# Non-destructive controlled single-particle light scattering measurement

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## ARTICLE INFO

## ABSTRACT

We present a set of light scattering data measured from a millimeter-sized extraterrestrial rock sample. The data were acquired by our novel scatterometer, which enables accurate multi-wavelength measurements of single-particle samples whose position and orientation are controlled by ultrasonic levitation. The measurements demonstrate a non-destructive approach to derive optical properties of small mineral samples. This enables research on valuable materials, such as those returned from space missions or rare meteorites.

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## 1. Introduction

Non-destructive measurements are important for characterizing unique and valuable samples, e.g. samples returned from Solar System objects (samples from the asteroid Itokawa and from the Moon). Scattering theory provides tools for characterizing small particles. By examining the light scattered by a particle, one can estimate its optical properties or its shape. Since the inverse problem does not necessary have a unique solution, one may need assumptions on, e.g., constant bulk optical properties throughout the particle's volume, shape model for the particle, or a measured shape estimate using, for example, microscopy, laser scanning, X-ray microtomography, or even holography [1]. Scattering-based imaging could create a pathway towards super-resolution imaging [2]. In the scattering field, there are difficulties in combining modeled and measured results for small particles or particle aggregates. Exact methods exist for modeling the scattering response of complex small particles, but these methods are computationally demanding and thus limited with respect to size of the particle, compared to the wavelength [3]. On the other hand, scattering measurements, together with target structure characterization, are more conveniently done for larger particles or aggre-gates. For small particles, it is easier to measure the average scattering characteristics for a particle population, e.g., particles in a flow [10] or on a particulate surface [4–7], than to measure individual small-particle scattering for identified particles. One of the first scatterometry setups for small particle characterization was built in Arizona [8]. The system was used to characterize 110 nm diameter latex spheres. The light source was a high-pressure Hg lamp (Osram HBO 100). To acquire all the elements of the Mueller matrix, polarized light was used. Later, another system was built in the Netherlands, to measure scattering properties of irregularly shaped mineral aerosol samples [9]. This system was further developed at the IAA cosmic dust laboratory, Granada, Spain [10] to become one of the first systems to truly bridge the gap between theory and experiment [11], albeit with the limitation of measuring the statistical average of a group of particles. A comparison across these three setups, as well as our own, is shown in Appendix A. Lately, two more systems have been developed [12,13]. The latest one allows characterization of levitated water droplets using a 100 kHz ultrasound levitator. As a light source, it uses a collimated, vertically polarized, coherent and continuous laser beam, with wavelength $\lambda = 532.130$ nm (coherence length 50 m and high laser power 2 W).

We present an experimental setup that measures light scattered by a fixed particle in the size range of micrometers to millimeters. The goal of our setup is nondestructive characterization of such

particles by measuring light of multiple wavelengths scattered in 360° in a horizontal plane by a levitating sample, whilst simultaneously controlling its 3D position. This work describes the principles and design of our instrument and its calibration. It also presents an example measurement of a real sample, as well as discussing some of the considerations that have to be made when choosing the light source.

## 2. Scattering theory

We describe the polarization state of light beam using the Stokes parameters $I$, $Q$, $U$, and $V$, which we combine into a vector known as the Stokes vector. A scattered beam can thus be related to an incoming beam by multiplication with the $4 \times 4$ scattering matrix, $\mathbf{S}$. For an incoming vector $\mathbf{I}_i = (I_i, Q_i, U_i, V_i)^T$ and a scattered vector $\mathbf{I}_s = (I_s, Q_s, U_s, V_s)^T$ the transformation becomes:

$$\mathbf{I}_s = \frac{1}{k^2 R^2} \mathbf{S} \, \mathbf{I}_i. \tag{1}$$

Here $R$ is the distance from the particle to the observer and $k$ is the wave number. Individual elements of the scattering matrix can be defined by measuring the scattered light at specific polarization states. To resolve all the matrix elements, the polarization of the incoming light is controlled by a linear polarizer and a quarter wave plate [14]. Since our detector measures only light intensity, the scattered light must also be filtered by an equivalent polarizer and a quarter wave plate. The Mueller matrices for a linear polarizer $\mathbf{M}_p$ and a quarter wave plate $\mathbf{M}_q$ are:

$$\mathbf{M}_p(\theta) = \frac{1}{2} \begin{pmatrix} 1 & \cos(2\theta) & \sin(2\theta) & 0 \\ \cos(2\theta) & \cos^2(2\theta) & \sin(2\theta)\cos(2\theta) & 0 \\ \sin(2\theta) & \sin(2\theta)\cos(2\theta) & \sin^2(2\theta) & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$$

$$\mathbf{M}_q(\theta) = \frac{1}{2} \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & \cos^2(2\theta) & \sin(2\theta)\cos(2\theta) & \sin(2\theta) \\ 0 & \sin(2\theta)\cos(2\theta) & \sin^2(2\theta) & -\cos(2\theta) \\ 0 & -\sin(2\theta) & \cos(2\theta) & 0 \end{pmatrix}$$

$$\tag{2}$$

Thus, for one single measurement with the scatterometer, the chained transformation becomes:

$$\mathbf{I}_s = \mathbf{M}_p(\theta_4)\mathbf{M}_q(\theta_3)\mathbf{M}\,\mathbf{M}_q(\theta_2)\mathbf{M}_p(\theta_1)\mathbf{I}_i \tag{3}$$

where $\mathbf{M} = k^{-2}R^{-2}\mathbf{S}$. While both the quarter wave plates and the polarizers are needed to determine all 16 elements of the scattering matrix, the upper left $2 \times 2$ submatrix can be determined using only linear polarizers, with, e.g., the following configurations:

$$\begin{aligned} I_1 &: \theta_1 = 0°; \theta_4 = 0° \\ I_2 &: \theta_1 = 90°; \theta_4 = 90° \\ I_3 &: \theta_1 = 0°; \theta_4 = 90° \\ I_4 &: \theta_1 = 90°; \theta_4 = 0° \end{aligned} \tag{4}$$

From these measurements, the Mueller matrix elements can be calculated as:

$$\begin{aligned} M_{11} &= I_1 + I_2 + I_3 + I_4 \\ M_{12} &= I_1 - I_2 + I_3 - I_4 \\ M_{21} &= I_1 - I_2 - I_3 + I_4 \\ M_{22} &= I_1 + I_2 - I_3 - I_4 \end{aligned} \tag{5}$$

## 3. The scatterometer

We developed an automated scatterometer that measures scattered light at different wavelengths from small particulate samples. The setup comprises: (a) the PXI Express platform (National Instruments) to synchronously record data from several photomultiplier tubes (PMTs); (b) a motorized rotation stage to precisely control the azimuthal angle of the PMTs around 360°; (c) a custom-built ultrasonic levitator to hold the sample in a non-contacting way; and (d) a versatile light source, whose wavelength, polarization, and intensity can be precisely controlled. (Fig. 1).

The light source is a tunable Argon-krypton laser (Melles Griot 35 KAP 431), with 12 wavelengths ranging from 465 to 676 nm, beam quality factor $M^2 = 1.2$, and a power of 4 to 20 mW, depending on wavelength. The polarization of light is selected by linear polarizers (Thorlabs LPVISE100-A). As light detectors, we use photomultiplier tubes (PMT) manufactured by Hamamatsu (microPMT H12403-01, peak sensitivity wavelength 420 nm) mounted radially from the sample at adjustable radii, as well as one reference PMT monitoring beam intensity. The PMT signals are amplified by Thorlabs TIA60 transimpedance amplifiers and captured by an NI PXIe-5171R oscilloscope module. The current setup allows measuring all azimuthal angles except for $\pm 11°$ around the backward and forward scattering directions. These "dead zones" are due to the measurement head blocking the incoming or outgoing beam. For specific applications, this can be improved by replacing the motorized rotation of the polarizer and the motorized shutter in front of the PMT with manual controls, resulting in a narrower ($\pm 4°$) measurement head. A rotation stage (Standa 8MRB240-152-59D) controlled through the NI PXIe-8880 moves the PMTs. The measurement angle is controlled by the motor-driven rotation stage with an accuracy of 15′.

To reduce external light and reflections, the device is enclosed inside three adjacent chambers covered with a black velvet-like material. The first chamber contains beam shaping and filtering optics, the second contains the sample and sensors, whereas the third chamber contains the beam stop. The laser is outside the enclosure for improved temperature control. The light is transferred from the laser by a polarization-maintaining fiber (single mode, pure silica, PANDA geometry) into the first chamber, where the light is collimated.

The sample is held in place in a noncontacting manner by a custom-built ultrasonic levitator, Fig. 2. The standing ultrasonic waves are tuned to create a node at a suitable height in the acoustic field, trapping the sample. The levitator is based on a Langevin transducer, with two sandwiched piezoelectric discs (Ferroperm Pz26, Ø = 50 mm, thickness = 1 mm), driven at a frequency of 35.2 kHz with an electrical power of 2.5 W. To ensure that the sample is centered in the device, the levitator position can be adjusted in the $x$- $y$- and $z$-directions. For large samples, e.g. the 5 mm glass sphere used for calibration, the levitator can be replaced by a static conic pedestal.

The Langevin-type levitator does not control the rotation ($\rho$, $\theta$, $\phi$) of the sample, but it does provide a well-defined potential minimum which keeps the sample in position ($x$,$y$,$z$). Using a high-speed camera (Phantom V611) we measured the radial and axial movement of millimeter-sized rock samples. Automated tracking of the lit area of the sample revealed that, for the worst-case oscillations, average displacement was 700 μm in the radial direction and 70 μm in the axial direction, Fig. 3.

The PXIe-8880 module acquires timing-critical data from PMTs and motor drivers. The signals from the PMTs transimpedance amplifier are averaged over the exposure time for each angle, to reduce the amount of stored data. The system is programmed with LabVIEW, including FPGA-based signal acquisition, data processing and the instrument's user interface.

The scatterometer measures the scattered light by sweeping the PMT across a specified range of angles, measuring at each angular step for a set exposure time. Each sweep is made for only one wavelength and polarizer configuration. A complete measurement consists of one or more sweeps for each of the four polarizer configurations described in the theory section. Changing the wavelength is typically only done between measurements, since