List of publications

Modeling of neutron star atmospheres and emergent radiation

Paper I. Nättilä, J., Suleimanov, V. F., Kajava, J. J. E., Poutanen, J.: Models of neutron star atmospheres enriched with nuclear burning ashes, 2015, A&A, 581:A83, http://dx.doi.org/10.1051/0004-6361/201526512

Paper II. Nättilä, J. Pihajoki, P.: Radiation from rapidly rotating oblate neutron stars, 2017, A&A, submitted

Understanding the astrophysical environments of X-ray bursts

Paper III. Poutanen, J., Nättilä, J., Kajava, J. J. E., Latvala, O.-M., Galloway, D. K., Kuulkers, E., Suleimanov, V. F.: The effect of accretion on the measurement of neutron star mass and radius in the low-mass X-ray binary 4U 1608-52, 2014, MNRAS, 442, 3777–3790, http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/mnras/stu1139

Paper IV. Kajava, J. J. E., Nättilä, J, Latvala, O.-M., Pursiainen, M., Poutanen, J., Suleimanov, V. F., Revnivtsev, M. G., Kuulkers, E., Galloway, D. K.: The influence of accretion geometry on the spectral evolution during thermonuclear (type I) X-ray bursts, 2014, MNRAS, 445:4218–4234, http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/mnras/stu2073

Paper V. Kuuttila, J., Kajava, J. J. E., Nättilä, J., Motta, S. E., Sanchez-Fernandez, C., Kuulkers, E., Cumming, A., Poutanen, J.: Flux decay during thermonuclear X-ray bursts analysed with the dynamic power-law index method, 2017, A&A, in press, https://arxiv.org/abs/1705.05653

Paper VI. Kajava, J. J. E., Koljonen, K. I. I., Nättilä, J., Suleimanov, V., Poutanen, J.: Variable spreading layer in 4U 1608-52 during thermonuclear X-ray bursts in the soft state, 2017, MNRAS, in press, https://arxiv.org/abs/1707.09479

Constraining the mass and radius of neutron stars

Paper VII. Nättilä, J., Steiner, A. W., Kajava, J. J. E., Suleimanov, V. F., Poutanen, J.: Equation of state constraints for the cold dense matter inside neutron stars using the cooling tail method, 2016, A&A, 591:A25, http://dx.doi.org/10.1051/0004-6361/201527416

Paper VIII. Kajava, J. J. E., Nättilä, J., Poutanen, J., Cumming, A., Suleimanov, V., Kuulkers, E.: Detection of burning ashes from thermonuclear X-ray bursts, 2017, MNRAS, 464:L6–L10, http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/mnrasl/slw167

Paper IV. Suleimanov, V. F., Poutanen, J., Nättilä, J., Kajava, J. J. E.; Revnivtsev, M. G., Werner, K.: The direct cooling tail method for X-ray burst analysis to constrain neutron star masses and radii, 2017, MNRAS, 466, 906-913, http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/mnras/stw3132

Paper X. Suleimanov, Valery V. F., Kajava, J. J. E., Molkov, S. V., Nättilä, J., Lutovinov, A. A., Werner, K. Poutanen, J.: Basic parameters of the helium accreting X-ray bursting neutron star in 4U 1820-30, 2017, MNRAS, submitted

Paper XI. Nättilä, J., Miller, M. C., Steiner, A. W., Kajava, J. J. E., Suleimanov, V. F., Poutanen, J.: Atmosphere model fits of thermonuclear X-ray burst cooling tail spectra: new neutron star mass and radius constraints using Bayesian hierarchical modeling, 2017, A&A, submitted

Contents

1 Constraining the equation of state with astrophysics

The main motive for this thesis was to set constraints for the ultra-dense equation of state. Instead of starting from the nuclear physics that works on the smallest scales, we use astrophysical observations to study large-scale "global" aspects of neutron stars. It is then possible to make a step back to the nuclear physics because the size of a compact star is strongly coupled to the composition of its core.

Looking from the astrophysical point of view, it is the size of the neutron star that will define many of its observable features. One of the most important characteristics is the compactness of the object that will then define the exact shape of the spacetime surrounding it. The strongly curved spacetime, in turn, influences many of the phenomena occurring in the close vicinity of the star and will also leave its distinct imprints on the observations.

The physical phenomena behind the observable features on the other hand, are often highly energetic, otherwise they would not be seen by distant observers, such as us. It is these highly energetic physical processes that will then render the neutron stars visible to us, and that at the same time carry a plethora of information from the surroundings of where they originated from. This gives birth to a beautiful cosmic connection where the delicate and unattainable nuclear physics of the ultra-dense matter is coupled to vigorous astrophysical phenomena that we can observe. The caveat here is that the astrophysical processes are often messy and poorly understood. Hence, a thorough understanding of both, the nature of the observed phenomena and how it exactly couples to the nuclear physics, is needed.

In this thesis, we will focus on extracting the information from the so-called X-ray bursts that ignite in the upper layers of neutron stars. These bursts originate from the unstable nuclear fusion runaways in the neutron star ocean that produce excessive heat that is then radiated away as photons. These photons will then emerge through the atmosphere of the star, travel astronomical distances towards Earth until they will land on one of our scientific instruments, and be recorded by us as X-ray events. In theory, this process is very robust, but in practice caution is needed when extracting information from these bursts, as the environment near the neutron star can also play a huge role.

In this final chapter, we will shortly review the relevant astrophysics behind these X-ray bursts, lay out the framework on how observing them can set constraints on the size of the emitting area, and finally draw a connection to the work done for this thesis.

1.1 Accretion

In the heart of this whole problem is an astrophysical process called accretion.

Gravitational potential energy release

$$\Delta E_{\mathrm{acc}} = \frac{GMm}{R} \sim 10^{20} \left(\frac{10\,\mathrm{km}}{R} \right) \left(\frac{M}{\mathrm{M}_{\odot}} \right) \ \mathrm{erg\ g}^{-1} \tag{1.1}$$

Eddington luminosity

$$L_{\rm Edd} = \frac{4\pi G M m_{\rm p} c}{\sigma_{\rm T}} \approx 1.3 \times 10^{38} \left(\frac{M}{\rm M_\odot}\right) \text{erg s}^{-1} \tag{1.2}$$

Accretion luminosity

$$L_{\rm acc} = \frac{G M \dot{M}}{R} \tag{1.3}$$

1.1.1 Boundary layers

$$\Omega(R) \approx \Omega_{\rm K}(R) = \left(\frac{GM}{R^3}\right)^{1/2} \tag{1.4}$$

Layer of thickness b equals $\Omega(R+b) \approx \Omega_{\rm K}(R+b)$ that must slow down to Ω_*.
Energy difference

$$\dot{E} = \frac{1}{2}\,\dot{M} R^2 (\Omega_{\rm K}^2 - \Omega_*^2) = \frac{1}{2}\dot{M}\frac{GM}{R}\left[1 - \left(\frac{\Omega_*}{\Omega_{\rm K}}\right)^2\right] \tag{1.5}$$

Viscous torque $G_{\rm T} = \dot{M} R^2 (\Omega_{\rm K} - \Omega_*)$ Hence,

$$\dot{E} = \frac{1}{2}\,\frac{G M \dot{M}}{R}\left(1 - \frac{\Omega_*}{\Omega_{\rm K}}\right)^2 \tag{1.6}$$

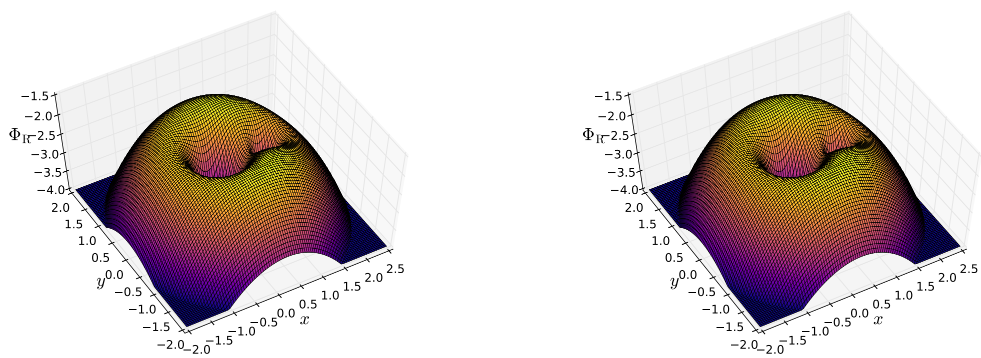

Figure 1.1: Roche potential for binary systems.

1.2 Appendix A

1.3 Roche lobe overflow

Roche Lobe[*][†]

A flow of gas between two stars can be described by the Euler equation. It gives the time evolution of the velocity $\boldsymbol{v}$ of the gas that has a pressure of P and density ρ. In a reference frame rotating together with the binary system with angular velocity ω the Euler equation takes the form

$$\frac{\partial \boldsymbol{v}}{\partial t} + (\boldsymbol{v} \cdot \nabla)\boldsymbol{v} = -\nabla\Phi_{\mathrm{R}} - 2\boldsymbol{\omega} \times \boldsymbol{v} - \frac{1}{\rho}\nabla P, \tag{1.7}$$

where the angular velocity of the binary is then

$$\boldsymbol{\omega} = \left(\frac{GM}{a^3}\right)^{1/2} \boldsymbol{e}, \tag{1.8}$$

as given with the unit vector $\boldsymbol{e}$, normal to the orbital plane. Here M is the total mass of the system, i.e. $M = M_1 + M_2$, where M_1 and M_2 are the individual masses of the two stars in the system, respectively, and a is their orbital separation.

The effects originating from the gravitation and from the centrifugal forces are encapsulated in the so-called Roche potential, given as a function of radial vector $\boldsymbol{r}$ as

$$\Phi_{\mathrm{R}}(\boldsymbol{r}) = -\frac{GM_1}{|\boldsymbol{r} - \boldsymbol{r_1}|} - \frac{GM_2}{|\boldsymbol{r} - \boldsymbol{r_2}|} - \frac{1}{2}\,(\boldsymbol{\omega} \times \boldsymbol{v}\,)^2, \tag{1.9}$$

where the location of the stars is given with $\boldsymbol{r_1}$ and $\boldsymbol{r_2}$.

By studying the shape of the potential, we see that in between the stars, in the so-called L_1 point there exists a location where the individual gravitational pull from the stars is balanced. This leads to a kinda of a nozzle in the system from which the material can leak from the less massive star to the more massive object.

[*] [1] P. Podsiadlowski, S. Rappaport, and E. D. Pfahl. *ApJ*. (2002).

[†] [2] D. A. Leahy and J. C. Leahy. *Computational Astrophysics and Cosmology*. (2015).

Such a leaking, or a Roche lobe overflow, will then occur if the companion star's radius exceeds the size of its Roche lobe. Typically such a thing can happen when the star evolves and expands at the end of its life cycle.

LMXB*

1.4 Accretion disks

Hard and soft state†

alterate between these two states‡§

Sect. **??** Let us try and estimate the energetics of different phenomena of what we can observe from neutron stars. Few possible stable sources of energy exists: thermal, gravitational, rotational, and magnetic. Energy output In addition, unstable fusion processes can also power some observable phenomena.

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‡ [5] T. Muñoz-Darias *et al*. *MNRAS*. (2014).
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2 Summary of the original publications

2.1 Scientific summary

Paper I.: The effect of accretion on the measurement of neutron star mass and radius in the low-mass X-ray binary 4U 1608-52

Paper II.: The influence of accretion geometry on the spectral evolution during thermonuclear (type I) X-ray bursts

Paper III.: Models of neutron star atmospheres enriched with nuclear burning ashes

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Paper XI.: Basic parameters of the helium accreting X-ray bursting neutron star in 4U 1820-30

2.2 The author's contribution to the publications

Paper I.

The author of the thesis made contributions to the manuscript, reduced and analyzed the observational X-ray data, and contributed to the scientific discussions related to the manuscript.

Paper II.

The author participated in the reduction and analysis of the observational data, made significant contributions to the development of the data reduction software, and helped in the preparation of the manuscript.

Paper III.

The author contributed to the main idea of the paper, independently redesigned the neutron star atmosphere code used for the calculations, and implemented new physical processes to this numerical framework. The author also prepared most of the manuscript.

Paper IV.

The author independently designed the Bayesian fitting framework for the cooling tail method, reduced and analyzed the X-ray observations, and finally led the equation of state modeling from the observations. The author also prepared the manuscript.

Paper V.

The author contributed to the main idea of this research and was responsible of the atmosphere modeling of the observations. The Bayesian atmosphere spectral model fitting framework was also independently designed by the author. Author also made significant contributions to the manuscript.

Paper VI.

Author helped in designing the fitting framework, based on his own previous results, and contributed to the scientific and statistical discussions of the paper. The author also contributed to the manuscript.

Paper VII.

In this paper, the author proposed the usage of the dynamic power-law method and co-supervised the project which was originally based on the Master's thesis of J. Kuuttila. Author also made significant contributions to the manuscript.

Paper VIII.

The author of the thesis took part in the discussion of the theoretical explanation for the obtained observational results and contributed significantly to the statistical analysis of data. The author also contributed to the manuscript.

Paper IX.

The author independently proposed the idea of applying the split-Hamilton method to the ray tracing problem of photons, derived the theoretical framework and all the related formulae, designed the numerical code, and prepared most of the manuscript.

Paper X.

The author independently designed the hierarchical Bayesian fitting framework, implemented it into a code together with M.C. Miller and A.W. Steiner, analyzed the data, and, finally, prepared most of the manuscript together with M.C. Miller.

Paper XI.

In this paper, the author took part in the scientific discussion of the results, helped in the statistical analysis and contributed to the manuscript.

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"Modelling the behaviour of accretion flows in X-ray binaries. Everything you always wanted to know about accretion but were afraid to ask"
DOI: 10.1007/s00159-007-0006-1.