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Optical characteristics of triclinic rubidium hydrogen selenate

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The refractive indices of rubidium hydrogen selenate are measured for several wavelengths at room temperature, and the transmission spectrum is measured from the UV (240 nm) to the near IR (2000 nm). The orientation of the optical indicatrix with respect to the crystal axes is also determined at several wavelengths in the visible range. Using a new method based on the deflection of light by the ferroelastic domain structure, we also determine refined values for birefringence at several wavelengths. Finally, the dispersion of the three birefringences in the range 450–900 nm is deduced from polarimetric measurements. This set of results yields complete knowledge of the linear optical characteristics required for interpretation of the electro-optical and nonlinear optical properties of this compound.

1. INTRODUCTION

At room temperature, rubidium hydrogen selenate (RHSe) is in a ferroelectric–ferroelastic phase with the triclinic structure¹ (space group $P1$). This phase always exhibits a layered domain structure, with domain walls parallel to (001) reticular planes and the spontaneous polarization oriented close to the b axis.² Neighboring domains are symmetrical to each other in a two-fold rotation around the axis perpendicular to the (a, b) planes. This domain structure can be considered especially soft at room temperature, because it can easily be reversed by application of mechanical stresses or electric fields and it reappears spontaneously as soon as the field is released after saturation. This soft ferroelectric behavior is the basic process involved in some interesting properties of RHSe: a pronounced electro-optic effect at low frequency³ and electrical modulation of the deflection of light.⁴ However—and probably because of this inherent domain structure—the refractive indices and the ellipsoid orientation of RHSe have not been measured with good accuracy. A better knowledge of the optical properties of this material is essential for its application in electro-optical devices.

In this paper we first determine the following optical characteristics of RHSe at room temperature: the transmission spectrum from the UV (240 nm) to the IR (2000 nm), the orientation of the optical indicatrix relative to the crystal axes for several wavelengths, and the values of two refractive indices measured by Pulfrich refractometry and by Michelson interferometry. The accuracy in measurement of the refractive indices is relatively poor, and the third refractive index has not been determined. Therefore we use the property of light deflection by the

domain structure⁵ to obtain refined values of two birefringences at the same wavelengths as for index measurements. An important advantage of this method compared with classical interferometric methods is that the birefringences are directly determined from accurate measurements of the deflection angles and independently from the sample thickness. The latter parameter is not required and therefore does not affect the accuracy in the determination of the birefringence. In a last step, from polarimetric measurements we deduce the overall dispersion for the three birefringences versus wavelength in the range 450–900 nm.

2. SAMPLE PREPARATION AND DEFINITIONS OF AXES

Pure RbHSeO₄ crystals were grown at 305 K by evaporation from saturated water solutions. From as-grown single crystals (typically 30 mm × 20 mm × 15 mm) parallelepipedic samples and thin plates were cut and polished along the appropriate directions for the experiments. All samples were in the multidomain state, and we did not try to achieve a single-domain state because domains reappear immediately after any treatment. In what follows, any plate will be designated by the axis perpendicular to its optical faces: For instance, c cut means that the faces are cut and polished perpendicular to the c axis and that generally the light is propagated along this c axis. The various cuttings and orientations, denoted a , b , and c , refer to the so-called pseudo-orthorhombic axis system, which is shown in Fig. 1(a) and defined from crystal axes a_0 , b_0 , and c_0 of the triclinic lattice as follows: c is the axis perpendicular to the (001) domain walls and is

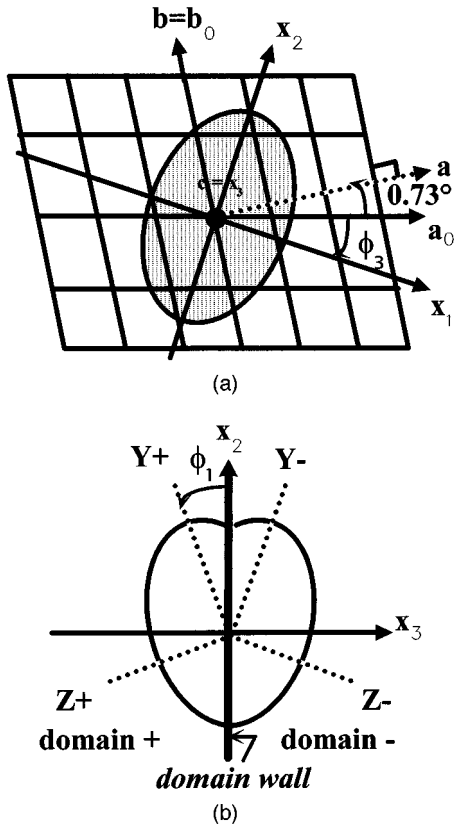


Fig. 1. Two axis systems. (a) Orthogonal axis system (a , b , c) of the pseudo-orthorhombic structure, and pseudoprincipal axes (x_1 , x_2 , x_3) of the average monoclinic structure (see text, Section 2). (b) True principal axes (X , Y , Z) of the triclinic structure in neighboring domains.

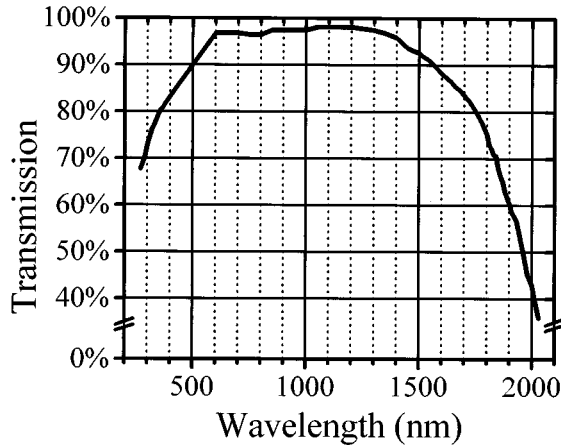


Fig. 2. Transmission spectrum of RHSe for unpolarized light propagating along the c axis and corrected to account for Fresnel losses. (Sample thickness, 3.35 mm.)

oriented in the same way as the pyroelectric c_0 axis, $b = b_0$ is the true crystal axis of the triclinic lattice, and a is the axis perpendicular to b_0 in the (001) reticular planes.

However, inasmuch as the crystallographic angle γ between the a_0 and b_0 axes is very close to 90° ($\gamma = 90.73^\circ$) the distinction between the a and the a_0 axes is not significant in most cases.

Another axis system (x_1 , x_2 , x_3), which is better suited than the (a , b , c) system to describe the optical properties, is also used below: x_1 and x_2 are optical neutral lines (fast and slow, respectively) in the (a , b) plane and $x_3 = c$ is the axis perpendicular to the (a , b) plane.

These axes should not be confused with the principal dielectric axes (X , Y , Z) of the triclinic, single-domain crystal [Fig. 1(b)]. In a multidomain crystal the axes x_1 , x_2 , and x_3 correspond to the average positions of the principal axes (X , Y , Z) through the domain structure, so they can be called the pseudoprincipal axes. The corresponding indices n_1 , n_2 , and n_3 on the indicatrix are called the pseudoprincipal indices, and the corresponding birefringences Δn_1 , Δn_2 , and Δn_3 in the perpendicular planes are called the pseudoprincipal birefringences.

3. TRANSMISSION SPECTRUM

The transmission spectrum of RHSe was measured under unpolarized light propagating along the c axis (perpendicular to the domain walls). This configuration was chosen because it is the only one for which the light crosses the crystal without any deflection. For this experiment we used a 3.35-mm-thick, c -cut sample and a Cary 17 absorption setup. The results obtained in the range 240–2000 nm are plotted in Fig. 2. The values are corrected to account for the Fresnel losses. The remaining losses in the transparency range can be attributed to the imperfect quality of the polishing and to the moisture that is due to the relatively large hygroscopy of the crystal. Note that the transparency range on the IR side is wider than that of potassium dihydrogen phosphate (KDP) and similar to that of the deuterated compound, KD*P.⁶

4. ORIENTATION OF THE OPTICAL INDICATRIX

The ferroelectric–ferroelastic domains of RHSe are clearly visible under a polarizing microscope [Fig. 3(a)] in both a -cut and b -cut plates.⁴ As in any ferroelastic crystal, the optical contrast of the domain structure between crossed polarizers is due to the mutual tilt of the optical indicatrices in neighboring domains. This tilt angle ($\pm\phi$ alternately with respect to the domain wall) is schematically illustrated in Fig. 3(b).

However, because angle ϕ is small, the measurement under the microscope is not accurate. To refine the measurement of ϕ_a and ϕ_b , we prepared a - and b -cut plates (approximately 1 mm thick). The sample was placed between two Nicol polarizers. Several wavelengths were used (633, 585, 514, 488, and 458 nm) from argon and helium–neon lasers. The beam was carefully focused upon a macro domain (typically 50–200 μm wide) previously observed under the microscope. Extinction was achieved between crossed polarizers; then the beam was shifted to an opposite macro domain and we achieved extinction again by rotating the polarizers. The rotation angle between the two positions has a value of $2|\phi|$, with a typical error of $\pm 0.2^\circ$. The results obtained in this way for ϕ_a and ϕ_b are listed in Table 1. Note that the results for ϕ_b are not so accurate and reproducible as those for ϕ_a , for which an explanation is given in Section 8 below.

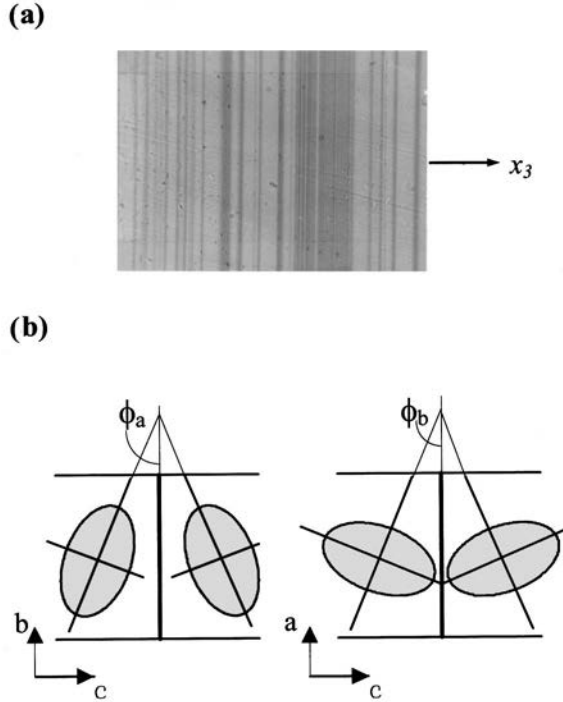


Fig. 3. (a) Domain structure observed under a polarizing microscope in a b -cut plate. (b) Tilt angle of the neutral lines in the (b, c) and (a, c) planes.

Table 1. Tilt Angles of the Optical Indicatrix in RHSe^a

Wavelength (nm)	ϕ_a (deg)	ϕ_b (deg)	ϕ_c (deg)
1321	$-2.5(\pm 0.2)$	-	-
633	$-2.25(\pm 0.1)$	$1.3(\pm 0.4)$	$-6.0(\pm 0.2)$
514	$-1.9(\pm 0.15)$	$1.0(\pm 0.4)$	-
458	$-1.8(\pm 0.15)$	$1.0(\pm 0.4)$	-

^aThe value and the sign of each angle refers to the oriented orthogonal system (a, b, c) formed by the pseudo-orthorhombic axes.

We also used a slightly different method to measure ϕ_a and ϕ_b : the sample (a or b cut) was prepared with silver-paste electrodes deposited upon the b faces and subjected to a dc voltage of 250 V, which is usually sufficient to produce a nearly single-domain state. The laser beam was not focused so we could avoid any possibility that a big part of the light could pass through one reverse domain that could remain in the sample despite the electrical saturation. Extinction was achieved at saturation between crossed polarizers; then the dc field was reversed and extinction was achieved again. The values obtained in this way (at 633 nm) for ϕ_a and ϕ_b were 2.0° and 1.2° , respectively (values corrected in accounting for the ferroelastic strain at saturation). The value for ϕ_a is slightly smaller than by the first method, because in the second method the a -cut plate was probably not fully saturated. Although it is less accurate, the second method allows us to determine the sign of the angles. Depending on the sign of the electric field, the shear strain of the sample can be observed because of the angular displacement of the deflected beams while the field is reversed. From the knowledge of the triclinic angles (α

$> 90^\circ$, $\beta < 90^\circ$) it is easy to determine the signs of ϕ_a and ϕ_b relative to the oriented axis system (a, b, c) . The values obtained by Tsukamoto⁴ at 633 nm for ϕ_a and ϕ_b (5.5° and 11.0° , respectively) were much larger than our results. This discrepancy must be attributed to the fact that Tsukamoto used an indirect method, which was based on the extinction of the deflected beams (instead of the direct beam).

The third angle, ϕ_c , defined as the angle between pseudo-orthorhombic axis a (b) and the neutral line x_1 (x_2) in the (a, b) plane, was measured on a 1 mm-thick c -cut plate. Because the c axis is perpendicular to the domain walls, the whole crystal is optically continuous in this direction despite the domain structure, so the extinction position can be directly measured relative to a natural growth face (100) taken as a reference. The value measured at 633 nm is $\phi_c = -6.0^\circ (\pm 0.2^\circ)$.

5. REFRACTIVE INDICES

The values of the refractive indices were measured by two complementary methods. First we used a Pulfrich refractometer. The parallelepipedic sample used for this experiment was cut perpendicularly to the pseudoprincipal axes (x_1, x_2, x_3) . The x_2 -cut face was aligned horizontally on the prism of the refractometer, and the x_3 -cut face was oriented perpendicularly to the incident beam supplied by a collimated spectral lamp. This configuration allowed us to measure either the n_1 or the n_2 index by polarizing the incident light along the horizontal axis or the vertical axis, respectively. The values obtained for three wavelengths of the mercury lamp are listed in Table 2. By using other configurations we obtained similar results for n_1 and n_2 . Unfortunately, it was not possible to measure the third index, n_3 , unambiguously with the Pulfrich refractometer because the incident light when it is polarized along c axis is always deflected by the domain structure. This result indicates that the third pseudoprincipal index, n_3 , is smaller than n_1 and n_2 .

For index measurements we also used an interferometric method⁷: The shift of the optical path length through a RHSe plate was measured while the sample was rotated in one arm of a Michelson-type interferometer. From the

Table 2. Pseudoprincipal Refractive Indices of RHSe^a

Wavelength (nm)	Measurement Method	Refractive Index	
		n_1	n_2
436	PR	1.532(2)	1.579(2)
546	PR	1.526(3)	1.574(3)
578	PR	1.525(3)	1.573(3)
633	MI	1.521(1)	1.563(1)
1152	MI	1.513(1)	1.545(1)

^aMeasurements at 293 K by Pulfrich refractometry (PR) and by Michelson interferometry (MI). The accuracy of the PR results is not good because the surface of the crystal was rapidly damaged by the liquid, ensuring contact between the sample and the prism. For MI results, the error in the refractive indices is due mainly to the error in the sample thickness ($\pm 0.15\%$).

positions of the maxima (or minima) on the interferogram it is possible to deduce the index value, provided that the thickness of the sample is perfectly known. We performed the experiment on a *c*-cut RHSe sample (thickness, $2990 \pm 5 \mu\text{m}$), using two different wavelengths from helium–neon lasers (633 and 1152 nm). These data are also listed in Table 2.

6. DEFLECTION MEASUREMENTS

The deflection of light by ferroelastic domain walls can be used to determine the birefringence of a crystal with good accuracy, provided that at least one refractive index is known approximately. This method is rarely employed, and we explain it below. First we describe the deflection phenomenon.

A. Deflection Phenomenon

As was shown by Tsukamoto and Futama,⁵ the tilt of the optical indicatrix relative to ferroelastic domain walls leads to a deflection phenomenon of the light. Deflection is caused by reflection and refraction processes at the domain walls from high index to low index or vice versa. All possible deflection processes are shown in Fig. 4. An unpolarized incident beam gives rise—as a rule, in the most general case—to six beams, denoted D, R, A, A', B, and B', at the output of the crystal. Beams A, A', symmetrical to each other with respect to the plane of domain walls, result from refractive transmission and reflection processes acting from low index to high index at domain walls. These two beams are linearly polarized along the high-index direction. Beams B and B' (also symmetrical to each other with respect to the domain wall) result from refractive transmission and reflection processes from high index to low index. So they are polarized along the low-index direction and appear only for incidence angles larger than a critical value. The direct beam (D) and the reflected beam (R) are due, respectively, to transmission and reflection processes that do not change the magnitude of the refractive index (i.e., high-to-high or low-to-low). The two beams D and R (symmetrical to each other) are

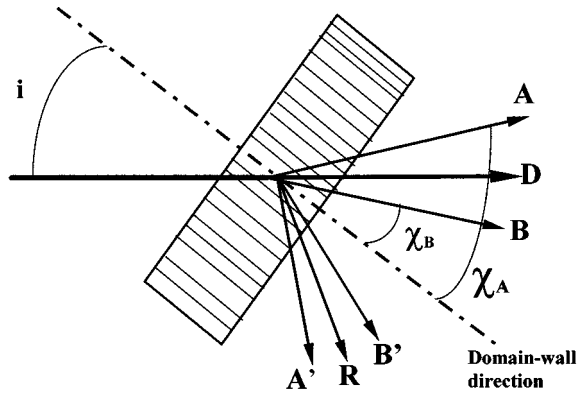


Fig. 4. Deflection processes at domain walls in RHSe. **A, A'**, refractive transmission and reflection from low index to high index; **B, B'**, refractive transmission and reflection from high index to low index. **D, R**, nonrefractive transmission and reflection.

only slightly refracted at the domain wall (the deviation is negligible) and are both unpolarized.

For a given deflected beam the deflection angle χ depends not only on the incidence angle i but also on the direction of the cutting axis chosen in the (a , b) plane. As we shall see below, accurate measurements of the deflection angles χ make it possible to deduce the values of the birefringences.

B. Experimental Results

Several deflecting RHSe plates, less than 1 mm thick, were cut perpendicularly to the domain structure: a -cut (100), b -cut (010), $(1\bar{1}0)$ -cut, x_1 -cut, and x_2 -cut, and two other plates were cut at -17° and $+13^\circ$ from the x_2 axis. We recall that x_1 and x_2 are defined as the neutral lines in the (a , b) plane and are rotated by 6° from the a and b axes, respectively. These axes (x_1 , x_2) are of particular interest for deflection because they correspond to the extremal values (maximal and minimal, respectively) of deflection angle χ_A at zero incidence. Several laser beams were used as a light source, with wavelengths ranging from 454 to 633 nm. The sample was centered on the vertical axis of a rotating holder to vary the angle of incidence i . Using a goniometric system, we measured the deflection angles relative to the incident beam, with a typical error of $\pm 0.1^\circ$, as a function of the angle of incidence i . Complete experiments were made in this way at 633 nm for the (100) and the $(1\bar{1}0)$ plates. The results are plotted in Fig. 5, where the deflection angles have been referred not to the incident beam direction but to the direction of the domain walls (i.e., the angle of incidence i has been subtracted from the measured values to show the symmetry of the deflection phenomenon). As Fig. 5(a) shows, in the case of the (100) plate the B–B' beams appear above a critical incidence angle (24.5°) that is equal to the deflection angle $\chi_A(0)$ of the A–A' beams at zero incidence. This value is in good agreement with that obtained previously by Tsukamoto.⁴ For the $(1\bar{1}0)$ plate [Fig. 5(b)], the value of deflection angle $\chi_A(0)$ at zero incidence is 13.7° . The results obtained for deflection angle χ_A at zero incidence in the different plates are listed in Table 3. The measurements versus wavelength were carried out with the x_1 -cut and the x_2 -cut plates. The results are given in Table 4.

C. Refinement of Birefringence from Deflection Measurements

As was shown by Tsukamoto *et al.*,⁸ the deflection angles can be calculated from the laws of crystal optics, in any configuration of the incident beam, provided that the following five optical parameters of the deflecting crystal are known: the two tilt angles ϕ_1 and ϕ_2 of the indicatrix relatively to domain walls (as seen from the x_1 and the x_2 axes, respectively), or otherwise the two inclination angles ϕ_a and ϕ_b (as seen from the a and the b axes, respectively) and the three principal indices n_x , n_y , and n_z (or otherwise the pseudoprincipal indices n_1 , n_2 , and n_3).

However, the deflection angle is sensitive mainly to the birefringence of the plate but is less sensitive to the absolute values of the refractive indices or to the tilt angles of the indicatrix (provided that these angles are small). For instance, in an x_1 -cut plate the deflection angle $\chi_A(0)$ at

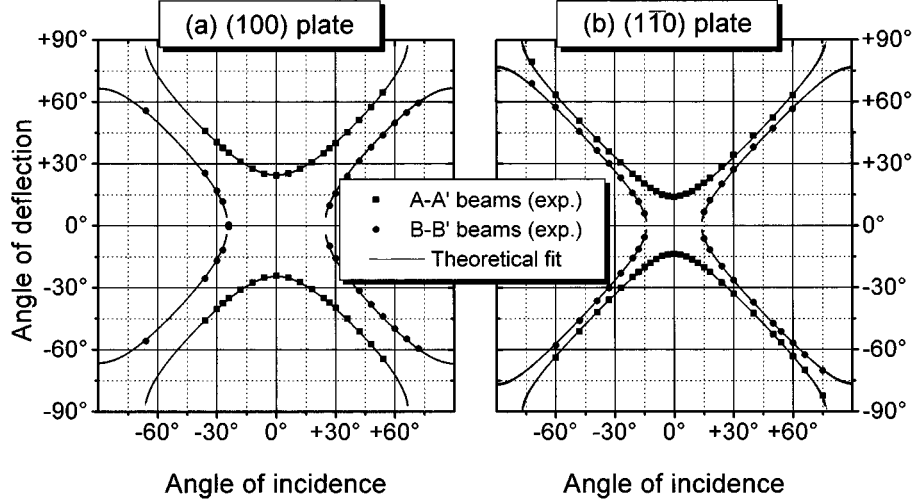


Fig. 5. Deflection angles of beams A and B at 633 nm as functions of the angle of incidence. The least-squares values of the birefringence taken for the theoretical fitting are $\Delta n_1 = 0.0560$ and $\Delta n_2 = 0.0139$. Other optical parameters involved in the calculation are $n_2 = 1.5632$, $\phi_1 = -2.2^\circ$, $\phi_2 = +0.6^\circ$, $\phi_3 = -6.0^\circ$.

Table 3. Deflection Angle $\chi_A(0)$ at Zero Incidence^a

Cutting Axis x of the Plate	Position of x Relative to x_1 (deg)	Angle of Deflection at Zero Incidence (deg)
x_1	0	24.6
a	6	24.5
$x_2 - 17^\circ$	73	12.6
x_2	90	11.85
b	96	11.9
$x_2 + 13^\circ$	103	13.2
($\bar{1}\bar{1}0$)	110	13.7

^aMeasurements at 633 nm for different plates cut perpendicularly to the domain walls.

Table 4. Deflection Angle $\chi_A(0)$ at Zero Incidence As a Function of Wavelength for x_1 -Cut and x_2 -Cut Plates

Wavelength (nm)	Angle of Deflection at Zero Incidence (deg)	
	x_1 -Cut Plate	x_2 -Cut Plate
1321	21.4 ± 0.3	–
1064	22.5 ± 0.3	–
820	23.7 ± 0.3	–
633	24.6 ± 0.1	11.9 ± 0.1
514	25.4 ± 0.1	12.1 ± 0.1
488	25.6 ± 0.1	12.15 ± 0.1
458	25.9 ± 0.1	12.25 ± 0.1

zero incidence depends mainly on birefringence Δn_1 in the plane perpendicular to the x_1 axis. Therefore, from the results of deflection measurements given above, it is possible to refine the values of the two pseudoprincipal birefringences Δn_1 and Δn_2 , provided that at least one refractive index is known.

It should be pointed out that within this technique the determination of the birefringence is absolutely indepen-

dent of sample thickness L . Comparatively, the classical techniques based on interferometry or on polarimetry require L as a parameter in the fitting procedure for determination of refractive index n (or of birefringence Δn): Although the accuracy of the product $L \times (n - 1)$ or $L \times \Delta n$ is usually very good (typical relative error is to 10^{-5} or 10^{-6}), the final accuracy of the birefringence can be much affected by the inaccuracy of the sample thickness itself (typical relative error 10^{-3} to 10^{-4}). Additionally, in our deflection method the sign of each birefringence is determined immediately from the angular position of the input polarizer, ensuring the extinction of the A–A' deflected beams.

To test the validity of our fitting computations we started from previous studies by Tsukamoto *et al.*⁸ of other deflecting crystals (Rochelle salt, gadolinium molybdate, bismuth titanium oxide), because their birefringences are well known. We verified that our computations of deflection angles versus incidence were in perfect agreement with the results obtained by Tsukamoto *et al.* for these crystals. Then we used the same theoretical calculation to fit our own experimental data obtained for RHSe crystals; the fitting parameters were the pseudoprincipal birefringences Δn_1 and Δn_2 . One of the three pseudoprincipal indices, n_2 , was assumed to be known: The value obtained previously by Michelson interferometry (see Section 5), $n_2 = 1.5632$ (633 nm), was chosen.

Complete fits of all deflected beams versus incidence angle have been made with our computer program for (100) and ($\bar{1}\bar{1}0$) plates at 633 nm. The results are plotted in Figs. 5(a) and 5(b), respectively. As can be seen, good agreement is achieved with the experimental data for both plates in the whole range of the incidence angle. The corresponding least-squares values for the pseudoprincipal birefringences at 633 nm are $\Delta n_1 = 0.0560(2)$ and $\Delta n_2 = 0.0139(1)$. For other wavelengths the birefringences are deduced from the deflection angles $\chi_A(0)$ listed in Table 4 (measured for A-type beams

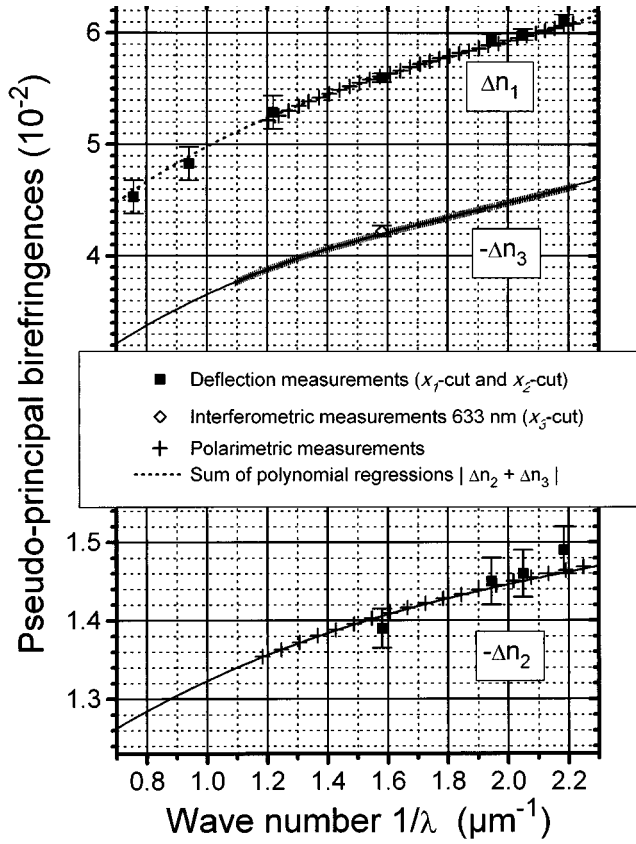


Fig. 6. Dispersion of the pseudoprincipal birefringences deduced from the deflection measurements. The solid curves are polynomial regressions Δn_2 and Δn_3 given by Eqs. (3) and (4) as deduced from polarimetric measurements. $|\Delta n_2 + \Delta n_3| \approx \Delta n_1$.

at zero incidence only). The results are shown in Fig. 6 together with the results deduced from polarimetric measurements (see Section 7 below). The absolute error of birefringences Δn_1 and Δn_2 is deduced from the experimental error on deflection angle χ_A ($\pm 0.1^\circ$ in the visible range, $\pm 0.3^\circ$ in the IR range).

We computed the theoretical variation of deflection angle $\chi_A(0)$ at 633 nm as a function of the propagation direction in the (a, b) plane of the domain walls, using the same parameters as above ($\Delta n_1 = 0.0560$, $\Delta n_2 = 0.0139$, $n_2 = 1.5632$, $\phi_1 = -2.2^\circ$, $\phi_2 = +0.6^\circ$). The curve is drawn in Fig. 7(a) (dashed curve) through the set of experimental data corresponding to the different deflecting plates listed in Table 4.

7. BIREFRINGENCE DISPERSIONS BY THE POLARIMETRIC METHOD

For these experiments a plane-parallel plate is placed between crossed polarizers, both rotated by 45° from the neutral lines of the plate. As the wavelength is scanned continuously with the aid of a monochromator placed between a white-light source and the sample, an intensity spectrum is recorded (Fig. 8). The maxima correspond to half-wave states of the sample, and the minima correspond to full-wave states. From the positions of these extrema it is possible, in principle, to determine the disper-

sion of the birefringence, provided that the sample thickness L is known and that each minimum can be indexed by an integer m (m is the order of the full-wave state at the corresponding wavelength):

$$\Delta n(\lambda) = m\lambda/L \quad (m \in \mathcal{N}). \quad (1)$$

In practice, indexing the minima without any ambiguity requires at least one value of the birefringence at a particular wavelength. The previous deflection measurements at 633 nm (Section 6) can provide the requisite results. The x_1 - and x_2 -cut plates used for this experiment were the same as those described in Section 6. For the x_1 -cut plate (thickness, $430 \pm 5 \mu\text{m}$) the 34 minima obtained in the range 900–450 nm are indexed from 25 ± 1 to 58 ± 1 . For the x_2 -cut plate (thickness, $530 \pm 5 \mu\text{m}$) the 10 minima obtained in the same range are indexed unambiguously from 8 to 17.

For the x_3 -cut plate (thickness, $2990 \pm 5 \mu\text{m}$) the indexing of the minima cannot be done from results of deflection measurements, because this configuration gives no deflection. Therefore the indexing is made from the value Δn_3 at 633 nm, which can be deduced from the refractive indices n_1 and n_2 measured by Michelson interferometry on the same x_3 -cut sample (see Section 5).

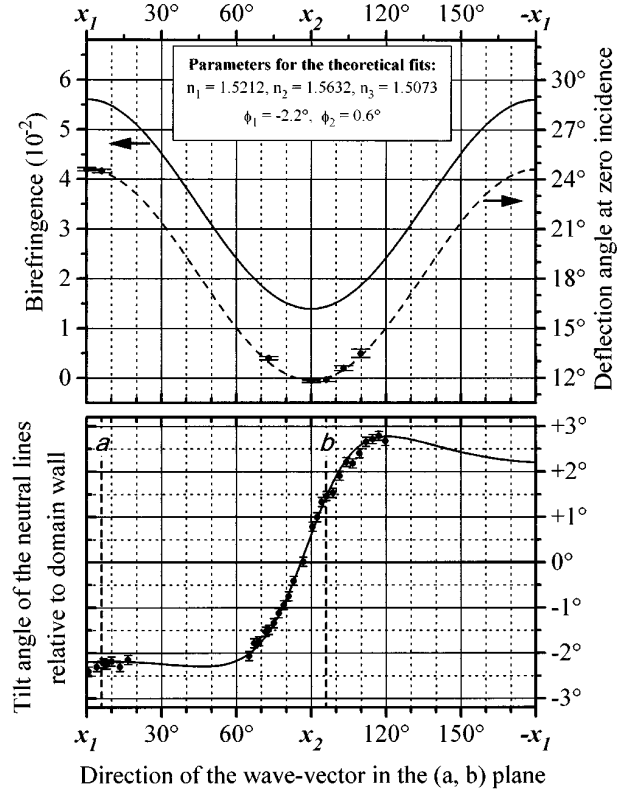


Fig. 7. Variation of the birefringence (solid curve, top figure), the deflection angle (dashed curve, top figure), and the tilt angle of the neutral lines (solid curve, bottom figure) as functions of the propagation direction in the (a, b) plane of domain walls at the wavelength 633 nm. The theoretical curves are calculated from Eqs. (5) and (6) (see text, Section 8). The experimental data (filled circles) are obtained from several deflecting plates cut perpendicularly to the domain walls.

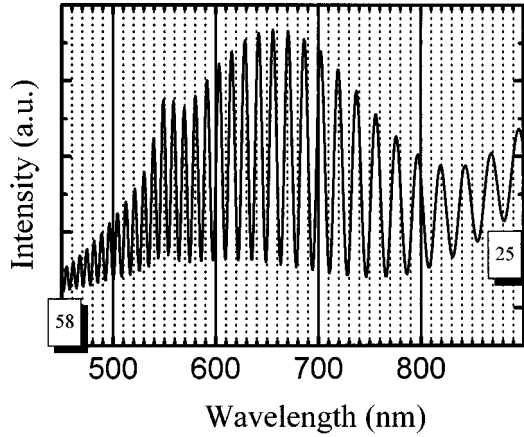


Fig. 8. Intensity spectrum obtained with the x_1 -cut RHSe plate ($430 \mu\text{m}$ thick) between crossed polarizers at 45° from the neutral lines. The dispersion of the birefringence can be deduced from the spectral positions of the extrema.

This reference point at 633 nm leads to indexing the 186 minima of the spectrum from 122 ± 2 to 307 ± 2 in the range $900\text{--}450 \text{ nm}$.

The dispersions of the three birefringences Δn_1 , Δn_2 , and Δn_3 are then deduced from Eq. (1). The results are plotted in Fig. 6 versus the wave number $1/\lambda$. The ambiguities that still affect the indexing of the minima (± 1 for the x_1 -cut plate, ± 2 for the x_3 -cut plate) are due to experimental errors in the sample thickness ($\pm 5 \mu\text{m}$) and in the birefringence at 633 nm taken as a reference point ($\pm 2 \times 10^{-4}$). These ambiguities do not significantly affect the accuracy of the dispersions. For the x_2 -cut plate there is no ambiguity in the indexing, so the maximal error in the dispersion Δn_2 ($\pm 1.3 \times 10^{-4}$) strictly corresponds to the error in the sample thickness.

From these results we can expand the birefringence dispersions by polynomial regressions versus $1/\lambda$, as follows:

$$\Delta n_1(\lambda) = 0.01889 + 0.04719/\lambda - 0.02038/\lambda^2 + 0.00345/\lambda^3, \quad (2)$$

$$-\Delta n_2(\lambda) = 0.01058 + 0.00368/\lambda - 0.00119/\lambda^2 + 0.00016/\lambda^3, \quad (3)$$

$$-\Delta n_3(\lambda) = 0.01479 + 0.03367/\lambda - 0.01447/\lambda^2 + 0.00257/\lambda^3. \quad (4)$$

The validity of these regressions is restricted to the range of measurements $450\text{--}900 \text{ nm}$.

Inasmuch as Δn_1 , Δn_2 , and Δn_3 are not principal but are pseudoprincipal birefringences, they should not exactly verify that $\Delta n_1 + \Delta n_2 + \Delta n_3 = 0$. Nevertheless, it can be verified from Fig. 6 that the experimental data obtained for Δn_1 are close to the sum of the polynomial regressions $|\Delta n_2| + |\Delta n_3|$ in the whole spectral range. In fact, because the maximum tilt angle of the optical indicatrix is small, one can calculate that the difference should theoretically not exceed 2×10^{-4} , a value that is below the experimental error.

8. VARIATIONS OF THE BIREFRINGENCE AND OF THE TILT ANGLE OF THE NEUTRAL LINES VERSUS SAMPLE ORIENTATION

We show in Fig. 7 the variations of the birefringence, of the deflection angle $\chi_A(0)$, and of the tilt angle ϕ of the neutral lines with respect to domain walls, as functions of the propagation direction in the plane of domain walls, for the wavelength 633 nm . The variable x corresponds to the angle between the wave vector and pseudoprincipal axis x_1 . Most of the experimental points for tilt angle ϕ have been obtained by use of three different plates (perpendicular to a , to $x_2 - 17^\circ$, and to $x_2 + 13^\circ$, respectively) placed between crossed polarizers. Each plate was slightly tilted with respect to the incident beam to vary the propagation direction on each side of the cutting axis. The angle of incidence relative to the cutting axis was limited to $\pm 10^\circ$ and corrected to account for the refraction inside the plate. The theoretical variations $\Delta n(x) = n_+(x) - n_-(x)$ and $\phi(x)$ shown in Fig. 7 are calculated from the laws of crystal optics [Eqs. (5) and (6)] with the same parameters as above ($n_1 = 1.5212$, $n_2 = 1.5632$, $n_3 = 1.5073$, $\phi_1 = -2.2^\circ$, $\phi_2 = +0.6^\circ$):

$$\phi(x) = 1/2 \arctan \left[\frac{b(x)}{a(x) - a_3} \right], \quad (5)$$

$$\frac{1}{n_\pm^2(x)} = \frac{a(x) + a_3}{2} \pm \frac{b(x)}{2 \sin 2\phi(x)}, \quad (6)$$

where

$$a(x) = \frac{1}{n_1^2} \cos^2 x + \frac{1}{n_2^2} \sin^2 x, \quad (7)$$

$$a_3 = \frac{1}{n_3^2}, \quad (8)$$

$$b(x) = \left(\frac{1}{n_2^2} - \frac{1}{n_3^2} \right) \tan 2\phi_1 \cos x - \left(\frac{1}{n_3^2} - \frac{1}{n_1^2} \right) \tan 2\phi_2 \sin x. \quad (9)$$

The theoretical variation of deflection angle $\chi_A(0, x)$ at zero incidence was also computed and is plotted in Fig. 7(a). The agreement between theoretical and experimental data is fairly good for both tilt angle ϕ and deflection angle χ_A .

Note that a particular axis exists, close to the x_2 axis, where tilt angle ϕ goes to zero. When the light beam is propagated along this direction, the optical indicatrices in two opposite domains look exactly parallel, and the intensity of the deflected beams weakens drastically. For the same reason, the optical contrast of the domain structure under the polarizing microscope should also vanish, because the multidomain crystal looks optically continuous in this particular direction. This effect is sometimes observed in some slightly misoriented x_2 -cut plates. Moreover, as evidenced in Fig. 7(b), tilt angle ϕ varies drastically with the sample orientation in the vicinity of the x_2 or the b axis, whereas it is almost constant in the vicinity

of the x_1 or the a axis. This is certainly the reason why the experimental results in Section 4 were less reproducible for ϕ_b than for ϕ_a .

9. SUMMARY

We have determined the optical characteristics of rubidium hydrogen selenate at room temperature as follows: the transmission spectrum and transparency range, the orientation of the optical indicatrix, the refractive indices, and the dispersion of the birefringences versus wavelength. These data will be particularly important for correct interpretation of the contribution of domain dynamics to the huge electro-optic effect observed in this material at low frequency^{3,9} and for prediction of the dependence of this effect on wavelength and on sample orientation. Moreover, we have emphasized the possibility of and interest in using the light deflection by the domain structure to obtain the birefringence of ferroelastic crystals. This method requires no particular thickness or careful preparation of the plate and can be used directly on multidomain crystals.

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