

# TO THE MAGNETO-OPTICAL ANISOTROPY OF THE Mg CRYSTAL THE EFFECT OF CHANGING THE MAGNETIC STRUCTURE OF FeBO<sub>3</sub>

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#### Abstract

The field dependence of the magnetic linear birefringence (MLB) in easyplane weak FeBO<sub>3</sub>:Mg

ferromagnet has been investigated. It is found that MLB nonmonotonically (stepwise) tends to a constant

value with an increase in magnetic field at low temperatures. This feature of MLB in FeBO<sub>3</sub>:Mg is related to the transformation of the crystal magnetic structure during magnetization.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Optically transparent iron borate (FeBO<sub>3</sub>) is a promising material for the element base of various magnetooptical devices. For this reason, the magnetic, optical, and magnetooptical properties of this easyplane weak ferromagnet had been intensively investigated and are known fairly well. However, a relatively short time ago, it was found [1, 2] that doping of FeBO<sub>3</sub> with diamagnetic Mg ions in low concentrations leads to a specific feature in the technical magnetization of FeBO<sub>3</sub> crystals: at low temperatures( $T < Tc \approx 130$  K), with an external magnetic field *H* applied in the easymagnetization (111) plane, anincrease in *H* leads to the transformation of the magnetic structure of FeBO<sub>3</sub>:Mg: it becomes spatially modulated rather than homogeneous. It was shown in [1–3] that the magnetic order of FeBO<sub>3</sub>:Mg becomes modulated when the orientation of the vector **H** is close to one of three directions that are perpendicular to the directions of the twofold symmetry axes  $C_2$  (near the directions of hard magnetization axes of in planehexagonal anisotropy). modulated magnetic structure (MMS) of the crystal exists in some temperature dependent range of magnetic field strengths and has the form of a static spin wave linearly polarized in





the easymagnetization plane, in which the local antiferromagnetism vector oscillates near the axis  $C_2 \perp \mathbf{H}$  when moving along the vector  $\mathbf{H}$ .

### EXPERIMENTAL

The experiments were performed on the same  $FeBO_3$ :Mg single crystal (Mg content ~ 0.1 wt %) that was used in the MMS studies in [1–3]. The sample was

a plane parallel plate with transverse sizes of ~3 mm and thickness of ~60 µm, with developed faces in the easy magnetization plane.

We analyzed the field dependence of the magnetic linear birefringence (MLB) in FeBO<sub>3</sub>:Mg. As was noted above, MMS arises when a crystal is magnetized in the directions close to perpendiculars to the three  $C_2$  axes; hence, the MLB dependence on *H* was investigated for the vector **H** oriented along the direction

perpendicular to one of the  $C_2$  axes and (for comparison) at  $\mathbf{H} \parallel C_2$ . To minimize the effect of magnetic linear dichroism on the measurement results, the MLB

study was performed in the range of maximum optical transparency of iron borate, using argon laser radiation with the wavelength  $\lambda \approx 0.514 \ \mu m$ .

The MLB measurements were performed at temperatures from 80 to 295 K in a magnetic field of  $H \leq 30$  Oe (in all experiments, the vector **H** was in the easymagnetization plane of the crystal), at normal incidence of light on the sample plane (light propagated in the crystal along the *C*3 axis, i.e., one of the three optical indicatrix axes); in this case, the plane of polarization of the incident light made an angle of  $\pi/4$  with the **H** direction. The MLB value was determined from the phase shift between the normal modes as follows:

$$\alpha = 2\pi d(n||-n\bot)/\lambda$$

(*d* is the sample thickness, n|| and  $n\perp$  are the refractive indices for the light linearly polarized along and across the **H** direction, respectively) and measured with a phase compensator ( $\lambda/4$  plate) according to the conventional technique based on modulation of the azimuth of the polarization plane of the light incident on the photodetector (FHU\_79) [5]. The photodetector signal was synchronously detected and applied at the *Y* input of an *X*−*Y* recorder, with a signal proportional to *H* on the *X* input. The measured signal was recorded with linear magnetic field scan at a rate of ~1 Oe/s. The sensitivity of the experimental setup to the angle  $\alpha$ was ≈0.001°; this value, recalculated to the difference  $\Delta n = (n|| - n⊥)$  for the sample under study, corresponds to ≈3 × 10<sup>-8</sup>.





# **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The studies performed showed that the dependence  $\Delta n(H)$  barely changes with variations in the direction of the vector **H** in the (111) plane at temperatures above the temperature of crystal transition in the modulated magnetic state (i.e., at T > Tc). At the same time, at T < Tc, the dependences  $\Delta n(H)$  observed at different magnetizing field orientations were radically different. As an example, the figure shows the field dependences of the MLB of the crystal studied, obtained at 80 and 150 K with the vector **H** oriented along one of the  $C_2$  axes and perpendicular to this direction. A comparison of the plots shows that the curves  $\Delta n(H)$  obtained at T = 150 K differ only slightly, whereas the dependences  $\Delta n(H)$  measured at T = 80 K

significantly change with reorientation of **H**; specifically, the slope of the initial portion, magnetic hysteresis, and the saturation field change. The difference in the obtained curves  $\Delta n(H)$  is especially pronounced in fairly strong magnetic fields. In particular, the figure indicates that, in contrast to the orientation **H** ||  $C_2$  (at

which  $\Delta n$  does not change within the experimental error with an increase in *H* at *H* > 5 Oe), at **H**  $\perp$  *C*<sub>2</sub>, the  $\Delta n(H)$  nonmonotonically (stepwise) tends to a constant value.

As was shown in [1], the MMS spatial period D in a FeBO<sub>3</sub>:Mg crystal stepwise changes with a change in H. Comparing the plots in the figure, one can clearly

see a correlation between the position of steps in the curve  $\Delta n(H)$  at  $\mathbf{H} \perp C_2$  and the steps in the dependence D(H) (the plot D(H) at T = 80 K is taken from [1]). Let

us discuss this correlation in more detail, assuming that the observed features of the field dependence of MLB are related to the modulation of the crystal magnetic structure.

As was noted above, MMS arises when a crystal is magnetized in the easymagnetization plane along one of the hardmagnetization axes. Therefore, at  $\mathbf{H} \perp C_2$ , the magnetization tends to a constant value through rotation of the vector  $\mathbf{m}$  toward the direction  $\mathbf{H}$  (and, correspondingly, rotation of the vector  $\mathbf{l}$  toward the direction of the  $C_2$  axis, oriented perpendicularly to  $\mathbf{H}$ ). On the basis of the theoretical consideration [1] of the phase transition of the crystal from the homogeneous magnetic state to a spatially modulated one, the angle of deviation of the local vector  $\mathbf{l}$  from the  $C_2$  axis near the magnetic saturation fields in FeBO<sub>3</sub>:Mg can be written as

$$\beta = 2\left[\left(A - mH - \frac{2\pi^2 \gamma}{D^2}\right) / 3B\right]^{\frac{1}{2}} \sin 2\pi x / D = \beta_1 \sin 2\pi x / D, \quad (1)$$

where *A*, *B*, and  $\gamma$  are *H* independent constants, *x* is the current coordinate along the direction of the vector **H** (**H**  $\perp$  *C*<sub>2</sub>), and *D* is the spatial modulation period.





Note that, according to the data of [1-3], the angle  $\beta_1$  is ~10° and decreases with an increase in *H*. With dueregard to the curve *D*(*H*) shown in the figure, expression (1) yields specifically the dependence  $\beta_1(H)$ .

Taking into account the dependence of MLB on the l orientation in the easymagnetization plane of FeBO<sub>3</sub>:Mg [3, 4]

 $\Delta n \sim sin2(\theta - \beta)$ 

 $(\theta = \pi/4 \text{ is the azimuth of the polarization plane of the light incident on the crystal with respect to the direction of$ **H**), one can draw the following conclusion.

When the direction of the vector **l** in the modulated magnetic phase changes from point to point in the sample plane, the measurable  $\alpha$  in the chosen geometry of the experiment is determined by the  $\Delta n$  value averaged over the laser beam cross section. When the dependence of the angle  $\beta$  on *x* is described by (1),  $\Delta n$  can be written as

$$\Delta n \sim r^{-1} \int_0^r \cos\left(\frac{2\beta_1 \sin 2\pi x}{D}\right) dx = r^{-1} \int_0^r [J_0(2\beta_1) + 2\sum_{k=1}^n J_{2k}(2\beta_1) \cos 4\pi kx / D] dx \approx J_0(2\beta_1) + J_2(2\beta_1) D \sin(\frac{4\pi r}{D}) / 2\pi r, \quad (2)$$

where *r* is the sample linear size along the direction of **H** in the laser beam cross section and  $J_0(2\beta_1)$  and  $J_2(2\beta_1)$  are, respectively, the zero-and second-order Bessel functions [6].

For the experimentally observed values of  $\beta_1$ ,  $J_0(2\beta_1) \gg J_2(2\beta_1)$  (for example, at  $\beta_1 = 10^{\circ} J_0(0.35) \approx 0.96$  and  $J_2(0.35) \approx 0.01$  [6]) and the modulation period

 $D \ll r$  ( $r \approx 2$  mm is the laser beam diameter). Hence, it follows from (2) that, in the modulated magnetic phase the field dependence of MLB is entirely determined by the dependence of the term  $J_0(2\beta_1)$  on H. It can be seen from (1) that a step change in the modulation period leads to a step change in the angle  $\beta_1$ . Taking into account (2), this means that the steps observed in the dependence  $\Delta n(H)$  at  $\mathbf{H} \perp C_2$  are due to the step change in  $\beta_1$  in the magnetic field. According to the experimental results shown in the figure, the MMS period decreases with an increase in H. Moreover, at

the same *H*, the *D* value measured in a field increasing from zero differs from that obtained in a field decreasing from maximum; therefore, according to (1) and (2), the steps in the curve  $\Delta n(H)$  at  $\mathbf{H} \perp C_2$  are smaller at larger *H* and less pronounced in the reverse magnetization curve (figure).





EFFECT OF THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE MAGNETIC STRUCTURE







Field dependences of the MLB in a FeBO<sub>3</sub>:Mg crystal, obtained at T = 80 K for the magnetic field orientations (1)  $\mathbf{H} \perp C_2$  and (2)  $\mathbf{H} \parallel C_2$ . The dashed broken line is the field dependence of the spatial modulation period of the azimuth of the antiferromagnetism vector in the inhomogeneous magnetic phase of the crystal. The magnetic field scan direction is indicated by arrows. The inset shows the field dependences of the FeBO<sub>3</sub>:Mg MLB crystal obtained at T = 150 K at magnetic field scanning from zero at  $\mathbf{H} \perp C_2$  (solid line) and  $\mathbf{H} \parallel C_2$  (dashed line).

To conclude, we should note that no step change in the angle  $\beta_1$  in a field *H* was found in [2]; therefore, the results of the MLB study performed here make it possible to refine the structure and reveal specific features of technical magnetization of the modulated magnetic phase of FeBO<sub>3</sub>:Mg crystals.

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