

The global composition of comet 67P's dust as measured *in situ* by the COSIMA mass spectrometer

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Abstract

We report here the global composition of the dust particles released from the Jupiter family comet 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko, as deduced from the COSIMA instrument measurements during the two years of Rosetta mission. We will particularly focus on the high carbon content found [1] and discuss its astrophysical significance and implications.

1. Introduction

COSIMA (COmetary Secondary Ion Mass Analyzer) was a Time-Of-Flight Secondary Ion Mass Spectrometer (TOF-SIMS) on board the Rosetta spacecraft [2, 3]. During two years, the instrument allowed *in situ* analysis of the dust particles released from 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko before and after the comet's perihelion. Compared to the previous space missions targeting a comet, COSIMA collected the cometary dust at a lower impact velocity ($<10 \text{ m.s}^{-1}$ [4]) that largely preserved the dust chemical properties and part of its physical structure such as the particle porosity [5, 6]. More than 35,000 particles were collected during the mission [7] and about 250, ranging from ~ 50 to $\sim 1000 \mu\text{m}$ in size (Figure 1), were analyzed by TOF-SIMS.

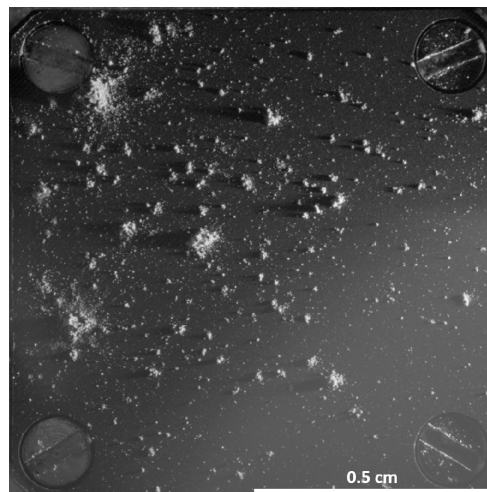


Figure 1: A collecting target (1 cm x 1 cm) of the COSIMA instrument showing cometary dust particles (up to a millimetre in size) that impacted it. Credit: ESA / Rosetta / MPS for COSIMA MPS / CSNSM Team / UNIBW / TUORLA / IWF / IAS / ESA / BUW / MPE / LPC2E / LCM / IMF / UTU / LISA / UOFC / vH & S.

2. Results and discussion

We will present the elemental composition of the cometary dust as deduced from COSIMA

measurements [1, 8, 9]. The average elemental composition measured for 67P's dust will be compared to previous results obtained from the Giotto and Vega missions for comet 1P/Halley and the Stardust mission for comet 81P/Wild 2, to the composition of Chondritic Porous Interplanetary Dust Particles (CP-IDPs), and to the CI chondrite composition.

According to the mass spectra measurements, 67P's dust has a high carbon content (atomic $C/Si = 5.5^{+1.4}_{-1.2}$ on average) [1] close to the solar value and comparable to comet 1P/Halley's value. Based on their elemental composition, the cometary particles collected by COSIMA are estimated to be made of nearly 50% organic matter in mass mixed with minerals that are mostly anhydrous (Figure 2).

The dust collected and analyzed by COSIMA is representative of 67P's non-volatile composition. The average minerals to organics mass ratio deduced from the TOF-SIMS measurements (Figure 2) gives constraints on the comet's surface and nucleus characteristics. The astrochemical implications of COSIMA results will be discussed with a focus on the high carbon content found in the cometary dust [1].

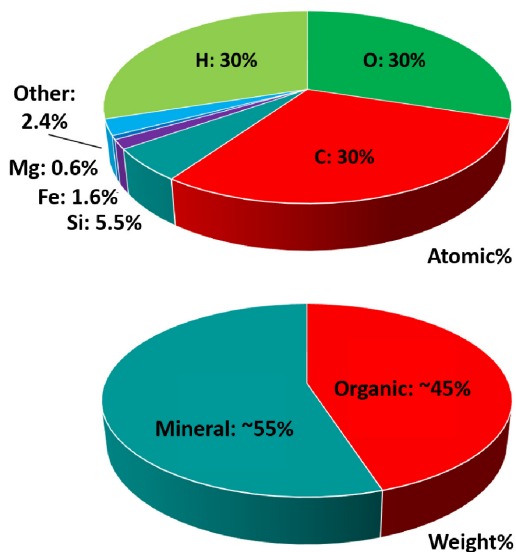


Figure 2: Top panel: the average elemental composition of the dust particles of comet 67P. Lower panel: the average mass distribution of minerals and organic material in these particles [1].

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