

Extragalactic Star Clusters (IAU Symposium No. 207), edited by D. Geisler, E. K. Grebel & D. Minniti (Astronomical Society of the Pacific, San Francisco), 2002. Pp. 778, 24 × 16 cm. Price \$95 (about £63) + \$15 airmail shipping (hardbound; ISBN 1 583 81115 X) .

The astronomical community interested in the formation and evolution of star clusters and their host galaxies is a very vibrant one indeed. This is not in the last place thanks to major new technological developments, such as the realisation of ever increasing ground and space-based telescope apertures and resolving power, and the availability of new generations of powerful computing facilities capable of running simulations of the complex physics governing dense stellar clusters. Realising the promise of this field, and in particular that of bringing together researchers working on the many different aspects of extragalactic star clusters of any age and in a variety of different wavelength ranges, the editors of this book have succeeded in compiling a challenging and scientifically very interesting cross section of material.

It is almost a shame that the publication of this books took about 1.5 years, since research in this very active field has made significant progress in the mean time. Nevertheless, readers wishing to brush up their knowledge of or obtain new insights into almost any aspect of extragalactic star cluster research will find the invited reviews (12 pp each) and the vast majority of the contributed talk summaries (8 pp each) interesting and rewarding reading. The editors have done a good job by clearly separating these longer contributions from the short highlights of varying quality and relevance presented as scientific poster papers at this conference.

Almost every reader interested in the broader contexts of stellar and galaxy evolution, dynamical processes in gravitationally bound dense stellar systems, and the processes dominating at the very birth of stars and star clusters, will find at least a few contributions of interest. The focus of this book is broad ranging, from the detailed physics in nearby extragalactic star clusters in Local Group galaxies, via the general properties of (old) globular cluster systems in more distant galaxies, to recently formed

star clusters in interacting and starburst galaxies, and the pressing question as to whether these latter systems will eventually evolve into old globular cluster analogues as observed in our own Milky Way, for example.

Most of the scientific issues covered are clearly observation driven, but, while a sprinkling of contributions based on theoretical interpretation and modelling is contained in the book's final section, this field could clearly benefit from more of such efforts. However, as I said before, theoretical studies and sophisticated modelling approaches are currently among the main efforts in this very lively community. As in any observation-driven field, the compulsory future outlook (although by key researchers in the field) mainly calls for more and more detailed observations, while theoretical and modelling approaches only receive a cursory mention. Nevertheless, the future prospects for extragalactic star cluster research look bright from an observational point of view, with many large and sensitive ground and space-based observatories planned for the next decade.

In summary, despite the rather steep price for this hefty volume, I believe that the key invited and contributed sections make interesting and useful reading for professional astronomers, students and interested amateurs alike. It should be kept in mind, however, that this field is very lively, so that the most recent developments may have superseded some of the state-of-the art contributions in this book already!

— RICHARD DE GRIJS.