Near-Edge Study of Gold-Substituted YBa$_2$Cu$_3$O$_{7-\delta}$

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Abstract

The valence of Cu and Au in YBa$_2$Au$_{0.3}$Cu$_{2.7}$O$_{7-\delta}$ was investigated using x-ray absorption near-edge structure (XANES). X-ray and neutron diffraction studies indicate that Au goes on the Cu(1) site and Cu K-edge XANES shows that this has little effect on the oxidation state of the remaining copper. The Au L$_3$ edge develops a white line feature whose position lies between that of trivalent gold oxide (Au$_2$O$_3$) and monovalent potassium gold cyanide (KAu(CN)$_2$) and whose height relative to the edge step is smaller than in the two reference compounds. The appearance of the Au L$_3$-edge suggests that fewer Au 3d states are involved in forming the Au–O bond in YBa$_2$Au$_{0.3}$Cu$_{2.7}$O$_{7-\delta}$ than in trivalent gold oxide.

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Substitution of many metals in YBa$_2$Cu$_3$O$_{7-\delta}$ (abbreviated as 123 in the following)\textsuperscript{1–4} reduces the superconducting transition temperature $T_c$. Metals like Fe, Co, or Al replace linear chain site copper, the Cu(1) site, and depress $T_c$ more slowly than Zn or Ni which replace copper located on the CuO$_2$ planes, the Cu(2) site. X-ray absorption near-edge structure (XANES) studies\textsuperscript{5,6} indicate that transition metal substitutions sometimes change the oxidation state of Cu or oxygen. An apparent exception to the above generalization is the behavior of Ag and Au. Considerable amounts of Au or Ag can be put into 123 before $T_c$ begins to decrease.\textsuperscript{7} Streitz et al.\textsuperscript{8} examined the microstructure of Au/123 composites and found that separate Au and Au-containing 123–like phases existed after heat treatment in oxygen. Hepp et al.\textsuperscript{9} and Cieplak et al.\textsuperscript{10} investigated YBa$_2$(Au$_x$Cu$_{1-x}$)$_3$O$_{7-\delta}$ using x-ray diffraction\textsuperscript{9,10} and neutron scattering\textsuperscript{10} and found that Au went into the Cu(1) site.

In this communication, we report the results of an examination of the Cu K and Au L$_3$ x–ray absorption edges for YBa$_2$(Au$_x$Cu$_{1-x}$)$_3$O$_{7-\delta}$ designed to determine the valences of Cu and Au. We find that an Au substitution of 8 mole percent has no measurable effect on the oxidation state of Cu in 123 which is divalent. The appearance of the Au L$_3$ edge suggests that the valence of gold is less in the superconductor than in trivalent Au$_2$O$_3$.

Samples used in this study were synthesized and characterized at NASA Lewis Research Center; synthetic details are discussed in reference 9. For YBa$_2$(Au$_{0.1}$Cu$_{0.9}$)$_3$O$_{7-\delta}$, x–ray diffraction (XRD) patterns and x–ray photoemission (XPS) suggest that "trivalent" Au goes into the Cu(1) site. When this occurs the a and b axes remain unchanged but the c axis expands from 11.69 to 11.75 Å. This is in accord with the well known
structural chemistry of Au (see reference 9 for relevant discussion). Hepp et al.\textsuperscript{9} found no evidence for the presence of secondary phases in their x-ray data for Au substitutions less than 10 mole percent. The formation of a second phase was readily detected in the x-ray diffraction data when more than 10 mole percent was put in 123. \( T_c \) was observed to be 89 K for the 8 mole percent gold containing material and 91 K for the parent 123 material made without Au\textsubscript{2}O\textsubscript{3}. It should be emphasized at this point that the x-ray-based results of Hepp et al. have been confirmed by detailed neutron diffraction studies.\textsuperscript{10}

The x-ray absorption measurements were made in the transmission mode using powdered samples dispersed on adhesive tape. Au or Cu foil absorbers were placed after the samples to run in conjunction with the samples to maintain calibrated energy scale. The work was done at the X-11A beamline at the Brookhaven National Synchrotron Light Source (NSLS). The technical details of this beamline are published in reference 11. The resolution of the monochromator is estimated to be \( \sim 1.0 \) eV at the Cu k-edge and \( \sim 1.2 \) eV at the Au L\textsubscript{3} edge. The samples were crushed into powder and screened through 400-mesh before dispersal onto adhesive tape. The near-edge data for the Cu K and Au L\textsubscript{3} edges was obtained and analyzed using standard procedures. A linear background was removed from the edge before normalization. Energy calibration of the edge was ensured by measuring the L\textsubscript{3} edge from a gold foil and the k-edge from a Cu foil simultaneously with the superconducting samples.

The Cu k-edges for the 123 material (solid line) and the 8 mole percent Au sample (dashed line) are shown in figure 1. The shape of the Cu k-edge is complex and several interpretations of it exist.\textsuperscript{12-16} XANES results are now available for highly oriented powders or single crystal
materials using polarized x–rays and provide the most reliable data for
the Cu k edge.\textsuperscript{17–20} The Cu k near edge structure arises from dipole
transitions from the Cu Is core level to the low–lying copper valence or
conduction band states with p or π symmetry and to transitions from the
Cu Is to continuum final states that are modified by multiple scattering
(shape resonances). The transitions to bound final states are related to
the electron density of states and are sensitive to changes in the chemical
state of the Cu while the shape resonances are sensitive to structural
modification. Heald et al.\textsuperscript{17} examined the Cu k–edge from 123 powders
oriented such that the x–ray polarization vector \( \hat{\epsilon} \) was either parallel or
perpendicular to the c axis. The position of a weak pre–edge feature
marked "A" due to Is to 3d quadrupole transitions is marked on figure 1
and it is directly related to the valence of the Cu. In oxygen deficient 123
material, this peak grows in proportion to the removal of holes from the
oxygen site and the formation of Cu\textsuperscript{1+}.\textsuperscript{21,22} Peak "B" is due to transitions
from the Is to 4p\( \pi \) band accompanied by shake down transitions (4p\( \pi^* \)) and
peak "C" contains contributions from the Is to 4p\( \pi \) and Is to 4p\( \sigma \)
transitions from the Cu(2) and the Cu(1) sites. The feature marked "D"
is identified as a shape resonance. Figure 1 shows that the Cu–k edges for
YBa\textsubscript{2}Cu\textsubscript{3}O\textsubscript{7−δ} (solid line) and YBa\textsubscript{2}(Au\textsubscript{0.1}Cu\textsubscript{0.9})\textsubscript{3}O\textsubscript{7−δ} (dashed line) are
virtually identical which indicates that Au substitution has little or no
effect on the valence of copper.

The Au L\textsubscript{3} edges for YBa\textsubscript{2}(Au\textsubscript{0.1}Cu\textsubscript{0.9})\textsubscript{3}O\textsubscript{7−δ}, Au foil, monovalent
KAu(CN)\textsubscript{2} and trivalent Au\textsubscript{2}O\textsubscript{3} are shown in figure 2. The spectra for the
reference compounds and Au substituted 123 have been normalized to the
edge step of the Au absorption edge. The near–edge structure of the L\textsubscript{2} and
L\textsubscript{3} edges in 5d transition metal compounds is dominated by 2p\( 1/2 \) to 5d\( 3/2 \)
and \(2p_{3/2}\) to \(5d_{1/2}\) transitions (white line feature). The \(L_3\) edge also has a contribution from the \(2p_{3/2}\) to \(5d_{3/2}\) level but it is much weaker than the \(2p_{1/2}\) to \(5d_{3/2}\) and \(2p_{3/2}\) to \(5d_{1/2}\) transitions. The intensity of the white line feature is thought to provide a good indication of the \(5d\) occupation. For Au (small dashed curve), the \(5d\) band is filled and no white line feature is observed. The oxidation of Au to the mono or trivalent state creates the white line feature. We find that the white line area is larger for \(Au_2O_3\) (dot-dashed line) than \(KAu(CN)_2\) (dashed line) and also find that the white line feature shifts to lower photon energy when the oxidation number increases from 1+ to 3+. It should be noted that the ratio of the white line areas for \(Au_2O_3\) and \(KAu(CN)_2\) is less than the ratio of \(d\)-electron removal suggested by the valence. The white line area for Au in 123 (solid line) is considerably smaller than either of the reference compounds and lies at lower photon energy than \(KAu(CN)_2\) but at a higher photon energy than \(Au_2O_3\).

The Au \(L_3\) near edge data for \(YBa_2(Au_{0.1}Cu_{0.9})_3O_7\) suggests that the valence of Au in the 123 material differs from that of Au in trivalent \(Au_2O_3\). Iron also replaces Cu on the chain site and is trivalent. However, the substitution of 8 mole percent Fe depresses \(T_C\) by 55 K rather than the 2 K found for the equivalent gold substitution. Yang et al. found that Fe substitution modifies the O k-edge and reduces the number of \(2p\) holes on the oxygen. We suggest, based on the reduction in the apparent number of unoccupied Au \(5d\) states for the Au–O bond in 123, when compared to \(Au_2O_3\) and the small Au-induced change in \(T_C\), that little or no change occurs in the number of the oxygen \(2p\) holes. This is supported by our data for the Cu k-edge which shows no change in the Cu–O bonding like that observed when the high \(T_C\) material becomes oxygen deficient and holes
are removed from the oxygen site. 21

The near-edge data suggests that small amounts of Au incorporated in 123 at the Cu(1) have less 5d involvement in the Au–O bond in the superconductor than in Au2O3. We believe this is related to the doping of the oxygen site with holes. Gold has less effect on the superconducting properties than Fe presumably because Au does not localize the holes on itself. There are no obvious changes in the Cu k-edge and we conclude that Au substitution has little or no effect on the chemical state of Cu or oxygen.

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References


Figure 1.—Cu k-edge XANES for YBa$_2$Cu$_3$O$_{7.8}$ (solid curve) and YBa$_2$Au$_{0.3}$Au$_2$O$_{7.8}$ (dashed curve). The energy reference was maintained using a Cu foil.

Figure 2.—Au L$_3$ absorption edges for gold (dotted curve), a monovalent gold compound - KAu(CN)$_2$ (dashed curve), trivalent gold oxide - Au$_2$O$_3$ (dot-dashed curve) and YBa$_2$Au$_{0.3}$Au$_2$O$_{7.8}$ (solid). A consistent energy reference was maintained by examining the L$_3$ edge of a gold foil simultaneously with these samples.
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