

ICY BODIES
OF THE SOLAR SYSTEM
IAU SYMPOSIUM No. 263

COVER ILLUSTRATION: ENCELADUS

Enceladus is a small though very active satellite of Saturn that shows water-dominated plumes.

Credit: NASA/JPL/Space Science Institute

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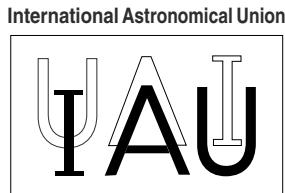
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Table of Contents

Preface	ix
Organizing committee	x

Part I. Overview

Icy Bodies in the New Solar System..... <i>D. Jewitt</i>	3
---	---

Part II. The Icy Planetesimals and Accretion Processes in the Protoplanetary Disk

The location of the snow line in protostellar disks	19
<i>M. Podolak</i>	
Heavy ion irradiation of astrophysical ice analogs..... <i>E. Seperuelo Duarte, A. Domaracka, P. Boduch, H. Rothard, E. Balanzat, E. Dartois, S. Pilling, L. Farenzena & E. F. da Silveira</i>	29
Low temperature CH ₄ and CO ₂ clathrate hydrate near to mid-IR spectra	33
<i>E. Dartois, B. Schmitt, D. Deboffle & M. Bouzit</i>	
Angular momentum of two collided rarefied preplanetesimals and formation of binaries	37
<i>S. I. Ipatov</i>	
Collision probabilities of migrating small bodies and dust particles with planets	41
<i>S. I. Ipatov</i>	
Simulation for Terrestrial planets formation	45
<i>J. Ji & N. Zhang</i>	
Interaction between gas and ice phase in the three periods of the Solar Nebula	50
<i>C. Tornow, E. Kührt, S. Kupper & U. Motschmann</i>	

Part III. Dynamical Aspects of Icy Bodies. The Oort Cloud

Galactic environment and cometary flux from the Oort cloud..... <i>M. Fouchard</i>	57
Sedna, 2004 VN112 and 2000 CR105: the tip of an iceberg	67
<i>R. S. Gomes & J. S. Soares</i>	
The discovery rate of new comets in the age of large surveys. Trends, statistics, and an updated evaluation of the comet flux..... <i>J. A. Fernández</i>	76
On hyperbolic comets	81
<i>A. S. Guliyev & A. S. Dadashov</i>	

Non-gravitational forces and masses of some long-period comets. The cases of Hale-Bopp and Hyakutake	85
<i>A. Sosa & J. A. Fernández</i>	
The contribution of Plutinos to the Centaur population	89
<i>R. P. Di Sisto, A. Brunini & G. C. de Elía</i>	
Influence of Trans-Neptunian Objects on motion of major planets and limitation on the total TNO mass from planet and spacecraft ranging	93
<i>E. V. Pitjeva</i>	
Impactor flux on the Pluto-Charon system	98
<i>G. C. de Elía, R. P. Di Sisto & A. Brunini</i>	
Numerical simulations of Jupiter Family comets; physical and dynamical effects	102
<i>R. P. Di Sisto, J. A. Fernández & A. Brunini</i>	
How to take into account the relativistic effects in dynamical studies of comets .	106
<i>J. Venturini & T. Gallardo</i>	

Part IV. Icy Satellites of the Outer Planets

Interior models of icy satellites and prospects of investigation.	113
<i>F. Sohl</i>	
Long-term evolution of small icy bodies of the Solar System	121
<i>D. Prialnik</i>	
The surface composition of Enceladus: clues from the Ultraviolet	126
<i>A. R. Hendrix & C. J. Hansen</i>	
Effect of the tensile strength on the stability against rotational breakup of icy bodies	131
<i>I. Toth & C. M. Lisse</i>	
Ground-based observations of Phoebe (S9) and its rotational dynamics	141
<i>E. Y. Aleshkina, A. V. Devyatkin & D. L. Gorshanov</i>	
Adenine synthesis at Titan atmosphere analog by soft X-rays	145
<i>S. Pilling, D. P. P. Andrade, A. C. Neto, R. Rittner & A. N. de Brito</i>	
Water masers in the Kronian system	147
<i>S. V. Pogrebenko, L. I. Gurvits, M. Elitzur, C. B. Cosmovici, I. M. Avruch, S. Pluchino, S. Montebugnoli, E. Salerno, G. Maccaferri, A. Mujunen, J. Ritakari, G. Molera, J. Wagner, M. Uunila, G. Cimo, F. Schilliro & M. Bartolini</i>	
A cometary perspective of Enceladus	151
<i>D. C. Boice & R. Goldstein</i>	
On the origin of retrograde orbit of satellites around Saturn and Jupiter	157
<i>Y. Ma, J. Zheng & X. Shen</i>	
Long-term dynamics of Methone, Anthe and Pallene	161
<i>N. Callegari & T. Yokoyama</i>	
How do the small planetary satellites rotate?	167
<i>A. V. Melnikov & I. I. Shevchenko</i>	

Part V. Icy Dwarf Planets and TNOs

Physical and dynamical characteristics of icy “dwarf planets” (Plutoids)	173
<i>G. Tancredi</i>	
Surface properties of icy transneptunian objects from the second ESO large program	186
<i>F. E. DeMeo, M. A. Barucci, A. Alvarez-Candal, C. de Bergh, S. Fornasier, F. Merlin, D. Perna & I. Belskaya</i>	
The Dark Red Spot on KBO Haumea	192
<i>P. Lacerda</i>	
Water alteration on (42355) Typhon?	197
<i>A. Alvarez-Candal & M. A. Barucci</i>	
Ground based observation of TNO targets for the Herschel Space Observatory	201
<i>R. Duffard, J. L. Ortiz, A. Thirouin, P. Santos-Sanz & N. Morales</i>	

Part VI. Transition Objects

Dynamics, origin, and activation of Main Belt comets	207
<i>N. Haghjhipour</i>	
Are the Main Belt comets, comets?	215
<i>J. Licandro & H. Campins</i>	
Material properties of transition objects 3200 Phaethon and 2003 EH1	218
<i>J. Borovička, P. Koten, P. Spurný, D. Čapek, L. Shrbený & R. Štork</i>	
Modeling the effects of a faint dust coma on asteroid spectra	223
<i>J. M. Carvano & S. Lorenz-Martins</i>	
The unusually frail asteroid 2008 TC3	227
<i>P. Jenniskens, M. H. Shaddad & The Almahata Sitta Consortium</i>	
Searching for minor absorptions on D-type asteroids	231
<i>T. Mothé-Diniz</i>	
The distribution of Main Belt asteroids with featureless spectra from the Sloan Digital Sky Survey photometry	237
<i>A. O. Ribeiro & F. Roig</i>	
Dynamical maps of the Inner Asteroid Belt	240
<i>T. Michtchenko, D. Lazzaro, J. M. Carvano & S. Ferraz-Mello</i>	
Magnetite microspheric particles from bright bolide of EN171101, exploded above the Trans-Carpathians mountains on Nov. 17, 2001	244
<i>K. I. Churyumov, R. Y. Belevtsev, E. V. Sobotovich, S. D. Spivak, V. I. Blazhko & V. I. Solonenko</i>	
The meteoroid above Mediterranean Sea on July, 6th 2002 was a fragment of a cometary nucleus?	246
<i>K. I. Churyumov, V. G. Kruchynenko, L. S. Chubko & T. K. Churyumova</i>	
The solar cycle effect on the atmosphere as a scintillator for meteor observations	249
<i>A. Pellinen-Wannberg, E. Murad, N. Brosch, I. Häggström & T. Khayrov</i>	

Study of meteoroid stream identification methods	253
<i>R. Rudawska & T. J. Jopek</i>	

Part VII. Physical Processes in Comets

Recent polarimetric observations of comet 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko	259
<i>A.-C. Levasseur-Regourd, E. Hadamcik, A. K. Sen, R. Gupta & J. Lasue</i>	
Secular light curves of comets	263
<i>I. Ferrín</i>	
Cometary nature of the 1908 Tunguska cosmic body	269
<i>F. S. Ibádov, S. S. Grigorian & S. Ibádov</i>	
On the relationship between gas and dust in 15 comets: an application to comet 103P/Hartley 2 target of the NASA EPOXI mission of opportunity	272
<i>G. C. Sanzovo, D. Trevisan Sanzovo & A. A. de Almeida</i>	
Spectroscopic studies of comets 9P/Tempel 1, 37P/Forbes and C/2004 Q2 (Machholz)	277
<i>E. Picazzio, K. I. Churyumov, L. S. Chubko, I. V. Lukyanik, V. V. Kleshchonok, A. A. de Almeida & R. D. D. Costa</i>	
Cometary gas relations 1P/Halley	281
<i>M. R. Voelzke</i>	
Near infrared photometry of comet C/2005 E2 (McNaught)	285
<i>E. Picazzio, E. Figueiredo, A. A. de Almeida, C. Mendes de Oliveira & K. I. Churyumov</i>	

Some active processes in comet icy nuclei: nucleus splitting and anti tail formation	289
<i>K. I. Ibadinov, A. M. Buriev & A. G. Safarov</i>	

A simple model for the secular light curve of comet C/1996 B2 Hyakutake	293
<i>E. Rondón & I. Ferrín</i>	

Observations of comets and minor planets at Kiev comets station (585)	298
<i>A. R. Baransky, K. I. Churyumov & V. A. Ponomarenko</i>	

Part VIII. Space Missions to Icy Bodies: Past, Present and Future

New Horizons: encountering Pluto and KBOs	305
<i>L. A. Young & S. A. Stern</i>	
The Rosetta Mission: comet and asteroid exploration	312
<i>R. Schulz</i>	
Deep Impact ejection from Comet 9P/Tempel 1 as a triggered outburst	317
<i>S. I. Ipatov & M. F. A'Hearn</i>	
Author index	323
Object index	325
Subject index	328

Preface

The study of the different populations of solar system small bodies is very important for understanding the accretion process in the protoplanetary disk, the different materials that condensed, and even the origin and transport of life among different worlds. This is particularly true for the ice-rich planetesimals formed beyond the snowline. Space missions, like Stardust, Deep Impact and Cassini, are bringing to us new insight about icy bodies like comets and satellites of the outer planets. Particularly interesting is the possibility that liquid water might have been present in the interiors of large icy bodies in the past, or even at present. Large surveys like Catalina, LINEAR and the upcoming Pan-STARRS or the Large Synoptic Survey Telescope (LSST) will allow us to improve our knowledge about the size and space distribution of populations of icy bodies like comets, Centaurs and TNOs.

The first ideas for this Symposium were raised during the 2006 IAU General Assembly, in Prague. At that time we felt that the great volume of new information about the different Solar System “icy bodies” would justify the proposal of a dedicated symposium, to be held in conjunction with the next IAU GA. Since its approval as part of the scientific program of the Rio de Janeiro IAU GA, we then aimed to attract planetary scientists from the different sub-areas and from a broad geographical distribution. To achieve this we took advantage of the fact that the IAU offers for this purpose a generous allotment of travel grants to assist colleagues with financial difficulties.

We are quite happy with the result: we received about 190 registrations, from which about 130 participants finally attended the symposium from around 20 different countries. The program was divided into 15 scientific sessions with 11 invited speakers, 48 oral contributions and 72 poster contributions, these discussed in three dedicated poster sessions. One key general review was also presented, as for the other symposia during the GA. The topics addressed in the symposium covered different aspects of icy bodies going from formation conditions in the protoplanetary disk, reservoirs and dynamical transport within the solar system, physics, space missions, and transition objects comet-asteroid, the latter a hot topic given the observation of activity in some main-belt asteroids. Last but not least, the relevance of icy bodies for life on Earth and elsewhere in the solar system was also addressed, in particular given the possibility that some large icy satellites of the Jovian planets might contain subsurface oceans. We present here part of the contributions to the symposium organized following the corresponding scientific program.

We are grateful to the IAU EC and Division Presidents for having selected this symposium to be held in conjunction with the XXVIIth General Assembly, an occasion when astronomers from all the fields of astronomy are gathered together. It is important to notice that this was the only symposium fully devoted to planetary sciences, an area that has had a great development in the last few decades. It is a great pleasure to acknowledge the members of the SOC, which ensured a very interesting scientific program, as well as the support from the National Organizing Committee of the XXVIIth IAU General Assembly. The comfortable venue and the wonderful city of Rio de Janeiro resulted in the perfect setting for a memorable meeting.

*Julio A. Fernández, Daniela Lazzaro, Dina Prialnik, Rita Schulz, Editors
Montevideo, Rio de Janeiro, Tel Aviv, Noordwijk, November 30, 2009*

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