Interaction of persistent slip bands with a grain boundary on the common primary slip plane in a copper bicrystal

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ABSTRACT

In this letter, the dislocation patterns on the common primary slip plane in a fatigued [134]–[18 2 7] copper bicrystal with a Σ = 19b grain boundary (GB) have been investigated using the electron channelling contrast technique in a scanning electron microscope. The results show that the two-phase dislocation structure, such as veins and persistent slip band (PSB) walls, embedded within veins, can be clearly seen on the common primary slip plane. In particular, the interactions of PSBs with the GB are clearly revealed. It is found that there are three kinds of interaction mode between the GB and the dislocations during cyclic deformation, and those are discussed. It is suggested that the dislocations carried by PSBs cannot transfer through the GB continuously even though the bicrystal has a common primary slip plane and its surface slip bands are continuous across the GB.

§ 1. INTRODUCTION

During cyclic deformation of copper and nickel single crystals, a large fraction of plastic strain is carried by the so-called persistent slip bands (PSBs), which consist of thin lamellae transferring through the specimens in the bulk. In particular, the PSBs are composed of nearly parallel and narrow dislocation walls arranged with fairly equal spacing perpendicular to the primary Burgers vector and are embedded in a matrix structure of loop patches. This feature has been explained by a two-phase model (PSBs and matrix) according to Winter (1974) and Finney and Laird (1975). The peculiar dislocation arrangement of the PSB lamellae has been extensively studied by transmission electron microscopy (TEM) and described in several review articles (Laird et al. 1986, Basinski and Basinski 1992). However, TEM investigations require thin-foil specimens and only a relatively small area can be investigated. Recently, the electron channelling contrast (ECC) technique in a scanning electron microscope has been successfully applied in studying the dislocation patterns in deformed metals (Dudarev et al. 1999, Wilkinson and Hirsch 1995, 1997), such as stainless steel (Zauter et al. 1992), nickel (Schwab et al. 1996, 1998, Bretschneider et al. 1997), copper (Ahmed et al. 1997, Gong et al. 1997, Melisova et al. 1997, Li et al. 1998) aluminium (Mitchell and Day 1998). It has been generally recognized that the scanning electron microscopy (SEM)–ECC technique can reveal information which is difficult to achieve by conventional TEM techniques. For example, it allows the
observations of dislocation patterns over the whole cross-section of the specimen, and especially at some special sites, such as in the vicinity of a grain boundary (GB) (Hu et al. 1998, Zhang and Wang 1998, Zhang et al. 1999), deformation bands (Gong et al. 1997, Melisova et al. 1997, Li et al. 1998) and a crack (Wilkinson et al. 1997). In our previous work, the dislocation patterns near the large-angle and small-angle GBs in fatigued copper bicrystals have been investigated by this technique (Hu et al. 1998, Zhang and Wang 1998, Zhang et al. 1999). In particular, in a [134]–[18 2 7] copper bicrystal, the two-component crystals possess a common primary slip plane and the interaction of PSBs with the GB was not clearly revealed throughout the depth of the specimen (Zhang et al. 1999). It is necessary to explore the distribution of dislocation patterns near the GB on the common primary slip plane so that the intergranular fatigue cracking mechanism may be clarified. In this letter, we focus attention on the observations on the common primary slip plane to reveal the interactions of the coplanar PSBs with the GB using the SEM–ECC technique by polishing away the specimen layer by layer.

§ 2. EXPERIMENTAL PROCEDURE

In our previous work (Zhang et al. 1999), a [134]–[18 2 7] copper bicrystal with a common primary slip plane was fabricated. By the electron back-scatter diffraction (EBSD) technique, the crystallographic relation of the bicrystal was carefully determined. It was found that the common rotation axis between the two-component crystals was in the [111] direction, which is also the normal to the common primary slip plane in the bicrystal. The rotation angle around the [111] rotation axis between the crystals G1 [134] and G2 [18 2 7] was 46.2°, thereby forming a Σ = 19b coincidence GB. Figure 1 shows the crystallographic relations on the common primary slip plane of the bicrystal. Clearly, the interaction angle θ between the primary Burgers vectors \( \mathbf{b}_1 \) and \( \mathbf{b}_2 \) of the crystals G1 and G2 should be equal to 13.8° (i.e. 60°–46.2°). However, the crystallographic orientations of the GB planes of the two crystals were difficult to determine. The slip morphology and dislocation patterns on the surfaces of the bicrystal have been reported previously (Zhang et al. 1999). The primary slip planes of the two crystals in the bicrystal are coplanar and can be sectioned according to the surface slip traces after cyclic deformation. Since the PSB lamellae are

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**Figure 1.** Sketch of slip directions on the common primary slip plane in the copper bicrystal.
embedded within matrix veins throughout the whole specimen, they should alternately appear after repeatedly polishing away the common primary slip plane. The interactions of the GB with the PSB and matrix lamellae can thereby be observed. The ECC technique was carried out in a Cambridge S360 scanning electron microscope. Similar to the image system reported by Schwab et al. (1996), an inverted imaging mode was adopted in the present investigation. Thus, the bright areas in the ECC micrograph represent dislocation-poor regions, whereas the dark areas represent dislocation-dense regions, which is in accord with the transmission electron micrograph under bright imaging conditions. The parameters of the scanning electron microscope working conditions are listed in Table 1.

§ 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After cyclic deformation of the bicrystals, the two-phase structure of PSBs and loop patches on the specimen surface is observed in both grains G1 [134] and G2 [18 27], as reported previously (Zhang et al. 1999). If the observations are focused on the common primary slip plane in the bicrystal, two kinds of dislocation pattern are found. Figure 2 (a) shows the typical dislocation vein structure with some parallel and dislocation-free channels. This observation is in good agreement with that observed on the (111) plane in fatigued copper single crystals (Winter 1978, Laird et al. 1986). In particular, those veins appear over the whole observation surface; no dislocation walls can be seen. It is indicated that the observed surface should correspond to the matrix lamellae rather than to PSB lamellae. When the specimen was polished repeatedly to observe the common primary slip plane, another typical dislocation pattern, that is PSB walls embedded within the matrix veins, can be clearly observed, as shown in figure 2 (b). The interesting finding is that PSB walls are surrounded by the channels (or veins) and both of those appeared alternately over the whole surface. However, PSB walls extending through the whole surface were not observed. This can be attributed to two main reasons. The first is that the observation plane might not completely correspond to the (111) plane owing to a deviation caused by cutting and polishing procedure. The second might be that there still exists localization of plastic strain even within a single PSB, and PSB walls cannot extend through the whole primary slip plane during cyclic deformation. Similar observations on the (111) plane have been reported previously in copper single crystals (Winter 1978; Laird et al. 1986, Basinski and Basinski 1992).

After the specimen was polished further, an interesting finding on the common primary slip plane is that there exists a grain-boundary-affected zone (GBAZ) of dislocation patterns. Such a GBAZ appears in both the G1 [134] and the G2 [18 27] grains. The width of the GBAZ of dislocation patterns within the two grains far from the specimen centre is nearly the same (5–10 μm), as reported previously (Zhang et al. 1999). In appearance, the GBAZ is somewhat similar to the dislocation-free zone (DFZ) in a fatigued [135]–[135] copper bicrystal (Hu et al. 1998) and in a polycrystal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acceleration voltage (kV)</th>
<th>Working distance (mm)</th>
<th>Filament current (A)</th>
<th>Probe current (A)</th>
<th>Brightness (%)</th>
<th>Contrast (%)</th>
<th>Scanning rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>15–20</td>
<td>2–3</td>
<td>2–5</td>
<td>60–75</td>
<td>30–33</td>
<td>TV/2K</td>
</tr>
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</table>
However, close to the specimen centre, the GBAZ gradually became unclear or disappeared, as shown in figure 3 (a). In combination with the previous observations (Zhang et al. 1999), a diagrammatic sketch of the GBAZ distribution on the matrix lamellae can be illustrated as in figure 4 (a). However, the formation mechanism of the GBAZ is still not clear and needs to be further clarified.

The above-mentioned interaction of dislocations with the GB mainly corresponds to the matrix lamellae without any PSB walls. As the PSB walls were exposed on the common primary slip plane, it was found that all the dislocation walls reached or were close to the GB. Figure 3 (b) shows one kind of interaction mode between PSB walls and the GB; clearly, the dislocation wall in a PSB within grain G1 can reach the GB and no GBAZ formed between the dislocation walls and the GB. However, on the other side, there is still a GBAZ with a width of 5–10 μm. Meanwhile, the dislocation pattern is typical veins and not regular walls within the grain G2. Another interesting finding is that the GBAZ can nucleate between the PSB walls and the GB, as shown in figure 3 (c). The width of the GBAZ in this case is also similar to that formed in previous observations (5–10 μm) between the GB and dislocation veins (Zhang et al. 1999). It is suggested that the PSB walls may not affect
Figure 3. Dislocation patterns near the GB on the primary slip plane; (a) disappearance of the GBAZ in the centre of the specimen; (b), (c) interactions of PSB walls with the GB; (d) two PSB walls intersecting on the same site of the GB.
the formation of the GBAZ during cyclic deformation. From the observations in figures 3 (b) and (c), the typical interaction modes between the GB and PSB walls on the common primary slip plane can be illustrated as in figure 4 (b).

The layer-by-layer observations on the common primary slip plane show that most of the PSBs within the two grains do not have a one-to-one correlation across the GB. Occasionally, the PSBs within the two grains may intersect at the same site of the GB, as shown in figure 3 (d). In this special case, the PSBs are often bent or discontinuous as they are close to the GB. However, the dislocation walls within the
PSBs are still straight and can be clearly distinguished even though they may disappear or become veins in some local regions. The interactions of PSB walls with the GB in this case can be illustrated as in figure 4(c). Note that there seems to exist a stronger interaction of the GB with PSBs than that in figures 3(a)–(c). This can be explained in terms of localization of the plastic strain in the PSB walls during cyclic deformation, especially as the two PSBs within the grains G1 and G2 intersect on the same side of the GB. This may be the reason why the PSBs become bent or discontinuous when they reach the GB.

From the observations above, it is suggested that the PSBs cannot pass through the GB continuously during cyclic deformation even though the two grains have a common primary slip plane. The reason is that their primary slip directions are not the same but have an interaction angle of 13.8°, as shown in figure 1. In particular, there may still exist localization of plastic strain within a single PSB, as shown in figure 2(b), which may strongly interfere with the continuity of the PSB across the GB.

§ 4. Conclusions

From the observations above, it can be concluded that the SEM–ECC technique can be successfully applied to investigate the dislocation patterns and the interactions of PSBs with a GB after cyclic deformation. By observing the dislocation patterns on the common primary slip plane in a fatigued [134–18 27] bicrystal layer by layer, the localization of plastic strain may exist even within a single PSB and the PSB walls cannot extend through the whole primary slip plane during cyclic deformation. Near the GB, three kinds of interaction mode of the dislocations with the GB have been identified. All those observations indicate that the PSBs cannot transfer through the GB continuously even though the two grains have a common primary slip plane. The reason is that their primary slip directions are not the same but have an interaction angle of 13.8°. Those observations may provide evidence for a better understanding the intergranular fatigue cracking mechanism.

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