EPSC Abstracts,
Vol. 4, EPSC2009-511, 2009
European Planetary Science Congress,

Global Geologic Mapping of Ganymede

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Abstract

We have completed a global geological map of Ganymede that represents the most recent understanding of the satellite on the basis of Galileo mission results. This contribution builds on important previous accomplishments in the study of Ganymede utilizing Voyager data [e.g., 1-5] and incorporates the many new discoveries that were brought about by examination of Galileo data [e.g., 6-10]. Material units have been defined, structural landforms have been identified, and an approximate stratigraphy has been determined utilizing a global mosaic of the surface with a nominal resolution of 1 km/pixel assembled by the USGS. This mosaic incorporates the best available Voyager and Galileo regional coverage and high resolution imagery (100-200 m/pixel) of characteristic features and terrain types obtained by the Galileo spacecraft. This effort has provided a more complete understanding of: 1) the major geological processes operating on Ganymede, 2) the characteristics of the geological units making up its surface, 3) the stratigraphic relationships of geological units and structures, and 4) the geological history inferred from these relationships.

Material units

Four fundamental geologic materials have been defined for Ganymede; dark, light, reticulate (**r**), and impact material [11,12]. On the basis of our mapping, dark material on Ganymede has been subdivided into three units; cratered (**dc**), lineated (**dl**), and undivided (**d**), while light material has been subdivided into four units; grooved (**lg**), subdued (**ls**), irregular (**li**), and undivided (**l**). Impact material encompasses palimpsest, crater, and basin materials. Palimpsest material is further subdivided into four units; three of these are distinguished on the basis of their stratigraphic relationship with light material units (**p_1**, **p_2** and **pu**) and the fourth is an interior plains unit (**pi**). Five crater units – fresh (**c_3**), partially degraded (**c_2**), degraded (**c_1**), unclassified (**cu**), and ejecta (**ce**)- comprise the crater materials, and two units – rugged (**br**) and smooth (**bs**) - comprise basin material.

Stratigraphy

As part of our global mapping effort, we have identified ~4000 craters >10km in diameter across the surface of Ganymede. This dataset has enabled us to calculate crater densities on a global-scale (Table 1) and compliments previous regional estimates of crater densities calculated utilizing counting areas 10 to 100 times smaller [e.g., 1,13].

Table 1.

	10 km[a]	20 km	30 km	Area (x 10^6 km^2)
Light				
grooved	39±2	14±1	8±1	9.29
	(44±3) [b]	(14±2)		(5.71)
irregular	30±4	13±3	6±2	1.94
	(20±5)	(5±2)		(0.992)
subdued	42±2	18±1	9±1	8.24
	(39±3)	(15±2)		(4.90)
Dark				
cratered	85±2	32±1	15±1	21.9
	(97±2)	(34±1)		(16.3)
lineated	67±8	19±4	8±3	1.06
	(69±8)	(20±4)		(1.01)
Reticulate				
reticulate	39±12	18±8	4±4	0.28
	(39±12)	(18±8)		(0.28)
Impact				
Palimpsest	61±7	23±4		1.37
Basin	19±5	11±4		0.80

[a]Number of craters ≥ the quoted diameter, normalized to 10^6 km^2.
[b]Numbers in parenthesis indicate values calculated from image data at resolutions ≤ 1.5 km/pixel.

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These data confirm that dark cratered material is the oldest material on Ganymede and that light materials formed substantially later. Dark lineated material and reticulate terrain have crater densities on the higher end of light material units, suggesting they mark a transition into the formation of light materials. Palimpsests are older than light materials, dark lineated material, and reticulate terrain, but younger than dark cratered terrain. Finally, Gilgamesh basin appears to be younger than light materials.

The mapping of groove orientations within polygons of light material and the cross-cutting relationships of those polygons with respect to each other have given us additional insight into the time sequence of their formation [14,15]. To determine this sequence, ~2000 light material polygons were run through a sorting algorithm [16,17]. The results suggested that four episodes (Fig. 1) of light material formation could describe the observed distribution of the orientations of grooves within polygons of light material. Using this distribution, and the fact that light material appears to form predominantly by extension [1,6,18], a strain history for light material formation was then determined [15]. This history was compared to various proposed driving mechanisms for the formation of light material and it was determined that stresses due to internal differentiation provided the best fit to the data.

Summary

In compiling the first global geologic map of Ganymede, we have been able to integrate valuable insights garnered from the Galileo mission into extensive work done mapping quadrangles of the satellite's surface based on Voyager data [e.g., 3-5]. New map units have been described and some previously determined ones have been combined, important structures and landforms have been recognized and classified, and a global stratigraphy has been determined. Further, based on these mapping efforts, a driving mechanism for the formation of light material has been proposed.

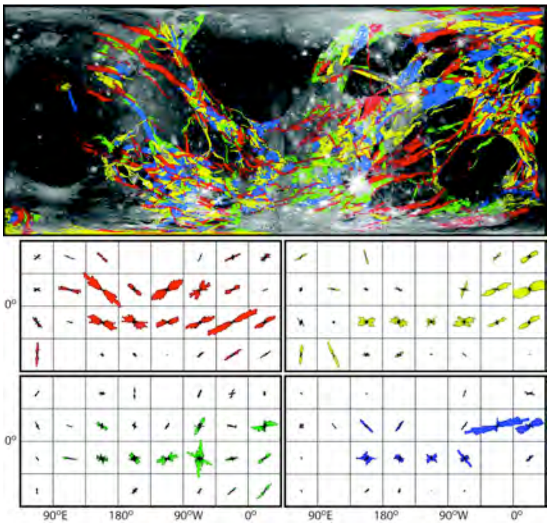

Fig. 1. Global image mosaic of Ganymede with 4 episodes of light material formation superposed (red, yellow, green, and blue). Variability of the orientations with latitude and longitude of groove sets within each episode are shown.

References

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