

**GEOS 657 – MICROWAVE REMOTE SENSING**  
**GRADUATE-LEVEL COURSE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA FAIRBANKS**

**Lecturer:**  
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**Lecture 13: Concepts of Polarimetric SAR**

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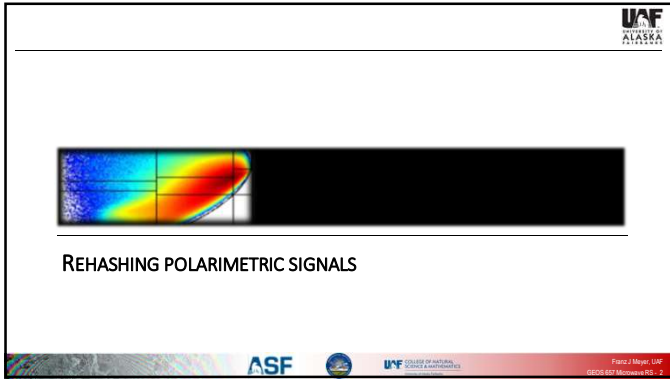
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**REHASHING POLARIMETRIC SIGNALS**

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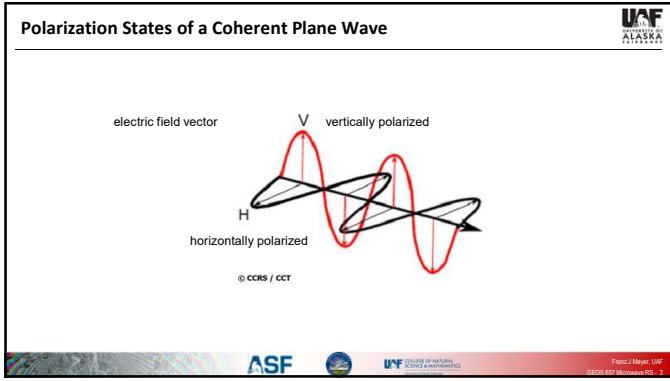
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**Polarization States of a Coherent Plane Wave**

electric field vector

V vertically polarized

H horizontally polarized

© cots / cct

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### Linearly Polarized Signals

- Several stages of linear polarization possible
  - Horizontal polarization (a)
  - Vertical polarization (b)
  - Linear -45° polarization (c)
  - Linear +45° polarization (d)

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### Circular and Elliptical Polarization

- Combination of vertically and horizontally polarized signals
  - Right circular polarization (a)
  - Left circular polarization (b)
  - Right elliptical polarization (c)
  - Left elliptical polarization (d)

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### Polarization of SAR Systems

Horizontal Transmit Horizontal Receive	HH	Horizontal Transmit Vertical Receive	HV
Vertical Transmit Vertical Receive	VV	Vertical Transmit Horizontal Receive	VH
Co-Polarized		Cross-Polarized	

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### Polarimetric SAR System Configurations

- **single pol:**
  - VV or HH (or possibly HV or VH)
- **dual pol:**
  - HH and HV, VV and VH, or HH and VV
- **quad pol (fully polarimetric):**
  - HH, VV, HV, and VH

relative phase between channels is important information

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### Scheme of a Dual-Pol System

Transmitter (T): X  
 Receivers (R): X & Y  
 (e.g. X = V and Y = H)

Jones Vectors:

$$\begin{bmatrix} S_{xx} \\ S_{xy} \end{bmatrix}$$


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### Scheme of a Quad-Pol System

Transmitter (T): X & Y  
 Receivers (R): X & Y  
 (e.g. X = V and Y = H)

Jones Matrices:

$$\begin{bmatrix} S_{xx} & S_{xy} \\ S_{yx} & S_{yy} \end{bmatrix}$$


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**Polarimetric Scattering Matrix**

In a quad-pol SAR, every pixel is represented by a matrix of four complex numbers, representing ratios of received and transmitted electric-field amplitudes:

$$[S] = \begin{pmatrix} S_{HH} & S_{HV} \\ S_{VH} & S_{VV} \end{pmatrix} \quad (\text{scattering or Jones matrix})$$

For (monostatic) SARs:  $S_{HV} = S_{VH}$  (reciprocity)

$$[S] = \begin{pmatrix} S_{HH} & S_{HV} \\ S_{HV} & S_{VV} \end{pmatrix} \quad (\text{Sinclair matrix})$$

⇒ 3 amplitudes + 2 independent phases per pixel

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**INTERPRETATION OF POLARIMETRIC SAR DATA**

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**To Make Sense of Polarization, It Is Convenient to Assume that the World is Made Up of Three Different Types of Targets**

- Radar scattering is physical and can be described as a series of bounces on scattering interfaces
- Three main scattering mechanisms dominate:
  - **Scattering on (rough) surfaces:** Water, bare soils, roads – Scattering strongly dependent on surface roughness and sensor wavelength
  - **Double-bounce scattering:** Buildings, tree trunks, light poles – little wavelength dependence
  - **Volume Scattering:** Vegetation; dry soils with high penetration – strongly dependent on sensor wavelength and dielectric properties of medium

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### Scattering Processes: Rough Surface (Bragg) Scattering

**• Polarimetric Dependence of Bragg scattering:**

- Horizontal polarization:  

$$R_{HH} = m \cdot \frac{\cos\theta_i - \sqrt{\epsilon_r - \sin^2\theta_i}}{\cos\theta_i + \sqrt{\epsilon_r - \sin^2\theta_i}}$$
- Vertical polarization:  

$$R_{VV} = m \cdot \frac{(\epsilon_r - 1)[\sin^2\theta_i - \epsilon_r(1 + \sin^2\theta_i)]}{(\epsilon_r \cdot \cos\theta_i + \sqrt{\epsilon_r - \sin^2\theta_i})^2}$$
- Cross polarizations:  

$$R_{HV} = R_{VH} = 0$$

... where  $\epsilon$  is the dielectric constant of the surface and  $m$  depends on surface roughness

➤ **Scattering Matrix:**  $[S] = m \begin{bmatrix} R_{HH} & 0 \\ 0 & R_{VV} \end{bmatrix}$

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### Scattering Processes: Fresnel Reflection

**Scattering Matrix:**  $[S] = \begin{bmatrix} R_s & 0 \\ 0 & R_p \end{bmatrix}$

**Fresnel Reflection Coefficients:**

$$R_s = \frac{\cos\theta - \sqrt{\epsilon - \sin^2\theta}}{\cos\theta + \sqrt{\epsilon - \sin^2\theta}} \quad \text{and} \quad R_p = \frac{\epsilon \cos\theta - \sqrt{\epsilon - \sin^2\theta}}{\epsilon \cos\theta + \sqrt{\epsilon - \sin^2\theta}}$$

... where  $\epsilon$  is the dielectric constant of the surface

This explains direct reflection off smooth surfaces

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### Scattering Processes: Fresnel Reflection

**Scattering Matrix:**

$$[S] = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & -1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ e^{i\phi} & 0 & R_{SS} & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & R_{SS} & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ R_{SV} & 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ R_{VS} & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}$$

**Fresnel Coefficients:**

$$R_{SS} = \frac{\cos\theta - \sqrt{\epsilon_s - \sin^2\theta}}{\cos\theta + \sqrt{\epsilon_s - \sin^2\theta}} \quad \text{and} \quad R_{VS} = \frac{\epsilon_s \cos\theta - \sqrt{\epsilon_s - \sin^2\theta}}{\epsilon_s \cos\theta + \sqrt{\epsilon_s - \sin^2\theta}}$$

$$R_{SV} = \frac{\cos\theta - \sqrt{\epsilon_s - \sin^2\theta}}{\cos\theta + \sqrt{\epsilon_s - \sin^2\theta}} \quad \text{and} \quad R_{VS} = \frac{\epsilon_s \cos\theta - \sqrt{\epsilon_s - \sin^2\theta}}{\epsilon_s \cos\theta + \sqrt{\epsilon_s - \sin^2\theta}}$$

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### Polarimetric Dependence of Scattering Principles

**Relative scattering strength by polarization:**

- Pure Surface Scattering:  $|S_{VV}| > |S_{HH}| > |S_{HV}|$  or  $|S_{VH}|$
- Double Bounce Scattering:  $|S_{HH}| > |S_{VV}| > |S_{HV}|$  or  $|S_{VH}|$
- Volume Scattering: main source of  $|S_{HV}|$  and  $|S_{VH}|$

**Legend**

Low Radar Brightness (|S|)  High Radar Brightness (|S|)

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### Visual Interpretation

- Simplest method for classifying polarimetric imagery
- Present data in a color image to support interpretation
- Suggested "realistic looking" color assignment:
  - HH = red      HV = green      VV = blue
  - Water reflections have high VV
  - Vegetation has higher than average HV

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### Think - Pair - Share

- Color composite of an ALOS PALSAR (L-band) scene over Washington, DC
- The following color coding was applied

$$\vec{s} = \begin{bmatrix} S_{HH} \\ S_{HV} + S_{VH} \\ S_{VV} \end{bmatrix}$$

- [Q1]: What are the red areas in this image?
- [Q2]: What may cause this region to appear white?
- [Q3]: This is a river. Why is it appear in a purple color rather than blue?

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### Sinclair Decomposition

**Definition:**

$$-s = \begin{bmatrix} S_{HH} \\ S_{HV} \\ S_{VV} \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} \text{Double bounce dominated} \\ \text{Volume dominated} \\ \text{Surface dominated} \end{bmatrix}$$

**Example:**

- ALOS PALSAR (L-band) data over Washington, D.C.

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### Example of Multiple Polarizations for Vegetation Studies - Pacaya-Samiria Forest Reserve in Peru

**L-band SAR images from UAVSAR (HH, HV, VV)**

**RGB Combination of Polarizations**

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### SAR Signatures of Vegetation at Various Frequencies and Polarizations

**R: P-BAND, G: L-BAND, B: C-BAND**

**R: HH, G: HV, B: VV**

Polarimetric signature change and sub-canopy features are exposed as wavelength increases

SAR Handbook: Comprehensive Methodologies for Forest Monitoring and Biomass Estimation. Eds. Flores, A., Herndon, K., Thapa, R., Cherrington, E. NASA, 2019. DOI: 10.25966/rlbm1-e0077

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### Polarimetric Signatures of Different Types of Agricultural Crops

- The structure of Crops/vegetation defines scattering power at different polarizations:
  - Voluminous leafy vegetation will scatter strongly in HV
  - Stemmy vegetation (e.g., corn) will dominate in HH
  - Bare fields and low vegetation stronger in VV

**Example:**  
 JPL UAVSAR image acquired by L-band radar showing three backscatter polarizations and the false-colored composites over an area in California's Central Valley covered by orchards and different crops. The strength of each polarized backscatter is shown, relatively suggesting how certain crops are relatively higher in one of the HH, HV, and VV polarizations.

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### Different Ways Of Representing Polarimetric Data

- Commonly used polarimetric target descriptors include:
  - [S]** Sinclair matrix
  - k** Pauli Scattering Vector
  - [K]** Kennaugh Matrix
  - [T]** Coherency Matrix
  - [C]** Covariance Matrix

Will not be discussed here

- Pauli Vector, Kennaugh matrix, and Coherency matrix are closely related to physical properties of the scatterer → allow insight into surface structure
- Sinclair Matrix and Covariance matrix are directly related to the system measurables

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### POLARIMETRIC DECOMPOSITIONS – WHAT ARE THEY AND WHAT IS THEIR PURPOSE

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### Goal of Polarimetric Decomposition

Goal of Polarimetric Decomposition: **Separate scattering mechanisms more cleanly** to allow for improved analysis of the Earth surface

ALOS PALSAR Look Angle:  $\theta = 25$  deg

Bangladesh  
21.923N 89.904E  
2009/04/08  
ALPSRP22400043

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### The Pauli Scattering Vector – A Polarimetric Decomposition

- The Scattering matrix can be decomposed by a set of "Pauli Matrices"  $\Psi_p$  resulting in the Pauli vector  $\underline{k}$ 

$$\underline{k} = \frac{1}{2} \text{trace}([S][\Psi_p])$$

where

$$[\Psi_p] = \left\{ \sqrt{2} \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}, \sqrt{2} \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 0 & -1 \end{bmatrix}, \sqrt{2} \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 1 \\ 1 & 0 \end{bmatrix}, \sqrt{2} \begin{bmatrix} 0 & -j \\ j & 0 \end{bmatrix} \right\}$$

- Resulting in:
 
$$\underline{k} = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}} [S_{HH} + S_{VV} \quad S_{HH} - S_{VV} \quad S_{HV} + S_{VH} \quad j(S_{HV} - S_{VH})]^T$$

Surface scattering      Double bounce scattering      Volume scattering

⇒ Related to physical properties of the scatterers

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### The Pauli Scattering Vector

- In the monostatic case (where you can assume that HV = VH) the Pauli Vector reduces to three elements:
 
$$\underline{k} = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}} \begin{bmatrix} S_{HH} + S_{VV} \\ S_{HH} - S_{VV} \\ 2S_{HV} \end{bmatrix}$$

Surface scattering      Double bounce scattering      Volume scattering
- It makes sense to represent these parameters in an RGB image with red = double bounce, green = volume scattering, and blue = single bounce

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### The Pauli Vector – A Polarimetric Decomposition

- **Technically speaking, the Pauli Vector is a "Polarimetric Decomposition":**
  - Take a complex matrix of correlated parameters
  - Decompose into sum of (orthogonal) component matrices, each of which has some simpler physical interpretation
- **Typical Decomposition Techniques include:**
  - Cholesky decomposition
  - Eigendecomposition
  - Singular Value Decomposition
  - Pauli Decomposition
  - ...
- **Goals:** Decompose complex correlated measurements into uncorrelated components that are easier to interpret

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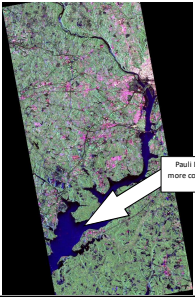
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### Pauli & Sinclair Decomposition

Washington, D.C., Example

**Pauli decomposition** (HH+VV, HV+VH, HH+VV)  
*(even bounce, volume, odd bounce)*



**Sinclair decomposition** (HH, HV+VH, VV)  
*(preferred double bounce, volume, preferred surface)*



Pauli Decomposition provides more correct "colors" as seen e.g., in water

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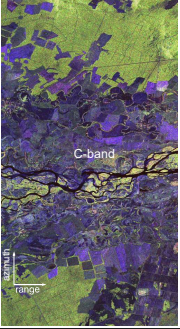
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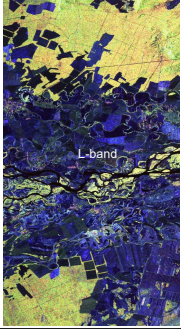
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### Visual Interpretation – Color Composites

C-band



L-band



RGB Coding:  
HH+VV  
2HV  
HH+VW

So-called "Pauli" decomposition

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### Scene Classification based on Polarimetric Decompositions

- Unsupervised classifiers have been introduced in the recent years
  - Based on physical properties of target and dominant scattering mechanism and NOT on dataset
    - No prior knowledge about scene content or terrain classes necessary
- Main decomposition-based classifiers:
  - Van Zyl: "odd bounce," "even bounce," "diffuse"
  - Freeman: Three component scattering model based classification
  - Cloude & Pottier:  $H / \alpha$  Classifier
  - Cloude & Pottier:  $H / A / \alpha$  Classifier
  - Yamaguchi: Four Component scattering model based classification (extension of Freeman)
- Newest methods combine unsupervised methods (e.g.,  $H / A$ ) with a subsequent supervised classifier to improve results

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### The Unsupervised $H / \alpha$ Classifier

- Eigendecomposition of the coherency matrix (i.e., reduction large number of parameters into an orthogonal set of parameters that contain meaningful information) → Physical interpretation of Eigenvalues
  - Polarimetric Entropy ( $H$ ) [calculated from ratio of Eigenvalues]:
    - Represents randomness of scattering with  $H = 0$  indicates single scattering mechanism and  $H = 1$  represents random mix of mechanisms



- The (average)  $\alpha$  Angle [calculated from Eigenvector]: Indicative of dominant scattering mechanism
  - If  $\alpha \approx 0^\circ$  → surface scattering
  - If  $\alpha \approx 45^\circ$  → volume scattering
  - If  $\alpha \approx 90^\circ$  → dihedral or multiple scattering

$$\alpha = \arctan \left( \frac{\sum_{i=1}^3 \alpha_i p_i}{\sum_{i=1}^3 p_i} \right)$$

with  $p_i = \frac{\lambda_i}{\lambda_1 + \lambda_2 + \lambda_3}$   
and  $\alpha_i =$  angle relative to vertical

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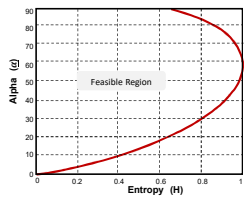
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### The Unsupervised $H / \alpha$ Classifier

- The  $H / \alpha$  diagram is shown below
- By definition, all image pixels will have  $H / \alpha$  values within the feasible region




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### Example of SAR Data in H / $\alpha$ Diagram

- TerraSAR-X SAR Data
- Agricultural Fields are shown
- Data Characteristics:
  - Spread across a range of  $H$  values with average of  $H \approx 0.8$
  - Low  $\alpha$  indicates dominance of surface scattering
  - Indications of variations of crop density on fields

14/04/2010 - Entropy

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### The Unsupervised H / $\alpha$ Classifier

- The  $H/\alpha$  plane is partitioned into nine classes
- Classes are chosen on general properties of scattering

W. Boerner: POLSARPROV3.0 - LECTURE NOTES Franz J Meyer, UAF GEOS 657 Microwave RS - 22

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### Refinement: The Unsupervised H / A / $\alpha$ (Entropy/Anisotropy/Alpha) Classifier

- In cases of high Entropy ( $H > 0.7$ ), the  $H / \alpha$  classification scheme is not unique.
- E.g. we can not discriminate between the following scattering cases:

- Anisotropy was introduced to solve these problems by distinguishing cases where  $I_2 \approx I_3$  from cases where  $I_2$  is large and  $I_3$  is small

$$A = \frac{\lambda_2 - \lambda_3}{\lambda_2 + \lambda_3}$$

Complementary to Entropy H  
Additional discrimination when  $H > 0.7$

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### Refinement 2: Rotation Angle Correction of Polarimetric Signatures

**Scattering matrix for even-bounce scatterers:**

- If scatterer oriented parallel to flight track:
 
$$[S] = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 0 & -1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 0 & e^{i\phi} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} R_{xx} & 0 \\ 0 & R_{yy} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} R_{xz} & 0 \\ 0 & R_{yz} \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} R_{xx}R_{xz} & 0 \\ 0 & -R_{yy}R_{yz}e^{i\phi} \end{bmatrix}$$
- In case of rotation with angle  $\phi$ :
 
$$[S] = \begin{bmatrix} \cos(2\phi) & \sin(2\phi) \\ \sin(2\phi) & -\cos(2\phi) \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 0 & e^{i\phi} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} R_{xx} & 0 \\ 0 & R_{yy} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} R_{xz} & 0 \\ 0 & R_{yz} \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} \cos(2\phi)R_{xx}R_{xz} & \sin(2\phi)R_{xx}R_{yz}e^{i\phi} \\ \sin(2\phi)R_{yy}R_{xz} & -\cos(2\phi)R_{yy}R_{yz}e^{i\phi} \end{bmatrix}$$

Rotation of dihedral scatterers makes dihedrals look like volume scatterers

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### Refinement 2: Rotation Angle Correction of Polarimetric Signatures

**Correction of Rotation Based on Deorientation Concept of Huygens**

- Minimization of cross-polarized HV component
 
$$[T] = \begin{bmatrix} T_{11} & T_{12} & T_{13} \\ T_{21} & T_{22} & T_{23} \\ T_{31} & T_{32} & T_{33} \end{bmatrix} \quad [T(\phi)] = [R_z(\phi)][T][R_x(\phi)]^T \quad [T(\phi)] = \begin{bmatrix} T_{11}(\phi) & T_{12}(\phi) & T_{13}(\phi) \\ T_{21}(\phi) & T_{22}(\phi) & T_{23}(\phi) \\ T_{31}(\phi) & T_{32}(\phi) & T_{33}(\phi) \end{bmatrix}$$
- Minimum found from  $T_{33}(\phi) = 0$ 

$$T_{33}(\phi) = T_{33} \cos^2(2\phi) - \text{Re}\{T_{31}\} \sin(4\phi) + T_{32} \sin^2(2\phi)$$

Equals minimization of  $T_{33}$  term in  $T(\theta)$ :

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**Fugen-dake Unzen**  
32.825N; 130.364E; 2007/6/5  
ALPSR072570650-1.1A

**T33 Rotation**  
Scattering power decomposition  
Pd, Pv, Ps

**Pauli-basis**  
HH+VV, 2HV, HH+VV

**Sinclair-basis**  
HH, 2HV, VV

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**Iwate-San Morioka Iwate**  
 39.747N 140.976E; 2007/3/28  
 ALPSRP062500790-1,1A

**T<sub>33</sub> Rotation**  
 Scattering power decomposition  
 Pd, Pv, Ps

**Pauli-basis**  
 HH+VV, 2HV, HH+VV

**Sinclair-basis**  
 HH, 2HV, VV

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 ALPSRP224000430

**T<sub>33</sub> Rotation**  
 Scattering power decomposition  
 Pd, Pv, Ps

**Pauli-basis**  
 HH+VV, 2HV, HH+VV

**Sinclair-basis**  
 HH, 2HV, VV

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**Available Software Tools**

- PolSARpro is a freely available software tool provided by ESA
- Can be downloaded at: <https://earth.esa.int/web/polsarpro/home>
- It includes all available polarimetric decomposition methods for dual-pol and quad-pol SAR data
- In addition to the software also tutorials to Polarimetry can be downloaded
- Includes polarimetric analysis of Sentinel-1 dual-pol data

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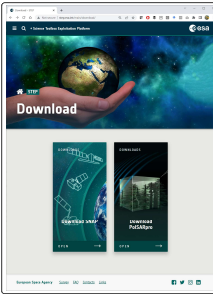
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### Download ESA Software Including Polarimetric Capabilities

- ESA has two software packages that include polarimetric capabilities, PolSARPro and SNAP
- To download these software tools go her:
  - <http://step.esa.int/main/download/>



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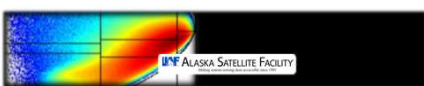
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UAF ALASKA SATELLITE FACILITY

### EXAMPLES OF SAR IMAGE CLASSIFICATION

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### The H / $\alpha$ Classifier

Example Natural Environment

- Mixed natural environment in Germany



Optical Image



Polarimetric SAR color composite

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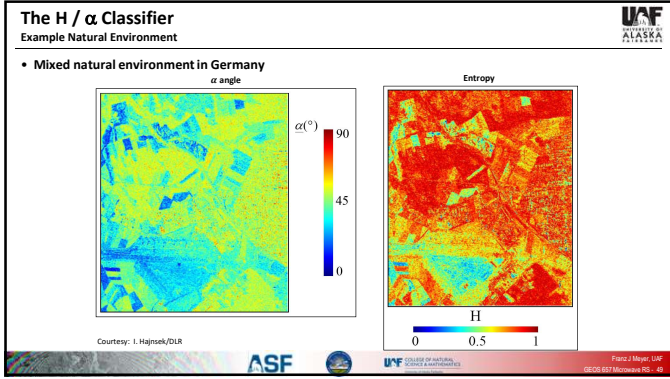
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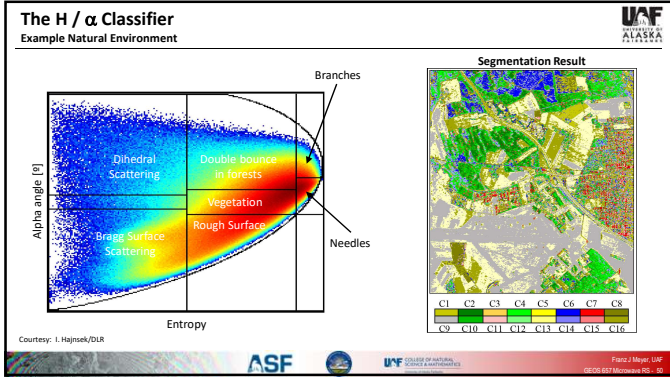
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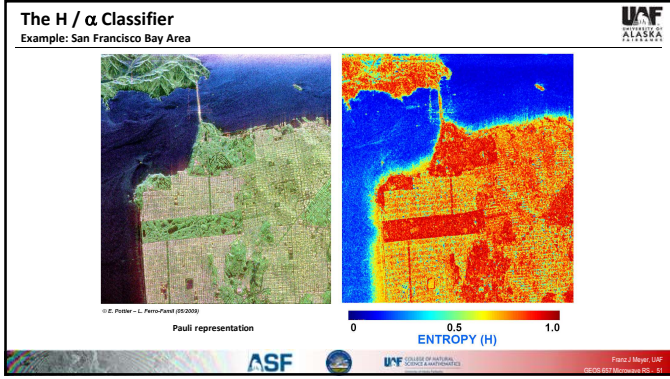
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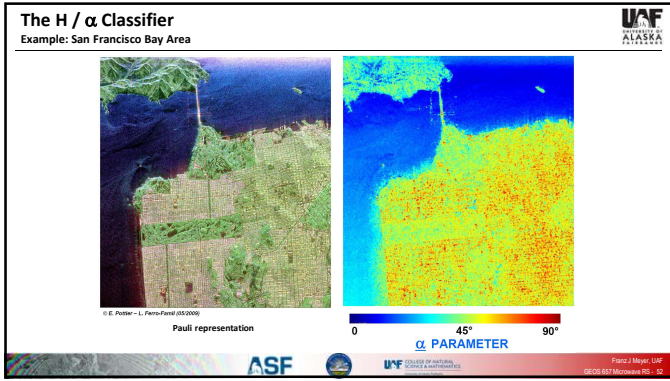
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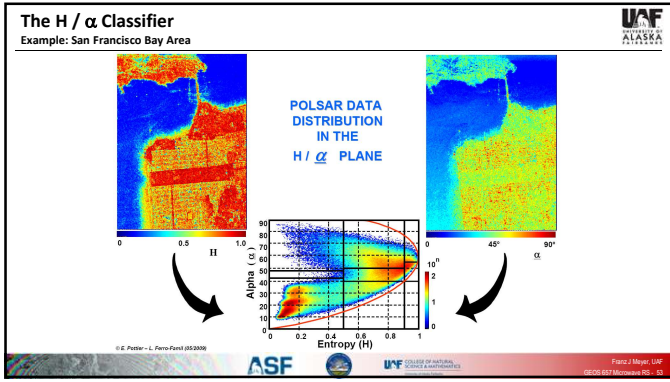
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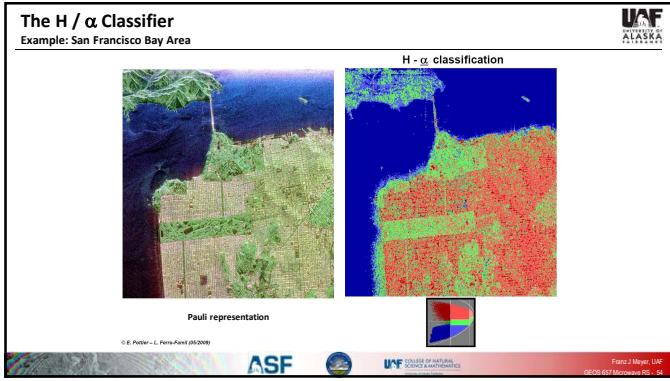
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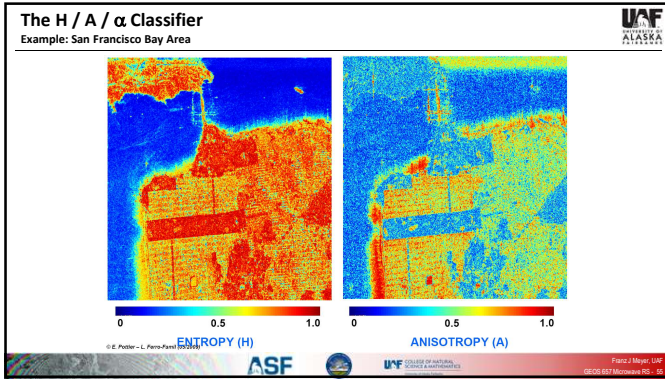
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### Unsupervised Classification based on the H / A / $\alpha$ Decomposition

- Disadvantage of H / A /  $\alpha$  classification schemes:
  - H /  $\alpha$  classification space is sub-divided into 9 basic zones
  - Location of the boundaries is fairly arbitrary and generic
  - Therefore, H / A /  $\alpha$  classification is not optimal and more advanced ways for determining class boundaries are sought.
- Solution:
  - In newer approaches H / A /  $\alpha$  classification results are combined with a subsequent Wishart or maximum likelihood classification to improve performance.
  - H / A /  $\alpha$  classification results provide initial class centers that are improved in subsequent classification

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### Unsupervised Classification based on the H / A / $\alpha$ Decomposition

• Example of k-mean classification procedure:

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**Unsupervised Classification based on the H / A /  $\alpha$  Decomposition**

• Example of k-mean classification procedure:

4th ITERATION

C1 C2 C3 C4 C5 C6 C7 C8

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**Unsupervised Classification based on the H / A /  $\alpha$  Decomposition**

H /  $\alpha$  + subsequent classifier

H /  $\alpha$  only

Performance Improvement

C1 C2 C3 C4 C5 C6 C7 C8

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**Polarimetric Classification**

The Role of the Observation Frequency

• Different penetration in different frequencies produce different polarimetric signatures

*C-band data:* Polarimetric data is volume dominated

Australian Pasture

4th Iteration (15 classes)

Surface Volume

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**Polarimetric Classification**  
 The Role of the Observation Frequency

• Different penetration in different frequencies produce different polarimetric signatures

L-band data: Higher penetration causes more surface signal

Australian Pasture  
 Courtesy of J.S. Lee

4<sup>th</sup> Iteration (15 classes)

Mixed Surface SP Volume DB

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**What's Next?**

• On Thursday we will have a short lecture and a lab on **The Role of InSAR in Geophysics**

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