



US 20130316239A1

(19) **United States**

(12) **Patent Application Publication**

Okamoto

(10) **Pub. No.: US 2013/0316239 A1**

(43) **Pub. Date: Nov. 28, 2013**

(54) **POSITIVE ELECTRODE ACTIVE MATERIAL FOR LITHIUM ION BATTERIES, POSITIVE ELECTRODE FOR LITHIUM ION BATTERIES, AND LITHIUM ION BATTERY**

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(21) Appl. No.: **13/984,947**

(22) PCT Filed: **Mar. 27, 2012**

(86) PCT No.: **PCT/JP2012/057974**

§ 371 (c)(1),

(2), (4) Date: **Aug. 12, 2013**

(30) **Foreign Application Priority Data**

Mar. 31, 2011 (JP) 2011-079268

Oct. 4, 2011 (JP) PCT JP2011 072865

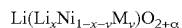
Publication Classification

(51) **Int. Cl.**
H01M 4/52 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC **H01M 4/52** (2013.01)
USPC **429/220; 429/223; 429/221**

(57) **ABSTRACT**

The present invention provides a positive electrode active material for lithium ion batteries having satisfactory battery characteristics. The positive electrode active material for lithium ion batteries, is represented by the following composition formula:

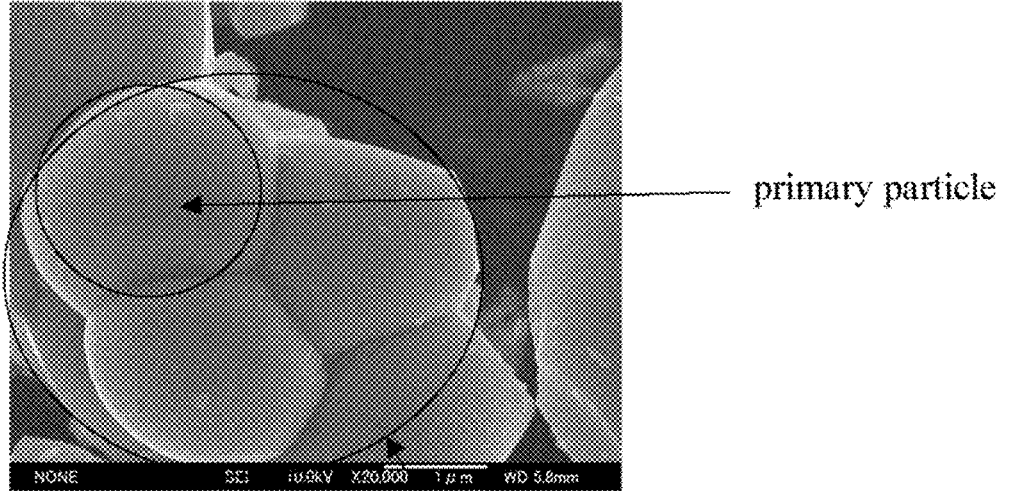


wherein M represents one or more selected from the group consisting of scandium (Sc), titanium (Ti), vanadium (V), chromium (Cr), manganese (Mn), iron (Fe), cobalt (Co), copper (Cu), zinc (Zn), gallium (Ga), germanium (Ge), bismuth (Bi), tin (Sn), magnesium (Mg), calcium (Ca), boron (B) and zirconium (Zr); $0 \leq x \leq 0.1$; $0 < y \leq 0.7$; and $\alpha > 0$,

wherein the particle size of primary particles is 1.6 to 2.3 μm , the alkali amount at the particle surfaces measured by two-stage neutralization titration is 1.2% by mass or less, and

when the amount of lithium hydroxide in the alkali amount at the particle surfaces is designated as A% by mass, and the amount of lithium carbonate is designated as B% by mass, the ratio A/B is 1 or less.

Fig.1



primary particle

secondary particle
(formed as a result of aggregation of primary particles)

**POSITIVE ELECTRODE ACTIVE MATERIAL
FOR LITHIUM ION BATTERIES, POSITIVE
ELECTRODE FOR LITHIUM ION
BATTERIES, AND LITHIUM ION BATTERY**

BACKGROUND

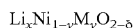
[0001] 1. Technical Field

[0002] The present invention relates to a positive electrode active material for lithium ion batteries, a positive electrode for lithium ion batteries, and a lithium ion battery.

[0003] 2. Related Art

[0004] In regard to the positive electrode active material for lithium ion batteries, lithium-containing transition metal oxides have been generally used. Specific examples thereof include lithium cobaltate (LiCoO_2), lithium nickelate (LiNiO_2), and lithium manganate (LiMn_2O_4), and in order to improve characteristics (an increase in capacity, cycle characteristics, storage characteristics, reduction of internal resistance, and rate characteristics) or to increase safety, compositization of these materials is in progress. Lithium ion batteries for large-sized applications such as for automobiles and for load leveling, are required to have characteristics that are different from batteries for mobile telephones or personal computers up to date.

[0005] For an improvement of battery characteristics, various methods have been hitherto used, and for example, Patent document 1 (Japanese Patent No. 4175026) discloses a method for producing a positive electrode material for lithium secondary batteries, the method including passing a lithium nickel composite oxide represented by the composition of:



wherein $0.8 \leq x \leq 1.3$; $0 < y \leq 0.5$; M represents at least one element selected from the group consisting of cobalt (Co), manganese (Mn), iron (Fe), chromium (Cr), vanadium (V), titanium (Ti), copper (Cu), aluminum (Al), gallium (Ga), bismuth (Bi), tin (Sn), zinc (Zn), magnesium (Mg), germanium (Ge), niobium (Nb), tantalum (Ta), beryllium (Be), boron (B), calcium (Ca), scandium (Sc) and zirconium (Zr); δ corresponds to the amount of oxygen deficiency or oxygen excess, and represents $-0.1 < \delta < 0.1$,

[0006] through a classifier, separating the composite oxide into particles having large particle sizes and particles having small particle sizes at an equilibrium separation particle size $D_h=1$ to $10 \mu\text{m}$, and blending particles having large particle sizes with particles having small particle sizes at a weight ratio of 0:100 to 100:0. The Patent Literature recites that according to this method, a positive electrode material for lithium secondary batteries with various balances between rate characteristics and capacity can be easily manufactured.

[0007] Patent document 1: Japanese Patent No. 4175026

SUMMARY

[0008] The lithium nickel composite oxide described in Patent document 1 (Japanese Patent No. 4175026) is a material having an excess amount of oxygen in the composition; however, there is still room for an improvement to be used as a positive electrode active material for lithium ion batteries of higher quality.

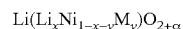
[0009] Thus, it is an object of the present invention to provide a positive electrode active material for lithium ion batteries having satisfactory battery characteristics.

[0010] The inventors of the present invention conducted a thorough investigation, and as a result, they found that there is

a close correlation between the amount of oxygen in the positive electrode active material, the particle size of primary particles, and the battery characteristics. That is, the inventors found that when the amount of oxygen in the positive electrode active material is adjusted to a certain value or more, and the particle size of primary particles of the positive electrode active material is controlled to an appropriate range, satisfactory battery characteristics are obtained.

[0011] Furthermore, the inventors found that there is a close correlation between the alkali content at the particle surfaces of the positive electrode active material, as well as the ratio between the amount of lithium hydroxide A and the amount of lithium carbonate B in the alkali amount at the particle surfaces, and the battery characteristics. That is, the inventors found that when the alkali content at the particle surfaces of the positive electrode active material is less than or equal to a certain value, and when the ratio A/B between the amount of lithium hydroxide A and the amount of lithium carbonate B in the alkali amount at the particle surfaces is less than or equal to a certain value, particularly satisfactory battery characteristics are obtained.

[0012] The present invention was achieved based on the findings described above, and according to one aspect of the present invention, there is provided a positive electrode active material for lithium ion batteries, which is represented by the following composition formula:



wherein in the above formula, M represents one or more selected from the group consisting of Sc, Ti, V, Cr, Mn, Fe, Co, Cu, Zn, Ga, Ge, Bi, Sn, Mg, Ca, B, and Zr; $0 \leq x \leq 0.1$; $0 < y \leq 0.7$; and $\alpha > 0$, and

[0013] in which the particle size of primary particles is $1.6 \mu\text{m}$ to $2.3 \mu\text{m}$, the alkali amount at the particle surfaces measured by two-stage neutralization and titration is 1.2% by mass or less, and when the amount of lithium hydroxide in the alkali amount at the particle surfaces is designated as A% by mass, and the amount of lithium carbonate is designated as B% by mass, the ratio A/B is 1 or less.

[0014] According to an embodiment of the positive electrode active material for lithium ion batteries related to the present invention, the alkali amount at the particle surfaces measured by two-stage neutralization and titration is 0.8% by mass or less.

[0015] According to another embodiment of the positive electrode active material for lithium ion batteries related to the present invention, the ratio A/B is 0.7 or less.

[0016] According to still another embodiment of the positive electrode active material for lithium ion batteries related to the present invention, M represents one or more selected from Mn and Co.

[0017] According to still another embodiment of the positive electrode active material for lithium ion batteries related to the present invention, in the composition formula, $\alpha > 0.05$.

[0018] According to still another embodiment of the positive electrode active material for lithium ion batteries related to the present invention, in the composition formula, $\alpha > 0.1$.

[0019] According to another aspect, there is provided a positive electrode for lithium ion batteries, which uses the positive electrode active material for lithium ion batteries related to the present invention.

[0020] According to still another aspect, there is provided a lithium ion battery which uses the positive electrode for lithium ion batteries related to the present invention.

[0021] According to the present invention, a positive electrode active material for lithium ion batteries having satisfactory battery characteristics can be provided.

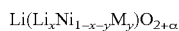
BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

[0022] FIG. 1 is a photograph of the external appearance of primary particles and secondary particles of the positive electrode active material.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0023] (Configuration of Positive Electrode Active Material for Lithium Ion Batteries)

[0024] Regarding the material of the positive electrode active material for lithium ion batteries of the present invention, a wide variety of compounds which are useful as a positive electrode active material for the positive electrode of general lithium ion batteries can be used; however, it is particularly preferable to use lithium-containing transition metal oxides such as lithium cobaltate (LiCoO_2), lithium nickelate (LiNiO_2), and lithium manganate (LiMn_2O_4). The positive electrode active material for lithium ion batteries of the present invention that is produced by using such a material is represented by the following composition formula:



wherein in the formula, M represents one or more selected from Sc, Ti, V, Cr, Mn, Fe, Co, Cu, Zn, Ga, Ge, Bi, Sn, Mg, Ca, B and Zr; $0 \leq x \leq 0.1$; $0 < y \leq 0.7$; and $\alpha > 0$.

[0025] In the positive electrode active material for lithium ion batteries of the present invention, the proportion of oxygen is represented by $\text{O}_{2+\alpha}$ ($\alpha > 0$) in the composition formula as described above, and oxygen is contained in excess. Therefore, when the positive electrode active material is used in lithium ion batteries, battery characteristics such as capacity, rate characteristics, and capacity retention ratio are improved. Here, α is preferably such that $\alpha > 0.05$, and more preferably $\alpha > 0.1$.

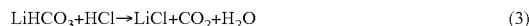
[0026] The positive electrode active material for lithium ion batteries is composed of primary particles, secondary particles formed as a result of aggregation of primary particles, or a mixture of primary particles and secondary particles (see FIG. 1). Among these, the particle size of the primary particles is 1.6 μm to 2.3 μm . If the particle size of the primary particles is less than 1.6 μm , there may occur breakage of particles caused by pressing at the time of battery production, or a problem of deterioration caused by cracking of particles at the time of battery cycling. Furthermore, if the particle size of the primary particles is larger than 2.3 μm , a problem of battery deterioration occurs as a result of degradation of the electrolyte solution or an increase in the amount of the electrolyte solution. The particle size of the primary particles is preferably 1.8 μm to 2.1 μm .

[0027] The positive electrode active material for lithium ion batteries of the present invention is such that the alkali amount at the particle surfaces measured by two-stage neutralization titration is 1.2% by mass or less. If the alkali amount at the particle surfaces in the positive electrode active material for lithium ion batteries is greater than 1.2% by mass, a lithium ion battery using the positive electrode active material reacts with the electrolyte solution when charge and discharge is repeated. Furthermore, if the alkali amount is large, gases are generated. Therefore, deterioration of the battery occurs, and battery characteristics, particularly cycle characteristics, of lithium ion batteries become defective. The alkali

amount measured by two-stage neutralization titration is preferably 0.8% by mass or less, and more preferably 0.6% by mass or less.

[0028] The positive electrode active material for lithium ion batteries of the present invention is such that in the alkali amount at the particle surfaces, when the amount of lithium hydroxide is designated as A% by mass, and the amount of lithium carbonate is designated as B% by mass, the ratio A/B is 1 or less. The alkalis contained in the positive electrode active material for lithium ion batteries are lithium hydroxide and lithium carbonate. Between these, if the ratio A/B, which is the ratio of the amount of lithium hydroxide to the amount of lithium carbonate, is greater than 1, because the proportion of lithium hydroxide which is a strong alkali becomes larger than the proportion of lithium carbonate which is a weak alkali, the pH value increases. Thus, battery characteristics, particularly cycle characteristics, of a lithium ion battery using the positive electrode active material become defective. The ratio A/B is preferably 0.7 or less, and more preferably 0.4 or less.

[0029] For the two-stage neutralization titration of the positive electrode active material for lithium ion batteries, a conventional method can be used, and for example, the method is defined in JIS K1201-3-1 (neutralization titration). Specifically, the relevant titration method is based on the following reactions between alkalis and acids.



[0030] In a conventional titration method of using an indicator, pH 7.8 is detected for the reactions of (1) and (2), and this point of measurement is designated as a first endpoint. Also, pH 3.9 is detected for the reaction of (3), and this point of measurement is designated as a second endpoint. Furthermore, in the titration method according to JIS K1201-3-2 (potential difference titration), inflection points are detected from two sites, and the points are designated as a first endpoint and a second endpoint, respectively. Then, the mass percentages of lithium hydroxide and lithium carbonate are calculated from the amounts of HCl used to the respective endpoints.

[0031] (Positive Electrode for Lithium Ion Batteries, and Configuration of Lithium Ion Battery Using the Positive Electrode)

[0032] The positive electrode for lithium ion batteries according to an embodiment of the present invention has a structure in which, for example, a positive electrode mixture prepared by mixing the positive electrode active material for lithium ion batteries having the constitution described above, a conductive aid, and a binder, is provided on one surface or on both surfaces of a collector formed from aluminum foil or the like. Furthermore, the lithium ion battery related to an embodiment of the present invention includes the positive electrode for lithium ion batteries having such a configuration.

[0033] (Method for Producing Positive Electrode Active Material for Lithium Ion Batteries)

[0034] Next, the method for producing a positive electrode active material for lithium ion batteries according to an embodiment of the present invention will be described in detail.

[0035] First, a metal salt solution is prepared. The relevant metals are Ni, and one or more selected from Sc, Ti, V, Cr, Mn, Fe, Co, Cu, Zn, Ga, Ge, Bi, Sn, Mg, Ca, B, and Zr. Furthermore, examples of metal salts include sulfates, chlorides, nitrates, and acetates, and particularly, nitrates are preferred. This is because, even if incorporated as impurities into a calcination raw material, since nitrates can be directly calcined, the number of washing processes can be reduced, and also, nitrates function as oxidizing agents and have a function of promoting oxidation of metals in the calcination raw material. The various metals contained in the metal salts are adjusted so as to be present at a desired molar ratio. Thereby, the molar ratio of the various metals in the positive electrode active material is determined.

[0036] Subsequently, lithium carbonate is suspended in pure water, and then the metal salt solution of the metals described above is introduced therein, to thereby prepare a metal carbonate solution slurry. At this time, lithium-containing carbonates in the form of fine grains are precipitated in the slurry. Note that, in the case of metal salts such as sulfates and chlorides whose lithium compounds do not react at the time of a heat treatment, the salts are washed with a saturated lithium carbonate solution and then separated by filtration. In the case of metal salts such as nitrates and acetates whose lithium compounds react as lithium raw materials during a heat treatment, the metal salts are not washed but are directly separated by filtration and dried, so that the metal salts can be used as calcination precursors.

[0037] Next, the lithium-containing carbonates that have been separated by filtration are dried, and thereby a powder of a composite of lithium salts (precursor for lithium ion battery positive electrode material) is obtained.

[0038] Next, a calcining container having a predetermined capacity is provided, and the powder of the precursor for lithium ion battery positive electrode material is filled in this calcining container. Subsequently, the calcining container filled with the powder of the precursor for lithium ion battery positive electrode material is transferred into a calcination furnace, and calcination is carried out. Calcination is carried out by heating and retaining the powder for a predetermined time in an oxygen atmosphere. Furthermore, it is preferable that calcination is carried out under pressure at 101 to 202 kPa because the amount of oxygen in the composition is further increased.

[0039] The heating and retention temperature in the calcination process affects the particle size of the primary particles of the lithium ion battery positive electrode material. In the present invention, since lithium carbonate is used in the raw material, reactivity is weak compared with the case of using lithium hydroxide as a raw material. Therefore, calcination for a long time at a high temperature is required, but due to this calcination for a long time at a high temperature, crystallinity of the particles is enhanced, and the particle size of the primary particles of the positive electrode material increases. In the present invention, the particle size of the primary particles is controlled to 1.6 to 2.3 μm by using lithium carbonate in the raw material, and performing calcination for 12 hours or longer at a temperature of 750° C. or higher. To the contrary, when lithium hydroxide is used as the raw material, since reactivity is usually high, the calcination temperature becomes lower, and the calcination time becomes shorter. Therefore, the particle size of the primary particles thus produced decreases to about 0.5 μm .

[0040] Thereafter, the powder is taken out from the calcining container, and the powder is subjected to cracking using a commercially available cracking apparatus or the like. Thereby, a powder of a positive electrode active material is obtained. Cracking at this time is carried out by appropriately adjusting the cracking strength and the cracking time so that the production of a fine powder is suppressed as much as possible. Specifically, through this cracking, the volume percentage of fine particles having a particle size of 6 μm or less after cracking is adjusted to be 4.0% to 7.0%, and preferably 4.3% to 6.9%.

[0041] As such, by controlling the production of a fine powder at the time of cracking, the surface area of the powder per unit volume decreases, and therefore, the amount of lithium hydroxide at the particle surfaces can be suppressed.

[0042] Furthermore, since lithium carbonate is converted to lithium hydroxide in a place where moisture is present, incorporation of moisture is controlled by performing the cracking in a dry air atmosphere.

EXAMPLES

[0043] Hereinafter, Examples will be described so as to help better understanding of the present invention and advantages thereof, but the present invention is not intended to be limited to these Examples.

Examples 1 to 15

[0044] First, lithium carbonate in the feed amount described in Table 1 was suspended in 3.2 liters of pure water, and then 4.8 liters of a metal salt solution was introduced therein. Here, in regard to the metal salt solution, hydrides of nitrates of various metals were adjusted such that the various metals would be contained at the composition ratio described in Table 1, and such that the total mole number of metals would be 14 moles.

[0045] Note that, the amount of suspension of lithium carbonate is an amount by which the product (a positive electrode material for lithium ion secondary batteries, that is, a positive electrode active material) is represented by the formula: $\text{Li}(\text{Li}_x\text{Ni}_{1-x-y}\text{M}_y)\text{O}_{2+\alpha}$, wherein x has the value indicated in Table 1, and each amount of suspension is calculated by the following formula:

$$W(\text{g})=73.9 \times 14 \times (1+0.5\{(1+X)/(1-X)\}) \times A$$

wherein in the formula, "A" is a numerical value multiplied in order to subtract in advance the amount of lithium based on lithium compounds other than lithium carbonate remaining in the raw material after filtration, in addition to the amount required in the precipitation reaction, from the amount of suspension. "A" is 0.9 when the lithium salt reacts as a calcination raw material as in the case of nitrate or acetate, and is 1.0 when the lithium salt does not react as a calcination raw material as in the case of sulfate or chloride.

[0046] A lithium-containing carbonate in the form of fine grains was precipitated in the solution through this treatment, but this precipitate was separated by filtration using a filter press.

[0047] Subsequently, the precipitate was dried, and thus a lithium-containing carbonate (precursor for lithium ion battery positive electrode material) was obtained.

[0048] Next, a calcining container was provided, and the lithium-containing carbonate was filled in this calcining container. Subsequently, the calcining container was placed in a furnace in an oxygen atmosphere at atmospheric pressure,

heated and retained for 10 hours at the calcination temperature described in Table 1, and then cooled to obtain an oxide.

[0049] Subsequently, the oxide thus obtained was cracked using a small-sized pulverizer (ACM-2EC manufactured by Hosokawa Micron, Ltd.) such that fine particles having a predetermined particle size would occupy a predetermined distribution width in the particle size distribution, and thus a powder of a lithium ion secondary battery positive electrode material was obtained.

Example 16

[0050] In Example 16, the same treatment as in Examples 1 to 15 was carried out, except that the various metals of the raw material for Example 16 were used at the composition indicated in Table 1, the metal salts used were chlorides, and after the lithium-containing carbonate was precipitated out, the precipitate was washed with a saturated lithium carbonate solution and filtered.

Example 17

[0051] The same treatment as in Examples 1 to 15 was carried out, except that the various metals of the raw material for Example 17 were used at the composition indicated in Table 1, the metal salts used were sulfates, and after the lithium-containing carbonate was precipitated out, the precipitate was washed with a saturated lithium carbonate solution and filtered.

Example 18

[0052] The same treatment as in Examples 1 to 15 was carried out, except that the various metals of the raw material for Example 18 were used at the composition indicated in Table 1, and calcination was carried out under pressure at a pressure of 120 kPa instead of atmospheric pressure.

Example 19

[0053] The same treatment as in Examples 1 to 15 was carried out, except that the various metals of the raw material for Example 19 were used at the composition indicated in Table 1, the metal salts used were nitrates, and after the lithium-containing carbonate was precipitated out, the precipitate was washed with a saturated lithium carbonate solution and filtered.

Comparative Examples 1 to 3

[0054] The same treatment as in Examples 1 to 15 was carried out, except that the various metals of the raw materials for Comparative Examples 1 to 3 were used at the respective compositions indicated in Table 1, and for the cracking of the final oxide, the conditioning such as that carried out in Examples 1 to 15 was not carried out.

Comparative Examples 4 to 6

[0055] The same treatment as in Comparative Example 1 was carried out, except that the various metals of the raw materials for Comparative Examples 4 to 6 were used at the respective compositions indicated in Table 1, and the calcination process was carried out in an atmosphere of air instead of an oxygen atmosphere.

Evaluation

[0056] Evaluation of Positive Electrode Material Composition

[0057] The metal contents of each of the various positive electrode materials were measured using an inductively coupled plasma emission spectrometer (ICP-OES), and the composition ratio (molar ratio) of the various metals was calculated. Also, the oxygen content was measured by the LECO method, and the value of a was calculated. It was confirmed that these results were as described in Table 1.

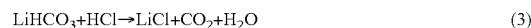
[0058] Evaluation of Particle Size of Primary Particles

[0059] A powder of each of the positive electrode materials was collected, and the particle size of the primary particles was measured using a laser diffraction particle size distribution analyzer (MICROTRACK MT3300EX II).

[0060] Evaluation of Alkali Amount

[0061] The alkali amount in the positive electrode material was measured by a two-stage neutralization titration method. Specifically, 1 g of a powder of each of the various positive electrode materials was collected and added to 50 mL of pure water. The mixture was stirred for 10 minutes, and then was filtered. Subsequently, 10 mL of the filtrate and 15 mL of pure water were introduced into a 50-mL tall beaker using a micropipette. Subsequently, phenolphthalein was added to the beaker as an indicator, a stirring bar was placed in the beaker, and the beaker was mounted on a magnetic stirrer. Electrodes were set up in the beaker. Subsequently, while the solution in the beaker was stirred, 0.01 N HCl was added dropwise thereto.

[0062] Here, the two-stage neutralization titration method is based on the following reactions between alkalis and acids.



[0063] pH 7.8 was detected for the reactions of (1) and (2), and this point of measurement was designated as a first endpoint. Also, pH 3.9 was detected for the reaction of (3), and this point of measurement was designated as a second endpoint. Then, while the amount of HCl used up to the first endpoint was designated as x (mL), and the amount of HCl used up to the second endpoint was designated as y (mL), the amount of Li_2CO_3 was determined by the formula: $(y-x) \times 0.369\%$ by mass, and the amount of LiOH was determined by the formula: $(2x-y) \times 0.12\%$ by mass.

[0064] Furthermore, ratio of the amount of LiOH and the amount of Li_2CO_3 (amount of LiOH/amount of Li_2CO_3) was determined from those amounts thus calculated.

[0065] Note that, the calculation formula: $(y-x) \times 0.369\%$ by mass related to the amount of Li_2CO_3 , and the calculation formula: $(2x-y) \times 0.12\%$ by mass related to the amount of LiOH were induced from the following formula.

[0066] The mole number of HCl in the formula (3) is determined by the following formula.

$$(y-x) \times \frac{1}{1000} \times 0.01 \text{ mol/L} = 10^{-5} \times (y-x) \text{ mol}$$

[0067] The mole number of Li_2CO_3 of the formula (2) is the same as the mole number of HCl, and since the molecular weight of Li_2CO_3 is 73.89, 10 mL out of 50 mL is used for the titration, and the original feed amount of the positive electrode material is 1g, the amount of Li_2CO_3 is determined by the following formula:

$$73.89 \text{ g/mol} \times 10^{-5} \times (y-x) \text{ mol} \times (50 \text{ mL}/10 \text{ mL}) + 1 \text{ g} \times 100\% = (y-x) \times 0.369\% \text{ by mass}$$

[0068] The mole number of LiOH of the formula (1) is determined by the following formula:

$$\frac{x \times \frac{1}{1000} \times 0.01 \text{ mol/L} - 10^{-5} \times (y-x) \text{ mol}}{\text{mol}} = 10^{-5} \times (2x-y)$$

[0069] Since the molecular weight of LiOH is 23.95, 10 mL out of 50 mL is used for the titration, and the original feed amount of the positive electrode material is 1 g, the amount of LiOH is determined by the following formula:

$$23.95 \text{ g/mol} \times 10^{-5} \times (2x-y) \text{ mol} \times (50 \text{ mL}/10 \text{ mL}) + 1 \text{ g} \times 100\% = (2x-y) \times 0.12\% \text{ by mass}$$

[0070] Evaluation of Battery Characteristics

[0071] Each of the positive electrode materials, a conductive material, and a binder were weighed at a ratio of 85:8:7,

and the positive electrode material and the conductive material were mixed with a solution prepared by dissolving the binder in an organic solvent (N-methylpyrrolidone) to obtain a slurry. The slurry was applied on an aluminum (Al) foil, dried and then pressed, and thus a positive electrode was produced. Subsequently, a 2032 type coin cell for evaluation was produced using Li for the opposite electrode, and the discharge capacity at a current density of 0.2 C was measured using a solution prepared by dissolving 1 M LiPF₆ in EC-DMC (1:1) as an electrolyte solution. Furthermore, the ratio of the discharge capacity at a current density of 2 C with respect to the battery capacity at a current density of 0.2 C was calculated to obtain the rate characteristics. Furthermore, the capacity retention ratio was measured by making a comparison between the initial discharge capacity and the discharge capacity after 100 cycles, which were obtained at a discharge current of 1 C at room temperature.

[0072] These results are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

TABLE 1

	Amount of suspension of lithium carbonate (g)	Composition ratio of various metals in all metals except for Li								Retention temperature		Fine particles having particle size of 6 μm or less after cracking		
		Ni	Co	Mn	Ti	Cr	Fe	Cu	Sn	Mg	(° C.)	ζ	α	(volume %)
Example 1	1393	33.3	33.3	33.3							1000	0.00	0.15	6.2
Example 2	1393	33.3	33.3	33.3							1000	0.00	0.12	5.2
Example 3	1393	33.3	33.3	33.3							1000	0.00	0.15	4.9
Example 4	1393	33.3	33.3	33.3							1000	0.00	0.14	4.3
Example 5	1442	33.3	33.3	33.3							970	0.025	0.17	6.3
Example 6	1393	33.3	33.3	33.3							950	0.050	0.19	5.3
Example 7	1393	33	33	33					1		1000	0.00	0.12	4.9
Example 8	1393	60	15	25							920	0.00	0.17	6.1
Example 9	1393	60	15	25							900	0.00	0.15	6.8
Example 10	1393	80	10	10							800	0.00	0.11	4.9
Example 11	1393	80	15		2.5					2.5	800	0.00	0.13	6.7
Example 12	1393	80	15			5					800	0.00	0.11	6.2
Example 13	1393	80	15				5				800	0.00	0.21	6.6
Example 14	1393	80	15					5			800	0.00	0.11	6.2
Example 15	1442	80	10	10							850	0.06	0.11	6.1
Example 16	1393	33.3	33.3	33.3							1000	0.00	0.07	6.8
Example 17	1393	33.3	33.3	33.3							1000	0.00	0.10	6.9
Example 18	1393	33.3	33.3	33.3							950	0.00	0.23	4.5
Example 19	1393	80	10	10							850	0.09	0.09	5.2
Comparative Example 1	1393	33.3	33.3	33.3							1000	0.00	0.18	8.1
Comparative Example 2	1393	60	15	25							920	0.00	0.09	8.3
Comparative Example 3	1393	80	10	10							800	0.00	0.12	9
Comparative Example 4	1393	80	10	10							800	0.00	-0.01	8
Comparative Example 5	1442	80	10	10							850	0.11	0.08	7.9
Comparative Example 6	1393	80	15		2.5					2.5	800	0.10	0.00	7.8

TABLE 2

	Particle size of primary particles (μm)	Alkali amount (mass %)	Amount of lithium hydroxide A (mass %)	Amount of lithium carbonate B (mass %)	A/B	Discharge capacity (mAh/g)	Rate characteristics (%)	Capacity retention ratio (%)
Example 1	2.3	0.134	0.024	0.110	0.218	153	92	92
Example 2	2.1	0.134	0.024	0.110	0.218	154	92	91
Example 3	2	0.158	0.019	0.139	0.137	157	95	92
Example 4	2	0.121	0.048	0.073	0.658	155	95	93
Example 5	1.9	0.135	0.015	0.120	0.125	155	93	92
Example 6	1.9	0.102	0.016	0.086	0.186	160	92	89

TABLE 2-continued

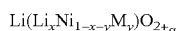
	Particle size of primary particles (μm)	Alkali amount (mass %)	Amount of lithium hydroxide A (mass %)	Amount of lithium carbonate B (mass %)	A/B	Discharge capacity (mAh/g)	Rate characteristics (%)	Capacity retention ratio (%)
Example 7	1.7	0.123	0.012	0.111	0.108	158	92	88
Example 8	1.8	0.248	0.02	0.268	0.075	175	88	87
Example 9	1.8	0.637	0.211	0.426	0.495	172	89	88
Example 10	1.8	0.544	0.172	0.372	0.461	195	87	85
Example 11	1.8	0.537	0.159	0.378	0.419	185	87	85
Example 12	1.8	0.840	0.208	0.639	0.326	186	88	84
Example 13	1.6	0.900	0.209	0.691	0.303	187	85	82
Example 14	1.6	0.581	0.249	0.332	0.750	180	88	83
Example 15	1.7	1.200	0.450	0.750	0.600	185	87	85
Example 16	1.8	0.123	0.012	0.111	0.108	153	90	87
Example 17	2	0.132	0.012	0.12	0.100	151	90	86
Example 18	1.9	0.135	0.000	0.135	0.000	156	95	93
Example 19	1.6	0.620	0.309	0.311	0.994	185	87	87
Comparative Example 1	1.5	0.178	0.075	0.103	0.728	153	91	85
Comparative Example 2	1.5	0.151	0.078	0.073	1.068	165	83	78
Comparative Example 3	1.4	0.248	0.12	0.168	0.714	180	83	82
Comparative Example 4	1.5	0.800	0.319	0.481	0.663	170	80	78
Comparative Example 5	1.4	1.210	0.62	0.59	1.051	178	82	80
Comparative Example 6	1.5	0.600	0.249	0.351	0.709	171	79	74

Evaluation

[0073] Examples 1 to 19 all exhibited satisfactory battery characteristics. Furthermore, Examples 1 to 15 and 18, which used nitrates as the metal salts for the raw material, exhibited particularly satisfactory battery characteristics. Moreover, Example 18 in which calcination was carried out under pressure instead of atmospheric pressure exhibited the most satisfactory battery characteristics.

[0074] In Comparative Examples 1 to 3, the compositions of metals used as the raw material contained oxygen in excess, similarly to the present invention. However, due to the cracking conditions, the battery characteristics were poor. In Comparative Examples 4 to 6, the compositions of metals used as the raw material were not included in the scope of the present invention, and also, due to the cracking conditions, the battery characteristics were poor.

1. A positive electrode active material for lithium ion batteries, represented by the following composition formula:



wherein M represents one or more selected from the group consisting of scandium (Sc), titanium (Ti), vanadium (V), chromium (Cr), manganese (Mn), iron (Fe), cobalt (Co), copper (Cu), zinc (Zn), gallium (Ga), germanium (Ge), bismuth (Bi), tin (Sn), magnesium (Mg), calcium (Ca), boron (B) and zirconium (Zr); $0 \leq x \leq 0.1$; $0 < y \leq 0.7$; and $\alpha > 0$,

wherein the particle size of primary particles is 1.6 to 2.3 μm ,

the alkali amount at the particle surfaces measured by two-stage neutralization titration is 1.2% by mass or less, and

when the amount of lithium hydroxide in the alkali amount at the particle surfaces is designated as A% by mass, and the amount of lithium carbonate is designated as B% by mass, the ratio A/B is 1 or less.

2. The positive electrode active material for lithium ion batteries according to claim 1, wherein the alkali amount at the particle surfaces is 0.8% by mass or less.

3. The positive electrode active material for lithium ion batteries according to claim 1, wherein the ratio A/B is 0.7 or less.

4. The positive electrode active material for lithium ion batteries according to claim 1, wherein M is one or more selected from Mn and Co.

5. The positive electrode active material for lithium ion batteries according to claim 1, wherein in the composition formula, $\alpha > 0.05$.

6. The positive electrode active material for lithium ion batteries according to claim 5, wherein in the composition formula, $\alpha > 0.1$.

7. A positive electrode for lithium ion batteries, using the positive electrode active material for lithium ion batteries according to claim 1.

8. A lithium ion battery using the positive electrode for lithium ion batteries according to claim 7.

9. The positive electrode active material for lithium ion batteries according to claim 2, wherein the ratio A/B is 0.7 or less.

10. The positive electrode active material for lithium ion batteries according to claim 2, wherein M is one or more selected from Mn and Co.

11. The positive electrode active material for lithium ion batteries according to claim 2, wherein in the composition formula, $\alpha > 0.05$.

12. The positive electrode active material for lithium ion batteries according to claim 11, wherein in the composition formula, $\alpha > 0.1$.

13. A positive electrode for lithium ion batteries, using the positive electrode active material for lithium ion batteries according to claim 2.

14. A lithium ion battery using the positive electrode for lithium ion batteries according to claim 13.

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