

# **On the Relationship Between Gas and Dust in Comets: an Application to Comet 85P/Boethin**

## **Sobre a relação entre o gás e a poeira em Cometas: uma aplicação ao Cometa 85P/Boethin**

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**Abstract:** Except for some narrowband photometric observations obtained by A'Hearn et al. (1995), in literature there is no other information available about Comet 85P/Boethin's activity, such as mass loss and nuclear size for this short-period ( $\sim 11.2$  years) comet. In an effort to find more information about this object, we have used visual magnitude measurements available from *International Comet Quarterly* (ICQ) to obtain the water production rates (in molecules  $s^{-1}$ ) related to its perihelion passage of 1986 by applying the Semi-Empirical Method of Visual Magnitudes-SEMVM (de Almeida et al., 1997; Sanzovo et al., 2001). When associated to Delsemme's (1982) water vaporization theory, these rates allowed for the calculus of the dimension of the effective minimum nuclear radius of the comet. The water production rates were then converted into gas production rates (in  $g s^{-1}$ ) so that, applying the correlation between gas and dust found for eleven periodic and three non-periodic comets deduced by Trevisan Sanzovo (2006),

we have obtained the dust loss rates (in  $\text{g s}^{-1}$ ), its behavior with the heliocentric distance and the dust-to-gas ratios for this little-known comet.

**Key words:** gas release rates; dust release rates; dust-to-gas ratios; short-period comets; non-periodic comets; Comet 85P/Boethin.

**Resumo:** Com exceção de algumas observações fotométricas de banda estreita realizadas por A'Hearn et al. (1995) não há, na literatura, nenhuma outra informação disponível sobre a atividade do Cometa 85P/Boethin, tais como perda de massa e dimensão nuclear para este cometa de curto-período (~11,2 anos). Em um esforço no sentido de encontrar mais informações a respeito deste objeto, nós usamos, neste trabalho, medidas de magnitudes visuais disponíveis no periódico *International Comet Quarterly* (ICQ) para obter, aplicando o método Semi-Empírico das Magnitudes Visuais - MSEM (de Almeida et al., 1997; Sanzovo et al., 2001), as taxas da produção da água (em moléculas  $\text{s}^{-1}$ ) relativas à sua passagem periélica de 1986. Quando associadas à teoria de vaporização da água de Delsemme (1982), essas taxas permitiram o cálculo da dimensão do raio nuclear mínimo efetivo do cometa. As taxas da produção de água foram convertidas, então, em taxas de produção de gás (em  $\text{g s}^{-1}$ ) de modo que, aplicando a correlação entre o gás e a poeira encontrada para onze cometas periódicos e três não-periódicos, deduzida por Trevisan Sanzovo (2006), nós obtivemos as taxas da perda de poeira (em  $\text{g s}^{-1}$ ), seu comportamento com a distância heliocêntrica e as razões poeira-gás deste cometa pouco conhecido.

**Palavras-chave:** taxas de perda de gás; taxas de perda de poeira; razões poeira-gás, cometas de curto-período; cometas não-periódicos; Cometa 85P/Boethin.

## 1. Introduction

Comet 85P/Boethin was discovered on 1975 January 4.5 in Abra, The Philippines, by Reverend Leo Maximilian Boethin with an estimated visual magnitude of  $\sim 12$ , and observed again only in 1986. On the occasion of its

return in 1997, the comet could not be observed from the Earth since it was behind the Sun. Today it is known that the comet has an orbital period of  $\sim 11.2$  years and that as to perihelion passage of 1986, the inclination of its orbit with respect to the ecliptic plane and the perihelion distance were  $\sim 5.7^\circ$  and 1.114 AU, respectively, and with perihelic date reached on 1986 January 16.4 (Marsden & Williams, 1993). For this return, ICQ makes available a set of 188 visual magnitudes measurements taken between 1985 November 3.4 and 1986 March 28.8, corresponding to  $r = 1.513$  AU in the pre-perihelion phase and  $r = 1.491$  AU, in the post-perihelion phase. These observational data were obtained by several observers and were published in various issues of ICQ. The maximum brightness of the comet was reached on 1986 January 8.97, resulting in a visual magnitude  $m_v = 7.0$ , obtained using a 20.3 cm aperture reflector. In this work, the application of the Semi-Empirical Method of Visual Magnitudes (SEMVM) to this visual magnitude data - unique in literature - obtained during the perihelion passage of 1986 of Comet 85P/Boethin allowed the deduction of the water production rates (in molecules  $s^{-1}$ ), which together with the vaporization theory of Delsemme (1982) allowed for the determination of the comet's nuclear dimension, besides its gas loss rates (in  $g s^{-1}$ ). We also used the gas-to-dust correlation found by Trevisan Sanzovo (2006) for ten Jupiter Family (JF) comets with the purpose of estimating the corresponding dust loss rates. This correlation is applied to Comet 85P/Boethin. To this date, there is no information in literature concerning its activity, such as nuclear dimension, mass, and mainly, those associated to the amount of matter lost in the form of gas and dust. To the best of our knowledge, the only information available in literature is from A'Hearn et al. (1995) who provide an average estimate for the water release rates at  $r = 1.12$  AU. The use of the correlation found between the gas and dust made possible the estimate the dust-loss rates, as well as the dust-to-gas ratios.

## 2. Theoretical Considerations

### 2.1 The Semi-Empirical Method of Visual Magnitudes (SEMVM) and the Gas-to-Dust correlation

Assuming that  $m'_v (= m_{6.78} - 5 \log \Delta)$  is the total visual magnitude observed from the coma of a comet, reduced to the standard diameter of 6.78 cm when the observer is placed at a standard geocentric distance  $\Delta = 1$  AU (Morris, 1973), and the comet at a heliocentric distance  $r(\text{AU})$ , the water production rate (in molecules  $\text{s}^{-1}$ ) is given by (Newburn 1981; de Almeida et al., 1997; Sanzovo et al., 2001)

$$Q(\text{H}_2\text{O}) \left\{ \frac{r^2 \cdot 10^{[0.4(-26.8 - m'_v) - p \cdot R_N^2 \cdot \Phi_N]} \cdot 0.825}{R \cdot l_r \cdot [1 + \delta(r, \theta)]} \right\} \quad (1)$$

where  $p=p(\lambda)$  is the geometric visual albedo of the comet's nucleus with radius  $R_N$ , and  $\Phi_N = 0.9982e^{-1.842\alpha}$ , where  $\alpha$  is the phase angle (in rad) of the comet (Sanzovo et al., 1996; Singh et al., 1997). A'Hearn et al. (1995) showed that JF comets are carbon-depleted having low abundances of carbon-chain species like  $\text{C}_2$ ,  $\text{C}_3$ , and  $\text{CN}$  when compared to Halley-type (HT) and long-period (LP) comets. Equation (1) represents an average correlation between water release rates and  $\text{C}_2$  production rates, obtained using observational data from Comet Levy (C/1990 K1) and seven JF comets (6P/d'Arrest, 9P/Tempel 1, 10P/Tempel 2, 22P/Kopff, 26P/Grigg-Skjellerup, 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko, and 81P/Wild 2), as reported by Sanzovo et al. (2001). The parameter  $R$ , the resonance fluorescence efficiency constant, takes in account the water release rates, an assumed known value for the nucleus radius  $R_N$ , and is determined empirically, varying between  $\sim 10^{-39}$  and  $\sim 10^{-37} \text{ cm}^2 \text{ s}^{-1}$  according to the periodicity of the comet. We adopted  $8 \times 10^{-38} \text{ cm}^2 \text{ s}^{-1}$  for JF comets,  $2 \times 10^{-38} \text{ cm}^2 \text{ s}^{-1}$  for HT comets, and  $5 \times 10^{-39} \text{ cm}^2 \text{ s}^{-1}$  for LP comets like Levy (C/1990 K1). If we knew the fluorescence process by which  $\text{C}_2$  is formed (see for instance Rousselot et al., 2000 and other references therein), we might have been able to derive a theoretical value for  $R$ ; while  $l_r (=6.6 \times 10^4 \cdot r^2)$  is the scale-length for photodissociation of  $\text{C}_2$  radical

(Randall et al., 1992; A'Hearn et al., 1995). In equation (1) the nucleus makes a significant contribution only when the phase angle  $\zeta$  of the comet is small. For the 1986 return of Comet 85P/Boethin, ICQ observational data provide phase angles varying between  $\sim 35^\circ$  and  $\sim 47^\circ$ . Therefore, it should be noted that in equation (1) the nuclear radius RN may be ignored with the used measurements, and was a free parameter in order to run the computer code. The dust-to-gas ratio in a comet can be expressed by (Ney 1982)

$$\partial(r, \theta) = \frac{\partial(r, 90)\partial(\theta)}{\partial(90)} \quad (2)$$

in which the scattering function  $\delta(\theta)$  is obtained from the observational curve proposed by Divine (1981), for the scattering angle  $\theta = 180^\circ - \alpha$ , and  $\delta(90) = 0.0362$ . We have determined and applied in equation (1) the dependencies of  $\delta(r, 90)$  on  $r$  for each individual comet studied in our sample.

Once the water production rates are obtained, its conversion into gas loss rates can be accomplished, considering a gaseous mixture of  $\sim 77\%$   $H_2O$ ,  $\sim 13\%$  CO, and  $\sim 10\%$  of other molecular species with average molecular weight of  $\sim 30$  amu (Sanzovo et al., 1996; Singh et al., 1997). Following this, the gas loss rates (in  $g\ s^{-1}$ ) correlates to the water production rates (in molecule  $s^{-1}$ ) through the expression

$$q_g = 3.42 \times 10^{-23} Q(H_2O) \quad (3)$$

Besides the water (and gas) production rates, the structure of SEMVM can be combined with the water vaporization theory, described by Delsemme (1982), in order to obtain an estimate of the minimum and effective nuclear dimension of a comet. If  $A_{AA}$  is the total active surface area on the nucleus at a heliocentric distance  $r$ , and  $Z(T)$  is the sublimation rate of this volatile, per unit area, then  $A_{AA} = Q(H_2O)/f_{AA} \cdot Z(T)$ , where  $Q(H_2O)$  is the water production rate (in molecules  $s^{-1}$ ) inferred through the SEMVM for that same heliocentric distance, and  $f_{AA}$  is the fraction of active surface area. Assuming a slow rotation hypothesis for the nucleus with spherically symmetric  $f_{AA} = 1$ , this active surface area will be bound to the comet's minimum nuclear radius by (de Almeida et al., 1997)

$$\frac{A_{AA}}{2\pi(R_N)^2} \leq 1 \quad (4)$$

Once the  $f_{AA}$  parameter is fixed, the Delsemme's theory (1982) can be used to calculate the effective nuclear radius for comets. Tancredi et al. (2000) present a catalog of a sample of 105 JF comets with "best estimates" of their absolute visual nuclear magnitudes. They discarded 33 JF comets, for which they were not able to adopt or even approach a reasonable estimate of a nuclear magnitude mainly because there are very few data. 85P/Boethin is amongst these comets.

In view of the very scant information in literature referring to Comet 85P/Boethin, except for the visual magnitude data available in several issues of ICQ, we used for the estimate of the dust loss rates,  $q_d$ , the gas-to-dust correlation found by Trevisan Sanzovo (2006) for Comets 9P/Tempel 1, 10P/Tempel 2, 21P/Giacobini-Zinner (21P/GZ), 22P/Kopff, 24P/Schaumasse, 26P/Grigg-Skjellerup (26P/GS), 46P/Wirtanen, 62P/Tsuchinshan 1, 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko (67P/CG), and 81P/Wild 2 determined for  $\lambda = 4845$  and  $4770 \text{ \AA}$ , and dust particle density  $\rho_d = 0.5 \text{ g cm}^{-3}$ . The correlation is given by

$$\log(q_g) = (2.052 \pm 0.187) + (0.755 \pm 0.043) \times \log(q_d) \quad (5)$$

and appear illustrated in Figure 1. The same figure shows another dust-to-gas correlation [ $\log(q_g) = (-0.200 \pm 0.203) + (1.067 \pm 0.031) \times \log(q_d)$ ] valid for Comets C/Hale-Bopp, C/Hyakutake, C/Levy, and also including 1P/Halley. To estimate those correlations, Trevisan Sanzovo (2006) used continuum data given by Schleicher et al. (1998) and Catalano et al. (1986) for Comet 1P/Halley; Miguel Torres (2001) for Comets 10P/Tempel 2, 67P/CG, and 81P/Wild 2; Schleicher et al. (1987) for Comet 21P/GZ; Storrs et al. (1992), and Schleicher (2006) for Comets 9P/Tempel 1, 22P/Kopff, 24P/Schaumasse, 26P/GS, 62P/Tsuchinshan 1, and 67P/CG; Osip et al. (1992) for Comets 10P/Tempel 2 and 81P/Wild 2; Farnham & Schleicher (1998) for Comet 46P/Wirtanen; Schleicher & Osip (2002) for Comet C/Hyakutake; Schleicher et al. (1991) for Comet C/Levy, and Schleicher et al. (1997) for Comet C/Hale-Bopp. The use of equation (5) correlating the gas and dust for JF cometary sample made the estimate of the

dust loss rates possible, as well as the dust-to-gas ratios for the 1986 return of Comet 85P/Boethin.

### 3. Results and discussion

We study the space-temporal behavior presented by the gas and dust in Comet 85P/Boethin, comparing the results with those for a sample which includes Comet 1P/Halley, 3 LP comets, namely C/Hale-Bopp, C/Hyakutake, and C/Levy, and 10 JF comets - 9P/Tempel 1, 10P/Tempel 2, 21P/GZ, 22P/Kopff, 24P/Schaumasse, 26P/GS, 46P/Wirtanen, 62P/Tsuchinshan 1, 67P/CG, and 81P/Wild 2 - obtained by Trevisan Sanzovo (2006), also using ICQ data archives, and applying the SEMVM. The gas production rates (in  $\text{g s}^{-1}$ ) were deduced through the SEMVM while the dust production rates (in  $\text{g s}^{-1}$ ) were obtained using equation (5). Our analysis is based on Figures 1 to 6 and also on Table I, which summarizes main results. There, in addition to the nomenclature, the first column shows the perihelion passages corresponding to the gas and dust analysis quoted between parenthesis and brackets, respectively. In column 2, we have the orbital period (in years) of the objects, while the nuclear radius (in km), the fraction of active area (in %), and the active surface area (in  $\text{km}^2$ ) are shown in column 3 of the same table. For completeness, the result from A'Hearn et al. (1995) observations is also plotted in our Figures 1 and 6.

#### 3.1. Nuclear Dimensions and Masses

We fixed the active surface area in 20% for the nuclear hemisphere lit by the Sun (Möhlmann, 1999), and the water production rates obtained through the application of SEMVM were combined with the vaporization rates of Delsemme (1982), resulting in an effective nuclear radius of  $\sim 1.9$  km for Comet 85P/Boethin. As can also be inferred from Figure 3, if  $f_{AA}=1.0$ , the water vaporization and production rates will be compatible with a minimum nuclear radius of  $\sim 0.8$  km.

We have verified, therefore, that Comet 85P/Boethin has, amongst the JF comets of the sample, about the same dimension as Comet 21P/GZ, whose

effective nuclear radius is  $\sim 1.7$  km. In contrast, for an activity of 100%, 85P/Boethin is nearly twice smaller than Comet 1P/Halley whose minimum nuclear radius is 1.5 km. We also make an estimate of the nuclear masses which are shown in column 4 of Table I. For this calculation, we considered a spherical nucleus and adopted a mean nuclear density  $\rho_N = 0.5 \text{ g cm}^{-3}$ , given by Keller et al. (1986). With this procedure we verify that Comet 85P/Boethin is a JF comet with intermediary mass, being comparable to 21P/GZ, and about one order of magnitude less massive than Comet 22P/Kopff.

### 3.2 Gas, Dust, Dust-to-Gas Ratios and Productivity

The application of SEMVM to Comet 85P/Boethin yield average gas production rates (in  $\text{g s}^{-1}$ ) which vary with the heliocentric distance according with the power-law:

$$q_g = (4.323 \pm 0.081) \times 10^6 \cdot r^{-5.21(\pm 0.45)} \quad (6)$$

in the pre-perihelion phase  $1.513 \leq r \text{ (AU)} \leq 1.114$ , and

$$q_g = (4.267 \pm 0.115) \times 10^6 \cdot r^{-5.34(\pm 0.56)} \quad (7)$$

in the post-perihelion phase comprehended between  $r = 1.115$  and  $1.491$  AU. The behavior of these rates with the  $r/q$  ratio, where  $q (=1.114 \text{ AU})$  is the perihelion distance, can be visualized in Figure 2.

The application of equation (5) yield dust loss rates (in  $\text{g s}^{-1}$ ) which vary with  $r$  according with the power-law

$$q_g = (1.177 \pm 0.087) \times 10^6 \cdot r^{-7.04(\pm 0.45)} \quad (8)$$

for both pre- and post-perihelion phases, and those temporal variations (in days, with respect to perihelion) are shown in Figure 4. In Figure 5 we show the behavior of the dust-to-gas ratios ( $\chi$ ) with  $r$ . The variation of the total mass production rates with  $r/q$  for Comet 85P/Boethin together with short-period comets 1P/Halley, 9P/Tempel 1, 10P/Tempel 2, 21P/GZ, 22P/Kopff, 24P/Schaumasse, 26P/GS, 46P/Wirtanen, 62P/Tsuchinshan 1, 67P/CG, 81P/Wild



2, and the LP comets C/Hyakutake, C/Levy, and C/Hale-Bopp, studied by Trevisan Sanzovo (2006) is shown in Figure 6. Using the power law represented by (6), we find that, at perihelion ( $r = 1.114$  AU), Comet 85P/Boethin lost gas at an average rate of  $\sim 2.5 \times 10^6$  g s<sup>-1</sup>, while Figure 2 shows a maximum of gas production rate estimated as  $qg \cong 7 \times 10^6$  g s<sup>-1</sup>. At this same heliocentric distance, A'Hearn et al. (1995) found a maximum for water release rates of  $3.3 \times 10^{28}$  molecules s<sup>-1</sup> ( $qg \cong 1 \times 10^6$  g s<sup>-1</sup>).

The inspection of Table I shows that 85P/Boethin is nearly two orders of magnitude less active than Comet 1P/Halley, and about two orders and a half of magnitude less productive than Comet C/Hale-Bopp. Besides the orbital period, dimensions and nuclear masses, Table I also presents in columns 5, 6, and 8 the dependencies with heliocentric distance of the gas and dust loss rates, and dust-to-gas mass ratios, respectively. In the last two columns of the same Table I we present nuclear radii and respective references found in literature, for comparison. In his analysis of 14 comets applied to Comet 85P/Boethin, Trevisan Sanzovo (2006) found an average ratio of  $1.44 \pm 1.58$  at  $1-\sigma$  level amongst his results and those in literature. The errors are derived mainly from propagation of the visual magnitudes uncertainties within the framework of the SEMVM. With the accuracy of both the method and ICQ observational data which has a typical scattering of  $\pm 0.4$  magnitude (Green & Morris, 1987), it seems difficult to be more precise in the estimation of those values. A factor 2 error is estimated by Newburn & Spinrad (1985) from their photometric method for dust cometary particles. In view of the significant uncertainties involved in both methods, we conclude that our results for  $R_N$  are in reasonably good agreement with those found in literature, as shown in Table I.

The total mass loss rates,  $Q_T$  (in kg s<sup>-1</sup>), in the form of gas and dust, are shown in column 7 of the table, being obtained fixing  $r = 1.6$  AU. This heliocentric distance was chosen from a rigorous analysis of the perihelion distance presented by the comets of the sample. The results indicate that Comets 22P/Kopff and 81P/Wild 2 in 1996 and 1997 apparitions, respectively, lost nearly twice more mass than Comet 85P/Boethin which in the pre-perihelic phase was more productive than Comets 9P/Tempel 1, 10P/Tempel 2, 21P/GZ, 24P/Schaumasse, 26P/GS, 46P/

Wirtanen, and 62P/Tsuchinshan 1. From Figure 5, we can conclude that Comet 85P/Boethin has predominantly  $0.15 < \chi < 0.30$ , being classified as belonging to the family of comets with intermediate dust-to-gas ratios (Sanzovo et al., 1996). Also, our results given in Figures 2, 4 and 6 show that the comet has intermediary gas and dust loss rates close to perihelion suggesting a slight pre-perihelion asymmetry. However, this conclusion should be verified by future observations of the evolution of gas and dust components from ground-based telescopes.

### Acknowledgments

D.T.S. is thankful to CAPES/PROPPG/UEL, G.C.S. is thankful to PROPPG/UEL, and A.A.A. is very grateful for the financial support from FAPESP (São Paulo, SP, Brazil) under contract No. 04/01215-1.

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