UNUSUAL MAGNETIC BEHAVIOR OF TmIr₂ and YbIr₂

J.O. WILLIS, J.L. SMITH and Z. FISK
Materials Science and Technology Division, Los Alamos National Laboratory, Los Alamos, NM 87545, USA

In contrast to the other magnetic Rare Earth (RE) ions for which the cubic Laves REIr₂ compound is ferromagnetic, YbIr₂ and TmIr₂ are antiferromagnetic below 0.40 and 0.05 K, respectively. Both are trivalent above 4 K, with a possible reduced moment for TmIr₂ below 0.3 K. In addition, CeIr₂ and LuIr₂ are superconductive below 0.20 and 0.23 K, respectively.

The predominant behavior of the magnetic Rare Earth (RE)Ir₂ (C15, cubic Laves phase) intermetallic compounds is local moment paramagnetism at high temperature and ferromagnetic order at low temperature, as reported by Bozorth et al. [1]. Curie points Tc were found to vary roughly as \((g - 1)^2J(J + 1)\), the De Gennes factor [2], and ordered moment values to fall between \(2S\) and \(gJ\). Here \(S\) is the spin and \(J\) is the total quantum number, and \(g\) is the Landé g factor.

The data for Eu-, Tm- and YbIr₂ were questionable as pointed out by the authors of ref. [1] because of unusual magnetic behavior for EuIr₂ and sample preparation difficulties for the other two compounds. The behavior of EuIr₂ was resolved when Matthias, Fisk and Smith [3] reported superconductivity at 0.2 K, proving that here Eu is in its purely trivalent, nonmagnetic state.

To reexamine the properties of the often mixed-valent elements Yb and Tm in the REIr₂ system, we have prepared single crystals by the flux growth technique using a Cu solvent. The crystals were all cubic Laves phase; lattice parameters of 0.74638(1) nm for YbIr₂ and 0.74736(2) nm for TmIr₂ were measured. Susceptibility measurements were made in a Faraday magnetometer over the range 230–4 K. A Curie–Weiss fit to the susceptibility \(\chi = (p_{\text{eff}}^2/8)/(T - \Theta)\) yields \(p_{\text{eff}} = 7.57\mu_B\) and \(\Theta = -4\) K for TmIr₂ and \(p_{\text{eff}} = 4.49\mu_B\) and \(\Theta = -4\) K for YbIr₂, in good agreement with the trivalent free-ion values for the effective moments. The ac susceptibilities were measured from 4 to 0.012 K with arbitrary sensitivity, and therefore no low temperature effective moment values could be obtained. A constant was subtracted from the ac susceptibility to correct for a temperature-independent paramagnetic background. The constant \(\chi_\infty\) (less than about 30% of the peak susceptibility) which gave the best straight line fit to \(1/\chi\) was employed in the analysis. For YbIr₂ this resulted in a \(\Theta\) of -0.3 K, much smaller than the high temperature extrapolated data. In addition, YbIr₂ has a cusp in the ac susceptibility at 0.42 K, indicating antiferromagnetic ordering; see fig. 1. Helping to confirm this assertion, we find that the cusp moves to lower temperatures in an applied magnetic field at the rate of \(-1.5\) K/T. The situation for TmIr₂ is more complex. Below 4 K, a linear fit to \(1/\chi_{\text{ac}}\) extrapolates to \(\Theta = -1.4\) K, compared to \(\Theta = -4\) K from the high temperature data. In addition, at 0.3 K, \(\chi_{\text{ac}}\) has a discontinuity in the slope (steeper at lower temperature) followed by a cusp at 0.05 K, seen in fig. 2. The cusp moves to lower temperatures in a field at the rate of \(-2.5\) K/T. We have also grown single-crystal CeIr₂ and LuIr₂; these compounds are superconductive below 0.20 and 0.23 K with upper critical fields of 0.11 and 0.10 T, respectively.

The cubic Laves C15 structure with REIr₂ appears

![Graph](image_url)

Fig. 1. Inverse ac susceptibility vs. temperature for YbIr₂. The line is only a guide to the eye.
unfavorable for mixed valence formation, with the usual exception of CeIr$_2$ which is reported to have a valence of 3.21 from L$_{113}$ X-ray absorption measurements [4]. EuIr$_2$ is superconducting at 0.2 K and thus must be in its trivalent $J = 0$ configuration. In contrast, EuRh$_2$ is not trivalent; rather it is mixed valent as determined from $^{151}$Eu Mössbauer effect measurements [5] and is strongly paramagnetic at low temperatures, indicating a probable divalent state. Generally then, the nonmagnetic RE ions form superconductors in the REIr$_2$ series; the magnetic RE ions order magnetically. Ferromagnetic order is the rule except for Yb- and TmIr$_2$ which are antiferromagnetic with Neél temperatures much lower than the $\Theta$ values; this may be due to crystal field effects. TmIr$_2$ has an additional susceptibility feature below 0.3 K which may be interpreted as a moment reduction. This may be due to crystal-field effects, the onset of mixed valency or quadrupolar ordering as seen in TmZn slightly above a magnetic ordering temperature [6]. The very low temperatures at which these effects occur make further investigation most difficult; they also indicate that extremely small energies are responsible for this unusual behavior.

As a further note on the unusual properties of these materials, we comment on arc melted Tm$_{0.2}$Ir$_{0.8}$. This composition forms a eutectic of Ir and TmIr$_2$ as determined by X-ray diffraction. Susceptibility measurements on as-cast material yield $\mu_{\text{eff}} = 7.44\mu_B$ and $\Theta = -2.6$ K, consistent with a full, trivalent moment on the Tm ion. Superconductivity is observed by ac susceptibility techniques at 1.5–1.8 K. Annealing this sample (16 days, 1000°C) destroys superconductivity above 0.1 K, the transition temperature of pure Ir. We speculate that one of two phenomena may be occurring: enhanced superconductivity [7] in Ir due to lattice mismatch with TmIr$_2$ giving rise to a lattice expansion and softening in Ir, which has been shown to lack credibility [8]; or the first case of superconductivity in a binary compound of undetermined crystal structure containing a rare earth element carrying its full local moment at low temperatures. At present, more experimental work needs to be done to confirm either of these hypotheses.

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