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2 **Gabbroic Shergottite Northwest Africa 6963: an intrusive**  
3 **sample of Mars**

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11

12 **ABSTRACT**

13 Meteorite Northwest Africa (NWA) 6963 was classified as a basaltic shergottite based on  
14 mineralogy, but here we show that it is a gabbroic rock with a quartz-alkali feldspar intergrowth  
15 that represents a late-stage granitic melt. NWA 6963 contains clinopyroxene and maskelynite  
16 grains up to 5 mm in length, with minor ferroan olivine, spinel, ilmenite, merrillite, apatite, Fe-  
17 sulfides and high-Si glass. NWA 6963 also contains areas of quartz and alkali-feldspar  
18 intergrowths up to ~1 mm in size. Based on mineral abundances and textural analysis, we  
19 suggest that NWA 6963 is an intrusive rock similar to a terrestrial gabbro. Infiltration of the  
20 martian crust by young gabbroic bodies would suggest that estimates of crustal composition,  
21 density, and thickness based on the surface chemistry alone would be problematic and the  
22 martian crust may be even more heterogenous than is seen from orbit alone. Investigations of

23 crater walls, where intrusive crustal rocks would be exposed, are needed in order to discover the  
24 launch sites of the shergottites and the full heterogeneity of the martian crust.

25 **Keywords:** Mars; gabbro; SNC meteorite; shergottite; intrusive; micro-graphic; granite

26

## 27 **INTRODUCTION**

28 Martian meteorites are classified, depending on mineralogy, as shergottites, chassignites,  
29 nakhlites, and ALH84001 (McSween and Treiman, 1998; Bridges and Warren, 2006).  
30 Shergottites represent the largest and most diverse group of martian meteorites and are further  
31 subdivided into basaltic, olivine-phyric, and lherzolithic. Basaltic shergottites are dominated by  
32 clinopyroxene and plagioclase with no forsteritic olivine (McSween, 1994; Goodrich, 2002;  
33 Treiman, 2003; Bridges and Warren, 2006). Those shergottites containing forsteritic olivine are  
34 classified as olivine (ol)-phyric shergottites (McSween, 1994; Goodrich, 2002; Treiman, 2003;  
35 Bridges and Warren, 2006). Both basaltic and ol-phyric shergottites are thought to be extrusive  
36 rocks similar to terrestrial basalts (McSween, 1994; Zuber et al., 2000; Bridges and Warren,  
37 2006; Gross et al., 2011). Lherzolithic shergottites are coarse-grained olivine-pigeonite cumulate  
38 rocks and are intrusive in nature (Goodrich, 2002; Bridges and Warren, 2006). Shergottites are  
39 also classified based on rare earth element bulk chemistry and isotopic signatures into enriched,  
40 intermediate, and depleted categories (Jones, 1989, 2003; Treiman, 2003; Bridges and Warren,  
41 2006; Filiberto et al., 2012). Shergottite NWA 6963 has previously been classified as an enriched  
42 basaltic shergottite (Bulletin, 2011; Wilson et al., 2012), but based on mineral abundances,  
43 textural analysis, and quartz-alkali feldspar intergrowths, we suggest it represents an intrusive  
44 rock similar to a terrestrial gabbro.

## 45 **SAMPLE AND METHODS**

46 Meteorite Northwest Africa (NWA) 6963 was found at an undisclosed location in  
47 Morocco in 2011, represents numerous partly fusion-crusted broken stones that together make up  
48 8-10 kg (Bulletin, 2011), and was classified as a martian shergottite meteorite based on its bulk  
49 composition, mineral chemistry and oxygen isotopes (Wilson et al., 2012). For this study we  
50 purchased a 1.201 g part slice of the meteorite from Martin Altmann and Stefan Ralew of  
51 “Chladni’s Heirs”, cut and polished a section of it into a thick section, and confirmed that it  
52 matched the mineralogy and textural description in the meteoritical bulletin (Bulletin, 2011).

53 Backscattered electron (BSE) images and X-ray element maps were taken with the  
54 Cameca SX100 electron microprobe (EMP) at the American Museum of Natural History  
55 (AMNH). The BSE images and X-ray element maps were used to determine the textural  
56 characteristics and the modal mineral abundance of this sample using techniques described by  
57 Maloy and Treiman (2007).

## 58 **COMPARISON WITH TERRESTRIAL AND LUNAR GABBROS**

### 59 **Mineralogy**

60 Mineralogically, NWA 6963 is composed of  $65 \pm 5$  % pyroxene ( $25 \pm 5$  % augite and  $40$   
61  $\pm 5$  % pigeonite),  $30 \pm 5$  % maskelynite (shocked plagioclase), with minor ferroan olivine, spinel,  
62 ilmenite, merrillite, apatite, Fe-sulfides and quartz-alkali feldspar intergrowths, which is similar  
63 to many basaltic shergottites (e.g., McSween, 1994; McSween and Treiman, 1998; Bridges and  
64 Warren, 2006). The two pyroxenes are in equilibrium and give a high temperature crystallization  
65 of  $\sim 1250^\circ\text{C}$  and low temperature of  $\sim 1000^\circ\text{C}$  calculated from Andersen et al. (1993). Olivine is  
66 fayalitic ( $\sim \text{Fo}_{10}$ ) suggesting that this mineral was a late stage crystallization product.

67 Terrestrial gabbros are typically composed of 30-75% plagioclase, 15-50% clinopyroxene  
68 with minor magnetite, amphibole, biotite, chrome-spinel, and olivine and/or quartz (e.g.,

69 Carmichael et al., 1974; Hopper and Smith, 1996; O'Driscoll et al., 2008), which is similar to  
70 NWA 6963. However, NWA 6963 contains more pyroxene and less plagioclase than typical  
71 terrestrial gabbros which is attributed to the difference in chemistry between martian and typical  
72 terrestrial magmas and not due to their cooling history (e.g., Dreibus and Wänke, 1985; Wänke  
73 and Dreibus, 1988; Treiman et al., 2000; Bridges and Warren, 2006). Martian rocks contain more  
74 FeO and less Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> than typical terrestrial Mid-Ocean Ridge and Ocean Islands Basalts and have  
75 similar chemistry to terrestrial ferropicrites (e.g., Dreibus and Wänke, 1987; Treiman et al.,  
76 2000; Filiberto et al., 2006; Filiberto, 2008b), which is reflected in the higher abundance of  
77 pyroxene and lower abundance of plagioclase than typical terrestrial gabbros. This observation is  
78 consistent with NWA 6963 being a martian gabbroic rock.

#### 79 **Textural description**

80 Meteorite NWA 6963 consists of subhedral clinopyroxene and maskelynite grains up to 5  
81 mm in length with minor ferroan olivine, spinel, ilmenite, merrillite, apatite, Fe-sulfides and  
82 quartz-alkali feldspar intergrowths. In contrast, ol-phyric shergottites typically contain large  
83 olivine up to several mm in length in a fine grained groundmass (e.g., Goodrich, 2002; Lentz and  
84 McSween, 2005; Gross et al., 2011). The pyroxene and maskelynite in NWA 6963 have a  
85 subophitic texture with the pyroxenes partly enclosing similar size maskelynite grains (**Fig. 1**),  
86 typical for terrestrial gabbroic rocks (e.g., Wager, 1961).

87 Basaltic shergottites display a range of grain sizes but all contain coarse grained pyroxene  
88 and plagioclase set in a fine grained groundmass as shown by crystal size distribution studies  
89 (e.g., Lentz and McSween, 2000; Lentz and McSween, 2005). Similar to many basaltic  
90 shergottites (e.g., McSween, 1994; Bridges and Warren, 2006; Stephen et al., 2011), the  
91 clinopyroxene in NWA 6963 exhibits a strong shape-preferred orientation (Filiberto et al., 2013).

92 However, unlike the other basaltic and ol-phyric shergottites, NWA 6963 does not contain a fine  
93 grained groundmass. Instead it is composed of > 95 % coarse-grained shocked plagioclase and  
94 pyroxene with minor minerals that are up to 300  $\mu\text{m}$  in length (**Fig. 2**).

95 The average grain size (**Fig. 2**) in NWA 6963 (average plagioclase  $0.7 \pm 0.3$  mm and  
96 pyroxene  $1.1 \pm 0.6$  mm in NWA 6963) compares with that of pyroxenes and plagioclase in  
97 terrestrial (average plagioclase  $0.9 \pm 0.4$  mm and pyroxene  $0.9 \pm 0.4$  mm in a terrestrial layered  
98 gabbro of the British Palaeogene igneous province; O'Driscoll et al., 2008) and lunar gabbros  
99 (average plagioclase  $0.9 \pm 0.5$  mm and pyroxene  $1.7 \pm 0.9$  mm in lunar gabbro MIL 05035; Joy  
100 et al., 2008) rather than with the grain size of martian basaltic or extrusive rocks (average  
101 pyroxene  $0.3 \pm 0.1$  mm in NWA 5789; plagioclase was too fine grained to accurately measure in  
102 NWA 5789; Gross et al., 2011). Textures of terrestrial gabbros are variable and depend on  
103 cooling and crystallization history of the magma (e.g., Blatt et al., 2005). They typically contain  
104 subhedral to euhedral plagioclase and pyroxene up to 5 mm in length, with subophitic textures  
105 commonly present (Hopper and Smith, 1996; O'Driscoll et al., 2008). Mineral layering and  
106 shape-preferred orientation of plagioclase and pyroxene are present in some terrestrial layered  
107 mafic sills and indicate magma flow directions during emplacement of the gabbroic body (e.g.,  
108 Ferré et al., 2002; O'Driscoll et al., 2008; Archanjo et al., 2012). Therefore, based on crystal  
109 texture, NWA 6963 resembles terrestrial mafic sills or dikes emplaced, cooled, and crystallized  
110 within the martian crust.

111 Additional comparisons can be made with Apollo and lunar meteorite collections in  
112 which gabbroic rocks and clasts are common (e.g., Engel and Engel, 1970; Papike et al., 1998;  
113 Joy et al., 2008). For example, the lunar meteorite Miller Range (MIL) 05035 is a coarse grained  
114 lunar gabbroic meteorite, and is thought to be part of a stratigraphic column consisting of an

115 upper regolith environment underlain by a coarsening downwards basalt lava flow, ending with a  
116 coarse grained gabbro (Joy et al., 2008). MIL 05035 is petrographically and mineralogically  
117 similar to NWA 6963 (**Fig. 2**). Both meteorites are coarse grained and consist mainly of  
118 pyroxene (MIL 05035: 54-69 vol% pyroxene with grain sizes up to 6 mm; NWA 6963: ~ 65  
119 vol% pyroxene with grain sizes up to 4 mm) and plagioclase (MIL 05035: 17-36 vol%  
120 plagioclase with grain sizes up to 4 mm; NWA 6963: ~30 vol% with grain sizes up to 1 mm).  
121 Both meteorites contain minor amounts of fayalitic olivine (MIL 05035: Fo<sub>1-11</sub>; NWA 6963:  
122 Fo<sub>9</sub>), ilmenite, spinel, FeS, apatite and silica, which represent crystallized products of its residual  
123 melt (Joy et al., 2008; Arai et al., 2010). MIL 05035 and NWA 6963 both display intergrowth  
124 textures, referred to as symplectic texture in MIL 05035 (Joy et al., 2008). In MIL 05035 this  
125 symplectite consists of silica, fayalitic olivine and hedenbergitic pyroxene (Joy et al., 2008);  
126 whereas in NWA 6963 quartz and alkali-feldspar form the intergrowth.

### 127 **Quartz-Alkali Feldspar Intergrowth**

128 Intergrowths of quartz and alkali-feldspar are common in terrestrial plutonic rocks (e.g.,  
129 Vogt, 1928; Moorhouse, 1959; Barker, 1970) and hypabyssal rocks such as granophyres  
130 (Walraven, 1985), though, these intergrowths are rare in volcanic rocks. NWA 6963 contains  
131 areas of quartz and alkali-feldspar intergrowths which can be up to ~1 mm in size. Texturally,  
132 quartz and feldspar intergrowths occur as regular arrangements mostly with sharp edges and  
133 corners but can also occur irregularly in shape (**Fig. 3**). Phases were identified based on element  
134 composition from geochemical maps and EMP data (**Fig 4**). Feldspar within the intergrowth is  
135 alkali-feldspar (Or<sub>62-48</sub>Ab<sub>50-34</sub>An<sub>4-2</sub>). Minor fayalitic olivine and needles (<1µm) of zircon and  
136 ilmenite occur in some intergrowths. We interpret the intergrowth to be igneous in origin and not

137 shock based on a comparison of the mineralogy and textures with shock features in other martian  
138 meteorites (e.g., Walton and Spray, 2003; Walton et al., 2012)

139 A great variety of intergrowths have been repeatedly described in the terrestrial literature  
140 and several terms such as graphic granite, micrographic, myrmekitic, and granophyric have been  
141 used to describe these textures. Based on the texture and mineral phases (**Fig. 3 and 4**), we  
142 define the intergrowth texture in NWA 6963 as micrographic – a cuneiform, regular intergrowth  
143 of quartz and alkali-feldspar that resembles the graphic intergrowth of terrestrial pegmatites but  
144 on a microscopic scale. Texturally, such intergrowths in terrestrial samples are suggestive of  
145 simultaneous crystallization of quartz and feldspar at the eutectic point (Vogt, 1928; Mehnert,  
146 1968; Barker, 1970). Similar to terrestrial micrographic intergrowths, this suggests that the  
147 intergrowths in NWA 6963 formed from a late stage simultaneous eutectic crystallization of  
148 quartz and alkali-feldspar. Previously, martian granitic melts have only been found in olivine-  
149 hosted melt inclusions in martian meteorites (e.g., Ikeda, 2005). Further, the finding of small  
150 pockets of granitic-like melt composition in a gabbroic host in NWA 6963 is consistent with the  
151 surface of Mars which is mainly basaltic in composition with only a few possible siliceous areas  
152 found from orbit (e.g., Bandfield et al., 2004; Bandfield, 2006; Taylor et al., 2006; McSween et  
153 al., 2009; Taylor et al., 2010). Therefore, there may be isolated siliceous bodies within the  
154 martian crust that formed from fractional crystallization of a martian basalt such as NWA 6963.  
155 Results from experimental fractional crystallization of martian basalts have already shown that  
156 martian granitic compositions are plausible (e.g., Minitti and Rutherford, 2000; Whitaker et al.,  
157 2005; Nekvasil et al., 2007; Filiberto, 2008a; McCubbin et al., 2008).

## 158 **IMPLICATIONS**

159           The finding of a martian meteorite that is a gabbro (as opposed to a basalt) should not  
160 come as a surprise; on Earth, intrusive rocks are volumetrically 5 times more abundant than  
161 extrusive volcanic rocks in oceanic localities, while in continental localities intrusive rocks are  
162 10 times more abundant (Crisp, 1984). Mars does not have plate tectonics with an average crust  
163 approximately  $50 \pm 12$  km thick, with estimates as high as 92 km and as low as 3 km (Wieczorek  
164 and Zuber, 2004; Taylor and McLennan, 2009). The martian northern lowlands represent a  
165 thinner crust ( $> 30$  km), while the southern highlands corresponds to a slightly thicker crust ( $57 \pm$   
166  $24$  km). This is thicker than the average crustal thickness in terrestrial continental regimes (36  
167 km, Cogley, 1984). Therefore, gabbros such as NWA 6963 could make up 5-10 times the  
168 volume of the martian crust, compared with extrusive basalts.

169           However, calculations of the crustal thickness are dependent on knowing the bulk density  
170 of the crust and typical values of terrestrial basalts ( $2.9 - 3.0 \times 10^3$  kg/m<sup>3</sup>) have routinely been  
171 used (e.g., Zuber et al., 2000; Taylor and McLennan, 2009). Shergottites typically have a density  
172  $> 3 \times 10^3$  kg/m<sup>3</sup> (Coulson et al., 2007), which would reduce the calculated crustal thickness.  
173 However, shergottites are approximately 180 my (Jones, 1986; Nyquist et al., 2001; Walton et  
174 al., 2008) and may not represent the entire crust but may denote younger magmatism and  
175 secondary crustal formation. Infiltration of the martian crust by young gabbroic bodies would  
176 suggest that estimates of crustal composition, density, and thickness based on the surface  
177 chemistry alone would be problematic and the martian crust may be even more heterogeneous  
178 than is seen from orbit alone (e.g., McCubbin et al., 2008).

179           The martian crust, as seen from orbit, is basaltic in nature with slight variations in bulk  
180 chemistry that can be characterized into provinces based on bulk K, Th, and FeO content (Taylor  
181 et al., 2006; Taylor et al., 2010). However, the shergottite meteorites have significantly different

182 chemistry than the average martian upper crust (McSween et al., 2003; Filiberto et al., 2006;  
183 McSween et al., 2009). Therefore, in places such as Tharsis, and the younger crust of the  
184 northern lowlands, the high density of gabbroic bodies, such as NWA 6963, needs to be taken  
185 into account when calculating the crustal thickness. In fact, recent models of the martian crust  
186 suggest that the density of the lower crust is  $\sim 3.4\text{-}3.5 \times 10^3 \text{ kg/m}^3$  (or greater), which is  
187 consistent with the density of shergottites (Coulson et al., 2007) and also consistent with a  
188 middle to lower martian crust similar in mineralogy and chemistry to NWA 6963. This might  
189 provide an explanation for the so far unsuccessful search for the launch sites of the shergottite  
190 martian meteorites (e.g., Hamilton et al., 2003; Lang et al., 2009).

191 Spectral data from orbital missions has been used to study the mineralogy of the martian  
192 surface at young volcanic provinces in the Tharsis region (Lang et al. 2009) and global crust  
193 (Hamilton et al. 2003) to identify the launch site for the shergottite meteorites, but did not  
194 analyze any region that had meteorite-like compositions. However, when considering that NWA  
195 6963, and possibly other basaltic shergottites, represent intrusive and not extrusive rocks, their  
196 launch sites may simply not be exposed on the surface with an aerial footprint large enough to be  
197 identified from orbit. Instead, investigations of crater walls, where intrusive crustal rocks would  
198 be exposed, may be needed in order to discover the launch sites of the shergottites and the full  
199 heterogeneity of the martian crust.

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204

205 **FIGURE CAPTIONS**

206 **Fig. 1.** Backscattered electron image (BSE) of the mineral texture in NWA 6963. The dark gray  
207 color represents maskelynite, and the lighter gray color is pyroxene. Light gray and white colors  
208 represent chromite and iron sulfides. Maskelynite and pyroxene show a subophitic texture, with  
209 the pyroxenes partly enclosing similar size maskelynite grains.

210 **Fig. 2.** Comparison between gabbros from Mars, Moon and Earth and an ol-phyric basalt from  
211 Mars. BSE images of martian gabbro NWA 6963 (a), martian olivine-phyric basalt NWA 5789  
212 (Gross et al., 2011) (b), lunar gabbro MIL 05035 (two slides) (Joy et al., 2008) (c) and a  
213 terrestrial gabbro (thin section image in polarized light) (d) from the layered gabbros of the  
214 British Palaeogene igneous province (O'Driscoll et al., 2008). Note that NWA 6963 and the  
215 terrestrial gabbro show strong orientation of the mineral grains. For comparison olivine-phyric  
216 shergottite NWA 5789 has olivine megacrysts set in a very fine grained matrix. Ol = olivine; Pyx  
217 = pyroxene; Plag = plagioclase.

218 **Fig. 3.** BSE image of the quartz-feldspar intergrowth in NWA 6963 (a). Close up of the  
219 intergrowth structure. Dark gray represents quartz, lighter gray represents feldspar. The bright  
220 colors in (b) represent ilmenite,  $\pm$ zircon,  $\pm$ fayalitic olivine. Pyx = pyroxene; Plag = plagioclase;  
221 Fsp = feldspar; Qtz = quartz; Ilm = ilmenite.

222 **Figure 4.** Element maps of the quartz-feldspar intergrowths in NWA 6963.

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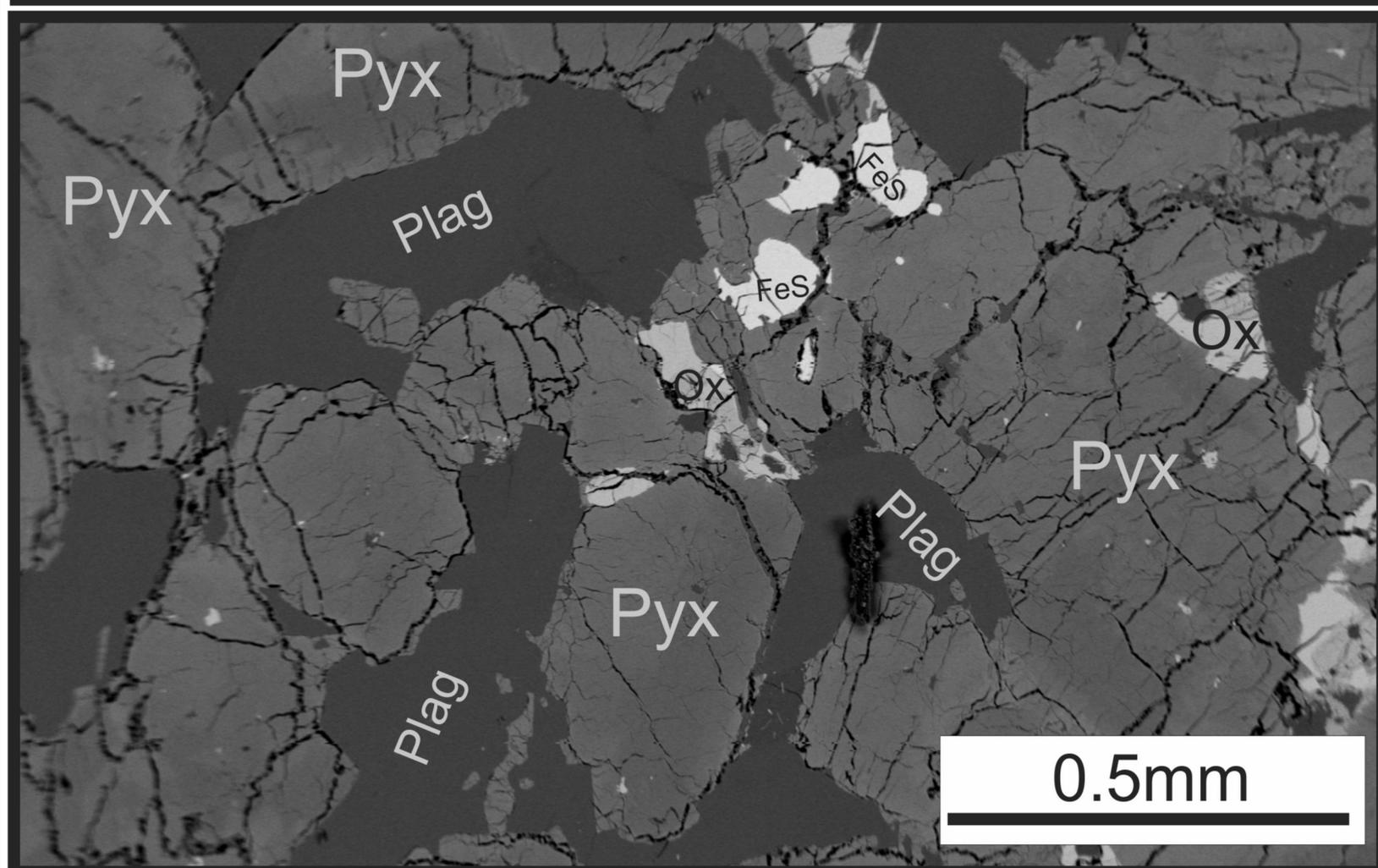
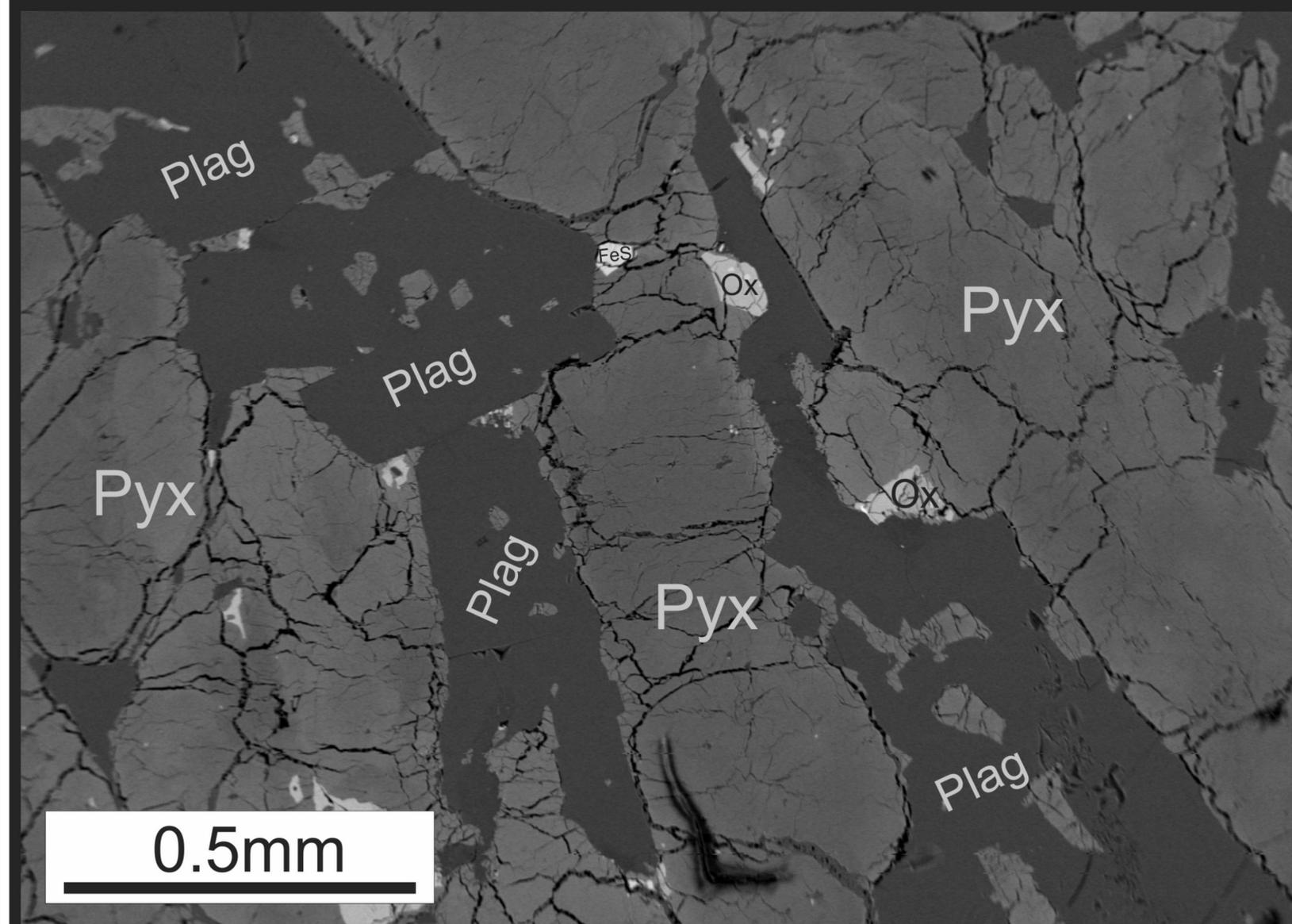
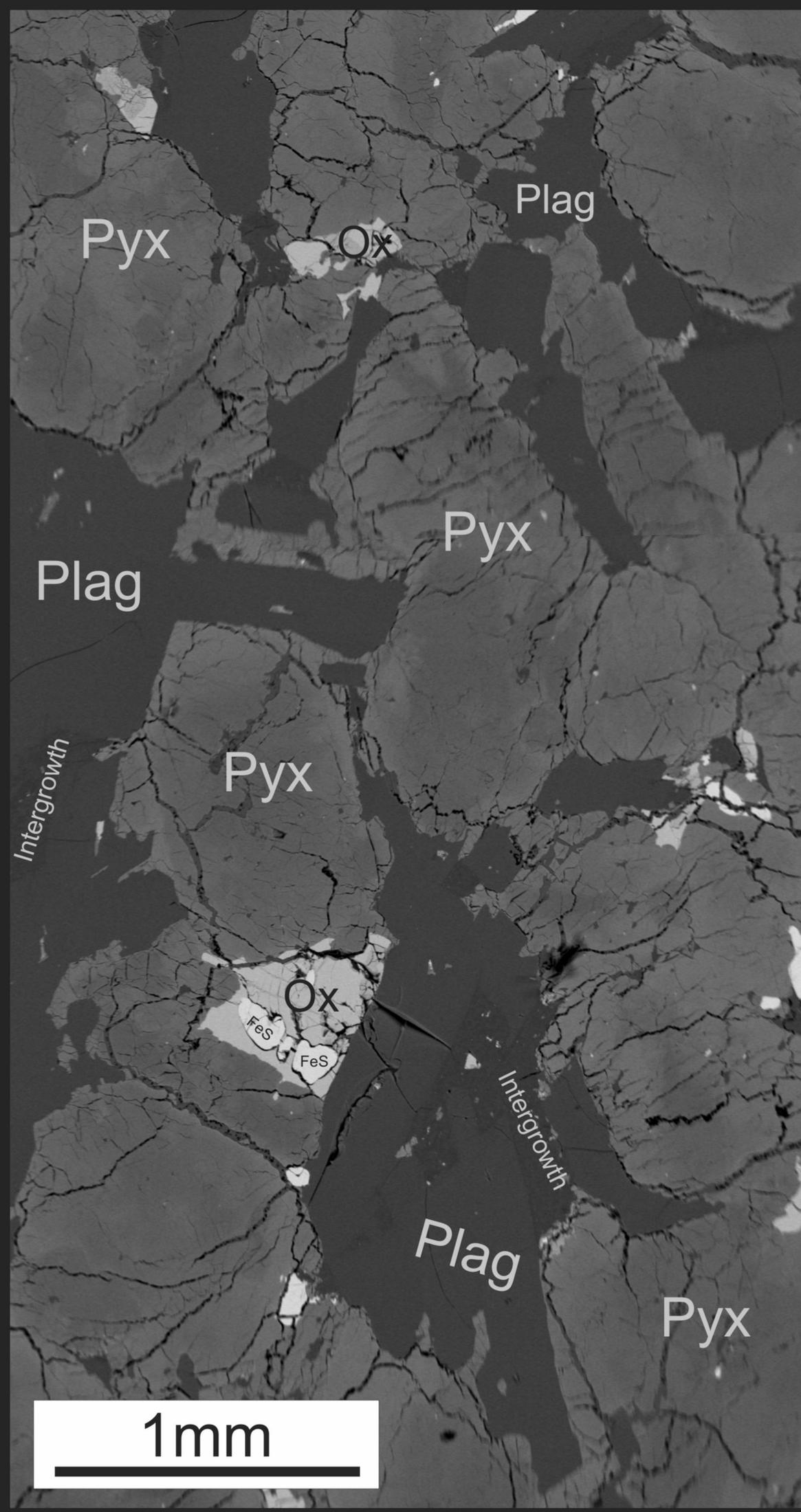
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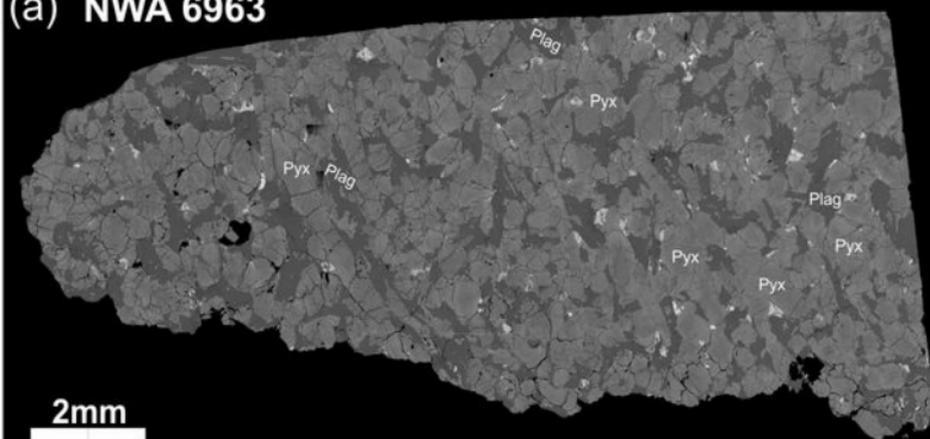
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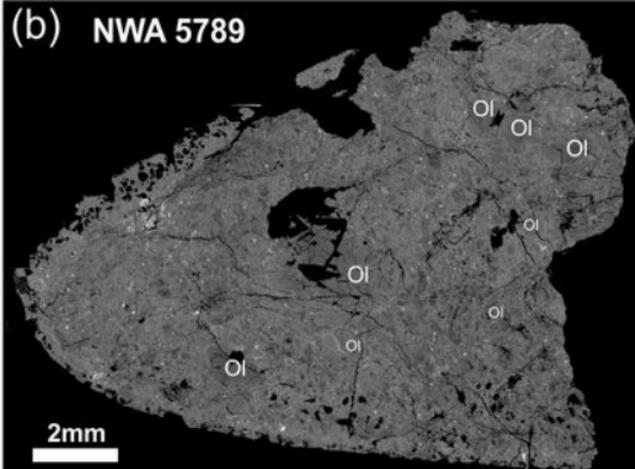
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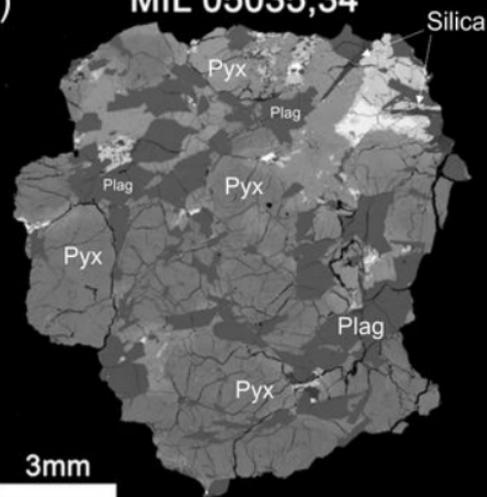
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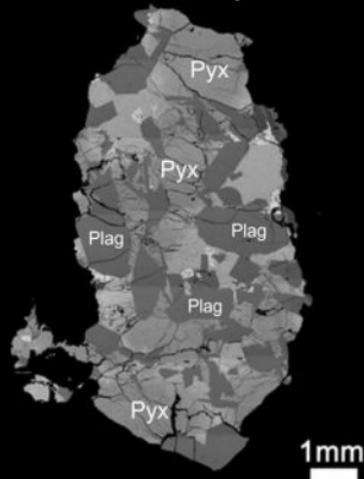
(b) NWA 5789



(c) MIL 05035,34



MIL 05035,31



(d) Terrestrial gabbro

