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## AFFILIATIONS

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## ABSTRACT

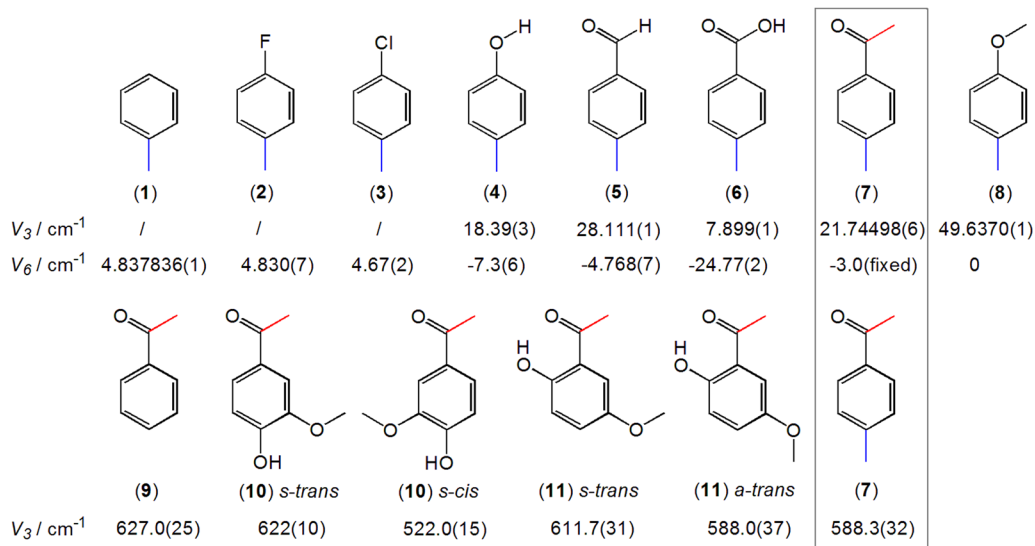
The Fourier transform microwave spectrum of 4-methylacetophenone recorded from 8 GHz to 18 GHz under jet-cooled conditions has revealed large tunneling splittings arising from a low barrier to internal rotation of the ring methyl group and small splittings from a high torsional barrier of the acetyl methyl group. The large splittings are especially challenging to model, while the small splittings are difficult to analyze due to the resolution limit of 120 kHz. The combination of two methyl groups undergoing internal rotations caused each rotational transition to split into five torsional species, which were resolved and fitted using a modified version of the XIAM code and the newly developed *ntop* code to a root-mean-square deviation close to measurement accuracy, providing an estimate of the  $V_3$  potential barriers of about  $22\text{ cm}^{-1}$  and  $584\text{--}588\text{ cm}^{-1}$  for the ring and the acetyl methyl groups, respectively. The assignment was aided by separately fitting the five torsional species using odd-power order operators. Only one conformer in which all heavy atoms are located on a symmetry plane could be identified in the spectrum, in agreement with results from conformation analysis using quantum chemical calculations.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The potentials of methyl internal rotation in toluene derivatives provide fascinating insights into the electronic structure effects of substitution. In this sense, the methyl rotor is an exquisite probe of its local electronic environment. It is known that the potential of methyl internal rotation in toluene (**1**) consists of a pure  $V_6$  term due to the  $C_{3v}$  symmetry of the methyl group and the  $C_{2v}$  symmetry of the phenyl ring (for molecule numbering, see Fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> The shape and height of this potential vary strongly if further substituents are added on the ring, which often breaks the  $C_{2v}$  symmetry of the phenyl ring so that a  $V_3$  term occurs. Figure 1 summarizes the experimental methyl rotor barriers in a series of substituted toluenes that illustrate this point. A systematic microwave study on three isomers of methylanisole has shown that the  $V_3$  potential is largest when the methoxy substituent is located next

to the methyl group of toluene ( $444\text{ cm}^{-1}$ )<sup>2</sup> but decreases drastically when it is in the *meta*<sup>3</sup> and *para*-position<sup>4</sup> (**8**) of the ring with respective values of  $55.7693(90)\text{ cm}^{-1}$  and  $49.6370(1)\text{ cm}^{-1}$ . In fluoro- and chlorotoluene, the same trend was observed, where the  $V_6$  potential of toluene becomes an almost pure  $V_3$  potential in *o*-fluoro and *o*-chlorotoluene with barrier heights of  $227.28(2)$ <sup>5</sup> and  $513.8(27)\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ,<sup>6</sup> respectively, but stays a pure  $V_6$  potential in *p*-fluoro (**2**)<sup>7</sup> and *p*-chlorotoluene (**3**)<sup>8</sup> with almost the same barrier height as that of toluene. Substitution at the *para*-position of toluene produces a low barrier to methyl torsion, which is confirmed by the study on *p*-toluic acid (**6**) with a  $V_3$  term of  $7.899(1)\text{ cm}^{-1}$  and a  $V_6$  leading term of  $-24.77(2)\text{ cm}^{-1}$  in the potential.<sup>9</sup> The  $V_3/V_6$  ratio as well as their signs are in agreement with results from theoretical calculations at the MP2/6-311++G(2d,p) level of theory; and fitting both  $V_3$  and  $V_6$  is required to obtain a reasonable fit.<sup>9</sup> In the investigation on *p*-tolualdehyde (**5**), Saal *et al.* reported a  $V_3$  potential of



**FIG. 1.** A selection of molecules featuring methyl internal rotation(s) related to 4-methylacetophenone. Upper trace: potential barriers of the *p*-methyl group (blue) in substituted toluenes: (1) toluene,<sup>1</sup> (2) *p*-fluorotoluene,<sup>7</sup> (3) *p*-chlorotoluene,<sup>8</sup> (4) *p*-cresol,<sup>11</sup> (5) *p*-tolualdehyde,<sup>10</sup> (6) *p*-toluic acid,<sup>9</sup> (7) 4-methylacetophenone (this work), and (8) *p*-methylanisole.<sup>4</sup> Lower trace:  $V_3$  potential of the acetyl methyl group (red) in substituted acetophenones: (9) acetophenone,<sup>12</sup> (10) acetovanillone,<sup>13</sup> and (11) 6-hydroxy-3-methoxyacetophenone.<sup>13</sup>

$28.111(1) \text{ cm}^{-1}$  with a  $V_6$  contribution of  $-4.768(7) \text{ cm}^{-1}$ .<sup>10</sup> Finally, in *p*-cresol (4), a barrier height of only  $18.39(3) \text{ cm}^{-1}$  has been observed.<sup>11</sup>

From the studies on *p*-tolualdehyde (5) and *p*-toluic acid (6), we see that the double bond of the carbonyl group contributes to  $\pi$ -conjugation throughout the phenyl ring and significantly affects methyl internal rotation.<sup>9,10</sup> This “long distance calling”<sup>10</sup> from the acid or the aldehyde group is felt by the methyl group at the other side of the phenyl ring. To learn more about this effect, it is interesting to study 4-methylacetophenone (7) (4MAP) where an acetyl group is attached at the *para*-position of toluene.

Another interesting aspect of 4MAP is that the methyl group in the acetyl moiety (hence forward called the acetyl methyl group) also undergoes internal rotation, but the torsional barrier is anticipated to be much higher than that of the ring methyl group. In acetophenone (9), the barrier height of the acetyl methyl torsion is  $627.0(25) \text{ cm}^{-1}$ .<sup>12</sup> In acetovanillone (10), Cocinero *et al.* reported a similar barrier of  $622(10) \text{ cm}^{-1}$  for the *s-trans* conformer and a lower barrier of  $522.0(15) \text{ cm}^{-1}$  for the *s-cis* conformer.<sup>13</sup> In the same work, the *s-trans*-conformer of 6-hydroxy-3-methoxyacetophenone (11) undergoes acetyl methyl internal rotation with a barrier height of  $611.7(31) \text{ cm}^{-1}$ , while the *a-trans* conformer has a slightly lower barrier of  $588.0(37) \text{ cm}^{-1}$ .<sup>13</sup> Obviously, the barrier to internal rotation of the acetyl methyl group changes with conformation and isomer but remains around  $600 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ . Recently, Andresen *et al.* proposed a rule to predict the torsional barrier of the acetyl methyl group in aliphatic ketones, where the barrier height could be linked to the structure at the other side of the carbonyl group.<sup>14</sup> The linear aliphatic ketones under study were classified into two categories, the “ $C_s$  class” where the barrier is always around  $180 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  and the “ $C_1$  class” with a barrier of approximately  $240 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ . Information on the

torsional barrier of the acetyl methyl group of 4MAP (7) will provide new data to expand this “two-class concept” proposed for aliphatic ketones to also include phenyl-containing ketones.

Since 4MAP combines two methyl internal rotors in one molecule, we can probe whether the two interact through  $\pi$ -conjugation in the ring. Several molecules with two methyl rotors have been studied in the past, with acetone<sup>15</sup> and methyl acetate<sup>16</sup> as two classic examples. Other two-rotor molecules involving an aromatic ring have also been reported, such as 2,5-dimethylthiophene,<sup>17</sup> 2,5-dimethylfuran,<sup>18</sup> 2-acetyl-5-methylfuran,<sup>19</sup> dimethylbenzaldehyde,<sup>20</sup> and a series of dimethylanisoles.<sup>21–23</sup>

In many such molecules, the spectra are hard to assign and to model because development of new theoretical tools involving effective Hamiltonians is often required to reproduce the experimental spectra. A popular and widely used program for simulating microwave spectra of molecules with multiple methyl rotors is XIAM, written by Hartwig,<sup>24,25</sup> which can treat the effects of internal rotation with up to three methyl tops. XIAM is user-friendly and fast but has a drawback in its treatment of low barrier rotors, where higher order perturbation effects often have to be considered. High order terms are included in two-top programs written by Groner,<sup>26</sup> Ohashi,<sup>27</sup> Kleiner,<sup>28</sup> and Ilyushin.<sup>29</sup> Recently, a new code called *ntop* was developed, which works in the principal axis system and can fit the torsion–rotation spectra of molecules with  $n$  non-equivalent or equivalent methyl rotors. The equilibrium symmetry is not limited to  $C_s$  or  $C_{2v}$ , but can also be  $C_1$ , and the number of high order terms is much higher than that in XIAM. When *ntop* was applied to 2,4-dimethylanisole,<sup>23</sup> it reduced the standard deviation of  $24.1 \text{ kHz}$  obtained by XIAM to  $4.2 \text{ kHz}$ , which is the measurement accuracy, by adding seven more effective parameters in the fit.

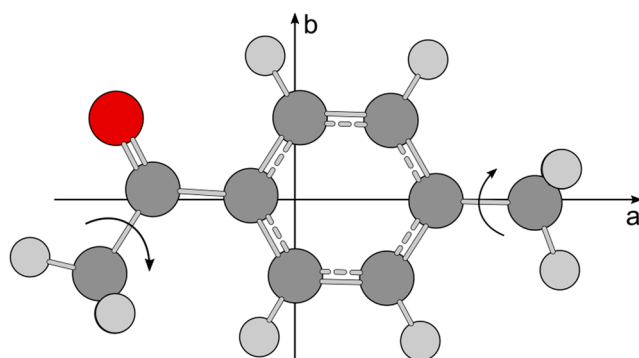
Another aspect of *XIAM* in treating low barrier rotation is its two-step diagonalization procedure, only considering one *J*-block in the second diagonalization step. This clearly affects fits, especially if strong quadrupole coupling is present in the system, as in the case of *meta*-chlorotoluene,<sup>30</sup> since in *XIAM*, the matrix elements off-diagonal in *J* are set to zero. Furthermore, the interaction between different  $v_l$  states is also not explicitly taken into account and some matrix elements are neglected, which could decrease the accuracy of the fit. Therefore, it is also argued that even if there were more effective terms in *XIAM*, the standard deviation would still be worse than with other programs. Using an internal rotation program called *aixPAM*, where the number of internal tops is limited to one ( $n = 1$ ), and applying it on the spectra of *m*-methylanisole containing two conformers, this argument has been tested and proven false, and the work suggests that additional effective parameters in *XIAM* would allow fits with standard deviations close to measurement accuracy.<sup>3</sup> To test this prediction, we modified the *XIAM* program by including some higher order parameters that are not available in the original version of *XIAM* (see the PROSPE<sup>31</sup> website <http://info.ifpan.edu.pl/kisiel/prospe.htm> for downloading the original version of *XIAM*) to fit the microwave spectrum of 4MAP and compare the results with those from the *ntop* fit. We will see below that both programs provide fits to the full manifold of torsion-rotation transitions that are within measurement accuracy. This leads to a quantitative determination of both barrier heights in 4MAP for comparison with other members of the series in Fig. 1.

## II. THEORY

### A. Quantum chemical calculations

The structure of 4MAP was predicted using a geometry optimization at the B3LYP<sup>32-35</sup>-D3BJ<sup>36-39</sup>/def2TZVP<sup>40,41</sup> level of theory using Grimme's dispersion correction with Becke-Johnson damping as implemented in the *Gaussian 09* program package.<sup>42</sup> This level was chosen because of its cost-efficiency and qualitatively useful predictions of the microwave spectrum.

The optimized geometry of 4MAP is shown in Fig. 2. The calculated rotational constants are  $A = 3644.5$  MHz,  $B = 788.5$  MHz, and



**FIG. 2.** Molecular structure of 4-methylacetophenone calculated at the B3LYP-D3BJ/def2TZVP level of theory, as viewed along the *c*-principal axis. This figure illustrates that (i) all heavy atoms are located on the *ab* plane and (ii) the ring methyl top is almost exactly parallel to the *a*-principal axis.

$C = 653.4$  MHz; and the dipole moment components are  $\mu_a = 2.66$  D,  $\mu_b = 2.34$  D, and  $\mu_c = 0.00$  D. The Gaussian 09 output is available in the [supplementary material](#). Harmonic frequency calculations were carried out to predict the centrifugal distortion constants. Relaxed one-dimensional potential energy scans were performed along the torsional angles to predict the  $V_3$  and  $V_6$  terms with least squares fits of a Fourier series,

$$V_{\alpha_1}/\text{cm}^{-1} = \frac{18.07}{2}(1 - \cos(3\alpha_1)) - \frac{3.03}{2}(1 - \cos(6\alpha_1)) + 0.101$$

and

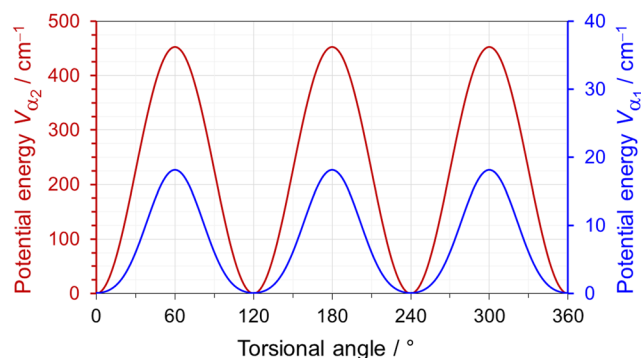
$$V_{\alpha_2}/\text{cm}^{-1} = \frac{452.48}{2}(1 - \cos(3\alpha_2))$$

for the ring methyl and the acetyl methyl group, respectively, where  $\alpha_1$  and  $\alpha_2$  are the torsional angles of the methyl groups. The resulting functions are plotted in Fig. 3.

### B. Symmetry considerations

$G_{18}$  is the appropriate molecular symmetry group for 4MAP, which features  $C_s$  point-group symmetry at equilibrium and two inequivalent methyl groups undergoing internal rotation.<sup>43</sup> Recently, a labeling scheme, for which the  $G_{18}$  group is written as the semi-direct product  $(C_3' \otimes C_3') \times C_s$ , has been introduced for 3,4-dimethylanisole<sup>22</sup> and then applied for 2,4-dimethylanisole.<sup>23</sup> Using this scheme, the torsional species can be labeled by the first part ( $\sigma_1\sigma_2$ ) of the full symmetry label given in Table I of Ref. 22. We will also use this abbreviated notation (00), (01), (10), (11), and (12) for 4MAP, where  $\sigma_1$  and  $\sigma_2$  represent the ring and acetyl methyl groups, respectively. The numbers  $\sigma = 0, 1, 2$  represent the three symmetry species *A*,  $E_a$ , and  $E_b$ , respectively, of the group  $C_3$ .

The two sets of three protons belonging to the two methyl groups and four protons attached on the phenyl ring result in 1024 spin functions. The representation of the total nuclear spin function is  $\Gamma_{ns} = 256(00) \cdot A' + 128(10) \cdot A + 128(01) \cdot A + 64(11) \cdot A + 64(12) \cdot A$ . The selection rules for torsional components are  $(00) \cdot A' \leftrightarrow (00) \cdot A''$ ,  $(10) \cdot A \leftrightarrow (10) \cdot A$ ,  $(01) \cdot A \leftrightarrow (01) \cdot A$  with a



**FIG. 3.** Potential energy functions for the internal rotation of the ring methyl (blue) and the acetyl methyl group (red) of 4-methylacetophenone predicted at the B3LYP-D3BJ/def2TZVP level of theory. Energies relative to the lowest conformations with their absolute energies of  $E = -424.412\,046\,0$  hartree are given.

TABLE I. Molecular parameters of 4-methylacetophenone as obtained with the program *XIAM* and *ntop*.

Parameters <sup>a</sup>	Unit	<i>XIAM</i>	<i>ntop</i>	<i>XIAM<sub>mod</sub></i>	Pred. <sup>b</sup>
<i>A</i>	MHz	3618.557 0(80)	3604.713 2(19)	3618.627 2(25)	3644.5
<i>B</i>	MHz	784.657 10(15)	784.646 59(30)	784.651 34(43)	788.5
<i>C</i>	MHz	650.444 0(11)	650.439 31(23)	650.441 96(30)	653.4
<i>D<sub>J</sub></i>	kHz	0.032 9(44)	0.014 00(93)	0.016 7(13)	0.0135
<i>D<sub>JK</sub></i>	kHz	0.004 312 <sup>c</sup>	0.004 312 <sup>c</sup>	0.004 312 <sup>c</sup>	0.0043
<i>D<sub>K</sub></i>	kHz	−8.04(40)	0.37(11)	−0.86(17)	0.3347
<i>d<sub>1</sub></i>	kHz	−0.006 94(80)	0.003 39(16)	−0.003 66(24)	−0.0023
<i>d<sub>2</sub></i>	kHz	0.000 943 <sup>c</sup>	0.000 943 <sup>c</sup>	0.000 943 <sup>c</sup>	0.0009
<i>V<sub>3,1</sub></i>	cm <sup>−1</sup>	21.950 8 (55)	21.744 826(57)	21.947 9(13)	18.07
<i>V<sub>6,1</sub></i>	cm <sup>−1</sup>	−3.027 9 <sup>c</sup>	−3.027 9 <sup>c</sup>	−3.027 9 <sup>c</sup>	−3.03
<i>V<sub>3,2</sub></i>	cm <sup>−1</sup>	594(24)	588.1(32)	583.6(66)	452.48
<i>D<sub>π2J,1</sub></i>	MHz	0.001 43(34)	0.001 727(82)	0.001 563(98)	
<i>D<sub>π2K,1</sub></i>	MHz	0.441 1(81)	0.940 628(69)	1.733(21)	
<i>D<sub>π2−,1</sub></i>	MHz	0.000 18(21)	0.000 162(44)	0.000 179 (60)	
<i>V<sub>K,1</sub>/−D<sub>c3K</sub><sup>d</sup></i>	MHz		17.628 2(32)	11.943(19)	
<i>F<sub>0,1</sub></i>	GHz	161.29 <sup>c</sup>	161.29 <sup>c</sup>	161.29 <sup>c</sup>	161.29
<i>F<sub>0,2</sub></i>	GHz	159.54 <sup>c</sup>	159.54 <sup>c</sup>	159.54 <sup>c</sup>	159.54
<i>δ<sub>1</sub></i>	degree	0.771 7(61)	0.763 225(57)	0.765 5(18)	0.26
<i>δ<sub>2</sub></i>	degree	125.0(90)	123.0(32)	121.4(23)	122.98
<i>N<sup>e</sup></i>		378	378	378	
rms <sup>f</sup>	kHz	99	26	29	

<sup>a</sup>Standard error in parentheses in the units of the last digits. Watson's S reduction and *I*<sup>f</sup> representation were used.

<sup>b</sup>Values calculated at the B3LYP-D3BJ/def2TZVP level of theory.

<sup>c</sup>Fixed to the calculated value.

<sup>d</sup>*V<sub>K,1</sub>* in Fit *ntop* and *D<sub>c3K</sub>* in Fit *XIAM<sub>mod</sub>*.

<sup>e</sup>Number of assigned transitions in the fit.

<sup>f</sup>Root-mean-square deviation of the fit.

spin statistical weight of 256 and (11) · *A* ↔ (11) · *A* and (12) · *A* ↔ (12) · *A* with a spin weight of 128. If we only consider the spin statistical weight, the intensity of the (00), (10), and (01) species is twice of that of the (11) and (12) species.

### C. The extended *XIAM* code

The *XIAM* code uses a combined axis method where the internal rotation Hamiltonian *H<sub>i, RAM</sub>* is set up in the rho axis system and then rotated into the principal axis system using a rotation matrix,

$$\mathbf{D}(\beta, \gamma) = \begin{pmatrix} \cos \beta & 0 & -\sin \beta \\ 0 & 1 & 0 \\ \sin \beta & 0 & \cos \beta \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} \cos \gamma & \sin \gamma & 0 \\ -\sin \gamma & \cos \gamma & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}, \quad (1)$$

where  $\beta$  and  $\gamma$  are the Euler angles defined as  $\cos(\beta) = \rho_z(\rho)^{-1}$  and  $\cos(\gamma) = \rho_x((\rho_x)^2 + (\rho_y)^2)^{-0.5}$ , where  $\rho$  is the coupling term and a vector parallel to the  $\rho$ -axis with its components  $\rho_x$ ,  $\rho_y$ , and  $\rho_z$  in the principal axis system.<sup>24,25</sup>

*XIAM* can treat many top problems, but the basic Hamiltonian for a one-top problem can be written as

$$H = H_r + H_{cd} + D^{-1}H_{i, RAM}D, \quad (2)$$

where *H<sub>r</sub>* is the rotational part of the Hamiltonian and *H<sub>cd</sub>* is the centrifugal distortion term. Using this combined axis method, structural rotational constants are used in the fit, centrifugal distortion is treated in the principal axis system, and internal rotation parameters such as the angles  $\delta$  between the internal rotor axes and the *a*-principal axis of inertia, the *V<sub>3</sub>* potentials, and *F<sub>0</sub>* (the rotational constants of the internal rotors) or  $\rho$  utilized in the fitting procedure are physically meaningful.

Currently, only a limited number of higher order parameters are available in *XIAM*. The three operators that are most efficient and frequently used are the internal rotation distortion terms *D<sub>π2J</sub>*, *D<sub>π2K</sub>*, and *D<sub>π2−</sub>*, multiplying  $2(p_\alpha - \rho^\dagger \tilde{P})^2 P^2$ ,  $\{(p_\alpha - \rho^\dagger \tilde{P})^2, P_a^2\}$ , and  $\{(p_\alpha - \rho^\dagger \tilde{P})^2, (P_b^2 - P_c^2)\}$ , respectively, where  $\{A, B\} = AB + BA$  is the anti-commutator,  $p_\alpha$  is the momentum operator of the internal rotation, and *P* is the angular momentum operator with its components *P<sub>a</sub>*, *P<sub>b</sub>*, and *P<sub>c</sub>*.<sup>44</sup> They describe the dependence of the moment of inertia of the methyl rotor upon centrifugal distortion. The transformation of these operators into the equivalent operators in the principal axis system is complicated and is given in Table S1 of the [supplementary material](#). Higher order terms describing the distortion of the potential surface along the torsional degree of freedom upon centrifugal distortion, connected to the potential term

$\cos(3\alpha)$ , are limited to only one parameter,  $D_{c3J}$ , which multiplies the operator  $\cos(3\alpha)P^2$ .

In the study on 2,4-dimethylanisole, the program *ntop* reduced the standard deviation of 24.1 kHz obtained by *XIAM* to 4.2 kHz by adding seven effective parameters in the fit; among them, three higher order terms  $V_J$ ,  $V_K$ , and  $V_-$  connected to the potential term  $\cos(3\alpha)$  are decisive.<sup>23</sup> They multiply the operators  $(1 - \cos(3\alpha))P^2$ ,  $(1 - \cos(3\alpha))P_a^2$ , and  $(1 - \cos(3\alpha))(P_b^2 - P_c^2)$ , respectively. While the  $V_J$  operator of *ntop* is comparable to the  $D_{c3J}$  operator of *XIAM*, the  $V_K$  and  $V_-$  parameters are not available in *XIAM*. To make the performance of the two programs more comparable, we extended the *XIAM* code by modifying the source code to also include the  $D_{c3K}$  and  $D_{c3-}$  terms, which multiply  $\cos(3\alpha)P_a^2$  and  $\cos(3\alpha)(P_b^2 - P_c^2)$ . The results of a fit from this modified version of *XIAM* on 4MAP will be compared with those of *ntop* using the same set of transitions and comparable sets of parameters.

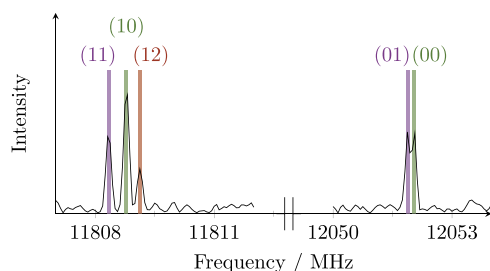
### III. MICROWAVE SPECTROSCOPY

#### A. Experimental details

The microwave spectrum of 4MAP was recorded using a chirped-pulse Fourier transform microwave spectrometer at Purdue.<sup>45</sup> The sample (Alfa Aesar, 96%) was placed in a reservoir located just before a pulsed valve and heated up to 117 °C by a coiled resistive heater. Helium was used as carrier gas at an absolute backing pressure of 1.4 bars. Spectra were recorded in the range from 8 GHz to 18 GHz, acquiring 2 000 000 measurements of 16  $\mu$ s that were averaged and then Fourier transformed. A Lorentz interpolation function was used to interpolate more precisely the center frequencies of the recorded transitions. In many rotational transitions, the torsional splittings between (00) and (01) as well as between (11)-(10)-(12) were below the resolution limit of 120 kHz of our instrument. In such cases, the frequencies were assigned only to (00) or (10), respectively. Two portions of the survey scan are illustrated in Fig. 4.

#### B. Spectral assignments

In an initial fit, only the (00) species was assigned to lines in the spectrum, yielding a fit with root-mean-square (rms) deviation of almost measurement accuracy using the program combination *SPFIT/SPCAT*.<sup>46</sup> The assignment was straightforward, and the (00) species lines followed the spectral patterns predicted using the



**FIG. 4.** Two typical spectra of the *b*-type Q-branches  $J''_{K'_a, K'_c} - J''_{K''_a, K''_c} = 9_{28} - 9_{19}$  transition of 4-methoxyacetophenone, which splits into five torsional components  $(\sigma_1\sigma_2) = (00), (01), (10), (11), \text{ and } (12)$ .

rotational constants from the equilibrium geometry calculated at the B3LYP-D3BJ/def2TZVP level of theory.

To assign other torsional species, the calculated  $V_3$  potentials (see Sec. II A) and angles  $\delta$  between the internal rotor axes and the principal *a*-axis were used in a prediction with the program *XIAM*. For the value of  $\delta$ , the internal rotation axis was identified to be parallel to a vector perpendicular to the plane of the three hydrogens in the optimized equilibrium structure. A fit with the initial assignment of the (10), (01), (11), and (12) species showed an rms deviation of several hundreds of kilohertz, assumed to be due to the misassignment of some torsional components.

The assignment of the individual torsional species was checked by a program written for *Separately Fitting of Large Amplitude Motion Species (SFLAMS)*, similar to an approach used by Ohashi *et al.* to assign the microwave spectrum of *N*-methylacetamide.<sup>27</sup> These separate fits have established the assignments of rotational quantum numbers and of symmetry species, especially the (10), (11), and (12) components. For each fit, the Hamiltonian consists of

$$H = H_r + H_{cd} + H_{op}, \quad (3)$$

where

$$H_{op} = (q + q_J P^2 + q_K P_a^2) P_a + r P_b. \quad (4)$$

The odd power terms of the angular momentum components  $P_a$  and  $P_b$  change sign under the time-reversal operation. The Hamiltonian becomes effective and deviates from a normal Hamiltonian because the coefficients in  $H_{op}$  enclose numerical expectation values of an odd power of the torsional angular momentum operators of the methyl groups ( $p_a$ ). However, if  $p_a$  were included explicitly in the torsion-rotational Hamiltonian, they would also change sign under time reversal, just as the odd power  $P_a$ ,  $P_b$ ,  $P_c$  operators. The sign changes cancel out, and the Hamiltonian  $H_{op}$  becomes invariant as it should be [see Eq. (4) of Ref. 27].

While  $H_{op}$  is not required to reproduce the (00) species of 4MAP, the  $q$  and  $r$  parameters (sometimes called  $D_a$  and  $D_b$  in the literature) are needed for the (01) species. For the (10), (11), and (12) species, the higher order terms  $q_J$  and  $q_K$  (or  $D_{aJ}$  and  $D_{aK}$ , respectively) are required in addition. In all separate fits, the deviations are about 25 kHz, indicating that this value is most probably the measurement accuracy.

#### C. Global fits

A total of 378 lines could be assigned with the aid of separate fits and were again included in the input of the program *XIAM*. With the correct assignment, the rms deviation of the *XIAM* fit decreases to 99 kHz by floating the rotational constants, three of five quartic centrifugal distortion constants, the  $V_3$  potentials, the angles between the internal rotor axes and the *a*-principal axis, and three higher order parameters related to the low barrier top  $D_{\pi^2 J}$ ,  $D_{\pi^2 K}$ , and  $D_{\pi^2 -}$ . The parameters are collected in the column *XIAM* of Table I. The frequency list with all fitted transitions along with their residuals is available in Table S2 of the [supplementary material](#). As can be seen in the frequency list, there are some *c*-type perturbation allowed transitions that occur because the quantum numbers  $K_a$  and  $K_c$  have no meaning for the symmetry of the rotational transitions apart from the (00) species. In the (01), (10), (11), and (12) species, the  $K_a$  and  $K_c$  quantum numbers only indicate the order of energy in analogy to the asymmetric top energy level.

The *ntop* code was applied using the same data set, where adding only one high order parameter of the low barrier ring methyl rotor,  $V_{K,1}$ , decreased the rms deviation to 26 kHz. The fit is shown in the column *ntop* of Table I. The residuals of all fitted transitions are also given in Table S2 of the [supplementary material](#).

We then added the *XIAM*'s version of  $-V_K$ , called  $D_{c3K}$ , using the modified *XIAM* code, and the rms deviation was reduced to 29 kHz, which is close to the measurement accuracy and only 3 kHz higher than that of *ntop*. This fit is given in the column *XIAM<sub>mod</sub>* of Table I.

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Comparison of *ntop* and *XIAM*

Using the original version of the program *XIAM*, 378 transitions of 4MAP were fitted with an rms of 99 kHz, about 4 times the measurement accuracy of 25 kHz. The program *ntop* and the modified version of the program *XIAM* reduced the rms deviation to 26 kHz and 29 kHz, respectively, both of which are close to the measurement accuracy. The  $d_2$  and  $D_{JK}$  centrifugal distortion constants cannot be determined well. Therefore, they were fixed to the calculated values. We notice that the signs of  $D_K$  and  $d_1$  in *XIAM* and *ntop* are opposite. While the sign and value of  $D_K$  obtained from *ntop* agree well with the quantum chemically predicted ones, those of  $d_1$  from *XIAM* agree better. The large deviations in  $D_K$  in *XIAM* suggest that it absorbs some of the internal rotation effects, while  $D_K$  in *ntop* seems to be much less affected.

The calculated  $V_3$  potentials of the ring and the acetyl methyl groups are  $18.07\text{ cm}^{-1}$  and  $452.48\text{ cm}^{-1}$ , respectively. They are of the same order of magnitude as the experimental  $V_3$  values, but lower for both rotors. The barrier heights obtained from *XIAM* and *ntop* agree nicely. Because only transitions in the ground torsional states are available,  $F_0$  strongly correlates with  $V_3$  and was fixed to the calculated values in both the *XIAM* and *ntop* fits. The  $V_6$  contribution to the potential cannot be determined and therefore is also fixed to the calculated value.

The internal rotation parameters ( $V_3$ ,  $\delta$ ,  $V_K$ ,  $D_{\pi^2K}$ , and  $D_{c3K}$ ) are much better determined with *ntop* than with *XIAM*. In the *XIAM* and *XIAM<sub>mod</sub>* fits, the  $D_{\pi^2K}$  parameter also differs significantly, likely due to a correlation with the parameter  $D_{c3K}$  introduced in the latter fit. We suspect a higher correlation between internal rotation parameters in *XIAM* compared to *ntop*, since *XIAM* uses a combined axis system, while *ntop* works exclusively in the principal axis system. Therefore, the  $D_{c3K}$  and  $V_K$  parameters are comparable, but not equivalent.

The *B* and *C* rotational constants deduced from *XIAM* and *ntop* are similar, but the *A* rotational constant obtained from *XIAM* is quite different from that of *ntop*, while the value remains almost the same in fit *XIAM* and fit *XIAM<sub>mod</sub>*. In the study on 2,4-dimethylanisole, the  $V_J$ ,  $V_K$ , and  $V_-$  parameters were also used in *ntop*, resulting in *A*, *B*, and *C* rotational constants that differ significantly from those of *XIAM*.<sup>23</sup> This strongly indicates that the *A* constant is correlated differently with the  $V_K$  parameter in *ntop* than it is with the  $D_{c3K}$  parameter in *XIAM*.

### B. Discussion on the methyl torsional barriers

The  $V_3$  potential for the ring methyl group in 4MAP (7) agrees remarkably in the *XIAM* and *ntop* fits, despite the fact that

very different fitting approaches are used. The value of approximately  $22\text{ cm}^{-1}$  is close to the value of about  $28\text{ cm}^{-1}$  found for *p*-tolualdehyde (5) (for molecule numbering, see Fig. 1) and the value of about  $18\text{ cm}^{-1}$  found for *p*-cresol (4), but much lower than the value found for *p*-methylanisole (8). As mentioned in the Introduction and discussed in Ref. 23, the less the  $C_{2v}$  symmetry of the phenyl frame is broken while substituting the *para*-position of toluene, the lower the  $V_3$  contribution to the potential becomes. In *p*-toluic acid (6), the COOH group is almost  $C_{2v}$  symmetric. Therefore, the  $V_6$  contribution is the leading term and significantly larger than  $V_3$ . In 4MAP (7), *p*-cresol (4), and *p*-tolualdehyde (5), the *para*-substituent of toluene is more  $C_{2v}$  symmetric than that in *p*-methylanisole (8) ( $\text{OH} \approx \text{O}=\text{C}-\text{CH}_3 \approx \text{CHO} < \text{O}-\text{CH}_3$ ), and the  $V_3$  term found for the ring methyl group of *p*-methylanisole is consequently larger [ $18.39(3)\text{ cm}^{-1}$  (4)  $\approx 21.744\text{ 98(6)}\text{ cm}^{-1}$  (7)  $\approx 28.111(1)\text{ cm}^{-1}$  (6)  $< 49.6370(1)\text{ cm}^{-1}$  (8)].

For aliphatic ketones, Andresen *et al.* proposed a two-class concept linking the acetyl methyl torsional barrier to the conformational geometry, where molecules in the  $C_1$  class always show a torsional barrier of around  $240\text{ cm}^{-1}$ . In this class, the  $\gamma$  carbon of the alkyl chain tilts out of the C-(C=O)-C plane to a synclinal position. The  $C_s$  class comprises ketones with “pseudo- $C_s$ ” structures in which the torsional barrier of the acetyl methyl group is always around  $180\text{ cm}^{-1}$ . In ketones such as 4MAP, a phenyl ring is attached to one side of the carbonyl group, and 4MAP does not belong to either of the two classes mentioned in Ref. 14, probably due to  $\pi$ -electron conjugation between the carbonyl group and the phenyl ring. The simplest ketone containing an acetyl group attached to a phenyl ring is acetophenone (9), where the acetyl methyl torsion was found to be  $627.0(25)\text{ cm}^{-1}$ .<sup>12</sup> In the isomers: acetovanillone (10) and 6-hydroxy-3-methoxyacetophenone (11), the torsional barriers range from about  $522\text{--}622\text{ cm}^{-1}$ .<sup>13</sup> Although the value of this parameter depends on the respective isomer and conformer, it remains around  $600\text{ cm}^{-1}$ . The value of  $588.0(37)\text{ cm}^{-1}$  found for the acetyl methyl group of 4MAP strongly supports a third class of ketones, where the acetyl methyl torsional barrier is approximately  $600\text{ cm}^{-1}$  if a phenyl ring is attached directly at the other side of the carbonyl group (called the “phenyl class”). Although the symmetry of all current molecules in this “phenyl class” is also  $C_s$ , the acetyl methyl torsional barrier is significantly higher than the value of  $180\text{ cm}^{-1}$  found for molecules in Andresen's  $C_s$  class, showing the decisive role of electronic effects from  $\pi$ -conjugation for this parameter in ketones.

A computational study on how differently the substituents contribute to the effective  $V_6$  and  $V_3$  terms of all these molecules is still missing, and elucidating results might come from effective fragment potential (EFP)<sup>47–49</sup> methods. These have the power to separate the different contributions of exchange-repulsion, electrostatics, dispersion, and polarization to the potential surface. The experimental results provided here will be crucial to judge the reliability of these computational methods.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

In this study, the performance of *ntop* was compared to the original *XIAM* and the modified *XIAM* codes. For this purpose, the broadband spectrum of 4-methylacetophenone was recorded and fitted to, finally for both programs, near measurement accuracy.



While the original version of *XIAM* shows a large rms deviation of 99 kHz, both the *ntop* and the modified version of *XIAM* programs show fits with similar quality. The deviations are 26 kHz and 29 kHz, respectively. The interplay between separate fits of large amplitude motion species and global fits was crucial for checking and correcting the assignments. The low  $V_3$  potential of about  $22\text{ cm}^{-1}$  obtained for the ring methyl group was compared to that of other *para*-substituted toluene derivatives, and the origin of such a low barrier can be explained from the symmetry surrounding the methyl group. The torsional barrier of the acetyl methyl group was compared to that of other substituted acetophenones, which supports a classification of those ketones in the so-called “phenyl class” with a barrier height of about  $600\text{ cm}^{-1}$ .

## SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

The [supplementary material](#) includes definitions of the operators multiplying the  $D_{\pi^2J}$ ,  $D_{\pi^2K}$ , and  $D_{\pi^2-}$  parameters, frequency lists, all *ntop* and *XIAM* fit files, and the *Gaussian 09* output.

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