



# A SHORT GUIDE FOR THE STUDY OF ANISOTROPY OF MAGNETIC SUSCEPTIBILITY (AMS) IN DEFORMED ROCKS

*Guía rápida para el estudio de rocas deformadas a partir del análisis de la Anisotropía de la Susceptibilidad Magnética (ASM)*

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**Abstract:** *The analysis of the Anisotropy of Magnetic Susceptibility (AMS) constitutes a fast and non-destructive technique that has gained the acceptance of structural geologists because it provides valuable information related to the orientation and intensity of the strain ellipsoid of deformed rocks. Part of its strength results from the possibility of (i) characterizing very subtle rock deformation, and (ii) integrating a large number of data, widespread across large areas. Since the pioneer works in the 1950s, a considerable amount of papers applying this technique to a wide variety of issues in Earth Sciences and to almost all rock types (considering both age and lithology) has been published. Here we explore and expose the use of this valuable technique in modern structural geology and tectonics, as well as its benefits and limits.*

**Keywords:** *anisotropy of magnetic susceptibility, deformed rocks, strain, magnetic ellipsoid, magnetic fabrics.*

**Resumen:** *El análisis de la Anisotropía de la Susceptibilidad Magnética (ASM) constituye una técnica rápida y no destructiva muy valiosa en geología estructural y tectónica, ya que es capaz de proporcionar información relacionada con la orientación e intensidad del elipsoide de deformación en rocas deformadas. Parte de sus ventajas son, su capacidad para (i) caracterizar rocas muy débilmente deformadas, y (ii) integrar gran cantidad de datos provenientes de grandes áreas. Desde los trabajos pioneros de los años 1950s, gran cantidad de trabajos han utilizado esta técnica en diferentes áreas de las Ciencias de la Tierra y aplicada a, prácticamente, todos los tipos de rocas existentes tanto en edad como litología. En este trabajo exploramos y mostramos el uso actual de esta técnica en geología estructural y tectónica, así como sus beneficios y limitaciones.*

**Palabras clave:** *anisotropía de la susceptibilidad magnética, rocas deformadas, deformación, elipsoide magnético, fábrica magnética.*

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## Introduction

Anisotropy of Magnetic Susceptibility (AMS) analysis in Earth Sciences provides information about the mineral preferred orientation. It can be applied quickly and without destroying or modifying the oriented samples (e.g., Tarling and Hrouda, 1993). The analysis of AMS has been applied to practically all rock types and within a wide range of disciplines in Earth Sciences (i.e., sedimentology, volcanism, magma flow in plutonic rocks, glaciology, tectonics and marine geology). In structural geology, it represents a valuable and commonly-used technique because: (i) it is well established that the orientation of the magnetic ellipsoid in a rock often reflects the orientation of the strain ellipsoid (e.g., Graham, 1966; Borradaile and Jackson, 2004), taking into account that the minerals carrying the magnetic anisotropy control the correlation between magnetic fabric and strain (e.g., Borradaile, 1987; Housen and van der Pluijm, 1990; Biedermann *et al.*, 2018), (ii) it can detect very incipient deformation before the development of other strain indicators (e.g., Cifelli *et al.*, 2004; Parés, 2015; Almqvist and Koyi, 2018; Burmeister *et al.*, 2009), and (iii) it provides valuable information on the origin and subsequent deformational history of rocks (e.g., Tarling and Hrouda, 1993; Borradaile and Henry, 1997). Magnetic fabric records the sum of all processes underwent by a deformed rock volume.

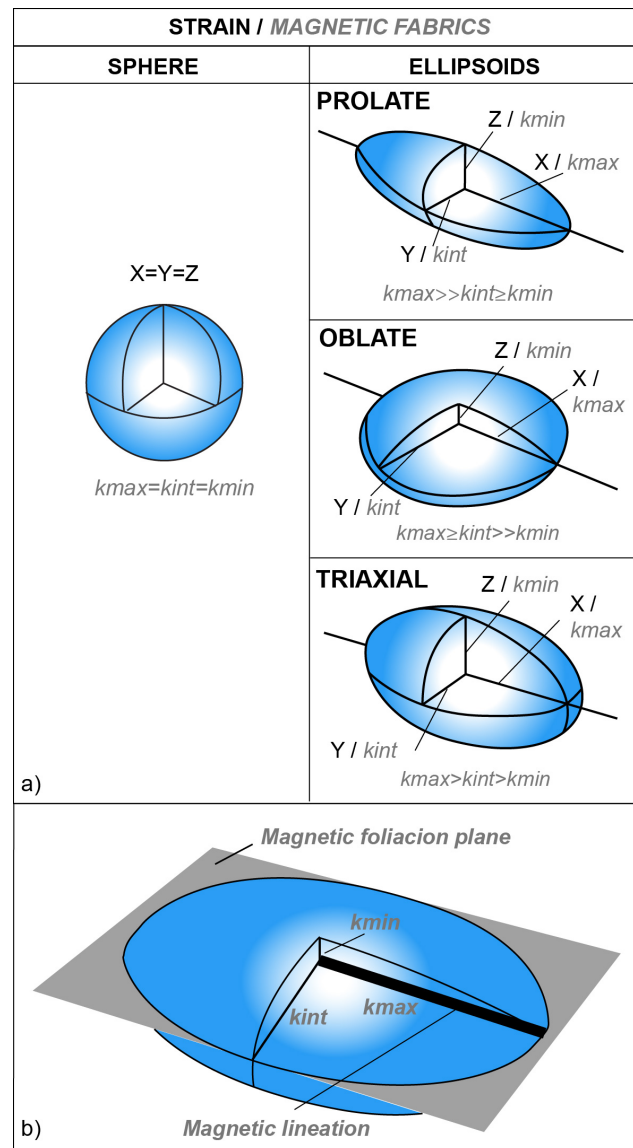
During the last decades, in order to validate the results obtained from magnetic fabrics, AMS measurements have been compared to numerous non-magnetic analyses, able to detect the crystallographic or shape preferred orientation of mineral grains and/or quantify the rock texture. This exercise has allowed to successfully validate AMS data by independently inferring the petrofabric of rocks and has shown its potential under different tectonic scenarios and/or rock types. Non-magnetic analyses include image analyses in rock samples and/or thin sections, XRD analyses, SEM-EDX observations (e.g., Kodama and Sun, 1990; Lüneburg *et al.*, 1999; Oliva-Urcia *et al.*, 2009), X-Ray goniometry (e.g., Van der Pluijm *et al.*, 1994; de Wall and Worm, 1993), neutron goniometry (e.g., Hansen *et al.*, 2004; Cifelli *et al.*, 2005), EBSD (Electron Backscatter Diffraction) analyses (e.g., Prior *et al.*, 1999; Bascou *et al.*, 2005), high-resolution X-ray micro-computed tomography imaging ( $\mu$ XCT) (e.g., Schöpa *et al.*, 2015; Zhu *et al.*, 2017), electrical conductivity (e.g., Clark *et al.*, 1988), acoustic velocity measurements (e.g., Robion *et al.*, 2014) and high-resolution transmission electron microscopy (HR-TEM) analysis (e.g., Mamtani *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, magnetic fabrics have been analysed in analogue models (i.e., sandbox models) under compression and strike-slip to characterize strain distribution (e.g., García-Lasanta *et al.*, 2017a, b; Almqvist and Koyi, 2018; Schöfisch *et al.*, 2021) and in numerical modelling, in this case analysing mineral alignment (e.g., Biedermann *et al.*, 2018; Kuehn *et al.*, 2019; Kusbach *et al.*, 2019).

Since the reviews done by Borradaile and Jackson (2004, 2010) about AMS in deformed rocks and by Parés (2015) in deformed sedimentary rocks, numerous works

and advances have been done using magnetic fabrics as strain markers of deformation under different tectonic scenarios. This works aims to serve as a non-exhaustive, simple guide for the study of anisotropy of magnetic susceptibility in deformed rocks (see Table 1).

## What is the AMS and what are magnetic fabrics?

A brief description of the theoretical background of AMS and magnetic fabrics is described on this section. Numerous works and review papers can be consulted to go further on this line (e.g., Tarling and Hrouda, 1993; Borradaile and Jackson, 2004, 2010; Parés, 2015; Biedermann, 2018). The AMS consists of a method able to determine the magnetic fabric of a rock, which reflects the anisotropic behaviour of the magnetic properties of its components (e.g., Hrouda, 1982).



**Fig. 1.-** (a) Strain/magnetic ellipsoids (prolate, oblate and triaxial) compared with a sphere (Tarling and Hrouda, 1993 and Ramsay and Huber, 1983). (b) Magnetic ellipsoid showing the magnetic lineation and magnetic foliation (modified from Tarling and Hrouda, 1993).

Rock Type	Structural context	Magnetic lineation (ML)/foliation (MF) with respect to S <sub>0</sub> /cleavage	Magnetic lineation (ML) with respect to strain	Magnetic lineation (ML) with respect to structural elements	Other characteristics	References
<b>COMPRESSSIONAL SETTINGS</b>						
Sedimentary	Weak deformation	ML parallel to S <sub>0</sub> MF parallel to S <sub>0</sub>	Controlled by layer-parallel shortening ML perpendicular to compression direction	ML parallel to thrusts and folds	Mainly oblate magnetic ellipsoids ML can be used as passive markers to infer vertical-axis rotations	Tarling and Hrouda, 1993 Parés et al., 1999 Soto et al., 2009 Parés, 2015 Pueyo-Anchuela et al., 2012
Sedimentary	Weak cleavage	ML parallel to S <sub>0</sub>	ML perpendicular to compression direction		Prolate magnetic ellipsoid K <sub>int</sub> and K <sub>min</sub> distributed along a girdle in a plane parallel to compression direction	Borradaile, 1987 Aubourg et al., 1995 Borradaile and Henry, 1997 Parés et al., 1999
Sedimentary	Cleavage domains	MF parallel to cleavage plane		ML parallel to the elongation direction (usually the intersection between S <sub>0</sub> and cleavage plane)	Transition from oblate (parallel to bedding) to oblate (parallel to cleavage) passing through triaxial magnetic ellipsoid stage	Parés et al., 1999 Oliva-Urcia et al., 2009 Aubourg et al., 2000
Sedimentary	Deformed diapirs	ML parallel to S <sub>0</sub> in deformed diapirs MF parallel to S <sub>0</sub> in deformed diapirs		In cases of strong compression magnetic lineation parallel to the intersection lineation	All magnetic ellipsoid types (strongly dependent on diamagnetic mineralogy)	Soto et al., 2017 Santolaria et al., 2015
Sedimentary	Shear zones		Magnetic scalar parameters can vary with strain in complex shear zones	ML parallel to transport direction of the thrust ML parallel to S-C planes		Ferré et al., 2014 Marcén et al., 2018
Igneous				ML and MF can be related to syn-emplacement deformation	Traditionally ML parallel to primary magmatic flows	Tarling and Hrouda, 1993 Bouchez, 1997 CañónTapia, 2004
High-grade metamorphic rocks	Crustal shear zones			MF parallel to the metamorphic foliation ML parallel to the stretching lineation or crenulation axis of minerals		Hrouda, 1982 Borradaile and Jackson, 2004 Ferré et al., 2014
<b>EXTENSIONAL SETTINGS</b>						
Sedimentary rocks	Extensional basins	ML parallel to S <sub>0</sub> MF parallel to S <sub>0</sub>	ML parallel to extension extension	ML perpendicular to main normal faults	Usually oblate magnetic ellipsoids	Mattei et al., 1997 Cifelli et al., 2005
Sedimentary rocks	Diapirs			ML and MF consistent with diapiric flow and interaction with regional deformation	All magnetic ellipsoid types (strongly dependent on diamagnetic mineralogy)	Soto et al., 2014 Santolaria et al., 2015
Sedimentary rocks	Inverted extensional basins	ML parallel to S <sub>0</sub> MF parallel to S <sub>0</sub>	ML parallel to previous extension direction	ML perpendicular to main previous normal faults	All magnetic ellipsoid types In case of posterior compressional-related cleavage, primary extensional magnetic fabric can be modified	Soto et al., 2007, 2008 Oliva-Urcia et al., 2013 García-Lasanta et al., 2018
	Shear extensional zones			MF parallel to fault or foliation planes ML parallel or perpendicular to transport direction	All magnetic ellipsoid types, depending on the intensity of deformation	Marcén et al., 2019
<b>TRANSPRESSIONAL/TRANSTENSIONAL SETTINGS</b>						
		ML variable, depending on the intensity of deformation		ML parallel, oblique or perpendicular to faults, depending on strain partitioning MF parallel or slight oblique to faults	Usually triaxial magnetic ellipsoids	Marcén et al., 2015 Román-Berdiel et al., 2019

**Table 1.-** Magnetic fabrics in different tectonic settings.

Magnetic susceptibility is a physical property that defines the capacity of any material to get magnetized when subjected to an external magnetic field (e. g. Tarling and Hrouda, 1993). The AMS measures the directional variations of the magnetic susceptibility. These directional variations can be mathematically described as a symmetric second-rank tensor with six independent matrix elements and represented by an

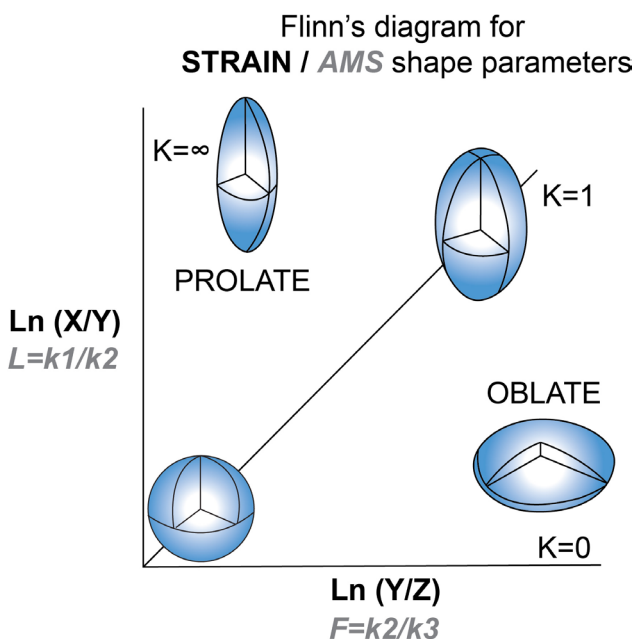
ellipsoid (e.g., Nye, 1951), similar to the strain ellipsoid. This ellipsoid, usually called magnetic ellipsoid, is defined by the orientation and magnitude of three principal and perpendicular axes;  $k_{max}$  or  $k_1 \geq k_{int}$  or  $k_2 \geq k_{min}$  or  $k_3$  (Fig. 1). The  $k_{max}$  axis represents the magnetic lineation, whereas the plane defined by  $k_{max}$  and  $k_{int}$  represents the magnetic foliation (Fig. 1). Several scalar parameters derived from these three

principal magnetic axes have been established to evaluate the anisotropy degree and the shape of the magnetic ellipsoid. For example, the parameters L ( $k_{max}/k_{int}$ ) and F ( $k_{int}/k_{min}$ ) used to characterize magnetic ellipsoids were adapted to magnetic fabrics from the equivalent petrofabric terms proposed by Flinn (1958) (Fig. 2), whose graphical representation (Flinn diagram) has been widely used in structural geology.

The bulk magnetic susceptibility ( $K_m$ ) results from the contribution of all dia-, para- and ferromagnetic minerals present in the rock. Each mineral type shows different magnetic behaviour depending on the temperature (except diamagnetic minerals), the capacity to retain a remanent magnetization or the intensity of the applied magnetic field (e.g., Tarling and Hrouda, 1993). To know which kind of minerals (i.e., dia-, para- and ferromagnetic minerals) contributes to the total AMS is important for subsequently validating structural interpretations. Many works published in the last three decades have made a considerable effort to elucidate this issue in different rock types (e.g., Parés and van der Pluijm, 2002a, 2014; Borradaile and Jackson, 2004, 2010; Martín-Hernández and Hirt, 2004; Bilardello, 2015; Martín-Hernández and Ferré, 2007; Elhanati *et al.*, 2021).

new elements to petrological-based categories) based on these premises. Nevertheless, all this development was preferentially applied to medium-to-high grade metamorphic rocks in which deformation can be clearly observed, either from exposures or polished sections, or from thin sections under the microscope. Weakly deformed sedimentary rocks, including also very low-grade metamorphic rocks, were not usually considered in these analyses, mainly because of the common lack of strain markers, the smaller grain size and the poorer picture of deformational images under the microscope.

In parallel to strain analysis, but in a non-overlapping scientific field, the measurement of Anisotropy of Magnetic Susceptibility (AMS) began to be applied to the study of the petrofabric of rocks (Khan, 1962; Uyeda *et al.*, 1963; Rees, 1965). This technique strongly developed during the following decade, with the works of the Czech magnetic school (Hrouda and Janák, 1971; Janák, 1972; Janák and Kropáček, 1973), later involved in the Agico company. The latter was responsible for the development of the most reliable devices for measuring AMS in rocks. It is worth noting that the distinction between “classical” structural geology and geophysical techniques was a common playground during the 20th century, here including the plate tectonics paradigm. Interestingly, the AMS measurement technique focused mainly in sedimentary and low-grade metamorphic rocks, that were commonly neglected in studies of classical structural geology. During the last two decades of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21th century, the orientations of the magnetic ellipsoids were compared to paleostress ellipsoids confirming that AMS could be considered as a reliable indicators of palaeostress directions in weakly deformed mudrocks (Borradaile and Tarling, 1981; Kissel *et al.*, 1986; Lee *et al.*, 1990; Sagnotti *et al.*, 1994, 1999; Mattei *et al.*, 1997, 1999; Borradaile and Hamilton, 2004; Cifelli *et al.*, 2004, 2005; Soto *et al.*, 2007, 2009). Sedimentary fabrics (associated with compaction), layer-parallel shortening (LPS) under compressional regimes (e.g., Borradaile, 1987, 1991; Borradaile and Henry, 1997; Parés, 2004), or layer-parallel extension (LPE) under extensional regimes in sedimentary and low-grade metamorphic rocks (e.g., Mattei *et al.*, 1999; Cifelli *et al.*, 2005) gained significance under the light of the orientation of the magnetic lineation and allowed characterizing weak deformation in rocks (e.g., Larrasoña *et al.*, 2004, 2011; Pueyo-Anchuela *et al.*, 2010; Pocoví *et al.*, 2014; Parés and Anastasio, 2018). The magnetic lineation results from the reorientation of mineral grains (e.g., phyllosilicates) according to the prevailing stress field (Richter *et al.*, 1993; Benn, 1994). Therefore, magnetic lineation is (i) perpendicular to the shortening direction in compressional settings (e.g., Kissel *et al.*, 1986; Mattei *et al.*, 1997; Sagnotti *et al.*, 1998, 1999; Parés *et al.*, 1999; Parés and van der Pluijm, 2002b; Parés, 2004; Larrasoña *et al.*, 2004) and (ii) parallel to the stretching direction in extensional contexts (Mattei *et al.*, 1997, 1999; Sagnotti *et al.*, 1994; Cifelli *et al.*, 2004, 2005; Borradaile and

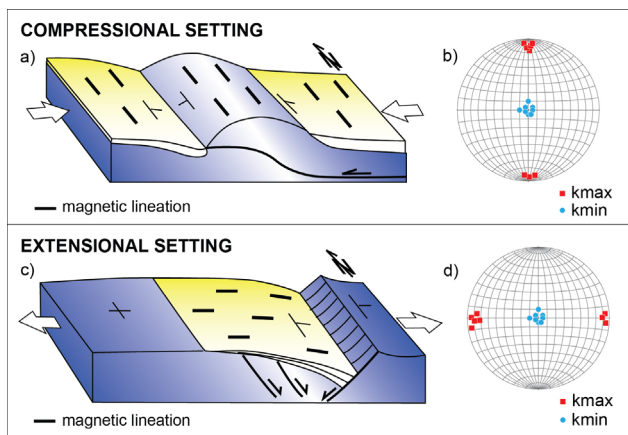


**Fig. 2.-** Flinn diagram for representing the shape of strain/magnetic ellipsoids (modified from Ramsay, 1967). L=Lineation and F=Foliation.

### The parallel evolution of strain analysis and AMS development in the 20th century

The work of J.G. Ramsay (e.g., Ramsay, 1967; Ramsay and Graham, 1970; Ramsay and Huber, 1983; Ramsay *et al.*, 1983) brought about a discrete scientific revolution in Structural Geology, because of the introduction of a solid mathematical ground within which the (until then) qualitative geological observations could be framed. Quantitative analyses allowed reliable determination of orientation axes as well as quantification of the deformation ellipsoid and classification of rocks (adding





**Fig. 3.-** (a, b) Magnetic ellipsoid showing  $k_{max}$  and  $k_{min}$  axes in compressional scenarios. In these contexts, the magnetic lineation is usually parallel to fold axes or the strike of thrusts. (c, d) Magnetic ellipsoid showing  $k_{max}$  and  $k_{min}$  axes in extensional scenarios. There, the magnetic lineation usually coincides with the stretching direction and is perpendicular to the main normal faults.

Hamilton, 2004; Soto *et al.*, 2007, 2009) (Fig. 3), where anisotropic syn-tectonic growth of certain minerals (i.e., magnetite) can also occur (e.g., Calvin *et al.*, 2018).

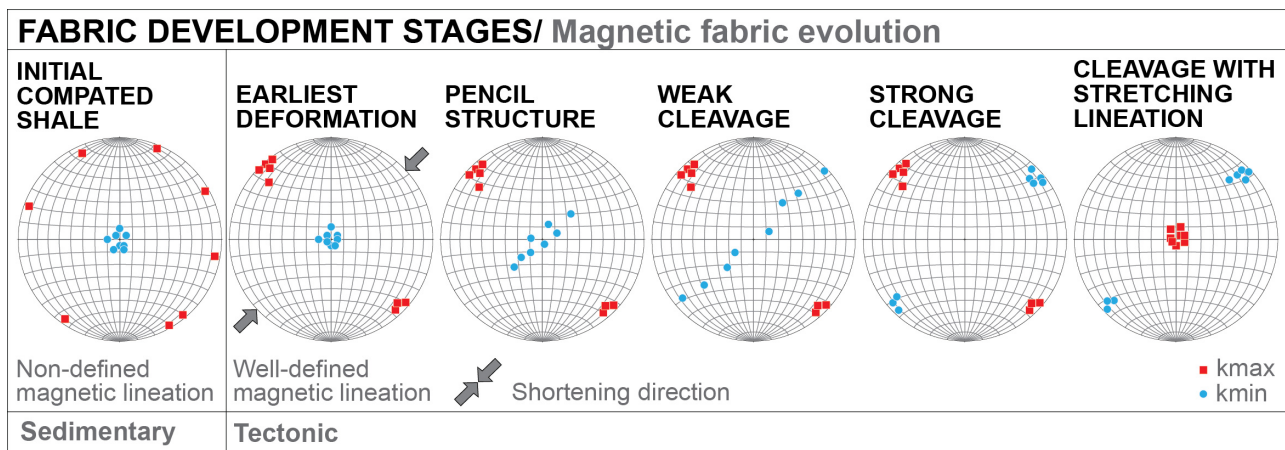
In contrast with the direct use of magnetic axis orientation to characterize deformation in sedimentary rocks, parameters of the magnetic ellipsoid are not easily translated to the strain parameters defined by Ramsay (1967) and other authors. This is because of the influence of the magnetic anisotropy of each mineral, which does not necessarily correspond to the way in which that same mineral is oriented under the prevailing stress field (e.g., Biedermann, 2018). A reliable comparison between the magnetic ellipsoid and the strain parameters has been found in areas with homogeneous lithology and significant changes of strain values within small distances (Boiron *et al.*, 2020; Gracia-Puzo *et al.*, 2021). A typical oblate-to-prolate-to-oblate path is found when tectonic shortening increases, from the compaction to the purely tectonic fabric (Parés and van der Pluijm, 2002a).

**Interpretation of magnetic fabrics in different tectonic scenarios**

*Compressional settings*

*Application to sedimentary rocks in compressional scenarios.* Most published works related with AMS deal with its application to deformed rocks in compressional settings. Among them, sedimentary deformed rocks have received more attention compared with igneous or metamorphic rocks. In mudrocks deformed under compression Parés *et al.* (1999) proposed an evolutionary model analogous to the structural model by Ramsay (1967) and Ramsay and Huber (1983). According to Parés *et al.* (1999) the shape and orientation of the magnetic ellipsoide change as strain increases following a well-defined pattern (Fig. 4). This model has been widely used in the literature (see Parés, 2015 and references therein) and evolves from bedding-related to cleavage-related magnetic fabrics. The earliest stage of deformation is represented by an oblate magnetic ellipsoid with  $k_{max}$  axes grouped perpendicular to the shortening direction and  $k_{min}$  axes perpendicular to bedding (Fig. 4). As deformation increases, coeval to the formation of pencil structures and weak cleavage stages (fracture or rough cleavage), the magnetic fabric is characterized by prolate magnetic ellipsoids with  $k_{max}$  axes still perpendicular to the shortening direction and  $k_{int}$  and  $k_{min}$  axes distributed along a girdle perpendicular to  $k_{max}$  (Fig. 4). In the latest stages, when slaty cleavage develops,  $k_{min}$  axes evolve into a cluster oriented normal to the cleavage planes (Fig. 4). Among sedimentary rocks, lithologies other than shales, such as sandstones (i.e., coarser grained sediments) or limestones are not so commonly used in AMS deformation studies due to the possible influence of paleocurrents (e.g., Rees, 1965; Felletti *et al.*, 2016) or the possibility of occurrence of inverse magnetic fabrics due to mineralogical effects (e.g., Čemý *et al.*, 2020), respectively.

Under weak compression, the AMS presents a great potential, because it can detect magnetic lineations perpendicular to the shortening direction even in apparently



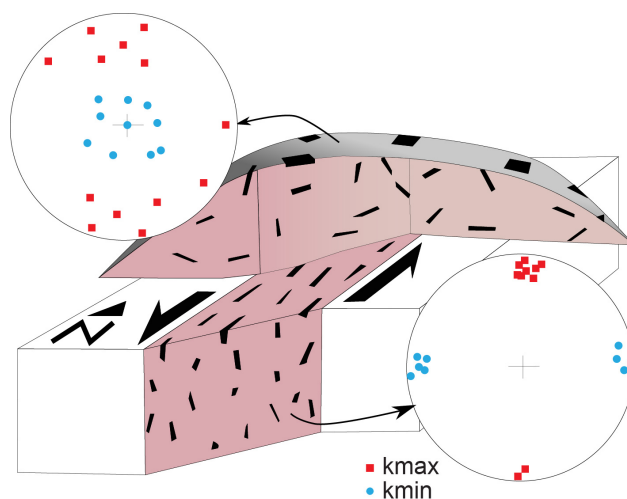
**Fig. 4.-** Fabric development stages in deformed shales (after Ramsay and Huber, 1983) in black capital letters and examples of stereoplots showing  $k_{max}$  and  $k_{min}$  magnetic susceptibility axes related to magnetic fabric evolution in progressively cleaved mudrocks (after Parés *et al.*, 1999) in grey lower-case letters.

undeformed foreland basins (i.e., with subtle evidences of deformation and showing fracture systems) (e.g., Ebro foreland basin; Soto *et al.*, 2009, 2016). Other applications of AMS analysis in compressional settings are listed below. (1) In squeezed salt diapirs, the magnetic lineation seems to record the diapiric flow, but it can also be reoriented by the subsequent compression (e.g., Santolaria *et al.*, 2015; Soto *et al.*, 2014, 2017; Heinrich *et al.*, 2019). Since inferring the petrofabric inside diapirs is usually difficult due to poor-quality outcrops and poorly developed meso-scale structures, AMS in diapiric bodies constitutes a very promising tool to infer the petrofabric of evaporitic cores and/or associated rocks diagnosing ductile flow. (2) The application of AMS to shear zones of major thrusts has shown magnetic lineations parallel to the transport direction, related to ductile S-C structures (e.g., Ferré *et al.*, 2014; Marcén *et al.*, 2018) or to the intersection of S and C planes (e.g., Parés and van der Pluijm, 2002b). Spatial variations in the magnetic ellipsoid orientation and magnitude of the magnetic scalar parameters have also helped unravelling complex heterogeneous shear zones (e.g., Marcén *et al.*, 2018). (3) Magnetic lineations can also be used as passive markers of deformation to calculate vertical-axis rotations when AMS is acquired during pre-tilting deformation (Mochales *et al.*, 2010; Pueyo-Anchuela *et al.*, 2012).

*Application to igneous rocks in compressional scenarios.* The application of AMS to igneous rocks emerged lately when compared to sedimentary or metamorphic rocks (e.g., Khan, 1962; King, 1966; Wing-Fatt and Stacey, 1966). This technique has been traditionally used to characterize the primary magmatic flows and/or the location of preferential pathways for magma ascent of plutonic, volcanic and subvolcanic rocks (e.g., Tarling and Hrouda, 1993; Bascou *et al.* 2005; Hrouda *et al.* 2005; Ort *et al.*, 2015; Nagaraju and Parashuramulu, 2019) (Fig. 5). The comparison between AMS orientation and lava flow directions is not straightforward since it depends on the carrier minerals of the AMS (e.g., Cañón-Tapia, 2004). In structural geology and tectonics, magnetic fabrics of igneous rocks are useful to analyse the syn-emplacement deformation of rocks or the post-emplacement solid-state ductile structures formed during orogenesis (e.g., Bouchez, 1997; Cañón-Tapia, 2004; Antolín-Tomás *et al.*, 2009; Silva *et al.*, 2010; Fodor *et al.*, 2020; Porquet *et al.*, 2017 and references therein). In numerous classically considered post-tectonic granites, AMS has revealed unexpected internal structures favoring their interpretation as syn-tectonic (e.g., Bouchez, 1997; Aranguren *et al.*, 2003). AMS in lavas can result very useful because it can help to detect different magnetic fabric types (zones) in the same lava flow related to rheology, flow dynamics and/or flow-induced shear strain (e.g., Cañón-Tapia, 2004; Caballero-Miranda *et al.* 2016, and references therein).

*Application to high-grade metamorphic rocks in compressional scenarios.* The interpretation of magnetic fabrics in high-grade metamorphic rocks can be complicated by deformation, metamorphism and/or magnetic mineralo-

gy (e.g., Borradaile and Jackson, 2004; Ferré *et al.*, 2014 and references therein; Mertanen and Karell, 2012). In deformed metamorphic rocks, magnetic fabric analyses have been applied to characterize crustal shear zones with different strain gradients (e.g., Kontny *et al.*, 2012; Merz *et al.*, 2019). In normal conditions, several examples of AMS in metamorphic rocks have shown that the magnetic foliation is parallel to the metamorphic foliation and the magnetic lineation parallel to the stretching lineation or crenulation axis of minerals (e.g. Kligfield *et al.*, 1977; Hrouda, 1982).

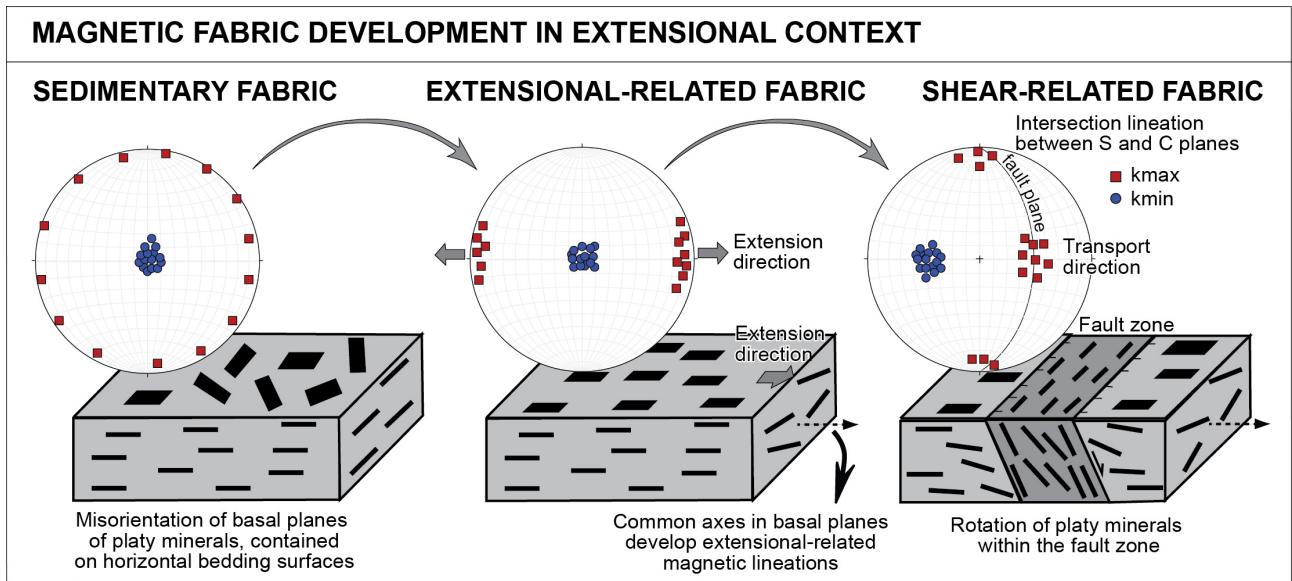


**Fig. 5.-** Magnetic fabrics related to magma flow in plutonic rocks. The different situations correspond to a transtensional shear band contemporary with magma intrusion at deep levels and expansion of magma in the upper crust defining an intrusion with laccolith geometry. Note that the magnetic fabrics are better defined when the intrusion is strongly constrained by the deformation field.

#### *Extensional settings*

Although the application of AMS to the study of extensional contexts developed long after its application in compressive contexts, the resulting publications have widely demonstrated its usefulness in all types of rocks (granites, high metamorphic rocks, dikes and sedimentary sequences, e.g., Staudigel *et al.*, 1992; Bouillin *et al.*, 1993; Sagnotti *et al.*, 1994; Román-Berdiel *et al.*, 1995, among the first works). It has also been demonstrated that the technique has a high sensitivity, especially in those contexts where the extensional deformation is weak, inhomogeneous and localized, and where strain markers are scarce or not available.

The application of the analysis of AMS to extensional contexts (e.g., back-arc basins, intracontinental extensional basins, etc.) has revealed that a well-defined tectonically controlled magnetic lineation can develop also in these contexts. Numerous works have largely demonstrated that the magnetic lineation coincides with the stretching direction obtained from mesostructural analysis of brittle structures (e.g., faults and joints) (Sagnotti *et al.*, 1994; Mattei *et al.*, 1997, 1999; Cifelli *et al.*, 2005; Soto *et al.*, 2007, 2012; Oliva-Urcia *et al.*, 2010, 2013, 2016; García-Lasanta *et al.*, 2014, 2015). This magnetic lineation is oriented subparallel to the local bedding dip direction (Mattei *et al.*, 1997, 1999; Marcén *et al.*, 2019) or perpendicular to the main normal

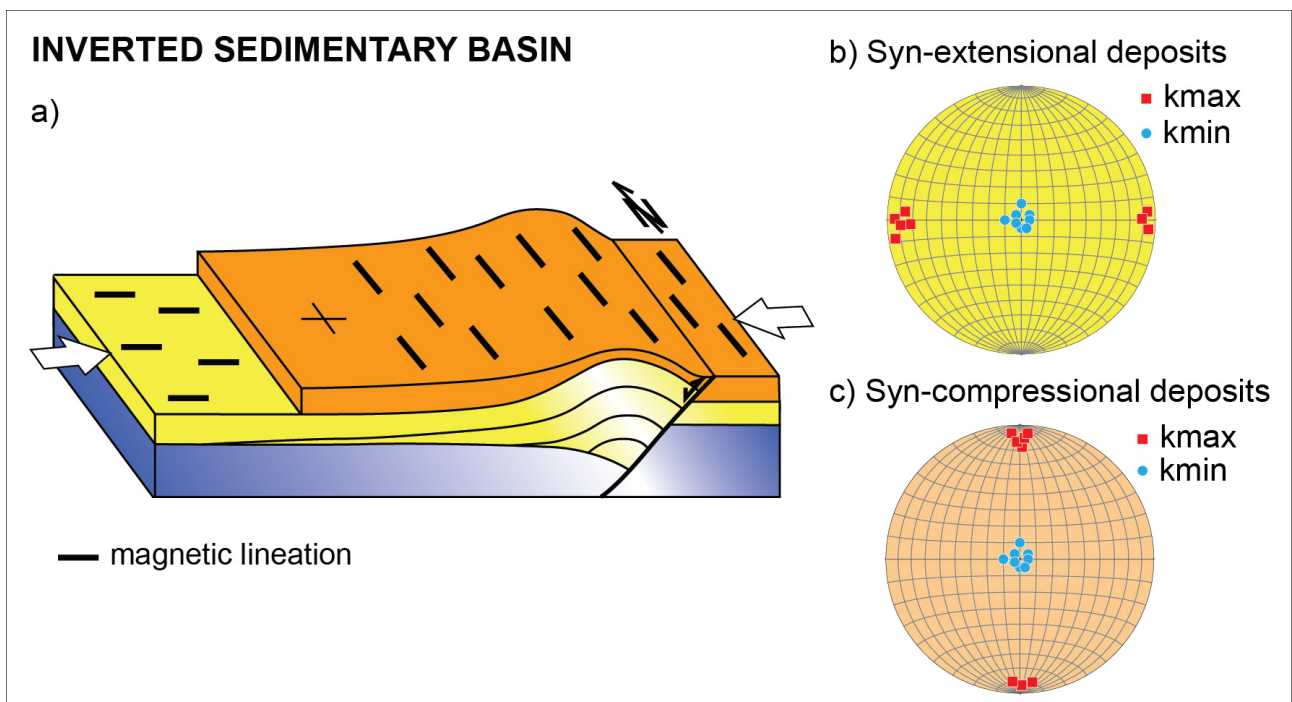


**Fig. 6.-** Sketch showing the relation between deformation and magnetic fabrics in extensional context (modified from Marcén *et al.*, 2019). Note that in shear-related deformation contexts, mechanical rotation of platy minerals occurs within the fault zone and *kmin* axes change from perpendicular to bedding plane (sedimentary fabric) to perpendicular to fault planes (shear-related fabric).

faults (Cifelli *et al.*, 2005). In the same way that the evolution of the magnetic fabric has been described as the strain path in mudrocks under compression, the evolution of magnetic ellipsoids with strain has also been described for extensional scenarios (Marcén *et al.*, 2019) (Fig. 6). In this case, the magnetic fabric changes from an extension-related fabric (with magnetic foliations parallel to bedding and magnetic lineations clustered parallel to the local extension direction) to shear-related fabrics (with magnetic foliations parallel to faults or to foliation planes and magnetic lineations parallel or perpendicular to the transport direction) when strain in-

creases, approaching the fault zones limiting the basins (Fig. 6). Magnetic lineations in extensional settings have been defined by the crenulation of the clay minerals (i.e., paramagnetic minerals) parallel to the stretching direction (Mattei *et al.*, 1999) or by the intersection axis resulting from the girdling of phyllosilicates basal planes parallel to the stretching direction (Cifelli *et al.*, 2004, 2005).

Extensional magnetic lineations are acquired during the early (i.e., syn-sedimentary) stages of deformation (e.g., Cifelli *et al.*, 2004; García-Lasanta *et al.*, 2013), and they can be preserved in spite of the occurrence of subsequent



**Fig. 7.-** (a) Magnetic fabrics in inverted sedimentary basins. Stereoplots showing the *kmax* and *kmin* magnetic ellipsoid axes that can be found in syn-extensional (b) and posterior syn-compressional deposits (c).



tectonic events (Soto *et al.*, 2007; Oliva-Urcia *et al.*, 2013). Primary extensional magnetic lineations can be modified only in areas with intense deformation associated with a subsequent compressional stage (i.e., development of compression-related cleavage, Oliva-Urcia *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, magnetic lineations parallel to the previous stretching direction acquired during the extensional basal stage are common in inverted sedimentary basins (e.g., Soto *et al.*, 2007, 2019; García-Lasanta *et al.*, 2018 and references therein) (Fig. 7). Compared to syn-extensional brittle mesostructure analysis, AMS records deformation associated with the near deformation field, during shorter intervals of time (i.e., earliest stages of deformation), whereas brittle mesostructure analysis records longer time spans (Soto *et al.*, 2007). This makes AMS very useful in inverted basins, where its application allows obtaining information on the extensional stage, prior to the tectonic inversion (Soto *et al.*, 2007, 2008, 2019; García-Lasanta *et al.*, 2018 and references therein).

#### *Transpressional/transensional settings*

Deformation at the grain scale, and hence magnetic fabrics in transpressional and transtensional scenarios, are strongly dependent on strain partitioning between different structures (e.g., Goldstein and Brown, 1988; Housen *et al.*, 1995; Jones and Tanner, 1995; Fossen and Tikoff, 1998; Díaz-Azpiroz *et al.*, 2014; Barcos *et al.*, 2015). Under homogeneous strain conditions, intermediate-plunging lineations are typical of both transpressional and transtensional settings. However, strain partitioning imposes other constraints that must be also applied to magnetic fabric analysis, namely the co-existence of lineations parallel to the strike of faults and parallel to the dip direction of faults, even when all lineations are parallel to the transport direction of each individual fault (Marcén *et al.*, 2015; Román-Berdiel *et al.*, 2019). The bimodality in the lineation orientation further complicates the interpretation of magnetic fabrics because it adds another variable to the existing dichotomy between transport-parallel and transport-perpendicular magnetic lineations. This implies that thorough studies, including low-temperature AMS (and subfabric analysis in general), detailed mapping and analysis of polished and thin sections under the microscope, must be done in order to characterize the movement of the fault and the possible subfabrics corresponding to different types of magnetic minerals. Magnetic foliation is usually more constant, and commonly parallel or slightly oblique to the trace of the faults, what also gives hints about the compatibility with their sense of movement.

#### **AMS discussion and interpretation, use with caution**

The use of AMS to characterize deformed rocks presents numerous advantages widely known by the scientific community (i.e., quick, inexpensive, effective and non-destructive technique). These advantages, however, should not lead to erroneous interpretations of AMS data in terms of structural geology and tectonics. These errors usually come from

misinterpretations of the relationships between the magnetic signal and the petrofabric (e.g., Borradaile and Jackson, 2004). To know the contribution of the magnetic carriers to the total AMS is crucial, since both the shape and the crystallographic preferred orientations of mineral grains and the magnetic interactions between ferro- and ferrimagnetic particles are the main sources of the AMS in a rock (e.g., Borradaile and Jackson, 2004, 2010; Biedermann, 2018). In this section we briefly explain three important factors, which are closely interconnected, to be considered when interpreting AMS data. (1) Magnetic subfabric analyses accompanying AMS data to correctly interpret tectonic magnetic lineations and/or foliations in case of coexistence of paramagnetic and ferrimagnetic minerals. (2) Absence of magnetic mineral artifacts that can mask AMS data related to deformation. (3) Presence of composite magnetic fabrics related to different tectonic processes.

#### *Magnetic subfabric interpretation*

The common coexistence of diamagnetic, paramagnetic and ferrimagnetic s.l. minerals in a rock makes relevant the separation of magnetic subfabrics (e.g., Borradaile and Jackson, 2004, 2010). Minerals in a rock can form at different times and also respond to deformation differently. This means that paramagnetic minerals can show a magnetic fabric different from that the one indicated by the ferrimagnetic minerals present in the same rock. Thus, in case of complex magnetic ellipsoids and to properly understand their structural significance, separation into para- and ferrimagnetic subfabrics, even in cases where the contribution of ferrimagnetic grains might be considered as secondary, is crucial. The use of the following techniques is very useful to check the match or mismatch between the paramagnetic and ferrimagnetic subfabric; (i) AMS at low temperature (AMS-LT) allows to enhance the paramagnetic signal (e.g., Parés and van der Pluijm, 2002a, 2014), and (ii) the anisotropy of anhysteretic remanent magnetization (AARM), the anisotropy of the isothermal remanent magnetization (AIRM) and the high field AMS (HF-AMS) allow to separate the ferrimagnetic subfabric (e.g., Kelso *et al.*, 2002; Borradaile and Jackson, 2004, 2010; Martín-Hernández and Hirt, 2004; Martín-Hernández and Ferré, 2007; Elhanati *et al.*, 2021).

Here we describe several examples where magnetic subfabric separation was necessary to correctly interpret AMS data. In fine-grained sedimentary rocks where phyllosilicates are abundant, AMS-LT is usually used to confirm that paramagnetic minerals are the main carriers to the total AMS (e.g., Parés and van der Pluijm, 2002a). In red beds where hematite (i.e., ferrimagnetic mineral) is present, usually phyllosilicates mimic the hematite subfabric, and the LT-AMS subfabric and the total MS fabric overlap (see García-Lasanta *et al.*, 2015). In remagnetized limestones sampled in inverted extensional basins (e.g., Cameros basin and Central High Atlas), the LT-AMS and the total AMS do not overlap (García-Lasanta *et al.*, 2014; Calvin *et al.*, 2018). The LT-AMS gives information about the subfabric of phyllosilicates, and the AARM (among other me-



thods) reflects the subfabric carried by magnetite. In this case, the  $k_{max}$  axes of the magnetite subfabric are parallel to the extension direction linked to the basinal stage and the remagnetization event (Calvín *et al.*, 2018). In remagnetized siltstones affected by penetrative pressure-solution cleavage, the orientation of the paramagnetic ellipsoids was consistent with the orientation of layer-parallel shortening related to an early diagenetic or sedimentary period, whereas the orientation of the ferrimagnetic ellipsoids responded to subhorizontal shear associated to subsequent cleavage formation, a process that did not alter the earlier paramagnetic subfabric (Oliva-Urcia *et al.*, 2009).

Ferromagnetic granites (i.e., magnetite-bearing granites; see Bouchez, 1997) show mixed para/ferro (iron-bearing silicates/magnetite) fabric type. The subfabric ellipses are usually coaxial and the separation of subfabrics is not necessary (e.g., Nédélec and Bouchez, 2015). In paramagnetic granites (i.e., magnetite-free granites, with bulk magnetic susceptibilities  $K_m$  generally below  $500 \times 10^{-6}$  SI; see Bouchez, 1997), a mixture of biotite and amphibole is the most frequent case, resulting in a mixed para/para subfabric. Subfabrics of biotite and amphibole are considered coaxial, and the resulting bulk magnetic fabric is well-defined both in foliation and lineation, but not in magnitude (i.e., anisotropy degree), which depends of the intrinsic anisotropy and respective amounts of each mineral species (e.g., Nédélec and Bouchez, 2015). Special attention should be put when tourmaline or cordierite are present, because their ‘inverse’ magneto-crystalline paramagnetic anisotropy ( $k_{min}$  parallel to the prism axis) may interfere with other mineral fabrics (e.g., Nédélec and Bouchez, 2015).

#### *Mineralogical artefacts*

Mineralogical changes (i.e., formation of new minerals) related to the deformational processes are common. Widespread mineralizations can occur during diagenesis, related to hydrothermal events and/or to fluid migration associated with the formation and subsequent compressional deformation of sedimentary basins and also in fold-and-thrust belts. The neoformation of minerals could mask the previous magnetic fabric having structural significance, especially if the new magnetic mineralogy is dominated by ferrimagnetic minerals (Gaillot *et al.*, 2006; Mattsson *et al.*, 2021), and at the same time, they can provide information on the evolving strain field. In addition, another common phenomenon to be taken into account when working with ferroan carbonates is their inverse magnetic fabric (that is,  $k_{max}$  axis corresponds to the minimum axis of the petrofabric) (e.g., Rochette, 1988; Černý *et al.*, 2020).

Hematite is ubiquitous in red beds and can be a neoformed mineral. It presents a strong magnetocrystalline anisotropy with its  $k_{min}$  axis located parallel to the  $c$ -axis, and the  $k_{max}$  axis in the basal plane (Morrish, 1994; Martín-Hernández and Guerrero-Suárez, 2012). The new formation of hematite can provoke magnetic ellipsoid axes switching with respect to the bedding or foliation planes (strain axis), both in igneous rocks (i.e., Mondal and Mamtani, 2014; Gonçalves *et al.*, 2020), and in red beds (Oli-

va-Urcia *et al.*, 2016).

In magmatic rocks, where magnetite is more abundant than in sedimentary rocks, “abnormal” (Fanjat *et al.*, 2012) or unexpected fabrics ( $k$  axes do not follow strain axes) are found more often, either related to interaction or to elongated shapes of magnetite particles (Fanjat *et al.*, 2012 and references therein). In multi-domain (MD) grains of magnetite, the AMS axes correspond with the magnetite crystal, whereas for single-domain (SD) crystals the magnetic axes inversely correlate with the grain shape (e.g., Rochette, 1988; Cañón-Tapia, 1996; Biedermann, 2020; Mattsson *et al.*, 2021 and references therein).

The ferrimagnetic s.l. sulphides greigite and/or pyrrhotite are authigenic minerals, that constitute intermediate phases precursor of pyrite (paramagnetic mineral). Their preservation in the sedimentary record is related to the abundance of iron relative to more limited dissolved sulphide (Roberts, 2015 and references therein). Pyrrhotite has strong magnetocrystalline anisotropy with the easy direction of magnetization in the basal plane and the  $c$ -axis perpendicular to the basal plane containing the axis of hard magnetization (Sagnotti, 2007 and references therein). Greigite has also a strong magnetocrystalline anisotropy (Sagnotti, 2007 and references therein). Their presence can develop “composite” magnetic fabric due to their relationship with posterior tectonic events. The term «composite magnetic fabrics» refers to the combination in a rock of different preferred orientation of minerals contributing significantly to magnetic anisotropy (Housen *et al.*, 1993). They can be developed under different/subsequent strain scenarios or grain sizes with different orientation distribution (see next section). Their combination provides a magnetic ellipsoid which usually does not follow the strain ellipsoid and requires further magnetic and non-magnetic analyses to properly decipher the total AMS (Debacker *et al.*, 2004).

#### *Composite magnetic fabrics*

One of the major contributions of AMS to the study of deformed rocks is the possibility of analyzing the different processes that sum up, in different proportions, to the total fabric of the rock. Ferro-, para- and diamagnetic contributions to the total susceptibility (and its anisotropy) provide the means for understanding the different processes involved during the periods of basin formation and inversion, especially when different  $p$ - $T$  conditions, and therefore, different magnetic minerals, characterize each of these stages (e.g., Calvín *et al.*, 2018; García-Lasanta *et al.*, 2018). This is particularly true, for example, in fault zones (Román-Berdiel *et al.*, 2019; Casas-Sainz *et al.*, 2018; Marcén *et al.*, 2015) where para- and ferro-magnetic fabrics coexist and can be coaxial or not, depending on the intensity of deformation and the timing of their formation. Ferromagnetic fabrics can reflect the transport direction of faults vs. paramagnetic fabrics, whose lineation can be either parallel or perpendicular to the transport direction. In the second case, phyllosilicates are interpreted to be arranged according to the S/C fabrics related to shear zones.

The confrontation between the competing effects of sedimentary, compaction-related and tectonic-related fabrics has been a common issue when comparing different fabric types in compressed sedimentary basins (Parés and van der Pluijm, 2002b; Pueyo-Anchuela *et al.*, 2010; García-Lasanta *et al.*, 2014). In this case, when the magnetic mineralogy is homogeneous (i.e., same mineralogical composition), the analysis of scalar parameters derived from the magnetic ellipsoid axes is a good marker of the strain path for rocks in different parts of the basin and can be used as an indicator of the prevalence of one kind of fabric against the other (Gracia-Puzo *et al.*, 2021). In weakly deformed rocks, the orientation of foliation, rather than that of the lineation (whose direction remains usually parallel to the strike of beds and axes of folds), is the most sensitive feature that can help to define the degree of tectonic deformation. The distribution of poles to the magnetic foliation and their scattering (clustered or distributed along a great circle containing the poles to bedding and cleavage) is also a qualitative and reliable indicator (Parés, 2004, 2015).

## Conclusions

Anisotropy of Magnetic Susceptibility (AMS) analyses applied to structural geology and tectonics have demonstrated their high versatility and applicability. In deformed rocks, magnetic fabrics reflect the strain ellipsoid detecting even very incipient deformation, despite the correspondence between the orientation and magnitude of the magnetic and strain ellipsoids cannot be straightforward. AMS analysis can help to characterize rock volume deformation under different tectonic scenarios (i.e., extension, compression or strike-slip) of different rock types (i.e., sedimentary, igneous and metamorphic rocks). This work explores the use of this valuable technique in modern structural geology and its benefits and limits.

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## Author contributions

Manuscript preparation, R.S., A.C, B.O. and T.R.; methodology, R.S., A.C, B.O. and T.R.; data curation, R.S., A.C, B.O. and T.R.; figures, R.S., A.C, and T.R.; research/analysis, R.S., A.C, B.O. and T.R.; manuscript review, R.S., A.C, B.O. and T.R.; coordination and supervision, R.S.; funding acquisition, R.S., A.C, and T.R.

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