On the solar abundance of indium

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ABSTRACT
The generally adopted value for the solar abundance of indium is over six times higher than the meteoritic value. We address this discrepancy through numerical synthesis of the 451.13-nm line on which all indium abundance studies are based, both for the quiet Sun and the sunspot umbra spectrum, employing standard atmosphere models and accounting for hyperfine structure and Zeeman splitting in detail. The results, as well as a re-appraisal of indium nucleosynthesis, suggest that the solar indium abundance is close to the meteoritic value, and that some unidentified ion line causes the 451.13-nm feature in the quiet-Sun spectrum.

Key words: line: identification – nuclear reactions, nucleosynthesis, abundances – Sun: abundances.

1 INTRODUCTION

The solar abundance of indium is controversial because its generally accepted value significantly exceeds the meteoritic value. At a factor of 6 difference, this remains the largest unexplained discrepancy between meteoritic and solar abundance values. In this paper, we address this problem by considering the nucleosynthesis of indium and through indium line synthesis for the quiet solar photosphere and sunspot umbrae including hyperfine structure in detail.

The meteoritic indium abundance is \( A_{\text{in}}^m = 0.80 \pm 0.03 \) (Lodders 2003, and references therein) where \( A_{\text{in}} = \log(n_{\text{in}}/n_{\text{H}}) + 12 \) with \( n_{\text{in}} \) and \( n_{\text{H}} \) the indium and hydrogen particle densities, respectively. Table 1 summarizes the determinations of the solar indium abundance in the literature. All measurements are based on a single, very weak feature in the quiet-Sun spectrum at \( \lambda = 451.1307 \) nm which is commonly identified as one of the In resonance lines. The initial result of Goldberg, Muller & Aller (1960) was based on an erroneous oscillator strength. The other three determinations scatter around \( A_{\text{in}}^\odot = 1.6 \), the value listed in the compilation of Asplund, Grevesse & Sauval (2005). The 0.8 dex discrepancy with the meteoritic value cannot be explained by the usual uncertainties of abundance determination such as line strength measurement, imprecise atomic data and solar modelling deficiencies.

The origin of elements heavier than Fe is mostly attributed to neutron-capture processes (see Meyer 1994, for a review). Slow neutron capture (the \( s \) process) occurs relatively low neutron densities \((\leq 10^{7} \text{ cm}^{-3})\), while rapid neutron capture (the \( r \) process) occurs for relatively high neutron densities \((>10^{9} \text{ cm}^{-3})\). Allen (1978) analysed the Sn/In abundance ratio. He found that ‘no combination of \( r \)- or \( s \)-process products even remotely resembling those which generally predict the Solar System abundances very successfully can give Sn/In as low as 1.4 arcmin (which results from taking \( A_{\text{in}}^\odot = 1.71 \)).

Recently, Gonzalez (2006b) suggested that because of its low condensation temperature (536 K, Lodders 2003), indium may have been depleted in chondritic meteorites to an abundance much smaller than the solar one. However, we note that, e.g. thallium has a similar condensation temperature (532 K, Lodders 2003) and a similar meteoritic abundance (0.78 \( \pm \) 0.04) whereas its well-determined photospheric abundance (0.9 \( \pm \) 0.2) is only slightly higher than the meteoritic one. In a sequel paper, Gonzalez (2006a) studied the indium abundance in a sample of 42 Sun-like stars of which five are known to host planets. He found a strong negative correlation between the [In/Fe] and [Fe/H] logarithmic abundance ratios. This trend is much steeper than the comparable relation for europium, which is a pure \( r \)-process element. However, one would expect a less steep trend for indium because it received contributions both from the \( s \) and the \( r \) processes.

In this paper, we once again scrutinize the solar indium abundance, paying specific attention to indium nucleosynthesis.
(Section 2.1), indium line identification and appearance in the solar spectrum (Section 2.2), and indium line synthesis accounting for hyperfine structure both for quiet Sun and sunspot umbrae (Section 2.3). The conclusion is that, after all, the solar indium abundance is likely to be close to the meteoritic value.

2 ANALYSIS

2.1 Nucleosynthesis and the Sn/In ratio

In this section, we update the analysis of Allen (1978) considering the latest models for the origin of heavy elements. The indium and tin abundances in the Solar System are believed to have received contributions from both the s and the r processes, with roughly 30 and 60 per cent s-process production to In and Sn, respectively (e.g. Arlandini et al. 1999; Travaglio et al. 2004).

In Table 2, we present the Sn/In ratios associated to the most recent models of the s and the r processes. For the s process, we list different estimates of the ratio: two of them were derived using the classical approach for the s process, where abundances are calculated via a parametric model and another via the stellar model, where the building up of s-process abundances is modelled inside an asymptotic giant branch (AGB) stars (see Arlandini et al. 1999, for details). A further more realistic description of the Solar System distribution of abundance is given by models of the galactic chemical evolution (GCE), where yields from different generations of AGB stars are integrated in order to build up the Solar System abundances at the time and location of the formation of the Sun. In all descriptions, the Sn/In ratios remain very similar among the s-process estimates because during the s process, and far from nuclei with closed neutron shells, s-process abundances are determined by the $\sigma A N_A \propto \text{constant}$ rule, where $\sigma A$ is the neutron capture cross-section of isotope with atomic mass $A$, and $N_A$ its abundance during the s process. The $\sigma A$ of In and Sn are determined with roughly

| Authors                  | $A_{\text{in}}$ | Specified error |
|--------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Goldberg et al. (1960)   | 1.16            |                 |
| Lambert, Mallia & Warner (1969) | 1.71          |                 |
| Grevesse & Sauval (1998) | 1.66            | 0.15            |
| Bord & Cowley (2002)     | 1.56            | 0.20            |

10 per cent uncertainties$^1$ and thus the Sn/In ratios from the s process have small nuclear uncertainties.

For the r process, we take the recent parametric models of Kratz et al. (2007). Two r-process components, generated assuming different neutron densities, are introduced to build up the r-process abundances in the Solar System: the ‘weak’ r process produces elements up to tellurium and the ‘main’ r process produces elements from tellurium up to the actinides. The Sn/In ratio for the main r-process component is equal to six (Table 2), which confirms the estimate of Allen (1978) made using the simple argument that the r process would produce similar yields for close-by isotopes and that In and Sn have one and six stable isotopes that can be produced by the r process, respectively.

Finally, we note that recent r-process calculations indicate that the situation is likely to be much more complex, with several different components involved (Farouqi 2005). However, also in these more recent models no component with Sn/In < 8 is found (Kratz, personal communication).

2.2 Indium in the solar spectrum

The 451.13-nm line. The resonance line of In I at 451.13 nm (5p$^2$P$^3_2 \rightarrow 6s^2S^2_1$) is the only indium line that has been identified in the solar spectrum. Fig. 1 shows this region in the disc-centre quiet-Sun Kitt Peak spectral atlas of Wallace, Hinkle & Livingston (1998). The small frame in Fig. 1 is enlarged in Fig. 2 and shows the region around 451.13 nm in detail. There are no significant differences with the Jungfraujoch atlas (Delbouille, Roland & Neven 1973). In the Kitt Peak atlas, the relatively strong feature at 451.1155 nm is attributed to Ti I, but this identification does not agree with Kurucz & Bell (1995) whose table instead suggests a line of Cr I at 451.1134 nm.

Other lines that may be expected in this narrow region are listed in Table 3 and indicated in Fig. 2. The lines of Ru I and Sc II are fully blended by the wing of the line at $\lambda = 451.1155$ nm. The four Fe II lines have high excitation energy (>10 eV) and low oscillator strengths; hence, they should not be present in the quiet-Sun spectrum. There are three candidate blends of the In line due to Sc I, V I and Sm I. All three belong to elements with a large nuclear spin, so that hyperfine splitting must be taken into account. Scandium and vanadium have only one stable isotope with $I = 7/2$. Samarium

![Figure 1](https://academic.oup.com/mnras/article-abstract/384/1/370/966047/15/March/2020)

Table 2. Sn/In from different nucleosynthetic processes.

| Sn/In               |          |
|---------------------|----------|
| s process (classical)$^a$ | 39       |
| s process (stellar)$^b$  | 46       |
| s process (GCE)$^c$  | 38       |
| r process (weak)$^d$   | 34       |
| r process (main)$^e$   | 32       |
| Solar value$^f$    | 6        |
| Meteoritic value$^f$ | 2.51     |

$^a$ Arlandini et al. (1999), $^b$ Simmerer et al. (2004), $^c$ Travaglio et al. (2004), $^d$ Kratz et al. (2007), $^e$ Asplund et al. (2005), $^f$ Lodders (2003)

1 http://nuclear-astrophysics.fzk.de/kadonis/.
Figure 2. Enlargement of the frame in Fig. 1. Solid line: Kitt Peak atlas. Dotted line: Jungfraujoch atlas. The candidate lines of Table 3 are indicated by arrows. Positions of hyperfine components of the \( \text{V I} \) line are also indicated.

Table 3. Possible blends of \( \text{In I} \) 451.13 nm. The data are from Kurucz & Bell (1995) (K&B) and Kupka et al. (1999) (VALD).

| Element | \( \lambda \) (nm) | \( E_\lambda \) (eV) | \( \log (g_f) \) | Reference |
|---------|----------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------|
| Fe II  | 451.1127 | 11.31 | -2.811 | K&B |
| Cr I   | 451.1134 | 3.17  | -2.366 | K&B |
| Ti I   | 451.1170 | 0.50  | -3.300 | VALD |
| Ru I   | 451.1193 | 1.69  | -1.070 | K&B |
| Sc II  | 451.1201 | 7.87  | -1.694 | K&B |
| Fe II  | 451.1306 | 10.60 | -3.338 | K&B |
| In I   | 451.1307 | 0.27  | -0.213 | K&B |
| Sm I   | 451.1317 | 0.50  | -0.013 | K&B |
| Sc I   | 451.1380 | 1.85  | -1.193 | K&B |
| Ti I   | 451.1390 | 3.29  | -4.076 | VALD |
| Fe II  | 451.1416 | 11.29 | -2.063 | K&B |
| V I    | 451.1429 | 2.13  | -1.520 | K&B |
| Fe II  | 451.1439 | 10.72 | -3.405 | K&B |
| Ta I   | 451.1456 | 0.70  | -1.730 | K&B |

Other indium lines. Table 4 lists the other candidate lines of neutral and singly ionized indium. The other component of resonance multiplet (1) is \( 5p^2P_{3/2} \rightarrow 6s^2S_{1/2} \) at \( \lambda = 410.1765 \) nm. It is located close to the centre of the Balmer \( \text{H}_\alpha \) line and is not recognizable in the quiet-Sun Kitt Peak atlas. The other indium lines are absent or completely blended or located in spectral regions that are not covered by the present solar atlases.

Since indium is mostly ionized (over 99 per cent throughout the photosphere assuming the Saha distribution), one would expect that the \( \text{In I} \) resonance line at 158.6 nm should be the strongest in the solar spectrum, but also this line is not clearly present in the atlas of Curdt et al. (2001).

2.3 Synthesis of the solar \( \text{In I} \) 451.13-nm line

Model atom. Oscillator strengths for the indium transitions were taken from Kurucz & Bell (1995) except for the 451.13-nm line for which Table 5 lists various values from the literature. We adopted the value of Fuhr & Wiese (2006). The indium hyperfine structure must be taken into account because the nuclear spin of In is \( I = 9/2 \). Values of the magnetic dipole (\( A \)) and electric quadrupole (\( B \)) constants of the hyperfine interaction for the lower and the upper levels of the \( \text{In I} \) multiplet 1 were taken from Jackson (1981) and Zaal et al. (1978).

The level splitting was evaluated from

\[
\Delta E_F = \frac{C}{15} A + \frac{3C(C + 1) - 4(I + 1)J(J + 1)B}{8I(2I - 1)J(J - 1)}
\]

where \( C = F(F + 1) - J(J + 1) - I(I + 1), F = J + I, J + I - 1, \ldots, |J - I| \) and \( J \) is the electronic angular momentum (e.g. Sobelman 1992). For the upper level with \( J = 1/2 \) only the first term in the Hamiltonian of the hyperfine interaction is present and is split into two sublevels (\( F = 4, 5 \)), while the upper level is split into four sublevels (\( F = 3, 4, 5, 6 \)). Hence, the selection rule (\( \Delta F = -1, 0, 1 \)) implies that six hyperfine components are expected in the 451.13-nm transition. Relative intensities of these components were calculated from Wigner 6j coefficients assuming analogy with Russell–Saunders coupling (cf. Sobelman 1992). Table 6 specifies the resulting hyperfine structure components. Indium has two stable isotopes, but since the ratio of their abundances is \( ^{115}\text{In} : ^{113}\text{In} = 95.7:4.3 \), the second isotope can be neglected.

Quiet-Sun profile synthesis. The radiative transfer code \textsc{multi} 2.2 of Carlsson (1992) was used for detailed synthesis of the \( \text{In I} \) 451.13-nm line profile.
Table 4. Candidate lines of In I and In II and their appearance in the Kitt Peak atlas (K, Wallace et al. 1998) and the atlas of Curdt et al. (2001; S). The wavelengths and oscillator strengths are from CD-ROM No. 23 of (Kurucz & Bell 1995).

| Ionization stage | \( \lambda \) (nm) | \( \log (g_f) \) | \( E_\mathrm{l} \) (eV) | Atlas | Comment |
|------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----|---------|
| I                | 303.9357         | -0.143          | 0.000           | K   | In the wing of Fe I 303.9321 nm |
| I                | 325.6087         | 0.170           | 0.274           | K   | In the wing of a strong line at \( \lambda = 325.613 \) nm |
| I                | 325.8559         | -0.620          | 0.274           | K   | Between two strong lines |
| I                | 410.1765         | -0.550          | 0.000           | K   | In the core of H\( \alpha \) |
| I                | 451.1307         | -0.213          | 0.274           | K   | The only identified line of In I |
| I                | 684.7440         | -1.200          | 3.022           | K   | No line |
| I                | 690.0132         | -1.510          | 3.022           | S   | Strong telluric line |
| II               | 78.3892          | -3.092          | 0.000           | S   | No line |
| II               | 91.0951          | -1.777          | 0.000           | S   | No line |
| II               | 92.7324          | -3.170          | 0.000           | S   | Heavily blended |
| II               | 158.6450         | 0.393           | 0.000           | S   | Very weak unidentified line |

Table 5. Values of \( \log (g_f) \) for In I 451.13 nm transition.

| \( \log (g_f) \) | \( A \) (10\( ^8 \) s\(^{-1} \)) | Source |
|------------------|----------------------------------|--------|
| -0.308           | 0.806                            | L      |
| -0.265           | 0.890                            | M      |
| -0.213           | 1.003                            | K&B    |
| -0.206           | 1.019                            | F&W    |
| -0.167           | 1.115                            | C&B    |
| -0.360           | 0.715                            | G&K W  |
| -0.590           | 0.421                            | G&K D  |

L = Lambert et al. (1969), M = Morton (2000), K&B = Kurucz & Bell (1995), F&W = Fuhr & Wiese (2006), C&B = Corliss & Bozman (1962), G&K = Gurtovenko & Kostyk (1989) (W = value determined from the equivalent width, D = from the line depth).

Table 6. Hyperfine components of In I 451.13 nm with \( r \) the intensity of the component relative to the strongest one and \( \Delta \lambda \) the wavelength shift from the centre of gravity.

| \( F_I \) | \( F_a \) | \( r \) | \( \Delta \lambda \) (pm) |
|---------|---------|-------|------------------|
| 5       | 4       | 3.34  | 3.14             |
| 4       | 4       | 50.76 | 2.38             |
| 3       | 4       | 53.84 | 1.93             |
| 6       | 5       | 100.00| -1.38            |
| 5       | 5       | 50.76 | -2.58            |
| 4       | 5       | 18.46 | -3.34            |

As commonly done in solar abundance analysis (see Rutten 2002), we assume local thermodynamical equilibrium (LTE) and the model of Holweger & Müller (1974; henceforth HOLMUL) for the solar photosphere, including its microturbulence stratification. For the oscillator strength of In I 451.13 nm, we take the value of Fuhr & Wiese (2006). We computed line profiles both for the meteoritic abundance value \( A_{\text{In}}^{\text{m}} = 0.80 \) and for the solar value \( A_{\odot \text{In}} = 1.60 \) listed by Asplund et al. (2005). The resulting profiles are compared with the observed quiet-Sun profile in Fig. 4. The vertical bars specify the hyperfine structure components. It is obvious that neither computation fits the observed feature at all.

Fig. 5 illustrates the steps that are required to force a better match. The synthesized line was convoluted with a broad Gaussian profile with full width at half-maximum (FWHM) = 1.58 pm (1 pm = 10\(^{-3}\) nm), much wider than the instrumental broadening of the Fourier Transform Spectrometer (FTS) at Kitt Peak, and it was shifted redwards over \( \Delta \lambda = 2.35 \) pm. With these ad hoc measures a reasonable fit is obtained for indium abundance \( A_{\odot \text{In}} = 1.50 \) (Fig. 5).
but the assumptions made to obtain it are not justified. We conclude that the solar line at this wavelength in the quiet-Sun spectrum is probably not due to indium.

**Umbral profile synthesis.** We use the appearance of the 451.13-nm line in the sunspot spectrum to provide an independent estimate. In order to include Zeeman splitting, we estimate the magnetic field to be 3000 G from the Ti I 464.52-nm line observed at the same day as the In I 451.13 nm in the Kitt Peak Sunspot atlas. Lines with hyperfine structure split in complex manner in the presence of magnetic fields (Landi degl’Innocenti 1975). We employed the code by Landi degl’Innocenti (1978). The result is shown in Fig. 6. We assume that the orientation of the magnetic field in the observed sunspot is purely vertical and maintains only the $\sigma$ components.

For the model atmosphere, we use the semi-empirical umbral model M of Maltby et al. (1986). Fig. 7 compares the synthesized profile assuming the meteoritic abundance value $A_{In}^{tot} = 0.80$ to the observed profile assuming 60 per cent straylight. The dotted curve is the computed profile after convolution with instrumental broadening corresponding to the FTS resolution of one million. No ad hoc wavelength shift is applied. The match is quite satisfactory including the separation and amplitude ratio of the two peaks.

Obviously, the good match in Fig. 7 requires 60 per cent straylight subtraction. We first argue and then show that this is a reasonable value. In their introduction to the Kitt Peak sunspot atlas, Wallace et al. (2000) already remark that photospheric straylight dominates the violet part of the spectrum. Its contribution scales as $\lambda^{-2}$ (see Staveland 1970) so that it is still large in the blue around 450 nm. Berdyugina, Solanki & Frutiger (2003) used 25 per cent to fit their TiO lines at 705 nm which translates into 61 per cent at 450 nm with the $\lambda^{-2}$ dependence. In order to quantify this estimate more precisely, we have performed spectral synthesis of the Fe II 436.9-nm line chosen because it is the closest FeII line without Zeeman splitting to the In I 451.13-nm line. The oscillator strength of the line was adapted to obtain a good fit to the photospheric spectrum as shown in Fig. 8. The lower curves demonstrate that the FeII line vanishes in the intrinsic umbral spectrum and only appears due to the contribution by photospheric straylight. The good fit to the atlas spectrum was obtained with 65 per cent addition of the computed photospheric spectrum. The reason why the FeII line vanishes in the umbral spectrum is shown in Fig. 9. The dominant ionization stage is Fe II in the photosphere, but FeI throughout the low umbral photosphere. Fe II lines that are weak in the photospheric spectrum can therefore not appear in the intrinsic umbral spectrum.

### 3 DISCUSSION

Our update in Section 2.1 of the analysis of Allen (1978) did not change the conclusion that there is no combination of
nucleosynthetic processes that can produce a Sn/In ratio as obtained using the most recent solar values, while the chondritic ratio can be easily accounted for. This is a strong indication that the solar abundance of indium cannot be much higher than the meteoritic value. This is also suggested by the absence of the In I resonance line at 158.6 nm.

Furthermore, Fig. 4 shows that standard line synthesis including hyperfine structure does not fit the observed profile for either the high or low abundance value. In contrast, its appearance in the sunspot spectrum is well reproduced, including hyperfine Zeeman splitting, using the low-meteoritic abundance value (Fig. 7) and assuming a reasonable straylight fraction (60 per cent) and umbral field strength of 3000 G.

These results together suggest that the line at 451.13 nm in the quiet-Sun spectrum is not due to indium but to some other species. It should be from an ion with low ionization energy of the neutral stage since the line disappears in the sunspot spectrum (cf. Fig. 9). The observation by Gonzalez (2006a) of significant trends of the assigned indium abundance with $T_{\text{eff}}$ and [Fe/H] in a sample of stars cooler than the Sun suggests that the unidentified transition should have high excitation energy. The best possible candidate in the list of Gonzalez (2006a) would be the Sm II line, but as noted in Section 2.2 this is actually a resonance transition of Sm I.

Finally, an alternative explanation of the In I 451.13-nm line formation might be the effect of departure from local thermodynamical equilibrium. In particular, the appearance of the 451.13-nm line as emission line in the spectra of long-period variables during the downward modulation phase was explained already by Thackeray (1937) as optical pumping between H8 and a In I line at 410.1 nm which shares its upper level with In I 451.13 nm. However, this mechanism does not operate at all in the deep solar photosphere where the formation of the hydrogen Balmer lines is close to LTE (cf. fig. 30 of Vernazza, Avrett & Loeser 1981).

In conclusion, we suggest that the solar indium abundance is close to the meteoritic value as evidenced in the sunspot spectrum, whereas the feature at 451.13 nm in the quiet-Sun spectrum remains unidentified and is likely to be an ion line at high excitation energy from a species with low-first ionization energy.

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