An Extensionally Fractured Upper Lithosphere on Io

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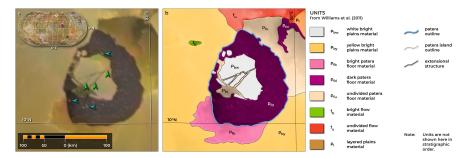
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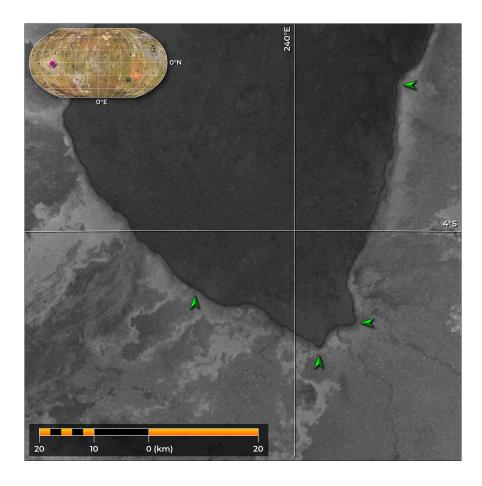
Abstract

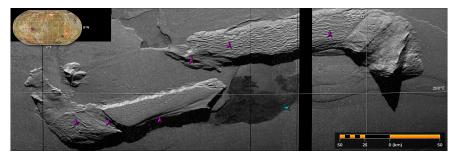
The Jovian moon Io features hundreds of paterae, broad depressions often filled with lava. The largest such example, Loki Patera, features a large, polygonal, and fractured island in its center. This island may reflect the fragmentation of the upper Ionian lithosphere by a shallow magma body, facilitated by a great number of shallow extensional structures. We propose a model for the Ionian lithosphere in which the upper portion is heavily deformed by joints, normal faults, and graben resulting from combined tidal, subsidence, and thermal stresses, and a lower portion rife with major thrust faults formed by horizontal compression of deeper crustal levels from the continued burial of surface units. Some of those thrusts may be reactivated normal faults. An extensionally fractured upper lithosphere accounts for the Loki Patera island, for observations of more than 175 paterae with straight edges, for the fact that almost 95% of Io's surface is covered with volcanic flow and plains units, and for widespread instances of mass wasting within Io's gigantic mountain blocks. Additional, high-resolution image and topographic data are required to test this hypothesized model for the moon's lithosphere.

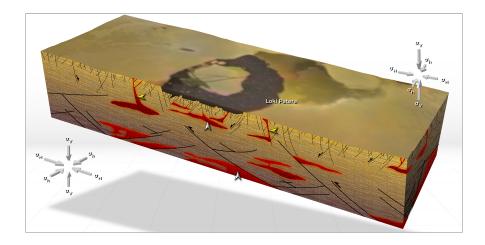
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20	Key Points:
21	• A distinctive polygonal "island" in Io's largest patera may be a fractured crustal block
22	• There are numerous other indicators for a pervasively fractured Ionian lithosphere
23	• We propose a lithospheric model for Io with major shortening and extensional tectonics in the
24	lower and upper portions, respectively

25 Abstract

26 The Jovian moon Io features hundreds of paterae, broad depressions often filled with lava. The largest 27 such example, Loki Patera, features a large, polygonal, and fractured island in its center. This island 28 may reflect the fragmentation of the upper Ionian lithosphere by a shallow magma body, facilitated by 29 a great number of shallow extensional structures. We propose a model for the Ionian lithosphere in 30 which the upper portion is heavily deformed by joints, normal faults, and graben resulting from 31 combined tidal, subsidence, and thermal stresses, and a lower portion rife with major thrust faults 32 formed by horizontal compression of deeper crustal levels from the continued burial of surface units. 33 Some of those thrusts may be reactivated normal faults. An extensionally fractured upper lithosphere 34 accounts for the Loki Patera island, for observations of more than 175 paterae with straight edges, for 35 the fact that almost 95% of Io's surface is covered with volcanic flow and plains units, and for 36 widespread instances of mass wasting within Io's gigantic mountain blocks. Additional, high-resolution 37 image and topographic data are required to test this hypothesized model for the moon's lithosphere.

38

39 Plain Language Summary

40 Io is a large moon of Jupiter, and one of the most volcanically active bodies in the Solar System. Io has 41 a distinctive landform type called "paterae" ("patera" in singular form), which are essentially large 42 depressions filled with lava. The biggest patera is called Loki Patera, and in its middle is a polygonal 43 island. We interpret this island as a fractured block of Io's crust. If this interpretation is correct, then it 44 is possible that much of the upper portion of Io's crust is riddled with extensional fractures caused by 45 several overlapping processes. A huge number of extensional fractures explains other aspects of Io's 46 geology, such as the fact that almost half of all the moon's paterae have straight edges—which is 47 something we'd expect to happen if paterae form in a heavily extensionally fractured crust. Io also has 48 gigantic mountains, which are formed by compression of the lower crust as tremendous amounts of

49 lava erupt and bury everything around them. But even those mountains show lots of extensional

50 tectonic structures, which provide further support for our idea about Io's crust.

51

52 **1 Introduction**

53 Jupiter's rocky moon Io is replete with towering mountain blocks (Schenk et al., 2001) and lava flows

54 that cover virtually the entire surface (McEwen et al., 1998; Williams et al., 2011). Internal heat energy

is principally supplied by tidal interactions with Jupiter and its neighboring moons (Peale et al., 1979).

56 Chief among the satellite's most notable landforms are the paterae, broad depressions that are

57 widespread and commonly filled with lavas (Radebaugh et al., 2001).

58 First described by Carr et al. (1979), paterae (*sing*. patera) are quasi-circular, shallow depressions

59 with curved, straight, or scalloped edges. These landforms may be the Ionian equivalent to the calderas

60 seen on Earth, Venus, and Mars, but a formation via collapse into a subsurface void space—the

61 principal means by which calderas form (Lipman, 1997)—has yet to be confirmed for Io's paterae.

62 Radebaugh et al. (2001) identified at least 417 paterae (425 including nested features: Williams et al.,

63 2011) distributed across the ~80% of Io imaged at 2 km/pixel or better, with diameters ranging from

64 2.5 to 202.6 km.

65 That largest patera is Loki, situated in Io's eastern hemisphere. Loki Patera features a prominent

66 "island" in its center (Lopes-Gautier et al., 2000). Dark lines that cross this island are suggestive of

67 tectonic lineaments—raising the possibility that the island is a fractured crustal block. If so, then the

68 break-up of this block may offer valuable insights into the properties and tectonic state of Io's

69 lithosphere.

70

71 2 The Loki Patera Island

Seen with combined data from the Voyager 1 Imaging Science Subsystem narrow-angle camera and
the Galileo Solid-State Imaging System (SSI) camera (Figure 1a), the island is distinctly polygonal in

outline and measures approximately 115×110 km in spatial extent along its north-south and east-west axes, respectively. A prominent lineament about 85 km long strikes east-northeast across the island, with two additional linear features (55 and 30 km long, respectively) striking to the northeast and abutting the first. Each of these features is ~2–3 km across. Smaller polygonal "islands" are present to the northwest and southwest of the larger block, and the dark patera floor is dotted with bright spots (termed "bergs") that may be locally high-standing topography and/or surface deposits (Howell et al., 2013).

81 The morphology of these lineaments strongly suggests that they are extensional tectonic structures. 82 Although lava flows can be much longer than they are wide, they tend to show digitate ends and widen 83 with distance from their source vents (e.g., Carr et al., 1977) and so are not morphologically consistent 84 with the Loki Patera island lineaments. Neither are other geological landforms that can have relatively 85 linear planforms, such as mass-wasting deposits nor secondary crater chains (of which no examples are 86 yet known for Io). Dikes often have straight margins that extend for tens of kilometers or more, but on 87 that scale are bounded by steep, near-vertical fractures (e.g., Ernst et al., 2001). We therefore interpret 88 these lineaments as being extensional in nature, either tensile fractures (i.e., joints) or, more likely 89 given their scale, are paired, antithetic, inward-dipping normal faults (i.e., graben).

90 Near-Infrared Mapping Spectrometer data returned by the Galileo mission indicate that both the 91 patera floor and the material within these fractures are warmer than the island and the plains 92 surrounding the patera (Lopes-Gautier et al., 2000); these thermal characteristics are shared by many 93 other paterae on Io (Radebaugh et al., 2001). Per our reasoning, the Loki Patera island is in fact several 94 discrete (but formerly contiguous) blocks that have rafted apart in a manner akin to pack ice, and the 95 material between the blocks is the lava the covers the entire patera floor. Comparison of image data of 96 Loki Patera from the Galileo and Voyager missions indicate that the island and its constituent fractures 97 show no resolvable change in position or size over the intervening two decades (Lopes-Gautier et al., 98 2000). Moreover, the kinetic and thermal effects of two concurrent resurfacing "waves" observed in

99 March 2015 did not appear to disrupt or destroy the island, strongly indicating that this feature has

100 persisted for at least the 36 years since its discovery in 1979, and that it may now be sitting on, or is

101 anchored to, the patera floor (de Kleer et al., 2017).

102

3 Implications for Ionian Volcanotectonics

104 *3.1 Patera Formation*

105 As large, irregular depressions overwhelmingly associated with lava flows, paterae have been

106 interpreted as the Ionian counterparts to calderas on Earth, Venus, and Mars (e.g., Carr et al., 1979).

107 Yet calderas on those worlds are generally characterized by quasi-circular or arcuate outlines

108 (Crumpler et al., 1996) and peripheral zones of crustal extension (Walter and Troll, 2011), and are

109 frequently associated with voluminous deposits of lava, ash, or both (Lipman, 1997). Indeed, 42% of

110 the 417 paterae surveyed by Radebaugh et al. (2001) have straight or irregular margins that terminate at

111 sharp corners (e.g., Figure 2). Adjacent extensional structures are not commonly observed, although

112 this dearth of extensional tectonics may be a function of available image resolution and Io's prodigious

113 global resurfacing rate of ~1.5 cm/yr (Kirchoff and McKinnon, 2009). And no volcanic deposits of

114 sufficient volume to match the observed depression have been unequivocally recognized proximal to,

and having come from, any patera (Keszthelyi et al., 2004).

116 Paterae may instead be the result of the stalling of silicate magma at shallow depths that undermines 117 the overlying crust, particularly if that crust is SO₂ rich and porous (Keszthelyi et al., 2004). Under this 118 scenario, the heat from an intrusion melts sulfur and/or SO₂, which mobilizes into the surrounding 119 country rock and leaves behind pore space. With continued melting, a substantial depression forms or 120 the magma chamber can even be fully unroofed (Keszthelyi et al., 2004). By this view, Io's paterae 121 differ from conventional calderas by forming not because of the eruption or lateral withdrawal of 122 magma but by the migration of volatiles through a crust that becomes increasingly porous or otherwise 123 mechanically weak (cf. Kargel et al., 1999).

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124 Regardless of the means of collapse, the disruption of a magma chamber roof would be readily 125 enhanced by pre-existing extensional fractures in the crust—such as those that cross the Loki Patera 126 island. We infer that these structures predate the formation of Loki Patera for two reasons: a) they do 127 not have a spatial distribution or arrangement consistent with extensional strains associated with 128 magma chamber tumescence or collapse (e.g., Walter and Troll, 2001); and b) at tens of km long, their 129 dimensions are comparable to the lengths of those portions of other paterae margins that are straight 130 and have been interpreted to reflect tectonic control (e.g., Radebaugh et al., 2001). 131 It may be, then, that the island is a remnant of fractured crust that overlaid and foundered into a 132 shallow, stalled magma body. The rest of the roof material might even have been subsumed by lava 133 entirely, accounting for why there are few similar, fractured islands in other paterae. (Some other paterae have islands, such as the 28 km-diameter Steropes Patera (Radebaugh et al., 2001) or the 75 134 135 km-wide Tupan Patera (Black, 2006), but available image data are insufficient to survey all such 136 examples on Io, or determine how many, if any, are also fractured.) Further, should the Loki block be 137 sitting on the patera floor, sufficiently anchored so as to remain seemingly stationary at least since its 138 first observation in 1979 (de Kleer et al., 2017), then it follows that as a result of the creation of void 139 space in the subsurface, the block's upper surface should be lower than the surrounding plains. Lava 140 from floor eruptions could then exploit and undermine fractures in the island to thermally erode and 141 enlarge them, such that those structures become visible at Voyager image resolutions.

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143 *3.2 Fracturing of the Ionian Upper Lithosphere*

The fractured block in Loki, the finding of almost half of all paterae having straight margins, and the fact that some patera walls are steep and stand kilometers tall—such as the margins of Chaac Patera, which are 2.7 km high and have slopes of 70° (Radebaugh et al., 2001)—together imply strong tectonic control on the formation of at least some paterae. Certainly *thrust* faults are widespread on Io, with the straight margins of many of the moon's enormous mountain blocks (Figure 3) taken as evidence of shortening tectonics, attributed to subsidence of the crust under continually emplaced lavas (Schenkand Bulmer, 1998; Turtle et al., 2001).

151 But there are reasons to expect substantial *extensional* deformation of the upper Ionian lithosphere, 152 too. For example, temporally and spatially localized decreases in eruptive activity, set against a 153 backdrop of sustained tidal heating, are predicted to generate considerably large, horizontally 154 compressive stresses deep in the Ionian crust, but horizontally extensional stresses near the surface 155 (McKinnon et al., 2001; Kirchoff et al., 2020). Similarly, the formation of Io's gigantic mountain 156 blocks along deep-seated thrust faults is thought to be accompanied by widespread extension and the 157 formation of normal faults and graben (Bland and McKinnon, 2016). Some of these extensional 158 structures may penetrate as much as 15 km into the footwall (Bland and McKinnon, 2016)—consistent 159 with the great heights and slope angles of, for instance, the Chaac Patera walls. Extensional fractures 160 would efficiently conduct ascending magma to the surface (Bland and McKinnon, 2016; McGovern et 161 al., 2016; Byrne et al., 2018), allowing magma to erupt that would otherwise be too dense to avoid 162 stalling in the shallow crust (Keszthelyi et al., 2004). At least some of these extensional structures have 163 a dip component of slip (Ahern et al., 2017).

164 Even within the uplifted and tilted mountain blocks, there is considerable extensional deformation,

such as the scarp-parallel lineaments on the back scarps of the Hi'iaka Montes (Ahern et al., 2017)

166 (Figure 3). Similarly, Schenk and Bulmer (1998) documented landslide scarps on Euboea Montes—

167 presumably great listric normal faults, on the basis of comparisons with landslide deposits on Earth and

168 other planets (e.g., Lopes et al., 1980; Riley et al., 1999).

169

170 **4 Discussion**

A highly extensionally deformed upper, brittle lithosphere accounts for several separate but related setsof observations of Io.

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173 Firstly, the prevalence of such structures explains why the central island in Loki Patera has a 174 polygonal outline and appears dissected by fractures: the island is a formerly coherent block that broke 175 apart along pre-existing fractures atop a shallow magma body as that body (and the patera) grew, by the 176 withdrawal and/or eruption of magma, via the mobilization of sulfur-bearing volatiles (Keszthelyi et 177 al., 2004), or by a combination of these processes. In any case, since *some* subsurface material was 178 removed, that central island must now be at a lower elevation than the surrounding plains and is 179 perhaps sitting on the patera floor. The smaller islands and bergs in Loki may be other, smaller 180 fragments of the original chamber roof, consistent with the view of Howell et al. (2013) that such 181 features are not concentrations of sulfur deposits but are instead isolated areas of terrain that avoided 182 burial by subsequent lavas. It is not clear why the large island has remained intact, in contrast to some of the smaller fragments throughout the patera floor (Howell et al., 2013), although there may well be a 183 184 resolution effect at play since those smaller fragments visible in Voyager images are not resolved with 185 Galileo data. The island may simply be the largest remaining piece of an ongoing process that will 186 ultimately destroy the original roof over the magma body entirely, in which case Loki will eventually 187 come to resemble other paterae where no large islands are present-and, by implication, other paterae 188 may once have had large island fragments.

189 Secondly, widespread joints and normal faults in the crust account for the straight margins of a 190 substantial number of Io's paterae (Radebaugh et al., 2001), with these structures forming the 191 boundary(ies) of patera(e) as shallow magma bodies undermined and drove the collapse of the 192 overlying, fractured roof material (Keszthelyi et al, 2004). The numerous instances of sharp paterae 193 corners noted by Radebaugh et al. (2001) might reflect the tectonic influence of intersecting sets of 194 joints or normal faults. Moreover, the extension associated with the mountain formation models of 195 Bland and McKinnon (2016) and Kirchoff et al. (2020) is consistent with the finding that paterae— 196 assuming their form is controlled by pre-existing normal faults-are much more commonly collocated 197 with mountains than predicted by chance alone (Radebaugh et al. 2001; Jaeger et al., 2003).

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198	Thirdly, abundant extensional structures provide ready conduits for magma to reach the surface;
199	indeed, the normal and transtensional fractures that characterize an extensional tectonic regime are
200	more conducive to magma ascent than reverse or transpressional fractures, given that crustal shortening
201	results in negative horizontal elongation whereas horizontal extension opens vertical accommodation
202	space into which magma can move (e.g., Byrne et al., 2018). A prevailing horizontally extensional
203	tectonic regime in its upper lithosphere is thus compatible with Io being almost entirely covered by
204	extensive lava flows and vast plains units, the latter of which mainly comprise buried lavas and
205	pyroclastic deposits (McEwan et al., 2000; Williams et al., 2002). Indeed, plains and lava flow units
206	occupy 66.6% and 27.8% of the surface, respectively (Williams et al., 2011).
207	Finally, Schenk and Bulmer (1998) proposed that uplifted blocks rise along deep-rooted thrust
208	faults, drawing a parallel between Io's mountains and basement-cored uplifts in the western United
209	States. In the latter case, those shortening structures moved along reactivated, high-angle normal faults
210	that originally formed via crustal extension (e.g., Reches, 1978). For horizontal compression, incipient
211	thrust faults form with low dip angles (Anderson, 1905). Therefore, should at least some mountain
212	blocks be bounded by high-angle reverse faults as suggested by Ahern et al. (2017), then those
213	bounding structures could have formed as normal faults that were later reactivated when horizontally
214	compressive stresses built at the base of the lithosphere from sustained burial of surface materials
215	(Bland and McKinnon, 2016).
216	We thus propose a model for Io whereby the upper lithosphere features a pervasive fracture network
217	formed by a combination of tidal, subsidence, and thermal stresses-with large, deep-seated thrust
218	faults and widespread normal faults dominant at lower and upper crustal levels, respectively (Figure 4).
219	Abundant extensional structures at shallow crustal levels serve as failure planes along which

220 undermined magma chamber roofs collapse, and are available for reactivation with a reverse or oblique

- sense of slip if favorably aligned to local, subsequent stress fields. The apparent dearth of extensional
- strain (beyond paterae and mountain block edges) on Io is probably a function of the moon's

extraordinary volcanic resurfacing rate, which likely obscures just how deformed the near surfaceactually is.

225 This stress state is in marked contrast to other terrestrial bodies in the Solar System. For instance, 226 although there are major thrust fault-related landforms on Mercury as is the case on Io, those on the 227 innermost planet are interpreted to have formed from secular interior cooling (Strom et al., 1975; Byrne 228 et al., 2018). The resulting horizontally compressive stress field results in a dearth of extensional 229 structures at the surface, and inhibits the ascent of magma to shallow depths in all but the weakest parts 230 of the planet's crust (Byrne et al., 2018). The tectonic characteristics of Mercury are largely shared by 231 the Moon (e.g., Byrne, 2020). Venus and Earth are replete with both extensional and shortening 232 landforms, although each is in a different tectonic regime than that of Io (e.g., Byrne, 2020; Lourenço 233 et al. 2020). Mars, too, has widespread extensional tectonics (e.g., Byrne, 2020), attributed at least in 234 part to near-surface stresses associated with the Tharsis Rise (e.g., Anderson et al., 2001), as well as 235 shortening structures reflecting both Tharsis-related loading stresses and global contraction (e.g., Nahm 236 and Schultz, 2010). But none of the inner Solar System worlds has a tectonic inventory matching Io. 237 The Jovian moon is also distinctive among outer Solar System satellites in that it is the only such 238 body without an icy exterior. Although tectonic structures including graben and thrust fault-related 239 landforms are widespread on myriad other icy moons (e.g., Collins et al., 2010), none boasts the 240 elevated mountain blocks nor visibly craterless surface of Io (Williams et al., 2011). Io's tectonic stress 241 state is the result principally of its inordinate effusive volcanism, which in turn is driven by the 242 dissipation of tidal energy in its interior (Peale et al., 1979). By this measure, Io's lithospheric stress 243 state may be unique in the Solar System—but could be illustrative of tidally heated planets orbiting 244 other stars (Barr et al., 2018; McEwen et al., 2020).

245

246 5 Conclusions

247	The distinctive, polygonal "island" in Loki Patera holds clues to Io's lithospheric stress state. This
248	island may be a fractured crustal block, the remains of a portion of the crust undermined by a shallow
249	magma body aided by widespread extensional deformation. A heavily extensionally deformed upper
250	lithosphere, likely by a combination of subsidence, tidal, and thermal stresses, accounts for several
251	seemingly disparate observations, including:
252	1) The polygonal, fractured appearance of the Loki Patera island;
253	2) A substantial number of other paterae with straight edges;
254	3) A globally youthful surface; and
255	4) The extensional strains so commonly seen within Io's enormous, uplifted mountains.
256	We therefore propose a scenario for Io under which the lower lithosphere is deformed by large,
257	deep-seated thrust faults from the burial of surface materials, but that is also riven by extensional
258	tectonics in the near surface.
259	The acquisition of image and topographic data at resolutions substantially greater than those
260	returned by the Voyager and Galileo missions would enable the search for and measurements of joints,
261	normal faults, and graben in the plains proximal to paterae and mountain blocks, and would also
262	establish if the elevation of the upper surface of the island is in fact below that of the surrounding
263	plains. Such data would also provide a valuable comparison for assessing whether the Loki island
264	really has remained stationary since its discovery. Further, the detection of small-scale extensional
265	structures undergoing burial by active volcanism would lend support to the hypothesis that the Ionian
266	lithosphere is far more tectonically disrupted than previously recognized.
267	
268	Open Research
269	No new data were created for this study. All Voyager and Galileo image data used in this paper are
270	publicly available at the NASA Planetary Data System (PDS) at https://pds.nasa.gov. The

271 photogeological data shown in Fig. 1a and used for preparing the structural sketch in Fig. 1b (and for

- the surface texture of the block in Fig. 4) is the combined Voyager–Galileo SSI global 1 km/px mosaic,
- 273 available at https://astrogeology.usgs.gov/search/map/Io/Voyager-Galileo/Io_GalileoSSI-
- Voyager_Global_Mosaic_1km. The data used to generate Figs. 2 and 3 are from the Galileo Solid-State
- 275 Imaging (SSI) dataset (Thaller, 2000).
- 276

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281

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395 Figures

396 Figure 1. Loki Patera. (a) Combined monochrome Voyager 1 and color Galileo imagery at 1 km/pixel. 397 The floor of the patera is dark, in contrast to the brighter polygonal island. We infer the dark, linear 398 features crossing the island (green arrows) as extensional tectonic structures. Smaller patches of bright 399 material dot the patera floor (blue arrows). The location of Loki Patera is shown with a purple diamond 400 on the global Io mosaic (in Robinson projection). (b) A structural sketch of (a); the patera and main 401 island are outlined in a solid blue and dotted black lines, respectively. The boundaries of the features 402 we interpret to be extensional structures are shown with solid black lines. The units shown are from the 403 Io global geological map (Williams et al., 2011). This scene is in azimuthal equidistant projection, 404 centered at 13.2°N, 51.3°E.

405

Figure 2. A portion of Emakong Patera, which has straight edges (green arrows) that terminate at sharp
corners (Radebaugh et al., 2001). The location of Emakong Patera is shown on the global Io mosaic.
The main scene comprises Galileo SSI images 5000r, 5139r, and 5140r, and is in azimuthal equidistant
projection, centered at 3.5°S, 240.0°E.

410

Figure 3. Hi'iaka Montes, examples of thrust fault-bounded mountain blocks on Io that show
substantial evidence for extensional deformation (pink arrows). The blue arrow indicates a lava flow.
The position of Hi'iaka Montes is shown on the global Io mosaic. The main scene comprises Galileo
SSI images 7465r, 7478r, and 7500r, and is in azimuthal equidistant projection, centered at 4.5°S,
279.0°E.

416

417 Figure 4. A schematic showing thrust faults (heavy black lines) dominating the lower part and

418 extensional structures (thin black lines) throughout the upper part of Io's lithosphere. Example

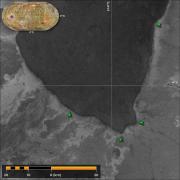
419 kinematic indicators are shown, as are magma bodies (examples marked by white arrows) and where

- 420 magma is ascending along normal faults (yellow arrows). The principal compressive stresses for the
- 421 upper and lower lithosphere are also shown; $\sigma_{\rm H}$ and $\sigma_{\rm h}$ are horizontal stresses, and $\sigma_{\rm V}$ is the vertical
- 422 stress. Where mountains are present, deep-seated thrusts extend to the surface (not shown here).

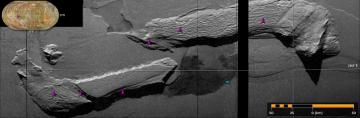
2022JE007722 Figure 01.



2022JE007722 Figure 02.



2022JE007722 Figure 03.



2022JE007722 Figure 04.

