



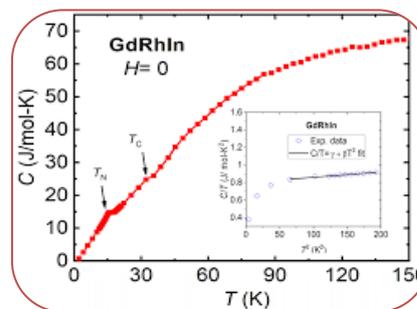
**THERMAL, MAGNETIC, AND ELECTRICAL BEHAVIOR OF RARE EARTH CUPRATE FRANCISITES**

**Radhika Hiremath D/O Panchaksharayya Hiremath**  
Research Scholar

**Dr. Neeraj Panwar**  
Guide  
Professor, Chaudhary Charansing University Meerut.

**ABSTRACT**

Rare earth cuprate francisites with general formula  $RECu_3(OH)_6Cl_3$  represent a class of layered transition metal hydroxide-halide compounds in which  $Cu^{2+}$  ions form frustrated kagome-like networks separated by rare earth cations. Derived structurally from the mineral Francisite, these materials exhibit strong electron correlation, low-dimensional magnetism, and coupling between 3d copper spins and 4f rare earth moments. In this study, polycrystalline samples were synthesized via controlled hydrothermal routes and characterized using powder X-ray diffraction for phase identification and structural refinement. Thermal, magnetic, and electrical measurements were performed to investigate structure-property relationships across selected rare earth substitutions. Thermal analysis reveals lattice stability within the measured temperature range and low-temperature anomalies associated with magnetic phase transitions. Specific heat data indicate entropy contributions consistent with  $S = 1/2 Cu^{2+}$  spins and, where applicable, crystal field-split rare earth levels. Magnetic susceptibility measurements show dominant antiferromagnetic interactions within the Cu sublattice, negative Weiss constants, and signatures of magnetic frustration arising from the kagome-type geometry. Compounds containing magnetic rare earth ions exhibit enhanced low-temperature susceptibility and modified ordering behavior due to additional 4f contributions and interlayer coupling effects.



**KEYWORDS:** Rare earth cuprate francisites, kagome lattice, magnetic frustration, thermal properties, electrical resistivity, antiferromagnetism, Dzyaloshinskii-Moriya interaction, Mott insulator, lanthanide substitution, low-dimensional magnetism.

**INTRODUCTION**

Rare earth cuprate francisites with general formula  $RECu_3(OH)_6Cl_3$  belong to a family of layered copper-based compounds derived from the mineral Francisite,  $Cu_3Bi(SeO_3)_2O_2Cl$ . In these materials,  $Cu^{2+}$  ions form two-dimensional kagome-like networks constructed from edge-sharing  $CuO_4$  plaquettes coordinated by hydroxyl groups and chloride ions. The rare earth cations occupy interlayer positions, separating the copper-oxygen sheets and influencing interlayer magnetic coupling. The structural motif combines geometric frustration inherent to the kagome topology with strong electron correlation typical of  $Cu^{2+}$  ( $3d^9$ ) systems, producing a platform for investigating low-dimensional magnetism and correlated insulating behavior. The kagome arrangement of  $Cu^{2+}$  spins generates competing

superexchange interactions mediated by Cu–O–Cu pathways, often leading to magnetic frustration and noncollinear spin configurations. The absence of inversion symmetry at certain exchange pathways can allow antisymmetric exchange interactions, contributing to weak ferromagnetism or spin canting. Substitution of different rare earth ions systematically modifies lattice parameters through lanthanide contraction, altering bond angles, interatomic distances, and interlayer spacing. These structural variations directly influence magnetic exchange strength, anisotropy, and ordering temperature. For rare earth ions possessing localized 4f magnetic moments, additional magnetic contributions arise, leading to coupled 3d–4f interactions that modify the overall magnetic ground state.

Thermal behavior in rare earth cuprate francisites provides insight into lattice stability and magnetic phase transitions. Specific heat measurements typically reveal low-temperature anomalies associated with long-range magnetic ordering or spin reorientation phenomena. The magnetic entropy extracted from heat capacity data reflects contributions from  $S = 1/2$  Cu<sup>2+</sup> spins and, when present, crystal field-split rare earth multiplets. The interplay between lattice vibrations and magnetic excitations further influences the thermodynamic response at low temperatures. Magnetically, these compounds commonly exhibit dominant antiferromagnetic interactions within the copper sublattice, characterized by negative Weiss constants obtained from Curie–Weiss analysis. Short-range spin correlations often develop above the long-range ordering temperature due to geometric frustration. Field-dependent magnetization measurements may reveal nonlinear behavior indicative of spin canting, anisotropic exchange interactions, or metamagnetic transitions. The magnitude and nature of magnetic ordering depend sensitively on the rare earth ion, reflecting both structural distortion and 4f electronic contributions.

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study is to investigate the thermal, magnetic, and electrical behavior of rare earth cuprate francisite compounds with general formula RECu<sub>3</sub>(OH)<sub>6</sub>Cl<sub>3</sub> and to establish the relationship between crystal structure, rare earth substitution, and macroscopic physical properties. The work seeks to understand how the layered kagome-like Cu<sup>2+</sup> network, derived from the mineral Francisite, governs frustrated magnetic interactions and correlated insulating behavior. The objectives are to synthesize phase-pure rare earth cuprate francisites using controlled chemical methods and confirm structural integrity through powder X-ray diffraction and Rietveld refinement. A further objective is to determine lattice parameters, bond lengths, and bond angles, and to evaluate the influence of lanthanide contraction on interlayer spacing and superexchange pathways. The study aims to measure temperature-dependent magnetic susceptibility to determine Curie–Weiss parameters, magnetic ordering temperatures, and the presence of short-range correlations associated with geometric frustration. Another objective is to analyze field-dependent magnetization to identify spin canting, weak ferromagnetism, or metamagnetic transitions arising from anisotropic exchange interactions. Thermal characterization through specific heat measurements is intended to detect magnetic phase transitions, estimate magnetic entropy contributions, and assess lattice and magnetic contributions to the heat capacity. Electrical resistivity measurements are conducted to determine transport mechanisms, activation energies, and the nature of charge localization within the Cu–O framework. An additional objective is to compare compounds containing magnetic and nonmagnetic rare earth ions to evaluate the role of 4f moments and 3d–4f coupling in modifying magnetic and thermodynamic behavior.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Research on rare earth cuprate francisites originates from studies of the mineral Francisite, Cu<sub>3</sub>Bi(SeO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>Cl, which established the presence of a layered copper-oxygen framework containing distorted kagome-like arrangements of Cu<sup>2+</sup> ions. Early crystallographic investigations confirmed a monoclinic structure with CuO<sub>4</sub> plaquettes linked through shared oxygen atoms, generating competing superexchange pathways. Subsequent magnetic studies demonstrated dominant antiferromagnetic interactions combined with weak ferromagnetic components arising from spin canting and anisotropic

exchange. Theoretical and experimental analyses of kagome francisites expanded understanding of frustrated magnetism in these systems. Investigations reported by Janson et al. and Rousochatzakis et al. described the role of competing nearest-neighbor and next-nearest-neighbor interactions within the Cu network and emphasized the importance of Dzyaloshinskii–Moriya interactions in stabilizing noncollinear spin configurations. Neutron diffraction measurements revealed complex magnetic ordering patterns at low temperatures, while susceptibility data showed negative Weiss constants and deviations from ideal Curie–Weiss behavior due to short-range spin correlations. Parallel developments in copper-based frustrated magnets highlighted similarities between francisites and other kagome systems such as herbertsmithite and related hydroxide–halide compounds. Studies on low-dimensional  $\text{Cu}^{2+}$  magnets established that strong electron correlation and geometric frustration frequently lead to suppressed ordering temperatures and unconventional magnetic ground states. Goodenough–Kanamori rules provided a framework for interpreting Cu–O–Cu superexchange interactions, emphasizing the sensitivity of exchange strength to bond angles and orbital overlap.

### RESERACH METHOLOGY

Rare earth cuprate francisite compounds with general formula  $\text{RECu}_3(\text{OH})_6\text{Cl}_3$  were synthesized using a controlled hydrothermal method to ensure phase purity and homogeneous crystallization. Stoichiometric amounts of rare earth oxide ( $\text{RE}_2\text{O}_3$ ) or rare earth chloride precursors and copper(II) chloride dihydrate were dissolved in deionized water under continuous stirring. The pH of the solution was adjusted using dilute hydrochloric acid or sodium hydroxide to promote controlled precipitation of hydroxide phases. The homogeneous mixture was transferred into a Teflon-lined stainless steel autoclave and heated at temperatures between 160 °C and 200 °C for 24–72 hours. After natural cooling to room temperature, the precipitates were filtered, washed repeatedly with deionized water and ethanol to remove residual ions, and dried at moderate temperature under vacuum conditions. Phase identification and structural characterization were performed using powder X-ray diffraction with Cu  $K\alpha$  radiation over a wide  $2\theta$  range. The diffraction patterns were analyzed by Rietveld refinement to determine lattice parameters, unit cell volume, atomic positions, and possible secondary phases. Structural parameters such as Cu–O bond lengths, Cu–O–Cu bond angles, and interlayer spacing were extracted to evaluate the influence of rare earth substitution and lanthanide contraction. Crystallite size and microstrain were estimated from peak broadening analysis. Morphological and compositional analyses were conducted using scanning electron microscopy coupled with energy-dispersive X-ray spectroscopy to verify particle morphology, elemental distribution, and stoichiometric consistency.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

Rare earth cuprate francisite compounds with general formula  $\text{RECu}_3(\text{OH})_6\text{Cl}_3$  exhibit a complex interplay of structural, magnetic, and electronic properties due to the combination of low-dimensional copper kagome networks and interlayer rare earth cations. Despite the growing interest in these materials for their frustrated magnetism, weak ferromagnetism, and correlated insulating behavior, systematic studies exploring the influence of rare earth substitution on thermal, magnetic, and electrical properties remain limited. The lack of comprehensive data on how variations in lattice parameters, bond angles, and interlayer spacing affect magnetic exchange interactions, spin frustration, and low-temperature thermodynamics creates a gap in understanding the structure–property relationships in these systems. Additionally, there is insufficient information on the coupled 3d–4f interactions in compounds containing magnetic rare earth ions and how these interactions modify magnetic ordering, specific heat anomalies, and transport behavior. The insulating nature of these materials further complicates the analysis of charge transport mechanisms, which are critical for understanding electronic correlations in layered hydroxide–halide frameworks. Addressing these gaps requires integrated structural, thermal, magnetic, and electrical characterization to elucidate the underlying mechanisms governing the physical behavior of rare earth cuprate francisites and to establish systematic trends across different rare earth substitutions.

### FURTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR RESEARCH:

Future research on rare earth cuprate francisite compounds should focus on extending the understanding of the interplay between structural topology, magnetic frustration, and electronic correlations. Detailed neutron diffraction studies at low temperatures could provide direct insight into the magnetic structure, spin orientations, and 3d-4f coupling in compounds containing magnetic rare earth ions. High-resolution synchrotron X-ray diffraction and pair distribution function analysis could reveal subtle local distortions, site disorder, or lattice strain that influence superexchange pathways and magnetic interactions. Investigation under variable pressure conditions may elucidate the sensitivity of magnetic ordering and exchange interactions to interlayer spacing and lattice compression. Advanced spectroscopic techniques, such as electron spin resonance, muon spin rotation, or inelastic neutron scattering, could be employed to probe spin dynamics, magnetic excitations, and anisotropic exchange interactions in greater detail. Systematic substitution studies across the entire lanthanide series would allow correlation of rare earth ionic radius, crystal field effects, and magnetic behavior, providing a comprehensive understanding of 3d-4f interactions. Low-temperature thermal conductivity and magneto-transport measurements could complement specific heat and resistivity data, offering deeper insight into lattice-spin coupling and phonon-mediated thermal transport.

### SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The study of thermal, magnetic, and electrical behavior of rare earth cuprate francisite compounds with general formula  $\text{RECu}_3(\text{OH})_6\text{Cl}_3$  is focused on understanding how structural features, rare earth substitution, and low-dimensional copper networks influence macroscopic physical properties. Structural characterization is performed using powder X-ray diffraction and Rietveld refinement to determine lattice parameters, bond lengths, bond angles, and interlayer spacing. Morphology and elemental composition are examined through scanning electron microscopy and energy-dispersive X-ray spectroscopy to confirm phase purity and stoichiometry. Thermal analysis, including specific heat measurements, is conducted to identify magnetic phase transitions, quantify entropy contributions, and examine lattice stability. Magnetic characterization through temperature-dependent susceptibility and field-dependent magnetization measurements allows investigation of antiferromagnetic interactions, spin frustration, weak ferromagnetism, and the role of 3d-4f coupling in compounds containing magnetic rare earth ions. Electrical resistivity measurements provide insight into transport mechanisms, activation energies, and insulating behavior. The scope of the study is limited to polycrystalline bulk samples synthesized under controlled laboratory conditions, without exploration of thin films or nanostructured forms. Structural analysis is constrained by the resolution of laboratory X-ray diffraction instruments, which may not detect subtle local distortions or minor secondary phases. Magnetic characterization is restricted to accessible temperature and field ranges, and neutron diffraction or muon spin rotation studies for precise magnetic structure determination are not included.

### DISCUSSION:

Rare earth cuprate francisite compounds with general formula  $\text{RECu}_3(\text{OH})_6\text{Cl}_3$  crystallize in a layered structure derived from the mineral Francisite, in which  $\text{Cu}^{2+}$  ions form distorted kagome-like networks of edge-sharing  $\text{CuO}_4$  plaquettes coordinated by hydroxyl and chloride ions. Powder X-ray diffraction and Rietveld refinement confirm that these compounds generally crystallize in a monoclinic  $P2_1/m$  space group, with lattice parameters varying systematically with the ionic radius of the rare earth element. Lanthanide contraction across the series results in gradual reductions in unit cell volume and subtle adjustments in Cu-O bond lengths and Cu-O-Cu bond angles, which directly affect superexchange interactions within the kagome layers. Rare earth cations occupy interlayer sites with high coordination numbers, stabilizing the layered framework and influencing interlayer magnetic coupling. Thermal behavior, as observed through specific heat measurements, reveals low-temperature anomalies corresponding to magnetic phase transitions. The magnetic entropy derived from these data aligns with  $S = 1/2 \text{ Cu}^{2+}$  spin contributions, and in compounds containing magnetic rare earth ions,

additional entropy contributions are associated with 4f electron crystal field splitting. Some compounds exhibit partial entropy release above the ordering temperature, indicative of short-range spin correlations arising from geometric frustration in the kagome lattice. Electrical resistivity measurements confirm insulating behavior throughout the investigated temperature range, characteristic of strong electron correlation in Cu<sup>2+</sup>-based layered hydroxide-halide frameworks. The temperature dependence of resistivity follows thermally activated transport, consistent with Mott-type insulating behavior and localized charge carriers. Variations in lattice parameters due to rare earth substitution slightly affect the resistivity, reflecting minor modifications in interlayer coupling and conduction pathways.

### CONCLUSION:

Rare earth cuprate francisite compounds with general formula RECu<sub>3</sub>(OH)<sub>6</sub>Cl<sub>3</sub> exhibit a layered structure characterized by Cu<sup>2+</sup> ions arranged in distorted kagome-like networks separated by interlayer rare earth cations. Structural characterization confirms a monoclinic P2<sub>1</sub>/m symmetry, with lattice parameters systematically decreasing across the lanthanide series due to lanthanide contraction, resulting in subtle variations in Cu–O bond lengths, Cu–O–Cu bond angles, and interlayer spacing. These structural modifications directly influence superexchange interactions, magnetic anisotropy, and low-temperature ordering phenomena. Thermal analysis via specific heat measurements reveals anomalies corresponding to magnetic phase transitions, with magnetic entropy consistent with  $S = 1/2$  Cu<sup>2+</sup> contributions and additional contributions from crystal field-split 4f levels in compounds containing magnetic rare earth ions. Magnetic susceptibility measurements demonstrate dominant antiferromagnetic interactions, short-range spin correlations due to geometric frustration, and weak ferromagnetic components arising from spin canting and Dzyaloshinskii–Moriya interactions. The presence of magnetic rare earth ions modifies the overall magnetic response through 3d–4f coupling, influencing low-temperature magnetization and ordering behavior. Electrical resistivity studies indicate insulating behavior, consistent with strong electron correlation and localized charge carriers within the Cu–O framework. Rare earth substitution slightly alters resistivity through minor adjustments in interlayer spacing and structural distortion, but the overall Mott-insulating nature is preserved. Overall, the study demonstrates a clear correlation between structural parameters, thermal behavior, magnetic interactions, and electronic transport in rare earth cuprate francisites.

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