

PHYSICAL METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

Refined Crystal Structures of SrLnCuS₃ (Ln = Er, Yb)

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Abstract—According to powder X-ray diffraction data, the crystal structures of compounds SrLnCuS₃ (Ln = Er, Yb) have been refined by minimizing the derivative difference in the anisotropic approximation for all atoms. Crystals are orthorhombic, space group *Cmcm*, structure type KZrCuS₃: *a* = 3.93128(3) Å, *b* = 12.9709(1) Å, *c* = 10.1161(1) Å, *V* = 515.843(9) Å³, ρ_{calc} = 5.337 g/cm³, *Z* = 4, *R*_{DDM} = 3.73%, *R*_F = 2.06% (SrErCuS₃); *a* = 3.91448(4) Å, *b* = 12.9554(1) Å, *c* = 10.0332(1) Å, *V* = 508.842(8) Å³, ρ_{calc} = 5.487 g/cm³, *Z* = 4, *R*_{DDM} = 3.56%, *R*_F = 1.48% (SrYbCuS₃). The structure of SrLnCuS₃ is described by [LnCuS₃] two-dimensional layers formed by distorted CuS₄ tetrahedra and LnS₆ octahedra with Sr²⁺ ions residing between the layers. The compounds are transparent for IR radiation in the range 3200–1800 cm⁻¹.

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Compounds ALnCuS₃ (A = Eu, Pb; Ln = Er, Yb) are crystallized in orthorhombic crystal system, space group *Cmcm*, isostructural to KZrCuS₃, unit cell parameters: *a* = 3.8965(1), *b* = 12.8451(3), *c* = 10.0028(2) Å (EuYbCuS₃); *a* = 3.911(1), *b* = 12.956(3), *c* = 10.064(3) Å (PbYbCuS₃); *a* = 3.916(1), *b* = 12.934(3), *c* = 10.106(2) Å (PbErCuS₃) [1–6]. In EuYbCuS₃ ferromagnetic ordering of Eu²⁺ and Yb³⁺ moments occurs at 5.5 K [1]. The compound is thermally stable up to 1745 ± 4 K and has the following high-temperature polymorphic transitions: α-EuYbCuS₃ structure type (ST) KZrCuS₃ $\xleftrightarrow{1513\pm 4\text{K}}$ β-EuYbCuS₃ $\xleftrightarrow{1564\pm 4\text{K}}$ γ-EuYbCuS₃ $\xleftrightarrow{1594\pm 3\text{K}}$ δ-EuYbCuS₃ [7]. The proximity of the values of *r*_{Eu²⁺} = 1.17 and *r*_{Sr²⁺} = 1.18 Å (CN = 6) [8] makes it possible to predict compounds SrLnCuS₃ (Ln = Er, Yb) to be formed. The temperatures and enthalpies of high-temperature phase transitions of sulfides SrLnCuS₃ were determined: *T*_{α↔β} = 1567 K, *T*_{β↔γ} = 1608 K, *T*_{γ↔δ} = 1621 K (SrYbCuS₃); *T*_{α↔β} = 1559 K, *T*_{β↔γ} = 1608 K, *T*_{γ↔δ} = 1621 K (SrErCuS₃) [9]. The regularities of the alteration of the mentioned characteristics in SrLnCuS₃ (Ln = La–Lu) are determined to be similar to those observed for compounds EuLnCuS₃ [1, 10]. When decreasing the Ln³⁺ ionic radius, ST of SrLnCuS₃ compounds varies subsequently (annealing at 970 K): ST BaLaCuS₃ (Ln = La, Ce, Pr) → ST Eu₂CuS₃ (Ln = Sm, Gd, Ho) → ST KZrCuS₃ (Ln = Er, Lu) [7].

In the temperature range 970–1170 K, polymorphic transitions were found for SrLnCuS₃ (Ln = La, Ce) [11, 12]. At 1170 K in the series SrLnCuS₃ (Ln = La–Lu), four types of crystal structures with orthorhombic crystal system were found: ST Ba₂MnS₃ (Ln = La, Ce) → ST BaLaCuS₃ (Ln = Pr, Nd) → ST Eu₂CuS₃ (Ln = Sm, Gd, Tb, Dy, Ho) → ST KZrCuS₃ (Ln = Lu) [9]. As far as we know, there are no data available in the literature on the determination of the crystal structures and refinement of the crystallographic parameters of compounds SrLnCuS₃ (Ln = Er–Yb, annealing at 1170 K).

The aim of this work is to determine the crystal structures of compounds SrErCuS₃ and SrYbCuS₃ annealed at 1170 K by powder X-ray diffraction.

EXPERIMENTAL

Cu₂S was prepared from the constituent elements (copper of high purity grade 11–4 and sulfur of high purity grade 15–3, Russian State Standards) in an evacuated and sealed-off quartz ampoule [7, 13, 14]. SrS was prepared when H₂ and H₂S were allowed to react with SrSO₄ of chemically pure grade [7, 15, 16]. Hydrogen with a rate of 7–8 L/h was first allowed to pass through a layer of strontium sulfate with increasing the temperature 870 K → 970 K → 1070 K and allowing it to stand at each temperature for 5 h followed by the H₂S stream treatment at 1270 K for 5 h [7].

Table 1. Coordinates of atoms and equivalent thermal parameters in the structures of SrLnCuS₃ (Ln = Er, Yb)

| Atom | <i>x</i> | <i>y</i> | <i>z</i> | <i>U</i> _{eq} , Å ² |
|----------------------|----------|--------------|------------|---|
| SrYbCuS ₃ | | | | |
| Yb | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0121 (12) |
| Sr | 0 | 0.74736 (10) | 0.25 | 0.0153 (13) |
| Cu | 0 | 0.47067 (15) | 0.25 | 0.0179 (17) |
| S(1) | 0 | 0.36505 (19) | 0.0640 | 0.014 (2) |
| S(2) | 0 | 0.0767 (3) | (2) | 0.007 (2) |
| | | | 0.25 | |
| SrErCuS ₃ | | | | |
| Er | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0130 (12) |
| Sr | 0 | 0.74734 (11) | 0.25 | 0.0201 (13) |
| Cu | 0 | 0.47136 (16) | 0.25 | 0.0176 (17) |
| S(1) | 0 | 0.3629 (2) | 0.0657 (2) | 0.016 (2) |
| S(2) | 0 | 0.0759 (3) | 0.25 | 0.008 (2) |

Sulfides Yb₂S₃ and Er₂S₃ were prepared by an indirect method from oxides of IbO-M and ErO-G grades in a flow of H₂S and CS₂ at 1300 K for 20 h [7, 17, 18]. The sulfides obtained had stoichiometric compositions within the error of chemical analysis. Compounds SrLnCuS₃ were prepared by alloying the constituent sulfides taken in stoichiometric amount in the ratio 2SrS : Ln₂S₃ : 1Cu₂S in a graphite crucible which was enclosed in an evacuated and sealed-off quartz ampoule. The ampoule was heated in an electrical furnace to 1570 K and then exposed for 30 min. Cooling was performed in the switched-off furnace. Weight portions of the sample were annealed at 1170 K for 1 month [5].

X-ray powder diffraction studies were carried out on a PANalytical X'Pert PRO diffractometer equipped with a PIXcel detector and a graphite monochromator (CuK_α radiation) in the diffraction angle range 12° ≤ 2θ ≤ 145°. Samples were prepared by trituration using

an agate mortar. Phases in samples 2SrS : 1Ln₂S₃ : 1Cu₂S (Ln = Er, Yb) were identified using the ICD-DPDF4 + 2012 database. Unit cell parameters were determined using the ITO software [19]. An analysis of systematic absences showed that SrLnCuS₃ (Ln = Er, Yb) had space group *Cmcm* (*hkl*: *h* + *k* = 2*n*; *0kl*: *k* = 2*n*; *h0l*: *h*, *l* = 2*n*; *h00*: *h* = 2*n*; *0k0*: *k* = 2*n*; *00l*: *l* = 2*n*). The initial structure model consisted of the data set for isostructural compound KZrCuS₃ [20]. The crystal structures of SrLnCuS₃ (Ln = Er, Yb) were refined using the derivative difference minimization (DDM) method [21] in the anisotropic approximation for all atoms, with account for the preferred orientation, anisotropic peak broadening, and surface roughness and displacement of test samples; the final reliability factors were *R*_{DDM} = 3.56–3.73% and *R*_F = 1.48–2.06%. In addition to the main phase, the following identified impurities were added to the model to be refined: 1.2% SrS, 2.2% Yb₂SO₂, 1.8% Yb₅S(SiO₄)₃ for sample 2SrS : 1Yb₂S₃ : 1Cu₂S and 1.2% SrS, 9.5% Er₂SO₂, 0.5% Er₅S(SiO₄)₃ for sample 2SrS : 1Er₂S₃ : 1Cu₂S. Atomic coordinates, equivalent anisotropic thermal parameters, and selected interatomic distances in the structures of SrLnCuS₃ are listed in Tables 1–3. Measured, simulated, and difference X-ray diffraction patterns after refinement are shown in Fig. 1. The Diamond 3 program package [22] was used to visualize crystal structures.

IR spectra were recorded in the range 4000–400 cm⁻¹ on an FSM 1201 FTIR spectrometer. Samples of SrLnCuS₃ were blended with KBr powder to a homogeneous mass with an agate mortar, and pellets were formed [23]. The resulting mixture was placed to a PF-13 die and were pressed using a PRG-400 hydraulic press with a pressure of 213 bar.

Table 2. Anisotropic thermal parameters (Å²) in the structures of SrLnCuS₃ (Ln = Er, Yb)

| Atom | <i>U</i> ¹¹ | <i>U</i> ²² | <i>U</i> ³³ | <i>U</i> ¹² | <i>U</i> ¹³ | <i>U</i> ²³ |
|----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| SrYbCuS ₃ | | | | | | |
| Yb | 0.0108 (15) | 0.0120 (14) | 0.0136 (14) | 0.0000 | 0.0000 | –0.0020 (4) |
| Sr | 0.0070 (15) | 0.0097 (15) | 0.0291 (18) | 0.0000 | 0.0000 | 0.0000 |
| Cu | 0.0209 (19) | 0.017 (2) | 0.0156 (19) | 0.0000 | 0.0000 | 0.0000 |
| S(1) | 0.013 (2) | 0.010 (2) | 0.0204 (19) | 0.0000 | 0.0000 | –0.0064 (14) |
| S(2) | 0.012 (3) | 0.005 (2) | 0.0051 (19) | 0.0000 | 0.0000 | 0.0000 |
| SrErCuS ₃ | | | | | | |
| Er | 0.0134 (11) | 0.0108 (10) | 0.0149 (9) | 0.0000 | 0.0000 | –0.0062 (6) |
| Sr | 0.0150 (14) | 0.0107 (12) | 0.0346 (13) | 0.0000 | 0.0000 | 0.0000 |
| Cu | 0.0234 (18) | 0.0119 (19) | 0.0175 (18) | 0.0000 | 0.0000 | 0.0000 |
| S(1) | 0.0165 (17) | 0.0133 (19) | 0.0172 (18) | 0.0000 | 0.0000 | –0.0034 (14) |
| S(2) | 0.012 (3) | 0.006 (3) | 0.006 (2) | 0.0000 | 0.0000 | 0.0000 |

Table 3. Interatomic distances (d) in the structures of SrLnCuS₃ (Ln = Er, Yb)

| Bond | d , Å | Bond | d , Å | Bond | d , Å |
|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| SrYbCuS ₃ | | | | | |
| Yb–S(1) ⁱ | 4 × 2.702 (2) | Sr–S(1) ⁱⁱ | 4 × 3.105 (2) | Cu–S(1) | 2 × 2.314 (3) |
| Yb–S(2) | 2 × 2.698 (1) | Sr–S(2) ⁱⁱ | 2 × 2.953 (3) | Cu–S(2) ⁱⁱ | 2 × 2.391 (2) |
| ⟨Yb–S⟩ | 2.701(2) | ⟨Sr–S⟩ | 3.054(2) | ⟨Cu–S⟩ | 2.353(2) |
| SrErCuS ₃ | | | | | |
| Er–S(1) ⁱ | 4 × 2.733 (2) | Sr–S(1) ⁱⁱ | 4 × 3.096 (2) | Cu–S(1) | 2 × 2.336 (3) |
| Er–S(2) | 2 × 2.714 (1) | Sr–S(2) ⁱⁱ | 2 × 2.968 (3) | Cu–S(2) ⁱⁱ | 2 × 2.388 (2) |
| ⟨Er–S⟩ | 2.727(2) | ⟨Sr–S⟩ | 3.053(2) | ⟨Cu–S⟩ | 2.362(2) |

The average values are shown in bold type. Symmetry transformations used to generate equivalent atoms: (i) $x - 1/2, y - 1/2, z$; (ii) $x - 1/2, y + 1/2, z$.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The X-ray powder diffraction patterns of the compounds were indexed in terms of the orthorhombic crystal system, space group $Cmcm$ (KZrCuS₃ structure type) with the unit cell parameters: $a = 3.93128(3)$ Å, $b = 12.9709(1)$ Å, $c = 10.1161(1)$ Å, $V = 515.843(9)$ Å³, $\rho_{\text{calc}} = 5.337$ g/cm³, $R_{\text{DDM}} = 3.73\%$, $R_{\text{F}} = 2.06\%$ (SrErCuS₃), $a = 3.91448(4)$, $b = 12.9554(1)$, $c = 10.0332(1)$ Å, $\rho_{\text{calc}} = 5.487$ g/cm³, $V = 508.842(8)$ Å³, $R_{\text{DDM}} = 3.56\%$, $R_{\text{F}} = 1.48\%$ (SrYbCuS₃).

The crystal structure of compounds is of the layer–block type (Fig. 2). Ions Sr²⁺, Ln³⁺ (Ln = Er, Yb), and Cu⁺ occupy independent crystallographic positions. Distorted tetrahedra CuS₄ connected by the vertex atoms S(2) form continuous chains along the a axis. Distorted tetrahedra are built of $2 \times \text{S}(1) + 2 \times \text{S}(2)$ atoms. The average bond lengths $d_{\text{Cu–S}} = 2.362$ Å in SrErCuS₃ (Table 3) is lower than the theoretical value $d_{\text{Cu–S}}^{\text{(theor)}} = 2.44$ Å calculated from the ionic radii $r_{\text{Cu}^+} = 0.6$ Å and $r_{\text{S}^{2-}} = 1.84$ Å [8]. In distorted tetrahedra of SrYbCuS₃, the average Cu–S distance is even shorter being 2.353 Å. Distorted octahedra LnS₆ are in between CuS₄ distorted tetrahedra chains. The octahedral environment of Ln³⁺ is built of four equatorial atoms S1 and two axial atoms S(2) (Fig. 3). The average distances $d_{\text{Ln–S}}$ practically coincide with the theoretical values, $d_{\text{Er–S}} = 2.727$ Å as compared to $d_{\text{Er–S}}^{\text{(theor)}} = 2.73$ Å ($r_{\text{Er}^{3+}} = 0.89$ Å, CN = 6) and $d_{\text{Yb–S}} = 2.701$ Å as compared to $d_{\text{Yb–S}}^{\text{(theor)}} = 2.708$ Å ($r_{\text{Yb}^{3+}} = 0.868$ Å, CN = 6), and decrease systematically with decreasing $r_{\text{Ln}^{3+}}$ [8]. Distorted octahedra LnS₆, joining the $2 \times \text{S}(1)\text{S}(1)$ edges along the a axis and the $2 \times \text{S}(2)$ vertices along the c axis, form two-dimensional grids in the a – c plane. Distorted octahedra LnS₆ and distorted tetrahedra CuS₄ joining $4 \times \text{S}(1)\text{S}(2)$ edges form parallel [LnCuS₃] layer-blocks perpendicular to the b axis. The trigonal prisms SrS₆ are formed by $4 \times \text{S}(1)$ and $2 \times \text{S}(2)$ atoms with an average $d_{\text{Sr–S}}$ distance

of 3.053 Å (for SrErCuS₃) and 3.054 Å (for SrYbCuS₃) whereas $d_{\text{Sr–S}}^{\text{(theor)}} = 3.02$ Å. Trigonal prisms are connected by faces $2 \times \text{S}(1)\text{S}(1)\text{S}(2)$ to form chains along the a axis.

The structure of SrLnCuS₃ can be described by two-dimensional layers [LnCuS₃] in the a – c plane formed by distorted tetrahedra CuS₄ and distorted octahedra LnS₆ with Sr²⁺ ions in between.

The determined values of the X-ray diffraction and structural parameters for SrLnCuS₃ (Ln = Er, Yb) agree with the regular alteration of the average values of $d_{\text{Ln–S}}$ and $d_{\text{Cu–S}}$, unit cell parameters, unit cell volume, and the density calculated based on the X-ray diffraction studies for the series of SrLnCuS₃ [7] and correlate with changing $r_{\text{Ln}^{3+}}$. Thus, it was found that in SrLnCuS₃ (Ln = Gd, Er, Yb, Lu) the values of $a_{Pnma}(c_{Cmcm})$ and $b_{Pnma}(a_{Cmcm})$, $d_{\text{Ln–S}}$ and $d_{\text{Cu–S}}$ decrease:

$$a_{Pnma}(c_{Cmcm}) = 10.3288(2) \text{ (SrGdCuS}_3 \text{ [7])} \rightarrow 10.1161(1) \text{ (SrErCuS}_3 \text{)} \rightarrow 10.0332(1) \text{ (SrYbCuS}_3 \text{)} \rightarrow 10.0206(1) \text{ (SrLuCuS}_3 \text{ [7])} \text{ Å.}$$

$$b_{Pnma}(a_{Cmcm}) = 3.96271(7) \text{ (SrGdCuS}_3 \text{ [7])} \rightarrow 3.93128(3) \text{ (SrErCuS}_3 \text{)} \rightarrow 3.91448(4) \text{ (SrYbCuS}_3 \text{)} \rightarrow 3.91105(4) \text{ (SrLuCuS}_3 \text{ [7])} \text{ Å.}$$

$$d_{\text{Ln–S}}: 2.769 \text{ (} d_{\text{Gd–S}} \text{ [7])} \rightarrow 2.727 \text{ (} d_{\text{Er–S}} \text{)} \rightarrow 2.701 \text{ (} d_{\text{Yb–S}} \text{)} \rightarrow 2.699 \text{ (} d_{\text{Lu–S}} \text{ [7])} \text{ Å;}$$

$$d_{\text{Cu–S}}: 2.366 \text{ [7]} \rightarrow 2.362 \rightarrow 2.353 \rightarrow 2.350 \text{ [7]} \text{ Å, respectively.}$$

This correlates with changes in the parameters of isomorphous compounds BaLnMQ₃ [24] and EuLnCuS₃ [10].

Thus, decreased Ln³⁺ radii lead to crystal-chemical compression of the [LnCuS₃] two-dimensional block, which manifests itself in decreased crystallographic (unit cell parameters and unit cell volume) and structural (Cu–S distances and distances between the chains) parameters.

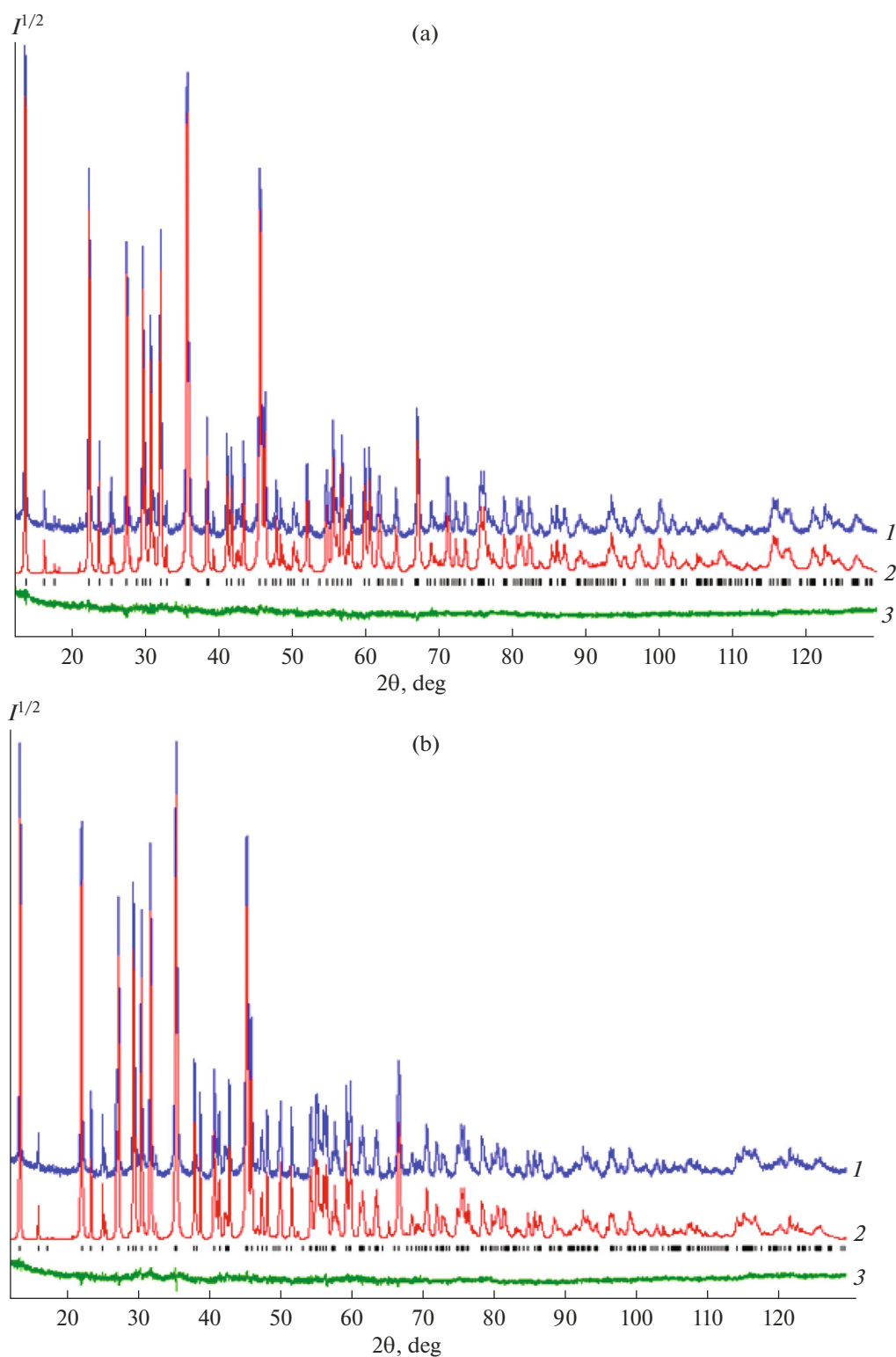


Fig. 1. (1) Measured, (2) simulated, and (3) difference X-ray diffraction patterns of samples (a) $2\text{SrS} : 1\text{Yb}_2\text{S}_3 : 1\text{Cu}_2\text{S}$ and (b) $2\text{SrS} : 1\text{Er}_2\text{S}_3 : 1\text{Cu}_2\text{S}$ after the structure has been refined by minimizing the derivative difference. The positions of the main phase peaks are shown in dashes.

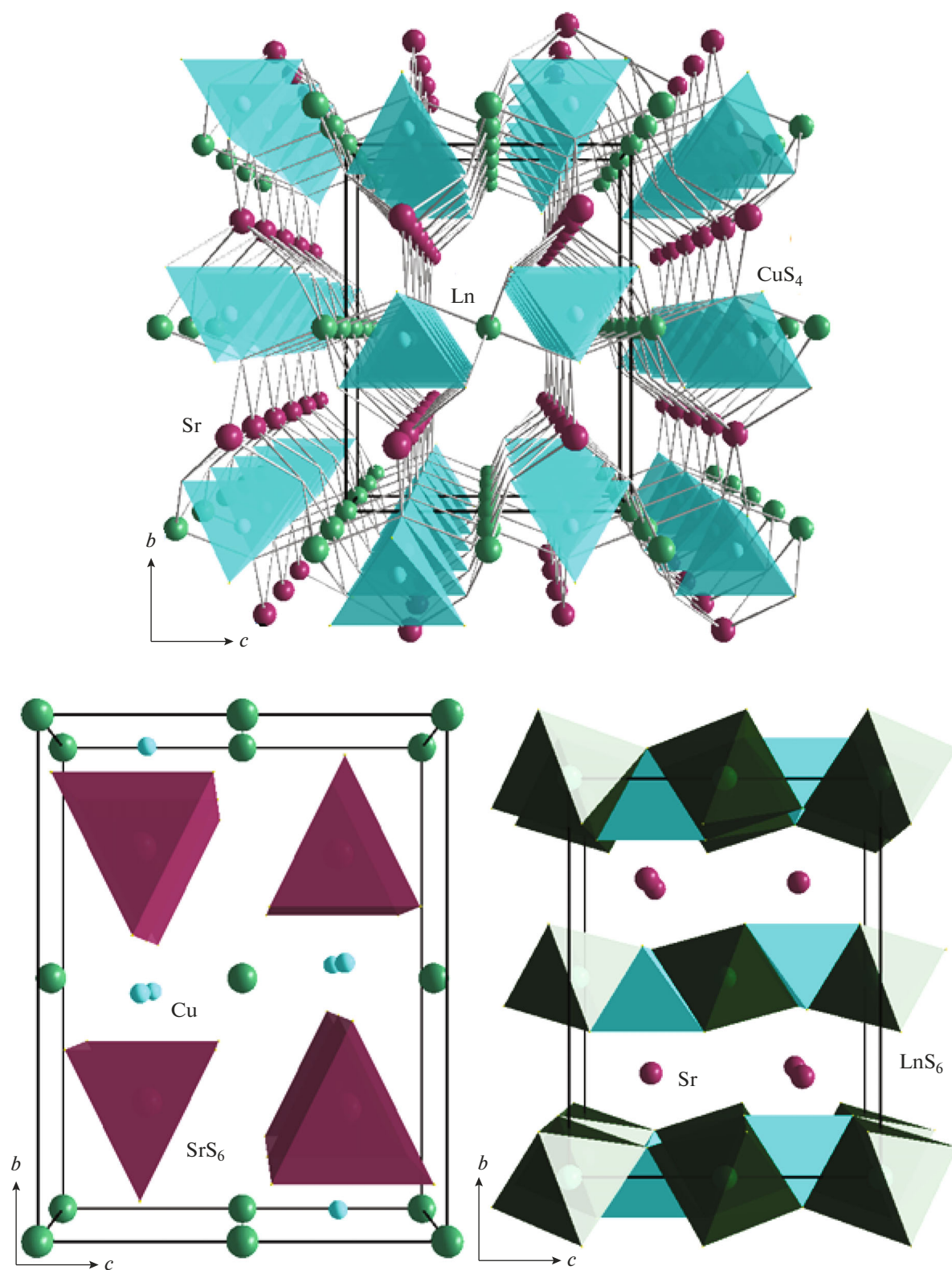


Fig. 2. The [100] projections of the structure of SrLnCu₃.

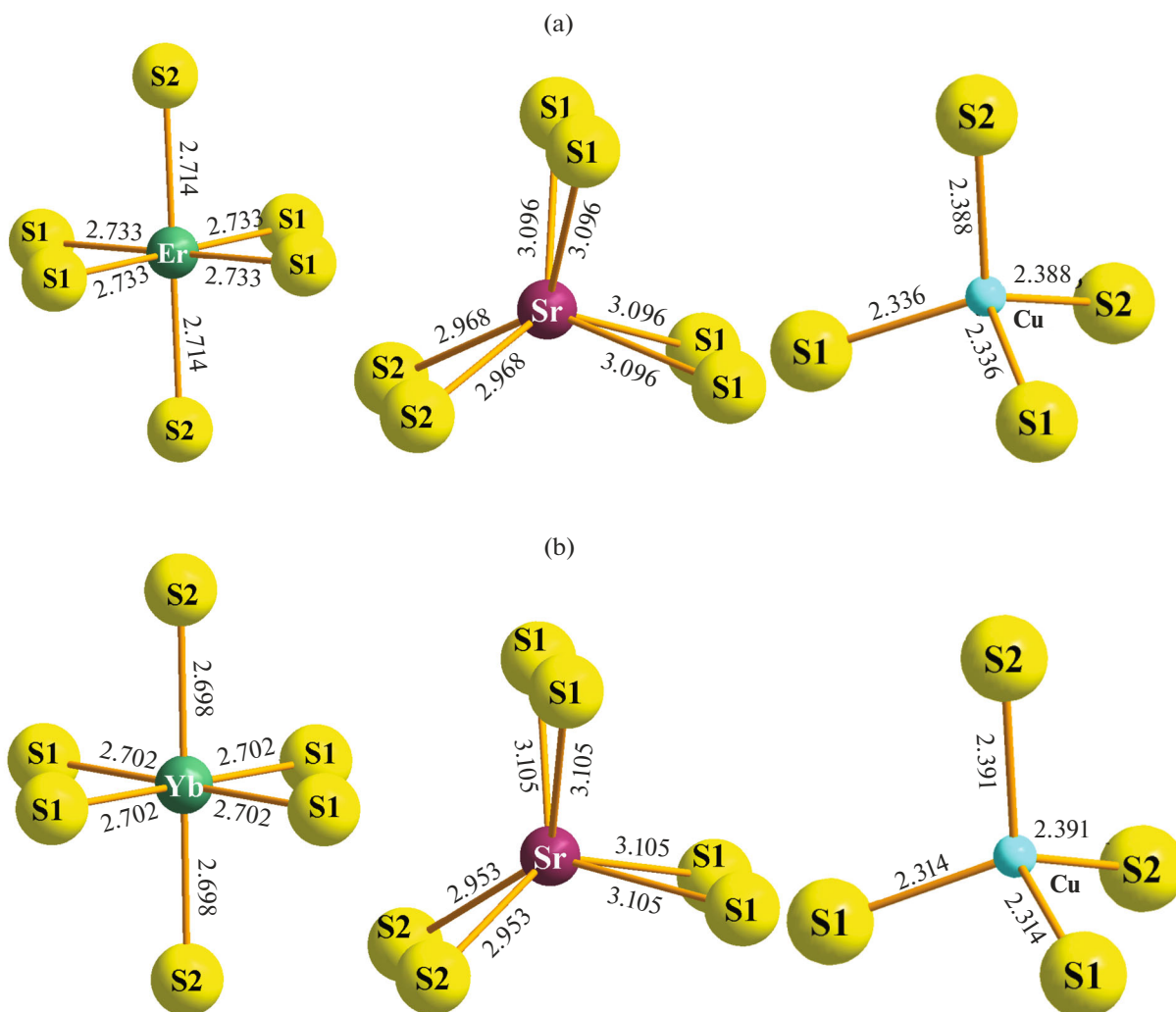


Fig. 3. Coordination environment of Ln, Sr, and Cu in compounds (a) SrErCuS₃ and (b) SrYbCuS₃.

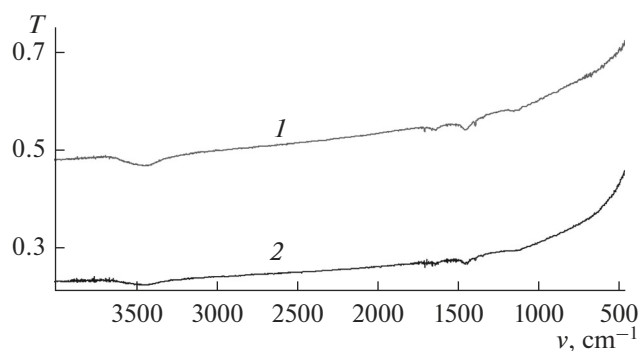


Fig. 4. IR spectra of (1) SrYbCuS₃ and (2) SrErCuS₃.

The IR spectra of SrLnCuS₃ (Ln = Er, Yb) are shown in Fig. 4. There are no absorption bands in the 3200–1800 cm⁻¹ region; the samples are transparent for IR radiation. In the ranges 3600–3300 and 1700–1300 cm⁻¹, the bands of OH-groups vibrations of sorbed water are observed. The presence of trace amounts of water is due to the water sensitivity of sulfides. The annealed surface of sulfides, when exposed to the atmosphere, is particularly capable of adsorbing water during the preparation of pellets. The presence of a spectral background in samples of SrLnCuS₃ (Ln = Er, Yb) is determined by the dispersity of the pellet starting material.

Table 4. Selected bond angles (ω) in the structures of SrLnCuS₃ (Ln = Er, Yb)

| Angle | ω , deg | Angle | ω , deg |
|---|----------------|---|----------------|
| SrYbCuS ₃ | | | |
| S(1) ⁱ YbS(1) ⁱⁱⁱ | 92.84 (7) | S(1) ⁱⁱ SrS(2) ⁱⁱ | 87.13 (5) |
| S(1) ⁱ YbS(1) ^{iv} | 87.16 (7) | S(1) ⁱⁱ SrS(2) ^{vi} | 141.78 (5) |
| S(1) ⁱ YbS(2) | 90.99 (7) | S(2) ⁱⁱ SrS(2) ^{vi} | 83.03 (10) |
| S(1) ⁱ YbS(2) ^v | 89.01 (7) | S(1)CuS(1) ^{ix} | 107.50 (14) |
| S(1) ⁱⁱ SrS(1) ^{vi} | 78.17 (6) | S(1)CuS(2) ⁱⁱ | 109.86 (5) |
| S(1) ⁱⁱ SrS(1) ^{vii} | 73.89 (8) | S(2) ⁱⁱ CuS(2) ^{vi} | 109.89 (17) |
| S(1) ⁱⁱ SrS(1) ^{viii} | 121.17 (9) | | |
| SrErCuS ₃ | | | |
| S(1) ⁱ ErS(1) ⁱⁱⁱ | 92.00 (9) | S(1) ⁱⁱ SrS(2) ⁱⁱ | 86.70 (6) |
| S(1) ⁱ ErS(1) ^{iv} | 88.00 (9) | S(1) ⁱⁱ SrS(2) ^{vi} | 141.55 (5) |
| S(1) ⁱ ErS(2) | 90.54 (7) | S(2) ⁱⁱ SrS(2) ^{vi} | 82.93 (10) |
| S(1) ⁱ ErS(2) ^v | 89.46 (7) | S(1)CuS(1) ^{ix} | 105.94 (16) |
| S(1) ⁱⁱ SrS(1) ^{vi} | 78.81 (6) | S(1)CuS(2) ⁱⁱ | 109.99 (5) |
| S(1) ⁱⁱ SrS(1) ^{vii} | 74.06 (8) | S(2) ⁱⁱ CuS(2) ^{vi} | 110.82 (17) |
| S(1) ⁱⁱ SrS(1) ^{viii} | 122.09 (11) | | |

Symmetry transformations used to generate equivalent atoms: (i) $x - 1/2, y - 1/2, z$; (ii) $x - 1/2, y + 1/2, z$; (iii) $x + 1/2, y - 1/2, z$; (iv) $x - 1/2, -y + 1/2, -z$; (v) $-x, -y, z - 1/2$; (vi) $x + 1/2, y + 1/2, z$; (vii) $-x - 1/2, y + 1/2, -z + 1/2$; (viii) $-x + 1/2, y + 1/2, -z + 1/2$; (ix) $-x, y, -z + 1/2$.

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