

Precipitation: Advances in Measurement, Estimation and Prediction

Silas Michaelides

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in Measurement, Estimation
and Prediction

 Springer

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This book is dedicated to my wife Fyllitsa

Silas Michaelides
Editor

Editorial

This book is the outcome of contributions from scientists who were invited to expose their latest findings on precipitation research and in particular, on the measurement, estimation and prediction of precipitation. In this respect, the book comprises a state-of-the-art coverage of the most modern views and approaches in the study of precipitation. In addition, the 20 Chapters that this book consists of provide an insight into the evolutionary aspects of their respective disciplines; also, many of the authors attempt to project into the future by providing an outlook of the planned and expected developments in their respective areas of research.

The Chapters presented in this book are mostly written by selected scientists who presented their advances in precipitation research during activities at the 2006 and 2007 General Assemblies of the European Geophysical Union (EGU) that I convened, at the kind invitation of its Atmospheric Sciences Division. However, in order to give a more complete picture of the subject, other invited experts were asked to supplement with additional Chapters.

The readers of this volume are presented with a blend of theoretical, mathematical and technical treatise of precipitation science. Large parts of many Chapters are devoted to authentic applications of technological and theoretical advances: from local field experiments to country-scale campaigns and, beyond these, to multinational space endeavors. Also, the book reveals the high level of scientific ingenuity, the systematic exploitation of modern technological knowledge and the extent of scientific collaboration and networking that were employed by the scientific community in tackling a very complex issue.

Bearing in mind the above, the book is addressed to those who are involved in precipitation research, but also to those researchers from the wider area of atmospheric sciences whose interests touch on this extremely important weather phenomenon. Moreover, the book aims at introducing newcomers in the field of precipitation science to the various up-to-date scientific facets of the subject, by exposing the full dimensions of the measurement, estimation and prediction of precipitation. I trust that this volume will become a valuable source of

inspiration for the scientific endeavors of all scientists working on the multifaceted physical phenomenon of precipitation.

This book is the result of an intense collaborative effort and close interaction between the Authors and the Editor, on the one hand, and the Editor and the Publishers, on the other hand. In this respect, I wish to express my deepest appreciation to all and each one of the 51 esteemed colleagues, scientists and researchers who contributed to this book for their valuable writings but also for their patience during the compilation of this volume. I also wish to thank the Publishers for their kind invitation to lead and coordinate this effort which turned out to be a great experience for me. Finally, I am grateful to my wife Fyllitsa for her valuable support during the writing and compilation of this book.

Dr. Silas Michaelides
Editor

Prologue

As mankind faces up to the various pressing environmental and climatic problems of the twenty-first century, protecting freshwater resources is to be found at the forefront. The availability of freshwater for human consumption, agriculture and industry is of concern to all nations, particularly those in the arid zones where prolonged droughts have already created immense human suffering, population displacement and erosion of arable resources. Ultimately, precipitation is the foremost source of freshwater. With the exception of ancient artesian deposits and deep aquifers, which themselves can only be recharged by precipitation once depleted, mankind largely depends upon precipitation to supply inland lakes, rivers, wetlands and reservoirs of all types for its freshwater stores – including the buildup of snow in mountains for the eventual Spring runoff. Understanding the physical processes which control and produce precipitation and the development of models to predict precipitation, are responsibilities left to scientists, especially those who are specialists in precipitation physics, measurement, remote sensing estimation, model formulation, and verification.

It is notable that some 60% of the world's population that is impacted by shortages of freshwater live within the 21 countries that surround the Mediterranean Sea – the centerpiece of a basin whose water budget is of central concern to the European Union and even more so to its neighbors to the East and South where current and pending water shortages are extreme. Preserving a fresh water supply to residents of these nations and elsewhere has become a prime responsibility of national and local governments, as well as of individuals – and more recently of international organizations whose well conceived policies are able to help assist governments and individuals to protect, preserve, conserve, and utilize water in the best possible fashion. By the same token, scientists are left with the responsibility of finding the optimal means to measure precipitation, to understand how its production is influenced by climate change, aerosol effects, and land use change – and ultimately to predict its distribution and those additional elements of regional and global water cycles that affect man's life and health. It is easy enough to overlook these issues when conducting research, seeking

funding for research, teaching and supervising students concerning precipitation science and running models associated with precipitation and water resources; without scientific commitment in helping solve mankind's central problems with water and water conservation, scientists would not be exercising their very best skills. That is why books such as this up-to-date compendium are so very important.

The book's Chapters are organized into four thematic Parts, entitled: I. Measurement, II. Estimation (via space, ground and underwater remote sensing), III. Prediction, and IV. Integration – with each Part covering a selection of distinct views.

The first Part addresses measurement techniques and quality control based on new technology instruments, including the 2D-Video-Distrometer and the Droplet Spectrometer which obtain measurements of accumulated rainfall by actually counting and integrating the water volumes of individual droplets. Such technology enables diversified quantization and segmentation of rainfall because it resolves the process down to its fundamental unit metric.

The second Part addresses the remote sensing of rainfall- which has traditionally been a problem in transforming backscatter observations (i.e., reflectivity factor measurements) from non-coherent, non-polarimetric, single frequency ground radar systems into estimates of rain rate – but in recent decades has undergone a technology revolution into the use of Doppler, polarimetric, and multi-frequency radar systems operated on the ground, on ships and on aircraft, plus the use of passive microwave radiometers and high frequency radars operating on Earth-pointing spacecraft. New remote sensing technology has even been used in the ocean to estimate rain rates by measurement of under water acoustic waves produced by rainfall noise on the ocean surface. The Chapters in this Part provide a selection of new ideas concerning the remote sensing of precipitation using the newer technologies, including a view to the future.

The third Part then moves to the prediction of precipitation through the use of different types of prognostic modeling systems: (a) the ensemble numerical weather prediction (E-NWP) model, (b) the Limited Area Model (LAM), and (c) the advection-based Nowcasting Model (NM) which can be used with either time-lapse ground radar images or optical-infrared satellite images.

Finally, the fourth Part addresses the integration of precipitation research. Amongst other issues, this Part addresses the research that took place within the *Voltaire Project*, a European-wide project that addressed many of the same issues addressed within this book's

compilation of Chapters, but closely focused on verification and validation of precipitation observations.

It is left as a challenge to the reader to help devise and guide future research programs concerning precipitation physics, measurement, estimation, prediction and validation. These remain as imperative research topics for the experimental, applications and operational agencies along with the academic research departments charged with understanding, monitoring and predicting precipitation and the stores of freshwater resources that mankind depends upon for its livelihood, health, food production and commerce. The publication of findings of these research programs is crucial in moving the science forward and in creating understanding of all aspects of precipitation – knowledge that is sublimely important to the world community. Therefore, I offer my gratitude as a scientist and as a friend to Dr. Silas Michaelides for the very fine effort he has put forth to deliver this book and its contents – provided by an international body of scientists – into the open literature.

Professor Eric A. Smith

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Contents

Part I. Measurement of precipitation..... 1

Chapter 1 – The 2D-Video-Distrometer 3

Michael Schönhuber, Günter Lammer, Walter L. Randeu

1.1	Introduction.....	3
1.2	About distrometer types.....	4
1.3	Principle of measurement by 2D-Video-Distrometer	6
1.3.1	Design of the instrument	8
1.3.2	Measurable and derived quantities.....	12
1.4	Current implementation	20
1.4.1	Specifications	21
1.4.2	Maintenance procedures.....	21
1.5	Experiences.....	23
1.6	Scientific merits	24
1.7	Outlook	28
	References.....	29

Chapter 2 – Using vibrating-wire technology for precipitation measurements..... 33

Claude E. Duchon

2.1	Introduction.....	33
2.2	Principles of operation	35
2.3	Description of field site and data acquisition.....	36
2.4	Advantages of using three vibrating wires.....	41
2.5	Calibration-verification.....	44
2.6	Temperature sensitivity.....	47
2.7	Rain rate estimation	50
2.8	Very low precipitation events.....	53
2.9	Summary.....	56
	References.....	58

Chapter 3 – Measurements of light rain, drizzle and heavy fog 59

Ismail Gultepe

3.1	Introduction.....	59
3.2	FRAM field projects and observations	62
3.2.1	FD12P measurements	63
3.2.2	VRG101 measurements	64
3.2.3	POSS measurements	65
3.2.4	Total Precipitation Sensor (TPS) measurements	67
3.2.5	FMD and CIP measurements	68
3.3	Analysis	68
3.4	Results.....	69
3.4.1	Case studies.....	69
3.4.2	Overall comparisons	70
3.5	Discussion.....	73
3.5.1	Light precipitation and drizzle measurements	75
3.5.2	Visibility calculations	75
3.5.3	Uncertainties	78
3.6	Conclusions.....	79
	References.....	80

Chapter 4 – The Droplet Spectrometer – a measuring concept for detailed precipitation characterization..... 83

Sebastian Glasl, Magnus Anselm

4.1	Introduction.....	83
4.2	Physical basis.....	84
4.2.1	Drop size calculation.....	84
4.2.2	Calibration.....	86
4.3	The measuring concept	87
4.3.1	The droplet sensor	87
4.3.2	The software ‘Rainalyser’	89
4.4	Discussion and applications.....	93
4.4.1	Measuring range.....	93
4.4.2	Influence of wind	94
4.4.3	Drop shapes and drag coefficient.....	94
4.4.4	Significance of the impulse of the drops.....	94
4.4.5	Application possibilities.....	95
4.5	Future plans and improvements.....	96
4.6	Appendix.....	97
	References.....	99

Chapter 5 – Quality control of precipitation data 101

Thomas Einfalt, Silas Michaelides

5.1 Introduction..... 101

5.2 Quality Control of rain gauge data..... 102

 5.2.1 Gaps in the data..... 103

 5.2.2 Physically impossible values..... 103

 5.2.3 Constant values 103

 5.2.4 Values above set thresholds 103

 5.2.5 Improbable zero values 104

 5.2.6 Unusually low daily values 104

 5.2.7 Unusually high daily values 104

 5.2.8 Data check time series..... 104

 5.2.9 Station data quality..... 105

 5.2.10 Generalization and future work..... 106

 5.2.11 Conclusion: what can we do automatically?..... 106

5.3 Quality Control of radar data 106

 5.3.1 Data Quality report of COST 717 107

 5.3.2 Error sources 108

 5.3.3 Data Quality Index 111

 5.3.4 Correction methods 114

5.4 Future developments..... 123

References..... 123

Part II. Estimation of precipitation..... 127

i. Space estimation 129

Chapter 6 – Global precipitation measurement..... 131

*Arthur Y. Hou, Gail Skofronick-Jackson, Christian D. Kummerow,
James Marshall Shepherd*

6.1 Introduction..... 131

6.2 Microwave precipitation sensors 135

6.3 Rainfall measurement with combined use of active
and passive techniques..... 140

6.4 The Global Precipitation Measurement (GPM) mission..... 143

 6.4.1 GPM mission concept and status 145

 6.4.2 GPM core sensor instrumentation 148

 6.4.3 Ground validation plans 151

6.5 Precipitation retrieval algorithm methodologies..... 153

 6.5.1 Active retrieval methods 155

 6.5.2 Combined retrieval methods for GPM 157

6.5.3	Passive retrieval methods.....	159
6.5.4	Merged microwave/infrared methods	160
6.6	Summary.....	162
	References.....	164

Chapter 7 – Operational discrimination of raining from non-raining clouds in mid-latitudes using multispectral satellite data 171

Thomas Nauss, Boris Thies, Andreas Turek, Jörg Bendix, Alexander Kokhanovsky

7.1	Introduction.....	171
7.2	Conceptual model for the discrimination of raining from non-raining mid-latitude cloud systems.....	172
7.3	Retrieval of the cloud properties using multispectral satellite data	173
7.4	Application of the conceptual model to Meteosat Second Generation SEVIRI data	175
	7.4.1 The daytime approach.....	175
	7.4.2 The night-time approach	178
7.5	Evaluation of the new rain area delineation scheme.....	183
	7.5.1 Evaluation study using daytime scenes.....	184
	7.5.2 Evaluation study using night-time scenes	186
7.6	Conclusions.....	188
	References.....	190

Chapter 8 – Estimation of precipitation from space-based platforms 195

Itamar M. Lensky, Vincenzo Levizzani

8.1	Introduction.....	195
8.2	Estimating rainfall from space.....	196
	8.2.1 VIS/IR	197
	8.2.2 Passive microwave.....	198
	8.2.3 Active sensors	200
	8.2.4 Blended techniques	202
8.3	Retrieval of precipitation formation processes using microphysical data	205
	8.3.1 Rain estimates using microphysical considerations.....	205
	8.3.2 Retrieval of precipitation formation processes	207
	8.3.3 Future developments	212
8.4	Abbreviation	212
	References.....	213

Chapter 9 – Combined radar–radiometer retrievals from satellite observations..... 219

Mircea Grecu, Emmanouil N. Anagnostou

9.1 Introduction..... 219
 9.2 Background..... 220
 9.3 General formulation..... 223
 9.4 Concluding remarks..... 228
 References..... 228

Part II. Estimation of precipitation

ii. Ground estimation 231

Chapter 10 – Rain microstructure from polarimetric radar and advanced disdrometers 233

Merhala Thurai, V. N. Bringi

10.1 Introduction..... 234
 10.1.1 Background 234
 10.1.2 Rain microstructure: relevance 235
 10.1.3 Relating rain microstructure to polarimetric radar measurements..... 238
 10.2 Drop size distributions 242
 10.2.1 Variability 242
 10.2.2 DSD models 243
 10.2.3 DSD estimation from polarimetric radar measurements..... 248
 10.2.4 DSD estimation from advanced disdrometers..... 254
 10.2.5 Global DSD characteristics 257
 10.2.6 Seasonal variation 259
 10.3 Drop shapes..... 263
 10.3.1 Axis ratio measurements from an artificial rain experiment..... 263
 10.3.2 Drop contours..... 265
 10.3.3 Consistency with polarimetric radar measurements..... 268
 10.4 Drop orientation angles..... 269
 10.5 Fall velocities 274
 10.6 Summary..... 276
 References..... 279

Chapter 11 – On the use of spectral polarimetry to observe ice cloud microphysics with radar..... 285

*Herman Russchenberg, Lennert Spek, Dmitri Moisseev,
Christine Unal, Yann Dufournet, Chandrasekhar Venkatachalam*

11.1	Introduction.....	286
11.2	The concept of spectral polarimetry	287
11.3	Microphysical model of ice particles.....	288
11.3.1	The shape of ice crystals	289
11.3.2	Canting angles of ice crystals.....	290
11.3.3	Mass density of ice crystals.....	290
11.3.4	Velocity of ice crystals.....	291
11.3.5	Bulk parameters	292
11.4	Radar observables of ice particles.....	293
11.5	Retrieval of microphysical parameters	296
11.5.1	Dependence on DSD parameters of plates and aggregates.....	296
11.5.2	The curve fitting procedure.....	297
11.5.3	Quality of retrieval technique.....	302
11.6	Application to radar data.....	303
11.6.1	Retrieval algorithm results	304
11.6.2	Comparison of IWC with LWC	304
11.6.3	Relation between IWC and reflectivity.....	307
11.6.4	Influence of the shape parameter of the DSD	308
11.7	Summary and conclusions	310
	References.....	311

Chapter 12 – Performance of algorithms for rainfall retrieval from dual-polarization X-band radar measurements..... 313

Marios N. Anagnostou, Emmanouil N. Anagnostou

12.1	Introduction.....	313
12.2	X-band dual-polarization systems	316
12.3	Attenuation correction schemes for X-band dual-polarization radar observations.....	318
12.4	Rainfall estimation algorithms.....	319
12.4.1	Review of microphysical retrieval algorithms	319
12.4.2	Rainfall retrieval algorithms	324
12.4.3	Data	325

12.5 Algorithm evaluation 328
 12.5.1 Evaluation of the DSD retrieval techniques 329
 12.5.2 Evaluation of rainfall retrieval techniques 333
 12.6 Closing remarks 337
 References..... 337

Part II. Estimation of precipitation

iii. Underwater estimation..... 341

Chapter 13 – Underwater acoustic measurements of rainfall 343

Eyal Amitai, Jeffrey A. Nystuen

13.1 Introduction 343
 13.1.1 Why measure rainfall at sea? 343
 13.1.2 Why listen to rainfall underwater? 344
 13.1.3 What instrumentation is used to measure rainfall at sea?..... 344
 13.1.4 Using sound to measure drop size distribution and rain rate..... 345
 13.2 Listening to rainfall in a shallow water pond 348
 13.3 Oceanic field studies of the acoustic measurement of rainfall 349
 13.4 Listening to rainfall 2000 meters underwater – the Ionian Sea Rainfall Experiment..... 350
 13.4.1 Rain type classification and wind speed estimates..... 358
 13.5 Conclusions and outlook..... 360
 References 361

Part III. Prediction of precipitation 365

Chapter 14 – Probabilistic evaluation of ensemble precipitation forecasts..... 367

Bodo Ahrens, Simon Jaun

14.1 Introduction..... 367
 14.2 Rain station precipitation data 370
 14.3 Forecast data by the limited-area prediction system COSMO-LEPS 371
 14.4 Observational references..... 373
 14.5 Skill scores..... 376

14.6 Results and discussion 379
 14.7 Conclusions..... 384
 References..... 386

Chapter 15 – Improved nowcasting of precipitation based on convective analysis fields..... 389

Thomas Haiden, Martin Steinheimer

15.1 Introduction..... 389
 15.2 The INCA system 393
 15.3 Advection forecast 397
 15.4 Convective analysis fields 401
 15.5 Cell evolution algorithm 403
 15.6 Verification and parameter sensitivity 407
 15.7 Orographic effects in convective initiation..... 412
 15.8 Conclusions..... 415
 References..... 416

Chapter 16 – Overview of methods for the verification of quantitative precipitation forecasts 419

Andrea Rossa, Pertti Nurmi, Elizabeth Ebert

16.1 Introduction..... 419
 16.2 Traditional verification of QPF and limitations for high resolution verification 423
 16.2.1 Common scores..... 424
 16.2.2 The double penalty issue..... 429
 16.3 Scale-dependent techniques..... 433
 16.3.1 Neighborhood methods 433
 16.3.2 Spatial decomposition methods..... 437
 16.4 Object and entity-based techniques 438
 16.5 Stratification 440
 16.5.1 Seasonal, geographical and temporal stratification..... 441
 16.5.2 Weather-type dependent stratification 442
 16.6 Which verification approach should I use?..... 448
 References..... 449

Chapter 17 – Objective verification of spatial precipitation forecasts..... 453

Nazario Tartaglione, Stefano Mariani, Christophe Accadia, Silas Michaelides, Marco Casaioli

17.1 Introduction..... 453
 17.2 The problem of observations in objective verification 456
 17.3 Use of rainfall adjusted field for verifying precipitation 458
 17.4 Statistical interpretation of position errors as derived by object-oriented methods 461
 17.5 Assessing the difference between CMS indices from two different forecast systems 466
 17.6 Conclusions..... 467
 References..... 469

Part IV. Integration of measurement, estimation and prediction of precipitation 473

Chapter 18 – Combined use of weather radar and limited area model for wintertime precipitation type discrimination 475

Roberto Cremonini, Renzo Bechini, Valentina Campana, Luca Tomassone

18.1 Introduction..... 475
 18.2 Data source and precipitation type discriminating algorithms..... 478
 18.2.1 Data sources 478
 18.2.2 Precipitation type discriminating algorithms 480
 18.3 Algorithm’s validation 482
 18.4 Results..... 485
 18.4.1 Ground network 2 m air temperature 485
 18.4.2 LAMI freezing level..... 486
 18.4.3 LAMI wet-bulb temperature 488
 18.5 Summary and conclusions 489
 References..... 490

Chapter 19 – Adjusting ground radar using space TRMM Precipitation Radar..... 493

Marco Gabella, Silas Michaelides

19.1 Introduction..... 494
 19.1.1 Monitoring hardware stability and measurements’ reproducibility 494
 19.1.2 Calibration versus absolute calibration 494

19.1.3	Adjustment	495
19.1.4	Why to adjust Ground-based Radar (GR) data?.....	496
19.2	Radar/Gauge factor: range-dependence as seen by gauges	497
19.2.1	Adjustment not directly related to physical variables	498
19.2.2	Adjustment factor related to some physical variables	499
19.3	Comparing ground-based and spaceborne radar.....	500
19.3.1	Range-dependence as seen by the TPR.....	501
19.4	Instrumentation and data description.....	503
19.4.1	The TRMM Precipitation Radar (TPR)	503
19.4.2	The Ground-based Radar (GR) in Cyprus	504
19.5	Results.....	505
19.5.1	Bias and range-dependence derived from single overpasses	505
19.5.2	A robust range-adjustment equation: integrating more overpasses	507
19.5.3	Comparing TPR and GR echoes	508
19.6	Summary and lessons learned.....	510
	References.....	512

Chapter 20 – Implementing a multiplatform precipitation experiment..... 515

Giovanni Perona, Marco Gabella, Riccardo Casale

20.1	Introduction.....	515
20.1.1	Scientific/technological objectives of the VOLTAIRE project.....	517
20.1.2	Project organization	518
20.2	VOLTAIRE project summary and recommendations	520
20.2.1	Summary	520
20.2.2	Main lessons learned.....	523
20.2.3	Recommendations	524
20.3	VOLTAIRE technical conclusions	526
20.4	Outlook for QPE using radar	527
20.4.1	Where we stand today	527
20.4.2	Proposed solution: use of many inexpensive, redundant, short-range radars.....	528
20.5	General conclusions.....	529
20.6	Appendix.....	530
	References.....	530

Author index..... 533

Subject index

Part I. Measurement of precipitation

1 The 2D-Video-Distrometer

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Table of contents

1.1	Introduction	3
1.2	About distrometer types.....	4
1.3	Principle of measurement by 2D-Video-Distrometer	6
1.3.1	Design of the instrument	8
1.3.2	Measurable and derived quantities.....	12
1.4	Current implementation	20
1.4.1	Specifications.....	21
1.4.2	Maintenance procedures.....	21
1.5	Experiences.....	23
1.6	Scientific merits	24
1.7	Outlook	28
	References	29

1.1 Introduction

Detailed knowledge on tropospheric precipitation microstructure is one of the bases in various fields of sciences and applications, like terrestrial and satellite radio transmission, remote sensing of precipitation, generally tropospheric wave propagation and atmospheric sciences.

In the field of telecommunications, precipitation causes several unwanted effects on Earth-satellite as well as on terrestrial links. System design has to consider that and has to take care for appropriate countermeasures. Statistical approaches allow quantitative answers on questions about precipitation's impact on wave propagation. Thus probabilities are given, that e.g., rain induced attenuation or phase delay

exceeds a certain threshold for a given set of parameters (location, frequency etc.). Increasingly demanding applications (higher frequencies, frequency re-use and multiple satellite links) require answers on increasingly complex questions.

Remote sensing technologies aim at measuring precipitation parameters at far distances, using either spaceborne or ground-based radars and radiometers. Such observations permit better climatological characterization, on a global as well as on a regional scale. Global keyword terms like greenhouse effect, global atmospheric warming, tropical rainfall, the Earth's energy and water cycle, etc. immediately indicate the urgent need for such observations. Speaking in local scale, short-term climatological considerations play a more important role. Weather fore- and nowcasting help in many various ways in everyday life. To mention only but a few examples of the numerous points of interest: flood and storm warnings, control of air and road traffic, control of hydroelectric power plants, water resources management, etc.

1.2 About distrometer types

Drop size distribution meters are called disdrometers, often with this very spelling being used. Within this Chapter, however, the spelling distrometer is preferred, indicating a device for measuring *distributions*, not limited to raindrops only, but also suited for other particular matter (amongst which are snow flakes and hail stones). The 2D-Video-Distrometer (2DVD) has been produced and marketed under this very name since more than a decade.

Based on different technologies, distrometers have been developed to get detailed information on precipitation microstructure in point monitoring observations. Most distrometer types rely either on measurement of precipitation particles' mechanical impact onto some sensor, or on optical methods. Whereas measurements by electromechanical distrometers are restricted to drop size distribution information, optical, especially imaging distrometers, provide more comprehensive information.

A well known electromechanical instrument is the RD69 distrometer (Joss and Waldvogel 1967). The measurement principle of this system is based on the automatic compensation of the force produced by a rain drop falling upon the sensor. This automatic force compensation together with raindrop fall velocities taken from literature models allows obtaining a value for the drop size. On this basis, rain