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3 Global two-channel AVHRR aerosol climatology: effects of
4 stratospheric aerosols and preliminary comparisons with MODIS
5 and MISR retrievals

6 Igor V. Geogdzhayev^{a,b}, Michael I. Mishchenko^{b,*}, Li Liu^{b,c}, Lorraine Remer^d

7 ^aDepartment of Applied Physics and Applied Mathematics, Columbia University, 2880 Broadway, New York, NY 10025, USA

8 ^bNASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies, 2880 Broadway, New York, NY 10025, USA

9 ^cDepartment of Earth and Environmental Sciences, Columbia University, 2880 Broadway, New York, NY 10025, USA

^dNASA Goddard Space Flight Center, Code 913, Greenbelt, MD 20771, USA

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11 **Abstract**

12 We present an update on the status of the global climatology of the aerosol column optical thickness and Ångström
13 exponent derived from channel-1 and -2 radiances of the advanced very high resolution radiometer (AVHRR) in
14 the framework of the Global Aerosol Climatology Project (GACP). The latest version of the climatology covers
15 the period from July 1983 to September 2001 and is based on an adjusted value of the diffuse component of
16 the ocean reflectance as derived from extensive comparisons with ship sun-photometer data. We use the updated
17 GACP climatology and stratospheric aerosol and gas experiment (SAGE) data to analyze how stratospheric aerosols
18 from major volcanic eruptions can affect the GACP aerosol product. One possible retrieval strategy based on the
19 AVHRR channel-1 and -2 data alone is to infer both the stratospheric and the tropospheric aerosol optical thickness
20 while assuming fixed microphysical models for both aerosol components. The second approach is to use the SAGE
21 stratospheric aerosol data in order to constrain the AVHRR retrieval algorithm. We demonstrate that the second
22 approach yields a consistent long-term record of the tropospheric aerosol optical thickness and Ångström exponent.
23 Preliminary comparisons of the GACP aerosol product with MODerate resolution Imaging Spectrometer (MODIS)
24 and multiangle imaging spectro-radiometer aerosol retrievals show reasonable agreement, the GACP global monthly
25 optical thickness being lower than the MODIS one by approximately 0.03. Larger differences are observed on a
26 regional scale. Comparisons of the GACP and MODIS Ångström exponent records are less conclusive and require
27 further analysis.

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* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1-212-678-5590; fax: +1-212-678-5622

E-mail address: crmim@giss.nasa.gov mmishchenko@giss.nasa.gov (M.I. Mishchenko).

1 1. Introduction

3 The totality of recent research results provides a strong indication that tropospheric aerosols have
4 a significant impact on climate by both directly modulating the solar radiative fluxes and altering the
5 radiative properties of clouds [1–3]. However, the magnitude of this impact and the human contribution
6 to its temporal variation remain highly uncertain due to the complex and variable nature of aerosol
7 properties.

8 Advanced very high resolution radiometer (AVHRR) instruments on board of National Atmospheric
9 and Oceanic Administration (NOAA) weather satellites are a unique source of information about aerosol
10 properties due to the extensive length of their combined data record and the global coverage. Having
11 this in mind, we have developed an algorithm to retrieve the aerosol optical thickness (AOT), τ , and
12 Ångström exponent, A , from AVHRR channel-1 and -2 radiances in the framework of the Global Aerosol
13 Climatology Project (GACP) [4]. The latter was established jointly by the National Aeronautics and Space
14 Administration (NASA) and the World Climate Research Programme's Global Energy and Water Cycle
15 Experiment (GEWEX).

16 The goal of this paper is to provide an update on the status of the GACP data product. In the following
17 section, we will describe an improved version of the retrieval algorithm, which incorporates changes
18 suggested by the results of extensive comparisons of satellite retrievals and ship-borne sun-photometer
19 observations [5], and present the latest version of the aerosol climatology covering the period from July
20 1983 to September 2001. In Section 3, we analyze the potential influence of volcanic aerosols on the
21 GACP aerosol record by using stratospheric aerosol and gas experiment (SAGE) data and two different
22 retrieval strategies. Finally, we take advantage of the availability of contemporaneous AVHRR, MOD-
23 erate resolution Imaging Spectrometer (MODIS), and multiangle imaging spectro-radiometer (MISR)
24 observations and present the results of a preliminary comparison of the GACP retrieval results with those
25 derived from the more advanced satellite data.

25 2. Updated GACP climatology

26 Mishchenko et al. [6] published an AVHRR-derived climatology of the tropospheric AOT and Ångström
27 exponent for a period extending through December 1999. Liu et al. [5] have since used ship-borne sun-
28 photometer observations with well-characterized accuracy to validate the two-channel AVHRR aerosol
29 retrievals and concluded that the satellite-derived AOT values are in good agreement with the sun-
30 photometer data. Furthermore, they have found that by adjusting the diffuse component of the ocean
31 surface reflectance from 0.002 to 0.004 in AVHRR channels 1 and 2, it is possible to reduce a residual
32 positive offset observed in the satellite retrievals with respect to the sun-photometer data. Since the ocean
33 surface reflectance is variable, the number Li et al. were aiming for was one that gave as good an average
34 AOT result as possible with a single value.

35 We have, therefore, recalculated the entire GACP data set by using the new ocean diffuse reflectance
36 value 0.004 and have extended the GACP record through September 2001 (the end of the lifetime of the
37 NOAA-14 AVHRR). The resulting product is posted on the world wide web at <http://gacp.giss.nasa.gov/>
38 retrievals and is illustrated in Fig. 1. The upper panel shows the global monthly mean AOT values (solid
39 curve) as well as corresponding averages over the Southern (dotted curve) and Northern (dashed curve)
40 Hemispheres. The lower panel depicts the respective monthly averages of the Ångström exponent. One

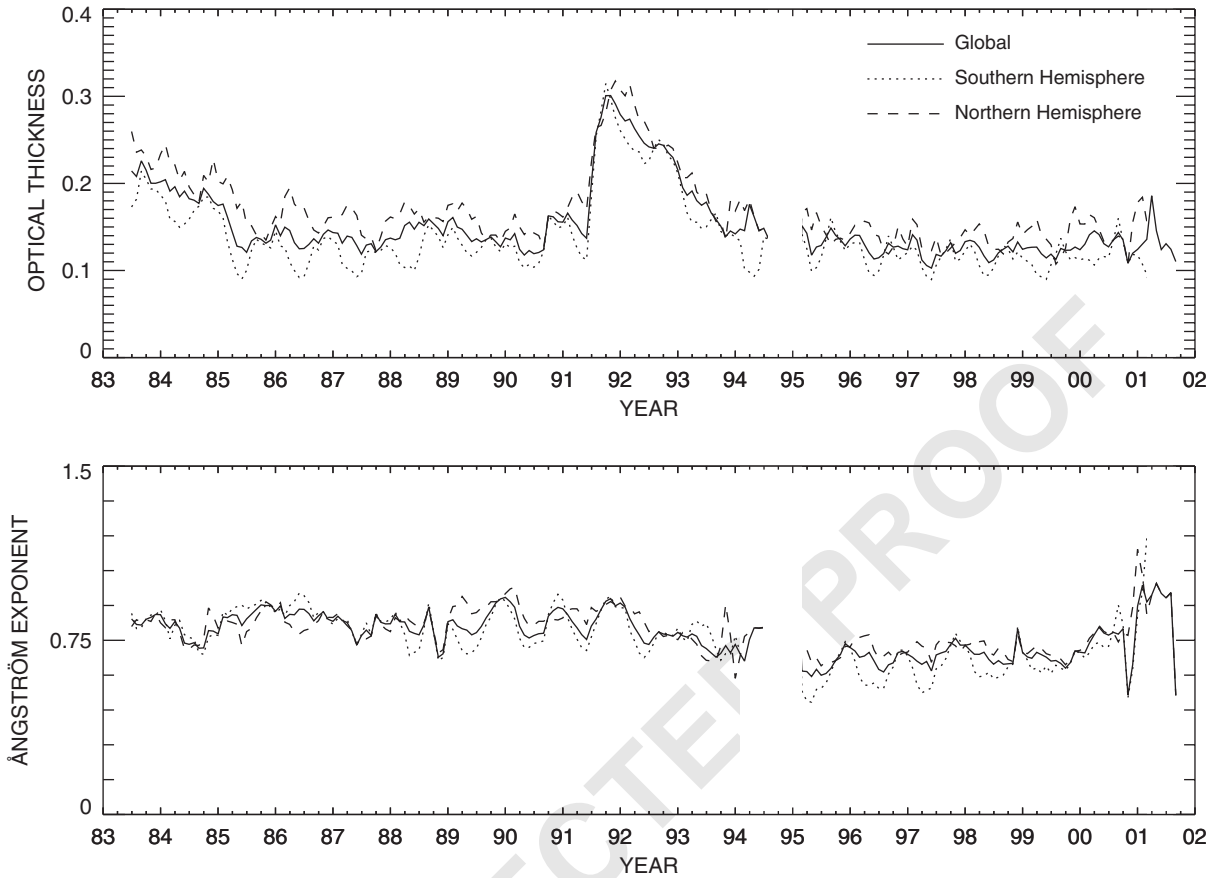


Fig. 1. Time series of the global monthly mean AOT and Ångström exponent retrieved from the AVHRR channel-1 and -2 data.

1 can see that the main features of the global aerosol record discussed in [6] are preserved in the updated
 climatology, so that the previously reached conclusions about seasonal trends and hemisphere differences
 3 remain unchanged. One noticeable consequence of increasing the diffuse surface reflectance value is a
 reduction of the long-term global aerosol optical thickness from the previous value 0.145 [6] to 0.13.
 5 The global value of the Ångström exponent has not changed much from the old value 0.75 [6]. The
 extension of the record through September 2001 does not reveal any new trends in the AOT. The sharp
 7 oscillations of the Ångström exponent observed in late 2000 and through 2001 may be explained by
 poor data quality at the end of the AVHRR instrument lifetime as well as by the significant drift of
 9 the satellite orbit that made unavailable AVHRR data for the Southern Hemisphere after March 2001.
 Since the NOAA-16/L satellite was launched in September 2000, there is a significant overlap in the
 11 NOAA-14 and -16 AVHRR data records. We therefore, expect to be able to improve the quality of the
 GACP retrievals and to rectify these problems once the new AVHRR data have been calibrated and
 processed.

1 3. Effects of stratospheric aerosols on the AVHRR climatology

3 The long-term GACP record (Fig. 1) indicates that stratospheric aerosols had a strong impact on the
4 column AOT after the El Chichon (March 1982) and Mt. Pinatubo (June 1991) eruptions. The former
5 manifests itself as increased AOT values at the beginning of the GACP data record from July 1983 through
6 the middle of 1985. The latter resulted in a sharp increase in the global AOT in the second half of 1991
7 with the peak value being twice as big as the background value, followed by a gradual decrease to the
8 background level by 1995. The remarkable prominence of these events makes it very important to analyze
9 the effect of volcanic aerosols on the performance of the GACP retrieval algorithm and on the resulting
10 aerosol product.

11 It is widely recognized that the SAGE data are a unique source of information about stratospheric
12 aerosols [7]. Mishchenko et al. [6] have used these data to develop a simple adjustment procedure
13 for the NOAA-11 aerosol retrievals in order to solve an apparent calibration problem that manifested
14 itself as a discontinuity in the AOT record at the time of transition from NOAA-9 to NOAA-11 as
15 well as artificial trends in the AOT and Ångström exponent records. Their approach was to subtract
16 the SAGE optical thickness from the total monthly mean AVHRR AOT, thereby creating a proxy for
17 the tropospheric AOT. This proxy is relatively insensitive to the presence of volcanic aerosols and
18 was subsequently used to compare the NOAA-9, -11, and -14 retrievals and to develop a correction
19 to the NOAA-11 channel-2 calibration offset in such a way that the continuity of the tropospheric
20 AOT record was restored and the artificial trends in the AOT and Ångström exponent records were
21 removed.

22 However, one may expect that this approach gives only an approximate value of the tropospheric AOT
23 during the periods affected by the El Chichon and Mt. Pinatubo eruptions and that a potentially more
24 accurate estimate could be obtained by explicitly modeling the stratospheric aerosol layer in the GACP
25 inversions. Although the radiative transfer scheme that we use for the computation of the GACP look-up
26 tables is quite flexible and allows an easy inclusion of a layer of stratospheric aerosols, the presence of
27 an additional layer of particles with microphysics different from that of the tropospheric aerosols adds
28 several more unknown model parameters and makes the already ill-posed inverse problem even worse.
29 With only two pieces of measurement data (AVHRR channel-1 and -2 radiances) per pixel available, one
30 can hope to retrieve only two model parameters. Therefore, there is a significant degree of arbitrariness
31 in how to select these two parameters while keeping the rest of the model parameters fixed in space and
32 time.

33 Within this limited framework, one may consider two distinct approaches. The first one is to fix
34 the size distributions and refractive indices of the stratospheric and tropospheric aerosols and the alti-
35 tude of the stratospheric aerosol layer and to retrieve the optical thicknesses of both layers. The advan-
36 tage of this approach would be the ability to compare the AVHRR- and SAGE-retrieved stratospheric
37 AOTs.

38 The second approach is to rely on the SAGE stratospheric AOT and to retrieve the optical thickness and
39 size of the tropospheric aerosols. The obvious advantage of the second approach is that it would enable
40 one to verify the expected long-term constancy of the global annual means of the tropospheric aerosol
41 parameters.

42 Below we analyze these two approaches in more detail and describe their application to the development
43 of the long-term GACP record.

1 3.1. Approach 1

Two fixed microphysical models of the stratospheric and tropospheric aerosols were considered. For the tropospheric aerosol, we used a model based on a power-law size distribution and a refractive index of $1.5+0.003i$. This model is equivalent to the one used in the operational GACP algorithm but with a power-law exponent fixed at 3.8. This value was chosen because it yields the Ångström exponent value of 0.75, which is close to the previously obtained long-term global mean value [6]. The stratospheric aerosol was assumed to be nonabsorbing and was characterized by the refractive index 1.44 and a gamma size distribution [8] with the effective radius $r_{\text{eff}} = 0.45 \mu\text{m}$ and the effective variance $v_{\text{eff}} = 0.35$. The effective radius value was chosen based on the SAGE data as being representative of the periods of high stratospheric aerosol loads after the Mt. Pinatubo eruption. Although nonabsorbing particles are typical of the background stratospheric aerosol and may not be an adequate model of fresh volcanic aerosol, the model of nonabsorbing aerosol seems to be a rational zero-order approximation given the necessity to select a fixed global value, as explained above. The vertical stratospheric-aerosol profile was modeled to follow that of ozone, while the tropospheric aerosols were assumed to be distributed vertically according to the vertical water vapor content.

Using this atmospheric model, a set of two look-up tables was generated for inverting the channel-1 and -2 AVHRR radiances, in which the tropospheric and stratospheric-aerosol optical thicknesses varied from 0 to 1.0 and from 0 to 0.3, respectively. We then attempted to retrieve simultaneously the tropospheric and the stratospheric AOT by seeking a minimum discrepancy between the measured and the calculated radiance values.

Test runs involving periods of low and high stratospheric aerosol loads demonstrated that the AVHRR-derived global average of the retrieved stratospheric AOT differed from the SAGE-retrieved results quite significantly. A subsequent detailed analysis of the retrieval process has revealed a degeneracy, which is illustrated in Fig. 2 by plotting the error function

$$25 \quad F_{\text{err}}(R_1, R_2) = \sqrt{\frac{(R_1 - R_{1\text{mes}})^2 + (R_2 - R_{2\text{mes}})^2}{R_{1\text{mes}}^2 + R_{2\text{mes}}^2}} \quad (1)$$

for a particular viewing geometry as a function of the tropospheric and stratospheric-aerosol optical thicknesses, where R_1 and R_2 are the calculated and $R_{1\text{mes}}$ and $R_{2\text{mes}}$ are the measured radiances, respectively, in AVHRR channels 1 and 2. This specific plot refers to the measurement performed on 2 July 1992 for the pixel with coordinates 58.3°N and 152°W . The corresponding solar zenith angle, satellite zenith angle, and the satellite–sun azimuth angle difference were 47.2° , 40.6° , and 158.0° , respectively, while the measured channel-1 and -2 reflectances were $R_1 = 0.048$ and $R_2 = 0.026$, respectively. In addition, the dashed and dot-dashed lines show the contours of theoretical channel-1 and -2 radiances in the $(\tau_{\text{trop}}, \tau_{\text{strat}})$ parameter space at the levels corresponding to the measured values. One can see that the discrepancy between the measured and the calculated reflectances is minimized by an essentially infinite number of couplets $(\tau_{\text{trop}}, \tau_{\text{strat}})$ such that $\tau_{\text{trop}} + \tau_{\text{strat}} \approx 0.23$. This obviously suggests that it is impossible to simultaneously retrieve the tropospheric and stratospheric AOTs from the AVHRR channel-1 and -2 radiances. Instead, the specific selection of the couplet $(\tau_{\text{trop}}, \tau_{\text{strat}})$ by the retrieval algorithm is controlled by the instrumental noise and numerical errors and is random rather than deterministic. Quite similar patterns emerge when one considers other viewing geometries and measured radiance values.

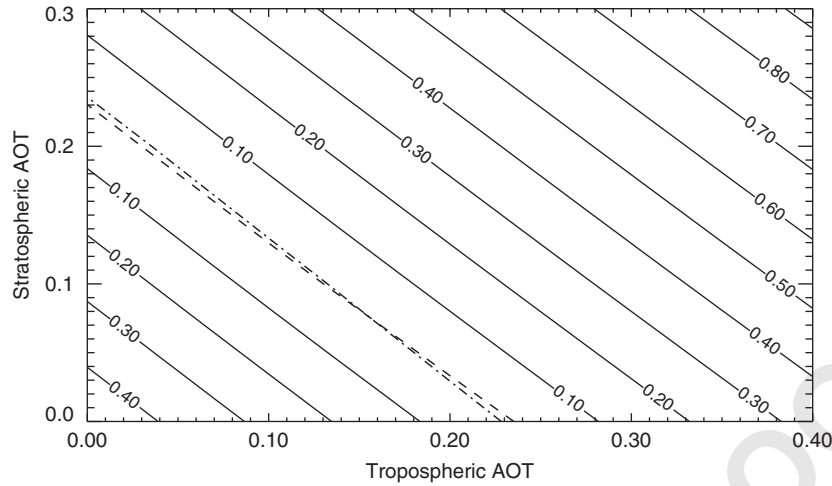


Fig. 2. Error function defined by Eq. (1) as a function of the tropospheric and stratospheric AOTs (see text).

1 The physical explanation of this behavior is that the spectral properties of the stratospheric and tropo-
 3 spheric aerosols are not sufficiently different to allow an effective separation of the two fractions based
 on the reflected radiances in the two closely spaced broadband AVHRR channels. Note that the problem
 is mostly caused by the physical limitations imposed by the specific configuration of AVHRR channels
 5 1 and 2 rather than by measurement and/or numerical errors. This situation may be contrasted to the
 operational GACP retrieval algorithm, in which the two model variables (the total AOT and the Ångström
 7 exponent) are nearly “orthogonal,” thereby enabling one to retrieve them separately [4].

Thus we have to conclude that one cannot retrieve the stratospheric AOT separately from the tropo-
 9 spheric AOT from the AVHRR radiance data alone. Therefore, the former must be inferred independ-
 11 ently from another data set (e.g., from the SAGE data) or derived from aerosol transport-chemistry
 models.

3.2. Approach 2

13 The second approach we implemented is based on using the SAGE-retrieved stratospheric AOT and
 size in order to infer the tropospheric AOT and Ångström exponent from the AVHRR data. Since the
 15 SAGE data are relatively sparse compared to the AVHRR data and are not collocated, we decided to use
 time and space averages of the SAGE results in the AVHRR retrievals. Specifically, we selected the data
 17 set developed by Hansen et al. [7], which consists of monthly zonal means of the stratospheric AOT and
 effective radius r_{eff} . A straightforward inclusion of this auxiliary information in the GACP algorithm
 19 would require the addition of two extra dimensions (the stratospheric AOT and effective radius) to the
 channel-1 and -2 look-up tables. However, the effect of r_{eff} is only important when the stratospheric aerosol
 21 load is high (i.e., shortly after a volcanic eruption), whereas during normal (clean) periods the uncertainty
 associated with its variability is negligible since the contribution of the background stratospheric aerosol
 23 to the top-of-the-atmosphere radiance is minor compared to that of the tropospheric aerosol. We therefore

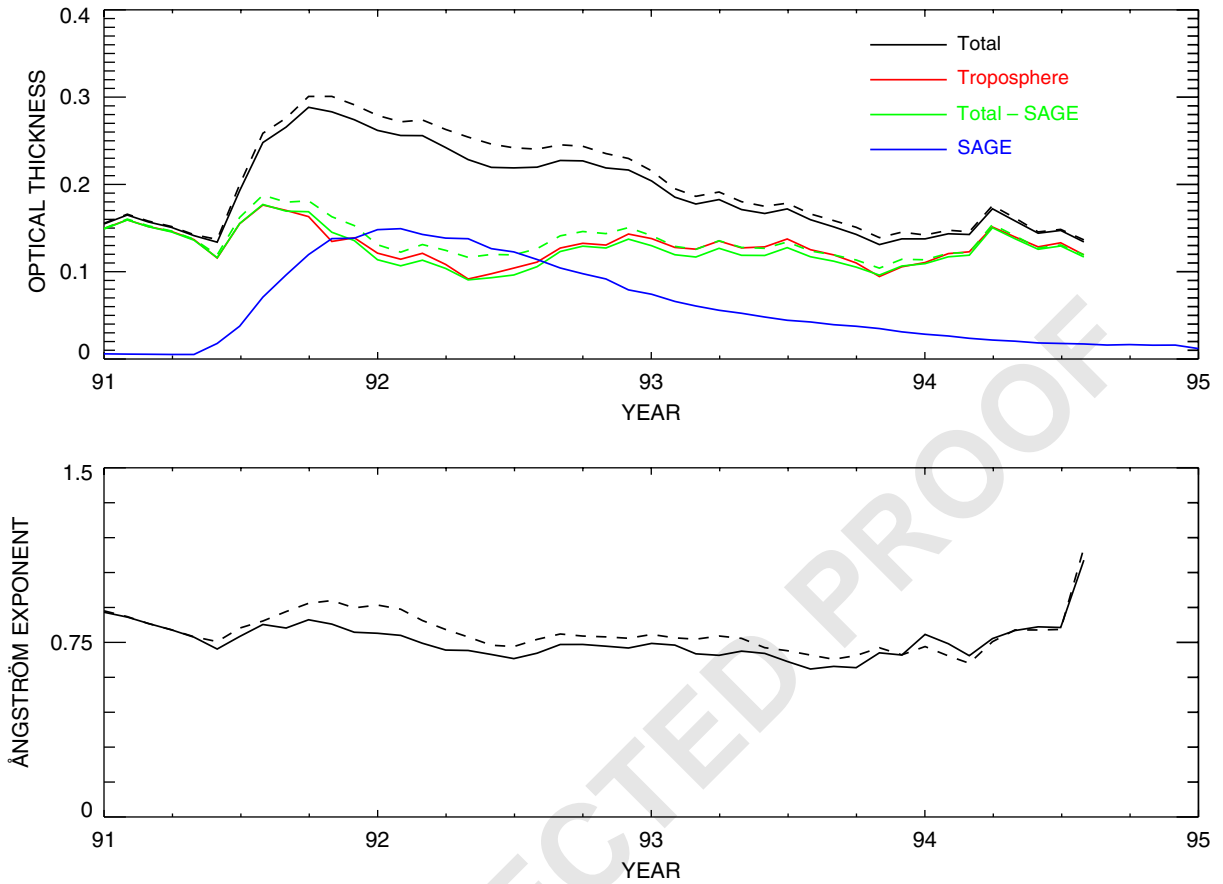


Fig. 3. Time series of the global monthly mean AOT and Ångström exponent retrieved from the AVHRR data and the global monthly mean optical thickness of stratospheric aerosols retrieved from the SAGE data (see text).

- 1 decided to model the stratospheric aerosol using the fixed value $r_{\text{eff}} = 0.45 \mu\text{m}$, as rationalized in the
 previous subsection, thereby adding only one extra dimension to our look-up tables.
- 3 The algorithm was applied to the time period extending from 1991 to 1995, which was affected by
 the Mt. Pinatubo eruption. The results are shown in Fig. 3, in which solid curves depict the quantities
 5 retrieved using the second approach and dashed curves show the corresponding quantities retrieved with
 the operational GACP algorithm. The black curves show the total global monthly mean AOT (the upper
 7 panel) and Ångström exponent (the lower panel). The green curves depict the difference of the total
 AOT and the SAGE-retrieved stratospheric AOT. The red curve corresponds to the AVHRR-retrieved
 9 tropospheric AOT. Also shown is the SAGE stratospheric AOT (the blue curve).
- 11 One can see that both the simple subtraction of the SAGE AOT from the total AOT (the solid green
 curve) and the actual retrieval of the tropospheric AOT (the red curve) help to eliminate the volcanic
 effect from the long-term record and give very close results. The residual increase in the tropospheric
 13 AOT observed shortly after the eruption can be explained by the fact that the vertical distribution of the

1 volcanic aerosol was sufficiently uniform at that time and contributed both to the tropospheric AOT and
2 the stratospheric AOT measured by SAGE. In addition, the optical properties of the fresh volcanic aerosol
3 may have been significantly different from the aerosol model assumed in the retrieval algorithm. The
4 total AOT is slightly lower at the time of maximum aerosol load compared with that retrieved with the
5 operational GACP algorithm. This is mainly due to the nonabsorbing stratospheric aerosol model used
6 and the fact that the stratospheric aerosol was located above most of the absorbing atmospheric water
7 vapor, thereby appearing brighter. The retrieved Ångström exponent is similar to that yielded by the
8 operational algorithm with largest differences occurring during the period of maximum aerosol loads, as
9 expected. The tropospheric aerosol record exhibits no discernable trends and is in good overall agreement
10 with that during the periods not affected by volcanic aerosols.

11 4. Preliminary comparisons with MODIS and MISR aerosol retrievals

12 The GACP data set has been used in a number of recent validation and intercomparison studies
13 [5,10–14]. They have included comparisons with ground- and air-borne data [5,10,14] and models [11,12]
14 as well as with data sets obtained from other satellite sensors and algorithms [12,15–19]. The results of
15 these studies both increase our confidence in the robustness of the GACP aerosol climatology and help
16 to understand its limitations. Geogdzhayev et al. [14] have concluded that one of the most promising ap-
17 proaches to validating the GACP retrievals is to compare them with the newer and more advanced satellite
18 products such as the MODIS and MISR aerosol records. These newer instruments have some ability to
19 account for particle property variations that affect AOT retrievals. They also have advantages in spatial
20 resolution (which may improve cloud clearing), in sensitivity (with the help of additional spectral bands
21 or angles), and possibly in radiometric calibration. As such, regional differences between the AVHRR
22 and the MODIS and MISR products will be of great interest, since they will test the limits of assuming a
23 single particle type globally, as well as differences in cloud clearing, etc.

24 The extension of the GACP record through September 2001 allowed us for the first time to directly
25 compare our retrievals with those derived from the MODIS and MISR radiance data. For this purpose, we
26 have used the MODIS Level 3 monthly mean AOT values at 550 nm and the Ångström exponent values
27 calculated from the AOT values in two channels [19]. The spatial resolution of the MODIS Level 3 data is
28 $1^\circ \times 1^\circ$. Also, we have used the MISR Level 3 monthly AOT data at 555 nm with the $0.5^\circ \times 0.5^\circ$ spatial
29 resolution [21]. Only the retrievals over the oceans have been included.

30 Fig. 4 compares the MODIS, MISR, and GACP global monthly mean AOTs (the upper panel) and
31 the MODIS and GACP global mean Ångström exponents (the bottom panel). MISR Level 3 Ångström
32 exponent data were not available at the time of this publication and are not shown. One can see a generally
33 reasonable agreement between the AVHRR- and MODIS-retrieved AOT values. The MODIS AOTs are
34 systematically higher than the GACP AOTs by about 0.03 and systematically lower than the MISR AOTs
35 by approximately the same amount. The three curves correlate well, which is encouraging given the
36 somewhat different spatial coverage afforded by these instruments. It also gives us confidence that the
37 orbital shift at the end of the NOAA-14 operation and the associated change in the AVHRR spatial
38 coverage did not distort significantly the retrieved global monthly mean AOT values. Note that although
39 the MODIS and MISR global averages were calculated by including all pixels, the inclusion of only
40 those pixels for which the contemporaneous AVHRR data were available does not change the results
41 significantly.

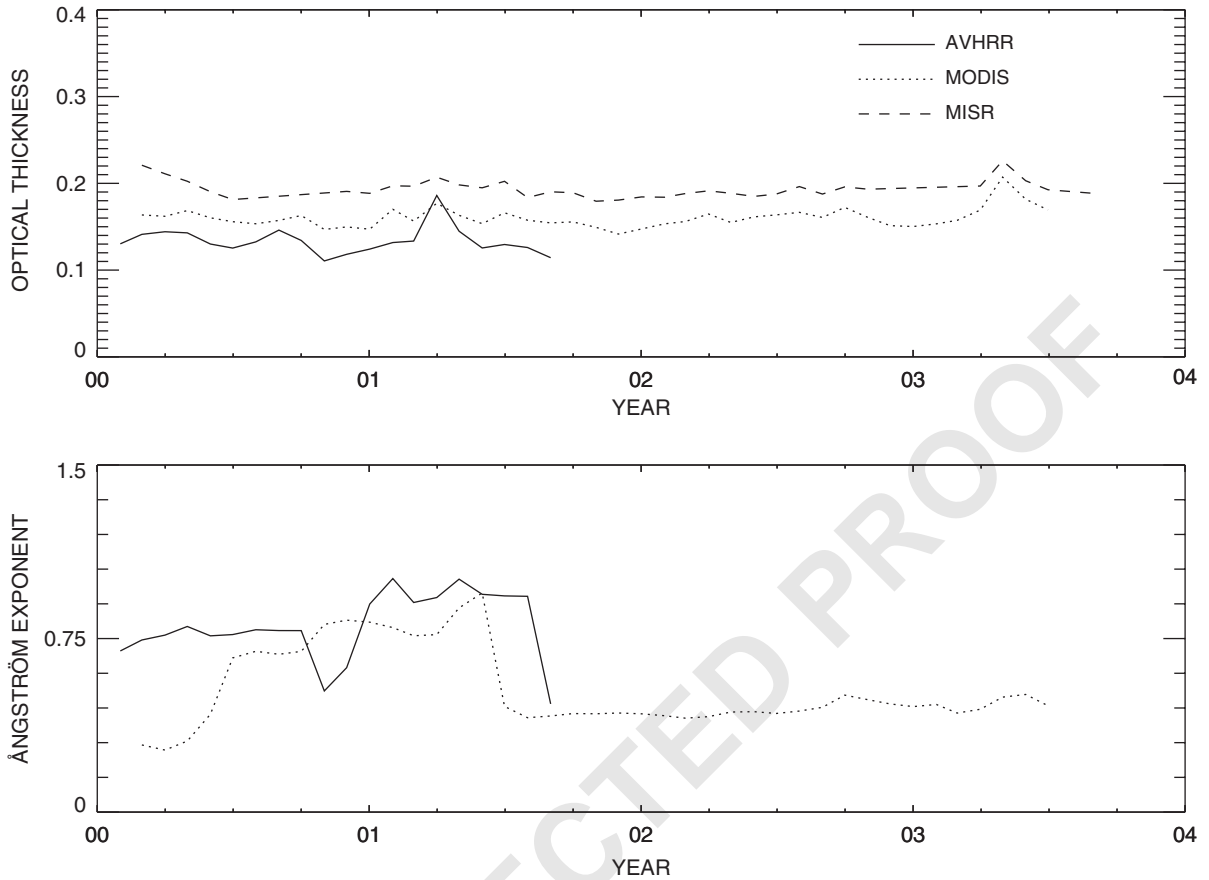


Fig. 4. Time series of the global monthly mean AOT and Ångström exponent retrieved from the AVHRR, MODIS, and MISR radiance data.

- 1 The comparison of the Ångström exponent records reveals large fluctuations in both the AVHRR and
 2 the MODIS results. While an abrupt change in the AVHRR-retrieved values at the end of the record is
 3 associated with the orbital shift and general deterioration of the quality of the AVHRR radiance data,
 4 the cause of the large changes in the MODIS record is not clear. High values of the Ångström exponent
 5 in the extreme polar regions have certainly contributed to the higher values at the beginning of the
 6 record. However, limiting the comparison to the MODIS data collected at latitudes lower than $\pm 60^\circ$ still
 7 produces large fluctuations in the Ångström exponent. It should also be noticed that the GACP aerosol
 8 model assumes a wavelength-independent Ångström exponent, whereas the MODIS retrieval algorithm
 9 calculates the Ångström exponent from the ratio of AOTs in two channels and generally depends on
 10 wavelength. Obviously, further analysis of the Ångström exponent records is necessary.
- 11 Given the good correlation of the global AOT record, it is interesting to see what happens on the regional
 12 scale. In fact, one might expect to observe significant differences based on the fact that the GACP retrievals
 13 are performed using a single globally fixed model of all aerosol properties except the Ångström exponent,

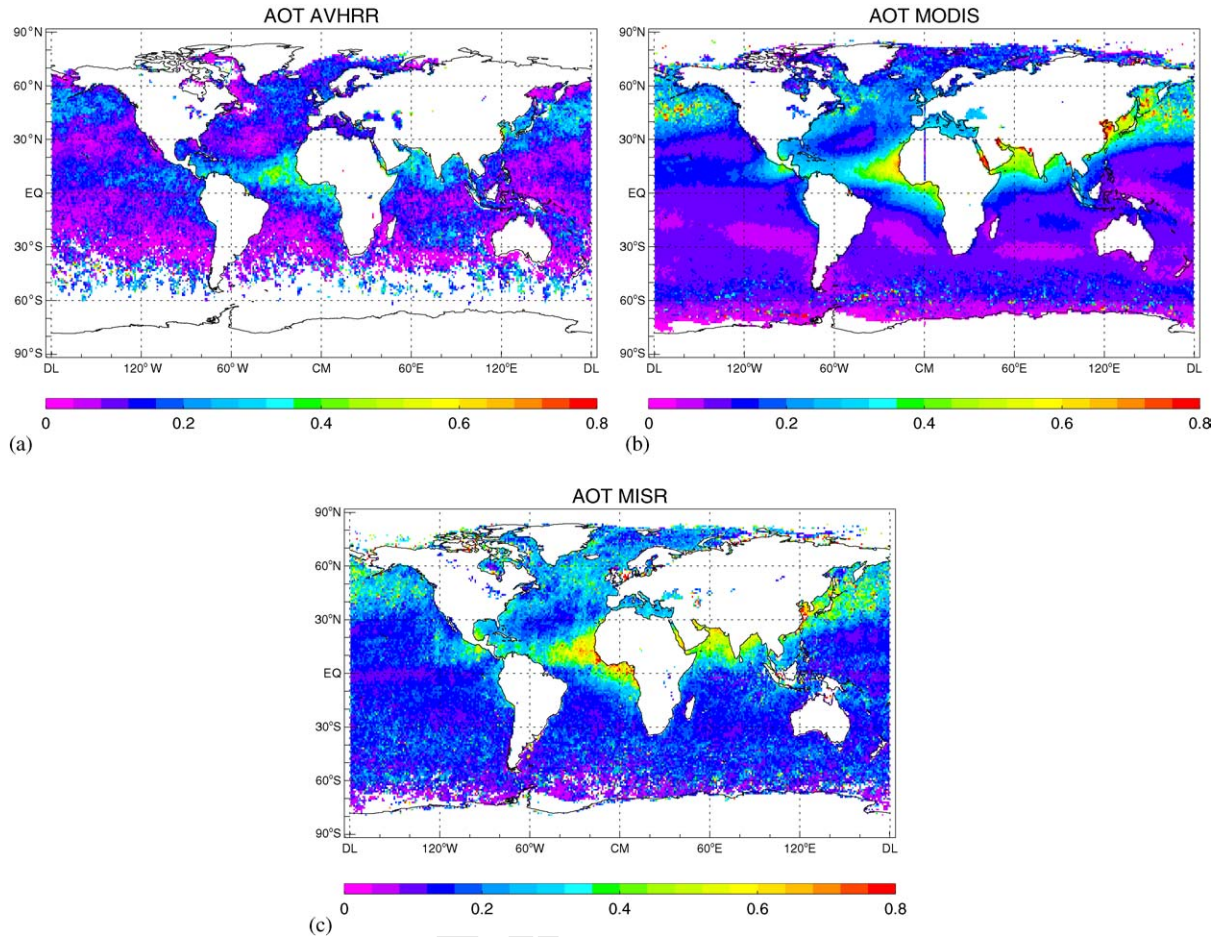


Fig. 5. Monthly averages of the AOT for the period from March to July 2000 compiled from (a) the two-channel AVHRR retrievals, (b) the MODIS aerosol data, and (c) the MISR aerosol data.

- 1 whereas the advanced capabilities of the MODIS and MISR instruments allow for more sophisticated
 2 retrieval algorithms using sets of aerosol models with varying optical properties [19,20].
 3 Fig. 5 shows maps of the GACP, MODIS, and MISR AOT values averaged over the period from March
 4 to July of 2000. One can see that the MODIS and MISR data extend further towards the poles than
 5 the AVHRR data. This is especially noticeable at mid latitudes of the Southern Hemisphere where the
 6 AVHRR results are patchy due to the orbital drift and appear to be “noisy” because of a smaller number
 7 of individual retrievals contributing to each $1^\circ \times 1^\circ$ pixel. The general structure of the global aerosol
 8 fields retrieved by all three satellites is remarkably similar, with local minima and maxima occurring in
 9 exactly the same regions. For example, the dust outflows from the Sahara desert, Persian Gulf, and Far
 10 East and a belt of elevated AOT values in the Southern Hemisphere are all present in the same locations.
 11 However, the magnitude of these features differs between the instruments. The AVHRR retrievals tend to

1 produce smaller values in areas with high aerosol loads and somewhat smaller values for the background
2 aerosols in open ocean areas. The MISR retrievals are similar to the MODIS results in the areas with
3 high aerosol loads and are significantly higher than the AVHRR- and MODIS-retrieved AOTs in the open
4 ocean areas. The belt of higher aerosol loads in the Southern Hemisphere is probably associated with
5 sea salt particles and is more pronounced in the AVHRR than in the MODIS results, although the lack of
6 detailed contemporaneous AVHRR data in that area does not allow us to make a definitive judgment.

7 Several possible explanations can be suggested for the observed discrepancies. First, differences in the
8 cloud screening algorithms may have been significant contributors, especially in the Southern Hemisphere.
9 Second, our retrieval algorithm may not always distinguish between optically thick aerosols and clouds
10 [4], which may be a significant source of differences in areas with high aerosol loads. One may also
11 suspect that while the aerosol model used in the AVHRR retrievals can be expected to perform reasonably
12 well globally, it may not be the best choice in the areas affected by optically thick dust plumes.

13 It is also anticipated that the preliminary MODIS and MISR aerosol products will become significantly
14 better in the near future. Indeed, the currently available MISR aerosol product is not yet fully validated.
15 The expected refinements to the MISR calibration, particle models used in the retrieval, and possibly
16 treatment of the ocean surface boundary condition, will affect the results. For example, a correction to
17 the MISR band-to-band radiometric calibration reduces the AOT retrieved over a broad sampling of dark
18 water sites by about 0.025 (Kahn et al.), thereby reducing the discrepancy with sun-photometer (and
19 apparently with AVHRR) values by 40%.

20 In any case, this comparison is only a very preliminary step in what should be a sustained and significant
21 effort. We hope that the extension of the GACP record using the NOAA-16 data as well as a more detailed
22 analysis approach will help us to better quantify the differences between the various aerosol products and
23 to understand their potential causes.

5. Conclusions

25 We have presented an updated global long-term (July 1983–September 2001) climatology of aerosol
26 optical thickness and Ångström exponent derived from AVHRR channel-1 and -2 radiance measurements.
27 This climatology incorporates an adjusted value of the diffuse component of the ocean surface reflectance
28 in order to provide a better agreement with extensive ship-borne sun-photometer data. The updated GACP
29 record preserves the main features of the time series reported in our previous publications, but implies a
30 slight reduction of the global mean AOT from 0.145 to 0.13. We expect that problems associated with the
31 orbital drift and data quality deterioration at the end of the NOAA-14 lifetime will be ameliorated once
32 the contemporaneous data from the NOAA-16 AVHRR are processed.

33 We have analyzed two ways of treating stratospheric aerosols in the two-channel AVHRR retrieval
34 algorithm during the periods affected by major volcanic eruptions. It has been shown that one cannot
35 retrieve the stratospheric and the tropospheric AOT simultaneously using AVHRR channel-1 and -2
36 radiances because of the insufficient difference between the spectral effects caused by the two aerosol
37 fractions. However, we have demonstrated that the auxiliary data on the stratospheric AOT and size
38 provided by SAGE can be incorporated in the AVHRR retrieval algorithm in order to obtain a continuous
39 long-term global record of the tropospheric AOT and Ångström exponent.

40 Preliminary comparisons with the MODIS and MISR aerosol results have revealed a reasonable corre-
41 lation between the global monthly averages of the AOT records during the period when contemporaneous

1 AVHRR data were available (March 2000–September 2001), the GACP retrievals being systematically
2 lower than the MODIS and MISR results by approximately 0.03 and 0.06, respectively. The comparison
3 of the GACP and MODIS Ångström exponent results is less conclusive and requires further analysis.

4 Regional comparisons show that the GACP algorithm retrieves smaller AOT values in the areas affected
5 by desert dust aerosols compared to the MODIS and MISR results. This may be due to the potentially
6 imperfect differentiation between clouds and optically thick aerosols by the operational GACP algorithm,
7 as discussed above, and/or due to a bias associated with the globally fixed aerosol model. The significant
8 differences in the GACP, MODIS, and MISR cloud screening approaches may also have contributed to
9 the differences in the aerosol retrieval results, especially at mid latitudes in the Southern Hemisphere,
10 where high sea salt concentrations may be expected to be the cause of greater AOT values.

11 We expect that further extension of the GACP record using NOAA-16 data will help us to arrive at
12 more quantitative and more definitive conclusions.

13 6. Uncited references

[9]

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