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Mitchell, JT

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SAMPLING AN IMPACT MELT SHEET WITH UNUSUAL DIAGONET NORTH AFRICA 5480
J.T. Mitchell¹, N.R. Stephen², A.G. Tomkins¹. ¹School of Earth, Atmosphere & Environment, Monash University, Clayton VIC 3800, Australia (jennifer.tallis.mitchell@gmail.com), ²Plymouth Electron Microscopy Centre, University of Plymouth, Drake Circus, Plymouth PL4 8AA, United Kingdom

Introduction: The petrofabrics of meteorites can preserve information about melt flow and mechanical disruptions to the system among other things. Recent studies using electron backscatter diffraction (EBSD) have identified evidence – and distinguished between – magmatic flow and mineral settling in Martian nakhlites [1] and ungrouped achondrites [2], as well as the effects of shock [3]. Northwest Africa (NWA) 5480 is a harzburgitic diogenite with heterogeneous distribution of olivine and orthopyroxene that has been previously associated with the Vestan mantle [4] or an impact melt sheet [5]. Here, we utilize EBSD to explore the petrogenesis for this unusual meteorite.

Methods: Imaging of a polished thin section of NWA 5480 was carried out using a Zeiss Crossbeam 550 at 15 keV and 10 nA. EBSD analysis used an Oxford Instruments Symmetry detector and AZtec software, paired with an Oxford Instruments UltiMax 170 detector for phase identification. Post-processing was completed with AZtecCRYSTAL, and data plotted on upper hemisphere equal area projections, expressed as multiples of uniform density.

Results: NWA 5480 has a mean orthopyroxene (enstatite) composition of En₅₆.₆₂Fs₂₁₃₄Wo₁₉₅ (n=28) and mean olivine composition Fs₅₅₆₂Fo₇₃₁₆ (n=23). Dunite clasts contain adcumulate textures with 120° triple junctions and sharp contacts to the enstatite matrix. Olivine also appears as pervasive chadacrysts which are restricted entirely to the enstatite matrix. No alignment in observed in the dunite clasts, olivine chadacrysts, nor enstatite matrix. An example of the data collected in this study, showing the before-mentioned features is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. EBSD phase map overlaid on band contrast image to show grain boundaries (left) indexed for olivine, enstatite and chromite, IPF maps (right) of the same view and associated pole figures.

Discussion: The lack of preferred orientation in this sample suggests that NWA 5480 did not undergo shearing in a mantle setting as previously suggested [4]. Adcumulate textures identified in NWA 5480 further suggest that the dunite clasts represent a precursor lithology that underwent mineral settling and compaction in a crustal magma chamber. This process is observed both terrestrially and in other HED samples [6,7]. Although poikilitic textures can often represent deep crustal processes on Earth [8], this texture combined with the finer-than-typical orthopyroxene grain size and previously reported minor element zoning [5] suggest that likely NWA 5480 cooled rapidly in a near-surface environment. Additionally, the compositions of pyroxene and olivine in NWA 5480 are not the most primitive recorded in the HED suite [9], contrary to what would be expected from a sample of the Vestan mantle [9,10]. As such, we propose that NWA 5480 represents a sampled melt sheet in which a pre-existing dunite-rich lithology was breached and entrained in the melt, surrounded by crystallising orthopyroxene, and the olivine chadacrysts are likely pre-existing crystals that were partially resorbed into the melt [8] following the impact event. NWA 5480 sheds new light on the complexities of impact processes in the early Solar System, and we conclude that the Vestan mantle most likely remains unsampled by the current global meteorite collection.