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Physica C 252 (1995) 303–307

PHYSICA C

Neutron powder diffraction studies of Sr_2RuO_4 and SrRuO_3

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Received 20 February 1995

Abstract

Neutron powder diffraction experiments have been carried out on two interesting perovskite compounds, Sr_2RuO_4 (K_2NiF_4 structure) and SrRuO_3 (distorted perovskite), both of which are used as substrates for the growth of high-temperature superconducting thin films. The powder diffraction data have been refined at high and low temperatures to obtain lattice parameters and the lattice mismatch between these compounds and $\text{YBa}_2\text{Cu}_3\text{O}_7$ over a wide temperature range is found to be good. No evidence has been found for any lattice distortions between 5 and 973 K in Sr_2RuO_4 and between 100 and 300 K in SrRuO_3 .

1. Introduction

The current interest in thin films of high-temperature superconductors has made the compatibility of film and substrate an important concern. To obtain an oriented film, a single crystal substrate is required with excellent lattice match, similar thermal-expansion coefficients and no disruptive phase transitions. There has been a lot of effort put into preparing thin films of the high-temperature superconductor $\text{YBa}_2\text{Cu}_3\text{O}_7$ (Y123) on available substrates such as SrTiO_3 and MgO [1]. Conductivity in the high-temperature superconductors occurs mainly in the ab plane, and the highest critical currents in the films are also obtained when the material is fully oriented with the c -axis perpendicular to the substrate and having a minimum amount of grain boundaries. For these reasons the substrates used for epitaxial growth must have a good lattice match with the a or b

lattice parameters of Y123. It is in this context that there has recently been renewed interest in the study of ternary ruthenium oxides like BaRuO_3 , CaRuO_3 , SrRuO_3 and Sr_2RuO_4 for use as metallic substrates for Y123 thin films. The ternary ruthenates, apart from being useful candidates for substrates are interesting in their own right.

Sr_2RuO_4 crystallises in the K_2NiF_4 structure, similar to the $\text{La}_{2-x}\text{Sr}_x\text{CuO}_4$ superconductor. It shows high metallic conductivity along the ab plane ($\sim 10^{-6} \Omega \text{ cm}$) and a slightly lower conductivity along the c -axis [2]. It is therefore not surprising that superconductivity was recently discovered in Sr_2RuO_4 at 0.9 K [3]. Thin films of Y123 superconductor have been successfully grown on Sr_2RuO_4 and the lattice matching has been found to be satisfactory [2]. Our study of the structure of this compound was motivated because of the suitability of this compound as substrate over a wide range of temperature. Our investigation was carried out prior to the discovery of superconductivity in it and hence did not extend in temperature down to its supercon-

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Table 1
The results from Rietveld analysis of SrRuO₃

Atom	$T = 100 \text{ K (Pbnm)}, R_{\text{wp}} = 8.1\%, R_e = 4.5\%, \chi^2 = 1.8,$ $a = 5.5636(6) \text{ \AA}, b = 5.5206(6) \text{ \AA}, c = 7.8429(8) \text{ \AA}$				$T = 300 \text{ K (Pbnm)}, R_{\text{wp}} = 12.1\%, R_e = 11.0\%, \chi^2 = 1.1,$ $a = 5.5639(6) \text{ \AA}, b = 5.5302(3) \text{ \AA}, c = 7.8441(3) \text{ \AA}$			
	x	y	z	$B_{\text{iso}} (\text{\AA})^2$	x	y	z	$B_{\text{iso}} (\text{\AA})^2$
Sr	-0.0025(4)	0.0196(3)	$\frac{1}{4}$	0.0881(2)	-0.0016(6)	0.0201(2)	$\frac{1}{4}$	0.3578(4)
Ru	$\frac{1}{2}$	0	0	0.1768(3)	$\frac{1}{2}$	0	0	0.1149(5)
O1	0.7226(6)	0.2774(4)	0.0283(7)	0.0406(2)	0.7225(9)	0.2777(9)	0.0288(4)	0.2540(1)
O2	0.0550(4)	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{4}$	0.0058(3)	0.0541(3)	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{4}$	0.4766(8)

ducting transition temperature. It, however, covers a temperature range wide enough to provide the necessary information for those interested in its use as a substrate as well as for those interested in its structure as a superconductor.

SrRuO₃ crystallises in the perovskite structure and is also metallic, having an in-plane resistivity of the same order of magnitude as Sr₂RuO₄. It has been used successfully as a substrate for deposition of

Y123 films [4]. SrRuO₃ is probably the only compound containing Ru to show ferromagnetic behaviour. It exhibits a change of slope in the resistivity at 160 K, and there is further evidence from magnetic-susceptibility measurements indicative of ferromagnetic ordering at this temperature [5]. The interesting magnetic properties of SrRuO₃ make it a useful substrate in fabricating S–N–S junctions.

In this paper we report our investigations of the

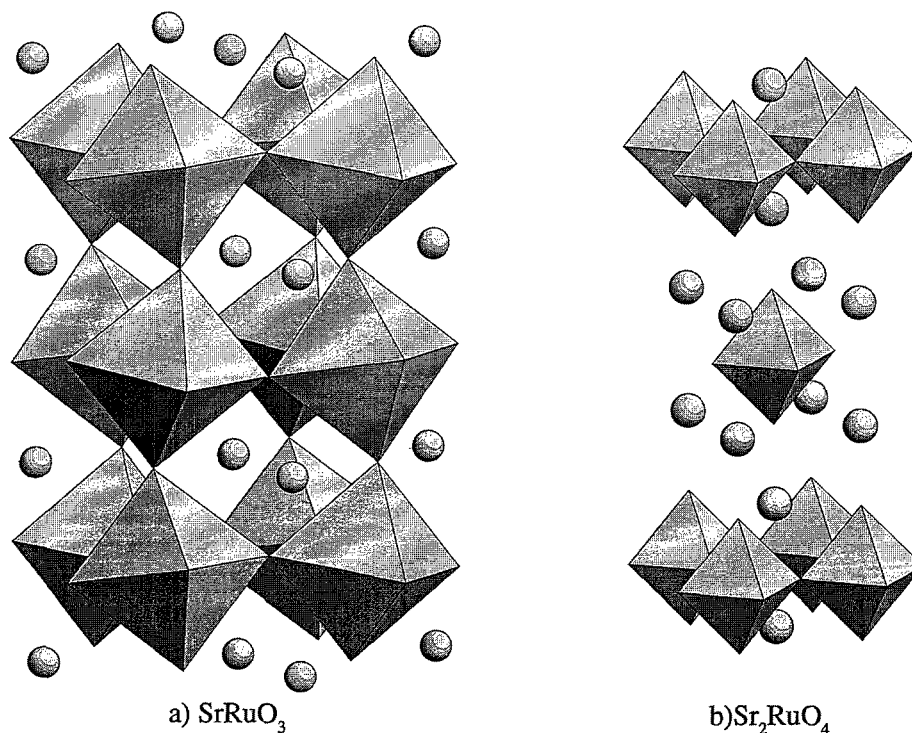


Fig. 1. The room-temperature structures of (a) SrRuO₃, distorted perovskite (Pbnm), and (b) Sr₂RuO₄, K₂NiF₄ (I4/mmm). The octahedral coordination of Ru and the Sr sites are shown.

temperature dependence of the lattice parameters for tetragonal Sr_2RuO_4 over the temperature range of its use as a substrate. Thin films are normally deposited at elevated temperatures, ~ 973 K, so we have carried out neutron powder diffraction experiments between 5 K and 973 K to obtain an accurate set of lattice parameters and also to look for any structural disorders in this temperature regime. In SrRuO_3 , we have performed neutron powder diffraction experiments at room temperature and at 100 K (below the ferromagnetic transition temperature) to see if the ferromagnetic ordering is associated with a structural transition.

2. Experimental details

The polycrystalline samples were prepared by reacting, in air, appropriate proportions of SrCO_3 (99.99%) and Ru metal (99.99%) for 24 h at 1200°C for SrRuO_3 and 40 hours at 1200°C for Sr_2RuO_4 with several intermittent grindings to ensure a complete reaction, before sintering at 1300°C . The samples prepared were single phase and were characterised by X-ray powder diffraction, resistivity and susceptibility measurements prior to the neutron experiment. The neutron powder diffraction experiments were carried out on the high-resolution pow-

der diffractometer (HRPD) at the pulsed neutron source, ISIS. The samples were enclosed in a vanadium container and then placed in a cryostat or furnace to carry out experiments between 5 K and 973 K. The refinement of the Sr_2RuO_4 and SrRuO_3 data was carried out assuming the tetragonal K_2NiF_4 -type structure of space group $I4/mmm$ and the orthorhombic space group Pbnm , respectively, and using the Rietveld refinement method. This method compares the complete calculated powder diffraction pattern with the one observed, and optimises the degree of fit by adjusting the various structural parameters by non-linear least square fitting.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. SrRuO_3 , low and room-temperature measurements

In Table 1 we present the results of Rietveld refinement for powder diffraction patterns obtained at 100 K and 300 K of SrRuO_3 . At room temperature and 100 K the ternary ruthenium oxide, SrRuO_3 , was found to possess the orthorhombic space group Pbnm and its unit cell is shown in Fig. 1. The refined parameters at room temperature agree well with those obtained by Jones et al. [6]. The interatomic distances at room temperature agree well with those published by Shikano et al. [5]. The structure is the perovskite structure with chains of ruthenium oxide forming the basal planes of elongated octahedrons. Fig. 2 shows the temperature dependence of the cell edge for SrRuO_3 , $((a^2 + b^2)^{1/2})/2$ which is effectively the length of the pseudo cell axis. These results give a lattice mismatch of no more than 0.2% [7] with the a -axis of Y123 over the entire temperature range of the experiment. This compares well with the lattice mismatch of other substrates in use such as SrTiO_3 (1.16%) and NdGaO_3 (0.27%) [1] with the high-temperature superconductor.

The similarity in the refined parameters of the 100 K and the room-temperature data suggests that no structural phase transitions take place between these two temperatures although it is known that a ferromagnetic transition takes place at 160 K [5].

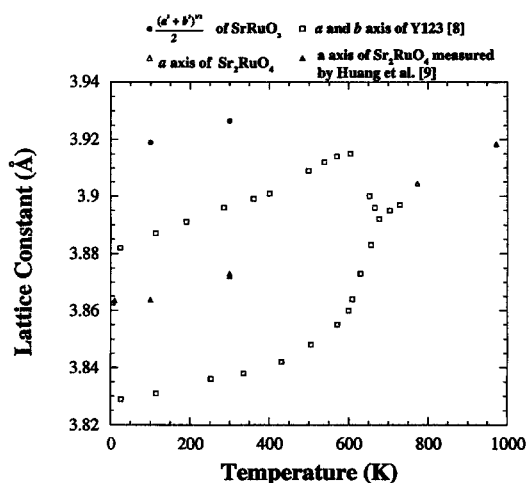


Fig. 2. The temperature dependence of the pseudo cell axis of SrRuO_3 and the a -axis of Sr_2RuO_4 . The lattice parameters of the tetragonal and orthorhombic phases of $\text{YBa}_2\text{Cu}_3\text{O}_7$ are also shown.

Table 2
The results from Rietveld analysis of Sr_2RuO_4

Atom	$T = 5 \text{ K (I4/mmm)}$, $R_{\text{wp}} = 45\%$, $R_e = 13.2\%$, $\chi^2 = 3.4$, $a = 3.8627(4) \text{ \AA}$, $c = 12.7176(8) \text{ \AA}$				$T = 300 \text{ K (I4/mmm)}$, $R_{\text{wp}} = 30\%$, $R_e = 17.7\%$, $\chi^2 = 1.7$, $a = 3.8720(3) \text{ \AA}$, $c = 12.7345(7) \text{ \AA}$				$T = 973 \text{ K (I4/mmm)}$, $R_{\text{wp}} = 6.4\%$, $R_e = 3.2\%$, $\chi^2 = 2.0$, $a = 3.9183(8) \text{ \AA}$, $c = 12.7905(3) \text{ \AA}$			
	x	y	z	$B_{\text{iso}} (\text{\AA})^2$	x	y	z	$B_{\text{iso}} (\text{\AA})^2$	x	y	z	$B_{\text{iso}} (\text{\AA})^2$
Sr	0	0	0.3530(8)	0.0083(3)	0	0	0.3519(6)	0.3594(7)	0	0	0.3528(1)	1.3418(3)
Ru	0	0	0	0.0025(5)	0	0	0	0.1689(7)	0	0	0	0.5642(5)
O1	0	0	0.1618(8)	0.0028(1)	0	0	0.1622(5)	0.6407(1)	0	0	0.1615(2)	1.7796(6)
O2	0	$\frac{1}{2}$	0	0.0026(1)	0	$\frac{1}{2}$	0	0.3739(7)	0	$\frac{1}{2}$	0	1.5842(8)

3.2. Sr_2RuO_4 , low- and high-temperature measurements

The tetragonal unit cell of Sr_2RuO_4 with space group I4/mmm, is shown in Fig. 1. The strontium atom lies approximately in the basal plane of a quadratic pyramid of five oxygen atoms and the ruthenium atoms have a distorted octahedral coordination. The atomic arrangement is similar to that of La_2CuO_4 and its Sr and Ba based derivatives except that the deformity in the octahedron is considerably less.

Rietveld analysis of Sr_2RuO_4 neutron diffraction data at 5, 100, 300, 773 and 973 K was carried out between $30\,000 \mu\text{s} < \text{t.o.f.} < 100\,000 \mu\text{s}$, which includes approximately 250 observed reflections. The diffraction patterns at all the temperatures were fitted to the tetragonal I4/mmm structure and the refinement is summarised in Table 2. The lattice constants of Sr_2RuO_4 change by 1.4% between 5 K and 973 K. The a and b lattice constants increase by only 0.5% between 5 K and room temperature and then increase more rapidly with temperature up to 973 K. As shown in Fig. 2, the lattice constants agree well with the lattice parameters of both the orthorhombic and tetragonal phases of Y123 over the entire temperature range of the experiment. The lattice mismatch between the a -axis of Y123 and the $a(b)$ -axis of Sr_2RuO_4 at 973 K was calculated to be 0.15% and this decreases to 0.12% [7] at 5 K. Huang et al. [9] have earlier reported the refinement of their neutron powder data on this compound at 300 K and 10 K and our parameters agree well with their data at these temperatures (see Fig. 2 for comparison). The interatomic distances obtained from our refinement

of Sr_2RuO_4 agrees well with those of Huang et al. [9] at room temperature and low temperatures. Our interatomic distances at 973 K are as follows: Sr–O(1) = 2.694(9) Å, Sr–O(2) = 2.435(4) Å, Sr–O(2) = 2.744(7) Å, Ru–O(1) = 1.936(5) Å, Ru–O(2) = 2.056(6) Å.

Once again we found no evidence of any phase transitions over the whole temperature range of the experiment, indicating that Sr_2RuO_4 substrates are excellent candidates for epitaxial growths of high-temperature superconducting Y123 thin films.

4. Conclusions

The lattice parameters of the metallic strontium ruthenates have been determined by neutron powder diffraction measurements over a wide temperature range to check their suitability for use as substrates for the high-temperature superconductors. The lattice parameters are found to agree well with the $a(b)$ lattice constants of the high-temperature superconductor $\text{YBa}_2\text{Cu}_3\text{O}_7$. The mismatch being as good as or better than that of the substrates commonly used such as SrTiO_3 and MgO . It has been shown that Sr_2RuO_4 does not undergo any structural transition between 973 K and 5 K and similarly SrRuO_3 undergoes no structural transition between room temperature and 100 K although it becomes a ferromagnet below 160 K. Further experiments are planned on the superconducting Sr_2RuO_4 to investigate possible structural instabilities close to the superconducting transition temperature and to also establish the structure in the superconducting state.

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank R.M. Ibberson at ISIS for his help during the experiment. This work was supported by a grant from the SERC, UK.

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