

RECENT INSTRUMENTAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOLAR PHYSICS AT THE INSTITUTO DE ASTROFÍSICA DE CANARIAS

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ABSTRACT

This contribution correspond to the report presented within the Section devoted to Working Group no. 2 (Solar Observing Techniques) of the JOSO Annual Meeting.

The main spanish "hits" in solar instrumentation during the past year are briefly reviewed. They refer to the upgrading of facilities for the Vacuum Newton Telescope (VNT) of the Observatorio del Teide (OT, Tenerife), and two full Stokes Polarimeters developed at the IAC (Instituto de Astrofísica de Canarias): LPSP, La Palma Stokes Polarimeter, and TIP, Tenerife Infrared Polarimeter.

Key words: solar instrumentation; visible and infrared photometry; visible and infrared spectropolarimetry.

1. Acquisition System of Solar Images

SAIS II, successfully tested at the VNT in June 1998, stands for Sistema de Adquisición de Imágenes Solares (Acquisition System of Solar Images). It is a combination of hardware and software allowing to obtain images from 3 different cameras which can be connected to the computer through the corresponding acquisition board. The computer used is a PC Pentium II (3.2 Gb disk, CD-ROM, Windows NT). The design includes a common user-interface for the 3 cameras, differing only in certain features, particular of each instrument.

The three detectors are: (i) Infrared detector Su128-1.7RT: 128×128 px of 60×60 μm; spectral response: 0.9 to 1.7 μm (ii) Infrared detector NICMOS-3: 256×256 px of 40×40 μm; spectral response: 1 to 2.5 μm (iii) Visible detector DALSA: 1024×1024 px of 12×12 μm; spectral response: visible range

Among the different options offered by this system are: visualization of live images, which can be 'frozen', stored in hard disk and recovered from it; obtention of statistics of selected zones; automatic selection of images; real time correction for dark current and flatfield (by using previously stored frames);

and basic image treatment, as enlargement/reduction of desired areas or contrast adjustment for a better visualization. Other possibilities are the automatic change of exposure time and selection of the filter to be used. More details can be found in Gago et al. (1999).

At the moment, the first detector above mentioned is installed and working at the VNT. It is intended for a long-term observational program for obtaining sunspots images at 1.6 μm, with the aim of checking whether there is actually an umbral brightening along the solar cycle.

Finally, as part of the VNT upgrading, a new auxiliary telescope (6 cm of diameter, 60 cm of focal length) is available which, together with the visible camera, will be definitively assembled in October 1999. It has been designed to obtain whole Sun images at different wavelengths: three broad-band (blue, green, red), G band, and CaII K (10 and 3 Å half-width).

2. Visible and IR Polarimeters for the Canarian Observatories

At the IAC, in collaboration with the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences and the Kiepenheuer Institut für Sonnenphysik, two full Stokes polarimeters have been designed and developed: LPSP for visible wavelengths (first light at the Swedish Vacuum Solar Telescope -SVST of the Observatorio del Roque de Los Muchachos -ORM in September 1998), and TIP for the near IR range (first light at the Vacuum Tower Telescope -VTT of the OT in July 1998).

The analyzers measure all 4 Stokes parameters almost simultaneously using a modulation scheme based on Ferroelectric Liquid Crystals (FLCs), that is, electro-optical devices with a fixed retardance and an optical axis that can be alternated between two orientations as a function of an externally applied voltage. Four images corresponding to 4 different states of the FLCs are needed to measure the whole Stokes vector, and a number of exposures for each of those states can be added to improve the S/N ratio.

Both polarimeters are composed of: (i) a mechanical shutter (for dark current measurements); (ii) a UV filter to protect the FLCs; (iii) a pair of FLCs,

driven by a simple DC square wave with an amplitude of 10-15 volts.; and (iv) a polarizing beamsplitter composed of 2 calcite blocks, in order to reduce the so-called seeing-induced crosstalk and to double the number of detected photons.

The efficiencies of the analyzers in determining each one of the Stokes parameter (see Sánchez Almeida et al. (1994) for a definition) are related to the properties of the FLCs (retardances, which are a function of the wavelength, orientations and temperature). A number of tests and simulations have been carried out at the laboratory and the telescopes, showing that the IAC analyzers are indeed efficient in measuring polarization, with values close to the optimum ones. For more details, see Martínez Pillet et al. (1999) and Collados (1999).

The two polarimeters use calibration units (consisting of a linear polarizer and a quarter wave retarder which can be rotated independently) to calibrate the performance of the analyzer by generating known polarization states. They allow to obtain the corresponding polarimeter modulation matrix, and to take into account all the instrumental polarization effects induced by the optical elements between the calibration system and the analyzer itself, located behind the slit in both cases. Finally, both polarimeters have re-imaging optics to adjust the pixel size to the right sampling and increase the amount of photons reaching each pixel.

Two-dimensional maps of Stokes I , Q , U , and V can be obtained with LPSP and TIP, by scanning the spatial direction perpendicular to the slit with the aid of the correlation tracker. All the components of the polarimeters, the elements needed for the scanning mode, and their operations are controlled from DEC-alpha workstations (400 Hz) through a user-interface developed at the IAC.

LPSP and TIP are similar except for the different sensitivity to wavelength of the FLCs and detectors used. Other distinct features, related to the telescope, the calibration optics and the re-imaging system, are commented below.

2.1. La Palma Stokes Polarimeter

The nominal wavelength (λ_0) of LPSP is 6300 Å, but a larger usable range is attainable by using 2 pairs of temperature controlled FLCs, for the ranges 4500-5800 Å and 5800-7500 Å, respectively.

The modulation frequency is 15 Hz and a number of 67 images for each of the 4 modulation states are accumulated to obtain a S/N ratio of about 10^3 .

The instrumental calibration unit is located between the exit window and the entrance slit, inside a vacuum chamber before all the correlation tracker components. LPSP uses as re-imaging optics 2 cylindrical lenses. Only the focal length in the spatial direction is reduced by a factor of 2, keeping the same focal length in the spectral direction.

The detector used by LPSP is a CHIL-CCD camera with 755×242 px of $8.5 \mu\text{m} \times 19.75 \mu\text{m}$ (spatial \times spectral direction).

A field of view is $60'' \times 60''$ can be scanned in about 30 minutes. The spectral range at λ_0 is 4.3 Å, with a pixel size of $0.157'' \times 17.95 \text{ m}\text{\AA}$.

During the 1999 summer, the first observational campaigns with LPSP@SVST have been scheduled and carried out. As an example of the performance of LPSP, its first light can be seen in Fig. 1.

2.2. Tenerife Infrared Polarimeter

TIP has been designed for a wavelength range from 1 to $2.3 \mu\text{m}$. Presently, a pair of FLCs is installed, valid for the H band (1.5 to $1.8 \mu\text{m}$, $\lambda_0=1.56 \mu\text{m}$). Tests, first light and the first observational campaigns (during the summer of this year) have been carried out within this range. Two more pairs of FLCS, for the J (1 to $1.5 \mu\text{m}$) and K (1.8 to $2.3 \mu\text{m}$) bands have already been purchased and tested at the laboratory. After some tests at the VTT, they are expected to be installed and ready for the 2000 observing time.

In this case, the modulation frequency is 2 Hz, and a S/N ratio close to 103 is obtained after accumulating 10 images for each of the 4 modulation states.

The calibration unit is located between the telescope exit window and the entrance slit, inside the correlation tracker tank and before all its optical components. As re-imaging optics, TIP uses 2 spherical lenses which reduce both the focal lengths in the spatial and spectral directions by a factor of 2.

The detector used by TIP is a NICMOS-3 IR detector, with 256×256 px of $40 \mu\text{m} \times 40 \mu\text{m}$.

A field of view is $40'' \times 40''$ can be scanned in about 10 minutes, at steps of $0.4''$. The spectral range at λ_0 is 7.4 Å, with a pixel size of $0.37'' \times 29 \text{ m}\text{\AA}$.

An example of a penumbra observed with TIP can be seen in Fig. 2.

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LPSP First Light

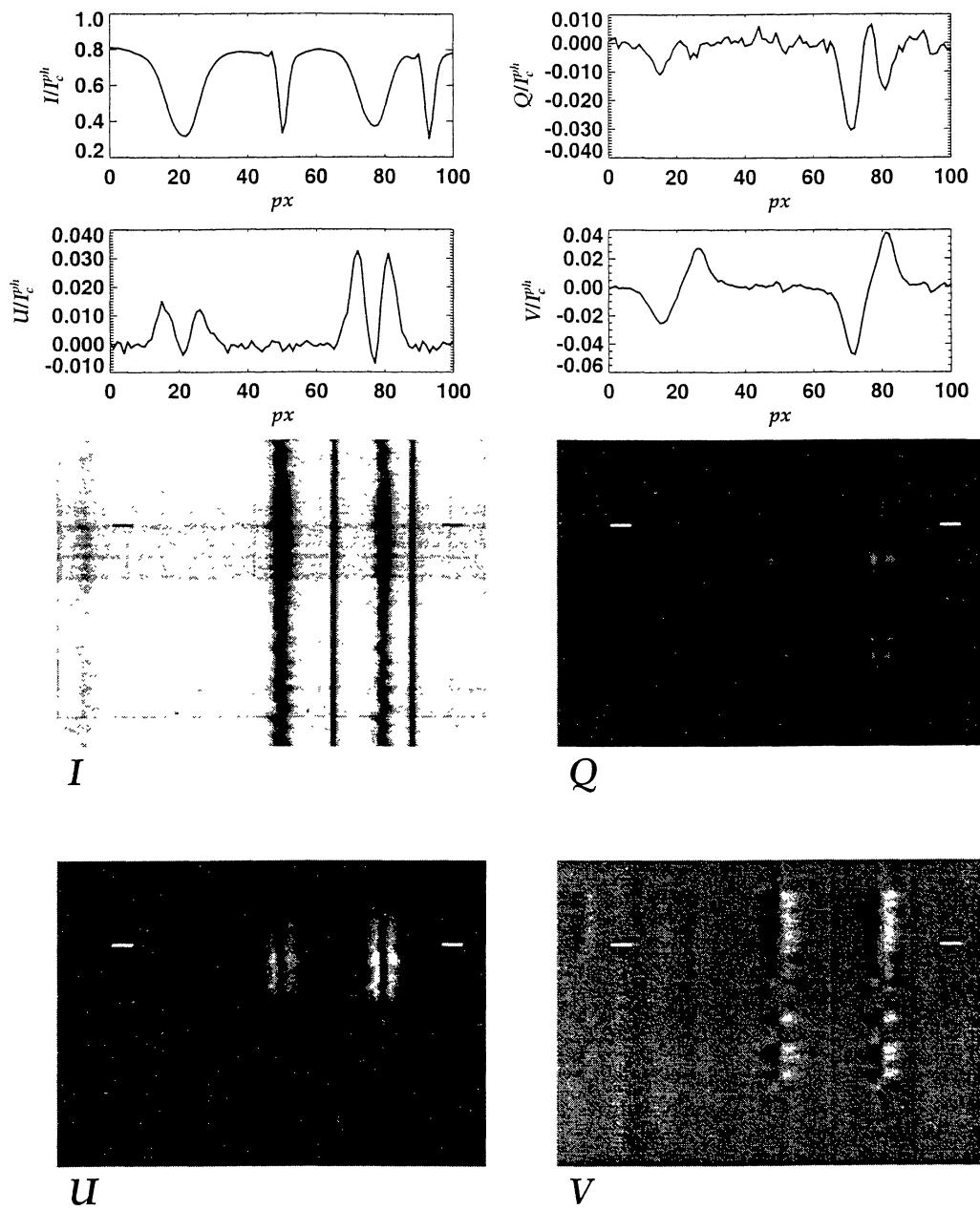


Figure 1. LPSP first light Stokes spectral images with the slit crossing the penumbra of a sunspot. The profiles in the upper part correspond to the point marked with white horizontal bars on the images. The spectral range includes the lines FeI $\lambda\lambda$ 6301 and 6302 Å. The slit length is about 60'.

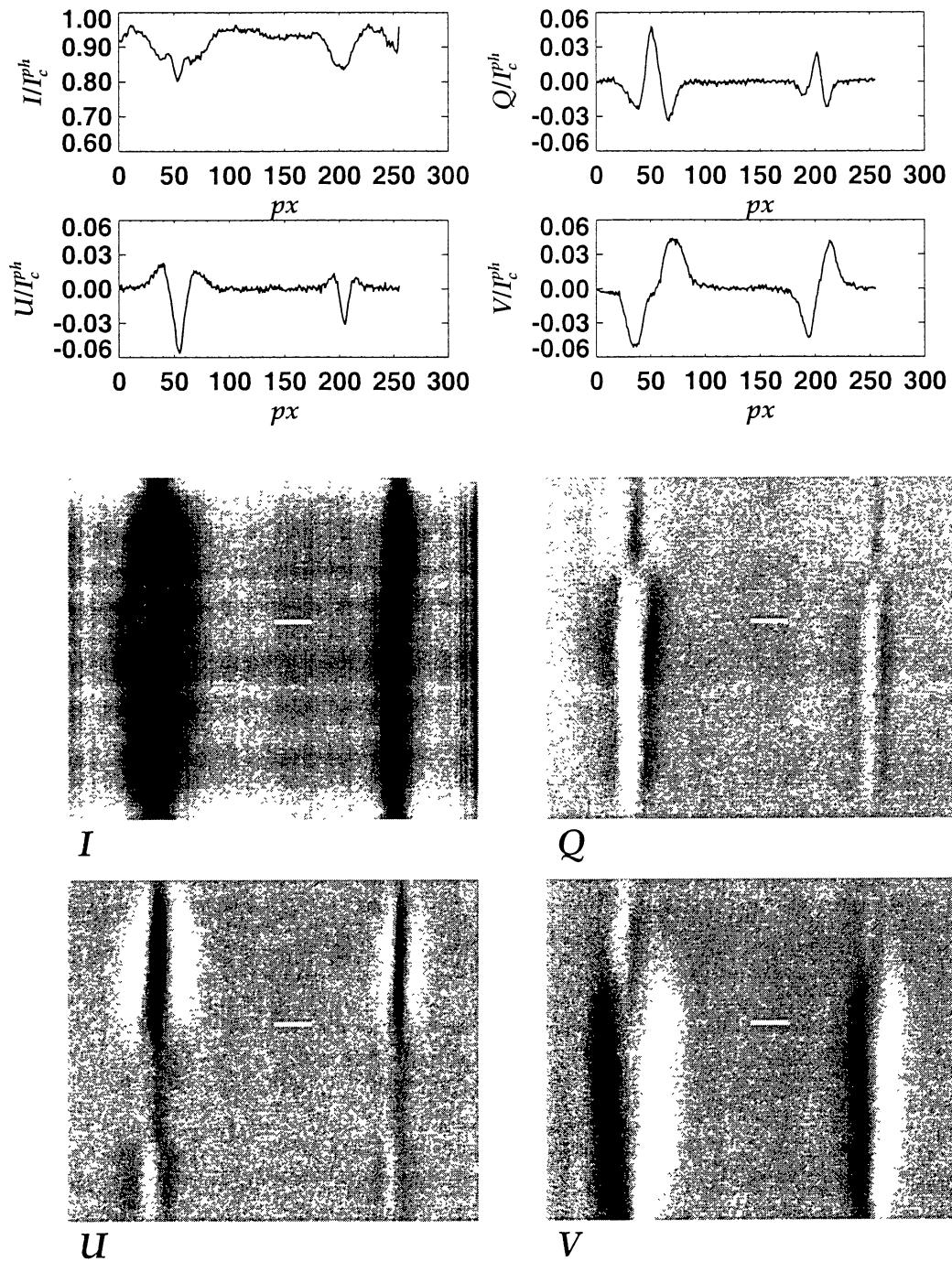


Figure 2. Stokes spectral images of a penumbral region obtained with TIP, including 2 FeI lines at 15648 \AA ($g_{\text{eff}}=3$) and 15653 \AA ($g_{\text{eff}}=1.6$). The spectral range is close to 8 \AA , the slit length is about $40''$. The profiles in the upper part correspond to the point marked with horizontal bars on the images.

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