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Field cooling memory effect in Bi2212 and Bi2223 single crystals

D Shaltiel¹, H-A Krug von Nidda², B Rosenstein³, B Ya Shapiro⁴,
M Golosovsky¹, I Shapiro⁴, A Loidl², B Bogoslavsky¹, T Fujii⁵,
T Watanabe⁶ and T Tamegai⁷

¹ Racah Institute of Physics, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem 91905, Israel

² Experimental Physics V, Center for Electronic Correlation and Magnetism, University of Augsburg, D-86135 Augsburg, Germany

³ Department of Electrophysics Hsinchu, National Chiao Tung University, 30050, Taiwan

⁴ Department of Physics, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan 52100, Israel

⁵ Cryogenic Research Center, University of Tokyo, Yayoi, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo 113-0032, Japan

⁶ School of Science and Technology, Hirosaki University, Hirosaki, Aomori 033-8561, Japan

⁷ Department of Applied Physics, University of Tokyo, Hongo, Bunkyo-ku 113-8656, Japan

Abstract

A memory effect in the Josephson vortex system created by a magnetic field in the highly anisotropic superconductors Bi2212 and Bi2223 is demonstrated using microwave power absorption. This surprising effect appears despite a very low viscosity of Josephson vortices compared to Abrikosov vortices. The superconductor is field-cooled in a DC magnetic field H_m oriented parallel to the CuO planes through the critical temperature T_c down to 4 K, with subsequent reduction of the field to zero and again above H_m . A large microwave power absorption signal is observed at a magnetic field just above the cooling field, clearly indicating a memory effect. The dependence of the signal on a deviation of the magnetic field from H_m is the same for a wide range of H_m from 1500 to 17 000 G.

1. Introduction

Many complex disordered systems in nature fail to equilibrate with their environment below a certain temperature. Examples include the whole spectrum of glasses, from window glass to spin glass [1]. The glassy metastable frustrated state gives rise to novel and unusual behavior such as memory effects, aging and nonlinear dynamics. In recent years the family of glasses has significantly expanded and now includes additional effects such as domain walls [2], two-dimensional electron gas [3] and Abrikosov vortices in type II superconductors under magnetic fields (see [4] and references therein).

The glassy vortex state is usually prepared by field cooling (FC) a sample containing quenched disorder across the superconducting transition temperature $T_c(H)$. A memory phenomenon in superconductors is usually studied as a response to an applied perturbation which suddenly disturbs the superconductor. After removing the perturbation, the subsequent response reveals the memory effects, for example the rate of the magnetic relaxation is slower in ‘older’

systems than in ‘younger’ ones [4]. Experiments on different conventional superconductors [5] and in YBaCuO single crystals [6] demonstrated the presence of a history effect similar to those in Heisenberg spin glasses.

Here we report an entirely different manifestation of the memory effect in strongly anisotropic high T_c superconductors. In these superconductors, a magnetic field directed parallel to the layers penetrates the sample as a system of Josephson vortices (JV), thus qualitatively distinct from pancake vortices (PV) that appear when the magnetic field is perpendicular to the layers. In less anisotropic materials, as in most conventional superconductors and optimally doped YBaCuO, they appear as Abrikosov vortices (AV). It is well known that for sufficiently strong disorder the AV form a vortex glass [7]. In JV systems a randomly distributed set of defects of the layered structure (microresistances [8]) is analogous to the quenched disorder pinning AV in the conventional vortex glass. Apparently the pinning of JV is expected to be less effective than the pinning of AV since the JV are coreless. However it was shown (see [8, 9]) that both the individual and collective

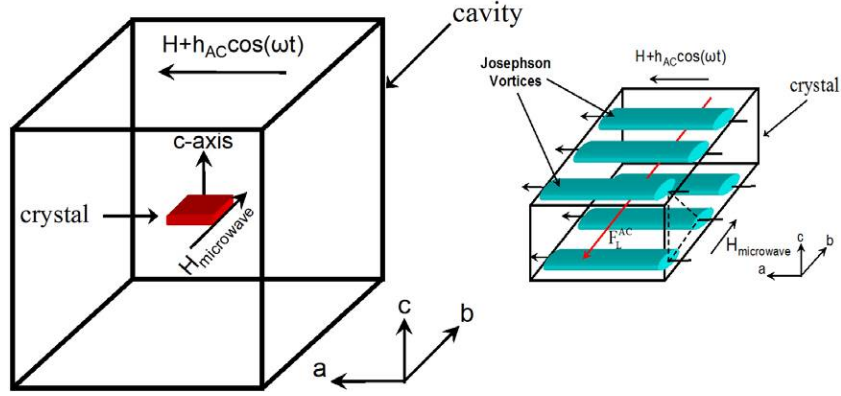


Figure 1. Orientation of the superconducting crystal in the cavity with respect to the DC, AC and MW magnetic fields. Inset: JV structure in high T_c superconductors induced by DC magnetic field parallel to the a - b plane. The AC eddy currents apply a Lorentz force on the JV as shown.

pinning of the Josephson vortices on the structural defects is an experimentally and theoretically well-studied phenomenon.

We demonstrate the formation of the glassy state of the JV [8] in $\text{Bi}_2\text{Sr}_2\text{Ca}_1\text{Cu}_2\text{O}_\delta$ (Bi2212) and $\text{Bi}_2\text{Sr}_2\text{Ca}_2\text{Cu}_3\text{O}_\delta$ (Bi2223) single crystals where the landslide pinning potential is formed by the structural defects. The memory properties are studied by measuring the microwave power absorption (MPA) of the sample subjected to colinear DC and AC magnetic fields parallel to the layers, see figure 1. This method is sensitive to register weakly pinned JV, while strongly pinned JV do not contribute to the signal [10]. In the present experiment the JV glass is prepared by field-cooling (FC) the sample from above T_c to $T_m = 4.2$ K while a DC magnetic field H_m is applied parallel to the a - b crystal plane. At this temperature the external field is decreased to zero and after applying a low frequency AC field it is subsequently increased again. No MPA signal is detected until the external magnetic field reaches the initial field H_m . The peak of the MPA signal appears just above H_m , demonstrating the memory effect. The dependence of the signal on the deviation of the magnetic field $H - H_m$ is the same in a wide range of cooling fields.

2. Vortex matter in BSCCO

The Abrikosov (namely $H \parallel c$ axis) vortex physics in Bi2212, whose anisotropy is $\gamma = 250$ [11], was comprehensively studied. A complicated H - T phase diagram contains the melting line and a transition to a glassy state. Magnetic flux penetrates the sample as 2D pancake vortices which are weakly linked by Josephson coupling and magnetic interaction along the c axis, and repel each other. As a result, PV form a periodic lattice structure at low temperatures and low fields. The PV lattice melts into a liquid with increasing temperature and magnetic field. This first-order transition is observed as a step in the equilibrium magnetization [12].

On the other hand, transverse fields penetrate between two superconducting planes as JV. Fundamental differences in vortex structures in $H \parallel c$ and $H \perp c$ naturally call for an interest in the vortex states under tilted fields in which both PV and JV segments are present [13]. A static arrangement

of PV on the a - b plane in tilted fields was studied by Bitter decoration [14]. A one-dimensional arrangement of PV along the tilting direction concomitant with a triangular lattice between chains was visualized. Moreover, direct observation of PV by a scanning Hall probe microscope revealed the existence of the chain state [15]. The melting line in tilted fields was established recently [16].

Disorder plays a prominent role in vortex matter in BSCCO. The effect of disorder on melting processes was visualized using magneto-optics [17]. In addition, the irreversibility line or glass line appears around 40 K for $H \parallel c$. This was first determined in transport measurements. Recent magnetization measurements established the thermodynamic nature of this continuous transition. For titled fields pinning will be dominated by the PV segments. A theoretically conjectured phase diagram was proposed in [15]. In the extreme case of $H \perp c$ axis, when only JV exist, pinning is much weaker and has not been studied so far. Generally JV are not sensitive to oxygen defects, but are pinned by microresistances [8] which reside between the superconducting CuO planes. Such kinds of disorder can result in a novel type of glassy state. The microwave technique described below enables us to approach it.

3. Experiment

The memory properties of the Josephson glass are investigated using a Bruker ELEXSYS continuous-wave electron spin resonance (ESR) spectrometer working at the X-band frequency, $\omega_{mw}/2\pi = 9.3$ GHz, see [10, 18] for details. A microwave source feeds a rectangular H102 cavity where an optimally grown Bi2212 or Bi2223 crystal (sizes $1 \times 1 \times 0.1$ mm³) is placed in the center of the cavity region with only a microwave magnetic field present. The microwave (MW) magnetic field was parallel to the a axis in the a - b plane. The sample, whose temperature was varied continuously down to helium temperatures using a helium continuous-flow cryostat (Oxford Instruments), was exposed to colinear DC and AC ($\omega_{AC}/2\pi = 100$ kHz) magnetic fields parallel to the a axis

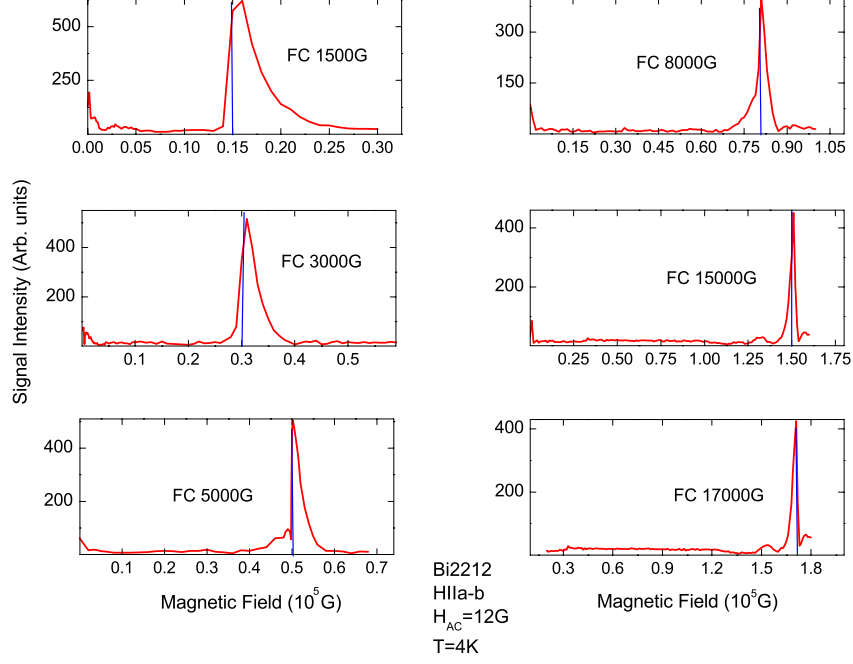


Figure 4. Signal intensity as a function of DC magnetic field in Bi2212 crystal for different H_m values up to 17 000 G, obtained by field-cooling at H_m from above T_c to 4 K and then dropping the field to zero. The signal's maxima are slightly above H_m , implying a memory effect.

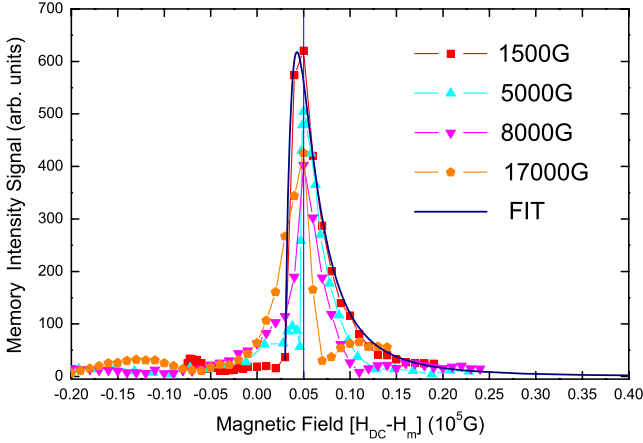


Figure 5. The memory signals shown in figure 4 as a function of the difference $(H - H_m)$ demonstrates scaling behavior. The signals are superimposed, with their maxima at about 500 G. The intensities and shapes are similar. The blue solid line is a theoretical fit for $H_m = 1500$ G, $A = 0.13$, $H_0 = 170$ G, where $|H - H_m| > H_0$.

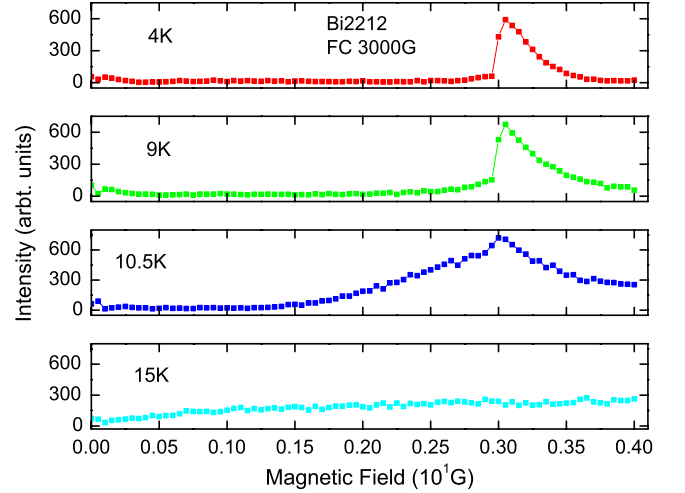


Figure 6. Signals as a function of DC magnetic field cooled at 3000 G to 4, 9, 10.5 and 15 K. The similar signal intensity and shape at 4 and 9 K and the signal broadening at 10.5 K indicates a glass phase transition at about 10 K.

(line 2 in figure 2) is between 10 and 15 K, depending weakly on the magnetic field. We found that in the range of fields studied the precursor of the glass transition appears at much higher temperatures around 30 K. In the crossover region the memory effect is not fully developed, see the $T = 10.5$ K line in figure 6.

Experimental results similar to those presented in figure 4 for Bi2212 were observed in a less anisotropic Bi2223 superconductor which was field-cooled to 4 K. In figure 7 MPA intensity as a function of the DC field is presented for magnetic fields H_m up to 2500 G.

5. Discussion

The glassy behavior observed in JV systems in BSCCO for the first time is reminiscent of those observed in other glassy systems. One can explain the memory effect described above using the hierarchical model of a glassy state commonly used in spin glass theory [24]. When the sample is adiabatically field-cooled (cooling speed around 10 K s^{-1}) from above T_c to a low temperature T_m well below T_c the JV fill the deepest valleys of the landslide potential, forming a quasi-equilibrium

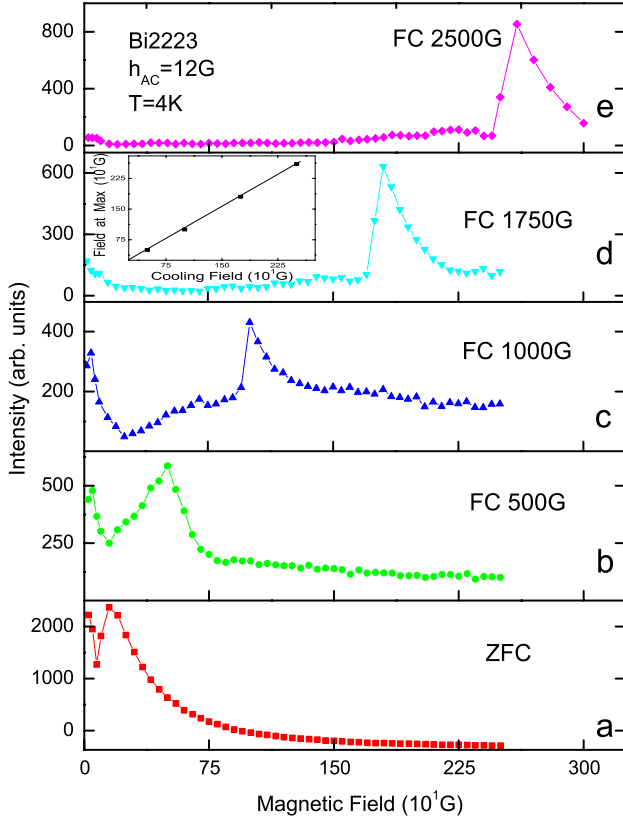


Figure 7. Signal intensity as a function of DC magnetic field in Bi2223 crystal for different H_m values up to 2500 G, obtained by field-cooling at H_m from above T_c to 4 K and then dropping the field to zero. The signal's maxima are slightly above H_m , implying a memory effect. The inset indicates a linear behavior of the signal's maxima.

JV glassy state. The landslide potential responsible for JV glass is formed by a randomly distributed set of the microresistances in the layers. These short-range pinning potentials (in comparison with the Josephson penetration length) are weak enough to allow the AC eddy current to depin the JV and thus to contribute to MWP. The PV also might, in principle, contribute to the memory effect, playing a role of a strong pinning mechanism of JV which are tied to them. However, on the basis of our experiments one can conclude that the memory effect depends on the PV number only slightly. In fact, the memory signal is not changed in a wide range of angles of the magnetic field tilted with respect to the CuO plane (a - b), from 0° to 50° (see figure 8). There is no memory effect and no MPA signal at all in the MW experiment when the magnetic field is perpendicular to the layers, namely in the case when only PV exist [18, 25]. This demonstrates that only the JV contribute significantly to the signal observed by our technique.

The cooling in the present experiment is definitely slow enough and the temperature high enough, so that the most favorable pinning positions are effectively found. When the external DC magnetic field is dropped to zero, while holding the temperature at T_m , the vortices are still confined inside the deep pinning landslide minima and cannot effectively absorb the microwave radiation. As the field is subsequently increased

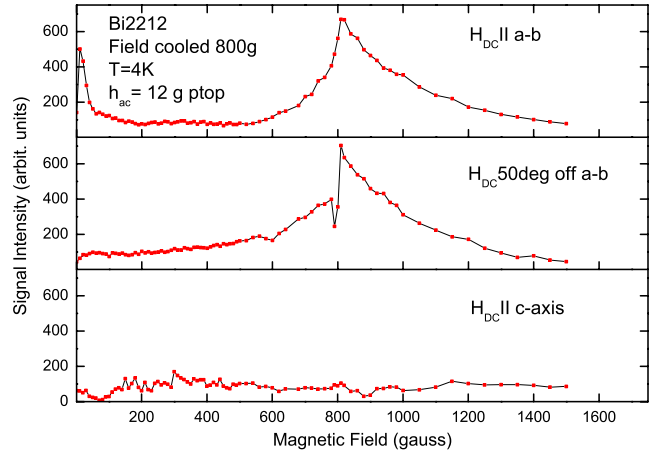


Figure 8. Memory signal versus magnetic field for $H_m = 8000$ G with magnetic field tilted by an angle of 50° away of the a - b plane; both the JV and the PV coexist. There is no change in memory effect as the number of PV is increased.

(with the temperature still kept at T_m), the fluxons remain immobile and prevent penetration of new JV till its starting 'equilibrium' field H_m is reached. When the field is further increased beyond H_m the JV glassy state loses its quasi-equilibrium and new vortices penetrate the sample populating unoccupied shallower valleys of the pinning landscape (in which the pinning constant is smaller). These are the vortices responsible for the experimentally observed sharp MPA signal. It is important to emphasize that the MPA signal depends on the magnitude of the external magnetic field rather than on the magnetic induction, which is dominated by the magnetic field of the pinned vortices (hysteresis). Thus the present memory signal has a universal shape. The shape can be understood using a simple formula derived in [10]:

$$S = A \frac{|H_0^3 - 2(H - H_m)^3|}{[H_0^3 + (H - H_m)^3]^2}, \quad (2)$$

which, for $|H - H_m| > H_0$, demonstrates a well-pronounced scaling behavior in the coordinate $|H - H_m|$ (solid line in figure 5). The only parameters describing the ability of the system to absorb the microwave energy [10] are $A \simeq 0.13$ and $H_0 \simeq 170$ G for $T = 4$ K. At temperatures below 10 K, H_0 is temperature-independent.

The memory should be destroyed at higher temperature $T > T_g$ since the pinning potential will be smeared (thermal depinning). This is the 'glass transition' in the JV system. Since the basic mechanism is the single-vortex pinning (for not too high fields) it is clear that the glass transition temperature T_g is only weakly dependent on the field. The situation is not expected to change qualitatively at larger fields in which JV will be pinned collectively.

To summarize: although the 'memory effect' in the context of vortex matter has been extensively discussed, our experiments allow its demonstration in a qualitatively different Josephson vortex system. In the highly anisotropic compounds Bi2212 or Bi2223, when field-cooled to 4 K, an MPA signal is retrieved at a magnetic field close to the cooling field, clearly

indicating a memory effect. We conclude that the two materials demonstrate very similar behavior because for a glassy system the details of the individual JV pinning are less important than the random pinning landslide potential, which is similar in both samples. The most striking observation in the ‘memory effect’ is that the microwave absorption peak obeys a universal scaling.

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