Single crystalline and rare earth substituted La$_2$RuO$_5$
investigated by x-ray diffraction and EXAFS spectroscopy

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Abstract

Single crystals of La$_2$RuO$_5$ were obtained from a BaCl$_2$ flux. The structure was determined by single crystal x-ray diffraction and compared to earlier x-ray and neutron powder diffraction results. The local structures of Ru and La/Ln in pure La$_2$RuO$_5$ and the rare earth substituted La$_{2-x}$Ln$_x$RuO$_5$ (Ln = Pr, Nd, Sm, Gd, Dy) polycrystalline samples were determined from the extended x-ray absorption fine structures (EXAFS) of the K- and L$_{II}$-edges of Ru, La, and Ln, respectively. A four shell model was developed to reduce the number of refinable parameters in the fit of the EXAFS spectra. The distribution of the Ln-ions in the layered crystal structure was determined by a comparison of the coordination spheres obtained from the Ln-edges with the unsubstituted La$_2$RuO$_5$. Interatomic distances were compared to the values obtained from the single crystal diffraction and were found to agree very well.

Keywords:
La$_2$RuO$_5$, rare earth substitution, ruthenate, layered perovskite, single crystal structure analysis, EXAFS

1. Introduction

La$_2$RuO$_5$ shows a combined structural and magnetic phase transition at roughly 170 K.\cite{1,2,3} Above this temperature the crystal structure is monoclinic (SG: P2$_1$/c) and a paramagnetic behavior of the Ru$^{4+}$ ions is found. In addition La$_2$RuO$_5$ is semiconducting with a small bandgap of 0.15 eV. Below the transition temperature the change to triclinic symmetry (SG: P1) is linked to an antiferromagnetic coupling of the $S = 1$ spin moments of Ru$^{4+}$ resulting in a local dimerization of neighboring Ru spins.\cite{4,5} This ordering causes an almost complete suppression of the paramagnetic susceptibility. The low temperature modification is found to be still a semiconductor, but with an increased bandgap of 0.21 eV.

Single crystal structure data were not available to date, although the electrical conductivity of single crystals was reported in literature.\cite{2} From the crystal structure obtained by powder neutron diffraction,\cite{6} La$_2$RuO$_5$ can be described by a stacking of perovskite-like LaRuO$_2$- and LaO-layers, alternating along the unit cell axis $a$. This layering in combination with the small temperature range, in which La$_2$RuO$_5$ is formed (1150 °C – 1200 °C), is a problem for the growth of single crystals, which generally are twinned. Crystal growth by the floating zone technique has been reported,\cite{7} but our own attempts were not successful. Therefore, the single crystals described in this study were grown using BaCl$_2$ as a flux. Only twinned crystals were obtained, but the different domains could be refined separately in the crystal structure analysis.

To gain more information on the relationship of the structural and magnetic phase transition, La was partly substituted by smaller rare earths (Pr, Nd, Sm, Gd, Dy).\cite{8,9} The maximum achievable substitution level is depending on the difference of the ionic radii of Ln$^{3+}$ compared to La$^{3+}$. Thus for Pr $x = 0.75$ was achieved, while for Dy the maximum was reached at $x = 0.2$. Above these values significant amounts of secondary phases were detected. The synthesis was carried out with a citrate based soft chemistry approach and lead to single phase polycrystalline samples. The magnetic properties of the rare earth substituted samples can be described assuming two almost independent magnetic sublattices. One sublattice consists of the above mentioned antiferromagnetically interacting Ru$^{4+}$ ions, while the second sublattice is formed by the paramagnetic rare earth ions. This model was partly deduced from the distribution of the rare earth ions on the two possible crystallographic sites in La$_2$RuO$_5$. Neutron diffraction results for two Pr substituted powder samples (La$_{0.75}$Pr$_{0.25}$RuO$_5$ and La$_{1.25}$Pr$_{0.75}$RuO$_3$) revealed a cationic ordering with roughly 65 to 70 % of the Pr ions in the LaO layers.\cite{9} Due to very similar neutron scattering lengths and/or huge absorption cross sections for Nd, Sm, Gd and Dy neutron diffraction was not applicable for the determination of the rare earth distribution. Therefore, a different method had to be used to investigate the localization of the rare earths in La$_{2-x}$Ln$_x$RuO$_5$.

EXAFS is a well established method to study the local crystal structure and the valence of a selected element.\cite{10} Since EXAFS is highly element specific, in many cases even directly neighboring elements in the periodic table can be investigated separately. While the Ru environment in La$_2$RuO$_5$ already was object of investigations\cite{11} and the Ru L$_{II}$-edges were used for the
determination of the crystal field splitting of the Ru 4d levels,\textsuperscript{7} this was not the case for La\textsubscript{2-x}Ln\textsubscript{x}RuO\textsubscript{5}, neither was the lanthanide local structure studied yet. According to the complex local environment of the two La/Ln sites a simplified model was developed to interpret the obtained EXAFS spectra. With this model the investigation of the site distribution of the substituted lanthanides became possible.

Additionally, in this work the single crystal structure results are compared with the already published powder data and with the values obtained from fitting the EXAFS spectra.

2. Sample preparation and experimental details

2.1. La\textsubscript{2}RuO\textsubscript{5} single crystal growth and x-ray diffraction

Single crystals of La\textsubscript{2}RuO\textsubscript{5} were obtained by a flux assisted method. The dried (6 hours at 850°C) binary oxides La\textsubscript{2}O\textsubscript{3} (Chempur, 99.9 %) and RuO\textsubscript{2} (Chempur, 99.9 %) were weighed in stoichiometric amounts (0.5325 g of La\textsubscript{2}O\textsubscript{3} and 0.2175 g of RuO\textsubscript{2}), mixed and well ground in an agate mortar. This powder was mixed with 6.25 g BaCl\textsubscript{2}, which was dried at 120°C. The mixture was reacted in uncovered aluminum-oxide crucibles in a tube furnace by heating to 1200°C at 4 hours, holding this temperature for 6 hours and slow cooling to 950°C with a rate of 3 K per hour to get below the melting temperature of BaCl\textsubscript{2}. At this temperature the furnace was switched off and allowed to cool down to room temperature. The excess BaCl\textsubscript{2} was dissolved in deionised water. In the crucible La\textsubscript{2}RuO\textsubscript{5} and LaOCl\textsubscript{12} remained, which had to be removed manually. The black La\textsubscript{2}RuO\textsubscript{5} crystals were separated from the colorless LaOCl crystals under a microscope. The obtained single crystals had a plate-like form with a size of roughly 0.05 × 0.05 mm\textsuperscript{2} and a thickness of less than 30 microns. This shape results from the layered structure, which also causes the observed twinning of the crystals.

From the obtained crystals an almost square shaped individual was selected. A STOE IPDS 2T single crystal diffractometer operating with Mo-K\textsubscript{α} radiation was used to record the reflections in the angular range 5° ≤ 2θ ≤ 80°. The numerical absorption correction was carried out using the measured crystal shape and size obtained from the indexing of the visible surfaces. This shape was optimized using the HABITUS type approach\textsuperscript{13} implemented in the X-Shape algorithm of the STOE data reduction software package. Further information about the measurement parameters are listed in table 1. The absorption corrected intensities were refined with SHEXL starting from the structural information determined from the powder data.\textsuperscript{14}

2.2. La\textsubscript{2-x}Ln\textsubscript{x}RuO\textsubscript{5} powder sample preparation and EXAFS

Powder samples of La\textsubscript{2-x}Ln\textsubscript{x}RuO\textsubscript{5} were prepared by a citrate based sol gel reaction described in more detail elsewhere.\textsuperscript{9} Starting materials were the rare earth nitrates, Ru-acetylacetonate and citric acid, which were dissolved in ethanol (96 %). The precursors were pyrolysed at 600°C and finally calcined for at least 96 h at 1175°C in alumina crucibles in air. Phase purity and structural data were determined by x-ray and neutron diffraction in combination with a Rietveld refinement of the recorded patterns.\textsuperscript{9}

EXAFS measurements were performed at the beamlines E4 (for the L\textsubscript{III}-edges) and X1 (for the K-edges) of HASYLAB at DESY. The spectra were recorded at room temperature in transmission mode. The samples for the K-edge investigations consisted of roughly 100 mg La\textsubscript{2-x}Ln\textsubscript{x}RuO\textsubscript{5} and 20 mg cellulose. These powders were mixed and pressed to pellets of 13 mm diameter. At the lower energies of the L\textsubscript{III} edges less sample material was needed. Approximately 50 mg La\textsubscript{2-x}Ln\textsubscript{x}RuO\textsubscript{5} was glued on adhesive tape, which was assembled in five layers. The used energy ranges and monochromators are listed in Tab. 5 for the different absorption edges. In the EXAFS region equidistant \( k \) steps (\( Δk \approx 0.04 \text{ Å}^{-1} \)) at K-edges and (\( Δk \approx 0.05 \text{ Å}^{-1} \)) at L\textsubscript{III}-edges) were used and the integration time was linearly increased with \( k \). The Ru-K data was energy calibrated against the first inflection point of the simultaneously recorded spectra of Ru-metal powder. Other reference materials were Mn and Co metal-foil for the Sm-L\textsubscript{III} and Dy-L\textsubscript{III} edge respectively.

To enhance the signal to noise ratio for Pr-K, Nd-K, Sm-L\textsubscript{III}, Gd-L\textsubscript{III}, and Dy-L\textsubscript{III}, the measurements were repeated four times and the spectra were subsequently averaged. For the La-K measurement a single spectrum was sufficient. The \( k^2 \)-weighted \( χ( k ) \) of the La-K-, Nd-K- (top) and the Sm-L\textsubscript{III}-, Dy-L\textsubscript{III}-edges

![Figure 1: (Color Online) \( k^2 \)-weighted EXAFS spectra of the La- and Nd-K- (top) and the Sm- and Dy-L\textsubscript{III}-edges (bottom) of polycrystalline La\textsubscript{2-x}Ln\textsubscript{x}RuO\textsubscript{5} samples.](image-url)
Table 1: La$_2$RuO$_3$ single crystal refinement parameters.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<td>Sum formula</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molar mass (g/mol)</td>
<td>458.885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crystal system</td>
<td>monoclinic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space group</td>
<td>P2$_1$/c (No. 14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diffractometer</td>
<td>STOE IPDS 2T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radiation:</td>
<td>Mo-K$_{a}$: $\lambda = 0.71073$ Å</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>b (Å)</td>
<td>5.8311(7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c (Å)</td>
<td>7.9658(9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\beta$ (deg)</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Volume ($\text{Å}^3$)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formula units per cell</td>
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<tr>
<td>Temperature (K)</td>
<td>293(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calculated density (g/cm$^3$)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crystal size (mm$^3$)</td>
<td>0.05 $\times$ 0.05 $\times$ 0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absorption coefficient (mm$^{-1}$)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>F(000)</td>
<td>792.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2$\theta$ range (°)</td>
<td>8.72 $\leq$ 2$\theta$ $\leq$ 79.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range in $hkl$</td>
<td>$\pm 16$, $\pm 9$, $\pm 11$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total no. of reflections</td>
<td>3888</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of rejected reflections</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent reflections</td>
<td>1428 ($R_{int} = 0.0566$)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflections with $I &gt; 4\sigma(I)$</td>
<td>903 ($R_p = 0.0601$)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data/parameters</td>
<td>1428/74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absorption correction</td>
<td>Numerical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodness-of-fit ($F^2$)</td>
<td>0.939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final $R$ indices ($I &gt; 4\sigma(I)$)</td>
<td>$R_1 = 0.0386$, $wR_2 = 0.0883$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R$ indices (all data)</td>
<td>$R_1 = 0.0730$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Largest differ. peak/deepest hole (e·Å$^3$)</td>
<td>2.11/-2.31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
by fitting a polynomial function (with coefficients $x^{-3}$ and $x^3$) to the pre-edge region. The atomic absorption coefficients $\mu$ were determined by fitting a polynomial function (with coefficients $x^{-3}$ and $x^3$) to the pre-edge region. The atomic absorption coefficient $\mu_0$ was obtained from a smoothing spline fit of the post-edge region. For the electron energy to $k$-space the threshold energy $E_0$ was calculated from the maximum of the first derivative of the normalized spectra. The finally obtained $\chi(k)$ curves were fitted using the program WinXAS. After weighting with $k^2$ or respectively $k^3$ a Bessel window was applied and the spectra were Fourier transformed resulting in the modified radial distribution functions (mRDF). Theoretical scattering amplitudes and phase shifts were calculated by FEFF8 using the structure data from the single crystal refinement.

3. Results

3.1. Single crystal structure refinement

Several crystals were tested and all turned out to be twins. Nevertheless, a structure analysis was possible due to the partially merohedral nature of the twinning, which allowed the separation of the diffraction patterns of both twin domains. Overlapping peaks were neglected in the refinement. In Tab. 1 the refinement and crystal parameters are shown. Unit cell values very close to the ones obtained from powder x-ray and neutron diffraction and the same monoclinic space group $P2_1/c$ were found. The single crystal analysis lead to similar atomic coordinates (Tab. 2), therefore, the bonding lengths and angles of the single crystal are comparable to the results from the neutron powder diffraction.

In Fig. 2 the obtained crystal structure is depicted. The ellipsoids represent the anisotropic displacement factors (Tab. 3) with 90% probability. Alternating LaO and LaRuO$_4$ layers along $a$ can be used to describe the crystal structure as was already suggested from powder diffraction data. The LaRuO$_4$ layers consist of perovskite like corner sharing RuO$_5$ octahedra, which are tilted and additionally slightly deformed due to the unequal Ru–O bond lengths listed in Tab. 4. The perovskite layers are separated by buckled LaO layers with tetrahedral La coordinated oxygen atoms, as depicted in detail in Fig. 3. Each oxygen atom in this layer is connected to one La atom in the LaRuO$_4$ and three in the LaO layer. The tetrahedra are highlighted in the figure by light blue coloring.

3.2. Ru-K EXAFS

In Fig. 4 the modified radial distribution functions of the Ru-K EXAFS for the La$_2$RuO$_5$ compounds with a high substitution level for each rare earth element are shown. The corresponding curve for unsubstituted La$_2$RuO$_5$ (solid state and sol gel synthesis) are additionally shown for comparison. All EXAFS spectra were weighted by $k^2$ and oscillations between $k = 2 - 15$ Å$^{-1}$ were used for the Fourier transformation.

Up to 4 Å, well defined peaks according to the different coordination spheres can be identified in the mRDF (Fig. 4). The

![Figure 2: (Color Online) La$_2$RuO$_4$ crystal structure viewed along e-direction. La is drawn in dark blue, oxygen in red and Ru in light grey in the center of the green RuO$_5$ octahedra. The anisotropic displacement ellipsoids are shown with 90% probability. Alternating LaO and LaRuO$_4$ layers are depicted in Fig. 1 to show the difference in data quality. Data evaluation was performed with the program VIPER. All spectra were energy calibrated setting the absorption edge energies to their literature values (Tab. 5) and normalized. The pre-edge background $\mu_0$ was obtained from a smoothing spline fit of the post-edge region. For the conversion from energy to $k$-space the threshold energy $E_0$ was calculated from the maximum of the first derivative of the normalized spectra. The finally obtained $\chi(k)$ curves were fitted using the program WinXAS. After weighting with $k^2$ or respectively $k^3$ a Bessel window was applied and the spectra were Fourier transformed resulting in the modified radial distribution functions (mRDF). Theoretical scattering amplitudes and phase shifts were calculated by FEFF8 using the structure data from the single crystal refinement.](Image 38x590 to 272x760)

![Figure 3: (Color Online) La$_2$RuO$_5$ crystal structure emphasizing the La$_2$O tetrahedra (light blue). The RuO$_5$ octahedra are depicted in green. Anisotropic displacement ellipsoids represent a 90% probability.](Image 307x579 to 540x761)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Atom</th>
<th>x</th>
<th>y</th>
<th>z</th>
<th>$U_{eq}$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>La1</td>
<td>0.1689(1)</td>
<td>0.2504(1)</td>
<td>0.0387(1)</td>
<td>0.0077(1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>La2</td>
<td>0.5519(1)</td>
<td>0.2628(1)</td>
<td>0.3794(1)</td>
<td>0.0072(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ru</td>
<td>0.8504(1)</td>
<td>0.2540(1)</td>
<td>0.2114(1)</td>
<td>0.0051(1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>O1</td>
<td>0.8544(9)</td>
<td>0.3325(12)</td>
<td>0.4623(6)</td>
<td>0.0090(11)</td>
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<tr>
<td>O2</td>
<td>0.6880(9)</td>
<td>0.4607(12)</td>
<td>0.1300(7)</td>
<td>0.0101(12)</td>
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<tr>
<td>O3</td>
<td>0.7231(10)</td>
<td>-0.0111(12)</td>
<td>0.2213(8)</td>
<td>0.0127(15)</td>
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<tr>
<td>O4</td>
<td>1.0211(11)</td>
<td>0.0441(14)</td>
<td>0.2933(8)</td>
<td>0.0155(15)</td>
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<tr>
<td>O5</td>
<td>0.4237(9)</td>
<td>0.3328(12)</td>
<td>0.6030(7)</td>
<td>0.0093(11)</td>
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Table 3: Anisotropic displacement factors $U_{ij}$ in Å$^2$ for the La$_2$RuO$_5$ single crystal.

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<tr>
<th>Atom</th>
<th>$U_{11}$</th>
<th>$U_{22}$</th>
<th>$U_{33}$</th>
<th>$U_{12}$</th>
<th>$U_{13}$</th>
<th>$U_{23}$</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>La1</td>
<td>0.0081(2)</td>
<td>0.0066(2)</td>
<td>0.0083(2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>La2</td>
<td>0.0098(2)</td>
<td>0.0062(2)</td>
<td>0.0059(2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ru</td>
<td>0.0059(3)</td>
<td>0.0045(2)</td>
<td>0.0052(2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>O1</td>
<td>0.0110(37)</td>
<td>0.0095(29)</td>
<td>0.0073(25)</td>
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<tr>
<td>O2</td>
<td>0.0094(38)</td>
<td>0.0098(31)</td>
<td>0.0102(27)</td>
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<tr>
<td>O3</td>
<td>0.0215(51)</td>
<td>0.0098(32)</td>
<td>0.0086(30)</td>
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<td>O4</td>
<td>0.0189(44)</td>
<td>0.0134(37)</td>
<td>0.0123(30)</td>
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<td>O5</td>
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<td>0.0122(30)</td>
<td>0.0041(25)</td>
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Table 4: Selected bond lengths and interatomic distances for the La$_2$RuO$_5$ single crystal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bond</th>
<th>d(Å)</th>
<th>Bond</th>
<th>d(Å)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ru–O1</td>
<td>2.044(5)</td>
<td>La1–La1 (x2)</td>
<td>3.9829(6)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ru–O2</td>
<td>2.055(5)</td>
<td>La1–La1</td>
<td>4.2194(6)</td>
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<td>Ru–O3</td>
<td>1.933(8)</td>
<td>La1–La2</td>
<td>3.8030(6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ru–O4</td>
<td>2.001(8)</td>
<td>La1–La2</td>
<td>3.9123(6)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ru–O5</td>
<td>2.067(8)</td>
<td>La1–La2</td>
<td>3.9596(6)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Ru–La1</td>
<td>3.4588(8)</td>
<td>La2–La1</td>
<td>3.8030(6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ru–La2</td>
<td>3.4957(9)</td>
<td>La2–La1</td>
<td>3.9123(6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ru–La3</td>
<td>3.5359(9)</td>
<td>La2–La1</td>
<td>3.9596(6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ru–La4</td>
<td>3.5361(9)</td>
<td>La2–La1</td>
<td>3.9123(6)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ru–La5</td>
<td>3.5388(9)</td>
<td>La2–La1</td>
<td>3.9596(6)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ru–La6</td>
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<td>3.8321(6)</td>
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<td>Ru–La8</td>
<td>3.4364(8)</td>
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<td>3.9857(6)</td>
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Figure 4: (Color online) Modified radial distribution function from the $k^2$-weighted Ru-K EXAFS spectra. The vertical dashed lines mark the different coordination shells of Ru (curves are shifted by 0.002).

Figure 5: (Color online) Fit (dashed line) of the mRDF of the $k^2$-weighted $\chi(k)$ measured at the Ru-K absorption edge of La$_2$RuO$_5$ (solid line) prepared by the sol gel route.
were kept fixed and the Debye-Waller factors $\sigma^2$ were constrained to be equal for the backscattering atoms of the same element in equivalent coordination shells. In a second refinement step $S_0^2$ and $\sigma^2$ were fixed to the values previously obtained and N and the distances were refined. The model was further improved by neglecting all Ru–O paths above approximately 3.5 Å. Their contribution is of minor relevance for the fit and the obtained values in the first attempts were not reliable. Multiple scattering was not taken into account since its contribution was negligible compared to the direct scattering. Multiple scattering occurs for colinear arrangements, i.e. bond angles close to 180°, which are not present in $La_{2-x}Ln_xRuO_5$. The Ru–O–Ru bonding angles of $\approx 155°$ in the ab-plane (resp. $\approx 153°$ along c) are comparable to the situation in CaCu$_3$RuO$_{12}$ with Ru–O–Ru $\approx 140°$, in which the multiple scattering could also be neglected.

By combining several backscattering shells as described above a reasonable simplification was achieved, which lead to a stable fit. The Ru–O distances were rearranged in two shells, which represent the two shorter bond lengths of O2 and O3, which are pointing to the LaO layers, and the four longer bond lengths of O1 and O4, respectively. The obtained distance of 1.909 Å is slightly shorter than the values of the single crystal results (see Tab. 4). On the other hand the second distance representing the four oxygen atoms crosslinking the RuO$_6$ octahedra in the LaRuO$_4$ layer gave an averaged distance of 2.042 Å, which is in good agreement with the single crystal data (between 2.001 and 2.067 Å, averaged distance 2.041 Å). From the distribution of the distances in Tab. 4 it can be seen that the eight Ru–La distances can be grouped into four sets with a degeneracy of 1, 4, 2, and 1. Therefore, four scattering shells were used to fit the first two La-related peaks. The obtained distances from the EXAFS spectra are only slightly longer by between 0.01 Å and 0.04 Å than the ones shown in Tab. 4. For the Ru–Ru backscattering a single shell with a coordination number of four was sufficient, while two different distances were used to model the third Ru–La peak. The obtained EXAFS distances are again distinctly larger by 0.04 Å to 0.1 Å than expected from the single crystal data. In general the obtained interatomic distances from EXAFS spectroscopy agree well with the values derived from the diffraction results. The small deviations observed are most likely due to the simplified model applied. The deviations of the coordination numbers from the EXAFS fit to the the expected values are small, which proves that the used model is applicable and leads to stable results.

The fitting procedure described above was applied to all spectra and resulted in very similar values. Thus it can be concluded that substitution by rare earth ions does not lead to a considerable distortion of the Ru environment. This corresponds well to the Ru–O bond lengths and angles obtained from x-ray and neutron powder diffraction. Also with these diffraction methods only very small deviations of bond lengths and angles in the RuO$_6$ octahedra were observed for $La_{2-x}Ln_xRuO_5$.9

The XANES (x-ray absorption near edge structure) region of the Ru-K edge was used for the determination of the Ru valence. The first maximum of the derivative of the spectra was taken as energy measure. A comparison showed that all compounds exhibit very similar absorption edge energies. Thus the Ru valence is +4 for all $La_{2-x}Ln_xRuO_5$ compounds in accordance with results on La$_2$RuO$_5$ reported by Arcon et al. 11

3.3. Ln-K EXAFS

The absorption edges of the rare earths were measured to investigate the cationic ordering in the substituted compounds. As described in the introduction, neutron diffraction revealed a preferred occupation of Pr on the La2 site, i.e. within the LaO-layers.9 Due to similar neutron scattering lengths of La and the substituting rare earth (e.g. La 8.24 fm, Nd 7.69 fm) and/or high absorption coefficients (e.g. Sm 5922 bn, Gd 49700 bn) this method could not be used for the other lanthanides.21 Since XAS is highly element specific, it allows the investigation of the surrounding of the substituting elements. In Tab. 5 the K- and LIII-absorption-edge energies of the used lanthanides are listed. The LIII-edge energies of La, Pr and Nd are too similar in energy to be evaluated separately. Thus the strong overlapping of the EXAFS regions of La and Pr/Nd demands the investigation of the K-edges of these elements. The larger energy difference of the K-edges enables a clear separation of the EXAFS spectra. However, for the late 4f-elements like Sm, Gd and Dy the energy finally becomes so high that the EXAFS oscillations are of very low amplitude, e.g. at the Sm-K edge no significant oscillations were observed. For these elements the LIII-edges were therefore investigated as described in section 3.4.

The fitting of the Ln-EXAFS data is complicated by the fact that the rare earths under investigation can occupy both crystalllographic La sites, i.e. the one in the LaRuO$_4$-layers and the one in the LaO-layers. Thus the obtained spectra contain contributions from both sites. Looking at the interatomic distances listed in Tab. 4 it is obvious that for both La positions a large number of different backscattering paths have to be considered. Therefore, certain simplifications were applied to reduce the number of fitting parameters with a conservation of accuracy. First of all, all backscattering rare earth elements were treated as lanthanum. This simplification is justified by almost identical backscattering amplitudes and phases calculated with FEFF8. As a second simplification the La-oxygen coordination sphere was not considered. The oxygen environment is composed of the contributions of many different oxygen ions with strongly varying La–O distances. In addition the coordination numbers are very similar for both La sites. La1 in the LaRuO$_4$ layer is surrounded by twelve oxygen atoms and La2 in the LaO layers has ten oxygen neighbors. For both sites the distances vary in the range R(La–O) $\approx 2.35$ Å to 2.98 Å with a very regular length-distribution. Thus a fit of the oxygen coordination sphere does not help to distinguish the two La sites and was therefore not performed. From the single crystal structure results it was found that the La1 site in the perovskite like LaRuO$_4$ layers is surrounded by six Ru ions (3.4588 Å $\leq R \leq 3.5703$ Å). In contrast the La2 site in the LaO layer is well separated from the Ru ions. As a result only two La–Ru distances with shorter lengths of $R = 3.2690$ Å and 3.4364 Å need to be considered for this site. In the following the Ru coordination sphere of La2 is denoted as
Ru(α) due to the shorter distances and Ru(β) is used for the La1 site. Ru(α) thus consists of 2 Ru ions with an average distance of 3.35 Å, while Ru(β) contains 6 Ru ions at an average distance of 3.52 Å. The values of the average distances derived from the single crystal analysis and the variance of the distribution range of distances, which reflects the "thickness" of the coordination shell, are listed in Tab. 7.

The La/Ln coordination of the La1 and La2 sites requires a more detailed discussion. La1 is surrounded by eight La/Ln atoms, which can be divided in six shorter distances with values between 3.80 Å and 4.02 Å and two clearly longer distances of ≈ 4.21 Å. In contrast, the La2 site has a tenfold La-coordination with distances between 3.59 Å and 4.02 Å. The coordination spheres are therefore rather similar for both La sites. Although this backscattering shell is thus not very well suited for distinguishing La1 and La2 it had to be included in the fitting procedure due to the overlap of the Ru- and La/Ln-shells clearly visible in Fig. 6. To describe these coordination shells the nomenclature La(α) for the 16 shorter bonds and La(β) for the two longer bonds was chosen. The combined backscattering of both La sites contributes in the fitting process of the La-K spectra. This situation is expected to be different for the Ln-K spectra due to the preferred localization described below.

The distribution of the Ln³⁺ ions was derived from the combined fitting of the Ru(α)/Ru(β) and the La(α)/La(β) coordination spheres. If the substituting rare earth Ln was occupying solely the La(2) site, the following coordination numbers would result: Ru(α) 2, Ru(β) 0, La(α) 10, and La(β) 0. On the other hand, for a completely random distribution of Ln the expected coordination numbers are Ru(α) 2, Ru(β) 6, La(α) 16, and La(β) 2. These numbers are given as N_{theo} (total) and N_{theo} (La2 site) in the second and third line of Tabs. 8 and 9. Because of these different coordination numbers the intensity ratio of the Ru and La/Ln peak are expected to change compared to the La-K-edge spectrum, if a (partial) cation ordering is present. In Fig. 6 the mRDF for the three recorded K-edges are shown in compari-

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**Table 5: Parameters for the EXAFS measurements.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Edge</th>
<th>Energy (keV)</th>
<th>Monochromator</th>
<th>EXAFS range (keV)</th>
<th>Δk (Å⁻¹)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>La-LII</td>
<td>5.483</td>
<td>Si(111)</td>
<td>5.503 - 5.895</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La-LI</td>
<td>5.891</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La-LI</td>
<td>6.266</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sm-LII</td>
<td>6.716</td>
<td>Si(111)</td>
<td>6.736 - 7.310</td>
<td>0.055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gd-LII</td>
<td>7.243</td>
<td>Si(111)</td>
<td>7.263 - 7.930</td>
<td>0.056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dy-LII</td>
<td>7.790</td>
<td>Si(111)</td>
<td>7.810 - 8.585</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ru-K</td>
<td>22.117</td>
<td>Si(311)</td>
<td>22.160 - 24.000</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La-K</td>
<td>38.925</td>
<td>Si(511)</td>
<td>38.970 - 40.000</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pr-K</td>
<td>41.991</td>
<td>Si(511)</td>
<td>42.030 - 43.100</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nd-K</td>
<td>43.569</td>
<td>Si(511)</td>
<td>43.620 - 44.800</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Table 6: Ru-K EXAFS fit results for polycrystalline La$_2$RuO$_5$ obtained by sol gel reaction.** With the simplified fit-model described in the text a residual of 13.10 % was achieved. The spectra was $k^2$ weighed, the $E_0$ shift was -2.58(1) eV and $S^2_0$ amounted to 0.910(1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coordination</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>R (Å)</th>
<th>$\sigma^2$ (Å²)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ru-O</td>
<td>1.96(1)</td>
<td>1.909(1)</td>
<td>0.0013(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ru-O</td>
<td>4.01(1)</td>
<td>2.042(1)</td>
<td>0.0013(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ru-La</td>
<td>0.98(1)</td>
<td>3.280(1)</td>
<td>0.0047(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ru-La</td>
<td>3.94(1)</td>
<td>3.477(1)</td>
<td>0.0047(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ru-La</td>
<td>1.98(1)</td>
<td>3.574(1)</td>
<td>0.0047(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ru-La</td>
<td>0.95(1)</td>
<td>3.640(1)</td>
<td>0.0047(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ru-Ru</td>
<td>4.11(1)</td>
<td>4.013(1)</td>
<td>0.0080(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ru-La</td>
<td>0.98(2)</td>
<td>4.694(1)</td>
<td>0.0039(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ru-La</td>
<td>0.90(2)</td>
<td>4.838(1)</td>
<td>0.0039(1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Table 7: Averaged distances calculated from La$_2$RuO$_5$ single crystal data.** The values in brackets represent the variance of the coordination shells.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXAFS path</th>
<th>Atoms</th>
<th>Average distance d(Å)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ru(α)</td>
<td>La2–Ru</td>
<td>3.35(7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ru(β)</td>
<td>La1–Ru</td>
<td>3.52(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La(α)</td>
<td>La–La</td>
<td>3.87(15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La(β)</td>
<td>La1–La1</td>
<td>4.22(2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

Figure 6: (Color online) Fourier transforms (mRDF) of the $k^3$ weighted EXAFS function $\chi(k)$ of the La-K-, Pr-K- and Nd-K-absorption edge.
For example for the compound Ce to reduce large numbers of scattering amplitudes and phases. Distances are unified to a single backscattering shell with an averaged interatomic distance. This procedure is commonly used for stoichiometric phases of O and La\(\alpha\) and \(\beta\) indicate scattering paths for the two different crystallographic La sites (see text for details).

Table 8: EXAFS refinement results for the K-edge measurements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Edge</th>
<th>(S_0^2)</th>
<th>(E_0) (eV)</th>
<th>(N_{\text{theo}}) (total)</th>
<th>(N_{\text{theo}}) (La2 site)</th>
<th>(\text{Ru}(\alpha))</th>
<th>(\text{Ru}(\beta))</th>
<th>(\text{La}(\alpha))</th>
<th>(\text{La}(\beta))</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>La-K ((\text{La}_2\text{RuO}_5))</td>
<td>0.56(1)</td>
<td>-7.28(5)</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.07(7)</td>
<td>16.29(20)</td>
<td>1.99(3)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Res = 9.72 %</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R (Å)</td>
<td>3.245(1)</td>
<td>3.480(1)</td>
<td>3.905(1)</td>
<td>4.234(1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(\sigma^2\times10^{-3}) Å(^2)</td>
<td>8.77(7)</td>
<td>8.90(5)</td>
<td>15.88(7)</td>
<td>5.21(6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pr-K ((\text{La}<em>{1.4}\text{Pr}</em>{0.6}\text{RuO}_5))</td>
<td>0.34(1)</td>
<td>-8.68(11)</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.14(6)</td>
<td>13.34(16)</td>
<td>1.58(2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Res = 12.46 %</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R (Å)</td>
<td>3.194(1)</td>
<td>3.439(1)</td>
<td>3.852(1)</td>
<td>4.232(1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(\sigma^2\times10^{-3}) Å(^2)</td>
<td>6.90(6)</td>
<td>9.20(4)</td>
<td>10.71(4)</td>
<td>3.13(4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nd-K ((\text{La}<em>{1.5}\text{Nd}</em>{0.5}\text{RuO}_5))</td>
<td>0.25(1)</td>
<td>-9.76(21)</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.68(16)</td>
<td>19.89(38)</td>
<td>2.72(6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Res = 7.19 %</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R (Å)</td>
<td>3.145(1)</td>
<td>3.378(2)</td>
<td>3.846(2)</td>
<td>4.227(2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(\sigma^2\times10^{-3}) Å(^2)</td>
<td>6.36(7)</td>
<td>12.67(6)</td>
<td>11.58(10)</td>
<td>3.85(10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The contributions of the four shells are shown as solid lines (shifted for clarity) and the summation is depicted as dashed line.

In Tab. 8 the results of the fitting parameters for the La-K, Pr-K and Nd-K spectra are listed. In the first step of the fitting procedure the amplitude reduction factor \(S_0^2\) and the energy shift \(E_0\) of the La-K spectra were refined while averaged values of the distance (R) taken from single crystal data and the Debye-Waller factors \((\sigma^2)\) were kept fixed. In addition the theoretical values \(N_{\text{theo}}\) (total) were used as coordination numbers. The same shift of the threshold energy \(E_0\) was used for all backscattering shells. In a next step R and \(\sigma^2\) were refined with fixed \(E_0\) and N. Finally only the coordination numbers and \(S_0^2\) were refined resulting in the values shown in Tab. 8. In all runs the coordination number \(N(R(u(\alpha)))\) was fixed to 2 in order to enhance the stability of the refinement and because this value is the same for both a statistical and a completely ordered distribution of \(Lu\).

The obtained residuals\(^{20}\) (Res) given in table 8 indicate a good fit quality. The rather high values for Debye-Waller factors of \(\text{Ru}(\beta)\) \((12.67\times10^{-3}\) Å\(^2\) for Nd-K) and \(\text{La}(\alpha)\) \((15.88\times10^{-3}\) Å\(^2\) for La-K) result from the large spreading of the interatomic distances unified to one backscattering shell in the fit. The \(\sigma^2\) of the remaining two paths is significantly smaller (roughly \(7\times10^{-3}\) Å\(^2\) for \(\text{Ru}(\alpha)\) and resp. \(3\times10^{-3}\) Å\(^2\) for \(\text{La}(\beta)\)), because only two quite similar distances were averaged here.

For the La-K edge of \(\text{La}_2\text{RuO}_5\) the obtained coordination numbers agree well with the expected values and prove that the simplified model (Tab. 8) can in fact be used for data analysis. This is illustrated in Fig. 7, where the resulting sum matches the experimental mRDF very well. The obtained distances of the backscattering shells are in very good agreement with the merged values listed in Tab. 7. Only the distance for \(\text{Ru}(\alpha)\) was approximately 0.1 Å shorter than expected from the single crystal analysis.

The same fitting procedure was used for the Pr-K and Nd-K spectra, leading to the values listed in Tab. 8. The obtained distances are distinctly smaller than the values calculated from...
the single crystal data listed in Tab. 7. These shorter interatomic distances correspond well with the observed decrease of the unit cell parameters upon rare earth substitution (see Ref. 9). The obtained values are quite similar for La1.4Pr0.6RuO5 and La1.5Nd0.5RuO5 (in detail the distances are slightly smaller for the latter one), which agrees with the similar unit cell parameters for both compounds.

Comparing the coordination numbers for the Pr-K and Nd-K edge spectra, it can be seen that the obtained number of backscattering atoms in the Ru(β) shell is clearly smaller than expected for a random distribution of Nd or Pr on the two La sites. For the La(α) and La(β) shells the differences of the coordination numbers are less reliable mostly due to the quality of the absorption spectra, which became rather noisy at high k-values because of the high absorption of lanthanum. In fact coordination numbers even larger than expected for a statistical distribution were in some cases observed (see Tab. 8). These may of course be avoided by appropriate constrains, which we did not apply to avoid biases in the results. We found N(Ru(β)) to be the most reliable measure for the distribution of the substituting rare earths and values of 4.14 for Pr and 4.68 for Nd correspond to 65% and 61% of the substituting rare earth on the La2 site. This is in very good accordance with the 65 - 70% for Pr derived from neutron diffraction.9

3.4. Ln-LIII EXAFS

The EXAFS spectra of the Ln-K-edge of Sm, Gd and Dy did not exhibit evaluable oscillations, therefore we used the LIII-edges of these elements. The Sm-LIII absorption edge has a sufficiently higher energy than the La-LIII edge (Tab. 5). Gd and Dy possess even higher LIII-edge energies, thus an overlapping with the La-LIII-edge does not need to be considered.

The spectra were recorded and evaluated similar to the the procedure described above for Ln-K-edges. The mRDFs of the rare earth LIII-edge spectra are depicted in Fig. 8. It is noteworthy that the signal-to-noise ratio at the LIII-edges of Sm, Gd, and Dy was by far worse that for the K-edge spectra of Pr and Nd (see Fig. 1). Due to the smaller maximum substitution levels for the late rare earths (e.g. xmax = 0.2 for Dy in comparison to xmax = 0.75 for Pr) rather small ρ(µ) values were observed at the LIII-edges. Because of the high absorption of the compounds, the thickness of the samples had to be small. For these reasons, only edge jumps of Δ(µ) ≤ 0.1 could be achieved. As a consequence the useful k range was limited to roughly 7 Å−1 (Gd) or 10 Å−1 (Sm, Dy). Among the mRDF of the rare earth substituted compounds the curve for Gd shows the smallest peak for the La/Ln coordination shells due to the comparable low quality of the measured spectra and the smallest k-range, which was evaluable. Additionally, the small k-region results in an overall broadening of the peaks in the LIII mRDFs.10

Calculation of the scattering amplitudes and phases at the LIII-edges was again performed with FEFF8. Similar scattering paths were combined and the same four coordination spheres introduced for the K-edge were used for the fit. A similar simulation was previously described e.g. for investigations of the LIII-edge of Ln2O3.23,24

For the edge energy correction E0, the intense white lines at the LIII-edges cause an increased shift. The fit of the data was done according to the above described procedure for the K-edges. First the distances R and the energy shifts were refined and in a second step the weighting of scattering paths was refined leaving R and N(Ru(α)) = 2 fixed.

The fit results are listed in Tab. 9 for La1.70Sm0.30RuO5, La1.75Gd0.25RuO5 and La1.85 Dy0.15RuO5. As was expected for the overall smaller k-range, the Debye-Waller factors of all four backscattering shells are slightly increased compared to the K-edge.

The obtained coordination shell distances agree well with the merged values in Tab. 7. For Ru(α) the accordence is excellent with approximately 3.3 Å, for Ru(β) the distances of roughly 3.4 Å are slightly shorter than the expected 3.52 Å, while the La backscattering shells show an increased distance compared to the merged values. With increasing distance the deviation between the expected and observed values increases. Taking into account the above described quality of the data such deviations are not surprising.

The obtained coordination numbers show a decrease for N(Ru(β)), which is very similar to the one for the Pr and Nd substituted samples. The preferred occupation of Ln on the La2 site in the LaO layers is therefore clearly supported by the EXAFS results. The reduction from N = 6 to 3.96 for Sm, 3.91 for Gd and 4.60 for Dy corresponds to roughly 68%, 69%, and respectively 57% of the Ln-ions occupying the La2 site. Again, these findings are in very good agreement with the neutron diffraction result for the Pr-substituted compounds (65 - 70% of the Pr ions in the LaO layer).9 Only for Dy no clear site preference was found in our EXAFS analysis.

4. Conclusions

The structural data obtained from the La3RuO5 single crystal refinement agree very well with earlier powder x-ray and...
powder neutron diffraction results. This proves that the twinning of the crystals and the resulting limitation of the data set (overlapping reflections were neglected) as well as the absorption correction do not comprise the single crystal structure analysis. The crystal structure was used as starting point for local structural investigations of La$_2$RuO$_5$ and rare earth substituted La$_{2-x}$Ln$_x$RuO$_5$ powder samples by x-ray absorption spectroscopy.

Details of the local surroundings of Ru, La and the rare earths (Pr, Nd, Sm, Gd, Dy) were studied. The Ru-K-edge EXAFS exhibited almost identical coordination of Ru independent of a partial replacement of La by other rare earth ions. A fit of the Ru coordination spheres was successfully carried out using a by far less complicated model compared to an earlier study. With this model interatomic distances were refined and found to agree well with the expected values derived from single crystal x-ray diffraction.

The distribution of the substituting rare earths was determined by EXAFS at the K- or L$_{III}$-edges, respectively. The data evaluation is complicated by the fact that two crystallographic sites for La/Ln are available and thus in the obtained modified radial distribution functions the contributions of both sites overlap. Therefore, a simplified model with a reduced number of coordination shells using averaged interatomic distances was successfully introduced. This model allows to perform the fitting procedure with a reasonable number of free parameters and was applied to the K- and L$_{III}$-edge EXAFS spectra of La$_{2-x}$Ln$_x$RuO$_5$.

The obtained results from the La, Pr and Nd K-edge spectra show a very good agreement with the averaged distances of the four backscattering shells calculated from the single crystal data. The corresponding values for the Sm, Gd and Dy L$_{III}$-edge spectra showed increasing deviations with increasing distance to the central absorber due to the limited k-range evaluable for the Fourier-transformation.

The rare earth ion distribution was examined by comparing the coordination numbers of the Ru($\beta$) backscattering path. For a random arrangement the coordination number 6 is expected, while a complete cationic ordering with the rare earths solely occupying the La$_2$ site should result in a value of 0. For both the K-edge and the L$_{III}$-edge spectra coordination numbers of roughly 4 were found. This reduction of N(Ru($\beta$)) clearly supports the preferred occupation of the La$_2$ site by the substituting ions and corresponds to roughly 2/3 of the Ln-ions on the La$_2$ site and 1/3 on the La1 site. It is noteworthy that the same degree of cationic ordering was found for all lanthanide ions (except for Dy, for which no clear ordering was found). This finding indicates that the size of the ions plays only a minor role for the ordering. The (partial) ordering in agreement with geometric considerations since the size of the La$_2$ position is smaller than the one of the La1 site and therefore it should be favored by the smaller lanthanide ions. Our results are further supported by earlier neutron powder diffraction studies on selected Pr-substituted samples, which also revealed a cationic ordering of roughly 65-70% of the Ln-ions on the La$_2$ site.

In summary, our investigations show that important structural information can be obtained from EXAFS spectroscopy especially when diffraction techniques fail. Such structural details can even be derived for low-symmetric compounds like La$_2$RuO$_5$, in which the coordination spheres are highly distorted.

5. Acknowledgements

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References
