

## The possibility of realizing room-temperature superconductivity in high- $T_c$ cuprates in their two-dimensional sandwich layers

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Based on the predictions of the theory of a superfluid Bose-liquid of unconventional (tightly-bound) Cooper pairs, we consider the possibility of realizing room-temperature superconductivity in distinctive high- $T_c$  cuprate materials containing many grain boundaries, interfaces and planes in the layered blocks. We argue that such high- $T_c$  materials (e.g., Bi/Pb-based high- $T_c$  cuprates) are the most promising and have certain favorable properties, which can serve as a possible guide in the search for persisting room-temperature superconductivity maintained in two-dimensional (2D) regions (e.g. at planar sheets or plates). We show that the superconducting transition temperature  $T_c$  is much lower in the bulk of high- $T_c$  cuprates than at planes in them; and the three-dimensional (3D) superconductivity in these materials is destroyed above the bulk  $T_c$ , while the 2D superconductivity is maintained at grain boundaries and interfaces and in the multiplate blocks up to room temperature at atmospheric pressure. We predict that the crossover from bulk to surface Bose-liquid superconductivity in the alternating 3D/2D sandwich layers might be possible route to room-temperature superconductivity in promising high- $T_c$  cuprate materials. Various experiments on some families of high- $T_c$  cuprates confirm the theory of Bose-liquid superconductivity and the signs of the superconducting transitions at temperatures well above the bulk  $T_c$  and sometimes close to room temperature.

**Keywords:** high- $T_c$  cuprates, Bose superfluids, grain boundaries, interfaces and planes/sheets, three- and two-dimensional sandwich layers, room-temperature superconductivity.

**Можливість реалізації надпровідності при кімнатній температурі у високотемпературних купратах в їх двовимірних сендвіч-шарах.** *С.Джуманов, А.Л.Соловійов, Р.В.Вовк, Б.В.Грінюв, Ш.С.Джуманов*

Базуючись на передбаченнях теорії надплинної бозе-рідини нетрадиційних (міцно зв'язаних) куперівських пар, ми розглядаємо можливість реалізації надпровідності при кімнатній температурі в характерних високотемпературних купратних матеріалах, які містять багато меж зерен, інтерфейсів і площин у шаруваті блоки. Ми стверджуємо, що такі високотемпературні матеріали (наприклад, високотемпературні купрати на

основі Bi/Pb) є найбільш перспективними та мають певні сприятливі властивості, які можуть служити можливим орієнтиром у пошуку стійкої надпровідності при кімнатній температурі, що підтримується в двох-вимірні (2D) області (наприклад, на плоских листах або плитах). Ми показуємо, що температура надпровідного переходу  $T_c$  значно нижча в об'ємі високотемпературних купратів, ніж у площинах у них; і тривимірні (3D) надпровідність у цих матеріалах руйнується вище об'ємної  $T_c$ , у той час як 2D надпровідність зберігається на границях зерен і поверхнях розділу та в багатошарових блоках до кімнатної температури при атмосферному тиску. Ми передбачаємо, що перехід від об'ємної до поверхневої надпровідності бозе-рідин у чергуванні 3D/2D сендвіч-шарів може бути можливим шляхом до надпровідності при кімнатній температурі в багатошарових високотемпературних купратних матеріалах. Різноманітні експерименти на деяких сімействах високотемпературних купратів підтверджують теорію надпровідності бозе-рідин і ознаки надпровідних переходів при температурах, значно вищих за об'ємну  $T_c$  і іноді близьких до кімнатної.

## 1. Introduction

The phenomenon of superconductivity has been discovered since the last century in many different substances ranging from simple metals to complex copper oxides (cuprates). The discovery of high-temperature superconductivity in La-based cuprates with the superconducting transition temperature  $T_c \approx 35$  K [1] and the subsequent dramatic increase of  $T_c$  in other discovered Y-, Bi- and Hg-based cuprate compounds to above 90 K [2], 110 K [3] and 130 K [4] opened up the possibility of increasing the highest value of  $T_c$  to well over 100 K and inspired researchers to search for room-temperature superconductors. However, for a long time, despite considerable theoretical and experimental efforts [5–12], the increasing of  $T_c$  up to room-temperature in various families of high- $T_c$  cuprate superconductors was remained a difficult problem.

First, Chu et al. [5] found that when the Hg-based cuprate  $\text{HgBa}_2\text{Ca}_{n-1}\text{Cu}_n\text{O}_{2n+4}$  superconductor was subjected to pressures up to 150 kbar, an increase in  $T_c$  up to 153 K was observed in this system. In a further experiment, the cuprate superconductor  $\text{HgBa}_2\text{Ca}_{m-1}\text{Cu}_m\text{O}_{2m+4}$  was subjected to quasi-hydrostatic pressure up to 45 GPa and the highest value of  $T_c$  reaching up to 164 K was reported by Gao et al. [6]. Later, Takeshita et al. [10] noted that the  $T_c$  values reported in the above studies at high-pressures are usually defined as the temperature at which the drop in resistivity begins, i.e. at the  $T_c$  values determined in these studies, zero resistivity was not observed. They reported that zero resistivity is maintained up to 153 K in high- $T_c$  cuprates under almost hydrostatic pressure of 15 GPa and the superconducting transition temperature  $T_c$  under such a high pressure reaches 153 K; this is the actual highest  $T_c$  record obtained so far. The experimental

data obtained in the studies on the effect of high hydrostatic pressure on the various electric transport mechanisms in high- $T_c$  cuprates were discussed in [13]. Recently, high- $T_c$  superconductivity has been discovered in other classes of new materials, such as in hydrogen- and carbon-rich materials, at temperatures close to room temperature and at extremely high pressures [14, 15]. In particular, the superconducting transitions with  $T_c \approx 250$ –260 K in the lanthanum hydride ( $\text{LaH}_{10+x}$ ) at high pressures of 180–200 GPa were reported for the first time [14]. Then the room-temperature superconductivity was found in the carbonaceous sulfur hydride (C–S–H) system with a maximum superconducting transition temperature of  $287.7 \pm 1.2$  K achieved at very high pressures of the order of  $267 \pm 10$  GPa [15]. However, room-temperature superconductors at such high pressures will not have immediate practical applications. In this regard, some distinctive families of superconducting cuprates may be the most promising and have certain favorable properties, which serve as a possible guide to the search for room-temperature superconductivity maintained in specially-grown specimens of such high- $T_c$  materials at atmospheric pressure.

Until now, it is often believed that Little's model of high-temperature superconductivity in one-dimensional organic compounds [16] and Ginzburg's model of two-dimensional (2D) alternating conducting/insulating sandwich layers [17] may be possible paths to room-temperature superconductivity. However, these models are based on the predictions of the BCS-like theory of Fermi-liquid superconductivity. In contrast, the doped high- $T_c$  cuprates can be in the regime of Bose-liquid superconductivity. In fact, both experimental and theoretical studies [7, 18–21] provide more and more evidence, that the superconducting state in high- $T_c$

cuprates is not just unusual, but actually a superfluid state of a Bose-liquid of charged bosons (tightly-bound Cooper pairs), since these high- $T_c$  materials undergo a  $\lambda$ -like superconducting transition at  $T_c$  [18, 19] (in contrast to the BCS-like transition).

In this work, we study the possibility of realizing room-temperature superconductivity in typical high- $T_c$  cuprate materials containing many grain boundaries, interfaces and planes in multi-lamellar blocks representing alternating three-dimensional (3D)/2D sandwich layers. We believe that the relevant charge carriers in doped cuprates are polarons; therefore, the phenomenon of high- $T_c$  superconductivity in these materials is due to the superfluidity of polaronic (bosonic) Cooper pairs and differs from the superconductivity of a BCS-type Fermi-liquid. We predict the possibility of realizing room-temperature superconductivity well above the bulk  $T_c$  in alternating 3D non-superconducting and 2D superconducting sandwich layers in specially-grown high- $T_c$  cuprates; in this case, in 3D regions, the destruction of high- $T_c$  superconductivity occurs above the bulk  $T_c$ , while in 2D layers (i.e., at grain boundaries, interfaces, and flat layers), the regime of high-temperature superconductivity is retained up to room temperature.

**Distinctly different superconducting transition temperatures in 3D and 2D Bose systems**

Undoped cuprates are charge-transfer (CT)-type Mott insulators [22]. The nature and properties of charge carriers introduced into the polar materials by doping are strongly modified during their interaction with the lattice vibrations. Hole carriers doping cuprates are self-trapped when they are strongly coupled to optical phonons and become strongly coupled large polarons [23]. In the doped cuprates, the self-trapping of hole carriers is favorable just like the self-trapping of free holes in ionic crystals of alkali halides [24, 25]. When the Fermi energy  $\epsilon_F$  of polarons is comparable with the energy  $\epsilon_A$  of the attractive interaction between them, the Cooper pairing of polaronic carriers results in the formation of bosonic (polaronic) Cooper pairs in the normal state of high- $T_c$  cuprates [20]. Therefore, the observed superconducting transition temperature  $T_c$  in the bulk of these materials is determined from the solutions of the following self-consistent integral equations of a 3D superfluid Bose liquid [26]:

$$\frac{2}{\gamma_B} = \int_0^{\xi_{BA}} \frac{\sqrt{\epsilon/\xi_{BA}} \coth\left[\frac{\sqrt{(\epsilon+\tilde{\mu}_B)^2 - \Delta_B^2}/2k_B T}{\sqrt{(\epsilon+\tilde{\mu}_B)^2 - \Delta_B^2}}\right]}{d\epsilon}, \tag{1}$$

$$\frac{2\rho_B}{D_B} = \int_0^{\infty} \left\{ \frac{\epsilon + \tilde{\mu}_B}{\sqrt{(\epsilon + \tilde{\mu}_B)^2 - \Delta_B^2}} \coth\left[\frac{\sqrt{(\epsilon + \tilde{\mu}_B)^2 - \Delta_B^2}}{2k_B T}\right] - 1 \right\} d\epsilon, \tag{2}$$

where  $\gamma_B = D_B \tilde{V}_B \sqrt{\xi_{BA}}$  is the interboson coupling constant in a 3D superfluid Bose-liquid;  $D_B = m_B^{3/2}/\sqrt{2\pi^2 h^3}$  is the density of states of bosons;  $m_B$  is the mass of bosons;  $\tilde{V}_B = V_{BA} - V_{BR}/[1 + D_B V_{BR}(\sqrt{\xi_{BR}} - \sqrt{\xi_{BA}})]$  is the effective interaction potential between bosons;  $\xi_{BA}$  and  $\xi_{BR}$  are the cutoff parameters for attractive  $V_{BA}$  and repulsive  $V_{BR}$  parts of the interboson interaction potential;  $\rho_B$  is the density of attracting (superfluid) bosons;  $\tilde{\mu}_B$  is the chemical potential measured relative to the Hartree-Fock quasiparticle energy;  $\Delta_B$  is the coherence parameter (i.e. superfluid order parameter) of condensed bosons.

The superconducting transition temperature  $T_c^{2D}$  in 2D planes and sheets in high- $T_c$  cuprates is determined from the solutions of the following integral equations of a 2D superfluid Bose-liquid [26]

$$\frac{2}{\gamma_B} = \int_0^{\xi_{BA}} \frac{\coth\left[\frac{\sqrt{(\epsilon + \tilde{\mu}_B)^2 - \Delta_B^2}/2k_B T}{\sqrt{(\epsilon + \tilde{\mu}_B)^2 - \Delta_B^2}}\right]}{d\epsilon}, \tag{3}$$

$$\frac{2\rho_B}{D_B} = \int_0^{\infty} \left\{ \frac{\epsilon + \tilde{\mu}_B}{\sqrt{(\epsilon + \tilde{\mu}_B)^2 - \Delta_B^2}} \coth\left[\frac{\sqrt{(\epsilon + \tilde{\mu}_B)^2 - \Delta_B^2}}{2k_B T}\right] - 1 \right\} d\epsilon, \tag{4}$$

where  $\gamma_B = D_B \tilde{V}_B$  is the interboson coupling constant in a 2D superfluid Bose-liquid;  $D_B = m_B/2\pi h^3$ ;  $\rho_B$  is the density of attracting (superfluid) bosons in a 2D Bose-liquid.

In the case of 3D Bose superfluids, numerical solutions of Eqs. (1) and (2) can be obtained for arbitrary  $\gamma_B$ . It is useful, however, to obtain an approximate analytical expression for  $T_c$ . Using the analytical solutions of Eqs. (1) and (2) near  $T_c$  and in the temperature range somewhat below  $T_c$ , a simple approximate expression can be obtained for

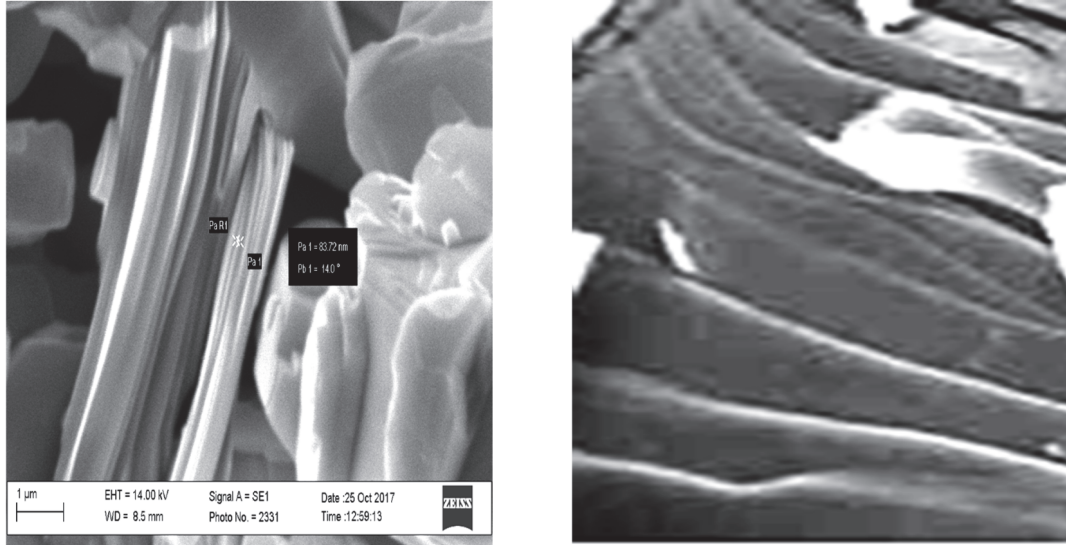


Fig. 1. Lamellar microstructure of high- $T_c$  cuprate superconductor Bi/Pb (2:2:19:20) with the stack of many blocks [27].

$T_c$  at  $\gamma_B < 1$  [26]. At  $\gamma_B \geq 0.3$  and  $\gamma_B < 1$ , this expression for the superconducting transition temperature  $T_c$  in the bulk of high- $T_c$  cuprates has the form

$$T_c \simeq T_{BEC}^* \left[ 1 + c\gamma_B \sqrt{\sqrt{2} k_B T_{BEC}^* / \xi_{BA}} \right], \quad (5)$$

where  $T_{BEC}^* = 3.31 h^2 \rho_B^2 / k_B m_B^*$  is the renormalized Bose-Einstein condensation temperature in a 3D Bose liquid,  $c = \pi^{3/2} / 3.918$ .

In the case of 2D Bose superfluids, the solutions of Eqs. (3) and (4) at  $T \rightarrow T_c^{2D}$  are obtained analytically [7, 26] and the actual  $T_c^{2D}$  in the cuprates for arbitrary  $\gamma_B$  is determined from the relationship

$$T_c^{2D} = - \frac{T_0^*}{\ln[1 - \exp(-2\gamma_B / (2 + \gamma_B))]}, \quad (6)$$

where  $T_0^* = 2\pi h^2 \rho_B / k_B m_B^*$ .

### The possibility of realizing room-temperature superconductivity in sandwich-type high- $T_c$ cuprate materials

Experimental studies of the microstructure of a new family of Bi/Pb — based high- $T_c$  cuprates  $\text{Bi}_{1.7}\text{Pb}_{0.3}\text{Sr}_2\text{Ca}_{(n-1)}\text{Cu}_n\text{O}_y$  (where  $n = 3-20$ ) synthesized by melt technology under the influence of solar energy [12, 27] in a solar furnace (in Parkent) show that these materials consist of many layered blocks (see Fig. 1). These blocks, in turn, contain coupled stacks of many quasi-2D plates, so that the multi-lamellar blocks are

alternating three-dimensional/two-dimensional sandwich layers.

In order to determine the sharply different superconducting transition temperatures in the bulk and 2D planes (sheets) in sandwich-type high- $T_c$  cuprates, we estimate  $T_c$  and  $T_c^{2D}$ , assuming that the mass  $m_p$  of polaronic carriers is of the order of  $2m_e$  (where  $m_e$  is the mass of free electrons); first, the bosonic Cooper pairs having the mass  $m_B = 2m_p$  are formed in the normal state, and then the interacting bosons (polaronic Cooper pairs) with the renormalized mass  $m_B^* > m_B$  condense into a Bose superfluid at  $T \leq T_c$  and  $T \leq T_c^{2D}$ . By taking  $m_p \simeq 2m_e$ ,  $m_B = 2m_p$ ,  $m_B^* \simeq 1.05m_B$  and  $\rho_B \simeq 4 \cdot 10^{19} \text{cm}^{-3}$  for 3D high- $T_c$  cuprates, we find  $T_{BEC}^* \simeq 81.7$  K. Next, we estimate  $T_c$ , assuming that  $\xi_{BA} = h\omega_0$  (where  $\omega_0$  is the frequency of the optical phonons in high- $T_c$  cuprates), and that bosonic Cooper pairs in the intermediate coupling regime ( $0.3 < \gamma_B < 1$ ) interact with optical phonons having relatively low energy  $h\omega_0 \simeq 0.03$  eV. Under these assumptions, we can use expression (5) to calculate the bulk  $T_c$  in high- $T_c$  cuprate materials. Then, assuming that at  $\gamma_B = 0.7$ , we find  $T_c \simeq 1.508 T_{BEC}^* \simeq 123$  K. We can now estimate  $T_c^{2D}$ , assuming that  $m_p \simeq 3m_e$ ,  $m_B = 2m_p$ ,  $m_B^* \simeq 1.05m_B$  and  $\rho_B \simeq 2 \cdot 10^{13} \text{cm}^{-2}$  for 2D planes and sheets in high- $T_c$  cuprates. Using the above values of the relevant parameters, we obtain  $T_0^* \simeq 176$  K. If in expres-

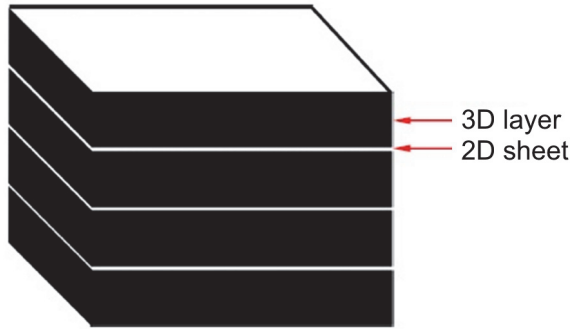


Fig. 2. Alternating 3D superconducting/2D superconducting sandwich layers in bosonic high- $T_c$  cuprate superconductors below the bulk  $T_c$ .

sion (6) we take the same value of  $\gamma_B = 0.7$  for a 2D Bose superfluid, we find  $T_c^{2D} \approx 1.105 T_0^* \approx 195$  K. The above predictions of the theory of 3D and 2D Bose superfluids indicate that the expected value of  $T_c$  in the bulk of high- $T_c$  cuprates is much lower than the expected value of  $T_c^{2D}$  at planes and planar sheets in these materials. We argue that the 3D regions in the considered high- $T_c$  cuprates become non-superconducting above the bulk  $T_c (=T_c^{3D})$ , but the Bose-liquid superconductivity is still preserved in 2D regions at much higher  $T_c$ . This 2D Bose-liquid superconductivity maintaining at grain boundaries, interfaces and planes in multi-plate blocks of high- $T_c$  cuprate materials may be encouraging in achieving room-temperature superconductivity at atmospheric pressure. Here we state that in specially grown samples of high-temperature cuprate superconductors, many grain boundaries parallel to each other, interfaces and planes or sheets in multi-plate blocks in alternating 3D superconducting/2D superconducting sandwich layers below the bulk  $T_c$  (Fig. 2) and in alternating 3D non-superconducting/2D are involed superconducting sandwich layers above  $T_c$  (Fig. 3). As seen in Fig. 3, the transition from the bulk to surface Bose-liquid superconductivity in the alternating 3D non-superconducting/2D superconducting sandwich layers can be a favorable path to realizing room-temperature superconductivity in high- $T_c$  cuprates.

One can expect that the critical temperature of the superconducting transition in 2D sheets of new sandwiches in high- $T_c$  cuprates shown in Fig. 3 can reach room temperature at certain values of  $\rho_B$  and  $\gamma_B$ . If we take  $\rho_B \approx 3 \cdot 10^{13} \text{cm}^{-2}$  and  $\gamma_B = 0.75$  for 2D layers of the above sandwiches, we find

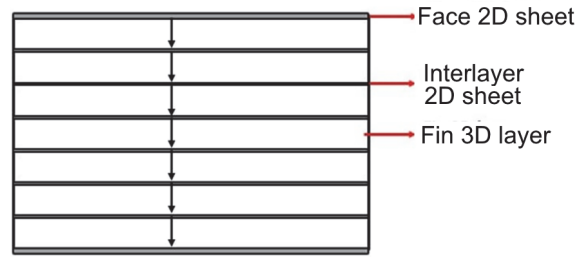


Fig. 3. Alternating 3D non-superconducting/2D superconducting sandwich layers in bosonic cuprate superconductors above the bulk  $T_c$ . Bold-type arrows indicate a transition from 3D non-superconducting (metallic) state to 2D superconducting state in these systems.

$T_0^* \approx 265$  K and  $T_c^{2D} \approx 1.154 T_0^* \approx 306$  K under the above assumptions of  $m_p \approx 3m_e$ ,  $m_B = 2m_p$ ,  $m_B^* \approx 1.05m_B$ . It follows that the room temperature superconductivity can be realized at grain boundaries, interfaces and planes/sheets in multi-plate blocks in some families of high- $T_c$  cuprates. In fact, there is experimental evidence that superconducting transition temperatures significantly exceed bulk  $T_c$  in high-temperature cuprates based on Y, Bi, and Hg. In particular, experimental results on anomalous transitions of resistivity between 125 and 260 K in high- $T_c$  cuprates  $\text{Y}_3\text{Ba}_4\text{Cu}_7\text{O}_x$  (with bulk  $T_c \approx 90$  K) indicate that superconductivity above the bulk  $T_c$  occurs at the grain boundaries in these systems [28] in accordance with the prediction of the above sandwich model. In addition, there is also experimental evidence for the retention of high-temperature superconductivity much higher than the bulk  $T_c$  in other families of cuprate superconductors, where resistive transitions were also observed at a temperature of about 260 K [29]. Most importantly, the possibility of traces of superconductivity at temperatures  $T \gg T_c$  and sometimes close to room temperature was observed in the systems  $\text{HgBa}_2\text{Ca}_{n-1}\text{Ca}_n\text{O}_{2n+2+\delta}$  and  $\text{Bi}_2\text{Sr}_2\text{CaCu}_2\text{O}_8$  [29]. These experimental findings are also indicative of the superconducting transitions taking place close to room temperature at 2D grain boundaries, interfaces and planes/sheets in multi-plate blocks in high- $T_c$  cuprates based on Hg and Bi, according to the sandwich model shown in Fig. 3. We believe that some evidence of room-temperature superconductivity has been observed in samples of high- $T_c$  Bi/Pb-based cuprates synthesized by using the new

melt technology under the influence of concentrated solar energy, which contain many grain boundaries, interfaces and multi-plate blocks [30] (see Fig. 1).

### Conclusions

We studied the possibility of realizing room-temperature superconductivity in sandwich-type high- $T_c$  cuprate materials containing many grain boundaries, interfaces and planes/sheets in multi-plate blocks. We have shown that the theory of Bose-liquid superconductivity predicts the possible route in the search for room-temperature superconductivity in such high- $T_c$  materials. We have found that the critical temperature  $T_c$  of the superconducting transition in high- $T_c$  cuprates is much higher in 2D regions than in the bulk. In high- $T_c$  cuprate materials synthesized using the new melt technology, many grain boundaries, interfaces and multi-plate blocks are involved in alternating 3D non-superconducting/2D superconducting sandwich layers above than the bulk  $T_c$ . This sandwich model for room-temperature superconductivity is based on the predictions of the theory of 3D and 2D Bose superfluids and on the transition from 3D regime to 2D regime of superconductivity in the alternating 3D/2D sandwich layers in high- $T_c$  cuprates. We conclude that the highest  $T_c$  up to room temperature can be reached in 2D planes and sheets in such sandwich-type high- $T_c$  cuprates. We argue that the specially-grown-specimens of high- $T_c$  cuprates based on Bi and Hg can be used in the search for room-temperature superconductivity. We compared our results on superconducting transitions above bulk  $T_c$  in various high- $T_c$  cuprates with experimental data indicating the retention of high-temperature superconductivity above bulk  $T_c$  up to room temperature in some families of high-temperature cuprates.

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