

1 | **REVISION 1**

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3 **First evidence of CaCO<sub>3</sub>-III and CaCO<sub>3</sub>-IIIb - high-pressure polymorphs of calcite –**  
4 **authigenically formed in near surface sediments**

5 **Maike Schaebitz<sup>1</sup>, Richard Wirth<sup>2</sup>, Christoph Janssen<sup>3</sup>, Georg Dresen<sup>4</sup>**

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7 <sup>1</sup> maike.schaebitz@gfz-potsdam.de ; +49 (0) 331/2881910  
8 Helmholtz Centre Potsdam GFZ, German Research Centre for Geosciences,  
9 Public Law Foundation State of Brandenburg, Telegrafenberg, 14473 Potsdam - Germany

10  
11 <sup>2</sup> richard.wirth@gfz-potsdam.de ; +49 (0) 331/2881371  
12 Helmholtz Centre Potsdam GFZ, German Research Centre for Geosciences,  
13 Public Law Foundation State of Brandenburg, Telegrafenberg, 14473 Potsdam - Germany

14  
15 <sup>3</sup> christoph.janssen@gfz-potsdam.de ; +49 (0) 331/2881323  
16 Helmholtz Centre Potsdam GFZ, German Research Centre for Geosciences,  
17 Public Law Foundation State of Brandenburg, Telegrafenberg, 14473 Potsdam - Germany

18  
19 <sup>4</sup> georg.dresen@gfz-potsdam.de ; +49 (0) 331/2881320  
20 Helmholtz Centre Potsdam GFZ, German Research Centre for Geosciences,  
21 Public Law Foundation State of Brandenburg, Telegrafenberg, 14473 Potsdam - Germany

22

23 **Abstract**

24

25 Calcite is one of the most ubiquitous minerals in the earth's crust and is mostly present as  
26 calcite or the slightly denser polymorph aragonite. In addition five different phases of CaCO<sub>3</sub>  
27 (calcite II- VI), which display similar structural features as calcite, have been observed with  
28 increasing pressure in different experiments by several authors. Experimentally, the CaCO<sub>3</sub>-  
29 III and CaCO<sub>3</sub>-IIIb polymorphs have recently been observed by Merlini et al (2012) applying  
30 pressures between 2.5 - 15 GPa on natural samples of calcite using single - crystal  
31 synchrotron X-ray diffraction.

32 Here we report an occurrence of metastable authigenic CaCO<sub>3</sub>-III and CaCO<sub>3</sub>-IIIb  
33 nanocrystals for the first time in nature. Using Transmission Electron microscopy,

34 idiomorphic, 50- 150 nm sized crystals were observed within several meters from the surface  
35 in quaternary loess deposits in Central Asia.  
36 Nanocrystals contain higher surface energy per volume compared to coarse grained materials  
37 due to their larger surface area. The internal pressure of a solid  $P_s$  is at equilibrium with the  
38 surface stress, which increases with decreasing particle size. We estimated internal pressures  
39 inside the observed nanocrystals between 2.54 – 4.06 GPa, assuming spherical crystals with  
40 1nm diameter and specific surface energies, between 1,27- 2,03 J/m<sup>2</sup> (Forbes et al., 2011).

41

42

### Introduction

43

44 Calcium carbonate displays three polymorphs, aragonite (orthorhombic), vaterite (hexagonal)  
45 and calcite (trigonal), which is the most stable at ambient conditions. Vaterite and aragonite  
46 are metastable polymorphs that transform to calcite at ambient conditions. Their occurrence  
47 depends on small changes in temperature or pH (Han et al., 2006) during precipitation. Since  
48 the first discovery of high pressure modifications of calcite that differ from aragonite structure  
49 (calcite II and III) by Bridgman (1938) applying volumetric measurements, calcite III has  
50 been repeatedly produced experimentally. However, none of these polymorphs, except  
51 calcite-I, aragonite and vaterite, have been quenched and observed under ambient conditions  
52 (Biellmann 1993). Recently, Merlini et al. (2012) refined the unit cell data for CaCO<sub>3</sub>-III (Cc-  
53 III) (triclinic) and introduced a triclinic structure named CaCO<sub>3</sub>-IIIb (Cc-IIIb). Cc - IIIb is  
54 observed to form at similar pressures of 2.5- 15 GPa as Cc-III, however only if pressure is  
55 increased slowly avoiding significant overpressure. The Cc- IIIb polymorph is pseudo-  
56 monoclinic and has a lower density. The number of formula units per unit cell is 4 in Cc-IIIb  
57 as opposed to 10 in Cc-III. (Fig. 1, Table 1), (Merlini et al., 2014).

58 Because of its higher energy content, Cc-IIIb is thermodynamically metastable with respect to  
59 Cc-III. In addition to calcite, five other modifications of  $\text{CaCO}_3$ , with basic structural features  
60 of calcite have been observed over a broad range of temperature and pressures (Fig 2).  
61 We used Transmission Electron Microscopy (TEM) to investigate the microstructures of  
62 sliding surfaces of landslides in Kyrgyzstan and China, Central Asia and found  
63 nanocrystalline calcite in gouge material that interestingly could neither be identified as  
64 calcite, aragonite nor vaterite. Instead authigenic nanocrystals of the metastable high pressure  
65 calcite polymorph  $\text{CaCO}_3$ -III and  $\text{CaCO}_3$ -IIIb have been found for the first time in nature.

### 66 **Geological setting/Study Area**

67  
68 In Kyrgyzstan samples have been taken from the first scarp sliding surface of a landslide  
69 located in quaternary loess (Fig. 3). The landslide extends over  $0.1 \text{ km}^2$  and has an  
70 approximate volume of  $400.000 \text{ m}^3$ . The sample location is situated 40 km southeast of Osch  
71 in the Fergana basin close to a roadside at the M 41. Loess deposits up to 50m thick cover  
72 large areas in the foothills of the Fergana basin in SW Kyrgyzstan (Roessner et al., 2005). The  
73 mineralogy of the deformed loess samples is dominated by fine grained quartz, some feldspar,  
74 sheet silicates (mainly illite) and carbonates.  
75 We also sampled a landslide 20 km north- east of Longnan (Province of Gansu) in Central  
76 China. The sliding surface of the landslide is well exposed and up to 20 cm thick. It forms the  
77 base of up to 5m thick quaternary loess deposits covering silurian phyllite. The  $\text{CaCO}_3$  high  
78 pressure polymorphs were found in the transition area of the sliding surface to the overlying  
79 loess deposits. The two sample locations in Kyrgyzstan and Gansu display similar climate  
80 conditions. Both regions are tectonically active and characterized by large loess deposits that  
81 are often affected by destructive mass movements related to snow melting, heavy rainfalls

82 and/or earthquakes. The climate in SW Kyrgyzstan and Gansu is continental, but the Gansu is  
83 partly affected by monsoon rains.

#### 84 **Sample preparation and methods**

85

86 To conserve the original, undisturbed structure of the sliding surface and about 20 cm of  
87 sediment below, we took the samples using 8 cm diameter and 20 cm long metal tubes. The  
88 sample tubes were pushed carefully into the soil approximately normal to the sliding surface  
89 using a hammer and plastic extension on top of the tubes. In order to prevent drying or  
90 moving of the contents, the tubes were wrapped in think layers of plastic film. For the  
91 preparation of thin sections the metal tubes were cut open into two equal parts, parallel to the  
92 long axis. To not affect the mineral content and microstructure by swelling of clay minerals,  
93 samples were polished dry.

94 Samples for thin sections were taken from directly the sliding surfaces itself (see Fig. 4) and  
95 at increasing distances to the surfaces. For thin section preparation the samples were  
96 embedded in epoxy to stabilize the material. After evaluating the characteristics of the  
97 microstructure in a sample using a transmitted light microscope, the area for the TEM  
98 investigations was marked on high resolution optical scans of the thin section. At  
99 GeoForschungsZentrum (GFZ) Potsdam these samples are prepared for transmission electron  
100 microscopy (TEM) in routine using a focused ion beam (FIB) device (FEI FIB200TEM) that  
101 avoids preparation induced damage (Wirth 2004, 2009). The microstructures were analyzed in  
102 TEM using a FEI Tecnai G2 F20 X-Twin transmission electron microscope (TEM/AEM) at  
103 GFZ Potsdam. The small size of the Cc nanocrystals and their sensitivity to electronic  
104 radiation damage did not allow the acquisition of convergent electron diffraction patterns. To  
105 overcome the problem of electron irradiation damage, diffraction patterns were calculated  
106 from high-resolution lattice fringe images by Fourier transforms (FFT). The acquisition time

107 for acquiring a high-resolution image on the CCD camera was 0.7 seconds. High-angle  
108 annular dark-field imaging (HAADF) was performed with two different camera lengths. The  
109 scattering intensity and the scattering angle of an atom depends on its atomic number (Z).  
110 Selecting an appropriate camera length allows imaging different contrasts. Short camera  
111 length (75 mm) collects the electrons that are scattered under a high-angle resulting in Z-  
112 contrast only. Increasing the camera length (330 mm) allows to acquire images with  
113 diffraction contrast plus Z-contrast.

#### 114 **TEM observations**

115

116 We investigated samples taken from the sliding surfaces and the host rock surrounding. The  
117 TEM overview image of a sample from Kyrgyzstan shows calcite and quartz grains  
118 surrounded by a layered mixture of clay minerals (Mg-Al-Si) and chlorite. Authigenic  
119  $\text{CaCO}_3\text{-IIIb}$  is growing into the pore space across the entire sample (Fig. 5). The second TEM  
120 overview image (Fig. 6) represents a sample from Gansu, China. Partly weathered  
121 sheetsilicates are surrounded by a mixture of newly formed  $\text{CaCO}_3\text{-III}$ ,  $\text{CaCO}_3\text{-IIIb}$  and new  
122 sheetsilicates. The Cc-III and Cc-IIIb crystals typically occur in open pore space (Fig. 5,6,7).  
123 There is no evidence from (micro-) structures or mineral content for a high pressure  
124 deformation event.

125 The idiomorphic carbonate crystals are nanocrystalline with an average grain size of 70 nm  
126 (Fig. 7) and show approximately the same size in all samples. The crystals are elongated (Fig.  
127 7) and show diffraction contrasts (see marked example in Fig. 7). Most crystals (Fig. 7)  
128 display non equate cross – sections suggesting a shape – preferred orientation.

129 Electron diffraction X-ray (EDX) spectra did confirm that the composition of single crystals  
130 for further analysis at high-resolution was a  $\text{CaCO}_3$  phase (Fig. 8). Calculated diffraction  
131 patterns from high-resolution lattice fringe images (fast Fourier Transforms FFT) were used

132 to identify the carbonate phase as Cc- III (Fig. 9) and Cc-IIIb (Fig. 10). The diffraction  
133 patterns could be completely indexed as Cc-III and Cc-IIIb, respectively. We measured the  
134 lengths of the diffraction vectors from the FFT images and converted them into lattice plane  
135 d-spacing. Additionally, the angles between the diffraction vectors were measured from the  
136 diffraction patterns. The observed d-spacings and the angles between adjacent lattice planes  
137 were compared with calculated data based on the crystal structure of Cc-III and Cc-IIIb,  
138 calcite and aragonite. The observed data did not fit the calculated data of aragonite, calcite or  
139 vaterite. However, we found a very good agreement between calculated and observed crystal  
140 lattice data for the calcite phases Cc-III and Cc-IIIb (Table 1).

## 141 **Discussion**

142  
143 The occurrence of nanometer-sized crystals of high P- (T) polymorphs in rocks has been  
144 discovered before. Here we demonstrate for the first time that these nanocrystals of high P  
145 phases form at ambient conditions in aeolian sediments just a few meters below the surface.  
146 Biellmann (1993) quenched and observed calcite II from moderately heated calcite  
147 pressurized at 45 GPa, but none of the high pressure polymorphs of calcite –except aragonite–  
148 have been observed to form at ambient conditions. For our samples we can exclude any  
149 indications for a high pressure or high stress dynamic impact related to the landslide activity  
150 on the samples. However creeping or episodic slip of the landslide may cause comminution  
151 and control microstructure such as Cc-III and Cc-IIIb nanocrystals.  
152 Bridgman (1939) suggested that under geological conditions, temperatures in the crust are to  
153 high at the prevailing pressures to allow for a (macro)phase transition of Cc-II to Cc-III.  
154 However, stability conditions for nanocrystalline materials, are expected to be very different  
155 from those of macroscopic materials due to their extremely small particle size. The formation  
156 of metastable high pressure phases is well known. For example in the early 1950's it became

157 possible to synthesize diamond at low pressures and moderate to high temperatures and even  
158 in ultrahigh vacuum by chemical vapor deposition (Discher et al., 1998). Nanometer-sized  
159 diamonds are also common in primitive chondrites (Kennet et al., 2009) and have been found  
160 in melt inclusions in Hawaiian lavas (Wirth & Rocholl, 2003).

161 Banfield and Zhang (2001) suggest that nanocrystals structures and properties are different  
162 than those of macroscopic crystals, dominated by a periodic structure. In contrast, with  
163 decreasing particle size surface effects become important. In contrast to the periodic structure  
164 of the crystals interior, the surface structure of a crystal is severely distorted because it  
165 consists of ions with their electronic charges being unbalanced due to interrupted coordination  
166 sites. As a result the surface carries excess energy, the surface free energy ( $\gamma$ ). In order to  
167 minimize the total energy of the system, surface atoms try to rearrange, causing a set of  
168 relative displacements resulting in a surface strain and a corresponding surface stress ( $f$ ).

169 The existence of the Cc-III and Cc-IIIb polymorphs in nano-particles, commonly stable in the  
170 pressure range of 2.5 – 15 GPa (Merlini, Hanfland et al., 2012), suggest that elevated surface  
171 tension in equilibrium with internal pressure may affect phase stabilities of nanosized crystals  
172 (Banfield and Zhang, 2001). For most solids,  $f$  is generally of the same order of magnitude as  
173  $\gamma$ , being equal or up to 3 times greater (Cammarata & Sieradski, 1994). A tensile surface  
174 stress, shrinking the unit cell parameters, is present in case  $f$  is positive (Banfield and Zhang  
175 2011). From calorimetric data, the surface energies of calcite were determined to be  $1.48 \pm$   
176  $0.21$  and  $1.87 \pm 0.16$  J/m<sup>2</sup> for hydrous and anhydrous surfaces (Forbes et al., 2011).

177 Assuming  $f \geq \gamma$ , the pressure acting on a spherical particle with radius  $r$  is:

178

179 
$$P = \frac{4\gamma(J/m^2)}{D(nm)} GPa \quad (1)$$

180

181 P is the pressure (Pa),  $\gamma$  is the surface free energy = surface stress or tension ( $\text{J/m}^2$ ), r the  
182 radius and D the diameter (nm) of a spherical particle.  
183 The pressure P required for the formation of  $\text{CaCO}_3\text{-III(b)}$  may exist in particles with grain  
184 sizes up to 2 nm (Fig. 11). However TEM images show calcite grainsizes in our samples  
185 between 50- 150 nm. We suggest that particles precipitated rapidly from an aqueous solution  
186 at low temperatures when diffusion and/or recrystallization are slow. Then the initial  
187 structure, controlled by the initial precipitation conditions may persist metastable (Navrotsky,  
188 2011). This assumes that during precipitation and nucleation of the crystal, pressures were  
189 sufficiently high to allow Cc-III and Cc-IIIb formation. We speculate that particles formed by  
190 oriented cluster attachment growth (Fig. 8) (Banfield and Zhang, 2001). The formation of  
191 nanoclusters is crystallographically controlled and cluster attachment minimizes surface  
192 energy of the system.

### 193 **Implications**

194  
195 It has been known from experiments for nearly a century that the very common mineral  
196 calcite undergoes several phase transitions with increasing pressure, but some of the  
197 described polymorphs have never been observed before in nature.  
198 Analyzing microstructures of sliding surfaces from landslides using TEM and the focused ion  
199 beam (FIB) technique, we found authigenic nanometer-sized crystals of two high pressure  
200 polymorphs of calcite,  $\text{CaCO}_3\text{-III}$  and  $\text{CaCO}_3\text{-IIIb}$  that clearly formed close to the Earth's  
201 surface at almost ambient pressure. The observed crystal structures have up to now only been  
202 found experimentally at high pressure (Merlini et al., 2014).  
203 We found both structures initially described by Merlini et al (2012) within on sample,  
204 confirming the possible coexistence as nanoparticles formed at ambient conditions in nature.  
205 As calcite plays an important role in the global geochemical cycles of C its stability and  
206 possible high pressure structures in the Earth's mantle are a matter of an ongoing debate



207 (Merlini et al., 2012; Biellmann et al., 1993) and amongst others CaCO<sub>3</sub>-III and CaCO<sub>3</sub>-IIIb  
208 are discussed as possible host structures, but the conditions on which they get adopted by  
209 carbonates in nature had to be established and we can show the first example.  
210 Our findings confirm that experimental results and assumptions from several authors, which  
211 demonstrate that high surface stresses may generate high pressure phase nanoparticles outside  
212 their stability field (Banfield and Zhang, 2001), does also occur in nature. Also finding these  
213 two polymorphs in two different samples at different geological settings several thousands of  
214 kilometers apart supports our conclusion that the formation of high pressure polymorphs on  
215 the nanoscale due to high surface stresses may be more common in geological materials than  
216 expected.

217

#### 218 **Acknowledgments**

219

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222 the field campaign in China and Dr. Hans-Ulrich Wetzel and Dr. Sigrid Roessner for guiding  
223 us in the field in Kyrgyzstan. We also would like to thank Anja Schreiber for TEM foil  
224 preparation using FIB technique, and Stefan Gehrman for the preparation of thin sections.

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226 (BMBF).

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### Figure captions

233

234 Fig. 1: Phase relations of  $\text{CaCO}_3$  polymorphs, experimental data. Bold lines: modified after  
235 Suito et al., 2001, dashed lines: after Merlini et al., 2012.

236

237 Fig. 2: Crystal structures of a) triclinic  $\text{CaCO}_3$ -III and b) triclinic  $\text{CaCO}_3$ -IIIb after Merlini et  
238 al., 2012. Red spheres: oxygen, black carbon, blue calcium atoms. The blue frames mark the  
239 unit cell, indicating Cc-III (10 units per unit cell) has a larger density than Cc-IIIb (4 units per  
240 unit cell). Y points to the crystallographical b- axis.

241

242 Fig. 3: a: The white circle marks the sampling area at the headscarp of a landslide located in  
243 quaternary loess in Kyrgyzstan.

244

245 Fig. 4: Landslide sample with sliding surface, which is retraced as a white dotted line on the  
246 left side. The white box marks the area of the thinsection that is shown as inset. Positions of  
247 the FIB foils for TEM analysis are marked. The macrostructure in the thin section shows no  
248 features pointing to movement; the positions for FIB are random. The change in color from  
249 darker to bright orange is due to oxidized ironoxid.

250

251 Fig. 5: High-angle annular dark field image: Part of an overview image of a FIB foil showing  
252 the characteristic locations of  $\text{CaCO}_3$ -IIIb crystals in all our samples: surrounded by  
253 sheetsilicate in open pore space. Examples of Calcite IIIb crystals are marked inside the three  
254 white rings. The sample was located in southwestern Kyrgyzstan.

255

256 Fig. 6: HAADF picture: Part of an overview image of a FIB foil also showing  $\text{CaCO}_3\text{-IIIb}$  and  
257  $\text{CaCO}_3\text{-III}$  crystals (white arrows) surrounded by sheet silicate in open pore space, indicating  
258 the absence of a high-pressure regime. Examples of  $\text{CaCO}_3\text{-IIIb}$  and  $\text{CaCO}_3\text{-III}$  crystals are  
259 marked with white arrows. The sample was located in central China.

260

261 Fig. 7: TEM bright field image showing the elongated morphology and local diffraction  
262 contrast of the  $\text{CaCO}_3\text{-IIIb}$  crystals and their characteristic frequent occurrence in open pore  
263 space. In many crystals local dark diffraction contrast along their long axis is visible, which is  
264 maybe due to local dislocations in the crystal lattice that developed while oriented attachment  
265 growth or twinning.

266

267 Fig. 8. Energy dispersive X-ray intensity spectrum of the  $\text{CaCO}_3\text{-III}$  nanocrystal in figure 8.  
268 Gallium scattering intensity is due to implanted Ga-ions during FIB sample preparation. The  
269 copper peak is caused by X-Ray photons from the copper grid. The unusual high carbon  
270 concentration is caused by the Epoxy.

271

272 Fig. 9. High-resolution electron microscopy image of a single  $\text{CaCO}_3\text{-III}$  crystal with zone  
273 axis  $[0\text{-}2\text{-}1]$  with the corresponding diffraction pattern in the upper right corner. In the lower  
274 right corner a second crystal can be seen which is connected to the central one in nearly the  
275 same crystallographic orientation.

276

277 Fig. 10. High-resolution electron microscopy image of a single  $\text{CaCO}_3\text{-IIIb}$  crystal with zone  
278 axis  $[120]$ . The inserted diffraction pattern contains additional reflections from at least two  
279 other crystals, one in the upper right corner (partially covered by the diffraction pattern) and  
280 the other crystal in the lower right corner. Some amorphous material between two crystals is  
281 marked within the white line.

282

283 Fig. 11. Principle calculations of surface pressure  $P$  against grain diameter (assuming  
284 spherical particles) for the lowest surface energies of calcite,  $1,27 \text{ J/m}^2$ .

285

286

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288

### Tables

289

290 Table 1 Measured d-spacing and the angles between adjacent planes of Cc- III, Cc-IIIb in  
291 comparison to the data of Merlini et al., 2012 and to aragonite and calcite.

292

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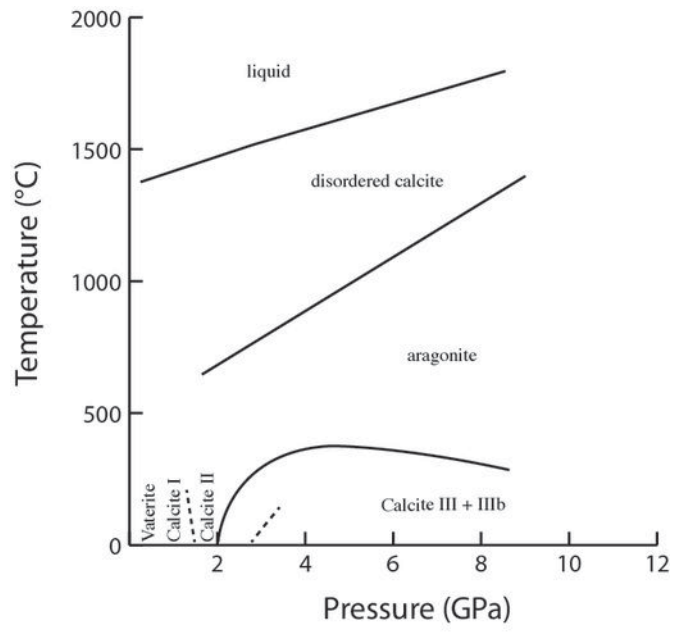
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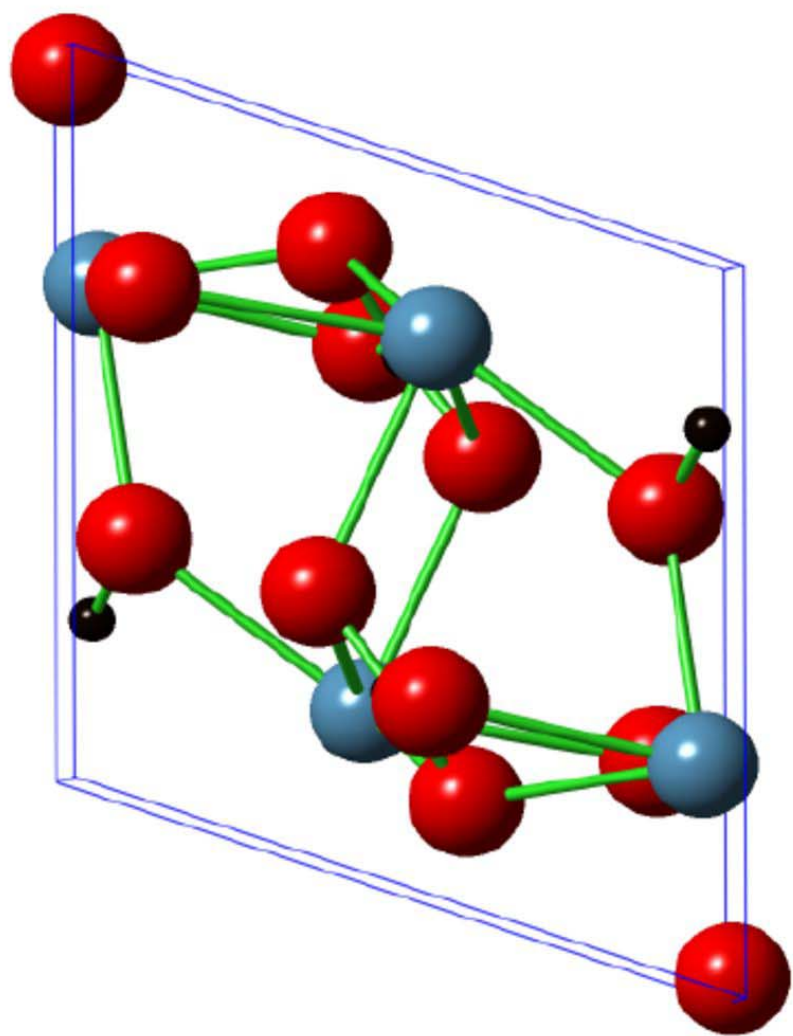
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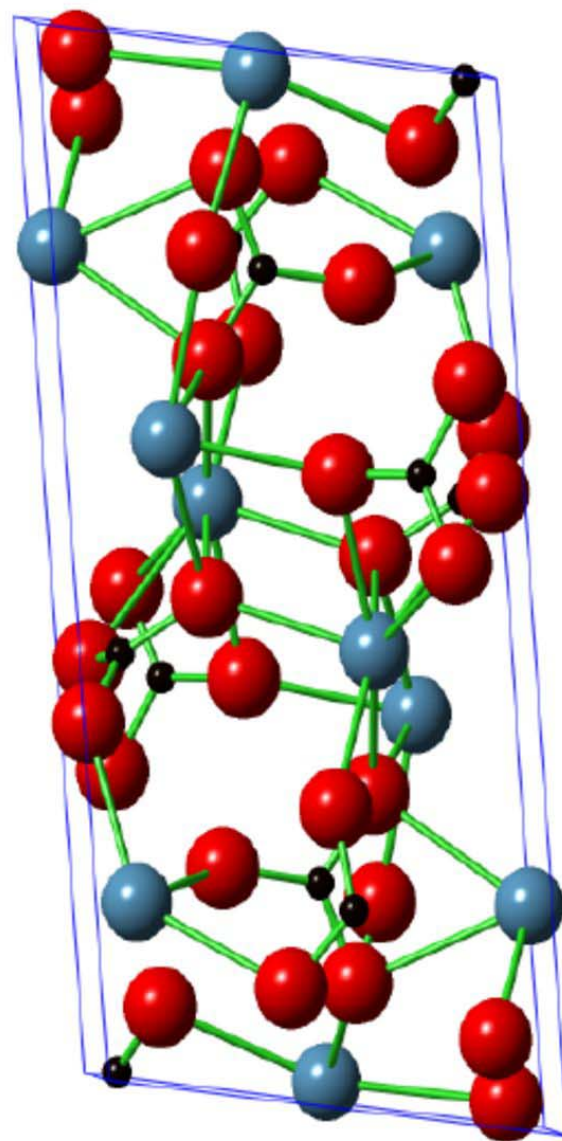
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Calcite-IIIb



Calcite-III

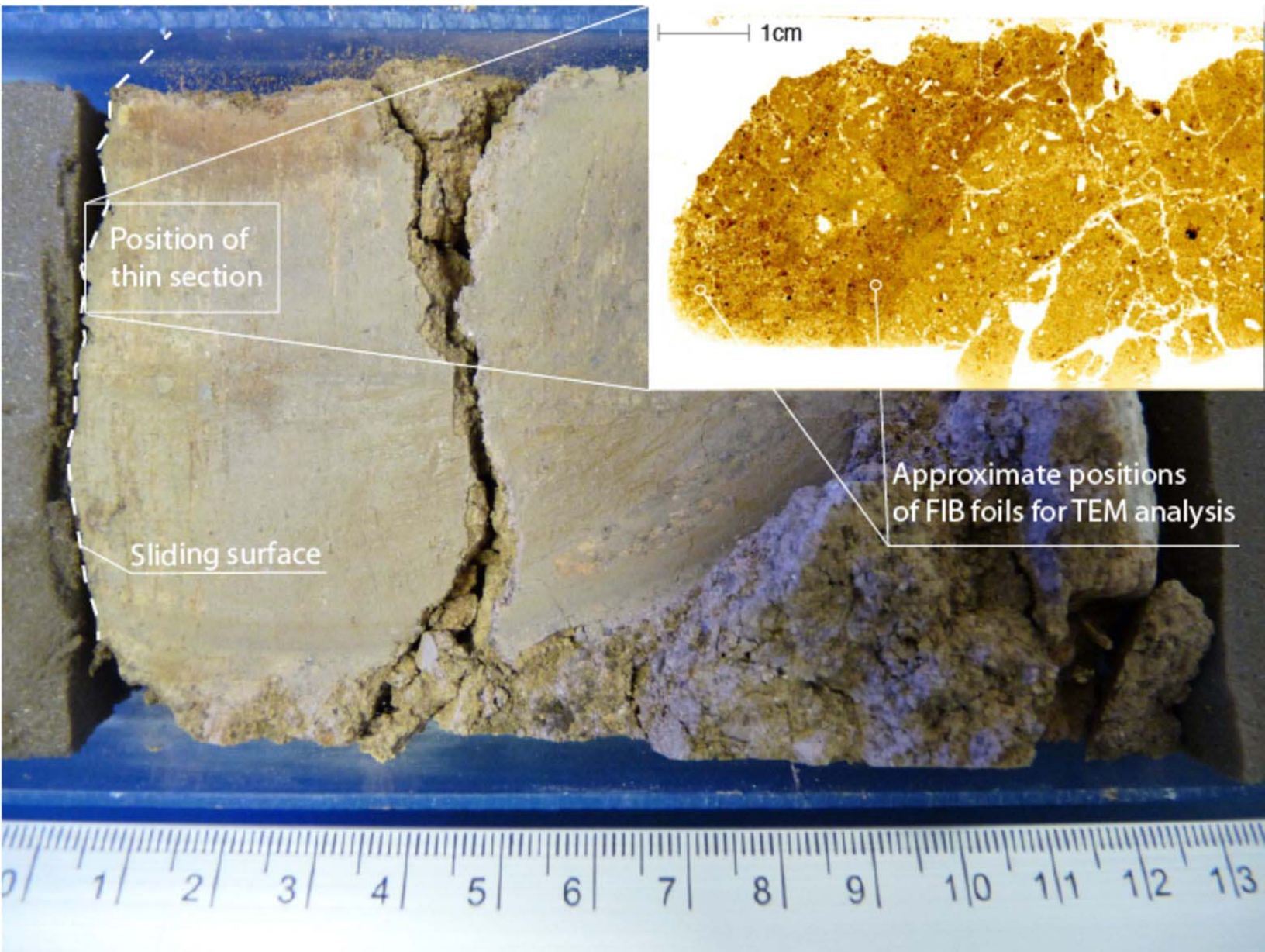


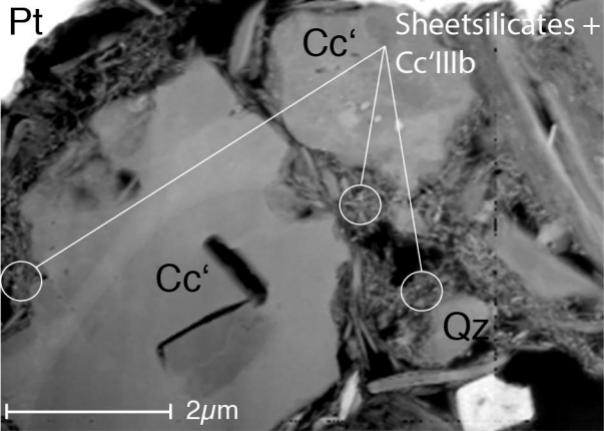


Sampling Area

50cm





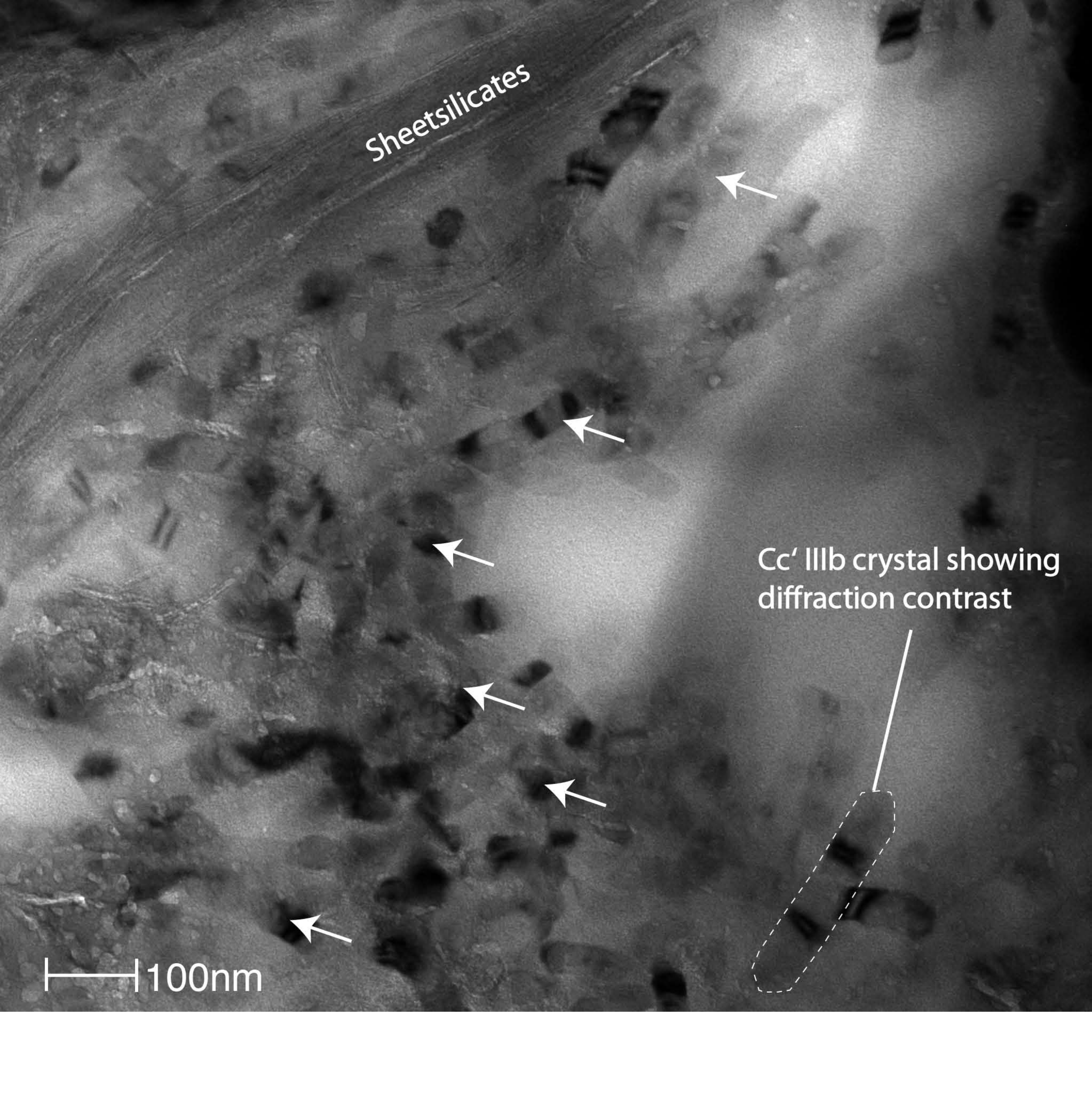


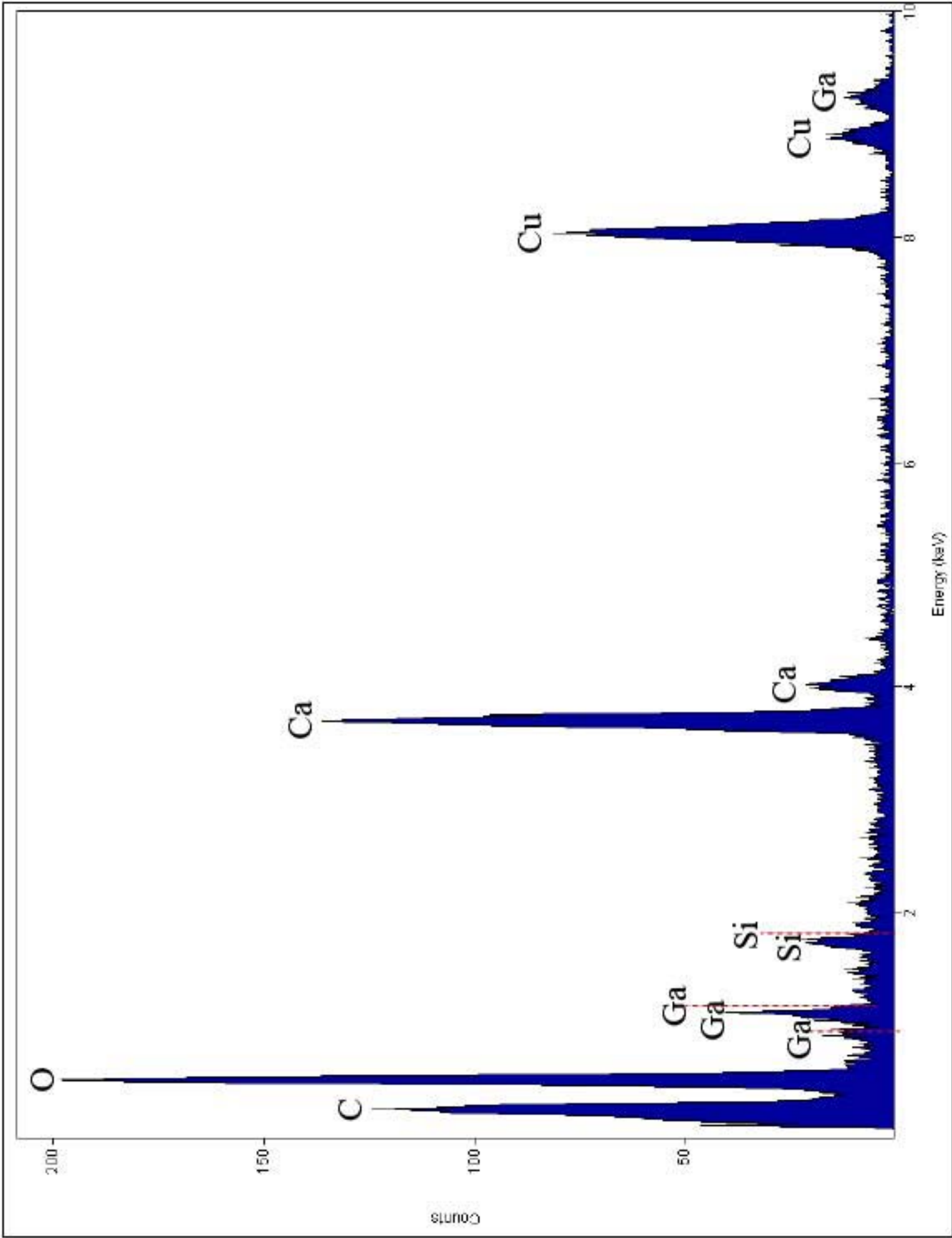


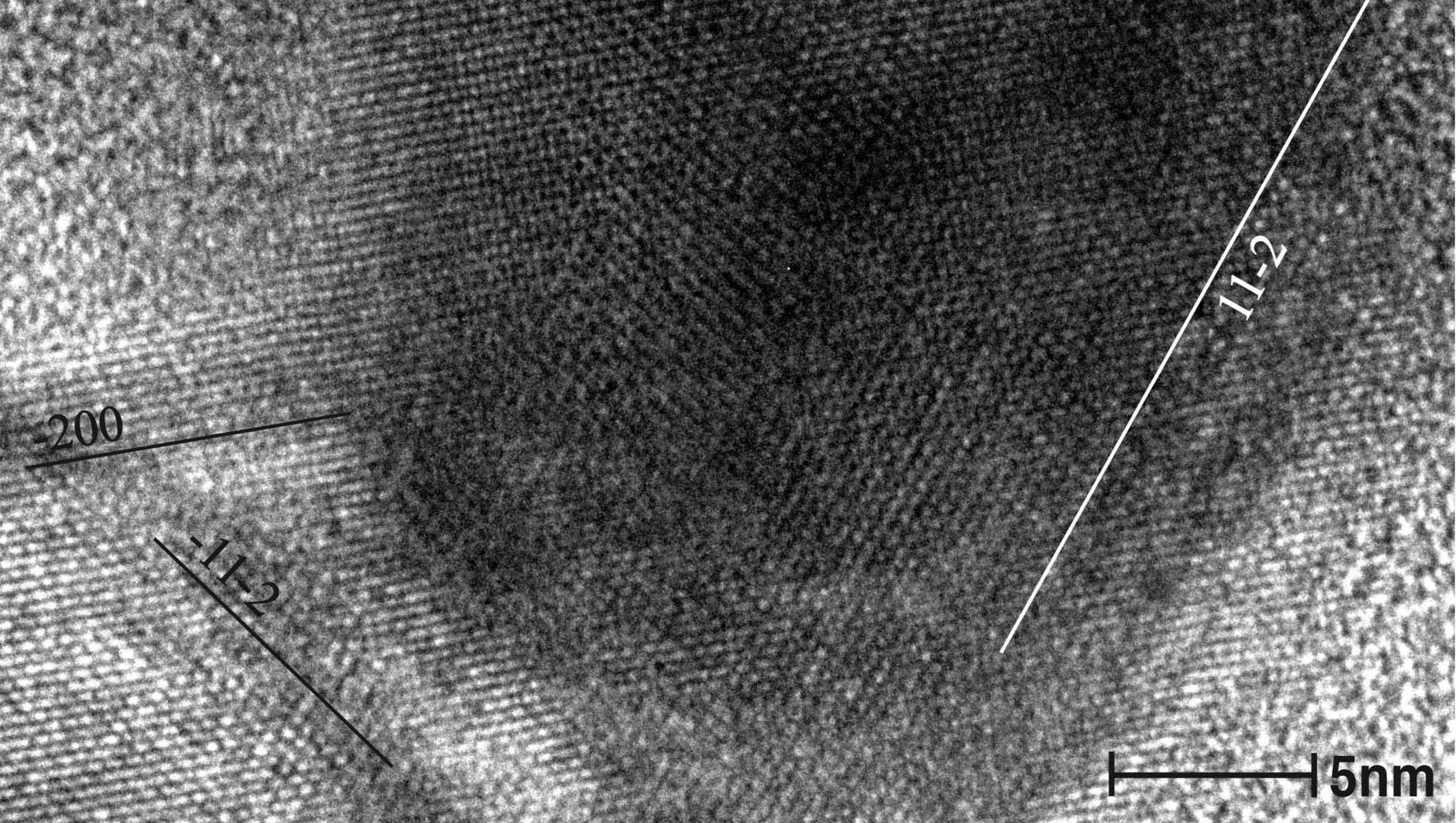
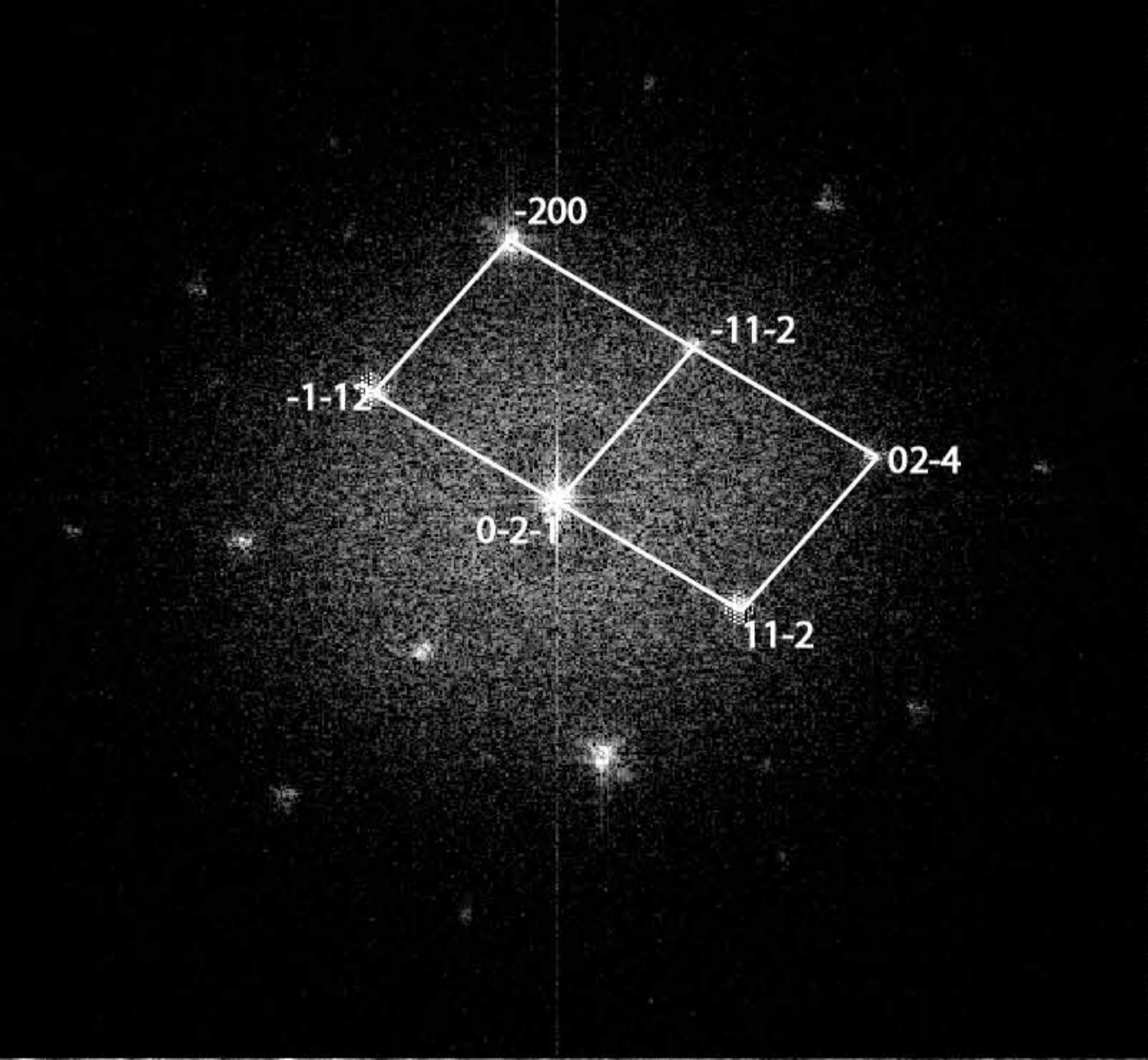
Sheetsilicates

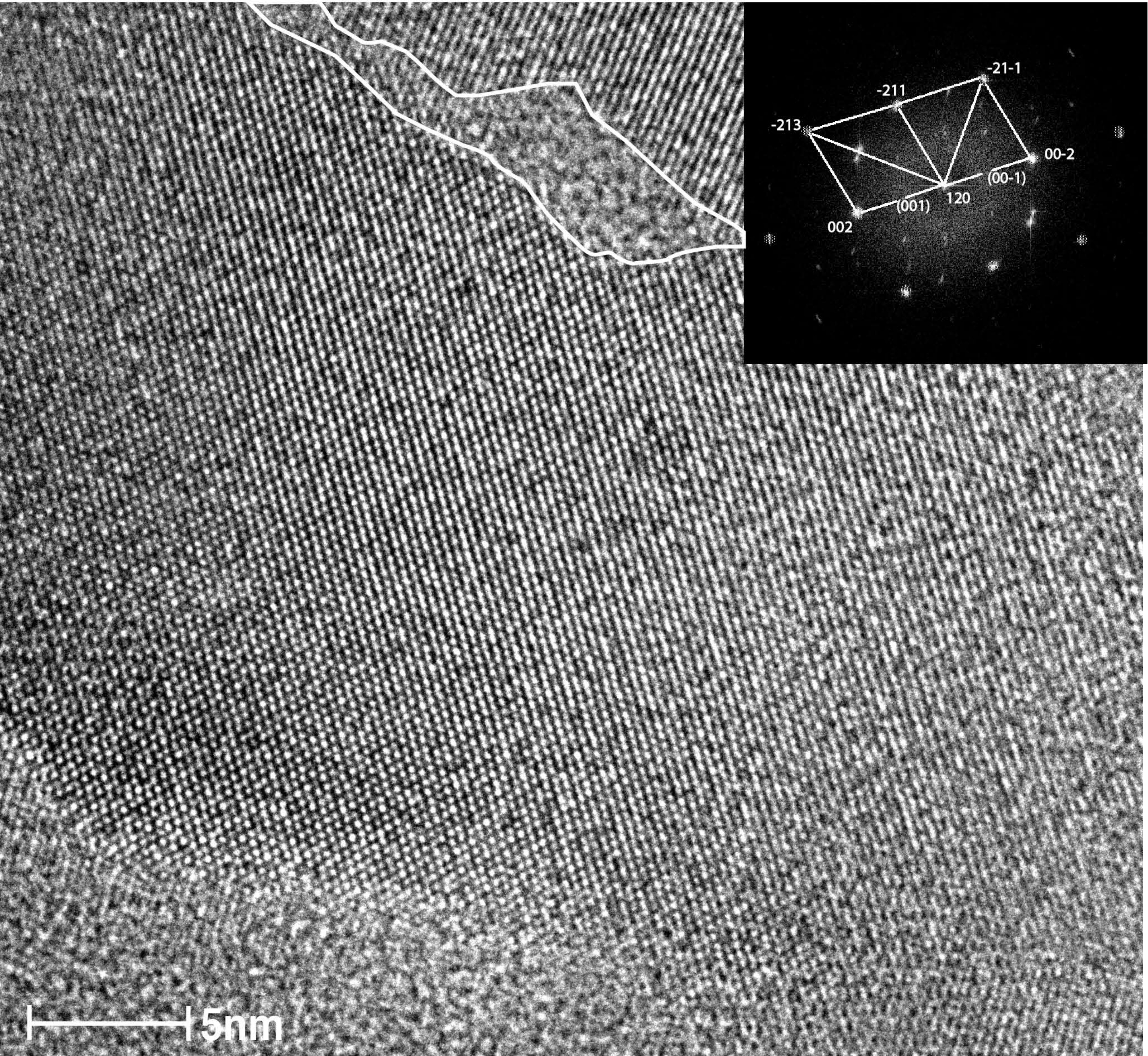
Cc' Illb crystal showing  
diffraction contrast

100nm

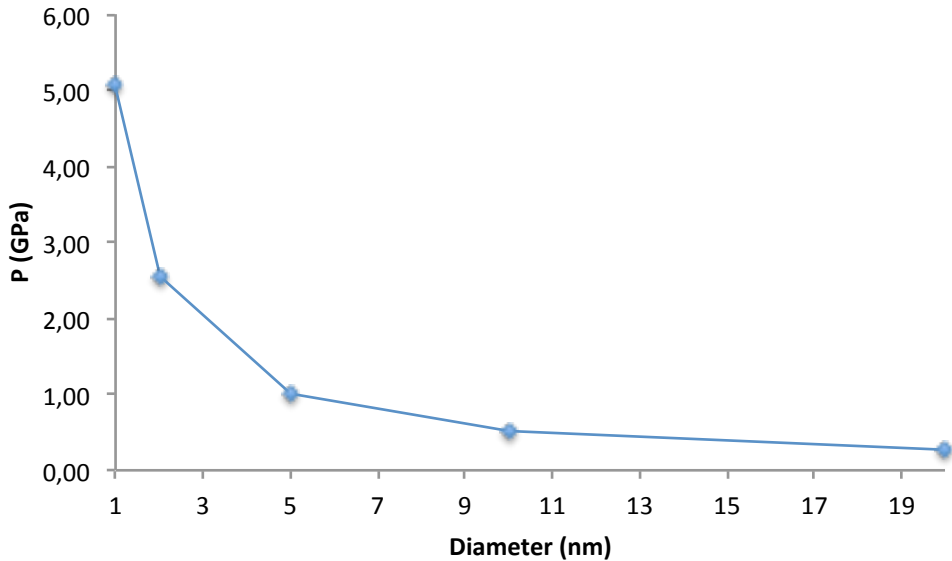








$$\gamma = 1,27 \text{ J/m}^2$$





$b_0 = 7,5073$ $c_0 = 12,5160$ $\alpha = 93,76(2)^\circ$ $\beta = 98,95(2)^\circ$ $\gamma = 106,49(2)^\circ$		$b_0 = 6,3715$ $c_0 = 6,3759$ $\alpha = 93,84(2)^\circ$ $\beta = 107,34(3)^\circ$ $\gamma = 107,16(3)^\circ$	$b_0 = 7,9672$ $c_0 = 5,7407$	$b_0 = 4,9760$ $c_0 = 17,4880$
3,9150 (-11-2) 3,6911 (11-2) 2,9611 (-200) 2,4752 (02-4)	6.072 2.994 2.961 2.473 1.867	5,9977 (00-1) 2,9989 (00-2) 2,9413 (-211) 2,3766 (-21-1) 1,9017 (-213)	3,9836 (020) 3,7536 (101) - 2,4845 (102) 1,8607 (013)	3,8654 (01-12) - 3,0691 (10-14) 2,4880 (11-20) 1,8923 (11-26)
(02-4)/(11-2) 38,47° (02-4)/(-11-2) 41,29° (-200)/(-11-2) 52,13° (-200)/(-1-12) 48,10°	52,94° 52,20° 36,20° 39,08°	(-21-1)/(00-2) 52,03° (-21-1)/(-211) 50,64° (-213)/(-211) 38,22° (-213)/(002) 39,11°		