

## 9. BASIC STRUCTURAL FEATURES

answer the reverse question: which space groups contain special positions of given point group  $\mathcal{G}$ ? Some general points may be noted.

(i) Special positions of symmetry  $\mathcal{G}$  will be found in the symmorphic, but not other, space groups of the geometric class  $\mathcal{G}$ . Thus, for example, there are special positions of symmetry  $mmm$  in  $Pnmm$ ,  $Cmmm$ ,  $Fmmm$ ,  $Immm$ , but not in any other space group in the geometric class  $mmm$ .

(ii) A 'family tree' of point groups is given in Fig. 10.3.2 of Volume A of *International Tables for Crystallography* (Hahn, 1995). Special positions of symmetry  $\mathcal{G}$  may be sought in space groups of the geometric classes linked to  $\mathcal{G}$  by a line (possibly zigzag) having a generally upwards direction. Thus, to take the same example, special positions of symmetry  $mmm$  are found in certain space groups of  $4/mmm$  ( $P4/mmm$ ,  $P4/mbm$ ,  $4_2/mmc$ ,  $P4_2/mcm$ ,  $P4_2/mmm$ ,  $I4/mmm$ ,  $I4/mcm$ ), in  $6/mmm$  ( $P6/mmm$ ), in  $m\bar{3}$  ( $Pm\bar{3}$ ,  $Im\bar{3}$ ), and in  $m\bar{3}m$  ( $Pm\bar{3}m$ ,  $Fm\bar{3}m$ ).

(iii) Obviously, the higher up the tree the symmetry  $\mathcal{G}$  is, the fewer will be the space groups in which it can occur – special positions of symmetry  $m\bar{3}m$  can occur only in the three symmorphic space groups of the corresponding geometric class. The lower symmetries (2,  $m$ ,  $\bar{1}$ ,  $\bar{3}$ ), with nothing below them but 1, can be traced upwards along many branches, and so can occur in many space groups, but not all are equally favoured. Special positions of symmetry 2 can be sought in all higher geometric classes except  $\bar{6}$ ,  $3m$ , and  $\bar{3}$ , but those of symmetry 3 could occur only in the classes of the trigonal, hexagonal, and cubic systems. An approximate count\* (Table 9.7.2.1) shows that special positions of symmetry 2 occur in 167 space groups, of  $m$  in 99, of  $\bar{1}$  in 38, and of 3 in 57. The only other special positions with space-group frequencies of this order are  $2/m$  (39),  $222$  (30), and  $mm$  (57).

## 9.7.3. Empirical space-group frequencies

Empirical space-group frequencies are based on two major collections of structural data for organic substances, in Cambridge and Moscow, respectively.

The Cambridge Structural Database (Allen *et al.*, 1991) contains assignments of space groups for a variety of different types of organic compounds. The file can be computer searched in many ways; it is easy, for example, to trace all structures having a particular space group, or those having a particular space group and a particular number of formula units per unit cell. For the present purpose, a selection has to be made, omitting space groups not substantiated by a full structure determination or dubious because of disorder in the crystal. The packing considerations discussed in previous paragraphs would not apply to crystals in which the intermolecular binding was ionic rather than van der Waals or the like, so that space groups of ionic structures (for example salts of organic acids) are also rejected. Unfortunately, as it is implemented at present (early 1995), it is not possible to search for structures with molecules occupying general positions or specified special positions, so that, in particular, the frequency data of Wilson (1993*d*) are inflated by the inability to distinguish between single occupation of a general position and multiple occupation of special positions.

The file compiled by V. A. Belsky at the L. Ya. Karpov Institute of Physical Chemistry in Moscow is the source of the data used by Belsky, Zorkaya & Zorky (1995). This file differs in objective from the Cambridge file; the latter includes all

\* Such counts are tedious and subject to error, but the table should be correct within a few units.

reasonably established organic structures short of proteins and high polymers, whereas the former concentrates on structures containing only a single type of molecule ('homomolecular structures'). It thus contains appreciably fewer entries than the Cambridge file, even if structures of the types mentioned in the previous paragraph are excluded from the latter. The Moscow file is, of course, the primary source for the data of Belsky, Zorkaya & Zorky (1995), in which the occupation of general and special positions is explicitly presented.

## 9.7.4. Use of molecular symmetry

It has long been recognized that in many crystal structures molecules with inherent symmetry occupy Wyckoff special positions, so that molecular and crystallographic symmetry elements coincide, but until recently systematic data have been lacking. Now the occurrence of molecules of particular symmetry in structures of various space-group types can be traced in the data of Belsky, Zorkaya & Zorky (1995), and will be discussed briefly.

## 9.7.4.1. Positions with symmetry 1

The empirical results for 'homomolecular structures' with one molecule in the general position are given in Table 9.7.1.2. The classification by arithmetic crystal class and degree of symmorphism follows Wilson (1993*d*); the numerical data are taken from Belsky, Zorkaya & Zorky (1995). Space groups symmorphic in the technical sense (Wilson, 1993*d*) are prefixed by an asterisk (\*), and in each arithmetic crystal class the space group most nearly antimorphic is followed by an obelus (†). The number of known structures having precisely one molecule in the general Wyckoff position is given as a superscript in brackets. It will be noticed immediately that structures with space groups 'fully symmorphic' or 'tending to symmorphism' are extremely rare. Most have no examples; three ( $P4_2$ ,  $P4/n$  and  $P\bar{3}$ ) are credited with a single example each. The frequency of space groups increases rapidly with increasing antimorphism. In the monoclinic system, the 'fully symmorphic' space group  $P2/m$  has no examples with one molecule in the general position, the 'equally balanced'  $P2/c$  has 11 examples, the 'tending to antimorphism'  $C2/c$  has 587, and the 'fully antimorphic'  $P2_1/c$  has 5951. Other systems have fewer examples, but the trend is the same; the really popular space groups are the 'fully antimorphic' plus  $P1$  and  $P\bar{1}$ .

All space groups, of course, possess general positions of symmetry 1, and the data in Table 9.7.2.1 show that 116 of them exhibit structures of some kind, and that 57 exhibit structures in which one or more general positions are used. 13 space groups ( $P1$ ,  $P2_1$ ,  $Pc$ ,  $Cc$ ,  $P2_12_12_1$ ,  $Pca2_1$ ,  $Pna2_1$ ,  $P4_{1,3}$ ,  $P3_{1,2}$ ,  $P6_{1,5}$ ) have no positions with symmetry higher than 1. These space groups contain no syntropic symmetry elements, and all are relatively popular.

9.7.4.2. Positions with symmetry  $\bar{1}$ 

Many space groups are centrosymmetric (all those in the geometric classes  $\bar{1}$ ,  $2/m$ ,  $mmm$ ,  $4/m$ ,  $4/mmm$ ,  $\bar{3}$ ,  $\bar{3}m$ ,  $6/m$ ,  $6/mmm$ ,  $m\bar{3}$ ,  $m\bar{3}m$ ), but comparatively few of them possess special positions of symmetry  $\bar{1}$ , as the centres of symmetry are often encumbered by other symmetry elements. All centres of symmetry in  $P\bar{1}$ ,  $P2_1/c$  and  $Pbca$  are free, as are some of those in  $P\bar{3}$  and  $R\bar{3}$ . When the encumbrance is an antitropic symmetry element, the special position can still be occupied by a molecule of symmetry  $\bar{1}$  only, but when the encumbrance is syntropic or atropic the position cannot accommodate such a molecule. Table