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Combustion of a single aluminum droplet burning in O2/CO2/N2 mixtures

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Objectives

- Explain and quantify influence of ambient SRM conditions on combustion process analyzing single burning aluminum particle:
  - Development of an experimental technique with high-speed image processing
  - Determination of combustion time dependence to improve numerical simulations
  - Improvement of phenomenological understanding

Background

Metal combustion has an interesting energetic potential and an elevated temperature flame. According to its high energetic density, aluminum micrometric particles are currently used in industrial solid propellants, especially to increase thrust of solid rocket motors (SRM). However, aluminum particles combustion is a complex process sensitive to many parameters. Indeed it is already proved that combustion time depends on particle diameter. Thus, the initial particle size impacts combustion dynamic and larger particles burn as vapor flame in a diffusion mode whereas smaller particles combustion occurs in a kinetic-limited regime. Relying on experiments, different other factors like pressure or ambient composition change the aluminum burning time and determination of dependence with influencing parameters is an ongoing effort to elaborate accurate correlations, especially in less documented atmospheres such as CO, CO2, or H2O which are oxidizers released by solid propellant combustion.

Experimental set-up

- Single aluminum particle (30-150µm) is isolated in an electrodynamic levitator confined in a high pressure chamber supplied by various gases [1].
  - Autonomous combustion is initiated by using a separated CO2 laser beam.
  - Optical signature of burning aluminum particle is recorded using filtered photomultipliers and a high-speed camera.

Results

- Recording of optical emissions and laser signal during combustion sequences
  - Experimental conditions
    - Air
    - P = 6 bars
    - Dp = 95 µm
  - Combustion time
  - Temporal identification of singular emissions
  - Confirmation of laser extinction

Combustion in various mixtures at atmospheric pressure : O2-N2-Ar

- Recording of dynamic combustion sequences
  - Experimental conditions
    - Air
    - P = 6 bars
    - Dp = 65 µm
  - Combustion time t0
  - Initial droplet diameter D0
  - Evolution of droplet diameter D
  - Evolution of flame diameter Df
  - Identification of phenomena

- Highlighting the existence of different stages [2] of combustion
  - Existence of a symmetric and asymmetric vapor phase (avp) regimes
  - Introduction of related parameters: tavp and Davp respectively time and droplet diameter before asymmetric phase occurrence.

Combustion in air at various pressure : 1 to 31 bars

- Varying pressure in a low range seems to modify related parameters of asymmetric vapor phase. Influence of higher pressure is then less considerable.

Future works

- Further investigations to understand and quantify the occurrence of asymmetric phase and its influence on burning parameters varying surrounding composition and pressure.
- Determine correlations between burning time and initial diameter based on regression ratio estimated by image processing.
- Analyze combustion of aluminum particles in CO2, CO, H2O vapor and mixtures.

References: