Determination of the recycling possibilities of worn materials obtained from Alko 80 AMC-S and Alko 60 A refractory bricks is the aim of this work. The spent linings from the pouring ladle for pig iron transport and steel ladle were investigated. The quality and composition of the particle-size classes were evaluated after crushing of the spent linings. The degree of contamination of refractory masses, the redistribution of the fundamental components (\(\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3\), \(\text{MgO}\), \(\text{SiO}_2\), \(\text{C}\)) into grain fractions of (0–1 mm), (1–2,5 mm) and (2,5–5 mm) and magnetic proportion were observed. The iron particles and Fe- and Ca-compounds are mainly concentrated in the magnetic proportion. 70–75 mass-% of refractory material from spent Alko 80 AMC-S bricks could be effectively recycled. It is possible to obtain the size class of 1–5 mm with content up 80–85 % of \(\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3\). The redistribution into size classes during the crushing of the spent Alko 60 A bricks did not occur. After removing the magnetic fraction, the residue contains more than 95 % of \((\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3+\text{SiO}_2)\) with the dominant mullite phase.

1 Introduction

The steel producers are among the largest consumers of high-alumina refractory materials. The linings of high-temperature metallurgical units, such as pouring ladle for pig iron and ladle for secondary metallurgy technologies of steel (e.g. deoxidation, doping and others), are formed from alumina ceramic bricks. These are applied in zones where the linings are in contact with the molten metal. These materials are attacked by molten metal under the temperatures of more than 1600 °C over long periods and cyclically exposed to the thermal shocks and extreme stress, to what they should be resistant [1–3].

The cost of high-quality ceramic raw materials is high and therefore the ceramic refractory manufacturers are looking for ways of recycling the materials from the worn refractory linings [4–9].

Refractory masses are composed of the clinkers of the different particle size and fine-grain matrix – binding materials and antioxidants, eventually. The fine particles cover the clinker grains and are filling the voids between the grains. The components react together under a high temperature, the high-temperature solid-phase’s reactions occur and new amorphous and crystalline phases are formed. Moreover, during the high-temperature metallurgical processes the refractory materials in units fall into the mutual interactions, the interaction with the molten metal, slags and gaseous phases. The chemical reactions, together with the physical and mechanical actions, can disturb the integrity of the heat-resistant material. The aggressive molten metal attacks the surface part of the bricks strongly, the metal slowly infiltrates into the pores of the refractory material and the individual grains are gradually released into the melt. The volume changes, the differences in the material dilatation of components cause the mechanical damage under the sintered surface layer of refractory material, which speeds up the process of lining degradation. The load conditions (high temperatures and repeated cycles, convection of melts and their aggressiveness), but mainly the refractory quality (composition and density/porosity) determine the period of service of the exposed lining. In the most cases the sharp boundary between attacked surface layer and lining core is created. Often, only a very narrow surface layer is strongly corroded by molten metal. The bulk of the core lining is not deteriorated so much as it is on the surface. The substantial part of refractory material applied in this part of ladle which is in contact with metal (“metal zone”) is chemically almost unchanged. Nevertheless, the long term exposure of refractory materials to high temperatures can develop the phase transformations, the formation of stable high temperature phases [9–12].

The presented work is focused on the recovery of alumina heat-resistant material.
obtained from two kinds of worn bricks: Alko 60 A and Alko 80 AMC–S, which have been applied into pouring ladle for pig iron transport and steel ladle for secondary metallurgy. R.M.S. a.s. Košice, DZ REFRAKO/ SK is a producer of these refractory bricks. The aim was to evaluate the possibilities of reusing the part of worn material as raw material for the production new refractory bricks and/or creation of guttering material.

2 Experimental

The worn Alko 80 AMC–S bricks were taken from a steel ladle for secondary metallurgy after 198 casting runs (Fig. 1), and worn Alko 60 A bricks from a pouring ladle for pig iron transport after 521 casting runs (Fig. 2).

The Alko 80 AMC–S refractory bricks are bauxite-based with the organic bound, which has high resistance to liquid metal and therefore it is used as a working lining of steel ladles. This material is in direct contact with molten steel and resists up to a temperature of 1700 °C.

The chemical composition of mass is as follows: 78 mass-% Al₂O₃, min. 6.5 % MgO, min. 5 % C, max. 1.2 % Fe₂O₃ and approx 2.3 % SiO₂. The bricks show the apparent porosity of 8 % and density of min. 2950 kg·m⁻³ [13].

The Alko 60 A bricks are andaluzite-based and they are applied up to 1650 °C. Material shows the tensile strength of min. 55 MPa, density of min. 2440 kg·m⁻³ and the increased resistance to the liquid metal and molten glass, therefore it is used as a lining of pig iron ladles in intensively stressed zones [14].

The surface of the bricks from the steel ladle (Fig. 1) and pouring ladle for pig iron (Fig. 2) was greatly worn and disrupted in a thin layer of about 5–15 mm. Therefore, the material from the surface was separated (layer thickness approx 20–25 mm) from the core of brick and evaluated separately. The materials were crushed into grain size under 5 mm gradually and sieved to three fractions (0–1 mm; 1–2.5 mm and 2.5–5 mm) that were quantified. The magnetic particles were separated by the magnetic separation and the conventional methods were applied to determine the chemical composition of all grain fractions. The results of the analysis are listed in Figs. 3, 4. Several selected samples were characterized by X-ray diffraction analysis (Rigaku MiniFlex 600). The diffraction records were evaluated using the quality analysis software PDFXL 2 and ICCD mineral and ceramics database. All the diffraction lines in the records were allocated to phases and the main lines of the phases are marked (Figs. 3, 4).

3 Results and discussion

Approximately 40–55 vol.-% of refractory material from the ladle lining is spent during the working cycles, this material passes into the slags. The rest of the Alko 80 AMC–S lining in a ladle represents about 5–8 t of worn materials. The sintered surface layer of the bricks with very thin accretion is only a few millimetres thick. In the case of the Alko 60 A bricks, the molten metal leaks into cracks which are located several millimetres under the sintered surface and probably these cracks primarily generate the thermal shocks during the pouring period.

The refractory materials under the surface layer look as unused bricks. It is difficult to separate the sintered corroded surface layer from the less corroded core material. The weight ratio of the surface material comparing to the core material depends on how thick coating was separated. It affects the results of the chemical analyses of the crushed samples. Manually sorted worn lining from the steel ladles and the pouring ladle for pig iron were gradually crushed and re-sieved, and the magnetic particles were put aside. Qualitatively different classes were obtained by the consequent separation of crushed non-magnetic material into size fractions: 0–1 mm; 1–2.5 mm and 2.5–5 mm.

The chemical composition of the strongly corroded surface and core bricks are presented in Fig. 3 and Fig. 4. It points out to the differences in degree of the brick contamination and the distribution of components into size fractions.

Alko 80 AMC – S: The mass proportion of the (0–1 mm), (1–2.5 mm), (2.5–5 mm) fractions and the Al₂O₃, SiO₂, Fe₂O₃, CaO, MgO, TiO₂ and C (as loss by ignition) contents are presented in Fig. 3. Alkali metal oxides (Na₂O + K₂O) content in the samples obtained from the corroded surface was less than 0.3 mass-%, and sulphur content was not in a detectable amount.

Of course, the magnetic part contains the highest proportion of Fe – compound and the total magnetic proportion obtained from the crushed bricks is 3–4 mass-%.

In our case, the weight ratio of the material from surface and core was 1 : 9. It is...
obvious from the results of analyses that \( \text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 \) is accumulated in coarser fractions (1–2.5 mm and 2.5–5 mm) but MgO and C in fine fraction (0–1 mm). The phase composition of worn refractory materials was compared with the material from the new brick. The results are shown in Tab. 1.

Strongly attacked surface layer of bricks represents a small portion of the worn bricks. Relatively high-quality \( \text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 \) clinkers of 1–5 mm granularity can be obtained by crushing of the bricks after the simple magnetic separation. 75 mass-% from spent bricks forms the size class of 1–5 mm, which contains more than 76 % of \( \text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 \). If carbon from this fraction burn up, the \( \text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 \) content increases approx to 85 mass-%. Carbon oxidation from finer fraction (0–1 mm) with higher C content increases the \( \text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 \) content from ~60 mass-% to ~75 mass-%.

**ALKO 60 A:** The weight proportion of obtained size fractions (0–1 mm; 1–2.5 mm and 2.5–5 mm) from worn Alko 60 A bricks and their chemical composition is shown in Fig. 4. The content of alkali metal oxides (\( \text{Na}_2\text{O} + \text{K}_2\text{O} \)) in the samples from surface layer achieved the value lower than 0.25 mass-% and the sulphur was detected only in trace amount. Despite of the cracks filled with metal under the great corroded surface layer, the separation of this surface layer from core brick is difficult. The magnetic weight proportion obtained from the crushed surface brick, which were in direct contact with molten iron, was 14–18 mass-%, but after recalculating to the whole brick it makes 4–5 mass-% only.

The significant difference between the finer and coarser classes, after separating the magnetic particles, was not found. Crushing does not lead to the redistribution of the components into size classes. Perhaps only a note: The CaO content in the 0–1 mm fraction from the surface of the bricks was higher (2–3 mass-%). The major content of \( \text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 \) and \( \text{SiO}_2 \) in all non-magnetic fractions corresponds to andalusite/sillimanite ratio (\( \text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 : \text{SiO}_2 = 63 : 37 \)). Although the examined spent bricks from pouring ladle for pig iron from the zones above and under slag line have the chemical compositions comparable, the phase analyses indicated that probably that was the case of two kinds of bricks (Tab. 2). The Mullite phase was detected as dominant in the worn bricks from the zone above slag line, which were free of accretion. Besides Mullite, there was a small amount of the sillimanite identified, too. In the case of the worn bricks with Fe-accretion, the diffraction lines of Mullite along with the andalusite were identified.

### 4 Conclusion

The key factor of reusing worn refractory materials from spent lining is a manual sorting immediately during the ladle lining demolition. Unlike the pouring ladle for pig iron, which is made of one type of material, the lining in each zone of steel ladle is formed by different refractory materials, which are often different in chemistry, but they are visually similar.

The analysis of worn \( \text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 \)-refractory bricks from pouring ladles and steel ladles showed that, after the gradual crushing of the manually sorted worn bricks into particle size of less than 5 mm, the most contaminated parts of lining materials can be removed by magnetic separation. The types of crushing machines determine the quantity of obtained fractions.

In the case of Alko 80 AMC–S, the fine-grained fraction (<1 mm) is enriched...
Based on the detected differences in the phase composition of the linings from the wall under and above the slag line we investigated the chemical composition of the residual crushed fractions (0–1 mm, 1–2.5 mm and 2.5–5 mm) occurred as almost identical. The content of carbon and MgO, and the corundum clinker is accumulated in the coarser fraction. The 1–5 mm size class contains more than 75 mass-% of Al₂O₃ and is less contaminated with spinel phase. This material can be used without further treatments for Alko AMC refractory materials production. If carbon is removed by ignition, the Al₂O₃ content increases (∼85 mass-% Al₂O₃). The non-carbon fine class (0–1 mm) could be utilized as additive in gunning mixtures. The 75–80 mass-% of materials from this spent lining could be returned back into production as good-quality refractory raw material.

In the case of the Alko 60 A, the accretions from the surface of corroded bricks, which are mainly magnetic ones, can be removed by magnetic separation after the crushing. After the magnetic particles removal the 1–5 mm size class contains more than 75 mass-% of Al₂O₃ and is less contaminated with spinel phase. This material can be used without further treatments for Alko AMC refractory materials production. If carbon is removed by ignition, the Al₂O₃ content increases (∼85 mass-% Al₂O₃). The non-carbon fine class (0–1 mm) could be utilized as additive in gunning mixtures. The 75–80 mass-% of materials from this spent lining could be returned back into production as good-quality refractory raw material.

The phase proportion in grain fractions of Alko 60 A bricks is presented in Tab. 2. The redistribution of components into grain fractions from worn bricks (material from SL – surface layer; CB – core brick, MG – magnetic part); X-ray patterns of sample from new and worn bricks: c – corundum (Al₂O₃); m – mullite (3Al₂O₃·SiO₂); q – cristobalite (SiO₂).
presume that in pouring ladle were applied two kinds of Alko bricks in these zones. Probably, the used bricks were produced from different Al2O3·SiO2 – raw materials (sillimanite/andalusite). The fractions contain (60–64) mass-% and (30–34) mass-% of Al2O3 and SiO2, respectively. Mullite creates dominant phase. Approximately 90 mass-% of this spent material, of relatively good quality, can be reused in the production as the refractory raw materials.

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