

## Supporting Information File

# Lepidocrocite-type Titanate Formation from Isostructural Prestructures under Hydrothermal Reactions: Observation by Synchrotron X-ray Total Scattering Analyses

Satoshi Tominaka,<sup>†,§,\*</sup> Hiroki Yamada,<sup>‡,§</sup> Satoshi Hiroi,<sup>#,§</sup> Saori I. Kawaguchi,<sup>§</sup> and Koji Ohara<sup>§</sup>

<sup>†</sup>International Center for Materials Nanoarchitectonics (WPI-MANA), National Institute for Materials Science (NIMS), 1-1 Namiki Tsukuba, Ibaraki 305-0044, Japan.

<sup>§</sup>Research and Utilization Division, Japan Synchrotron Radiation Research Institute, 1-1-1 Kouto, Sayo-gun, Hyogo 679-5198, Japan.

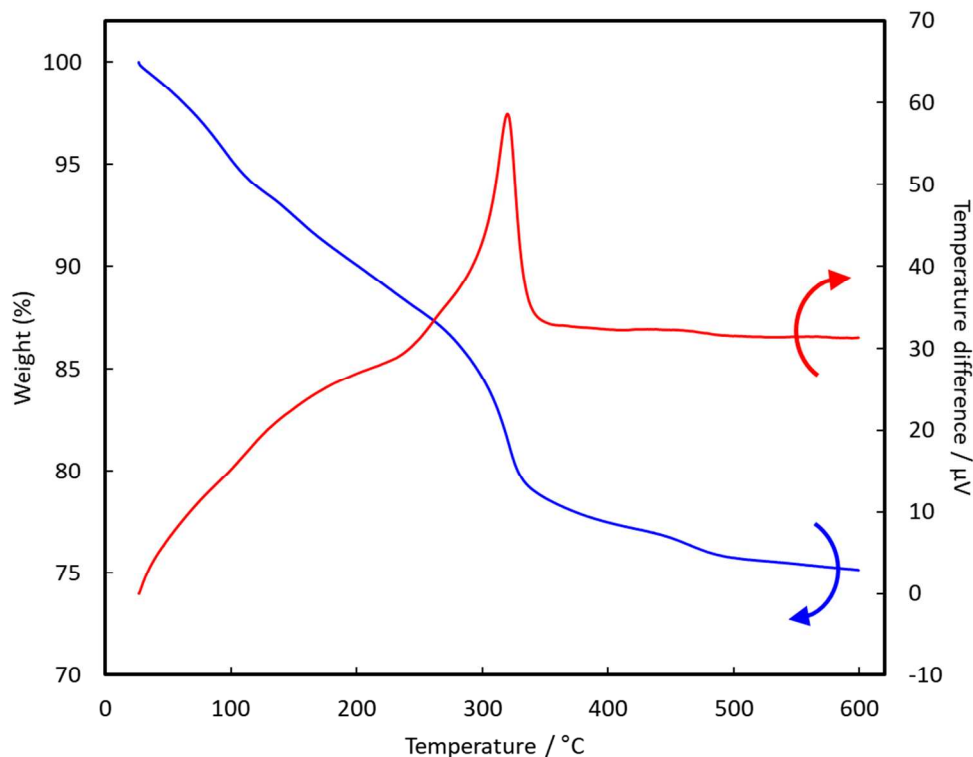
<sup>‡</sup>Department of Chemical System Engineering, The University of Tokyo, 7-3-1 Hongo, Bunkyo, Tokyo 113-8656, Japan.

<sup>#</sup>Synchrotron X-ray Station at SPring-8, Research Network and Facility Services Division, National Institute for Materials Science (NIMS), 1-1-1 Koto, Sayo, Hyogo 679-5148, Japan.

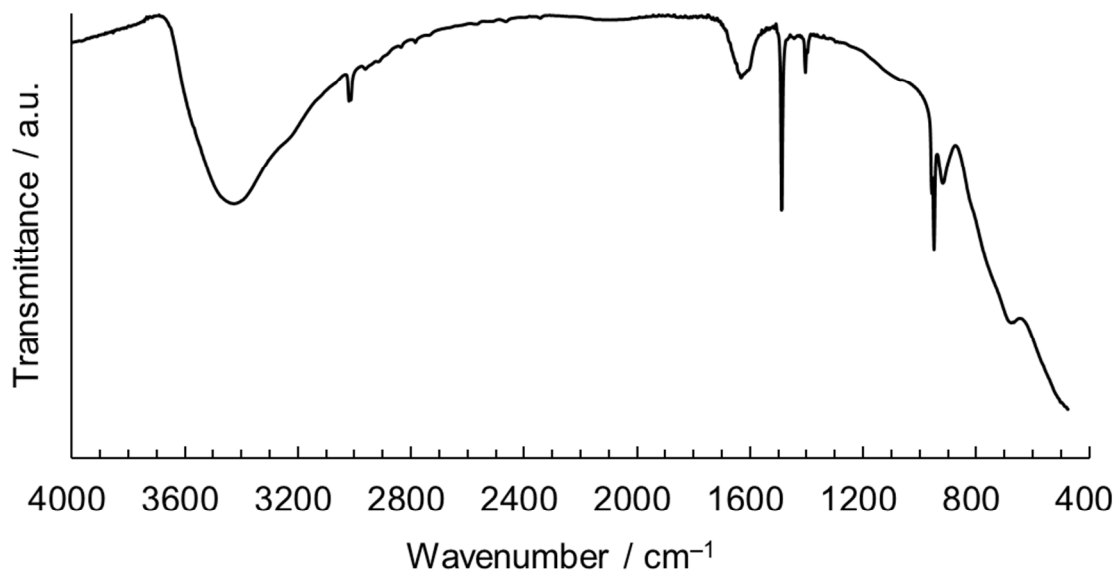
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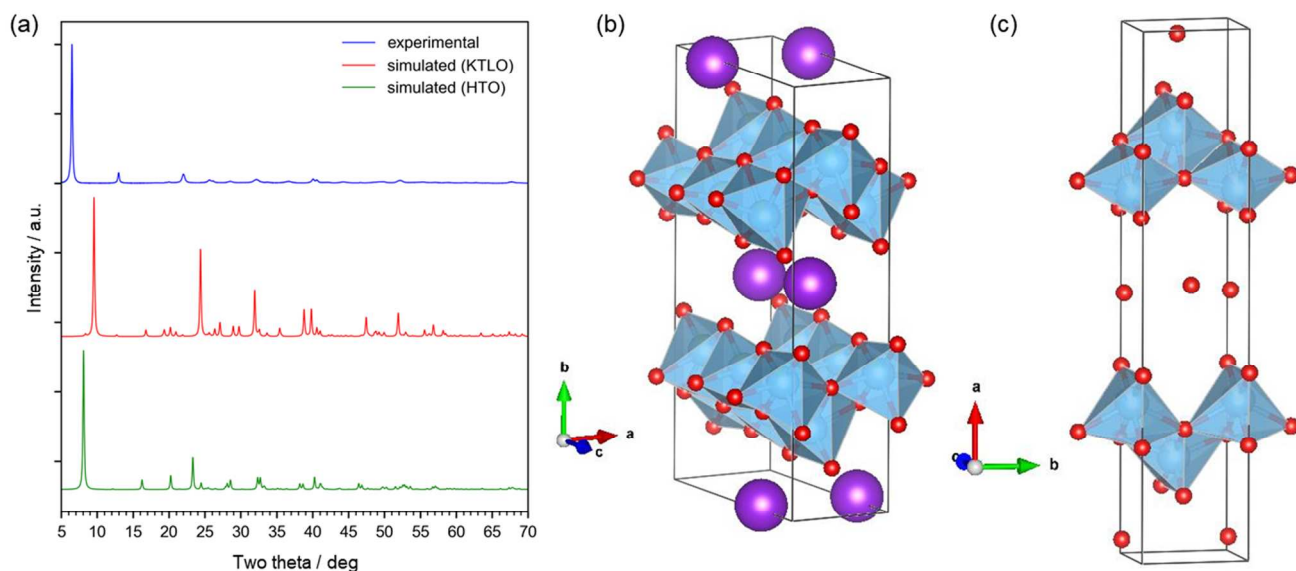
## Additional data



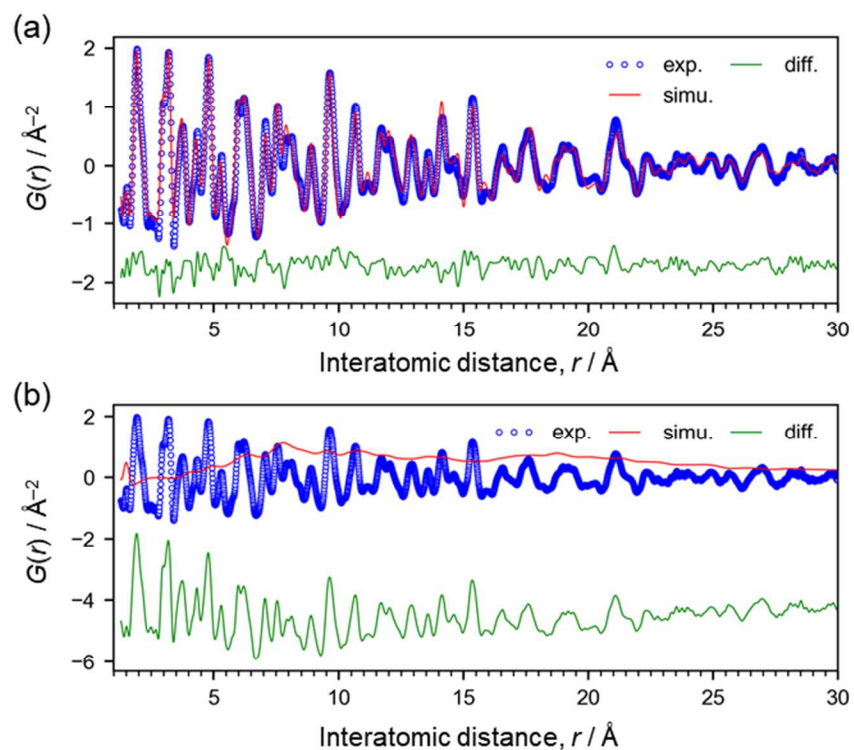
**Figure S1** Simultaneous thermogravimetric analysis and differential thermal analysis (TG-DTA) performed at  $5\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C min}^{-1}$  in air. The weight losses are assigned to  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$  (RT to  $120^{\circ}\text{C}$ , 6.2 wt% loss),  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$  (120 to  $230^{\circ}\text{C}$ , 5.0 wt% loss) and tmah (230 to  $405^{\circ}\text{C}$ , 11.4 wt% exothermic loss). Note that another loss (2.2 wt%) was observed from  $420^{\circ}\text{C}$  to  $600^{\circ}\text{C}$ , which is attributed to the deoxygenation of excess O atoms located at the edge of sheets upon crystal structure transformation of the lepidocrocite-type  $\text{TiO}_2$  into the anatase structure. Since the product formed during the TGA measurement is a yellow powder, the crystals are considered to contain oxygen vacancies, as often observed in titania crystals.



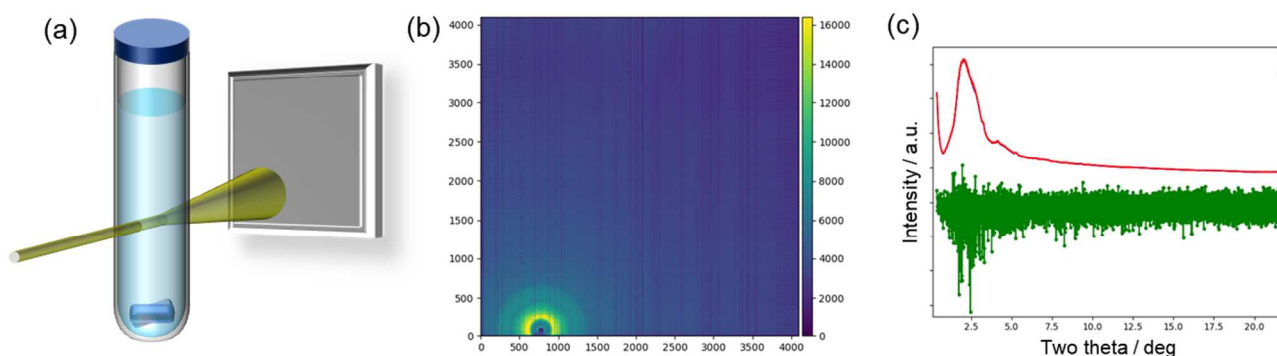
**Figure S2** Fourier-transform infrared spectroscopy spectrum of the dried product (lepidocrocite-type titanate) measured in the transmission mode. The major peaks are assigned as  $3426\text{ cm}^{-1}$  (broad, OH stretching),  $3012$  and  $3020\text{ cm}^{-1}$  (CH stretching),  $1628$  and  $1601\text{ cm}^{-1}$  (H–O–H bending),  $1489$ ,  $1404$ ,  $947$ ,  $949$  and  $912\text{ cm}^{-1}$  (H–C–H bending),  $1200$ – $1000\text{ cm}^{-1}$  (broad CN stretching),  $685\text{ cm}^{-1}$  (TiO stretching).



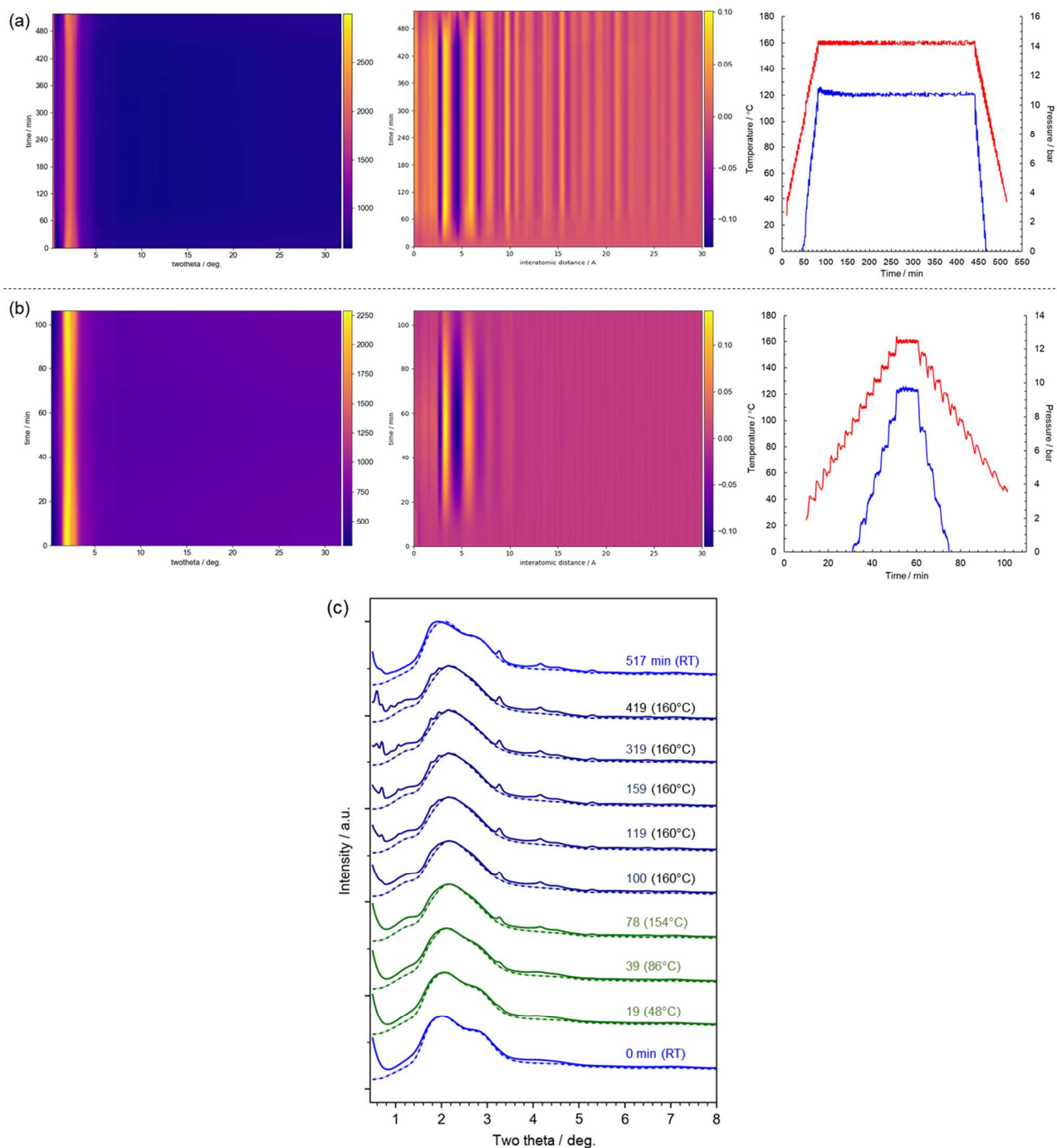
**Figure S3** (a) XRD patterns used for the phase identification of  $[\text{TiO}_2] \cdot n\text{H}_2\text{O} \cdot m((\text{CH}_3)_4\text{N})$  ( $n = 0.54$  and  $m = 0.22$ ). Blue curve: experimentally obtained XRD. Red curve: simulated pattern for  $\text{K}_{0.8}\text{Ti}_{1.73}\text{Li}_{0.27}\text{O}_4$  (KTLO). Green curve: simulated pattern for  $\text{H}_{1.07}\text{Ti}_{1.73}\text{O}_4$  (HTO). The structure information files were obtained from the literature.<sup>1</sup> (b) Structure model of KTLO. (c) Structure model of HTO.



**Figure S4** PDF fitting of the layered titanate crystals ( $\lambda = 0.1076 \text{ \AA}$ ,  $Q = 1.6\text{--}29.0 \text{ \AA}^{-1}$ ). (a) All atom pairs. (b) Partial PDFs for N-all and C-all pairs. For the simulation in the panel ‘a’, the fitting parameters were four lattice constants ( $a$ ,  $b$ ,  $c$  and  $\beta$ ), the scale factor, a diameter, a sratio parameter for simulating short-range order within  $1.7 \text{ \AA}$ , 29 parameters for the atomic coordinates of Ti and O atoms in the titanate under symmetry constraints, two  $U_{\text{iso}}$  parameters for the surface and core Ti, one  $U_{\text{iso}}$  parameter for O in the titanate and an occupancy value for the tmah molecules.



**Figure S5** In situ X-ray total scattering measurements of the solution heated by microwaves. (a) Illustration showing the experimental setup. (b) Image data recorded on a flat panel detector. The direct beam position is at the bottom left. The vertical black lines are dead pixels, which were excluded using the PIXIA program. (c) One-dimensional data with and without noise filtering. The noise was removed as described in the analytical details. This data was obtained by our first in situ measurement under the hydrothermal conditions at BL08W, SPring-8. We then focused on reducing the noise, and thus the other diffraction image data reported in this paper had less noise.



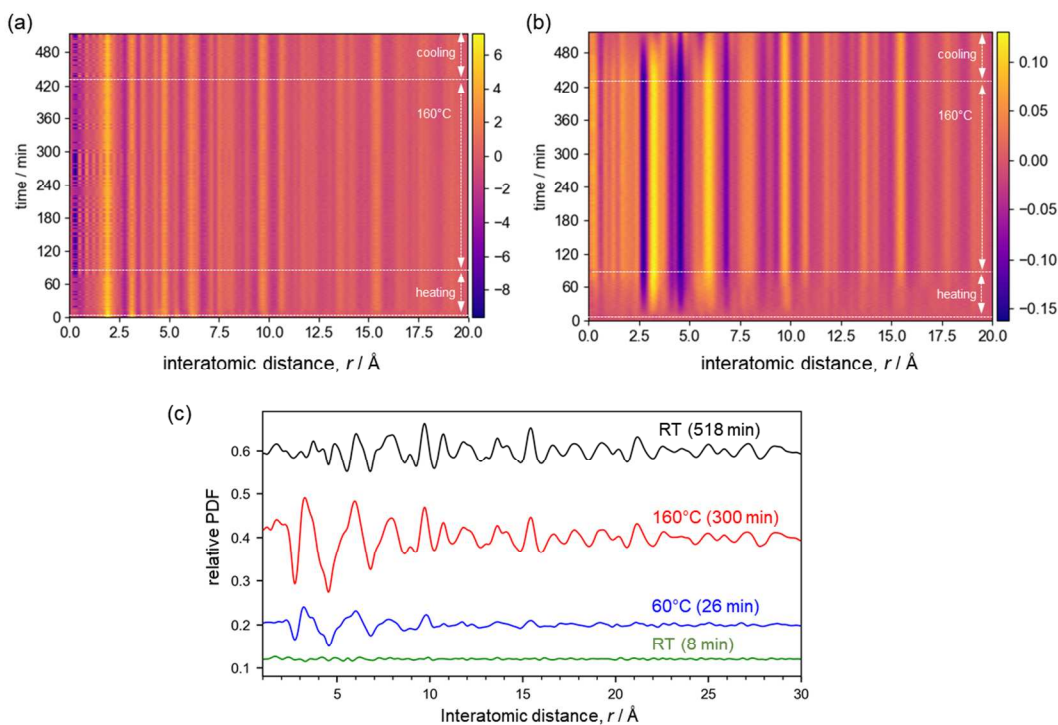
**Figure S6** In situ X-ray total scattering experiments on the solution with titanate (a) and without titanate (b) (left: two theta; middle: relative PDF; right: temperature and pressure data). (c) Total scattering patterns at different temperatures (solid curves: data with titanate; dotted curves: data without titanate).



(a) (b) (c) (d)

**Figure S7** (a) Precursor solution immediately after the preparation. (b) Precursor solution left at RT for 1 h. The change in the appearance of the suspension is not accompanied by a structural change as found from the PDF data. Thus, this change is probably attributed to dissolution of the as-formed titanate structure. (c) Solution heated at 40°C for 1 min using the microwave reactor. (d) Solution heated at 160°C for 1 min using the microwave reactor.



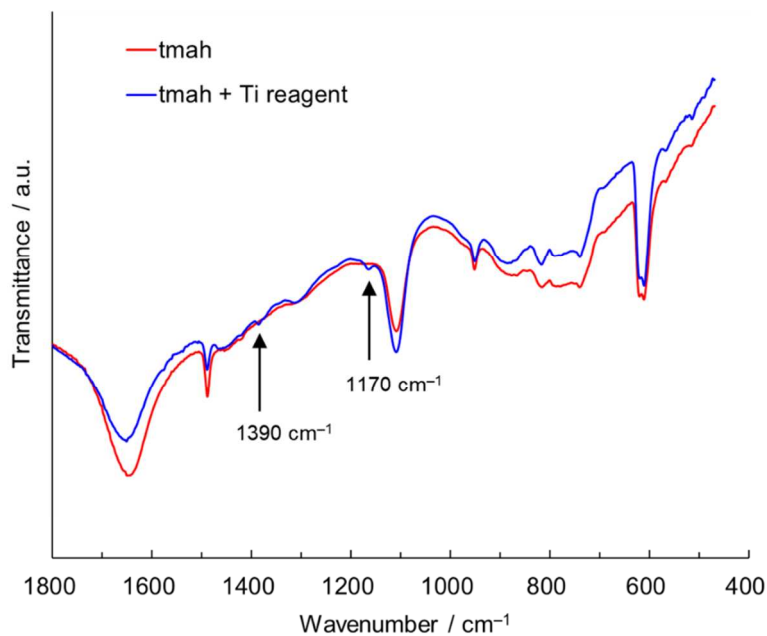


**Figure S8** (a) Two-dimensional data of time-dependent reduced PDFs (same as Fig. 4a). (b) Relative PDF data. The scattering image data for the solution containing titanate (time = 0, RT) was subtracted from the other data and then normalized by a form factor calculated for the chemical composition of  $\text{TiO}_2$  ( $Q$  range  $0.8\text{--}15.0 \text{\AA}^{-1}$ ). This shows the structural change from the reference data. (c) Selected relative PDFs ( $Q_{\text{max}} = 15.2 \text{\AA}^{-1}$ ). This relatively low  $Q_{\text{max}}$  was only used for these relative PDFs.

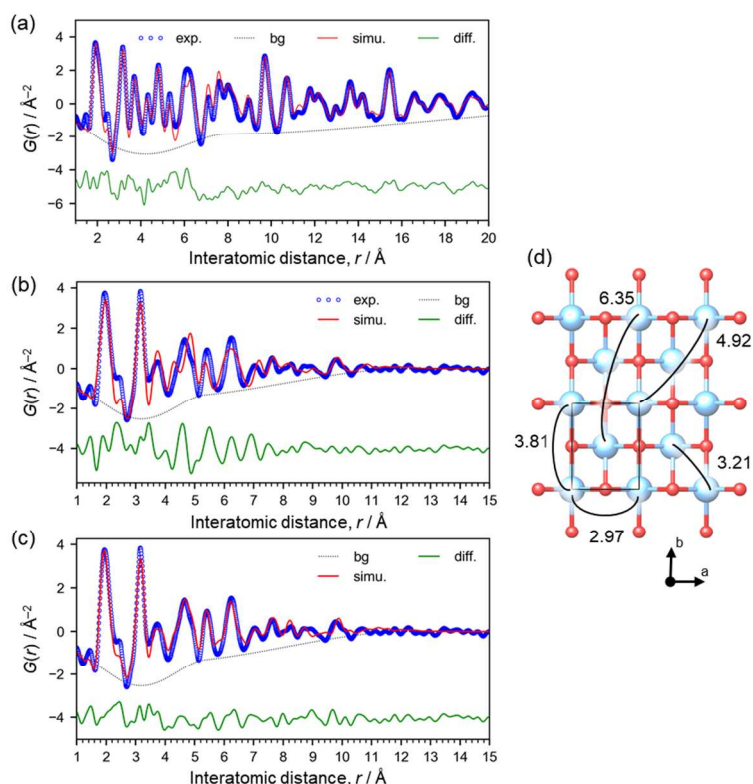
The X-ray total scattering image data for the solvent only was subtracted from the image data for the solution containing titanate at each temperature, and then a 1D scattering pattern was obtained. After the data corrections (e.g., Compton scattering subtraction), the intensity data was normalized by a form factor calculated for the chemical composition of  $\text{TiO}_2$  ( $Q$  range  $0.0\text{--}18.0 \text{\AA}^{-1}$ ). Because these processes were automated and not optimized at each temperature, some of the  $G(r)$  data have noise (or termination ripples) in the low  $r$  range. Thus, we could access these data after all the measurements. To monitor the structural changes during the synchrotron X-ray experiments, we used relative PDFs.

The relative PDFs were calculated by subtracting the initial total scattering data from the subsequent data and then normalized by the form factor calculated for the chemistry of  $\text{TiO}_2$ . The negative (darker) regions represent a decreased number of atom pairs compared with the initial data (time = 0 min), while the positive (brighter) regions mean an increased number of atom pairs. The positive regions

in the ranges of 3–4 Å and 5–6.5 Å suggest the formation of more Ti-Ti pairs in a layered structure, as found in the longer-range region as the thermal treatment proceeds. For example, even at 60°C, the features above 7 Å are almost the same as those in the PDF of the lepidocrocite structure, indicating the growth of lepidocrocite layered titanate.

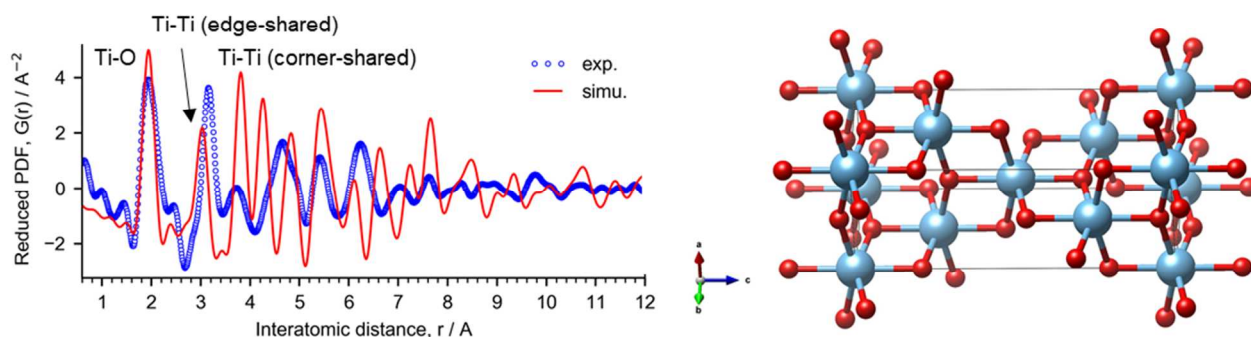


**Figure S9** Fourier-transform infrared spectroscopy spectrum of the as-prepared solution compared with that of a solution of tmah in water. This data was collected in the attenuated total reflection configuration. The peaks observed in the solution containing the Ti reagent (Ti isopropoxide) are assignable to isopropanol.

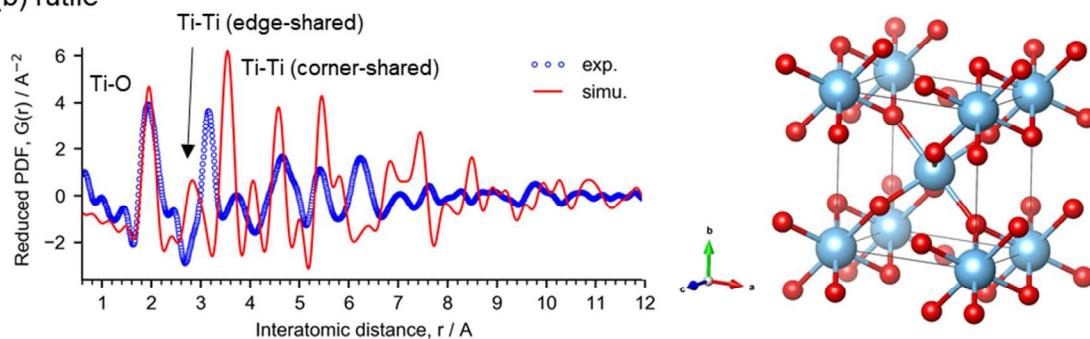


**Figure S10** PDF curve-fitting results of the (a) titanate after the reaction measured at RT (fitting parameters were two lattice constants ( $a$  and  $b$ ), the scale factor, the diameter, the sratio parameter for simulating short-range order within 3.46 Å, three parameters for the atomic coordinates of Ti and O atoms under symmetry constraints ( $Pmmn$ ) and three  $U_{\text{aniso}}$  parameters for each site of one Ti site and two O sites); (b) titanate in the as-prepared solution simulated using the smaller model (fitting parameters were two lattice constants ( $a$  and  $b$ ), the scale factor, the diameter, three parameters for the atomic coordinates of Ti and O atoms under symmetry constraints ( $Pmmn$ ) and two  $U_{\text{iso}}$  parameters for Ti and O); and (c) titanate in the as-prepared solution simulated using the larger model ( $P1$  space group,  $2 \times 2 \times 1$  supercell) (fitting parameters were two lattice constants ( $a$  and  $b$ ), the scale factor, the diameter (fixed at 14.0 Å), two  $U_{\text{iso}}$  parameters for Ti (fixed at 0.0021 Å<sup>2</sup>) and O (fixed at 0.0020 Å<sup>2</sup>) and atomic coordinates for eight Ti sites and 16 O sites (changed under the restraints described in the main text)). The background curves or baselines were simulated using an empirical model described in the later section, “simulation of PDF using isolated cluster/nanosheet models” (panel ‘a’:  $s1 = 1.20$ ,  $s2 = 7.89$ ,  $d = 30.0$  and  $x = 2.51$ ; panel ‘b’ and ‘c’:  $s1 = 2.30$ ,  $s2 = 5.33$ ,  $d = 12.2$  and  $x = 2.78$ ). (d) Structure model showing Ti-Ti distances in the typical lepidocrocite structure observed along the  $c$  axis (blue: Ti; red: O).

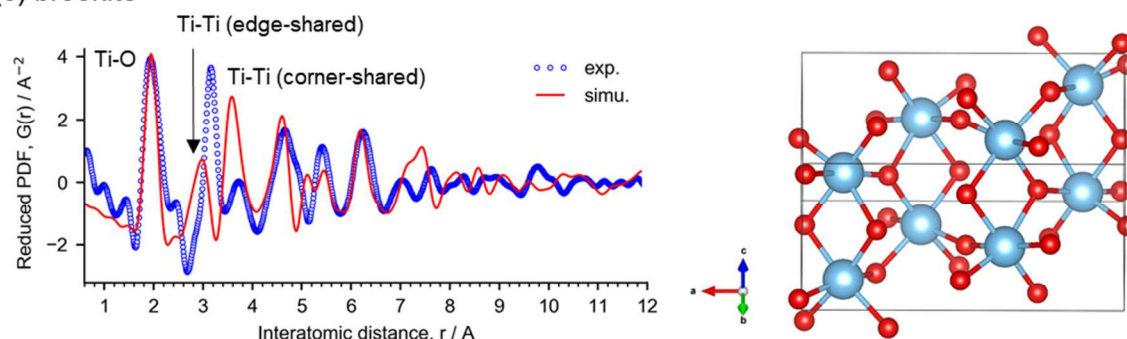
(a) anatase



(b) rutile

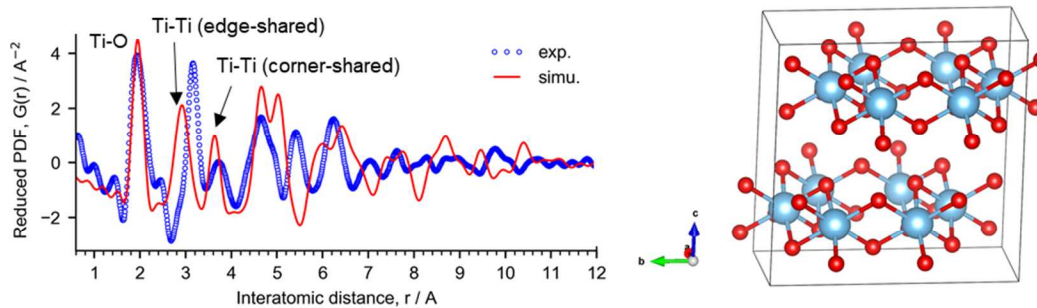


(c) brookite

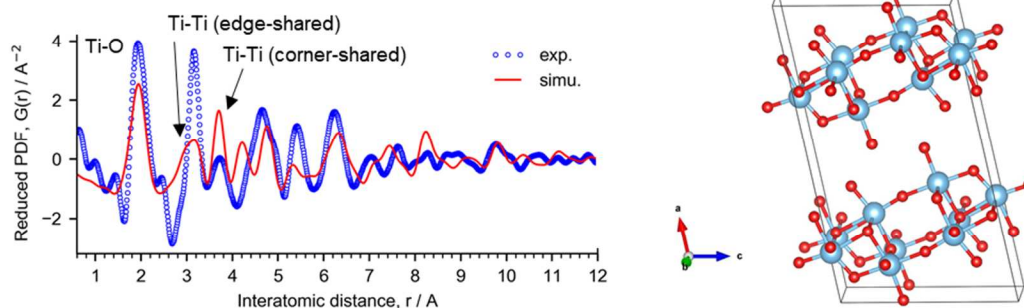


**Figure S11** PDF curve-fitting results for the as-prepared solution using different structure models shown on the right (blue: Ti; red: O). Each experimental PDF (blue dots) was obtained from structure function in the range of  $Q = 0.972\text{--}18.921 \text{ \AA}^{-1}$ . (a) Structure of anatase  $\text{TiO}_2$  ( $a = 3.7842$ ,  $c = 9.5146$ ; ICSD no. 9852). (b) Structure of rutile  $\text{TiO}_2$  ( $a = 4.5941 \text{ \AA}$ ,  $c = 2.9589 \text{ \AA}$ ; ICSD no. 9161). (c) Structure of brookite  $\text{TiO}_2$  ( $a = 9.174 \text{ \AA}$ ,  $b = 5.449 \text{ \AA}$ ,  $c = 5.138 \text{ \AA}$ ; ICSD no. 36408).

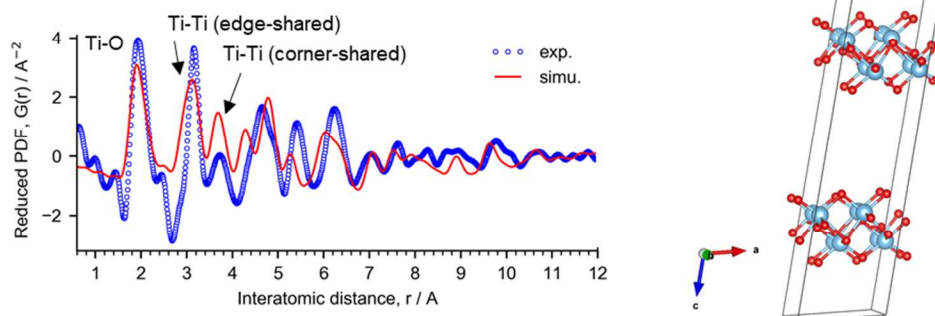
(d) Dihydrogen trioxotitanate



(e) Dihydrogen trititanium oxide



(f) Lepidocrocite titanium oxide



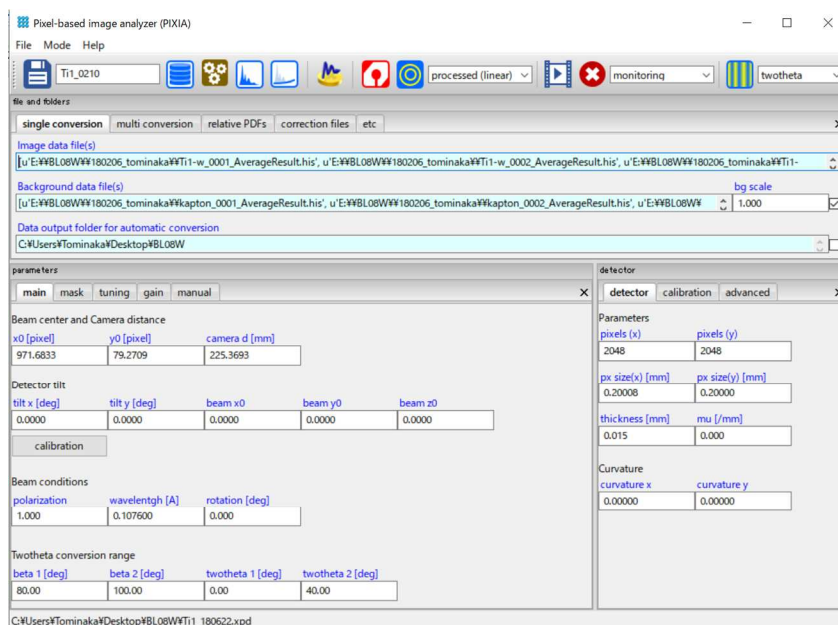
**Figure S11 (continued)** (d) Structure of dihydrogen trioxotitanate  $\text{H}_2\text{Ti}_2\text{O}_3$  ( $a = 4.97 \text{ \AA}$ ,  $b = 9.08 \text{ \AA}$ ,  $c = 9.53 \text{ \AA}$ ,  $\beta = 99.86^\circ$ ; ICSD no. 195648). (e) Structure of dihydrogen trititanium oxide  $\text{H}_2\text{Ti}_3\text{O}_7$  ( $a = 4.97 \text{ \AA}$ ,  $b = 9.08 \text{ \AA}$ ,  $c = 9.53 \text{ \AA}$ ,  $\beta = 99.86^\circ$ ; ICSD no. 195648). (f) Structure of lepidocrocite-type  $\text{TiO}_2$  ( $a = 4.97 \text{ \AA}$ ,  $b = 9.08 \text{ \AA}$ ,  $c = 9.53 \text{ \AA}$ ,  $\beta = 99.86^\circ$ ; solved in this work). Ti and O atoms were included, and other atoms were excluded from the simulation.  $U_{\text{iso}} = 0.005 \text{ \AA}^2$  was used for all the atoms. A spherical particle with a diameter of  $15 \text{ \AA}$  was used for all the models. A scale factor of 1.0 was used for all the calculations.



## Details of data processing

### Conversion of 2D data into 1D data using PIXIA program.

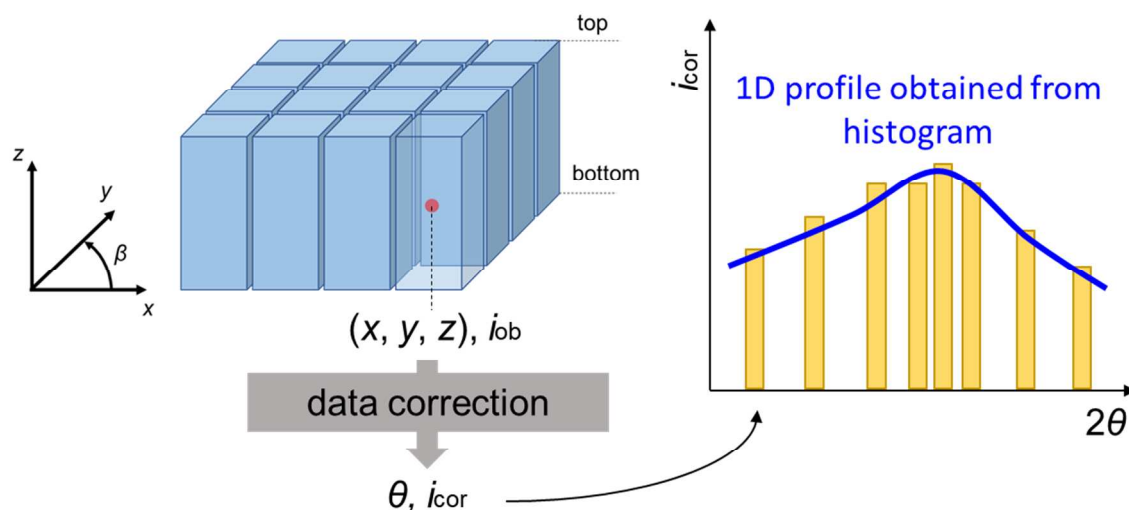
The conversion from 2D image data to a 1D scattering profile was performed using the PIXIA program. This program is being developed and will be available free of charge from National Institute for Materials Science (NIMS) ([https://samurai.nims.go.jp/profiles/tominaka\\_satoshi?locale=en](https://samurai.nims.go.jp/profiles/tominaka_satoshi?locale=en)). The program is written in Python and has a graphical user interface prepared using the wxPython module. The current version of PIXIA is being tested by beta testers and will be publicly available soon. **Figure S12** shows the user interface. Details of the mathematical treatments in this program will be available in future, and here we summarize the key concepts and equations required for the work reported in this paper.



**Figure S12** User interface of PIXIA program.

PIXIA stands for “Pixel-based Image Analyzer”, and is dedicated to image processing in X-ray scattering experiments. Briefly, the program can extract scattering data through the noise filtration and data corrections required for X-ray scattering analysis such as polarization correction. We assume a 2D detector as an array of square-pillar

detectors, and the coordinates of each pixel are defined as those at its center as shown in **Figure S13**. The 2D data is a function of the physical space coordinates  $(x, y, z)$  or X-ray scattering coordinates  $(\theta, \beta)$ , where  $\beta$  is the angle in the circumferential direction (anticlockwise). After image processing and correction for the intensities recorded at each pixel, a data list of the corrected intensity,  $i_{\text{cor}}$ , vs  $\theta$  is obtained. The histogram of  $i_{\text{cor}}$  vs  $\theta$  has many data points (e.g., one million points for  $1000 \times 1000$  pixels). A mathematical filter is used to obtain the scattering signal by removing the noise (note that current version of PIXIA uses a Savitzky–Golay filter).



**Figure S13** Concept of data processing in PIXIA.

In the data correction, the recorded intensities,  $I_{\text{rec}}$ , are corrected by removing offset values,  $I_{\text{ofs}}$ , and then normalized by the gain values  $G$ , to obtain observable intensities,  $I_{\text{ob}}$ ,

$$I_{\text{ob}}(x, y) = (I_{\text{rec}}(x, y) - I_{\text{ofs}}(x, y)) \cdot G(x, y). \quad (\text{S1.1})$$

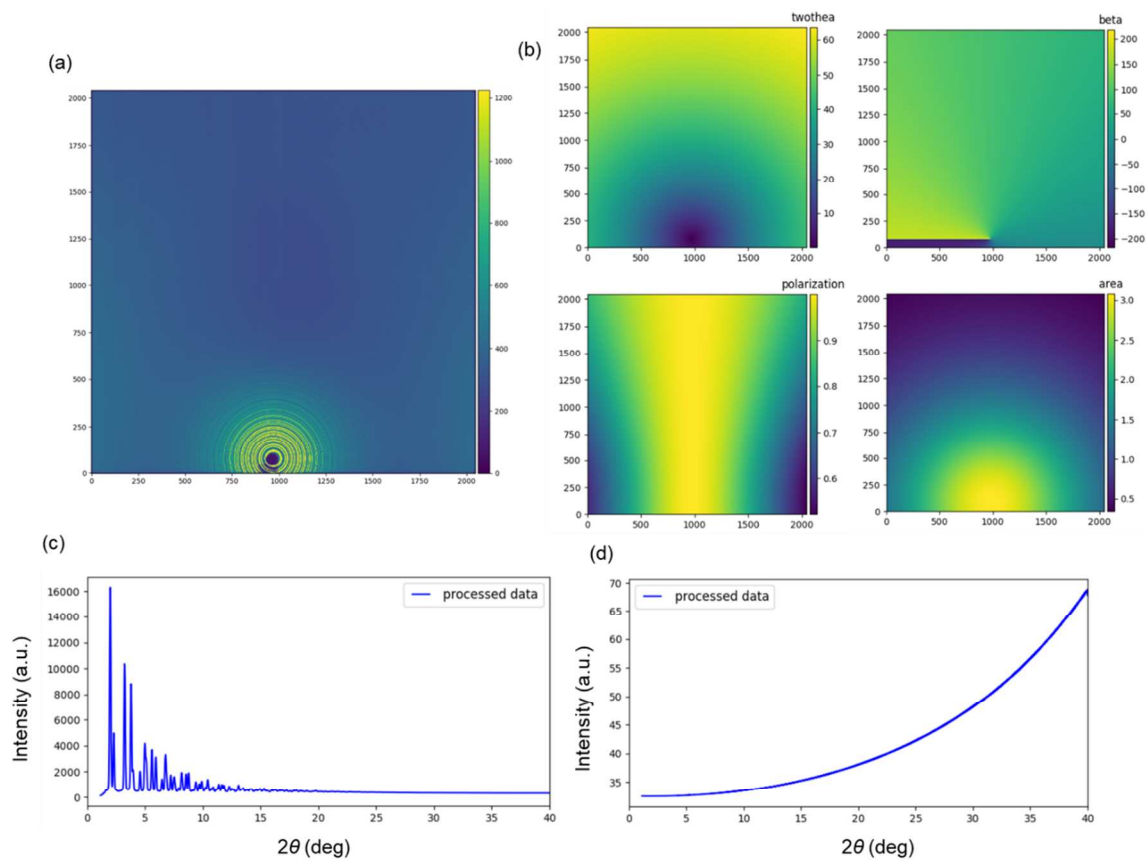
The polarization effect,  $P$ , is corrected in accordance with the original equation written by Kahn et al.,<sup>2</sup> which requires more calculations than the modified equation used for some programs dedicated to XRD within the small- $Q$  range. Then, the intensity of each pixel is normalized by the proportion of Debye–Scherrer rings recorded on the projected area of each pixel,  $D$ . The intensity of each pixel is further corrected for the oblique incidence of the X-ray to the detector having thickness  $h$  and absorption coefficient  $\mu$ . Details of the mathematics will be available in future (e.g., in a manual).



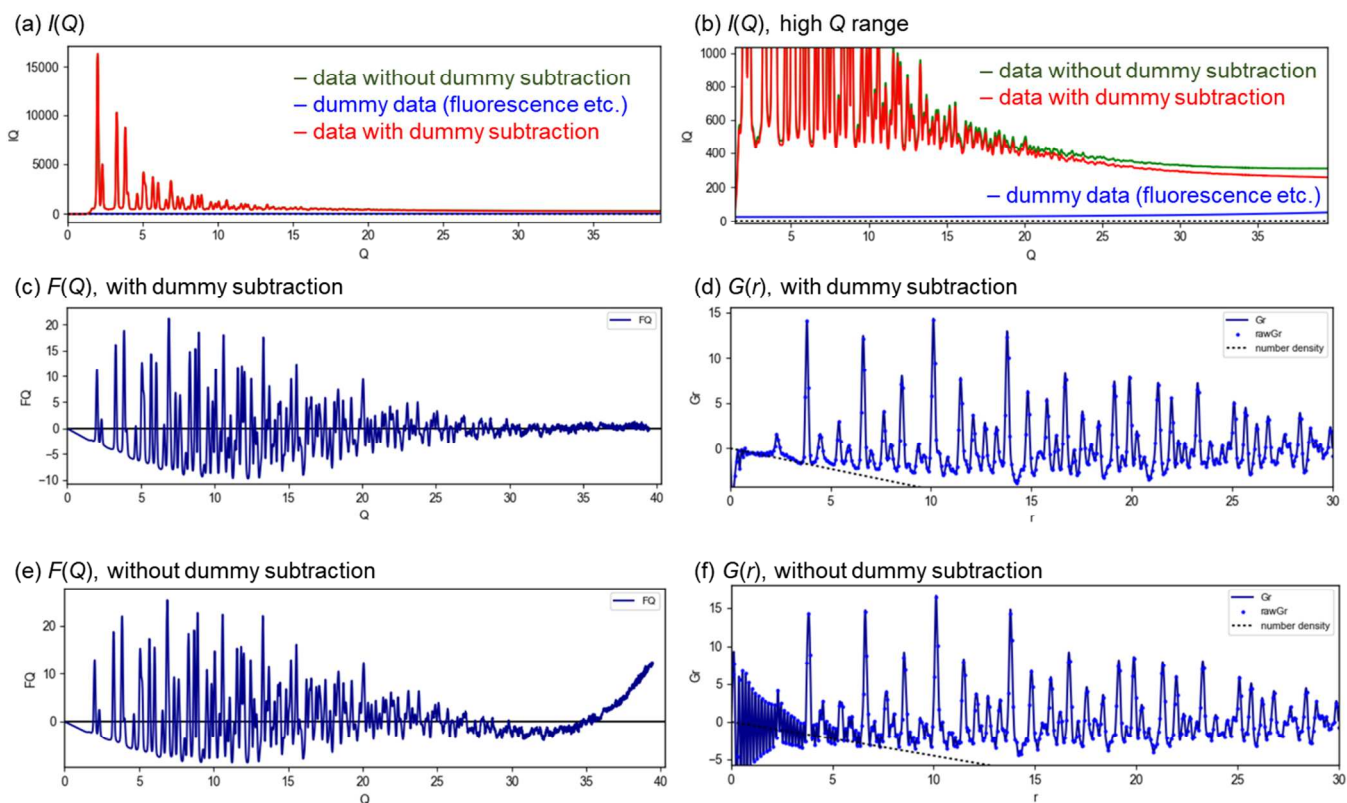
$$I_{\text{cor}}(x, y, z; \theta, \beta) = I_{\text{ob}}(x, y) \cdot P(\theta, \beta) \cdot D(x, y, z) \cdot O(x, y, z, h, \mu) - I_n \quad (\text{S1.2})$$

The intensities still contain unavoidable noise,  $I_n$ , which contains statistical noise and other noises. The noise is not a function of the physical space coordinates  $(x, y, z)$  or the X-ray scattering coordinates  $(\theta, \beta)$ ; thus, we can remove the noise from both coordinates. We excluded pixels (*i*) where  $G$  values are not constant (e.g., within 10% error) at different exposure times, (*ii*) where the intensities are markedly different from those of the surrounding pixels in the physical space coordinates (e.g., 50% error) and then (*iii*) where there are apparently different intensities (e.g., 50% error) compared with averaged intensities at each  $2\theta$  angle in the  $I$  vs  $2\theta$  graph. Then, intensity vs  $2\theta$  data is obtained using all the remaining pixel data.

**Figure S14** shows an example of data conversion. **Figure S14a** shows the 2D data (NIST CeO<sub>2</sub>) after subtracting the air background recorded under the same integration conditions. Parameters including angles, polarization and area correction factors were calculated as shown in **Fig. S14b**. Then, after masking the beam-stop region and dead pixels, the 2D data shown in **Fig. S14a** was converted into 1D profile shown in **Fig. S14c**. In the case of XRD, the profile shown in **Fig. S14c** is sufficiently accurate for data analysis. However, in the case of PDF analysis, the data still contains the fluorescence intensity and Compton scattering intensity as well as the effect of the modulated offset due to the exposure. As described above, the conversion of a 2D image into a 1D profile requires a complicated mathematical treatment, and thus even constant offset values remain in the data signals and the resultant 1D profile has a curved offset shape. For example, a dummy image having 100 counts at each pixel was converted into the 1D profile shown in **Fig. S14d** using the same parameters as those for CeO<sub>2</sub> data conversion. Thus, for the PDF analysis, we converted dummy image data having a constant intensity at each pixel into a 1D profile using the same conversion parameters as those for the total scattering experimental data. In the PDF conversion process using the MaterialsPDF program, we subtracted the curved dummy profile from the experimental data as shown in **Fig. S15**. The intensity in the dummy profile is not significant but its effect on the profile at high- $Q$  values is clear.



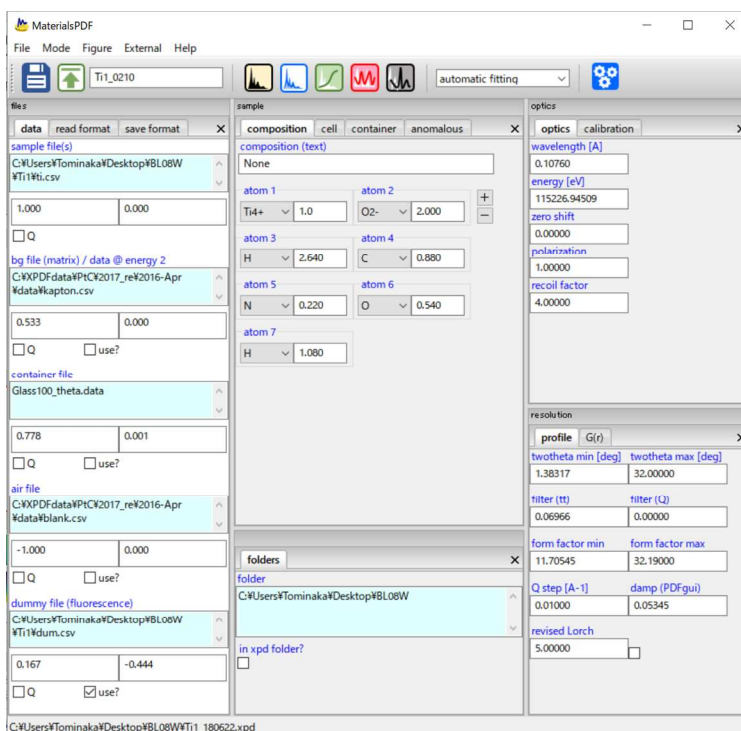
**Figure S14** Example of data conversion. (a) Two-dimensional image data for  $\text{CeO}_2$  after background subtraction. (b) Conversion parameters of each pixel. (c) Converted  $\text{CeO}_2$  data. (d) Converted dummy data.



**Figure S15** Example of data conversion from total scattering to reduced PDF,  $G(r)$ . (a, b) Total scattering patterns,  $I(Q)$ , for  $\text{CeO}_2$ . The dummy data is the profile obtained by converting the dummy image (100 counts on each pixel) into the 1D profile using the same parameters as those for the  $\text{CeO}_2$  data. (c, d) Reduced structure function,  $F(Q)$ , and  $G(r)$  obtained with dummy data correction. This is similar to fluorescence and dummy current correction. (e, f)  $F(Q)$  and  $G(r)$  without dummy data correction. The total scattering data was collected at BL08W of SPring-8 ( $\lambda = 0.10790 \text{ \AA}$ ).

## Conversion of 1D data into PDF using MaterialsPDF program

The data conversion from a 1D scattering profile to a PDF was performed using the MaterialsPDF program (**Fig. S16**). MaterialsPDF and PIXIA are parts of the Orochi program, with which X-ray scattering data can be seamlessly processed and analyzed on the same platform. "Orochi" is named after a legendary eight-headed dragon in Japanese mythology, "Yamata no Orochi". All the programs in Orochi are written in Python and connected to work concertedly. Thus, the data processed by the PIXIA program can be immediately handled in MaterialsPDF.



**Figure S15** User interface of MaterialsPDF program.

The 1D profile for the CeO<sub>2</sub> data shown in **Fig. S14c** was treated in the MaterialsPDF program as shown in **Fig. S16**. This program was developed with reference to other programs, PDFgetX2,<sup>3</sup> PDFgetX3,<sup>4</sup> GudrunX<sup>5</sup> and a program used at BL04B2 at SPring-8 (which is written as a macro of Igor and used at the beamline). Most of the core equations are the same as those in PDFgetX2 and those in the book written by Egami and Billinge,<sup>6</sup> but other useful functions have also been added by referencing to other programs such as the revised Lorch function derived by Soper and Barney.<sup>7</sup>

Data is processed by background subtraction (or capillary and air intensity subtraction), fluorescence subtraction and Compton scattering subtraction by simulating the scattering profile based on the database to obtain the coherent scattering intensity,  $I_{\text{coh}}$ ,<sup>8</sup>

$$I_{\text{coh}} = I_{\text{cor}} - (I_{\text{com}} + I_{\text{flu}} + I_{\text{bg}}), \quad (\text{S1.3})$$

where  $I_{\text{com}}$  is the Compton scattering intensity,  $I_{\text{flu}}$  is the fluorescence intensity, and  $I_{\text{bg}}$  is the background intensity.  $I_{\text{bg}}$  is often removed by subtracting the intensity obtained for a blank container. For the data processing of a 1D profile obtained by a 2D detector, the corrections of intensity using the profile obtained from a dummy image, as described in the previous sections are also very important as shown in **Fig. S15**.

Then, the data is normalized with a form factor based on the Faber–Ziman formalism calculated using atomic scattering factors<sup>9-10</sup> to obtain structure function,  $S(Q)$ ,

$$S(Q) = \frac{I_{\text{coh}} - NL(Q)}{N\langle f(Q) \rangle^2}, \quad (\text{S1.4})$$

$$L(Q) = \langle f(Q)^2 \rangle - \langle f(Q) \rangle^2, \quad (\text{S1.5})$$

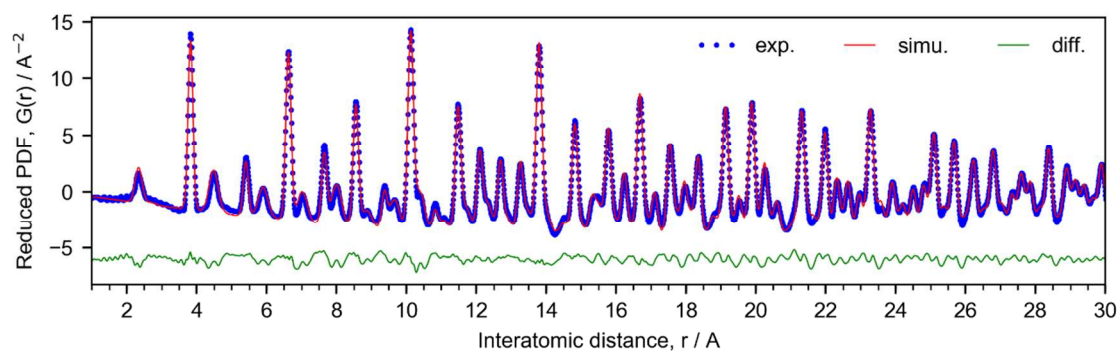
where  $L(Q)$  is the Laue scattering term,  $N$  is the number of scattering atoms and  $f(Q)$  is the atomic form factor. From the structural viewpoint, the Faber–Ziman structure function is a weighted sum of the structure function of each atom pair. From this structure function, the reduced PDF,  $G(r)$ , where  $r$  is the interatomic distance, can be derived through a Fourier transform, as

$$G(r) = \frac{2}{\pi} \int_{Q_{\text{min}}}^{Q_{\text{max}}} F(Q) \sin(Qr) dQ, \quad (\text{S1.6})$$

$$F(Q) = Q(S(Q) - 1), \quad (\text{S1.7})$$

where  $F(Q)$  is named the reduced structure function.

In the MaterialsPDF program, these corrections can be performed as an interactive computation by checking the final PDF data. The obtained  $G(r)$  is consistent with that obtained by other programs and can be well simulated (**Fig. S17**). We also verified the quality of  $G(r)$  for  $\text{SiO}_2$  glass as a standard amorphous material.



**Figure S17** PDF fitting of  $\text{CeO}_2$  (NIST 674B;  $a = 5.41165 \text{ \AA}$ ) performed using PDFfit2 program ( $Q_{\text{max}} = 39.94 \text{ \AA}^{-1}$ ,  $Q_{\text{damp}} = 0.05345$ ).  $R_w = 11.8\%$ .

## Relative pair distribution functions (PDFs)

For the time-dependent PDFs, the concept of relative PDFs described below is useful for monitoring the change in structures because they can extract the change in PDFs rather than show entire PDFs. For example, in the reaction we investigated in this work, the solution contained precursors, reacted titanium oxide and solvent molecules. The structure of the solvent molecules can be regarded as constant at a given temperature. The change in structure is accounted for by the structural transformation from unreacted molecules to titanite. Thus, if we can normalize the data using the initial structure data, structure information related to the bulk solvent and the unreacted molecules can be cancelled. Then, it is easy to find the start of reactions.

The difference between two reduced PDFs having the same atomic concentrations and scattering factors can be expressed as follows.

$$\Delta G(r) = \frac{2}{\pi} \int_0^{\infty} \Delta F(Q) \sin(Qr) dQ \quad (\text{S1.8})$$

$$\Delta F(Q) = \frac{Q \Delta I_{\text{coh}}}{N \langle f(Q) \rangle^2} = \frac{Q \Delta I_{\text{tot}}}{N \langle f(Q) \rangle^2} \quad (\text{S1.9})$$

Assuming that PDFs obtained from multiple components can be approximated as the weighted sum of partials,<sup>6</sup> we can normalize the scattering data ( $I_{\text{tot}}$ ) with  $N \langle f \rangle^2$  for the changed components. Thus, the relative values  $\Delta G(r)$  (or relative PDFs) are considered to be sensitive only to the changed components. However, the changed components change over time during in situ measurements and are difficult to know before detailed analyses; thus, we must assume or decide that the normalization function  $N \langle f \rangle^2$  has reasonable values for the changing components. Therefore, the heights of the relative PDFs may not be accurate, although the interatomic distance information is still accurate and useful. Considering the use of spline curves as the normalization function in extended X-ray absorption fine structure (EXAFS) analysis, this relative PDF is similarly reliable.

Because of the simple calculations and possible cancellation of constant errors in the data, the computation of relative PDFs is an easy and straightforward way to determine the start of reactions. Thus, relative PDFs can be obtained at the time of time-resolved measurements and are useful for monitoring the reactions. The dimension and fundamental mathematics of such a relative PDF are similar to those of differential PDFs, but we refer to it as “relative” to emphasize the difference in the normalization.

## Treatments of small-angle scattering peaks

The small-angle X-ray scattering intensities were excluded by defining a suitable minimum  $Q$  value ( $Q_{\min}$ ) as reported in the literature.<sup>12</sup> In more detail,  $Q_{\min} = >1.0 \text{ \AA}^{-1}$  was used for the titanate reactions, and this limit is sufficiently low to exclude the effect of particles of radius  $>5 \text{ \AA}$ .



## Simulation of PDF using isolated cluster/nanosheet models

In the simulation with the removal of the baseline and using isolated cluster/nanosheet models, we first removed the baseline in the PDF by estimating it using equation (S1.14). The reduced PDF,  $G(r)$ , is expressed as follows:<sup>6</sup>

$$G(r) = 4\pi\rho_0(g(r) - 1), \quad (\text{S1.10})$$

where  $\rho_0$  is the average number density and  $g(r)$  is the atomic PDF. This function,  $G(r)$ , approaches the straight line of  $-4\pi\rho_0r$  as  $r$  approaches zero. According to the experimental data,  $G(r)$  decays with increasing  $r$  owing to the limited resolution in  $Q$  and the limited atomic correlation associated with the particle size. For example, a Gaussian envelope of the following form is used in the PDFfit2 (and PDFfit) program:<sup>13</sup>

$$A(r) = \exp\left(-\frac{(Q_{\text{damp}}r)^2}{2}\right), \quad (\text{S1.11})$$

where  $Q_{\text{damp}}$  is the damping constant. The spherical particle envelope is defined as follows:<sup>14</sup>

$$B(r, d) = \left(1 - \frac{3r}{2d} + \frac{1}{2}\left(\frac{r}{d}\right)^3\right)H(d - r), \quad (\text{S1.12}),$$

where  $d$  is the particle diameter and  $H$  is the Heaviside step function. Thus, the experimentally obtained reduced PDF of spherical particles can be expressed as

$$G_{\text{exp}}(r) = G(r) \cdot A(r) \cdot B(r, d) = 4\pi\rho_0 (g(r) - 1) \cdot A(r) \cdot B(r, d). \quad (\text{S1.13})$$

Thus, the baseline is  $-4\pi\rho_0r$  around  $r = 0$  but it behaves as  $-4\pi\rho_0rAB$ . Assuming that we can appropriately model the structure as well as the size effect, we can simulate the PDF well. However, this does not hold true for the structures we analyzed in this work. This is because the materials are clusters (too small to be simulated as spherical particles) and 2D (not spheres) and, moreover, the density associated with the surrounding solvent molecules is uncertain. Thus, we simulated the baseline of the PDFs using the following function:

$$C(r, d, x, s1, s2) = \begin{cases} 1 & (r < s1) \\ \frac{\left(1 - \frac{3r}{2d} + \frac{1}{2}\left(\frac{r}{d}\right)^3\right)}{r^x} H(d - r) & (r > s2) \end{cases}, \quad (\text{S1.14})$$

where  $x$  is a constant used to adjust the decay curves,  $s1$  is the upper limit where the particle size envelope cannot be held and  $s2$  is the lower limit where the envelope can be held. This is an empirical model, and thus we will evaluate its physical meaning in order to optimize it. The range  $s1 < r < s2$  was connected using a spline function.

This function is not definitive, but we consider that the structure analysis for clusters and nanosheets surrounded by solvent molecules requires a treatment removing such a baseline, and considering the uncertainty of the contribution of such a solvent to the baseline, our approach is still reasonable. Thus, we used this approach to obtain  $4\pi\rho_0g(r)A$ , which can be simulated using the PDFfit program using a cluster or isolated nanosheet model as shown in **Fig. 5**, **Fig. 6** and **Fig. S10**.

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## Structural information data

The followings are the structural information file exported from EXPO2014 (XRD data) and PDFgui (PDF fittings). Regarding the PDF fitting, the fittings were carried out under symmetry restraints though the exported structure ins *P1* symmetry.

## (A1) Crystalline product (Rietveld refinement, XRD)

```
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  _atom_type_description
  _atom_type_scatter_source
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'Ti' 'Titanium' 'International Tables Vol C Tables 4.2.6.8 and 6.1.1.4'
'H' 'Hydrogen' 'International Tables Vol C Tables 4.2.6.8 and 6.1.1.4'
'C' 'Carbon' 'International Tables Vol C Tables 4.2.6.8 and 6.1.1.4'
'N' 'Nitrogen' 'International Tables Vol C Tables 4.2.6.8 and 6.1.1.4'

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_cell_length_c              23.65053
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_cell_angle_gamma           90.000
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_diffraction_ambient_temperature 298.3 K
_diffraction_radiation_wavelength 1.299000
_diffraction_radiation_type      Synchrotron

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_symmetry_space_group_name_hall  'P 2y'

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  _symmetry_equiv_pos_as_xyz
1 'x, y, z'
2 '-x, y, -z'

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  _atom_site_fract_x
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  _atom_site_U_iso_or_equiv
  _atom_site_occupancy
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Ti	Ti3	0.4068	0.6270	0.7918	0.0046	1.0000	Uiso
Ti	Ti4	0.5932	0.3731	0.7082	0.0046	1.0000	Uiso
Ti	Ti5	0.4252	0.1242	0.7970	0.0046	1.0000	Uiso
Ti	Ti6	0.5748	0.8758	0.7030	0.0046	1.0000	Uiso
Ti	Ti7	0.9263	0.1174	0.7991	0.0046	1.0000	Uiso
Ti	Ti8	0.0737	0.8826	0.7009	0.0046	1.0000	Uiso
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O	O4	0.8061	0.3748	0.6563	0.0080	1.0000	Uiso
O	O5	0.3865	0.3756	0.7706	0.0080	1.0000	Uiso
O	O6	0.6135	0.6244	0.7294	0.0080	1.0000	Uiso
O	O7	0.6901	0.6253	0.8388	0.0080	1.0000	Uiso
O	O8	0.3099	0.3747	0.6612	0.0080	1.0000	Uiso
O	O9	0.9463	0.8863	0.9197	0.6119	1.0000	Uiso
O	O10	0.9463	1.1137	0.4197	0.6119	1.0000	Uiso
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O	O12	0.5277	0.1224	0.7156	0.0080	1.0000	Uiso
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O	O16	0.1052	0.1197	0.7276	0.0080	1.0000	Uiso
O	O17	0.2042	0.1250	0.8464	0.0080	1.0000	Uiso
O	O18	0.7958	0.8750	0.6536	0.0080	1.0000	Uiso
O	O19	0.5388	0.6302	0.5969	0.6119	1.0000	Uiso
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C	C8	0.6099	1.0110	0.4623	0.1089	1.0000	Uiso
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H	H4	0.7545	1.1137	0.4086	0.7343	1.0000	Uiso
H	H5	0.4748	0.7279	0.6246	0.7343	1.0000	Uiso
H	H6	0.7307	0.6302	0.6080	0.7343	1.0000	Uiso
H	H7	0.6028	0.4675	1.0692	0.7343	1.0000	Uiso
H	H8	0.3469	0.3698	1.0858	0.7343	1.0000	Uiso
H	H9	0.9880	1.1292	1.0461	0.1307	1.0000	Uiso

H	H10	0.7028	1.2340	1.0153	0.1307	1.0000	Uiso
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H	H16	0.3082	0.4023	1.0704	0.1307	1.0000	Uiso
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H	H22	0.3245	0.7760	0.9143	0.1307	1.0000	Uiso
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## (A2) Crystalline product (PDF fitting)

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C8	C	0.184400	0.511000	0.288000	0.108974	Uiso	1.7372
C9	C	0.316200	0.759900	0.711900	0.108974	Uiso	1.7372
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C12	C	0.316200	0.240100	0.211900	0.108974	Uiso	1.7372
C13	C	0.609900	0.989000	0.712300	0.108974	Uiso	1.7372
C14	C	0.390100	0.989000	0.787700	0.108974	Uiso	1.7372

C15	C	0.390100	0.011000	0.287700	0.108974	Uiso	1.7372
C16	C	0.609900	0.011000	0.212300	0.108974	Uiso	1.7372
H1	H	0.882400	0.984010	0.697450	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H2	H	0.117600	0.984010	0.802550	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H3	H	0.117600	0.015990	0.302550	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H4	H	0.882400	0.015990	0.197450	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H5	H	0.138160	0.886310	0.680780	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H6	H	0.861840	0.886310	0.819220	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H7	H	0.861840	0.113690	0.319220	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H8	H	0.138160	0.113690	0.180780	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H9	H	0.474850	0.727890	0.374630	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H10	H	0.525150	0.727890	0.125370	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H11	H	0.525150	0.272110	0.625370	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H12	H	0.474850	0.272110	0.874630	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H13	H	0.730610	0.630190	0.357960	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H14	H	0.269390	0.630190	0.142040	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H15	H	0.269390	0.369810	0.642040	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H16	H	0.730610	0.369810	0.857960	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H17	H	0.988140	0.129210	0.796110	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H18	H	0.011860	0.129210	0.703890	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H19	H	0.011860	0.870790	0.203890	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H20	H	0.988140	0.870790	0.296110	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H21	H	0.703030	0.233850	0.765230	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H22	H	0.296970	0.233850	0.734770	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H23	H	0.296970	0.766150	0.234770	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H24	H	0.703030	0.766150	0.265230	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H25	H	0.898670	0.329280	0.831270	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H26	H	0.101330	0.329280	0.668730	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H27	H	0.101330	0.670720	0.168730	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H28	H	0.898670	0.670720	0.331270	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H29	H	0.284420	0.562240	0.759350	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H30	H	0.715580	0.562240	0.740650	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H31	H	0.715580	0.437760	0.240650	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H32	H	0.284420	0.437760	0.259350	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H33	H	0.308110	0.402220	0.820450	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H34	H	0.691890	0.402220	0.679550	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H35	H	0.691890	0.597780	0.179550	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H36	H	0.308110	0.597780	0.320450	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H37	H	0.099070	0.588550	0.812720	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H38	H	0.900930	0.588550	0.687280	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H39	H	0.900930	0.411450	0.187280	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H40	H	0.099070	0.411450	0.312720	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H41	H	0.347680	0.615750	0.725300	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H42	H	0.652320	0.615750	0.774700	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H43	H	0.652320	0.384250	0.274700	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H44	H	0.347680	0.384250	0.225300	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372

H45	H	0.324440	0.775990	0.664270	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H46	H	0.675560	0.775990	0.835730	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H47	H	0.675560	0.224010	0.335730	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H48	H	0.324440	0.224010	0.164270	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H49	H	0.138390	0.801930	0.717500	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H50	H	0.861610	0.801930	0.782500	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H51	H	0.861610	0.198070	0.282500	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H52	H	0.138390	0.198070	0.217500	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H53	H	0.478210	0.020920	0.670180	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H54	H	0.521790	0.020920	0.829820	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H55	H	0.521790	0.979080	0.329820	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H56	H	0.478210	0.979080	0.170180	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H57	H	0.763200	0.916750	0.701540	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H58	H	0.236800	0.916750	0.798460	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H59	H	0.236800	0.083250	0.298460	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H60	H	0.763200	0.083250	0.201540	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H61	H	0.672130	0.116760	0.736420	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H62	H	0.327870	0.116760	0.763580	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H63	H	0.327870	0.883240	0.263580	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
H64	H	0.672130	0.883240	0.236420	0.051872	Uiso	1.7372
N1	N	0.500000	0.874400	0.750000	0.108974	Uiso	1.7372
N2	N	0.500000	0.125600	0.250000	0.108974	Uiso	1.7372
N3	N	0.000000	0.374400	0.750000	0.108974	Uiso	1.7372
N4	N	0.000000	0.625600	0.250000	0.108974	Uiso	1.7372

### (A3) Titanate in the solution after 480 min thermal treatment and then cooled (PDF fitting)

\_symmetry\_space\_group\_name\_H-M 'P1'  
\_symmetry\_Int\_Tables\_number 1  
\_symmetry\_cell\_setting triclinic

\_cell\_length\_a 2.98708  
\_cell\_length\_b 3.80296  
\_cell\_length\_c 100  
\_cell\_angle\_alpha 90  
\_cell\_angle\_beta 90  
\_cell\_angle\_gamma 90

loop\_

\_atom\_site\_label  
\_atom\_site\_type\_symbol  
\_atom\_site\_fract\_x  
\_atom\_site\_fract\_y  
\_atom\_site\_fract\_z  
\_atom\_site\_U\_iso\_or\_equiv  
\_atom\_site\_adp\_type  
\_atom\_site\_occupancy

Ti1	Ti	0.500000	0.000000	0.510621	0.006507	Uani	1.0000
Ti2	Ti	0.000000	0.500000	0.489379	0.006507	Uani	1.0000
O1	O	0.500000	0.500000	0.501717	0.018110	Uani	1.0000
O2	O	0.000000	0.000000	0.498283	0.018110	Uani	1.0000
O3	O	0.000000	0.000000	0.521722	0.022041	Uani	1.0000
O4	O	0.500000	0.500000	0.478278	0.022041	Uani	1.0000

loop\_

\_atom\_site\_aniso\_label  
\_atom\_site\_aniso\_U\_11  
\_atom\_site\_aniso\_U\_22  
\_atom\_site\_aniso\_U\_33  
\_atom\_site\_aniso\_U\_12  
\_atom\_site\_aniso\_U\_13  
\_atom\_site\_aniso\_U\_23

Ti1	0.006508	0.005991	0.007021	0.000000	0.000000	0.000000
Ti2	0.006508	0.005991	0.007021	0.000000	0.000000	0.000000
O1	0.014201	0.011963	0.028166	0.000000	0.000000	0.000000
O2	0.014201	0.011963	0.028166	0.000000	0.000000	0.000000
O3	0.020744	0.023316	0.022063	0.000000	0.000000	0.000000
O4	0.020744	0.023316	0.022063	0.000000	0.000000	0.000000

**(A3) Titanate in the solution before thermal treatment measured at RT (PDF fitting)**

\_cell\_length\_a 6.16927  
\_cell\_length\_b 7.68268  
\_cell\_length\_c 95.00000  
\_cell\_angle\_alpha 90  
\_cell\_angle\_beta 90  
\_cell\_angle\_gamma 90  
\_space\_group\_name\_H-M\_alt 'P 1'  
\_space\_group\_IT\_number 1

loop\_  
\_space\_group\_symop\_operation\_xyz  
'x, y, z'

loop\_  
\_atom\_site\_label  
\_atom\_site\_occupancy  
\_atom\_site\_fract\_x  
\_atom\_site\_fract\_y  
\_atom\_site\_fract\_z  
\_atom\_site\_adp\_type  
\_atom\_site\_U\_iso\_or\_equiv  
\_atom\_site\_type\_symbol

Ti1	1.0	0.105826	0.092959	0.509817	Uiso	0.002099	Ti
Ti2	1.0	0.109506	0.668363	0.510872	Uiso	0.002099	Ti
Ti3	1.0	0.624933	0.113107	0.511611	Uiso	0.002099	Ti
Ti4	1.0	0.626051	0.662638	0.511862	Uiso	0.002099	Ti
Ti5	1.0	0.374600	0.335317	0.489627	Uiso	0.002099	Ti
Ti6	1.0	0.374803	0.906978	0.488793	Uiso	0.002099	Ti
Ti7	1.0	0.875149	0.396816	0.491718	Uiso	0.002099	Ti
Ti8	1.0	0.872007	0.914820	0.487852	Uiso	0.002099	Ti
O1	1.0	0.176504	0.385357	0.507185	Uiso	0.002000	O
O2	1.0	0.124612	0.860770	0.500442	Uiso	0.002000	O
O3	1.0	0.598670	0.388126	0.504968	Uiso	0.002000	O
O4	1.0	0.638452	0.870962	0.501049	Uiso	0.002000	O
O5	1.0	0.375706	0.122116	0.499525	Uiso	0.002000	O
O6	1.0	0.380203	0.624687	0.497117	Uiso	0.002000	O
O7	1.0	0.844170	0.151153	0.497009	Uiso	0.002000	O
O8	1.0	0.803767	0.654447	0.494035	Uiso	0.002000	O
O9	1.0	0.375000	0.110029	0.521669	Uiso	0.002000	O
O10	1.0	0.375000	0.610029	0.521669	Uiso	0.002000	O
O11	1.0	0.875000	0.110029	0.521669	Uiso	0.002000	O
O12	1.0	0.878286	0.612221	0.521678	Uiso	0.002000	O
O13	1.0	0.142021	0.397028	0.478038	Uiso	0.002000	O
O14	1.0	0.125000	0.889971	0.478331	Uiso	0.002000	O

015	1.0	0.625000	0.389971	0.478331	Uiso	0.002000	0
016	1.0	0.619299	0.878863	0.478454	Uiso	0.002000	0