

TOFA: Discussion Meeting on Thermodynamics of Alloys



The year 2014 saw another very successful TOFA Meeting, organized by Ales Kroupa and his colleagues in Brno in the Czech Republic. It was number 14 in a series of biannual meetings that started in 1988 in Vienna, Austria. There were contributions by scientists from many parts of the world, ranging from Brazil in South America to South Korea in Eastern Asia.

It must have been around 1985 when Bruno Predel and Ferdinand Sommer organized an informal meeting at the Max Planck-Institute of Metal Research (as it was called then) in Stuttgart, Germany, and the main topic was the thermochemistry of metallic systems. On this occasion, being a young researcher myself, I had the chance to meet some of the great people in metallurgical thermodynamics like Oswald Kubaschewski, Ottmar Knacke, Ole Kleppa, or Bruno Predel himself. I liked this type of meeting so much that, when I came back to Vienna, I tried to convince my department head Kurt Komarek that we should organize such a meeting ourselves. After some hesitation, he agreed under the condition that my colleague Adolf Mikula and I would take care of the entire organization.

Without much experience in such matters but with lots of enthusiasm and with the help of some other colleagues as well as the Austrian Chemical Society we started our preparations, and in April 1988 the first “Discussion Meeting on Thermodynamics of Alloys” took place in Vienna. (The acronym TOFA was coined only many years later). Already at this very first meeting, we had participants from many parts of the world, i.e., from the United States in the West to Japan in the East. Apparently, most of the attendees liked the meeting and the numerous discussions, and during the Conference Dinner, after one or two glasses of Austrian wine, Maria Teresa and Narcis Clavaguera agreed to organize a successor meeting in 1990 in Barcelona, Spain (which took then actually place in San Feliu de Guixols, a lovely seaside resort in Catalonia). From then on, the meetings took place every other year in various places in Europe, with one excursion to Beijing in 2010.

These TOFA meetings have developed into an occasion where scientists interested in the thermochemistry of metallic or ceramic systems get together to discuss the recent developments in the field. From the very beginning, phase equilibria have always been a prominent topic, first it was mainly experimental work, but soon CALPHAD calculations became also a major part of the program. This led to many disputes between experimentalists and the CALPHAD community and helped to better understand each other. It is this fascinating mix of scientists that makes the TOFA meetings such interesting and rewarding occasions: early stage researchers and experienced colleagues, experimentalists (unfortunately a dwindling number) and theoreticians as well as people from the CALPHAD community, scientists doing pure basic research and those interested in more applied research.

It is extremely pleasing that the places of the next two conferences are already fixed: Claudio Schön will organize the meeting in 2016 in Sao Paulo in Brazil, and the 2018 meeting will take place in South Korea, organized by Jonho Lee.

Thus, maybe we will have a chance to meet at one of these upcoming TOFA Meetings. Give it a try and see for yourself!

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