4.028	0.998	-	0.8	90	720
Comparative Example 1	0.17	Cubic	4.005	0.991	0.0021	1-3	30	400
Comparative Example 2	0.1	Cubic	4.010	0.998	0.0020	1-20	40	300

As is apparent from Table 1, all of the ceramic pieces having a ceramic grain size of about $0.9 \mu\text{m}$ or less exhibit excellent withstand voltage as high as 720 V/mm or more. When the ceramic grain size is $1 \mu\text{m}$ or more, the specific resistance at room temperature decreases and withstand voltage decreases simultaneously. When the grain size of the raw powders is in excess of about $0.1 \mu\text{m}$, the ceramic grain size increases to $1 \mu\text{m}$ or more to result in lowering withstand voltage. Furthermore, when the lattice constant of the raw powders is 4.02 angstrom or less, the ceramic structure becomes heterogeneous, i.e., a mixture of micrograins ($1 \mu\text{m}$ grains) and coarse grains ($10-20 \mu\text{m}$), to result in lowering withstand voltage. When the raw powder is obtained by forming a solid solution from titanium,

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barium, and pre-doped La which serves as a semiconducting agent or by post-adding La to a barium titanate powder, withstand voltage slightly decreases in the case of the latter method. The reason for this may be considered
5 that withstand voltage of the ceramic is affected by compositional homogeneity of grains forming the ceramic as well as ceramic grains themselves.

As described hereinabove, the barium titanate semiconductive ceramic having an average ceramic grain
10 size of about 0.9 μm or less according to the present invention has low specific resistance at room temperature and high withstand voltage fully satisfying the demand for enhancing withstand voltage and is suitable for applications such as controlling temperature, limiting
15 current, or heating at constant temperature. The barium titanate semiconductive ceramic enables an apparatus using the same to have enhanced performance and reduced size.

Furthermore, in the present invention, a
20 ceramic endowed with particularly high withstand voltage is obtained by firing a barium titanate powder or a calcined barium titanate powder having strictly limited physical properties, i.e., a grain size of about 0.1 μm or less, a crystal structure of the cubic system, and a
25 lattice constant of 4.02 angstroms or more, and containing a microquantity of a semiconducting agent forming a solid solution.

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WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A barium titanate semiconductive ceramic having an average ceramic grain size of about 0.9 μm or less.
2. The barium titanate semiconductive ceramic according to Claim 1, containing at least one a semiconducting agent selected from the group consisting of rare earth metal elements and transition elements.
3. The barium titanate semiconductive ceramic according to Claim 1, containing La.
4. A powder for producing the barium titanate semiconductive ceramic according to Claim 1, comprising a barium titanate powder having a grain size of about 0.1 μm or less, a cubic system crystal structure and a lattice constant of 4.02 angstroms or more, and containing at least one semiconducting agent in the form of solid solution.
5. The powder according to claim 4, wherein the semiconducting agent is selected from the group consisting of rare earth metal elements and transition elements.
6. The powder according to claim 5, wherein the semiconducting agent is La.
7. The powder according to claim 4, wherein the barium titanate powder is a calcined power.

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8. The powder according to claim 7, wherein the semiconducting agent is La.

9. The powder according to claim 4, wherein the barium titanate powder is an uncalcined power.

10. The powder according to claim 9, wherein the semiconducting agent is La.

11. A process for producing the barium titanate semiconductive ceramic according to Claim 1, comprising firing a barium titanate powder having a grain size of about 0.1 μm or less, a cubic system crystal structure and a lattice constant of 4.02 angstroms or more, and a semiconducting agent in the form of solid solution, for a time and at a temperature such that the average grain size of the resulting titanate is about 0.9 μm or less.

12. The process according to claim 11, wherein the semiconducting agent is selected from the group consisting of rare earth metal elements and transition elements.

13. The process according to claim 12, wherein the semiconducting agent is La.

14. The process according to claim 11, wherein the barium titanate powder is a calcined power.

15. The process according to claim 14, wherein the semiconducting agent is La.

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16. The process according to claim 11, wherein the barium titanate powder is an uncalcined power.

17. The process according to claim 17, wherein the semiconducting agent is La.

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