

# Preface

The idea to hold a workshop on globular clusters in Concepcion emerged during 2005 out of a variety of circumstances. Four years had passed since the IAU Symposium 207 on Extragalactic Globular Clusters in Pucón, a time span, which we thought to be long enough for justifying a new meeting with the intent to review the most recent developments in the field of extragalactic stars clusters. Originally intended to be a small-scale workshop, the response from the community was overwhelming so that only a full-scale international conference was able to cope with the numerous requests for talks and posters.

Finally, about 160 participants gathered in Concepción on March 6th, 2006. The venue was the university lecture hall located in the facultad de humanidades y artes of the Universidad de Concepción. Posters were exposed in the lobby of the faculty building. The weather was as good as one can reasonably expect from a late summer in Concepción. Although the programme was so tight that separate poster sessions other than those during coffee breaks could not be accomodated, posters received a lot of attention.

From the first to the last talk, the atmosphere was inspiring and the conference could keep its tension for five full days. This clearly shows that the attraction which globular clusters exercise on astrophysicists of quite different flavours, is as strong as ever.

Within the hierarchy of structure formation in the Universe, globular clusters link star formation with galaxy formation. Looking down from the globular cluster platform, one learns about stellar populations, looking up about galaxies. Sometimes it is not even necessary to look up, since the most massive clusters show properties which make their classification as star clusters or dwarf galaxies disputable. The concept of the conference was rather to look up and to put the emphasis on cluster systems and what they can tell us about their host galaxies. Strongly clustered star formation took or still takes place in almost all kinds of galactic environments, most spectacularly in ongoing mergers. Although the conditions for globular cluster formation must be realized locally in the interstellar medium, galaxy wide properties seem to be important to determine these conditions. The globular cluster systems of central galaxies may even be linked with the hosting galaxy cluster. Globular clusters can be used as dynamical probes for dark matter and thus enables a view onto the most fundamental conditions for galaxy formation, testing the CDM paradigm.

All these and more justify the conference title “Globular Clusters - Guides to Galaxies”.

Enforced by limited time resources, we had to neglect the detailed view onto Milky Way globular clusters, which provide extremely valuable insight into cluster formation. We particularly regret that it was not possible to present a portrait of Omega Centauri.

We want to thank all sponsors which made the conference financially feasible: The FONDAP center of astrophysics, the European Southern Observatory, the Cerro Tololo Interamerican Observatory, the Universidad de Concepción, and the Facultad de Ciencias Físicas y Matemáticas. The Facultad de Humanidades y Artes generously provided her lobby for poster presentations and for coffee and pastries.

The conference would not have been possible without the organisational skills and devotion of the Local Organising Committee: Doug Geisler, Matias Gómez, Aaron Romanowsky, and particularly Maria Eugenia Geisler.

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and  
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