

Session IV

Chemical Abundances Constraints on Mass Assembly and Star Formation 3 - The Milky Way



Manuela Zoccali during her talk.



Gehard Hensler during his talk.

Chemo-dynamical substructure of the Galactic halo

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Abstract. Deep recent surveys have considerably improved our picture of the outer Galactic halo by unveiling a complex level of substructuring in the form of streams, stellar clouds and debris systems. Here I discuss some of the recent findings and present their general properties.

Keywords. Galaxy: Halo, Galactic structure, tidal streams

1. Introduction

Eggen, Lynden-Bell & Sandage (1962; hereafter ELS) provided a first coherent picture for the formation of our Galaxy as the outcome of the dissipative collapse of a self-gravitating perturbed gas. Stars formed during the collapse would show a quite spherical distribution and the remaining gas would settle in an equilibrium disk configuration where star formation would proceed in a more steady pace. In spite of its simplicity, this scenario has some serious drawbacks, since its halo and disk components do not properly resemble the real halo and disk(s) inferred from the observations. For instance, it is presently known that the age range in the halo globular clusters is larger than the expected time scale for dissipative collapse formation of the halo (Sarajedini *et al.* 1997; De Angeli *et al.* 2005; Marín-Franch *et al.* 2009). Moreover, some clear and smooth chemokinematical trends found by ELS for the Galaxy are likely to have been formed by the particular local mixture of the main Galactic populations contributing to the stellar content of the solar neighborhood (Carollo *et al.* 2007, 2009).

Λ CDM models aimed at explaining the observed large scale structure of the distribution of galaxies have a much better performance at issues that are seen as failures of the monolithic dissipative collapse model. These give a quite intuitive explanation for the formation of the Galaxy as a hierarchical process, driven by the successive mergers of smaller subgalactic units into larger ones, making room for the existence of a population of faint satellites in the outskirts of the present-day bright galaxies. Nevertheless, the predicted number of these satellites in the Local Group is a order of magnitude or more larger than the presently known number of its satellite dwarfs (Moore *et al.* 1999; Kravtsov *et al.* 2004; Strigari *et al.* 2007; see also Tollerud *et al.* 2008 and Koposov *et al.* 2009). Several attempts have been made to solve this *missing satellite problem*, ranging from deep observations which could increase the present census of Local Group faint satellites (Willman *et al.* 2005a,b; Martin *et al.* 2006; Zucker *et al.* 2006a,b; Walsh *et al.* 2007; McConnachie *et al.* 2008; Liu *et al.* 2008) to reassessment of events in the early Universe that could hinder the lightening up of these, mainly dark, satellites (Simon & Geha 2007; D'onghia & Lake 2008; Madau *et al.* 2008; Bovill & Ricotti 2009; Yang *et al.* 2009).

Despite this inconsistency, it is clear that the Galaxy has experienced a number of merger events in its quite recent past, on account of the presence of nearby satellite galaxies. Their number should have been higher in the past and the outcome of their

interactions with the Milky Way (MW) can probably still be found as statistically significant substructures somewhat detached from the smooth stellar population distributions of the typical, canonical Galactic components. Halo substructures are also found in other spiral galaxies (e.g., Shang *et al.* 1998, Ibata *et al.* 2007, 2009; Herrmann *et al.* 2009; Martínez-Delgado *et al.* 2009a,b), and may be a quite common phenomenon attesting the tumultuous hierarchical formation of these systems.

It happens that much of the definition of what is a canonical Galactic component is somewhat biased towards what we expect from an ELS-type galaxy, especially in the case of the Galactic halo, which is expected to be an old, well-mixed, kinematically hot and non (or slightly) rotating component. Any deviation from this particular type of halo is a possible signature of past merger events between the MW and its satellite companions. This can lead to conflicting interpretations: the Virgo stellar overdensity (Jurić *et al.* 2008), the second largest MW halo substructure in angular size in the sky, can be the signature of a triaxial halo instead of the cloudy debris of a former satellite galaxy (Newberg *et al.* 2007; but see Bell *et al.* 2007).

Halo tidal substructures are diverse in shape and properties, as shown by Johnston *et al.* (2008) in a study of the morphology of tidal debris in merger-built haloes. Three main halo groups — as well as transition groups — can be distinguished, according to the distribution of the debris system around the galaxy and in phase space: the ‘mixed’, ‘cloudy’ and ‘great circles’ morphology. Each of these halo morphologies is produced by a particular accretion history such that the characterization the phase-space and chemical content of the halo substructure allows the uncovering of the MW accretion history.

2. Techniques for finding substructure

A number of techniques allows the identification of halo substructures. Those include:

- stellar density plots as a function of distance and/or position in the sky;
- color–magnitude diagrams (see, for instance, Walsh *et al.* 2009);
- Kinematical coherence in velocity phase space;
- Clustering in the angular momentum–energy diagram (Helmi *et al.* 1999; Klement *et al.* 2009); and
- Chemical abundance anomalies

Since the angular size of the halo substructures can vary substantially, the tracer used in their mapping depends on the kind of substructure one is looking for. Large substructures (star clouds and dSph tidal debris) are better traced by luminous stars like M giants, red clump giants, blue horizontal branch and RR Lyrae stars, whereas faint substructures (cold streams and GCs tidal tails) require the use of turnoff stars in order to enhance the signal of the structure in sky. Commonly a CMD filter technique — a.k.a., the ‘matched-filter’ technique (Rockosi *et al.* 2002) — allows a pre-selection of stars that consistently follows a theoretical single stellar population or the empirical CMD of a globular cluster having a given age and metallicity. The CMD filter is run in magnitude, enhancing the signal of potentially existing stellar overdensities at particular distance moduli (e.g., Grillmair 2006a, 2009; Liu *et al.* 2008).

Once a suspicious halo substructure is found, it is important to confirm its significance by comparing it with the expected stellar content, in the appropriate parameter space, predicted by a consistent Galactic model like the Besanon (Robin *et al.* 2003), the TRILEGAL (Girardi *et al.* 2005) and GALFAST model (Ivezić 2009). An alternative to making a comparison with model predictions is to use the stellar content across the main Galactic reference planes as symmetric templates for the canonical Galaxy (Rocha-Pinto *et al.* 2004, 2006); however, it must be stressed that this last check can yield false overdensities

if the stellar halo is triaxial (Newberg *et al.* 2007) or towards regions having selective reddening R_V very different from the R_V of their symmetric fields.

3. Sagittarius et alli

Figure 1 shows the approximate sky distribution of most of the presently known halo substructure in an aitoff projection using Galactic coordinates. By far, the largest debris feature in the Galactic halo is created by the disruption of the Sgr dSph (Ibata *et al.* 1994, Majewski *et al.* 2003, 2004, Newberg *et al.* 2002). Debris from Sgr are distributed according to a mix–great circle transition morphology with at least two clearly visible wraps (Belokurov *et al.* 2006). The two wraps of the Sgr tidal stream are displaced because of the precession of the Sgr orbital plane, and this puts a strong constraint to the shape of the Galactic dark halo being spherical or slightly prolate (Fellhauer *et al.* 2006), although the analysis of other parts of this debris system suggest other halo shapes (Helmi 2004a,b; Law *et al.* 2003; Johnston *et al.* 2005). Recently, Law *et al.* (2009) have suggested that this conflict can be solved the dark matter halo is triaxial.

In spite of being a dwarf spheroidal galaxy, Sgr had a complex chemical enrichment history. This can be attested by the $-1.58 < [\text{Fe}/\text{H}] < -0.71$ range shown by its stars (Marconi *et al.* 1998) and the $-2.0 < [\text{O}/\text{H}] < -0.2$ range found in its planetary nebulae (Kniazev *et al.* 2008). Moreover, there is a well-marked stellar population (Bellazzini *et al.* 2006) and abundance gradient (Chou *et al.* 2007, 2009) along the Sgr tidal stream: Stars supposed to be captured earlier have lower metal content than late-captured stars

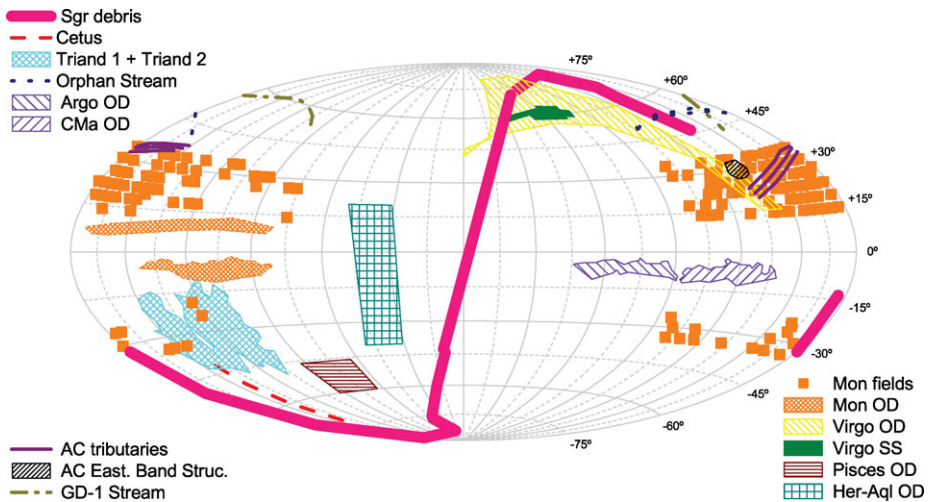


Figure 1. Aitoff projection showing the distribution of some of the presently known halo substructure in Galactic coordinates: Sgr tidal stream (Majewski *et al.* 2003), candidate Monoceros fields (Rocha-Pinto *et al.* 2003), Monoceros Northern and Southern ‘arcs’ (Martin *et al.* 2004; Rocha-Pinto *et al.* 2006), Canis Major (Martin *et al.* 2004), Argo (Rocha-Pinto *et al.* 2006), TriAnd 1 and 2 clouds (Rocha-Pinto *et al.* 2004; Martin *et al.* 2007), Virgo OD (Jurić *et al.* 2008), Virgo SS (Keller *et al.* 2009), Pisces (Watkins *et al.* 2009), Hercules-Aquila cloud (Belokurov *et al.* 2007a), Orphan stream (Belokurov *et al.* 2006), GD-1 stream (Grillmair & Dionatos 2006), Cetus stream (Newberg *et al.* 2009), Anticenter stream — tributaries and Eastern Band Structure (EBS; Grillmair 2006b). Acheron, Cocytos, Lethe and Styx (Grillmair 2009) — not shown in this plot — are located near the region where the Orphan and GD-1 cross each other. See the electronic version of this paper for a colored version of this plot.

and even lower than the metal content of Sgr-bound stars. Because it is not possible that chemical enrichment has occurred inside the stream — on account of negligible, if any, star formation in the debris —, this gradient is likely to trace the evolution of Sgr itself: The early captures are expected to have taken the less bounded stars from the dSph outskirts where less chemical enrichment are expected to have happened. Chemical enrichment proceeded in the Sgr main body in a perturbed and less gaseous environment, so that later captures correspond to a more metal-rich population, but not as rich as the Sgr galaxy where star formation continued much longer (Chou *et al.* 2007). Chou *et al.* concludes that this puts into doubt some attempts to look for captured halo stars by comparing the chemical content of the stellar populations in the halo and in the Milky Way satellites (e.g., Geisler *et al.* 2007) since abundances from halo stars accreted from mergers should not be similar to the abundances of the present-day survivor satellites.

During the last half decade, Monoceros seemed to be a low-latitude analogous of the Sgr stream. Its discovery in 2002, by Newberg *et al.* (2002) more or less coincided with the final data release of the 2MASS, prompting some groups to try to fully map it across mildly obscured lines of sight of the Galactic plane (e.g., Rocha-Pinto *et al.* 2003, Martin *et al.* 2004). The feature is very large, having associated overdensities over $\leq 40^\circ$ in b and $\leq 160^\circ$ in l . It occupies a distance range of 6-8 kpc from the Sun, becoming probably thicker at $l \geq 210^\circ$. Monoceros is not only seen as a spatial overdensity but also as a chemically peculiar feature (Ivezić *et al.* 2008), resembling very much a disrupted dSph debris system. It may be may be connected with other low- b 2MASS overdensities (CMa, Martin *et al.* 2004; Argo, Rocha-Pinto *et al.* 2006) which have been proposed as remanent cores of the disrupted dwarf. Nevertheless, there is still an inconclusive debate over the nature of these two overdensities (Rocha-Pinto *et al.* 2006, Bellazzini *et al.* 2006, Momany *et al.* 2004, 2006; Mateu *et al.* 2009). Particularly, on account of the absence of an unequivocal core and its confusion with the Galactic disk beyond $l \geq 225^\circ$, we still miss a clear picture of the morphology of this system. It could be a ring, as proposed by Ibata *et al.* (2003), a stream with a yet to-be-confirmed core or a star cloud debris system like Virgo. Some lines of sight crossing Monoceros also show evidence for somewhat farther overdensities which could be independent from Monoceros: the Anticenter Stream (A-C Stream) and three narrow ‘tributary cold streams running nearly parallel to it (Grillmair 2006b; Grillmair *et al.* 2008). Grillmair advances an interesting hypothesis that the tributaries could be debris from satellite clusters of the parent galaxy which created the A-C Stream. Note that the A-C Stream should not be confused with the Galactic Anticenter Stellar Stream (GASS), an alternative name for Monoceros used by Rocha-Pinto *et al.* (2003), Crane *et al.* (2003) and Frinchaboy *et al.* (2004), although stars from the A-C stream may have been mixed up with stars from Monoceros in the early analysis of these lines of sight.

The first ‘cloudy’ debris discovered around the Milky Way was Triangulum-Andromeda, a.k.a, TriAnd (Rocha-Pinto *et al.* 2004; Majewski *et al.* 2004). TriAnd has some curious properties: it is a very faint substructure, occupying nearly $30^\circ \times 40^\circ$ in the sky. By the time of its discovery, it was not clear how to produce puffed-up debris clouds like this, but Johnston *et al.* (2008) have shown that this morphology can be quite common. A thinner, farther structure (named ‘TriAnd 2’) was found in the same region by Martin *et al.* (2007). Majewski *et al.* (2004) and Martin *et al.* (2007) estimate a surface brightness of $\mu \sim 32$ mag arcsec $^{-1}$ for both TriAnd’s. Considering Fig. 4 from Johnston *et al.* (2008), cloud debris having this surface value may correspond to an accretion event 6-8 Gyr ago. In Peñarrubia *et al.* (2005)’s model TriAnd is explained as a past wrap of the Monoceros debris system. However, Majewski *et al.* (2010; in this proceedings) argues that TriAnd is chemically very distinct from Mon.

A large set of halo substructures was unveiled in the analysis of the SDSS stellar content, ranging from several cold streams to new ultrafaint satellite galaxies. Among them, a large debris system is the Virgo Stellar Overdensity (VOD; Jurić *et al.* 2008), whose existence has been suspected since the early 2000 from an overdensity of RR Lyrae in the QUEST survey (Vivas *et al.* 2001). It has the morphology of a star cloud, like TriAnd, with no apparent center. VOD could be part of the Sgr leading tail (Martínez-Delgado *et al.* 2007), but Newberg *et al.* (2007) and Yanny *et al.* (2009) argue that the Sgr tail passes at a different distance along the same line of sight. Just like for Monoceros and TriAnd, smaller substructures (including the Virgo Stellar Stream, a.k.a VSS) seem to share the VOD distance range and have possibly an independent origin (Duffau *et al.* 2006; Prior *et al.* 2009; Keller *et al.* 2009).

Other cloudy SDSS overdensities have been reported in the literature: Hercules-Aquila (HerAql; Belokurov *et al.* 2007a) and Pisces (Sesar *et al.* 2007; Watkins *et al.* 2009; Kollmeier *et al.* 2009). HerAql occupies an angular size of $\sim 80^\circ \times 50^\circ$ and can be seen above and below the Galactic plane (Belokurov *et al.* 2007a), lying between 10 to 20 kpc from the Sun toward $l \sim 40^\circ$. Belokurov *et al.* (2007a) proposes that it could be a new structural component of the inner halo. However, the southern regions of this overdensity (not covered by the presently available SDSS data) still need to be properly mapped before confirming this hypothesis. The Pisces overdensity has been initially seen by Sesar *et al.* (2007) as an overdensity of RR Lyrae stars in SDSS Stripe 82. Later, Watkins *et al.* (2009) independently found it and christened it that way. It is centered at $(l, b) \sim (80^\circ, -55^\circ)$, at a distance of ~ 80 kpc. Watkins *et al.* (2009) estimates its total mass as a few $10^4 M_\odot$. Kollmeier *et al.* (2009) have spectroscopically confirmed the existence of the overdensity and suggests that Pisces can be a new Milky Way satellite dwarf galaxy possibly in the process of disruption.

A great deal of attention has been given to the discovery of cold streams in SDSS on account of the deepness of the survey which allows reaching the distant turnoff stars of these narrow substructures. The most well studied of these are the Orphan Stream (Belokurov *et al.* 2007b; Grillmair 2006a) and the 63°-long Grillmair-Dionatos 1 Stream (Grillmair & Dionatos 2006). Other reported discoveries are Acheron, Cocytos, Lethe and Styx (Grillmair 2009) — a creative pattern of designations to avoid the boring repetition of constellation names in several different astronomical objects — and Cetus (Newberg *et al.* 2009). Structures like these can persist over timescales of 2-4 Gyr (Younger *et al.* 2008) and are particularly interesting because they trace the orbit of their parental body (e.g., Willett *et al.* 2009) and allow the constraining of the Galactic potential (Koposov *et al.* 2009; Eyre & Binney 2009).

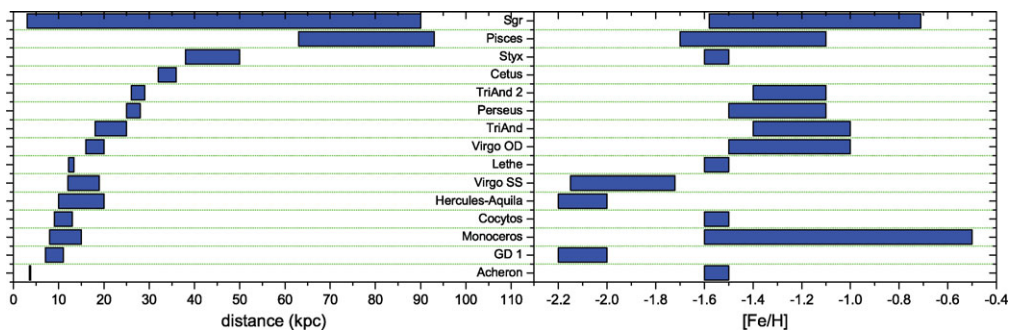


Figure 2. Distance and metallicity ranges for some of the presently known halo substructures.

It is not very easy to find halo structures by exclusively looking for correlations between chemical anomalies and spatial positions. In spite of it, Roederer (2008) has showed that the “kinematically diverse outer halo population is also chemically diverse”, suggesting that they were formed in “regions where chemical enrichment was dominated by local SN events.” Also, there are some chemically distinct overdensities in the SDSS data as Monoceros, Virgo and an unnamed significantly overabundant region in Figure 9a from Ivezić *et al.* (2009) at 2-3 kpc above the Galactic plane.

4. General properties of the halo substructures and conclusions

In Figure 2, I show the metallicity range of some know substructures. The metallicity distribution for each structure is not completely typical of the canonical (inner) halo, but there are presently no spectroscopic abundance determinations for several of them, so that Figure 2 can not be taken as more than an illustrative diagram of the chemical properties of the halo substructures. Future chemical abundance surveys (e.g., APOGEE, HERMES) may allow a more systematic chemical tagging of the signatures of recent past merging events and the discovery for chemically peculiar, possibly captured, stars like SDSS J234723.64+010833.4 (Lai *et al.* 2009).

Figure 2 also show the Galactocentric distance ditribution of these substructures. Several of the cloudy overdensities are located between 20-30 kpc in remarkable agreement with the predictions by Johnston *et al.* (2008). Nevertheless, because these substructures can have diverse origins, comparisons between their distances are not much significant.

It is likely that several other cold streams like these exist in the outer halo (Sales *et al.* 2008). A typical MW-size galaxy should have > 10% of its halo in the form of substructures (Johnston *et al.* 2008). A similar estimate was made by Starkenburg *et al.* (2009) from a star pair analysis of the pencil-beam survey Spaghetti project. As an example of the prolific abundance of substructures in the halo, three new stellar overdensities were announced when this article was being prepared (Keller 2009). The majority of presently known halo substructures comes from two very recent photometric surveys: SDSS and 2MASS. Considering that SDSS has mapped $\sim 1/3$ of the sky down to $r \sim 23$ and 2MASS has mapped >99% of the sky down to $K_S \sim 15$, there are still much to be searched both in sky and spectral coverage and the several upcoming surveys (GAIA, DES, Pan-STARRS, SIM, etc.) will provide a whole lot of new structures improving our charactrization of the outer halo and our understanding of the Milky Way build up.

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