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16 From flow to furnace: Low viscosity of three-phase lavas  
17 measured at Kīlauea 2018 eruption conditions  
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21 **ABSTRACT**

22 Melt composition, temperature, and crystallinity are often seen as the three most  
23 important characteristics driving lava rheology, which controls eruptive behavior. Traditional  
24 methods of measuring the viscosity of crystallizing basalts often yield different mineral  
25 characteristics to natural samples and are typically bubble-free. To quantify the viscosity of  
26 basalts inclusive of bubble and crystal cargo, we developed a new technique to measure high-  
27 temperature three-phase isothermal lava viscosity and applied it to samples from the 2018  
28 eruption of Kīlauea. This new experimental technique begins at subliquidus temperatures,  
29 preserving original phenocrysts. A short experimental duration allows for the retention of most  
30 of the original bubble population (19%–31% vs. 36% in the original lava) and accurate  
31 replication of crystal textures from field samples, as documented in quenched postexperiment  
32 samples. The observed rheological behavior in these experiments, conducted at syneruptive  
33 temperatures (1150–1105 °C) and strain rates (0.4–18 s<sup>-1</sup>), should therefore be representative of  
34 the lava flows. We measured **red** average viscosities of 116 Pa·s at 1150 °C to 167 Pa·s at 1115 °C,  
35 **i.e.**, only 10%–25% higher than calculated liquid viscosities at those temperatures, and a  
36 maximum of 1800 Pa·s at 1105 °C. These results are much lower than viscosity measured in  
37 traditional bubble-free experiments, which plateaued at ~14,000 Pa·s at 1115 °C. Our results  
38 suggest the effect of bubbles in three-phase magmas may be greater than predicted by models  
39 based on two-phase bubbly liquids, and **this effect** must be included in realistic lava flow  
40 rheology models. The method proposed here supplies a framework for providing the necessary  
41 experimental constraints.

## 42 INTRODUCTION

43 Characterization of lava viscosity is crucial for modeling lava flow emplacement and  
44 hazards (e.g., Cappello et al., 2016; Chevrel et al., 2018[[Not in the reference list.]]). Lavas

45 consist of crystals and/or bubbles in a silicate melt, where changes in temperature, melt  
46 chemistry, and size, shape, and abundance of bubbles and crystals can result in large variations in  
47 rheological behavior (e.g., Mader et al., 2013; Kolzenburg et al., 2022). Experiments on two- and  
48 three-phase analog materials (e.g., Truby et al., 2015; Pistone et al., 2016; Birnbaum et al., 2021)  
49 are used to measure the impact of bubbles and crystals on suspension rheology but are limited in  
50 their ability to emulate the complexity of magmatic systems.

51 Laboratory experiments measuring the viscosity of basaltic lavas near eruption  
52 temperatures (~1200–1100 °C) account for changes in temperature and melt composition (e.g.,  
53 Sehlke et al., 2014; Soldati et al., 2016; Kolzenburg et al., 2022). Traditional isothermal  
54 subliquidus experiments first heat samples above the liquidus and then cool to and hold samples  
55 at the target temperature until viscosity plateaus, which often takes  $\geq 10$  h (e.g., Ryerson et al.,  
56 1988; Ishibashi and Sato, 2007; Chevrel et al., 2015[[Not in the reference list.]]; Sehlke and  
57 Whittington, 2015). The initial high temperatures and long experimental duration result in a loss  
58 of bubbles, phenocrysts, and phases such as olivine, which are difficult to grow in atmospheric  
59 conditions (e.g., Mourey and Shea, 2019), creating a measured lava with very different textural  
60 characteristics than the parent lava.

61 While field measurements of basaltic lava viscosity have been conducted in situ (e.g.,  
62 Chevrel et al., 2018[[Not in the reference list.]]; Harris et al., 2024), these are limited to lava  
63 flow margins, where thermal gradients and flow advance result in brief measurements of cooling  
64 lava. The lack of high-temperature three-phase lava measurements thus leaves a gap in our  
65 ability to accurately model lavas at flow conditions.

66 Here, we present a new technique for the measurement of high-temperature three-phase  
67 isothermal (HTTPI) lava viscosity at syneruptive temperatures (~1145 °C; Gansecki et al., 2019)

68 and strain rates (2–3 s<sup>-1</sup>; Dieterich et al., 2021), in which the original textures of the basaltic  
69 lavas are well replicated, and our results demonstrate that viscosities of lavas at emplacement  
70 conditions are likely lower than estimates from traditional experimental methods.

71 **METHODS**

72 Samples along the fissure 8 flow field of the 2018 eruption of Kīlauea (Neal et al., 2019)  
73 were collected in January 2020, with emplacement dates determined from unoccupied aircraft  
74 system (UAS) video and thermal imaging during the eruption (Desmither et al., 2021; Patrick,  
75 2024). A single sample (F8.13) collected ~2 m below the flow surface was used as the starting  
76 material for all viscosity experiments. This sample is chemically indistinct from the rest of the  
77 flow (see X-ray fluorescence [XRF] data in Supplemental Material<sup>1</sup>) and provides a  
78 homogeneous, highly crystalline, and moderately vesicular (~34%) starting material.

79 Viscometry experiments were conducted using an Orton 1700 RSV viscometer, with a  
80 Brookfield HB head. A wide-gap concentric cylinder geometry was used, with iron-saturated  
81 Pt90:Rh10 alloy crucibles of ~70 mm height by 31 mm internal diameter, and alumina spindles  
82 sheathed in 7.4-mm-external-diameter iron-saturated Pt90:Rh10. At the start of each  
83 measurement, the spindle was immersed to 20 mm depth. Rotation rate was determined by the  
84 user, and the viscometer recorded the torque. This resulted in pairs of stress and strain rate data,  
85 the ratio of which is referred to as “apparent viscosity,” as the material is often non-Newtonian.

86 We first conducted a “traditional” isothermal experiment. For this, an ~60 g aliquot of  
87 roughly crushed (5 mm to 2 cm diameter) F8.13 was heated to 1500 °C at 10 °C/min, held for 30  
88 min, cooled to 1115 °C at 10 °C/min, and then held for 9 h until viscosity stabilized.

89 In contrast, the HTTPI experiments began by placing the crucible directly into a  
90 preheated furnace at 1175 °C (below the experimentally determined liquidus of 1200–1190 °C)

91 for ~20 min, until a visual inspection indicated no solid rock remaining. The spindle was  
92 immersed in the sample, and the furnace temperature was lowered at 10 °C/min to the target  
93 temperature (1150 °C, 1115 °C, or 1105 °C) immediately thereafter. Thermal equilibration of the  
94 sample was determined by a plateau in the apparent viscosity, ~5 min after the furnace reached  
95 the target temperature in each experiment. This is consistent with the experimental dimensions  
96 and low thermal diffusivity of basaltic lava, i.e., ~0.3–0.5 mm<sup>2</sup> s<sup>-1</sup> (Hofmeister et al., 2016).

97 Once viscosity stabilized, the strain rate was varied every 2–3 min between 0.44 and 18  
98 s<sup>-1</sup>, depending on the experiment, to quantify non-Newtonian behavior (see Supplemental Data).  
99 The spindle was subsequently removed, and the sample quenched within 3 min of the end of  
100 experiment by partial immersion of the crucible in water for ~30 s. Total duration above room  
101 temperature was constrained to <1 h to ensure minimum bubble loss and oxidation.

102 After quenching, samples were removed from crucibles using a diamond-coated core  
103 drill, mounted on glass slides, and polished. These were imaged in reflected light with a Meiji  
104 Techno MT9000 polarizing microscope, at a resolution of 0.36 µm/pixel. Images were mosaiced  
105 using Fiji® Image Stitching (Preibisch et al., 2009) and Adobe Photoshop®. Characterization of  
106 the abundance, size, and shape of crystals and bubbles was done using Dragonfly® software.  
107 Deep learning methodology (Halverson, 2024) was used for fast, large-scale segmentation across  
108 the samples. This image segmentation, with 30 min of manual refinement, resulted in  
109 uncertainties of <<1% area crystallinity. Subsequent **crystal size distribution (CSD)** calculations  
110 to examine crystal size and shape similarity between experimental and natural samples used  
111 HabitEST (Liu et al., 2018[[Not in the reference list.]] to approximate crystal habit, and  
112 CSD Corrections (Higgins, 2000) to calculate CSD graphs. Uncertainties were approximated by  
113  $2\sigma = 2\sqrt{N}$ , where  $N$  is the number of crystals in each size range (Higgins, 2000; Gualda, 2006).

114 **RESULTS**115 **Textural Analysis**

116 Crystallinity of the recovered HTTPI samples decreased from ~14% at 1175 °C to ~6% at  
117 1150 °C, indicating continued melting during cooling to target temperature (Table 1). However,  
118 crystallinity increased to ~13% at 1115 °C and surpassed the zero-time sample to reach ~31% at  
119 1105 °C. Material recovered from the 1115 °C traditional method was different to both the zero-  
120 time and HTTPI experimental products, with little to no vesicularity, plagioclase, or olivine, and  
121 higher oxide and pyroxene contents relative to HTTPI samples. This matches the assemblage  
122 from traditional experiments in controlled  $fO_2$  conditions obtained by Soldati et al. (2021b).

123 Vesicularity decreased from 36% at 1175 °C to ~19% at 1150 °C and 1115 °C. The 1105  
124 °C experiment retained 31% bubbles, likely related to its higher crystal fraction. Recovered  
125 vesicles in the 1150 °C and 1115 °C HTTPI experiments were spherical, due to a calculated  
126 relaxation time of <1 s, while at 1105 °C, the bubbles were more deformed (Fig. 1). The latter  
127 experiment had a maximum relaxation time of <3 s, indicating that crystal impingement may  
128 have contributed more than bulk viscosity to their morphology (Supplemental Data).

129 Comparison of natural and experimental textures indicates that we can re-create natural  
130 crystalline modal abundances and morphologies and achieve similar vesicularities to those seen  
131 in distal portions of the flow (Table 1). The crystal assemblage of the 1105 °C experiment  
132 resembles the quenched margin of sample F8.11, collected 14 km downflow. This surface-  
133 quenched ooze-out structure provides the best estimate for textures present within the flow  
134 without overprinting from postemplacement crystallization, which was seen in F8.13. While  
135 crystallinity is lower in the HTTPI experiment than in F8.11 (31 vs. 42 area %), we achieved  
136 very similar phase assemblages to those seen in the natural sample (Fig. 2; Table 1). CSDs

137 calculated for both **assemblages** show that plagioclase distributions are statistically  
138 indistinguishable (Fig. 2). The narrow (<2 mm) quenched margin in the natural sample precludes  
139 the presence of large pyroxene crystals.

140 The vesicularities of the samples, especially at 1105 °C, were similar to F8.25b, an ‘a’ā  
141 sample collected ~13 km from the vent on the lava delta of the fissure 8 flow. This sample has  
142 ~26% vesicularity, falling within those recorded from the experimental samples. It also exhibits  
143 partially spherical and merging bubbles, similar to those in HTTPI **lava at** 1105 °C (Fig. 1).

#### 144 **Viscosity Measurements**

145 The viscosity measured during the traditional experiment started at 262 Pa·s, which is  
146 slightly higher than the HTTPI experiment at the same temperature. It slowly increased after this,  
147 with some brief plateaus at ~970, ~1365, and ~7780 Pa·s, until reaching ~14,000 Pa·s 9 h later.  
148 This experiment is consistent with previous subliquidus studies on Kīlauea 2018 lavas, as we  
149 measured ~82 Pa·s at 1130 °C during cooling, compared to 77–132 Pa·s measured while holding  
150 at 1130 °C by Soldati et al. (2021b).

151 The apparent viscosity of the HTTPI experiments increased with decreasing temperature,  
152 from an average of 116 Pa·s at 1150 °C, to 167 Pa·s at 1115 °C, to 397–1800 Pa·s at 1105 °C,  
153 depending on strain rate. Viscosity became strongly shear-thinning at 1105 °C, as indicated by  
154 large variations with changing strain rate (Fig. 3A; Supplemental Material).

155 At 1115 °C, the viscosity of the HTTPI experiment was nearly two orders of magnitude  
156 lower than that at the end of the traditional method. This difference is far greater than could be  
157 explained by the difference in total crystallinity (17% traditional vs. 13% HTTPI). Even if the  
158 long equilibration time of the traditional method is ignored, and viscosity is recorded at the first  
159 plateau, there was still a more than factor of 5 difference between the two methods (~955 Pa·s

160 for traditional method vs.  $\sim$ 167 Pa·s for HTTPI). This difference reflects two key textural  
161 differences: the crystal size and shape distribution, and the presence of bubbles.

## 162 DISCUSSION

163 Our measured three-phase lava viscosities ~~were~~  $\sim$ 116 Pa·s at 1150 °C and  $\sim$ 167 Pa·s at  
164 1115 °C, for <15% crystals and <20% bubbles. Liquid viscosities for fissure 8 calculated using  
165 the VFT **[[Please spell out VFT here.]]** fit to the data of Soldati et al. (2021a) ~~were~~ 86 and 162  
166 Pa·s, i.e., only slightly lower, indicating that the effects of crystals and bubbles largely offset  
167 each other in these experiments (Supplemental Data). Higher bubble fractions, as seen in the  
168 active channel (e.g., 71%; Dietterich et al., 2021), are expected to result in even lower effective  
169 **[[apparent?]]** viscosities, which severely increase rapid inundation hazards.

170 While bubble loss occurred in all HTTPI samples, it only noticeably affected viscosity  
171 measurements at 1150 °C, where viscosity decreased by 0.15 log units over 14 min. This is  
172 commensurate with the lower bound of a  $8 \pm 2$  mm decrease in the immersion depth of the  
173 spindle calculated from the 16% vesicularity decrease from the zero-time material.

174 The apparent viscosity of the 1115 °C HTTPI experiment was a factor of  $\sim$ 5 to  $\sim$ 70 lower  
175 than the apparent viscosity of the 1115 °C traditional experiment, depending on which viscosity  
176 plateau was chosen. Contributing factors included a small difference ( $\sim$ 4.5%) in crystal fraction,  
177 a difference in crystal assemblage, and the addition of  $\sim$ 20 vol% bubbles. Previous experimental  
178 studies of bubbly lavas indicated that the maximum effect of bubbles on viscosity is up to one  
179 order of magnitude difference (e.g., Lejeune et al., 1999; Stein and Spera, 2002). Using the  
180 traditional method with a crystal-bearing fluid as the effective medium (Mader et al., 2013) and  
181 applying the equation of Llewellyn and Manga (2005) for the effect of bubbles, ~~we would predict~~  
182 a relative viscosity of 0.71–0.87 for the 1115 °C HTTPI experiment (dependent on strain rate and

183 effective medium viscosity; see Supplemental Data). This is at most a 29% decrease in viscosity  
184 relative to the traditional method, whereas we measured an 82%–99% lower relative viscosity.

185 In principle, three-phase lava rheology can also be modeled starting from the liquid  
186 viscosity, using the fit to data from Soldati et al. (2021a). We first applied the Maron and Pierce  
187 (1956) equation using these values to calculate the crystal liquid suspension viscosity. We used  
188 this as the effective medium and applied Llewellyn and Manga (2005) as above. The predicted  
189 viscosities agree with our measurements at 1150 °C, and 1105 °C, where both model and  
190 measurements vary strongly with strain rate (Fig. 3B). At 1115 °C, however, this method still  
191 resulted in a 70%–80% overestimation in three-phase viscosity. This indicates that bubbles may  
192 have a stronger effect upon viscosity of crystal-bearing suspensions than is suggested by current  
193 models, in certain crystallinity/vesicularity regimes. This effect should be greater in samples with  
194 larger bubbles and higher total vesicularity, especially at low crystallinity as seen in active flows,  
195 indicating that current models may overestimate lava flow viscosity.

196 The larger effect of bubbles on the three-phase viscosities seen in experiments over  
197 modeled viscosity may be due to strain partitioning into highly deformable bubbles (e.g.,  
198 Holtzman et al., 2012). During three-phase rheology experiments on haplogranites, Pistone et al.  
199 (2012) **[Not in the reference list.]** observed shear-thickening behavior at low strain rates ( $5.13$   
200  $\times 10^{-5}$  to  $1.04 \times 10^{-4} \text{ s}^{-1}$ ), and shear-thinning behavior at high strain rates ( $4.81 \times 10^{-4}$  to  $9.25 \times$   
201  $10^{-4} \text{ s}^{-1}$ ) for “dilute” suspensions of <44% crystals and 10%–12% vesicularity. The transition  
202 between shear thickening and thinning was attributed to strain partitioning into deformable  
203 bubbles at high strain rates, where the small bubble radii ( $\sim 5$ – $50 \mu\text{m}$ ) and low strain rates of  
204 those experiments likely drove the shear-thickening behavior. Given the fact that our HTTP1  
205 experiments had higher bubble contents, lower crystallinity, and larger average bubble radii

206 (~200–300  $\mu\text{m}$ ), the 4-log-unit higher strain rate of our experiments would result in strain  
207 partitioning into the bubble phase, causing strong deformation and viscosity decreases.

208 The HTTPI experiments presented here resulted in very similar crystal populations to  
209 those seen in distal samples from the fissure 8 flow field and retained significant bubble volume  
210 fractions. In order to match lower-crystallinity and/or much higher-vesicularity samples from  
211 closer to the vent, it may be necessary to use a starting material that is more similar to those  
212 textures. While we found it easier to retain bubble populations at higher crystallinity, highly  
213 vesicular samples from basaltic lava flows are often very crystal poor. The effect of bubbles may  
214 be particularly large in the channelized portion of the flow, where lavas exhibit 60%–80%  
215 vesicularity and 3%–20% crystals in the first 8 km. Future work should determine the crystal and  
216 bubble textures that can be consistently retained in the laboratory, providing three-phase data to  
217 improve models of conduit processes, lava flow emplacement, and hazards.

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343 Figure 1. Reflected light images of postexperimental samples, oriented with surface of  
344 experiment toward top of page. Sample F8.25b (collected from fissure 8 flow field of 2018  
345 Kīlauea eruption) is shown for vesicle comparison; its orientation is unknown. All scale bars are  
346 2 mm. Experimental samples are from top 1–2 cm of crucible, recording only that material  
347 measured by spindle. HTTPI—high-temperature three-phase isothermal.

348

349 Figure 2. (A–B) Reflected light images of high-temperature three-phase isothermal (HTTPI)  
350 sample at 1105 °C (A) and sample F8.11, collected from fissure 8 flow field of 2018 Kīlauea  
351 eruption (B). (C–D) Crystal size distribution graphs for both samples for plagioclase (C) and  
352 pyroxene (D).

353

354 Figure 3. (A) Viscosity data for all high-temperature three-phase isothermal (HTTPI)  
355 experiments. Arrows indicate changes in strain rate. (B) Three-phase viscosity calculations  
356 compared to HTTPI experiments. MP—Maron and Pierce (1956) equation; Mader—Mader et al.  
357 (2013) [[method, medium, equation?]]; VFT—[[Define here.]]. [[Figure edits: Fix spelling of  
358 1150 Experiment in legend in B. Define VFT in caption and verify definitions for MP and  
359 Mader.]]

360

361           **TABLE 1.** CRYSTALLINITY AND VESICULARITY VALUES FOR EACH HIGH-  
 362    TEMPERATURE THREE-PHASE ISOTHERMAL (HTTP1) AND ZERO-TIME (QUENCHED  
 363    AFTER THE 20 MIN HOLD AT 1175 °C) EXPERIMENT, A TRADITIONAL ISOTHERMAL  
 364    METHOD EXPERIMENT AT 1115 °C, AND TWO OTHER SAMPLES FROM THE  
 365    FISSURE 8 FLOW OF THE 2018 KĪLAUEA ERUPTION (F8.11 AND F8.25)

Sample	Vesicle-normalized %					Total crystallinity
	Vesicularity	Plagioclase	Pyroxene	Olivine	Oxides	
1105 °C	31.1%	12.8%	13.8%	3.2%	1.0%	30.8%
1115 °C	18.8%	7.6%	1.9%	2.7%	0.3%	12.6%
1150 °C	19.2%	2.4%	0.2%	2.6%	0.4%	5.6%
1175 °C zero-time sample	36.1%	6.5%	1.9%	5.6%	3.5%	14.3%
1115 °C traditional method	2.0%	0.0%	14.9%	0.0%	2.5%	17.4%
F8.11	13.5%*	21.4%	14.4%	0.0%	0.0%	41.5%†
F8.25b		25.7%*	N/A			N/A

366           \*Vesicularity and olivine values from the entire thin section.  
 367           †Total crystallinity value only for the olivine-free quenched margin; includes pyroxene and  
 368    plagioclase and incipient crystallization, where nanoscale crystallization fronts form around the  
 369    larger laths.

370