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# Electronic state of <sup>57</sup>Fe Mössbauer probe atoms in Cu(III) oxides with perovskite and perovskite-related structures

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#### ABSTRACT

Mössbauer spectroscopy studies were developed in order to obtain an evaluation of different physicochemical factors characterizing the electronic structure of the local sites  $(CuO_6)$  into three copper(III) oxides: LaCuO<sub>3</sub> having a three-dimensional (3D) perovskite structure; SrLaCuO<sub>4</sub> and La<sub>2</sub>Li<sub>0.50</sub>Cu<sub>0.50</sub>O<sub>4</sub> with a two-dimensional (2D) K<sub>2</sub>NiF<sub>4</sub>-type structure. All these matrixes have been doped with <sup>57</sup>Fe (1 at.%) Mössbauer probe atoms. Such evaluation was based on analysis of the <sup>57</sup>Fe Mössbauer parameters (isomer shift and quadrupole splitting) characterizing the formal oxidation state and the local structure of the <sup>57</sup>Fe probe atoms. The obtained results underline that four main factors play an important role in the stabilization of formally trivalent "Cu<sup>3+</sup>" ions: (i) the involved preparation process (in particular the oxygen pressure level able to impede the formation of oxygen vacancies); (ii) the dimensionality (3D or 2D) of the lattice; (iii) the chemical surrounding and (iv) the local structural distortion of the transition metal site (CuO<sub>6</sub>), both last factors governing the local crystal field energy, orbital ordering and a possible charge transfer Cu<sup>3+</sup>–O<sup>2-</sup>  $\leftrightarrow$  Cu<sup>2+</sup>–O<sup>-</sup>(L).

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#### 1. Introduction

In Solid State Chemistry, the high oxidation states  $M^{m+}$  of transition metals have been in the past the subject of numerous studies due to the correlations between the formal oxidation state value "m" and the strong increase of the covalency of the resulting  $M^{m+}$ —O bond [1,2]. Trivalent copper oxides are obviously a very good example. Most physical properties of these compounds, including high T<sub>C</sub> superconductivity [3,4], strongly depend on the electronic structure of the  $\{CuO_x\}^{(2x-3)-}$  sites. Few oxides containing only trivalent "Cu<sup>3+"</sup> ions have been prepared. As the corresponding Cu–O bonds are strongly covalent, it is necessary, in the most cases, to stabilize them by interaction with a weak bond as A–O (A=alkaline metal). Such ionic bonds A–O allows the oxygen atoms to involve mainly their 2p orbitals in the  $\sigma$ -bonds with the "Cu<sup>3+"</sup> ions. By this method. the compounds  $ACuO_2$  (A = Na, K, Rb, Cs) were first prepared by Klemm and co-workers [5,6]. Structural investigations of these oxides developed by Hestermann and Hoppe [7] and Brese et al. [8] underline that Cu(III) is stabilized in a square planar envi-

ronment (CuO<sub>4</sub>) with shared edges thus inducing the low spin (LS) electronic configuration  $(t_{2g}^6 d_{z}^2 d_{x^2-y^2}^0)$ . Then Demazeau and co-workers [9,10], using high oxygen pressures, have stabilized Cu(III) in six-coordinated sites in perovskite-type or derived structures. In particular three oxides have been prepared: LaCuO<sub>3</sub> having a three-dimensional (3D) perovskite structure [9]; SrLaCuO<sub>4</sub> and La2Li0.50Cu0.50O4 characterized by a two-dimensional (2D) K2NiF4type structure [9,10]. These oxides can be distinguished by chemical bonding factors versus the nature of the competing bond existing into the lattice: (Cu–O) bonds within the LaCuO<sub>3</sub> lattice and into the perovskite planes of the SrLaCuO<sub>4</sub> matrix or weak (Li–O) bond into the La<sub>2</sub>Li<sub>0.50</sub>Cu<sub>0.50</sub>O<sub>4</sub> structure (Fig. 1). All these factors can significantly affect local parameters characterizing the  $(CuO_6)$  sites: crystal field energy (Dq/B), structural distortion  $(\theta)$  and electronic anisotropy versus the possible charge transfer  $Cu^{3+}-O^{2-} \leftrightarrow Cu^{2+}-(L)O^{-}$  [11,12]. If LaCuO<sub>3</sub> is metallic, SrLaCuO<sub>4</sub> is a semiconductor and La<sub>2</sub>Li<sub>0.50</sub>Cu<sub>0.50</sub>O<sub>4</sub> is an insulator. Consequently, in such Cu(III) oxides, copper ions adopt different electronic configurations.

In this paper we report results of comparative investigation of LaCuO<sub>3</sub>, SrLaCuO<sub>4</sub> and La<sub>2</sub>Li<sub>0.50</sub>Cu<sub>0.50</sub>O<sub>4</sub> matrix doped with <sup>57</sup>Fe (1 at.%) Mössbauer probe atoms. The objective of this work was to characterize, using Mössbauer spectroscopy, the electronic state and local surrounding of <sup>57</sup>Fe probe atoms through

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Fig. 1. Schematic representation of the local structure in the iron-doped: (a) 3D LaCu<sub>0.99</sub><sup>57</sup>Fe<sub>0.01</sub>O<sub>3</sub>; 2D K<sub>2</sub>NiF<sub>4</sub>-type, (b) LaSrCu<sub>0.99</sub><sup>57</sup>Fe<sub>0.01</sub>O<sub>4</sub> and (c) La<sub>2</sub>Li<sub>0.50</sub>Cu<sub>0.50</sub>O<sub>4</sub> lattices.

its observed isomer shift and quadrupole splitting values. This method was recently developed for the physical characterization of manganite  $CaMn_7O_{12}$  containing in octahedral sub-lattices mixed valence  $Mn^{3+}/Mn^{4+}$  ions [13,14]. It has been shown that <sup>57</sup>Fe probe atoms reflect structural and chemical factors characterizing not only its local environment but also the electronic phenomena in the bulk. Moreover, the behaviour of iron atoms – as local probe in perovskite-type or derived matrixes – appears to be an interesting approach for studying the mechanisms of substitution on the different six-coordinated sites and the corresponding induced electronic phenomena characterizing the bulk.

#### 2. Experimental

In all cases, instead of undoped CuO oxide, a  $Cu_{0.99}^{57}$  Fe<sub>0.01</sub>O precursor was used for introducing the <sup>57</sup>Fe Mössbauer probe atoms into the corresponding lattices. This precursor was prepared through the thermal decomposition of the iron-doped hydroxide Cu(OH)<sub>2</sub>:<sup>57</sup>Fe. In the case of LaCuO<sub>3</sub> (<sup>57</sup>Fe: 1 at.%), the preparation process developed for the undoped material [with La<sub>2</sub>CuO<sub>4</sub> and CuO as reagents and KClO<sub>3</sub> as an in situ oxygen source, using a belt type equipment (6 GPa, 900 °C, 15 min)] was inoperative to get a pure perovskite phase. Consequently a new process was developed with monoclinic La<sub>2</sub>Cu<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>:<sup>57</sup>Fe (2 at.%) as precursor, KClO<sub>3</sub> as in situ oxygen source but using more severe pressure conditions (11 GPa, 900 °C, 15 min) [15]. Such a strong difference in the preparation process was attributed to the metallic behaviour of LaCuO<sub>3</sub>, the corresponding band structure being perturbed by the <sup>57</sup>Fe probe substituting Cu<sup>3+</sup> cations.

In the case of SrLaCuO<sub>4</sub> simple doped with <sup>57</sup>Fe (1 at.%), the preparation process developed for preparing the undoped simple [10] (SrO, La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> and Cu<sub>0.99</sub><sup>57</sup>Fe<sub>0.01</sub>O as reagents; 300 MPa of oxygen gas pressure and 820 °C) was appropriated for obtaining a pure phase with the K<sub>2</sub>NiF<sub>4</sub>-type structure.

The <sup>57</sup>Fe (1 at.%) doped La<sub>2</sub>Li<sub>0.50</sub>Cu<sup>3+</sup><sub>0.50</sub>O<sub>4</sub> matrix was also synthesized using the previous process developed for preparing the undoped material [9] (200 MPa of oxygen gas pressure, 870 °C, 48 h using La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>, Li<sub>2</sub>O and CuO:<sup>57</sup>Fe as reagents) [16]. XRD data were collected at 298 K using a STOE diffractometer (K<sub>\alpha</sub>Cu

 $\lambda$  = 1.5451 Å). The <sup>57</sup>Fe Mössbauer spectra were recorded at 300K using a conventional constant-acceleration spectrometer. The radiation source <sup>57</sup>Co(Rh) was kept at room

temperature. All isomer shifts refer to the  $\alpha$ -Fe absorber at 300 K.

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