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# Anti-wurtzite reoriented

## M. Hostettler and H. D. Flack

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## Anti-wurtzite reoriented

M. Hostettler<sup>a†</sup> and H. D.  
Flack<sup>b\*</sup><sup>a</sup>Institut de Cristallographie, University  
of Lausanne, Switzerland, and<sup>b</sup>Laboratoire de Cristallographie,  
University of Geneva, Switzerland† Current address: Laboratory of Chemical and  
Mineralogical Crystallography, University of  
Bern, SwitzerlandCorrespondence e-mail:  
howard.flack@cryst.unige.ch

Anti-wurtzite and wurtzite are shown to be the same crystal structure despite the claims of a recent paper describing the crystal structure of the mineral rambergite,  $\text{Mn}_{1-x}\text{Fe}_x\text{S}$ ,  $x \simeq 0.05$ . The anti-wurtzite/wurtzite confusion is used as an illustration to help clarify the correct general approach to take in the treatment and presentation of achiral non-centrosymmetric crystal structures.

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## 1. Comment

Eriksson & Kalinowski (2001; hereafter EK) have determined the structure of the mineral rambergite, a hexagonal manganese sulfide of composition  $\text{Mn}_{1-x}\text{Fe}_x\text{S}$ ,  $x \simeq 0.05$ , which is found to crystallize in the inverse wurtzite structure, *i.e.* the wurtzite-type structure but with the opposite absolute configuration, which can be named anti-wurtzite. The quote (in italics) from EK contains one of several deep misunderstandings in their work similar to those chastized by Rogers (1975). The space group of wurtzite and rambergite is  $P6_3mc$ , which contains roto-inversion operations (*i.e.* several mirror and glide reflections through various planes), clearly indicating that the crystal structure is achiral. As a consequence, this crystal structure does not occur as a pair of non-superposable enantiomorphs of opposite chirality and the crystal structures of wurtzite and anti-wurtzite may be brought into congruence after an appropriate pure rotation.

EK's study of rambergite provides an illustration of an orientation ambiguity (Le Page *et al.*, 1984; Koch *et al.*, 2002). This may arise when the structure of the crystal being studied is already known and the point symmetry of the crystal structure is lower than that of its lattice. To understand the nature of the orientation ambiguity, compare the crystal structures of the sample and the known model. The comparison needs to be undertaken with the structures oriented so that each axial direction **a**, **b** or **c** in the sample (determined by the chosen indexing of the Bragg diffraction peaks) is respectively parallel to the corresponding one in the model. This orientation

ensures that the lattices of the two structures are parallel but may not lead, as in EK's case, to the two structures being superposable in this fixed orientation. In fact, in EK's case the two crystal structures may be brought into coincidence by applying one of 12 equivalent isometries either to the sample or to the model. Of these 12 isometries it is appropriate to mention a rotation of  $\pi$  about the **a** axis or inversion through a point. Of course, each of these 12 isometries maps the corresponding crystal lattice onto itself. The reorientation of the sample may be achieved by reindexing the diffraction pattern on an alternative reciprocal basis. A further example helps to clarify how orientation ambiguities may arise in practical circumstances. In the refinement of the isotypic crystal structures of  $\text{Nb}_3\text{Si}$  and  $\text{Nb}_3\text{As}$  in space group  $P4_2/n$  ( $\text{Nb}_3\text{Si}$ :  $a = 10.22$ ,  $c = 5.19$  Å;  $\text{Nb}_3\text{As}$ :  $a = 10.29$ ,  $c = 5.20$  Å) working from a list of known coordinates, Waterstrat *et al.* (1975) found that  $\text{Nb}_3\text{Si}$  refined immediately to  $R = 0.032$ , whereas  $\text{Nb}_3\text{As}$  was fixed at 0.080. The point symmetry of the crystal structure is  $4/m$ , whereas that of the lattice is  $4/mmm$ . A rotation of  $\pi$  about the  $[1,1,0]$  direction will map the lattice onto itself but produces the crystal structure in an alternative orientation on this lattice. When the  $\text{Nb}_3\text{As}$  diffraction data was reindexed on a rotated reciprocal basis,  $R$  dropped to 0.043. It is important to point out that the isometries that cause orientation ambiguities are identical to those that are capable of inducing twinning by merohedry.

The sets of equivalent twinning or orientation-ambiguity operations are obtained from the coset decomposition of the crystal point

group with respect to the holohedry (*i.e.* the point symmetry of the lattice; Flack, 1987). In EK's case the point group is  $6mm$  and the holohedry is  $6/mmm$ . The coset decomposition is as follows:

$\{6/mmm\} = \{6mm\} + r\{6mm\} = \{1, 6, 3, 2_{[001]}, 3^2, 6^5, m_{[100]}, m_{[210]}, m_{[110]}, m_{[120]}, m_{[010]}, m_{[\bar{1}10]}\} + \{2_{[100]}, 2_{[\bar{1}10]}, 2_{[010]}, 2_{[120]}, 2_{[\bar{1}10]}, 2_{[210]}, 1, \bar{6}^5, \bar{3}^5, m_{[001]}, \bar{3}, \bar{6}\}$ . The direction of the axis of each of the twofold rotations is indicated as a subscript given in terms of the conventional hexagonal axes. For the mirror reflections  $m$  it is the direction perpendicular (*i.e.* the normal) to the mirror plane that is indicated. For all the other symmetry operations (apart from the inversion through a point  $\bar{1}$ ) the direction  $[0,0,1]$  is implicit. The superscripts (*i.e.*  $^2$  and  $^5$ ) indicate a power of the corresponding operation. In the nomenclature of *International Tables for Crystallography* (Hahn, 2002), but omitting the coordinates of the fixed point  $0,0,0$ , and with the symmetry operations arranged in the same order as above, the coset decomposition may be written  $\{6/mmm\} = \{6mm\} + r\{6mm\} = \{1; 6^+ 0,0,z; 3^+ 0,0,z; 2 0,0,z; 3^- 0,0,z; 6^- 0,0,z; m x,2x,z; m 0,y,z; m x,\bar{x},z; m x,0,z; m 2x,x,z; m x,x,z\} + \{2 x,0,0; 2 x,\bar{x},0; 2 0,y,0; 2 x,2x,0; 2 x,x,0; 2 2x,x,0; \bar{1}; \bar{6}^- 0,0,z; \bar{3}^- 0,0,z; m x,y,0; \bar{3}^+ 0,0,z; \bar{6}^+ 0,0,z\}$ . The first coset contains the symmetry operators of the point group  $6mm$  whilst the second coset contains all the remaining symmetry operators of  $6/mmm$ . The coset representative of the second coset,  $r$ , may be chosen to be any member of the second coset. All of the symmetry operations of the

second coset are equivalent one to another under  $6mm$  and any one of them transforms 'anti-wurtzite' into 'wurtzite'. It can be seen that one half of these twin operations are pure rotations of  $\pi$ , whilst the remaining twin operations are roto-inversions of different angles about the hexagonal axis. In particular, amongst the roto-inversions one finds the inversion in a point,  $\bar{1}$ . This analysis confirms that non-centrosymmetric crystal structures for which the point-symmetry group contains roto-inversions may be inverted by rotation.

The term *absolute configuration* as used by EK is inappropriate as it should refer to the specification of the chirality sense of molecular entities, enantiomers, and not to the chirality of whole crystals. Likewise, there is a common misuse of language that attributes to a crystal structure some property of its diffraction pattern. As an example it should be clear that a chiral crystal may always be distinguished from its enantiomorph by some suitable physical observation (*e.g.* optical activity), although in the absence of resonant scattering (anomalous dispersion), their diffraction patterns are identical. However, EK state that *without the anomalous dispersion effects the wurtzite and anti-wurtzite structures are equal*, implying that it is the crystal structures themselves that are identical rather than their diffraction patterns. It is apposite to recall Wilson's (1975) criticism of the *effect of dispersion on atomic parameters* as being meaningless. He states that *atomic parameters are determined by the interatomic*

*forces, the symmetry of the crystal, the temperature and so on. Dispersion, anomalous or otherwise, does not affect them* (Wilson, 1975).

A fuller exposé on chiral and achiral crystal structures may be found in Flack (2003), whilst other questions concerning absolute-structure and absolute-configuration determination are dealt with by Flack & Bernardinelli (1999, 2000).

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