

Rapid transpacific transport in autumn observed by the A-train satellites

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[1] Transpacific transport of dust and pollutants is well documented for spring but less so for other seasons. Here we investigate rapid transpacific transport in autumn utilizing the A-train satellites. In three episodes studied as examples, SO₂ plumes over East Asia were detected by the Ozone Monitoring Instrument aboard the Aura satellite and found to reach North America in 5–6 days. They were likely derived from anthropogenic sources, given that identical transport patterns of CO, a tracer for incomplete combustion, were simultaneously observed by the Aqua satellite. Trajectory analysis and meteorological data were employed to explore the meteorological circumstances surrounding these events: like many of their counterparts in spring, all three plumes were lifted to the free troposphere in warm conveyor belts associated with midlatitude wave cyclones, and their migration to the downwind region was regulated by the meteorology over the east Pacific. These cases provide further evidence that a fraction of SO₂ could escape wet scavenging and be transported at much greater efficiency than could NO_x (NO + NO₂). An analysis of the SO₂ and CO data from September to November during 2005–2008 found 16 SO₂ long-range transport episodes, out of 62 Asian outflow events. While the counts are sensitive to the choice of criteria, they suggest that the long-range transport of Asian sulfur species occurs quite frequently and could exert strong impacts on large downstream areas. This study also highlights the importance of transpacific transport in autumn, which has thus far been rarely studied and deserves more attention from the community.

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1. Introduction

[2] There is mounting evidence that Asian pollutants can travel far away from their source regions, in some cases across the Pacific [e.g., Barletta *et al.*, 2009; Jaffe *et al.*, 1999, 2003; Walker *et al.*, 2010]. Because of their potential large-scale impacts [e.g., Berntsen *et al.*, 1999; Brown-Steiner and Hess, 2011; Cooper *et al.*, 2010; Fiore *et al.*, 2009; Heald *et al.*, 2006; Jacob *et al.*, 1999; Zhang *et al.*, 2008], such transpacific transport events have been the primary focus of several recent field campaigns [e.g., Jacob *et al.*, 2003; Parrish *et al.*, 2004; Singh *et al.*, 2009]. These experiments provide valuable insights into the meteorological mechanisms for transpacific transport, particularly for relatively long-lived pollutants such as CO. It is now recognized

that midlatitude wave cyclones play a crucial part in exporting Asian pollution [e.g., Liu *et al.*, 2003; Yienger *et al.*, 2000], particularly in the cold season [Liang *et al.*, 2004], through advection in the boundary layer behind cold fronts [e.g., Carmichael *et al.*, 2003; Kaneyasu *et al.*, 2000] and lifting in the warm conveyor belt (WCB) [e.g., Bey *et al.*, 2001; Cooper *et al.*, 2004]. Convective transport is more significant in summer [e.g., Liang *et al.*, 2007] but can also be sizable in spring [Dickerson *et al.*, 2007]. Once displaced from their source region, the destination of pollutants is largely determined by the highly variable meteorological setup in the downstream area [e.g., Fisher *et al.*, 2010; Liang *et al.*, 2005], which is responsible for the episodic nature of transpacific transport and its strong interannual variability [e.g., Liang *et al.*, 2005; Pfister *et al.*, 2010]. It is worth mentioning that most of the existing studies focus on spring [Wuebbles *et al.*, 2007], and few deal with autumn, a season also featuring frequent cyclonic activity and potentially strong long-range transport.

[3] Compared to long-lived air pollutants, the long-range transport of short-lived pollutants is not as well documented. For Asian NO_x or SO₂ (lifetime in the boundary layer: hours to days) to cross the Pacific, they need to be first lifted into the free troposphere (FT) by WCB or convection, where

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stronger winds and extended chemical lifetime greatly enhance their potential for long-range transport [Holzer *et al.*, 2003]. The export efficiency of short-lived species is however typically low, as substantial rainfall and washout normally occur during their ascent [Eckhardt *et al.*, 2004]. Only 10–20% of East Asian NO_y (reactive nitrogen, NO + NO₂ + NO₃ + 2(N₂O₅) + HNO₃ + HONO + HNO₄ + peroxyacyl nitrates + organic nitrate) can reach the FT [Koike *et al.*, 2003; Miyazaki *et al.*, 2003], as corroborated by the small NO_y/CO ratio observed in transpacific plumes [Nowak *et al.*, 2004].

[4] The overall export efficiency for Asian SO_x (SO₂ + sulfate) into the FT is similarly low (15–20% [Koike *et al.*, 2003]), but sizable (up to ~1 ppb) anthropogenic SO₂ has been observed thousands of kilometers away from Asia [Brock *et al.*, 2004; Dunlea *et al.*, 2009; Tu *et al.*, 2004]. It has been proposed that a larger fraction of SO_x could remain as SO₂ prior to the frontal lifting, owing to its relatively slow gas-phase oxidation (in comparison to the formation of nitrate and some secondary organic aerosols). Part of this remaining SO₂, a moderately soluble gas, can survive wet scavenging during the ascent in WCB [Brock *et al.*, 2004]. While sulfate formed prior to the frontal lifting is often washed out, new sulfate production from the SO₂ that has survived the process is expected during the transport. Indeed, sulfate is often the dominant species in fine particles sampled in transpacific plumes [e.g., Leaitch *et al.*, 2009; Dunlea *et al.*, 2009] and the long-range transport of Asian SO_x could exert nonnegligible impacts on the aerosol loading, air quality, and visibility over large downstream areas [Heald *et al.*, 2006; Park *et al.*, 2004; van Donkelaar *et al.*, 2008]. However, it remains unclear how often SO_x transpacific events occur, and how much Asian SO_x is transported to North America. To gain a better understanding of these important issues, long-term, large-scale observations are needed to complement more detailed, short-term field measurements and model simulations.

[5] Here we explore the long-range transport of Asian pollutants utilizing data from the Aqua, Aura, and Cloud-Aerosol Lidar and Infrared Pathfinder Satellite Observations (CALIPSO) satellites. Flying in close formation, they are part of the polar-orbiting afternoon (13:30 local solar time) A-train constellation, and provide highly complementary global measurements which have been instrumental in previous studies on long-range transport [e.g., Heald *et al.*, 2006; Yu *et al.*, 2008; Zhang *et al.*, 2008]. While satellite retrievals are still too uncertain to directly quantify the transport of SO_x, they can help identify long-range transport events and estimate their frequency over an extended period of time. In this study, we analyze satellite retrievals of SO₂, a short-lived species, and CO, a relatively long-lived tracer for incomplete combustion, to distinguish rapid long-range transport of anthropogenic pollution. We also focus on autumn, presenting evidence that transpacific transport in this transition season could be important.

2. Data and Method

2.1. Satellite Data

2.1.1. Ozone Monitoring Instrument SO₂ Data

[6] Launched in 2004 on board the NASA Aura satellite [Schoeberl *et al.*, 2006], the Dutch-Finnish Ozone Monitoring

Instrument (OMI) is a hyperspectral UV spectrometer featuring both daily global coverage and fine spatial resolution (13 × 24 km² at nadir) [Levelt *et al.*, 2006]. Two operational algorithms are currently in use for retrieving SO₂ column density from the OMI data: the Band Residual Difference (BRD) algorithm [Krotkov *et al.*, 2006, 2008] designed for maximizing sensitivity to boundary layer pollution [e.g., Li *et al.*, 2010a], and the Linear Fit (LF) algorithm [Yang *et al.*, 2007] primarily for retrieving plumes with high SO₂ loading (e.g., those from volcanic eruptions). As the long-range transport of SO₂ likely occurs in the FT and BRD retrievals over the North Pacific storm track can be severely restricted by cloudy scenes, in this study we used the collection 3 level 2 LF middle troposphere (TRM) SO₂ column amount, available for pixels with cloud height below ~7 km.

[7] In the LF algorithm an initial estimate of the total ozone and effective cloud fraction (CF) is first derived using the TOMS total ozone algorithm [Bhartia and Wellemeyer, 2002] and assuming no SO₂. The radiance residuals at 10 wavelengths between 308.7 and 375 nm are then calculated with a vector forward model radiative transfer code, for which cloudy scenes are treated as a mixture of two opaque Lambertian surfaces, one at the terrain pressure and the other at OMI-retrieved Optical Centroid Radiative Cloud Pressure [Joiner and Vasilkov, 2006]. If SO₂ is present, the resulting radiance residuals contain spectral structures correlated with the SO₂ absorption cross section, as well as contributions from other yet undetermined error sources. Interference from the latter is reduced with a sliding median residual correction method [Yang *et al.*, 2007]. The algorithm then simultaneously adjusts total SO₂, ozone, and a quadratic parameterization of CF to minimize the radiance residuals for different subsets of the 10 wavelengths. To obtain the subsets, the shorter-wavelength bands (up to 322 nm) are removed one at a time, and the largest SO₂ amount from these subsets is the final estimate. An important a priori assumption in the retrieval is the height of the SO₂ plume or the center of mass altitude (CMA). The TRM SO₂ corresponds to a CMA of ~7 km, making it suitable for studying transport in the middle/upper troposphere.

[8] The 1-σ noise of TRM retrievals over presumably clean background tropical and midlatitude areas is estimated at 0.3 DU (Dobson Unit, 1 DU = 2.69 × 10¹⁶ molecules/cm²). Biases due to latitude and viewing angle are ~0.1 DU but increase with solar zenith angle (SZA). We used retrievals with SZA < 70° in this study and rejected pixels affected by the OMI row anomaly (abnormal L1B radiance signals for specific rows on the CCD detector affecting particular viewing directions near nadir and western part of the OMI swath, see <http://www.knmi.nl/omi/research/product/rowanomaly-background.php>), before gridding the data to 0.5° × 0.5° resolution. SO₂ resided at altitudes <7 km is underestimated in the TRM data, an artifact that can be corrected for if the actual SO₂ vertical distribution is known. In the absence of this knowledge, OMI SO₂ data were used qualitatively here as a tracer for short-lived anthropogenic pollutants. An example for the quantitative application of the OMI SO₂ data is given in our previous work [Li *et al.*, 2010b].

2.1.2. Atmospheric Infrared Souder CO Data and CALIPSO Vertical Feature Mask

[9] The Atmospheric Infrared Souder (AIRS) aboard NASA's Aqua satellite has 2378 channels over a wide spectral range from 600 to 2655 cm⁻¹ (15.38 to 3.75 μm), and covers about 70% of the Earth each day [Aumann *et al.*, 2003]. In the AIRS version 5 (V5) algorithm, 36 channels in the spectral range of 2181.49–2221.12 cm⁻¹ are used to retrieve CO on nine trapezoidal pressure levels sampled from the 100 AIRS standard layers [McMillan *et al.*, 2011]. Limited by the spectral resolution in the CO region, the AIRS CO retrieval averaging kernels (reflect retrieval sensitivity to CO variations at different altitudes) have broad peaks in the middle troposphere (~500 hPa). The sum of the elements along the main diagonal of the averaging kernel matrix, or the degrees of freedom (DOF), represents the information content for the retrieval: a value over 0.5 indicates that >50% of a particular retrieval is determined from the AIRS radiances, other than the first-guess profile. The DOF of AIRS CO retrievals is typically ~0.8 and rarely exceeds 1.5 [McMillan *et al.*, 2011]. AIRS CO retrievals are available over partially cloudy scenes, although a weak anticorrelation exists between DOF and cloudiness, reflecting the reduction in CO information due to increasing cloud cover [McMillan *et al.*, 2011]. In this study, the total CO column from AIRS is used as a tracer for relatively long-lived anthropogenic pollutants. Following Fisher *et al.* [2010], we only included daytime retrievals with DOF > 0.5 and surface temperature >250 K. Level 2 data were binned to 1° × 1° grid cells. Yurganov *et al.* [2010] compared AIRS total column CO to ground-based retrievals, noticing that for northern hemisphere the bias was generally within ±10% and even smaller between June and November.

[10] The primary instrument aboard the Cloud-Aerosol Lidar and Infrared Pathfinder Satellite Observations (CALIPSO) satellite is the Cloud-Aerosol Lidar with Orthogonal Polarization (CALIOP), a two-wavelength polarization lidar [Winker *et al.*, 2009]. Here version 3.01 (V3) level 2 vertical feature mask (VFM) product was employed to determine the plume height during transport. VFM contains information about the location (latitude, longitude, and altitude) and type of various detected features such as aerosols and clouds. While the feature location is fairly accurate, the retrieved feature type is subject to larger uncertainties [Liu *et al.*, 2009]. For example, dense dust layers can be misclassified as clouds [e.g., Di Pierro *et al.*, 2011], an artifact partially alleviated in the V3 product by introducing additional diagnostic parameters for cloud-aerosol discrimination. The nighttime CALIPSO data have greater signal-to-noise ratio, but in this study we used daytime VFM data coincident with OMI and AIRS measurements. Some improvements achieved in the V3 daytime calibration were highlighted in a recent validation study [Rogers *et al.*, 2011].

2.2. Model and Meteorological Data

[11] For trajectory calculation, we employed the NOAA Air Resource Laboratory HYSPLIT (Hybrid Single-Particle Lagrangian Integrated Trajectory) model (R. R. Draxler and G. D. Rolph, 2003, <http://ready.arl.noaa.gov/HYSPLIT.php>), along with the NCEP Global Data Assimilation System (GDAS) meteorological fields having 1° × 1° horizontal resolution and 23 vertical levels. The 120 h forward

trajectories from 12 different starting heights (1.5, 2.0, 2.5, 3.0, 3.5, 4.0, 4.5, 5.0, 5.5, 6.0, 7.0, and 8.0 km above ground level, AGL) were initiated from 0.5° × 0.5° grid cells covering the initial domain of SO₂ plumes. Each trajectory was tagged with TRM SO₂ for the corresponding cell. The trajectory tracer SO₂ for different starting heights was resampled on the basis of satellite overpass time (to the nearest hour) and orbit, and compared to OMI measurements for a rough estimate of the initial plume height. It should be pointed out that Asian outflow often has complicated, multilayer vertical structure, and our inferred plume height should be viewed as an approximation of the actual transport altitude. On the other hand, the TRM algorithm is insensitive to the boundary layer outflow and the plume height estimated this way essentially represents the part of the plume possessing the greatest potential for long-range transport. For the same reason, the SO₂ plumes are generally elevated and about 1–2 days displaced from their sources when first identified in the TRM data. 36–48 h (hr) backward trajectories were used to determine their source regions.

[12] In addition to the trajectories, the NASA Modern Era Retrospective-Analysis for Research and Applications (MERRA) [Rienecker *et al.*, 2011] meteorological data provide information about the meteorological conditions surrounding the transpacific events. The MERRA assimilated data are generated using the GEOS-5 atmospheric data assimilation system with a grid of 1/3° longitude × 0.5° latitude × 72 layers. The data set used here has been averaged to 1.25° × 1.25° and 42 vertical layers.

3. SO₂ Long-Range Transport in Autumn: Examples and Meteorological Mechanism

[13] We started by visually inspecting daily OMI TRM SO₂ maps during autumn (September, October, and November) 2005–2010, excluding periods influenced by large volcanic eruptions (S. Massie, Aura Cloud/Aerosol/SO₂ working group, personal communication, 2010). A number of regional SO₂ outflow plumes covering thousands of km² were found over northeast Asia, and some appeared to travel far downwind. Because of the uncertainties in the current operational SO₂ retrievals, we employed AIRS CO data and trajectory modeling to validate OMI-observed outflow and transport events. The methodology is demonstrated in this section using three prominent, well-defined SO₂ transport cases. Their transpacific transit time, meteorological circumstances, and the SO₂ transport efficiency are also discussed.

3.1. Case 1: 8 October 2006

[14] We first discuss a transpacific case occurred in October 2006. On 8 October, large SO₂ loading was observed by OMI over northeastern China (Figure 1a). Over the next few days, this plume first moved northeastward, reaching the north tip of the Sakhalin Island on 9 October (Figure 1b), and the Kamchatka Peninsula on 10 October (Figure 1c), before veering to the east. The front edge of the SO₂ plume passed just south of the Aleutian Islands on 11 October (Figure 1d) and arrived in the Gulf of Alaska and North America about one day later (Figure 1e). An overview of the movement of the SO₂ plume is also given in Figure 2a. AIRS data (Figures 1j–1n) show a similar transport pattern for CO, suggesting that both SO₂ and CO within

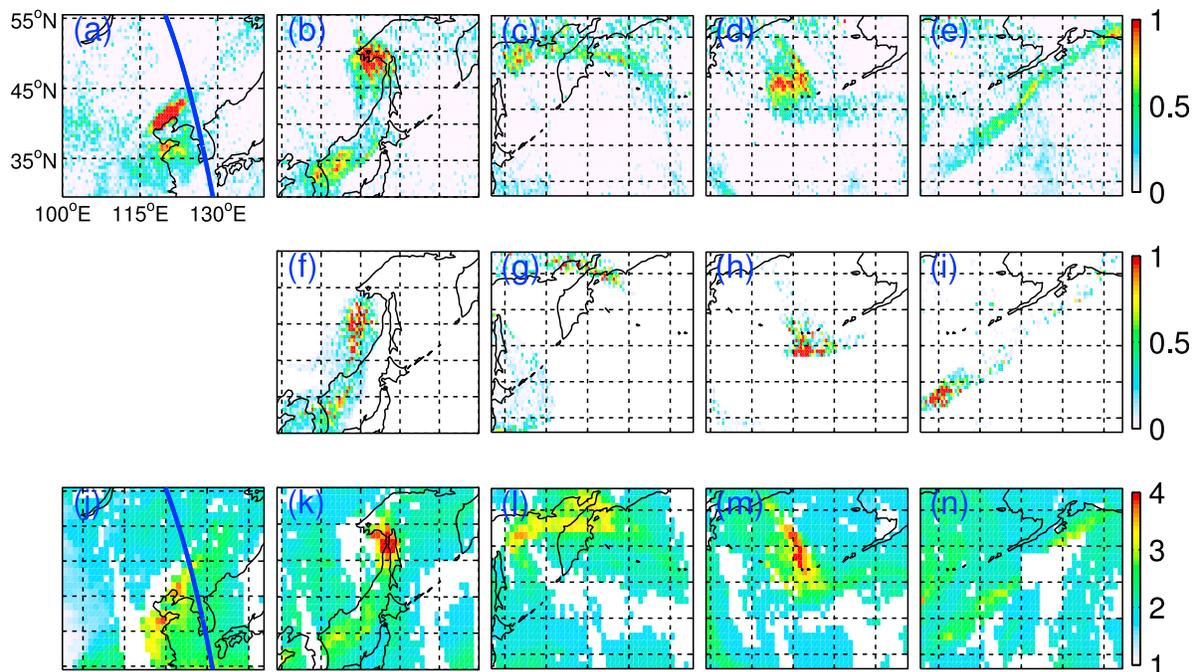


Figure 1. OMI TRM SO₂ column amount (units: DU) over northeast Asia and the North Pacific at (a) 05:00 UTC on 8 October, (b) 00:03 UTC on 9 October, (c) 02:00 UTC on 10 October, (d) 00:00 UTC on 11 October, and (e) 23:00 UTC on 11 October 2006. (f–i) Tracer SO₂ (units: DU) distribution calculated for the OMI observation time in Figures 1b–1e, using forward trajectories initiated on 8 October and assuming SO₂ is evenly distributed at 2.5–3.5 km (see section 2.2). (j–n) AIRS CO column amount (units: 10¹⁸ molecules cm⁻²) observed almost simultaneously with OMI SO₂. The blue lines in Figures 1a and 1j mark the track of the CALIPSO satellite on 8 October.

this plume were likely from anthropogenic sources in the same region. Forward trajectories tagged with OMI TRM SO₂ initiated at different levels (section 2.2) indicate that the plume height on 8 October was around 3 km. As shown in Figures 1f–1i, the transport process could be roughly reproduced by the trajectory tracer model assuming SO₂ evenly distributed at 2.5–3.5 km AGL, although discrepancies exist between the model and satellite. The inconsistency is probably caused by uncertainties in both the initial SO₂ vertical profile and trajectory calculation. The actual SO₂ profile could be far more complicated than assumed, while the errors of trajectories grow with time and distance traveled. Nonetheless, the CALIPSO satellite flying over the plume (~38–42°N, Figure 3a) on 8 October detected an elevated aerosol layer centered at ~3 km, in agreement with our estimated initial SO₂ plume height. If aerosols and SO₂ were from the same source region (a reasonable assumption for this season), or if the elevated aerosol layer was primarily composed of sulfate formed during transport, one would expect the SO₂ and aerosols in the outflow plume to have similar altitude distributions. The pollution plume, as projected by the forward trajectories, would ascend to the 400–500 hPa pressure level (or ~5–6 km altitude) on 9 October, maintain at this height for another 24 h, and then slowly descend to 500–600 hPa before arriving at the west coast of North America. CALIPSO measurements were unavailable for these days.

[15] To locate the source region of the plume, consider the weather pattern at 06:00 UTC on 6 October (Figure 4). A midlatitude cyclone was found east of Lake Baikal, with a

trough extending to its south-southeast and situated just west of the industrialized and densely populated northern China (35–40°N, 110–120°E). Pollutants often accumulate in the region under the relatively stagnant conditions ahead of cold fronts [e.g., *Li et al.*, 2007], and this case is no exception: satellite data show sizable SO₂ and CO (Figure 4) over the region on 6 October, despite both instruments' limited sensitivity to pollution in the lowest part of the atmosphere. The cyclone migrated eastward, with its cold front passing over northern China later on 6 October, while an upwind high-pressure system started to settle into the area (see the sea level pressure at 18:00 UTC in Figure 5). Frontal lifting is expected as the cold front moved through northern China, but backward trajectories (Figure 5) did not show active upward motion until early on 7 October (–30 to –25 h in trajectory time). The meteorological input to the trajectory model is probably too coarse to resolve the lifting early on 6 October. Nevertheless, as the aforementioned high-pressure system moved into northern China early on 7 October, the trajectory air parcels were located to its southwest and traveled clockwise around it, before joining the strong southwesterly ascending flow associated with the cyclone between 12:00 and 18:00 UTC the same day (Figure S1). Some of the air parcels moved from below 900 hPa to 700 hPa in about 25–30 h (Figure 5). If the subsequent ascent on 8–9 October is included, part of the plume was lifted from near the surface to 5–6 km, and traveled more than 15° longitude eastward and 15° latitude northward in 2–3 days. Such rapid ascent from the lower

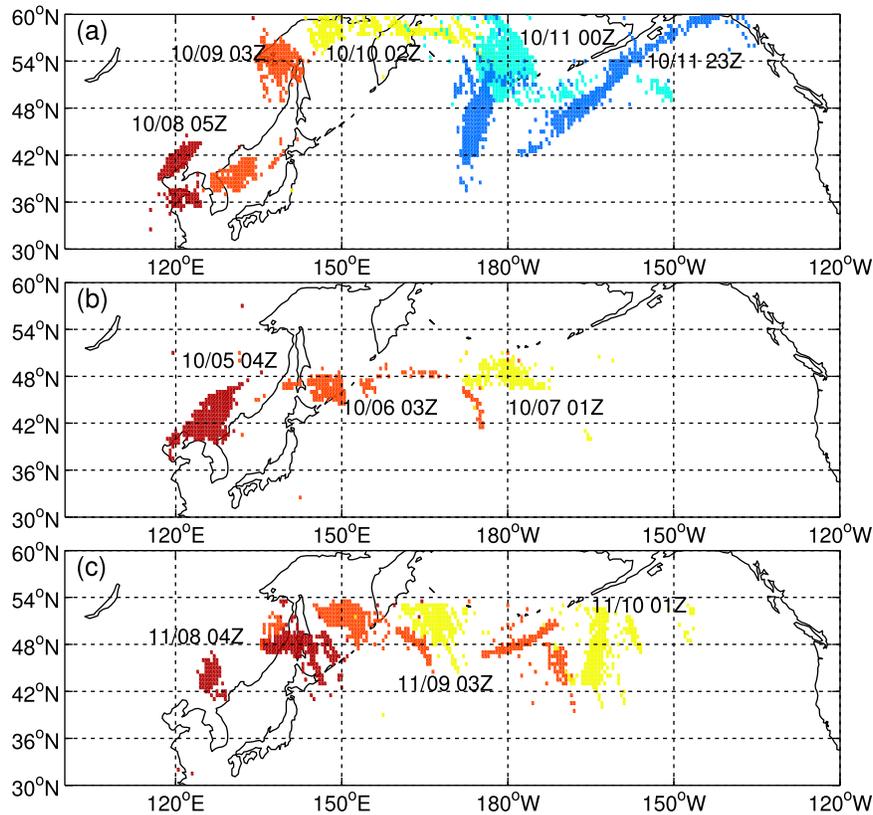


Figure 2. The movement of the SO₂ plumes in (a) case 1: October 2006, (b) case 2: October 2008, and (c) case 3: November 2010, as observed by the OMI instrument. Colors represent the location of the plume center on different days, which is defined as the part of the plume having OMI TRM SO₂ \geq 0.5 DU for 8–9 October 2006, 5 October 2008, and 8 November 2010; TRM SO₂ \geq 0.35 DU for 10 October 2006, 6–7 October 2008, and 9–10 November 2011; and TRM SO₂ \geq 0.25 DU for 11 October 2006.

atmosphere and northeastward movement are characteristics of warm conveyor belt (WCB), large-scale slantwise upward motion normally found along with midlatitude cyclones [Eckhardt *et al.*, 2004]. WCB or frontal lifting thus appears to be the outflow mechanism for this case.

[16] Once the plume is displaced from the source region into the free troposphere, the downstream meteorological pattern dictates, for the most part, its further transport. Figure 6 (top) clearly shows a cutoff low at the 500 hPa pressure level located just east of Japan on 9 October, which can also be identified at lower levels. The cutoff low persisted in the region for a few days, forcing the plume to first travel to the northeast. The most prominent feature over the east Pacific is a deep low over Alaska stretched well south of the Aleutian Islands. A strong Aleutian low with dense isobars and intense winds around it may facilitate transpacific transport [e.g., Liang *et al.*, 2005], as is the case with this particular plume (Figure 6, top).

[17] In summary, the plume was lofted from its source region during late 6 October to early 7 October and arrived at North America on 11–12 October, spending a total of 5–6 days to cross the Pacific Ocean.

3.2. Cases 2 and 3

[18] Similar analyses were also conducted for other two major transpacific events: case 2 in October 2008 (Figure 2b,

from late 3 October to late 8 October, transit time: \sim 5 days) and case 3 in November 2010 (Figure 2c, from 6 November to 11–12 November, transit time: 5–6 days). Detailed description of the two cases is presented in the auxiliary materials (Figures S2–S7 in Text S1).¹ As with case 1, in both cases 2 and 3, plumes having enhanced SO₂ and CO were from northern China, and lifted into the FT by WCB's associated with midlatitude cyclones. The meteorological setup over the east Pacific (Figure 6, middle and bottom) featured a deep Aleutian low and a subtropical Pacific high to its south, favorable for the observed rapid transport.

3.3. Transpacific Transit Time and Transport Mechanism

[19] In all three cases discussed above, the plumes spent 5–6 days to cross the Pacific, including 1–2 days for their ascent from the boundary layer into the FT. In comparison, Jaffe *et al.* [1999] reported transit time of \sim 6 days for transpacific transport observed over the Northwestern United States (tracer: CO, O₃, PAN, radon, and nonmethane hydrocarbons, NMHC). Likewise, aircraft measurements of CO and NMHC revealed transit time of 5–8 days for Asian plumes intercepted over the east Pacific [de Gouw *et al.*,

¹Auxiliary materials are available in the HTML. doi:10.1029/2011JD016626.

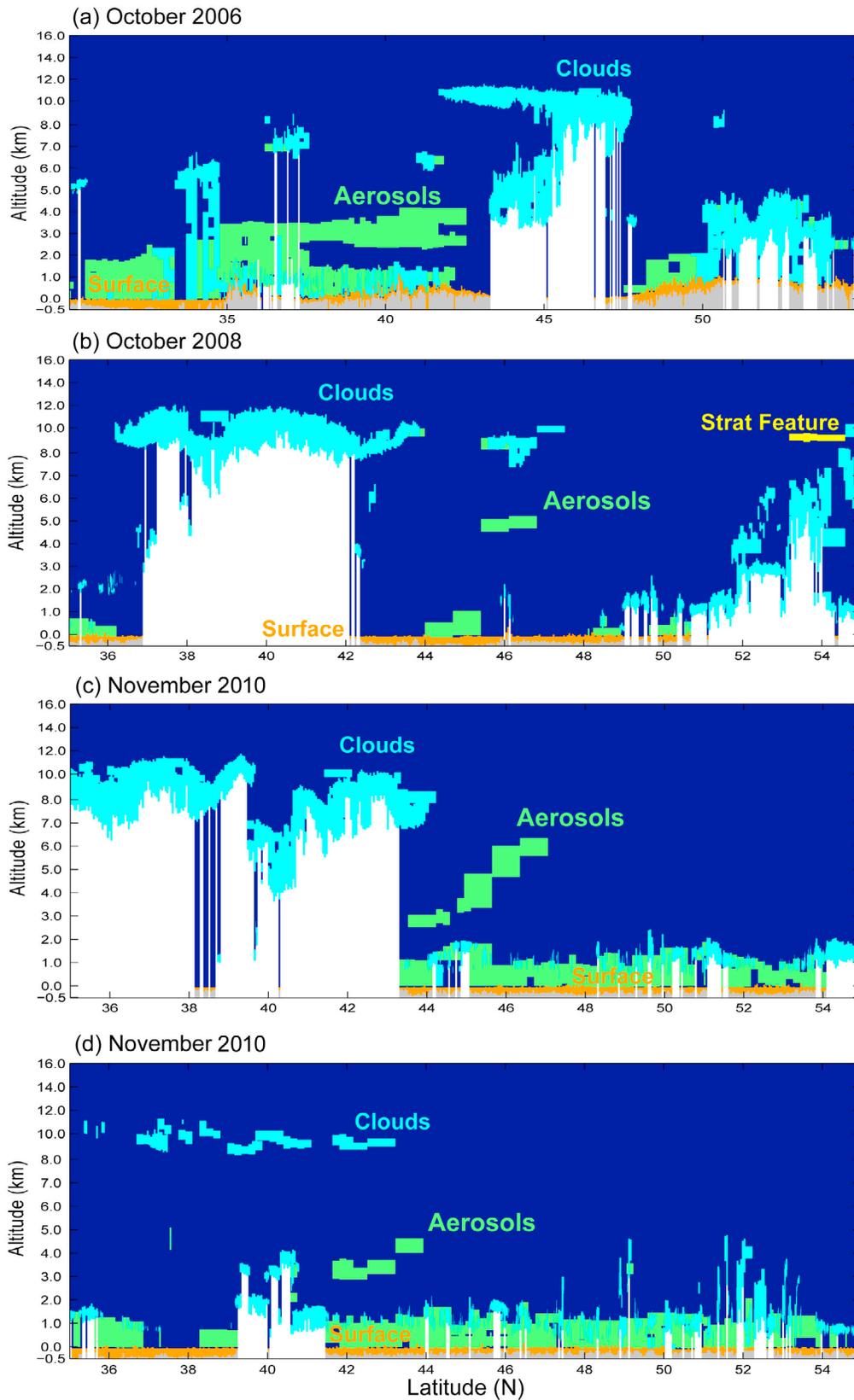


Figure 3. CALIPSO vertical feature mask on (a) 8 October, indicating an aerosol layer aloft at $\sim 2\text{--}4$ km near $38^{\circ}\text{--}42^{\circ}\text{N}$ along the track in Figure 1a, (b) 6 October 2008, showing an aerosol layer at ~ 5 km near $45^{\circ}\text{--}47^{\circ}\text{N}$ along the track in Figure S2b; (c) 9 November 2010, revealing an aerosol layer centered at $\sim 3\text{--}6$ km near $43^{\circ}\text{--}47^{\circ}\text{N}$ along the track in Figure S5b; and (d) 10 November 2010, showing an aerosol layer at $\sim 3\text{--}4$ km near $42^{\circ}\text{--}44^{\circ}\text{N}$ along the track in Figure S5c.

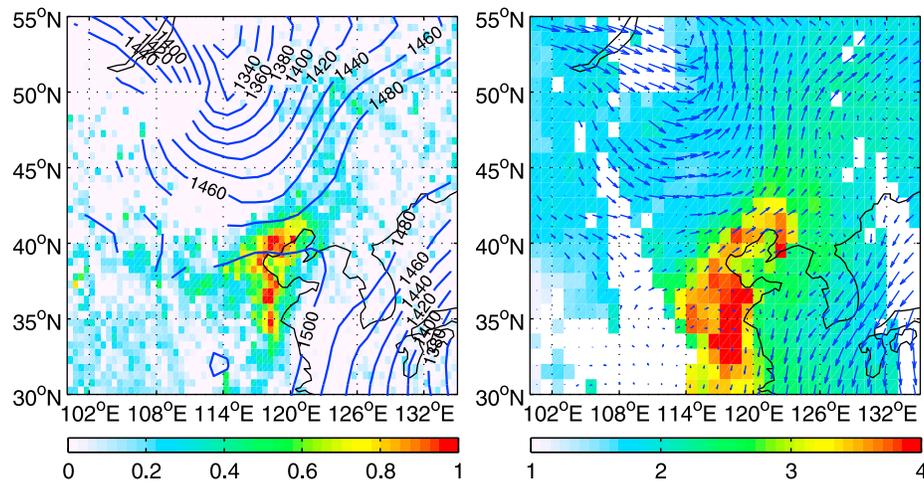


Figure 4. (left) OMI TRM SO₂ (color, units: DU) at 05:00 UTC on 6 October 2006 and the Modern Era Retrospective-Analysis for Research and Applications (MERRA) 850 hPa geopotential height (blue lines) at 06:00 UTC. (right) AIRS CO column amount (color, units: 10^{18} molecules cm^{-2}) and the MERRA 850 hPa wind vector (arrows) at approximately the same moment. Pollutants accumulated over northern China as a midlatitude wave cyclone approached the region.

2004; Barletta *et al.*, 2009]. Similar transit time in spring was also derived from model simulations of transport at higher altitudes [e.g., Holzer *et al.*, 2003; Yienger *et al.*, 2000]. Our reported transit time in autumn for the three episodes is largely comparable to the above studies on spring-time events. Transpacific transit time as short as 2 days has been found for a few isolated summertime cases associated with deep convection [Kritz *et al.*, 1990; Liang *et al.*, 2007]. The former study used radon as a tracer while the latter observed a host of pollutants including CO, PAN, and NMHC.

[20] The similarity in transit time between spring and autumn probably reflects the analogous transport mechanisms in the two seasons. Like many transpacific cases in spring, in all three autumn episodes studied here, midlatitude cyclones and the associated warm conveyor belt were responsible for the Asian outflow. Pollution first built up near the surface under relatively stagnant conditions, and then was vented into the free troposphere by the upward movement induced by the approaching fronts. The midlatitude cyclones are generally more active in spring, but autumn as a transition season also sees frequent cyclonic activity. Once a plume is exported from its source region, the downstream meteorology regulates the destination and speed of the ensuing transport. Previous studies focusing on spring indicate that a deep Aleutian low and a north-south alignment between the Aleutian low and Pacific subtropical high would create a more zonal flow favoring rapid transport across the Pacific [e.g., Liang *et al.*, 2005], and our analysis for autumn reaches the same conclusion.

3.4. Transport Efficiency of SO₂

[21] A major rainmaker, WCB may produce sizable amount of precipitation [e.g., Eckhardt *et al.*, 2004] and substantial washout of soluble species is expected during the ascent within WCB. Indeed, clouds were clearly visible near the fronts and the TRMM (Tropical Rainfall Measuring Mission) satellite detected rainfall at the initial stage of all

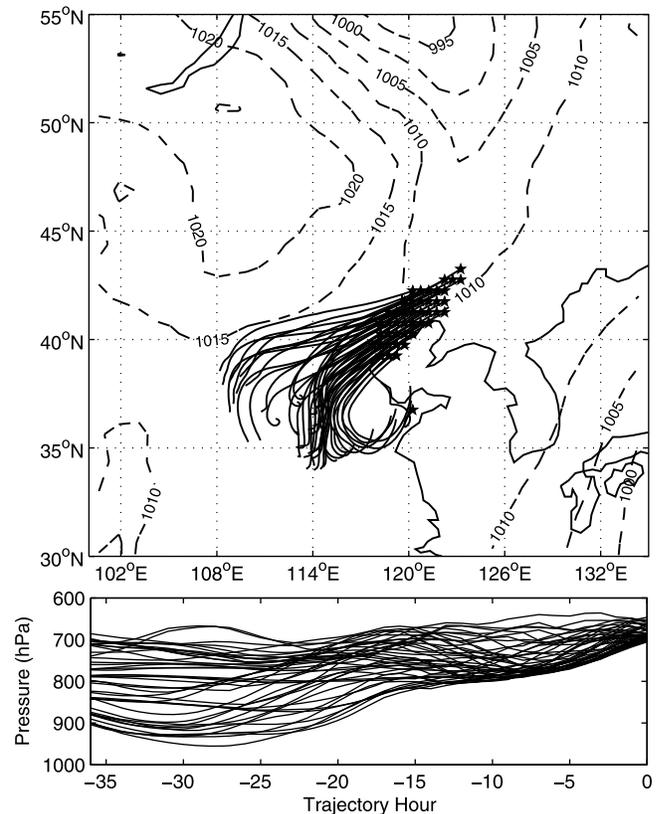


Figure 5. (top) The 36 h backward trajectories calculated for grid cells with OMI TRM SO₂ ≥ 1 DU (stars). Trajectories are started at 05:00 UTC on 8 October 2006 from 3 km above ground level (~ 700 hPa). Dashed lines are the sea level pressure at 18:00 UTC on 6 October 2006 from the MERRA meteorological data. (bottom) The height of trajectories, indicating substantial ascent from the industrialized region in northern China induced by the cyclone.

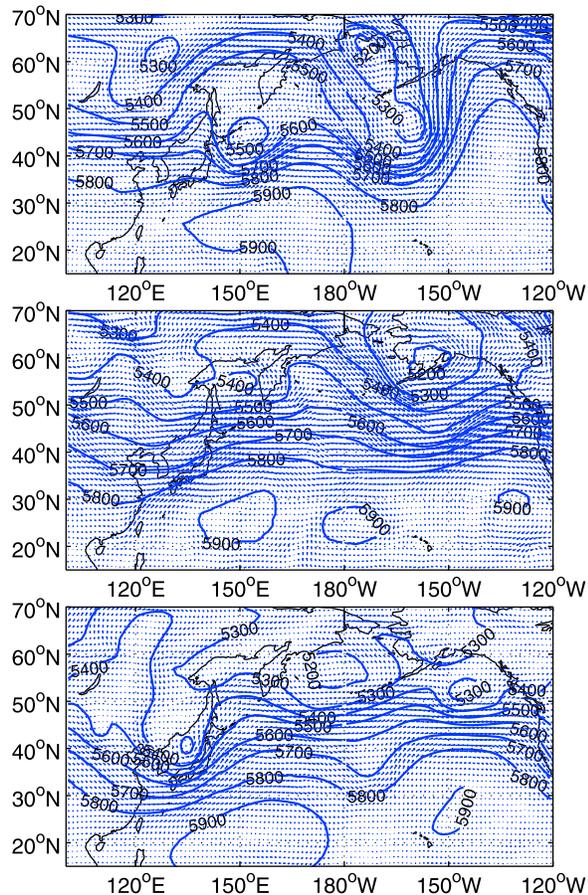


Figure 6. MERRA 500 hPa geopotential height (contours) and wind field (vectors) at 00:00 UTC on (top) 9 October 2006, (middle) 6 October 2008, and (bottom) 9 November 2010.

three cases (on 8 October 2006, 4 October 2008, and 8 November 2010). Under polluted prefrontal conditions, aircraft typically measured $\sim 1\text{--}2$ DU of SO₂ over northern China [e.g., Dickerson *et al.*, 2007; He *et al.*, 2012]. Given the low SO_x export efficiency (15–20%) previously estimated for Asian FT outflow [Koike *et al.*, 2003], the SO₂ loading (~ 0.5 DU) observed by OMI over the remote Pacific (Figures 1, S2, and S5) in this study is truly remarkable. Assuming that all SO₂ was within a ~ 1.5 km thick layer at around 500 hPa, this would translate into a mixing ratio of several ppb. Even if overestimated by a factor of two by the operational retrieval algorithm, the SO₂ loading of the plumes is still substantial. Note that to quantify the transport efficiency of SO₂ using satellite data, one has to take into account several factors, particularly the change of SO₂ signal during transport, the detection limit of the satellite sensor, and the interference of aerosols and clouds, as detailed in our previous case study [Li *et al.*, 2010b].

[22] As mentioned in section 1, there is observational evidence that part of the SO₂ can escape scavenging during wet lifting and travel over long distances. During TRACE-P, several plumes at 2–4 km with ~ 1 ppb of SO₂ were observed over the central North Pacific [Tu *et al.*, 2004]. Brock *et al.* [2004] measured up to 0.6 ppb of SO₂ and high concentrations of H₂SO₄ near the California coast during the

ITCT 2K2 campaign, after the plume had encountered significant cloud formation and precipitation. They proposed that prior to the ascent, a fraction of SO₂ reacted to form sulfate, which would be efficiently scavenged during the frontal lifting; because of its modest solubility, some of the unreacted SO₂ could survive the wet removal process, and generate H₂SO₄ during the ensuing long-range transport in the FT. Note that the amount of transported SO₂ measured in the above aircraft experiments is much smaller than observed in our cases. Our study thus not only provides further evidence that anthropogenic SO₂ can travel far away from Asia, but also suggests that the magnitude of such transport can be far greater than implied by previous measurements.

[23] We also examined the OMI-retrieved NO₂ column amounts in the three cases. Long-range transport of NO_x has been observed from satellites [e.g., Stohl *et al.*, 2003], but little evidence was found here. The oxidation of NO_x to HNO₃ and PAN is relatively fast. The highly soluble HNO₃ is expected to be washed out during the frontal lifting, while PAN has been identified as the dominant NO_y species in the Asian outflow [e.g., Miyazaki *et al.*, 2003]. Overall, only 10–20% of Asian NO_y is exported to the FT, with even less in the form of NO_x [e.g., Koike *et al.*, 2003; Miyazaki *et al.*, 2003; Nowak *et al.*, 2004; Walker *et al.*, 2010]. Some highly reactive VOCs may similarly form organic aerosols that will be scavenged during the ascent [Brock *et al.*, 2004]. Because of the relative enrichment of SO₂ in the FT, sulfate and dust are often the dominant aerosol species in Asian plumes captured near North America [e.g., van Donkelaar *et al.*, 2008]. Our results for autumn are consistent with these springtime measurements, and imply that SO₂ emissions from East Asia probably have greater direct impact on the downstream aerosol loading than other combustion products.

4. The Frequency of SO₂ Long-Range Transport Events

4.1. Determination of the Frequency of SO₂ Long-Range Transport in Autumn Using A-Train Data

[24] Section 3 demonstrates the potential of combining satellite observations of CO and SO₂ in studying long-range transport of anthropogenic pollution. A relatively long-lived pollutant, CO is mainly released from incomplete fuel combustion, while the relatively short-lived SO₂ is primarily emitted from coal burning. Since SO₂ from biomass burning and CO from volcanic eruptions are relatively small, simultaneous observations of these two gases allow us to distinguish between industrial and biomass burning sources, and between anthropogenic and volcanic plumes. Significant anthropogenic SO₂ plumes over the remote Pacific Ocean are also strong evidence for rapid transport from Asia. Another advantage of using AIRS CO and OMI SO₂ data is that the coverage of the two retrievals is less influenced by cloudy scenes, although plumes underneath thick clouds will still be undetectable. Aerosol retrievals using MODIS sensors have proved valuable for studying long-range transport, but for all three cases discussed above the availability of MODIS retrievals was severely limited over the North Pacific storm track.

[25] We extended our analysis to SON (September, October, and November) of 2005–2008 to estimate the

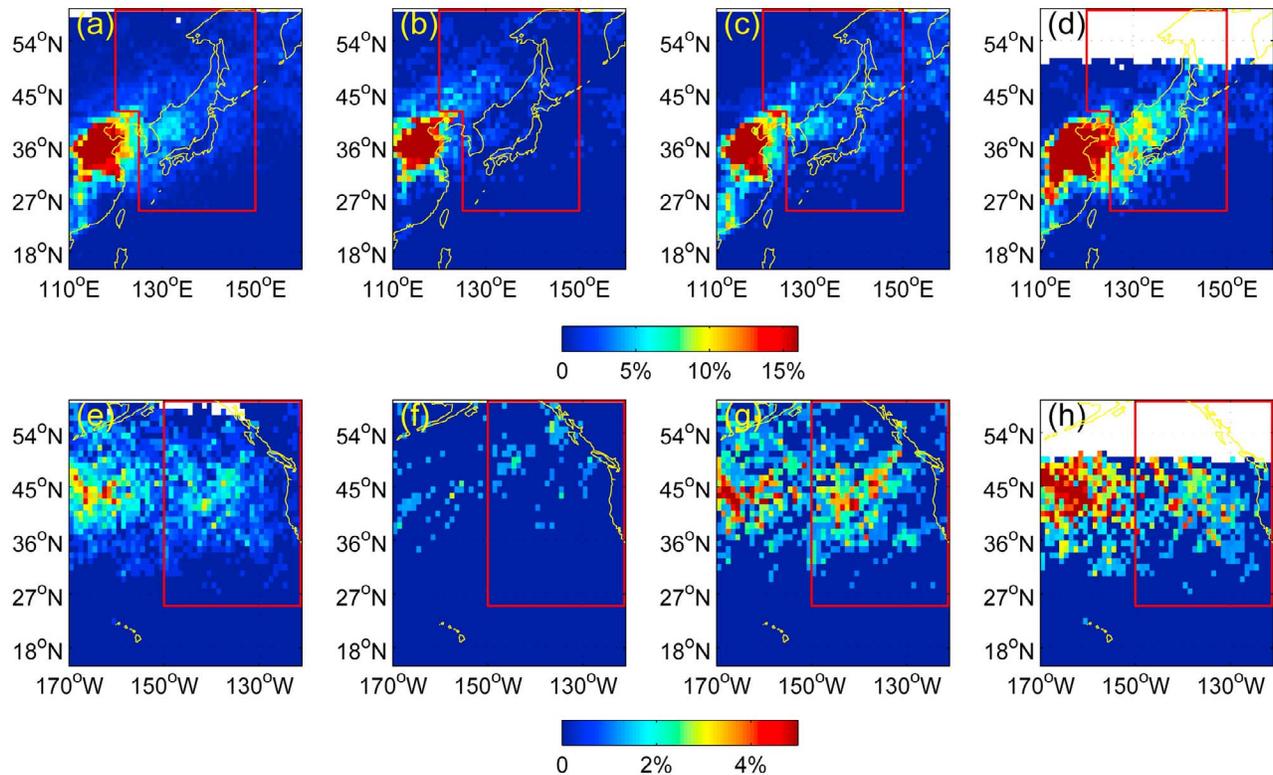


Figure 7. The frequency of pollution plumes having OMI TRM SO₂ ≥ 0.2 DU and AIRS CO $\geq 2.5 \times 10^{18}$ molecules cm⁻² for 1° × 1° grid cells over the Asian outflow region in (a) autumn, (b) September, (c) October, and (d) November during 2005–2008. The frequency of pollution plumes having OMI TRM SO₂ ≥ 0.2 DU and AIRS CO $\geq 2.25 \times 10^{18}$ molecules cm⁻² for 1° × 1° grid cells over the east Pacific long-range transport receptor region in (e) autumn, (f) September, (g) October, and (h) November during 2005–2008. The outflow and receptor regions are represented by the red boxes in Figures 7a–7d and Figures 7e–7h, respectively. Gap in high latitudes in November is due to the elimination of OMI data with solar zenith angle $>70^\circ$ (see section 2.1.1).

frequency of SO₂ long-range transport (LRT). Daily AIRS CO and OMI TRM SO₂ data gridded to 1° × 1° resolution were employed to search for outflow and LRT plumes. The Asian plumes discussed in section 3 were all first spotted over northeast Asia (northeastern China, Russian Far East, and Japan), and the Asian outflow region (Figure 7a) was defined accordingly. Our predefined LRT receptor region covered the domain of 25–60°N, 120–150°W (Figure 7e).

[26] We first looked for outflow plumes with at least 10 grid cells in the outflow region having both enhanced CO ($\geq 2.5 \times 10^{18}$ molecules/cm²) and SO₂ (≥ 0.2 DU). Only a single plume was allowed per day and consecutive days with a plume identified were screened to minimize multiple counting. The criterion for CO is close to the season-mean AIRS CO column amount over northern China, the most important source region identified in section 3. As for SO₂, it was assumed that the spatial averaging would reduce the 1- σ noise from 0.3 DU (section 2) to ~ 0.05 DU, and the detection limit for SO₂ can be roughly estimated at 0.2 DU (signal-to-noise ratio S:N = 2:1 for $\pm 1\sigma$ noise). A total of 62 outflow plumes satisfying the above criteria were found for our study period. This count is quite sensitive to the selected criterion for CO: increasing and decreasing it by

10% would change the total count to 39 and 113, respectively. Increasing (decreasing) the threshold for SO₂ by 10%, on the other hand, only decreases (increases) the number of counted outflow plumes to 60 (67).

[27] The LRT events were defined as those days with at least 10 grid cells in the receptor region having CO $\geq 2.25 \times 10^{18}$ molecules/cm² and SO₂ ≥ 0.2 DU. Since the CO column amounts became smaller as the plumes crossed the Pacific (section 3), we used a 10% lower criterion for CO for LRT plumes. Other criteria including that for SO₂ remained identical to ensure that only plumes with strong SO₂ signals were included. Additionally, the identified LRT plumes were checked to ensure that they were not originated from North America. We counted a total of 16 LRT events in autumn for the 4 year period. As with outflow plumes, the frequency of LRT plumes was found to be sensitive to the criterion for CO. Twenty-nine (13) plumes were found if it was adjusted down (up) by 0.05×10^{18} molecules/cm². Increasing (decreasing) the threshold for SO₂ by 10% changes the number of counted LRT plumes to 14 (18). Note that the number of outflow and LRT plumes is likely underestimated especially for November, owing to the gap in data coverage at high latitudes (see Figure 7).

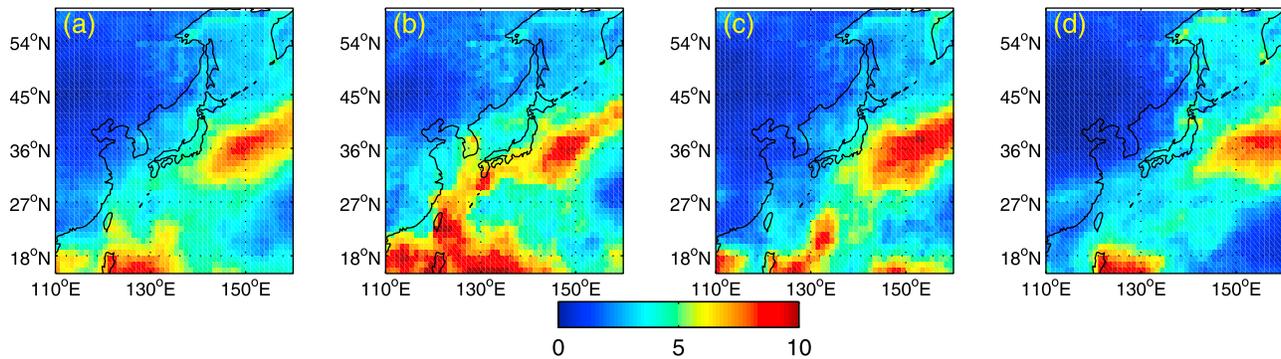


Figure 8. Mean precipitation (mm d^{-1}) from the Global Precipitation Climatology Project daily one-degree resolution data set [Huffman *et al.*, 2001] in (a) autumn, (b) September, (c) October, and (d) November during 2005–2008.

[28] One can also estimate how often strong SO₂ and CO signals are detected over a specific grid cell to determine the spatial distribution of outflow or LRT plumes. The results presented in Figure 7 indicate that the primary outflow pathway for Asian pollution in the season is the area around the Sea of Japan, where the outflow frequency is $\sim 5\%$ (Figure 7a). This means that about 5% of the time during the study period (or ~ 18 days), strong plumes with SO₂ ≥ 0.2 DU and CO $\geq 2.5 \times 10^{18}$ molecules/cm² were captured over this area by satellite sensors. For the receptor region, the latitude band of 35–55°N appears to be the most important inflow area for LRT plumes. The frequency of strong pollution plumes (SO₂ ≥ 0.2 DU, CO $\geq 2.25 \times 10^{18}$ molecules/cm²) in the area is mostly ~ 1 –2%, but exceeds 3% for $\sim 10\%$ of the grid cells. In other words, for areas most susceptible to the influence of LRT, Asian plumes were found on over 10 days during the study period.

[29] Both outflow and LRT events also demonstrate substantial temporal variation, with more episodes observed in October and November than in September (Figure 7). More precipitation over the outflow region in September (Figure 8b) is probably an important reason for this temporal variation. Other factors such as the frequency of frontal lifting events and the atmospheric lifetime of SO₂ may also play a role. The mean AIRS CO loading over northern China is largely constant through the three months, and the OMI SO₂ over the outflow region is much smaller in September. The choice of CO criterion is therefore unlikely the predominant reason for our observed temporal variation.

4.2. Comparison to the Results Using IASI and the Seasonal Change in Transport Frequency

[30] More recently, Clarisse *et al.* [2011] utilized IASI, an infrared satellite sensor, to study the long-range SO₂ transport case in November 2010 (case 3 in our study), and came to the same conclusion as ours (from the hyperspectral UV OMI instrument) that WCB lifting was the responsible mechanism. Their inspection of the IASI retrievals during October 2007 to December 2010 led to 12 LRT episodes in autumn, 10 in winter, and only 3 in spring. The count of 12 LRT plumes in almost four complete fall seasons is comparable to our results, as is their criterion for SO₂ loading (~ 0.186 DU). But they focused on plumes above 5 km in altitude, and defined those that can be tracked for

≥ 2.5 days as LRT cases. Considering the typical transpacific transit time of 5–6 days as discussed in section 3, some of their cases probably will not be classified as LRT events using our method. Both OMI and IASI have limited sensitivity to SO₂ at lower altitudes, and would underestimate the frequency of the actual SO₂ LRT events. OMI is relatively more sensitive and can detect plumes well below 5 km (as shown in our case studies), and our count based on OMI data is probably a closer lower limit for the frequency of LRT events.

[31] Larger discrepancy exists between the two satellite data sets for the spring season. Contrary to the finding of Clarisse *et al.* [2011], our preliminary results (Figure S8) suggest that the outflow and long-range transport of SO₂ are probably more active in spring than in autumn. While the two seasons have similar number of the frontal lifting events [Liang *et al.*, 2004], autumn is slightly wetter over the major source and outflow regions (Figure S9). Therefore one would expect the SO₂ transport to be more active in spring. However, a large difference in the abundance of CO can be found between the two seasons, and the CO criteria used in our preliminary analysis for spring will need to be further refined (see auxiliary materials) before a definite conclusion can be drawn. Clarisse *et al.* [2011] also hypothesized that the plume transport height in spring could be lower, causing a low bias in IASI-observed transport frequency. Another fundamental difference between the two seasons is the much larger dust loading in spring, which may influence the transport efficiency of SO₂. If collocated, dust particles may provide the site for heterogeneous reactions of SO₂ [e.g., Usher *et al.*, 2002], and could possibly increase the solubility of SO₂ in cloud droplets by decreasing their acidity. Dust may also interfere with satellite retrievals, decreasing the sensitivity of satellite sensors to SO₂ [e.g., Krotkov *et al.*, 2008]. A comprehensive study comparing the two seasons would be necessary to fully understand the seasonal change in SO₂ long-range transport from Asia.

5. Conclusions

[32] We investigated rapid transpacific transport in autumn using multiple sensors of the A-train satellite constellation. For typical cases discussed in section 3, pollution plumes with high concentrations of SO₂ were observed over

the North Pacific Ocean by the OMI instrument, and found to travel from their source regions in East Asia to North America within 5–6 days. The AIRS instrument showed very similar transport patterns for CO, suggesting that these plumes were most likely derived from anthropogenic sources. Trajectory analysis along with meteorological data indicate that, similar to many springtime transpacific events, strong lifting in the warm conveyor belt of midlatitude wave cyclones is the main outflow mechanism for these autumn events, while the strength and relative position of the Aleutian low and Pacific subtropical high largely determine the time scale and pathway for further transport. Dry (non-precipitating) convection induced by cold fronts could be another efficient export mechanism for Asian pollutants [Dickerson *et al.*, 2007], but is not explicitly resolved in the satellite data and trajectory model used in this study. The A-train observations provide evidence that in some cases much of the SO₂ could escape scavenging during the ascent in WCB, and be transported at greater efficiency than NO_x. The spatial coverage and magnitude of these SO₂ transport events far exceed those previously recorded in the sparse springtime aircraft experiments, suggesting that Asian sulfur emissions may have large impacts over vast downstream regions.

[33] An analysis utilizing the AIRS CO and OMI SO₂ data from September, October, and November of the 2005–2008 period reveals 16 SO₂ long-range transport events, out of 62 outflow episodes from East Asia. The most important Asian outflow pathway for the season is the area around the Sea of Japan, while the long-range transport plumes most frequently influence the latitudes between 35°N and 55°N over the east Pacific. While the plume counts are sensitive to the choice of criteria, and satellite observations likely underestimate the frequency of transport events, our results undoubtedly point to the importance of long-range transport from Asia in autumn.

[34] The approach employed in this study can be applied to other seasons. Our preliminary analysis suggests that the long-range transport of Asian anthropogenic SO₂ could be even more active in spring. Differences in frontal lifting, precipitation, and dust loading may result in the seasonal change in the SO₂ transport efficiency and frequency. For future studies, we plan to employ SO₂ data from a new retrieval algorithm [Yang *et al.*, 2010], whose improved accuracy has been demonstrated in recent airborne validation measurements over central China [He *et al.*, 2012]. In addition to the OMI SO₂ and AIRS CO data, we will make use of other satellite data such as the Aerosol Index [Hsu *et al.*, 1996] for detecting dust moving along with pollution. It will also be interesting to examine whether the satellite-observed long-range transport events can be reproduced by chemical transport models. Such intercomparison can help evaluate the model output, while the combination of the two may lead to more robust estimates on the frequency of transpacific SO_x transport events, their controlling factors, and their impacts.

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