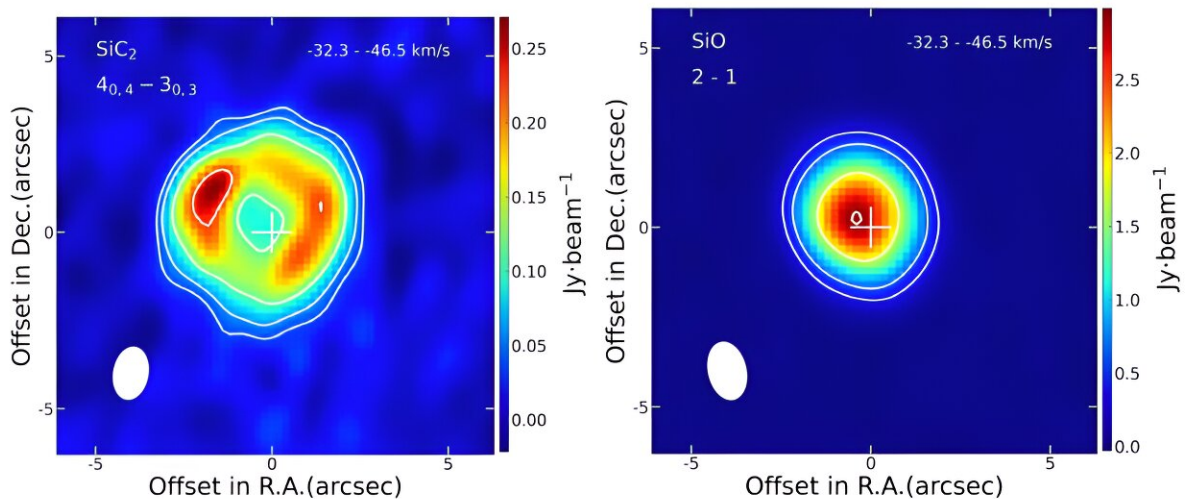


Annular distribution of SiC₂ in circumstellar envelopes of carbon-rich asymptotic giant branch stars

October 9 2023, by Li Yuan



Brightness distribution of SiC₂ (left panel) and SiO (right panel) transitions at the source velocity ($-32.3 - -46.5 \text{ km s}^{-1}$) in AI Vol. Color bar shows the brightness distribution of different regions. The white cross represents the center of the star in the map. The beam size of the observation in SiC₂ is $1.51 \times 0.99''$, with PA 9.82° . The beam size of the observation in SiO is $1.64 \times 1.06''$, with PA -12.99° . The white contours display the flux levels of SiC₂ at 3, 5, 10, and 20 times of the rms noise, with $1\sigma = 11.3 \text{ mJy}\cdot\text{beam}^{-1}$. For SiO (2 - 1), the flux levels are at 5, 10, 30, and 50 times of the rms noise, where $1\sigma = 58.9 \text{ mJy}\cdot\text{beam}^{-1}$. Credit: *arXiv*: DOI: 10.48550/arxiv.2307.13216

The circumstellar envelopes (CSE) of asymptotic giant branch (AGB) stars contain a large number of molecules, which account for about one-third of all molecules discovered in interstellar space.

Gas and dust are essential components of CSEs, and SiC₂ is one of the significant constituents of dust grains in carbon-rich AGB stars. Whether SiC₂ is a "parent" molecule formed in the photosphere or during the high-temperature [dust](#) formation process (exhibiting a "solid" [spatial distribution](#)), or a "daughter" molecule formed through photodissociation of "parent" molecules in the outer envelopes (exhibiting an annular distribution), is an ongoing debate.

Researchers led by Ph.D. candidate Feng Yanan and Prof. Li Xiaohu from the Xinjiang Astronomical Observatory (XAO) of the Chinese Academy of Sciences have conducted observational work on the SiC₂ molecule in circumstellar envelopes of three carbon-rich AGB stars (AI Vol, II Lup, and RAFGL 4211) using the Atacama Large Millimeter/Submillimeter Array (ALMA).

[Their study](#) was published in *Frontiers in Astronomy and Space Sciences* on Aug. 14.

They found that the spatial distribution of the four rotational transition spectral lines of SiC₂ molecules around these three sources exhibited an annular distribution, indicating the feature of a typical "daughter" species.

Then they compared the ALMA results of SiC₂ and SiO [molecules](#) in AI Vol. The SiO molecule exhibited a "solid" distribution feature, indicating that it is a "parent" molecule, which is consistent with previous studies.

"In future studies, we need to rethink the formation mechanism of SiC₂

in the CSEs of evolved stars," said Prof. Li.

More information: Yanan Feng et al, Photochemical origin of SiC₂ in the circumstellar envelope of carbon-rich AGB stars revealed by ALMA, *Frontiers in Astronomy and Space Sciences* (2023). [DOI: 10.3389/fspas.2023.1215642](https://doi.org/10.3389/fspas.2023.1215642)

Provided by Chinese Academy of Sciences

Citation: Annular distribution of SiC₂ in circumstellar envelopes of carbon-rich asymptotic giant branch stars (2023, October 9) retrieved 29 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2023-10-annular-sic2-circumstellar-envelopes-carbon-rich.html>

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