The Radius Anomaly of Transiting Hot Jupiters Explained?

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ABSTRACT

The radius anomaly displayed by many transiting hot Jupiters has motivated the development of new models that try to account for this bizarre property. These theoretical approaches include a wide variety of physical processes. Here we examine the scenario where hot Jupiters form in excretion disks that result from the merging of two main sequence stars. We find that this scenario may have some pros but also has some cons in explaining the properties of hot Jupiters.

Background

- Over 100 transiting planets are known, most of which have masses in the range 0.3 to 10 Jupiter masses, and are located within 01 AU of their host stars (Figure 1).
- Gas giant planets close to their stars are generally called Hot Jupiters because their surface temperatures are much higher than that of Jupiter.
- A large spread of planetary radii is observed in transiting hot Jupiters (Figure 2).
- Many hot Jupiters have radii well in excess the equilibrium radius for the age inferred from the host star, this has been termed the ‘radius anomaly’ of hot Jupiters (Leconte et al. 2009, A&A, 506, 385).
- A hot Jupiter needs a thermal energy excess of the order of its gravitational binding energy in order to inflate it by as much as 50%.
- A plausible mechanism to transport the stellar flux to the planet interior where it is needed for significant inflation needs to be invoked. We argue that such a mechanism is not required if inflated hot Jupiters come from binary mergers.

Results

- We find a strong correlation between the radius excess and the spiral in time of hot Jupiters due to G. Darwin’s instability.
- The correlation shown in Figure 5, can be explained if inflated hot Jupiters are young, of order of 100 Myr old. Their large sizes are not an anomaly but an indication that they are found at an early stage in their cooling evolution.
- The host stars are typically a few Gyr old, as judged from kinematics and evolutionary status (Lee et al. 2011, ApJ, 728, 32). Hot Jupiters could be younger than their host star if they formed in an excretion disk after a binary merger (Tutukov 1991, Astron. Zh., 68, 837). The cooling age of the planet would be an indicator of the time elapsed after the merger.
- Binary progenitors must be some 30 times more abundant than inflated hot Jupiters, and should be easily identifiable. The frequency of transiting planets found by CoRoT around G-type main-sequence stars is around 1 per 2000 stars, so the recognizably inflated fraction of 1/3 has an abundance of about $1.6\times10^{-4}f$ per G star. Their progenitors must then have an abundance of $\frac{\Delta \text{mass}}{\text{Gyr}}\sim 5\times10^{-3}f$. An obvious candidate population is contact binaries (W-UMa stars), but the direct merger of lower mass binaries that have not gone through an extended W-Uma-type contact phase is likely.
- A merger scenario agrees the peculiar distribution of orbital distances of transiting planets. The concentration near 0.05 AU, with a rapid decline at larger distances, indicates an origin close to the host star.
- An issue with the merger scenario is that some inflated Jupiter host stars seem to be rotating quite slowly. A very efficient angular momentum mechanism would be required.

Acknowledgements:

This work has been supported by the Spanish Plan Nacional de Astronomía y Astrofísica under grants AYA2007-2357 and AYA 2010-21308-C03-02, by RoPACS, a Marie Curie Initial Training Network funded by the European Commission’s Seventh Framework Program, and by the CONSOLIDER-INGENIO GTC project. We thank Michele Montgomery, Slavek Rucinski, Kazik Siwek, and Eric Ford for stimulating discussions, and Ramarao Tata for producing Figure 2. Part of this work was carried out while Eduardo Martin was a visiting research professor at the Geology Department of the University of Florida.