

# O<sub>3</sub> and PAN in southern Tibetan Plateau determined by distinct physical and chemical processes

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**Abstract.** Tropospheric ozone (O<sub>3</sub>) and peroxyacetyl nitrate (PAN) are both photochemical pollutants harmful to the ecological environment and human health. In this study, measurements of O<sub>3</sub> and PAN as well as their precursors were conducted from May to July 2019 at Nam Co station (NMC), a highly pristine high-altitude site in the southern Tibetan Plateau (TP), to investigate how distinct transport processes and photochemistry contributed to their variations. Results revealed that, despite highly similar diurnal variations with steep morning rises and flat daytime plateaus that were caused by boundary layer development and downmixing of free tropospheric air, day to day variations in O<sub>3</sub> and PAN were in fact controlled by distinct physicochemical processes. During the dry spring season, air masses rich in O<sub>3</sub> were associated with high altitude westerly air masses that entered the TP from the west or the south, which frequently carried high loadings of stratospheric O<sub>3</sub> to NMC. During the summer monsoon season, a northward shift of the subtropical jet stream shifted the stratospheric downward entrainment pathway also to the north, leading to direct stratospheric O<sub>3</sub> entrainment into the troposphere of the northern TP, which travelled southwards to NMC within low altitudes via northerly winds in front of ridges or closed high pressures over the TP. Westerly and southerly air masses, however, revealed low O<sub>3</sub> levels due to the overall less stratospheric O<sub>3</sub> within the troposphere of low latitude regions. PAN, however, was only rich in westerly or southerly air masses that crossed over polluted regions such as Northern India, Nepal or Bangladesh before entering the TP and arriving at NMC from the south during both spring and summer. Overall, the O<sub>3</sub> level at NMC was mostly determined by stratosphere-troposphere exchange (STE), which explained 77% and 88% of the observed O<sub>3</sub> concentration in spring and summer, respectively. However, only 0.1% of the springtime day-to-day O<sub>3</sub> variability could be explained by STE processes, while 22% was explained during summertime. Positive net photochemical formation was estimated for both O<sub>3</sub> and PAN based on observation-constrained box modelling. Near surface photochemical formation was unable to account for the high O<sub>3</sub> level observed at NMC, and nor was it the determining factor for the day-to-day variability of O<sub>3</sub>. However, it was able to capture events with elevated PAN concentrations and explain its day-to-day variations. O<sub>3</sub> and PAN formation were both highly sensitive to NO<sub>x</sub> levels, with PAN being also quite sensitive to VOCs concentrations. The rapid development of

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54 | transportation networks and urbanization within the TP, may lead to increased emissions and loadings in NO<sub>x</sub> and VOCs,  
55 | resulting in strongly enhanced O<sub>3</sub> and PAN formation in downwind pristine regions, which should be given greater attention  
56 | in future studies.

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## 58 | 1 Introduction

59 | Ozone (O<sub>3</sub>) and peroxyacetyl nitrate (PAN) are key photochemical pollutants in the troposphere, that are harmful to  
60 | vegetation and human health (Kleindienst et al., 1990;Yukihiro et al., 2012;Taylor, 1969;Lefohn et al., 2017). Since O<sub>3</sub> and  
61 | PAN are both produced during the oxidation of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in the presence of nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>),  
62 | they often share highly similar variational characteristics (Fischer et al., 2014). However, PAN is formed only from a limited  
63 | number of oxygenated VOCs (OVOCs), which are typically oxidation products of alkenes (with low carbon numbers),  
64 | aromatics and isoprene (Xu et al., 2021), while O<sub>3</sub> can be practically formed from all VOCs. Additionally, the photochemical  
65 | formation of O<sub>3</sub> depends highly nonlinearly on its precursor concentrations, being insensitive to VOCs changes under NO<sub>x</sub>-  
66 | limited conditions and vice versa, while PAN varied nearly proportionally to its OVOC precursors, with additional  
67 | influences from the NO<sub>2</sub> to NO ratio (Xu et al., 2021). Thus, photochemistry can sometimes result in distinct variations of O<sub>3</sub>  
68 | and PAN, especially during cold seasons (Xu et al., 2021;Zhang et al., 2020). From the aspect of physical transport, O<sub>3</sub> and  
69 | PAN can both be transported over large distances. Since PAN is easily thermal decomposed under high temperatures, its  
70 | transport is more favored in cold seasons or at higher altitudes. Early simulation studies suggested PAN to be an important  
71 | reservoir for NO<sub>x</sub> in the troposphere and lower stratosphere (Singh and Hanst, 1981), redistributing NO<sub>x</sub> far from its source  
72 | regions (Moxim et al., 1996). Different from PAN, O<sub>3</sub> is naturally produced within the stratosphere and can be transported  
73 | into the troposphere via stratosphere-troposphere exchange (STE) processes that are often associated with the occurrence of  
74 | tropopause folds, cut-off lows, streamers near the polar-front jet or subtropical jet stream, and mid-latitude cyclones  
75 | (Langford, 1999;Stohl et al., 2003;Sprenger et al., 2007;Tang et al., 2011). STE elevates tropospheric O<sub>3</sub> and oxidation  
76 | capacity at distinct latitudes during different seasons, with the largest mass fluxes in summer occurring mostly in higher mid-  
77 | latitudes, followed by spring occurring mostly in lower mid-latitudes (Tang et al., 2011;Škerlak et al., 2014). Deep STE  
78 | intrusions reaching the planetary boundary layer (PBL) and associated mass fluxes are largest during spring in China and the  
79 | western part of North America.

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80 | While the variational characteristics, influence of photochemical formation and transport on O<sub>3</sub> and PAN have been widely  
81 | investigated in polluted urban regions of China (Liu et al., 2018;Yao et al., 2019;Hu et al., 2020;Wei et al., 2020;Qiu et al.,  
82 | 2021;Zhang et al., 2021;Xu et al., 2021), those at remote background sites received less attention, especially for PAN. The  
83 | Tibetan Plateau (TP), located in western China, is often called the “Third Pole” with its average altitude over 4000 m. Due to  
84 | its harsh environment, the TP is only scarcely populated and thus highly pristine. The topography of the TP affects large  
85 | scale circulations with its strong thermal forcing, thereby influencing the weather, climate and air quality in eastern China

104 (Yang et al., 2014). Surface O<sub>3</sub> as a crucial greenhouse gas and with its deterministic role on atmospheric oxidation capacity  
105 has been paid certain attention in the TP and special attention has been given to the photochemical formation of O<sub>3</sub> under the  
106 strong radiative conditions at such high altitudes. Ma et al. (2002) investigated the photochemical formation of O<sub>3</sub> at Mt.  
107 Waliguan (WLG) in the Northeastern TP through box-modelling and suggested wintertime net production and summertime  
108 net loss in O<sub>3</sub>. Xue et al. (2013) further constrained the box model with VOCs sampling results, mainly including  
109 hydrocarbons and aromatic compounds (no oxygenated compounds), and found net O<sub>3</sub> formation at WLG during both spring  
110 and summer 2003. Airmass transport from central and eastern China was found to be frequent during summertime (Xue et al.,  
111 2011; Xu et al., 2018a), revealing higher O<sub>3</sub> production efficiencies (Xue et al., 2011) and being held responsible for rising  
112 O<sub>3</sub> trends during summer and autumn (Xu et al., 2016; Xu et al., 2018a). Due to its high altitude, the TP revealed the largest  
113 deep STE O<sub>3</sub> mass fluxes, with higher fluxes in spring and winter and lower ones in summer and autumn, especially in the  
114 southeastern TP (Škerlak et al., 2014). At WLG, O<sub>3</sub> was observed to be strongly influenced by STE associated with the  
115 subtropical jet during spring and summer in 2003, with stronger impacts during summer than spring (Ding and Wang,  
116 2006; Zheng et al., 2008). STE was estimated to contribute an annual average of 10.2% to tropospheric O<sub>3</sub> at WLG based on  
117 EMAC model simulations using tagged tracers, revealing a peak contribution in June (Liu et al., 2020). At Nam Co station  
118 (NMC) in the southern TP stratospheric influence was also mainly observed during spring and summer, which was estimated  
119 to contribute 20% and 10%, respectively, based on model simulations (Yin et al., 2017). Measurements from Dangxiong, a  
120 lower site not far from NMC, also revealed significant stratospheric impacts on surface O<sub>3</sub> (Lin et al., 2015). At Xianggelila  
121 station in the southeastern TP, the STE impact was suggested to be most pronounced during winter and weakest during  
122 spring and summer based on surface observations (Ma et al., 2014), which however was in disagreement with modelling  
123 results revealing strongest STE during April and May, with an annual average contribution of 4.3%. In comparison, PAN  
124 was far less investigated, the few existing studies mainly focused on the impact of transport on local PAN variations. Zhang  
125 et al. (2009) made measurements of O<sub>3</sub> and PAN at WLG station during summer 2006 and found that the two oxidants  
126 exhibited distinct diurnal variations and only weak correlations to each other, suggesting they were controlled by different  
127 processes, with PAN being strongly influenced by regional transport of polluted air plumes. Xue et al. (2011) analyzed the  
128 same set of observations and reported PAN to be one of the most abundant reactive nitrogen species (NO<sub>y</sub>) at WLG,  
129 contributing 32% to total NO<sub>y</sub>. Xu et al. (2018b) made measurements of O<sub>3</sub> and PAN at NMC station in summer 2011 and  
130 late spring to early summer 2012, detecting highly similar diurnal variations in both gases caused by boundary layer  
131 development and elevated PAN in connection with transport of air plumes crossing over Nepal, North Pakistan or North  
132 India.

133 Despite the findings in previous literature, the physicochemical factors determining the variation of O<sub>3</sub> and PAN in the TP  
134 and their relative contributions have not been comprehensively investigated mainly due to the lack of comprehensive online  
135 VOCs observations and accurate NO<sub>x</sub> measurements. In this study, we present integrated real-time measurements of  
136 O<sub>3</sub>, PAN, NO<sub>2</sub>, VOCs, CH<sub>4</sub>, CO, photolysis rates and other meteorological parameters during spring and summer 2019 at  
137 NMC station and analyzed them in combination with reanalysis data, utilizing trajectory modelling and box-modelling

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147 approaches. The different impact of distinct transport processes and photochemical formation on O<sub>3</sub> and PAN, as well as  
148 differences in sensitivities towards their precursors are intercompared using improved box-model constraints and the relative  
149 contributions of physical and chemical processes to O<sub>3</sub> and PAN variability are evaluated.

## 150 2 Experimental and analysis methods

### 151 2.1 Site, observations and data

152 As the first part of the @Tibet series campaign, a campaign was carried out at NMC Station (30.77° N, 90. 95° E, 4730m  
153 a.s.l.), which is a highly pristine site in the southern TP (Fig. 1). The site campus is located within the natural reserve of  
154 NMC Lake, thus far away from anthropogenic activities and emissions. The nearest county (Dangxiong) and city (Lhasa) are  
155 located 40 and 125 km to the southeast of NMC, respectively. The NMC Lake was ~1 km north to our observation site,  
156 while the foothills of the northern Nyainqêntanglha Mountains were ~15 km to the south.

157 Measurements were performed from 1 May to 31 July 2019. Instruments for gases (including O<sub>3</sub>, PAN, NO<sub>2</sub>, CO, CH<sub>4</sub> and  
158 non-methane volatile organic compounds (NMVOCs)) were housed in an air-conditioned container. O<sub>3</sub> was measured  
159 alternately at the heights of 1.8 and 6.8 m (switching between two heights at 15-minute intervals) using a Model TE-49C  
160 commercial O<sub>3</sub> analyzer, which was calibrated with a TE-49iPS O<sub>3</sub> calibrator (both from Thermo Electronics, USA). A Los  
161 Gatos Research (LGR) NO<sub>2</sub> Analyzer was adopted for the measurements of NO<sub>2</sub>, which has a measurement range of 0.01-  
162 1000 ppb and was calibrated using NO<sub>2</sub> standard gas at the beginning and end of the experiment. PAN measurements were  
163 made using a GC-ECD analyzer (Meteorologie Consult GmbH, Germany) which was calibrated using PAN instantly formed  
164 in the reaction of a NO reference gas with acetone in the internal calibration unit of the instrument. CO and CH<sub>4</sub> were  
165 measured (until 2 July) by a cavity ring-down spectroscopy (CRDS) analyzer (Model G2401, PICARRO, USA) at a high  
166 precision (0.4 and 0.04 ppb, respectively, for CO and CH<sub>4</sub>). The CRDS instrument was calibrated twice using a mixed CO  
167 and CH<sub>4</sub> standard gas, which was pressurized in 29.5 L treated aluminum alloy cylinders (Scott-Marrin Inc.) fitted with high-  
168 purity, two-stage gas regulators, and calibrated with cylinders assigned by the Global Atmosphere Watch (GAW) CO  
169 Central Calibration Laboratory operated by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Earth System  
170 Research Laboratory (ESRL). NMVOCs were measured (only from 29 April to 21 May) using an online GC-MS/FID  
171 analysis system (TH-PKU 300B, Wuhan Tianhong Instrument Co. Ltd., China) at a 1-hour time resolution, with detection  
172 limits in the range of 0.004 to 0.066 ppb. Multipoint calibrations were performed using Photochemical Assessment  
173 Monitoring Stations (PAMS) standard mixture and TO-15 standard mixture (100 ppb, Spectra Gases Inc., New Jersey, USA).  
174 To account for the reactivity of different VOCs species, Propy-Equivalent VOCs concentrations were calculated as:

$$175 C_{Propy-Equiv}(i) = C(i) \frac{k_{OH}(i)}{k_{OH}(C_3H_6)}, \quad \text{Eq. (1)}$$

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177 where  $C(i)$  is the ppbC concentration of species  $i$  (calculated using ppb mixing ratios multiplied by carbon numbers of  
 178 species  $i$ ),  $k_{OH}(i)$  the reaction rate of species  $i$  with OH radicals (obtained from master chemical mechanism,  
 179 <http://mcm.york.ac.uk/MCM/>), and  $k_{OH}(C_3H_6)$  the reaction rate of propene with OH.  
 180 Photolysis rates (J values) were obtained using a Metcon CCD-spectrograph (Meteorologie consult GmbH, Germany),  
 181 whose receptor optics were mounted on top of the container at the height of 2 m. Conventional meteorological parameters  
 182 including temperature (T), relative humidity (RH), surface pressure (P), wind speed (WS) and wind direction (WD) were  
 183 recorded by an Automatic Weather Station. In addition, meteorological reanalysis data (ERA5) from the European Centre for  
 184 Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF) were used for complimentary analysis.

## 185 2.2 Backward trajectory analysis and PSCF calculations

186 The HYSPLIT model (version 5) from NOAA Air Resources Laboratory (Draxler and Hess, 1997; Draxler and Hess,  
 187 1998; Draxler, 1999) was used for backward trajectory calculations, with  $0.25^\circ$  resolution GFS data from the National Center  
 188 for Environmental Prediction (NCEP) adopted as input. The trajectory endpoint was set at 250 m above the ground level of  
 189 NMC station. 7-day (168 hours) backward trajectories were calculated at an hourly interval for the entire period of the  
 190 campaign.

191 The potential sources of high  $O_3$  and PAN were studied using the potential source contribution function (PSCF) analysis,  
 192 which has been widely applied to detect possible source regions (Ara Begum et al., 2005; Lucey et al., 2001; Zhou et al.,  
 193 2004). The PSCF on grid  $(i,j)$  is defined as:

$$194 PSCF = m(i,j)/n(i,j), \quad (1)$$

195 where  $m(i,j)$  is the residence time of a subset of trajectories, whereas  $n(i,j)$  is the residence time of all the trajectories in that  
 196 grid. Each trajectory was associated with  $O_3$  and PAN concentrations observed at its time of arrival. To pin out the potential  
 197 source regions for high  $O_3$  and PAN, the  $m(i,j)$  was calculated using the subset of trajectories that were associated with  $O_3$  or  
 198 PAN concentrations higher than their respective 75<sup>th</sup> percentiles.

199 Abnormally high PSCF values may be produced for certain grids with very small  $n(i,j)$  values, which would induce large  
 200 uncertainties. Thus, a weighting factor  $W(n_{ij})$  is introduced that was proposed by Zeng and Hopke (1989), giving grids with  
 201 few trajectories passing through less weight:

$$202 W(n_{ij}) = \begin{cases} 1.0, & n_{ij} > \bar{n}_{ij} \\ 0.7, & 0.1 \cdot \bar{n}_{ij} < n_{ij} \leq \bar{n}_{ij} \\ 0.4, & 0.05 \cdot \bar{n}_{ij} < n_{ij} \leq 0.1 \cdot \bar{n}_{ij} \\ 0.2, & n_{ij} \geq 0.05 \cdot \bar{n}_{ij} \end{cases}, \quad (2)$$

203 where  $\bar{n}_{ij}$  is the average number of  $n_{ij}$ .

204 The PSCF analysis was respectively performed for  $O_3$  and PAN, separately for spring and summer periods. Based on  
 205 meteorological variations, spring and summer periods were defined as 1 May to 15 June and 15 June to 31 July, respectively.  
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### 208 2.3 Box modelling of local photochemistry

209 The Master Chemical Mechanism (version 3.2) was used within the F0AM (version 3.1) box-model framework developed  
210 by Wolfe et al. (2016), to simulate the impacts of local photochemistry on O<sub>3</sub> and PAN and to evaluate how much of their  
211 variations could be explained through local photochemistry. Observation data of VOCs, NO<sub>2</sub>, J values and meteorological  
212 parameters were either averaged or interpolated into 10-minute averages and used as constraints in the model. Model  
213 simulations were only performed for the period from 1 to 21 May, when VOCs observation data were available. To evaluate  
214 local O<sub>3</sub> and PAN formation, three sets of simulations were performed for each, respectively using measurement constraints  
215 on OVOCs, NO<sub>2</sub> or both of them. In O<sub>3</sub> simulation cases, PAN was constrained by observations, while in PAN simulations  
216 O<sub>3</sub> was constrained. Daytime O<sub>3</sub> and PAN increments ( $\Delta O_{3,mod}$  and  $\Delta PAN_{mod}$ ) were calculated and compared against  
217 observed ones ( $\Delta O_{3,obs}$  and  $\Delta PAN_{obs}$ ), with their ratios used to reflect how much modelled local photochemistry can explain  
218 observed daytime increases in O<sub>3</sub> and PAN. Simulated O<sub>3</sub> and PAN net formation rates in distinct modelling scenarios were  
219 intercompared and to evaluated the sensitivity of their formation to VOCs and NO<sub>x</sub> concentrations.

220

### 221 2.4 Impact of stratospheric-tropospheric exchange

222 A Y index was defined as the ratio between normalized O<sub>3</sub> and water vapor concentrations, calculated using the following  
223 equation:

$$224 Y_{ind} = \frac{O_3/\overline{O_3}}{H_2O/\overline{H_2O}} \quad \text{Eq. (3)}$$

225 The Y index adopted in previous studies for the identification of stratospheric air intrusions has additionally divided Eq. (3)  
226 by normalized CO concentrations (Ma et al., 2014). Due to the lack of CO measurements after 2 July, the Y index was  
227 modified to the current form (in Eq. 3), which compared well with those calculated when incorporating normalized CO  
228 concentrations (Fig. S1), since CO revealed very small variability during the entire observation period.

229 Additionally, O<sub>3</sub> mass mixing ratios from the ERA5 hourly reanalysis dataset were converted to volume mixing ratios and  
230 applied in the investigation of STE impacts, since the ERA5 data are simulated with simple stratospheric O<sub>3</sub> chemistry  
231 consideration and thus mainly represents the physical transport of stratospheric O<sub>3</sub> (Sprenger and Wernli, 2003).  
232 Additionally, ERA5 O<sub>3</sub> data has been verified to be well representative of observed O<sub>3</sub> profiles and ground concentration  
233 levels at remote polar regions (Wang et al., 2021), indicating that it can well represent stratospheric O<sub>3</sub> and the influence of  
234 its transport.

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## 236 3 Results and discussions

### 237 3.1 Variational characteristics of O<sub>3</sub>, PAN and their precursors

238 The time series of observed O<sub>3</sub>, PAN, NO<sub>2</sub>, CO, photolysis rates of O<sub>3</sub> (jO<sup>1</sup>D) and NO<sub>2</sub> (jNO<sub>2</sub>), as well as meteorological  
239 parameters observed at NMC from 1 May to 31 July are displayed in Figure 2. From 1 May to 15 June (defined hereafter as  
240 the spring period), NMC experienced cold temperatures, strong winds, and dry conditions with low relative humidity (RH)  
241 and hardly any precipitation except for three small snow events. While during 15 June to 31 July (defined hereafter as the  
242 summer period), temperatures increased, average wind speeds were smaller and frequent precipitation events occurred under  
243 the influence of the Asian summer monsoon (Fig. 2a, Table 1). Despite more frequent precipitation events, observed average  
244 daytime photolysis rates were similar between spring and summer periods.

245 Under such meteorological variations, O<sub>3</sub> and PAN exhibited higher average concentrations in the spring (59.8±13.4 and  
246 0.27±0.08 ppb) and lower ones in the summer period (53.6±13.2 and 0.20±0.05 ppb), with O<sub>3</sub> levels being overall in  
247 accordance with previous observations (Xu et al., 2018b; Yin et al., 2017), while PAN levels were significantly lower than  
248 those observed in 2012 (Xu et al., 2018b). VOCs concentrations were only obtained for the first half of the spring period,  
249 reaching average concentrations of 4.9±3.3 Propy-Equiv. ppbC (10.5±3.2 ppb), to which OVOCs contributed 61±12%  
250 (reaching 2.5±2.2 Propy-Equiv. ppbC on average), followed by alkenes (0.6±0.6 Propy-Equiv. ppbC), aromatics (0.6±1.3  
251 Propy-Equiv. ppbC) and alkanes (0.5±0.5 Propy-Equiv. ppbC), which made up similar fractions (14±6%, 13±7%, and  
252 11±4%, respectively), while other components (including alkynes, halogenated VOCs and nitriles) had negligible impacts

253 (1±1%) on the overall VOC concentration and reactivity (Fig. S2). Alkanes, alkenes and aromatics observed at the Dinghu  
254 mountain (1000 m a.s.l.) background site in southern China were 48, 40 and 29 times of those observed at the Nam Co site  
255 (Wu et al., 2016). Those in the Rocky Mountain National Park (3498 m a.s.l.) were 1.2, 3.6 and 1.3 times of those observed  
256 in this study (Benedict et al., 2019), while those observed during summertime (1994-1996) were 0.9, 1.4 and 1.6 times of that  
257 those in Nam Co (Ma et al., 2002), revealing the extremely low primary VOCs emissions at our site. However, OVOCs  
258 concentrations at Nam Co were 1.3 times of those observed in the Rocky Mountains, while only 0.24 times of those  
259 previously observed at Mt. Waliguan (Mu et al., 2007), indicating that air masses in the TP were strongly photochemically  
260 aged due to the strong radiation and high atmospheric oxidative capacity at high altitudes, with additional influences from  
261 natural sources such as plant emissions or animal excrement (mostly from yak and sheep). At Nam Co, concentrations of  
262 isoprene and its oxidation products (e.g. MVK and MACR) were very low (0.034 ppb in total), with OVOCs being mostly  
263 dominated by formaldehyde, acetaldehyde and acetone (3.2 ppb in total), which have shown elevated concentrations over  
264 animal excrement (Mu et al., 2007). While daytime concentrations of OVOCs and alkenes were significantly higher than  
265 those during nighttime, other VOCs species did not display much day-night discrepancy.

266 NO<sub>2</sub> revealed averaged concentrations 0.12±0.05 and 0.09±0.05 ppb during spring and summer periods, respectively, with  
267 no evident day to night differences. NO<sub>x</sub> levels were only scarcely reported for remote high-altitude locations, mainly due to  
268 instrument limitations. NO<sub>2</sub> levels were only slightly higher than the average NO<sub>2</sub> and NO level reported at Mt. Waliguan

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277 during summer 1994-1996 ( $0.048\pm 0.017$  ppb) based on filter-pack sampling and spring 2003 ( $0.043\pm 0.069$  ppb) based on  
278 chemiluminescence (Ma et al., 2002; Wang et al., 2006). Since Nam Co is located far away from anthropogenic emission  
279 sources,  $\text{NO}_x$  levels here are mainly determined by natural emissions, such as those from soil microbial activities or lightning  
280 processes. Additionally, a latest study has proposed that lakes in the TP are strong  $\text{NO}_x$  emission sources of  $\text{NO}_x$  (Kong et al.,  
281 2022). Averaged diurnal variations of  $\text{O}_3$  and PAN resembled each other (Figs. 3a1-2), both revealing decreases after sunset,  
282 reaching daily minimum concentrations near 7:00 Beijing Local Time (LT) and increasing quickly after sunrise simultaneous  
283 to PBL height (PBLH, Figs. 3b1-2) and exhibiting a flat plateau afterwards. Daily minimum  $\text{O}_3$  concentrations were  
284  $52.8\pm 10.9$  and  $48.3\pm 12.8$  ppb, while those of PAN were  $0.21\pm 0.06$  and  $0.17\pm 0.04$  ppb during spring and summer,  
285 respectively. Daily maximum  $\text{O}_3$  reached  $74.3\pm 6.7$  and  $63.5\pm 13.0$  ppb, while those of PAN reached  $0.31\pm 0.08$  and  
286  $0.22\pm 0.06$  ppb during spring and summer, respectively. Thus,  $\text{O}_3$  and PAN both revealed higher levels in spring and lower  
287 ones in summer, however, PAN concentrations have decreased more significantly than  $\text{O}_3$  (26% versus 10%), revealing a  
288 very flat and broad plateau during the day. OVOCs, aromatics and alkenes determined the variations of VOCs, with OVOCs  
289 and alkenes displaying diel variations similar to those of  $\text{O}_3$  and PAN, revealing increases from 7:00 to 9:00 LT, fluctuating  
290 around its daily maximum value over daytime and decreasing after 17:00 LT (Figs. 3b1-2).  $\text{NO}_2$  was typically higher during  
291 nighttime and lower during daytime, which is caused by combined effects of weakened dilution under nighttime shallow  
292 boundary layers, natural and anthropogenic  $\text{NO}_x$  emissions, as well as chemical transformations. Additionally, springtime  
293  $\text{NO}_2$  concentrations ( $0.12\pm 0.04$  ppb) were higher than those during the summer period ( $0.09\pm 0.05$  ppb, Figs. 3c1-2). CO,  
294 however, revealed only slightly higher concentrations during the summer period ( $107\pm 26$  and  $117\pm 29$  ppb in spring and  
295 summer, respectively), staying overall flat during the day, without any diurnal variations (Figs. 3c1-2). Both RH and  
296 absolute water vapor concentrations were higher during the summer period. RH revealed a diurnal maximum by 7:00 LT  
297 during both periods, decreased rapidly after sunrise and reached its diurnal minimum at 16:00 and 18:00 LT in spring and  
298 summer, respectively (Fig. 3e1-2). Water vapor, however, increased further after sunrise, possibly due to surface evaporation  
299 processes of frost and dew during the morning. While the diurnal peak in photolysis rates were similar between spring and  
300 summer periods, the averaged diurnal variations displayed a narrower peak during summer, especially for  $\text{jNO}_2$ , due to more  
301 frequent precipitation and higher cloud coverage.

302 The day-to-day evolution of diurnal  $\text{O}_3$  and PAN variations as well as those of winds and PBLH are more clearly displayed  
303 by Figs. 4). Downward winds were strongest during the afternoon under high PBLH (Figs. 4a,d). Due to the local  
304 topography with the NMC Lake to its west and north and the Nyainqentanglha Mountains to its south, the site was  
305 susceptible to both influences from land-lake and mountain-valley breezes. Accordingly, local surface winds displayed clear  
306 diurnal variations with southeasterly nighttime winds shifting to northwesterly winds during daytime (Figs. S3b-d, Fig. S3 is  
307 the same as Fig. 4, with winds replaced by 2 m wind measurements). 550 hPa winds from ERA5 over the  $0.25^\circ$  grid  
308 containing NMC station (representing near surface conditions, since surface pressure was on average  $573\pm 2$  hPa) revealed  
309 stronger diurnal variations in zonal winds (Fig. 4b), overall agreeing with variations in surface winds, while meridional

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317 winds were dominated by southerly wind directions (Fig. 4c), with occasional changes to northerly winds, suggesting that  
318 local circulations had stronger impacts on zonal winds.

319 Broad peaks in O<sub>3</sub> often lasted until late evening hours, while nighttime O<sub>3</sub> frequently revealed increases under westerly  
320 winds and could reach daytime concentration levels, which can only be attributed to transport processes. High nighttime O<sub>3</sub>  
321 was not always accompanied by simultaneous PAN increases, while vice versa, elevated nighttime PAN was also not always  
322 synchronized with those of O<sub>3</sub>, indicating that they might have originated from distinct sources and processes. O<sub>3</sub> levels were  
323 continuously high throughout the spring period, especially during 6-13 May. Despite overall lower levels in the summer  
324 period, two O<sub>3</sub> episodes occurred during 7-8 July and 24-25 July, respectively, exhibiting the highest concentrations (daily  
325 maximum concentrations ranging from 85.9 to 91.9 ppb) observed during the entire campaign (Fig. 2a, Fig. 4e). Compared  
326 to O<sub>3</sub>, PAN displayed much larger day to day variability, with an evident high PAN episode occurring from 13 to 16 May  
327 (0.42±0.08 ppb on average) under southeasterly winds from aloft (Fig. 4f). Summertime PAN was distinctly lower than that  
328 during spring season, with no increases detected during the two high O<sub>3</sub> episodes.

329 Overall, while O<sub>3</sub> and PAN revealed highly similar average diurnal variation patterns, their temporal variations often differed  
330 from each other, suggesting that they were determined by distinct transport or formation processes, which will be further  
331 investigated in the following sections.

332

### 333 3.2 Impact of local circulation

334 In previous studies, diurnal variations in O<sub>3</sub> and PAN were mainly attributed to local circulations, particularly the  
335 development of the PBL. At pristine mountain sites such as WLG, surface O<sub>3</sub> was influenced by free tropospheric air during  
336 nighttime and by boundary layer air masses during daytime, which resulted in a diurnal cycle with lower daytime and higher  
337 nighttime O<sub>3</sub> with very small diurnal variation amplitudes. Despite its high altitudes, NMC is located at the foot of the  
338 northern Nyainqêntanglha Mountains, and thus experienced local circulation distinct from those at WLG. Free tropospheric  
339 air was suggested to be richer in O<sub>3</sub> and PAN concentrations and was mixed down upon the rapid development of the  
340 convective boundary layer (CBL) after sunrise, while O<sub>3</sub> and PAN concentrations decreased upon the establishment of the  
341 nocturnal boundary layer (NBL), due to the dominance of local boundary layer air masses during nighttime, which were low  
342 in O<sub>3</sub> and PAN, since barely any surface O<sub>3</sub> and PAN precursor emission sources existed at NMC, added by effects of dry  
343 deposition (Xu et al., 2018b). The broad O<sub>3</sub> peaks that often lasted until late evenings and the frequent events of elevated  
344 nighttime O<sub>3</sub> (occurrence frequency of 38%, Fig. 4e) both supported the idea that under favorable meteorological conditions,  
345 high surface O<sub>3</sub> levels after sunlight hours could be sustained by continuous downmixing of free tropospheric air (average  
346 daily maximum nighttime O<sub>3</sub> reaching 67.6±10.1 and 62.9±6.4 ppb during spring and summer, respectively). The fact that  
347 nighttime O<sub>3</sub> could reach the same level as noontime O<sub>3</sub> is why previous studies suggested that physical transport was  
348 determining O<sub>3</sub> variations at NMC, while photochemistry played a minor role.

349 Diurnal variations of O<sub>3</sub> and PAN followed their averaged diel pattern on 72% and 75% out of the days with valid records,  
350 respectively. While O<sub>3</sub> diurnal cycles revealed more days with such daytime increases during summer (69% in spring vs. 74%

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353 in summer), PAN conformed better to its averaged diurnal cycle in spring (90% in spring vs. 63% in summer), suggesting  
354 that despite being under the same meteorological influences and despite highly similar average diurnal concentration profiles,  
355 O<sub>3</sub> and PAN often revealed different variations. O<sub>3</sub> and PAN increasing rates (on days with daytime increases) between 7:30  
356 and 10:30 LT both displayed linear correlations to temperature increasing rates ( $r=0.45$  and  $0.52$  for O<sub>3</sub> and PAN,  
357 respectively. Fig. S4), confirming again that their morning increases were closely connected to boundary layer development  
358 upon radiative heating. Prenoon (6:00 to 12:00 LT) O<sub>3</sub> concentrations also increased with PBLH during both spring (Fig. 5a)  
359 and summer (Fig. 5b), however, revealing slightly distinct slopes during distinct seasons. Weaker prenoon winds that mainly  
360 occurred during early morning under low PBLH conditions were associated with evidently lower O<sub>3</sub> concentrations. During  
361 early morning hours when PBLH was still low, strong winds that mostly came from the W-NW direction were associated  
362 with O<sub>3</sub> concentrations as high as those observed during noontime in the spring period (Fig. 5a). During the afternoon (12:00  
363 to 18:00 LT), when the CBL has fully established, O<sub>3</sub> hardly displayed any more variation with PBLH (Fig. S5a), indicating  
364 that once boundary layer and free tropospheric air was fully mixed, O<sub>3</sub> did not further increase with PBLH. In the summer  
365 period, W-NW winds were less frequent and O<sub>3</sub> associated with these winds only increased weakly with PBLH, whereas N-  
366 NE winds resulted in more significant rise in O<sub>3</sub> over prenoon hours. Summertime afternoon PBLH was significantly lower  
367 than during spring due to frequent cloudy and rainy conditions, mostly falling into the range of 0.5-1.5 km (Fig. S5b). O<sub>3</sub> still  
368 increased with PBLH, however, revealing large variability under the same PBLH, indicating that PBLH was not the  
369 deterministic factor for afternoon O<sub>3</sub> levels. PAN did not replicate the variation of O<sub>3</sub> with PBLH during prenoon hours,  
370 displaying large variability at lower PBLH and moderate concentration levels under high PBLH. This suggests that free  
371 tropospheric O<sub>3</sub> levels were consistently and significantly higher than boundary layer O<sub>3</sub> levels, indicating for weak surface  
372 formation of O<sub>3</sub> (further discussed in Sect. 3.3), which resulted in significant increases in observed surface O<sub>3</sub> upon down  
373 mixing. Whereas free tropospheric PAN or the surface formation of PAN might have had higher variability, which resulted  
374 in largely different responses of PAN with the down mixing of free tropospheric air, Intensive downmixing for free  
375 tropospheric air under high PBLH might have even diluted boundary layer PAN concentrations.

376 To investigate what has caused the discrepancies in free tropospheric O<sub>3</sub> and PAN over NMC, the variations of surface O<sub>3</sub>  
377 and PAN with free tropospheric (500-550 hPa) winds during spring and summer are depicted in Fig. 6. At lower wind speeds,  
378 both O<sub>3</sub> and PAN typically revealed lower concentrations. With increasing wind speeds, high concentrations of O<sub>3</sub> and PAN  
379 were associated with distinct wind directions, in both spring and summer. During springtime, high concentrations of O<sub>3</sub> and  
380 PAN both occurred with W winds, however, low O<sub>3</sub> and high PAN concentrations were detected under strong S winds.  
381 During summertime, high O<sub>3</sub> dominantly occurred with N-NE winds, while PAN mainly revealed elevated concentrations  
382 under S-SW winds. The distinct variation of O<sub>3</sub> and PAN with wind speed and wind direction suggests that the  
383 concentrations of both gases might have been impacted by different long-range transport processes, which will be  
384 investigated in the next section.

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### 386 3.3 Impact of inter-regional transport and stratospheric-tropospheric exchange

388 Potential influence of pollution transport from India and other south Asian countries have been previously reported, which  
389 had potential impacts on the transport of PAN (Xu et al., 2018b). However, the source regions of O<sub>3</sub> and PAN in the TP have  
390 not been systematically investigated before. NO<sub>2</sub> and CO columns from TROPOMI revealed high concentrations in South  
391 Asian regions south of the TP contrasting to the pristine environment within the TP (Fig. 7). CO was more severe and  
392 widespread outside of the TP during the spring period, while NO<sub>2</sub> pollution was more severe during the summer period both  
393 in South Asia and to the east of the TP in China. Inside the TP, NO<sub>2</sub> and CO columns were both higher during the summer  
394 period, suggesting that summertime atmospheric circulations might have been more favorable for pollution transport in to the  
395 TP. The high-altitude Himalaya mountains along the southern border of the TP is highly effective in blocking out direct  
396 intrusion of South Asian pollution, leading mostly to pollutant accumulation on its southern slope. High resolution satellite  
397 observations clearly reveal high NO<sub>2</sub> and CO along mountain and river valleys, indicating that pollution might have  
398 transported into the TP through these passageways. Belts of elevated CO extend from the western side (Kashmir) to the  
399 southeastern corner of the TP, indicating that pollution from South Asia could not directly cross over the Himalayas,  
400 especially not over those regions with very high altitudes, but had entered the TP by crossing either to its west or southeast.  
401 To further identify possible source regions for high O<sub>3</sub> and PAN at NMC station, the PSCF for both gases were calculated  
402 for spring and summer, respectively (Fig. 8). Spring time high O<sub>3</sub> concentrations were mainly associated with westerly  
403 trajectories, which crossed over North India and Nepal before arriving at NMC (Fig. 8a). Although trajectories associated  
404 with high springtime O<sub>3</sub> crossed over vast areas outside the southern TP border, they mainly entered the TP from two  
405 passageways, one from the west and another from the southeast (near the border of Bhutan). Before entering the TP, the  
406 majority of the [air masses](#) associated with high O<sub>3</sub> came from higher altitudes (> 6 km), diving downwards to heights of 3-  
407 6 km or even < 3 km near the southern border of the TP, and then entering the TP mainly from the west or south (Figs. 9a1-  
408 3). Aside from that, trajectories from the NW mostly travelling within 0-6 km (above ground level) were also associated  
409 with high springtime O<sub>3</sub>. High springtime PAN, however, was only associated with trajectories crossing over South Asia and  
410 entering the TP from the southeastern border. In addition, [air masses](#) from the Indian Ocean that travelled within 0-3 km and  
411 crossed over Bangladesh and Bhutan were also associated with high PAN, while not with high O<sub>3</sub> (Fig. 8b and Figs. 9b1-3).  
412 During summer, the PSCF of O<sub>3</sub> revealed a largely different distribution from that in spring. High altitude westerly [air](#)  
413 [masses](#) that entered the TP from the west in spring have not been seen in summer, while [air masses](#) sweeping along the  
414 southern border of the TP (Nepal and northern India) at altitudes below 6 km and approaching NMC from its south were still  
415 partly associated with high O<sub>3</sub> during summer (Fig. 8c and Figs. 9c1-3). Southerly low altitude (0-3 km) maritime [air masses](#)  
416 that travelled over Bangladesh and Bhutan before entering the TP were also sometimes linked to high O<sub>3</sub> at NMC. However,  
417 the major summertime O<sub>3</sub> source regions were located to the north of NMC, including southern Xinjiang province, Northern  
418 Tibet and western Qinghai Province (Fig. 8c). High O<sub>3</sub> was mostly associated with low altitude [air masses](#) from the NW and  
419 N directions (Fig. 9c1). Summertime PAN was only rarely associated with northerly [air masses](#), but mostly linked to  
420 westerly trajectories that travel along the southern TP border (mostly within 0-3 km, small parts within 3-6 km altitude, Figs.  
421 9d1-2) and southerly trajectories travelling over Bangladesh and Bhutan within 3 km altitude (Fig. 9d1).

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429 Thus, O<sub>3</sub> and PAN revealed distinct source regions in both spring and summer, while they also shared some common source  
430 regions. This explains why despite highly similar diel variation patterns, the day-to-day variation was often different between  
431 the two [photochemical pollutants](#). Overall, springtime synoptic conditions resulted in a relatively monotone origin of [air](#)  
432 [masses](#) at NMC, mostly favoring the subsidence of high altitude [air masses](#) under westerly airflows, which were rich in both  
433 O<sub>3</sub> and PAN. With the onset of the South and East Asian Monsoon during summer, circulations drastically changed and  
434 resulted in influences of various distinct airmass origins at NMC. These vastly different airmass origins also exhibited  
435 completely different O<sub>3</sub> levels, with those originated in the north exhibiting even higher O<sub>3</sub> levels than those observed during  
436 springtime and southerly [air masses](#) revealing much lower O<sub>3</sub> levels than during springtime. PAN, however, was more linked  
437 to westerly and southerly [air masses](#) during summer.

438 Aside from changes in air mass origins at NMC, seasonal variations in large scale synoptic conditions were also  
439 deterministic of STE and the overall spatial distribution of O<sub>3</sub>. Since the ERA5 reanalysis data has only considered  
440 simplified stratospheric O<sub>3</sub> chemistry and the physical transport of O<sub>3</sub>, the O<sub>3</sub> mixing ratio in the ERA5 dataset is a good  
441 indicator for the investigation of stratospheric influences. During the spring period, the averaged ERA5 500 hPa O<sub>3</sub> revealed  
442 relatively lower mixing ratios in the TP region (especially in southeast TP) and higher mixing ratios outside the TP in the  
443 latitude band between 15 and 25°N. As was shown in previous studies, the downward transport of stratospheric O<sub>3</sub> and its  
444 distribution is closely linked to the location of the subtropical jet stream (Xu et al., 2018a), which is typically located above  
445 the TP during the spring period (Fig. 10c1). Due to large scale circulations, lower stratospheric O<sub>3</sub> is typically high in polar  
446 regions, decreasing with latitude and reaching its lowest level in the equatorial belt (Fig. 10c1). Deep stratospheric intrusion  
447 and O<sub>3</sub> subsidence often occur along the lower edge of the subtropical jet stream, which is a slope extending from the lower  
448 stratosphere (150 hPa) between 38 to 42°N down to the middle or upper troposphere below 28°N. STE processes are  
449 especially promoted by fronts, which are accompanied by large scale subsidence of cold air from above (Stohl et al., 2003).  
450 STE mostly increased the O<sub>3</sub> levels in Southeast Asia to the west and south of the TP, which in turn could enhance O<sub>3</sub> at  
451 NMC through the westerly airmass transport passage (Figs. S6). Direct STE influence was also frequently observed during  
452 the spring period (on 5-8, 13, 23, 31 May and 3, 5 and 9 Jun, Figs. S7-13), with NMC frequently located near low pressure  
453 troughs behind cold fronts. These STE events were typically associated with high O<sub>3</sub> and low PAN concentrations, except  
454 for the 13 May, when stratospheric O<sub>3</sub> was transported to lower latitudes and then back to NMC via southwesterly winds,  
455 which also carried along high PAN concentrations, suggesting that NMC experienced aged stratospheric [air masses](#). During  
456 the summer period, with the northward shift of the subtropical jet stream, the high lower stratospheric O<sub>3</sub> concentrations  
457 were also confined within higher latitudes. 500 hPa ERA5 O<sub>3</sub> revealed a clearly distinct distribution from that during spring,  
458 displaying higher O<sub>3</sub> levels north of NMC (>30 °N) and much lower ones in the tropical region. Thus, under the prevailing  
459 southerly winds during the summer season, [air masses](#) with lower stratospheric O<sub>3</sub> contents are transported to NMC.  
460 However, during two episodes on 7-9 and 21-25 Jul, northerly cold [air masses](#) in front of 500 hPa high pressure systems over  
461 the TP brought stratospheric O<sub>3</sub> down to the norther TP regions and transported them within lower altitudes to NMC,

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470 resulting in surface O<sub>3</sub> levels even higher than those during springtime (Figs. S14-15), while PAN did not reveal significant  
471 increases.

472 Statistically, O<sub>3,ERA5</sub> only explained 0.1% of the observed daytime O<sub>3</sub> day-to-day variability during spring ( $r=0.033$ ),  
473 however, explained 22% of the summertime O<sub>3,NMC</sub> variability ( $r=0.47$ ), contributing on average 10% during the entire  
474 observation period (Fig. S16), which was overall in accordance with previous results reported in Yin et al. (2017). It is also  
475 worth noting that observed O<sub>3</sub> at NMC was typically higher than the 550 hPa ERA5 O<sub>3</sub> mixing ratio, especially during spring  
476 and early summer (Fig. 10d). During the entire observation, stratospheric O<sub>3</sub> transport explained 83% of the observed  
477 daytime O<sub>3</sub> concentration (O<sub>3,ERA5</sub>/O<sub>3,NMC</sub>), with a lower contribution during spring (77%) and a higher one during summer  
478 (88%). This suggests that despite the small contributions of STE to the day-to-day variability of observed O<sub>3</sub>, the overall  
479 daytime O<sub>3</sub> concentration was mainly maintained by the long-range transport of stratospheric O<sub>3</sub> (as opposed to direct strike  
480 of stratospheric O<sub>3</sub> during deep STE intrusions into the PBL). Additionally, the unexplained O<sub>3</sub> concentration might indicate  
481 for photochemical O<sub>3</sub> formation aside from pure physical transport. However, whether it was caused by local photochemical  
482 production or the long-range transport of photochemically produced O<sub>3</sub> still requires further investigation.

483

### 484 | 3.4 Impact of local photochemistry

485 As was already manifested, O<sub>3</sub> has its natural sources and is more affected by STE processes at high altitude locations such  
486 as NMC. O<sub>3</sub> is highly reactive and can be easily depleted in regions with high NO<sub>x</sub> and VOCs emissions, however has a  
487 relatively longer lifetime in pristine background areas and can be directly or indirectly transported (transport of its precursors)  
488 over large distances, affecting O<sub>3</sub> levels at remote locations (Xu et al., 2018a). The impact of local photochemistry on the  
489 budget of O<sub>3</sub>, however, was often under debate in previous studies conducted in background areas of the TP. Under such  
490 pristine atmospheric conditions, it was manifested that O<sub>3</sub> production was strongly NO<sub>x</sub>-limited, with NO<sub>x</sub> concentrations  
491 being the key factor determining whether O<sub>3</sub> was net produced or destructed in local photochemistry (Ma et al., 2002).  
492 However, the lower detection limit and precision of commercial instruments can hardly meet the needs for NO<sub>x</sub>  
493 measurements in such clean environments, which made it difficult to determine whether there has been net O<sub>3</sub> formation. At  
494 higher altitudes, PAN has a long lifetime and can be transported over long distances. PAN measurements have been  
495 previously conducted at Mt. Waliguan (Northeastern TP) in 2006 (Xue et al., 2011) and at NMC station in the springs and  
496 summers of 2011 and 2012 (Xu et al., 2018b). At both sites, PAN contributed substantially to reactive nitrogen and acted as  
497 a good indicator for regional and long-range transport of polluted air plumes. The photochemical formation of PAN requires  
498 the presence of peroxy acetyl radical and NO<sub>2</sub>. The former is only formed in photochemical reactions of its precursor  
499 OVOCs, which are predominantly emitted within the boundary layer, while the latter is also mostly emitted near surface,  
500 with the exception of lightning processes. Overall, the formation of PAN in comparison with O<sub>3</sub> is more likely to occur near  
501 surface and has no natural sources. Nevertheless, the impact of local PAN formation versus those of transport to observed  
502 concentration levels was not discussed before due to the lack of its precursor measurements.

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505 To evaluate the contribution of local photochemistry to observed O<sub>3</sub> and PAN, simulations were performed using an MCM-  
506 based box model for the period of 1 to 21 May, when VOCs measurements were available. Observed O<sub>3</sub> revealed much  
507 larger fluctuations than those obtained from all three simulation scenarios, which respectively used measurement constraints  
508 on OVOCs, NO<sub>2</sub> or both of them (Fig. 11a). With constraints on NO<sub>2</sub>, modelling results revealed significant daytime  
509 increases, indicating positive local net photochemical formation of O<sub>3</sub> (Fig. 12a). However, when NO<sub>2</sub> was unconstrained,  
510 modelled O<sub>3</sub> concentrations were significantly lower and displayed very small variability, with very small positive net O<sub>3</sub>  
511 production during the morning and mostly negative ones during the day (Fig. 12a). Nevertheless, none of the simulations  
512 could account for the large variability and steep morning increases within observed O<sub>3</sub>, with OVOCs and NO<sub>2</sub> both  
513 constrained by measurements, modelling results could only explain 28±19% (5-66%) of the observed daytime increases (Fig.  
514 11b), while even less could be explained when only OVOCs or NO<sub>2</sub> was constrained (3±6% and 21±14%, respectively).  
515 Days with relatively stronger local photochemical O<sub>3</sub> formation were not necessary days with high observed O<sub>3</sub>. In turn, days  
516 with high O<sub>3</sub> were also often associated with weak photochemical net O<sub>3</sub> formation. This indicates that physical transport  
517 and mixing processes were determinative of O<sub>3</sub> diel cycle as well as the day-to-day O<sub>3</sub> variability, while local  
518 photochemistry further added to the daytime O<sub>3</sub> burden. Additionally, intercomparison among simulations also confirmed  
519 the high sensitivity of O<sub>3</sub> formation towards NO<sub>x</sub> and the relatively weaker sensitivity to VOCs in such a pristine  
520 environment.

521 Simulated PAN levels under NO<sub>2</sub> constraints were, however, significantly higher than observed PAN concentrations,  
522 especially when OVOCs and NO<sub>2</sub> were both constrained. However, when NO<sub>2</sub> was unconstrained, PAN concentrations were  
523 mostly underestimated by simulations. Thermal decomposition of PAN was very weak under low springtime temperatures  
524 and net photochemical PAN formation rates were positive under all simulation scenarios, however, only NO<sub>2</sub> constrained  
525 cases revealed strong formation throughout daytime hours (08:00-20:00 LT) while unconstrained NO<sub>2</sub> simulations only  
526 displayed a very weak morning time (07:00-9:00 LT) photochemical formation. Only NO<sub>2</sub>-constrained simulations  
527 overestimated PAN concentrations by a factor of 1.8 on average, however, could reproduce observed daytime PAN  
528 increments by 94±84%. Additionally, days with high simulated PAN photochemical production (4-6 and 13-17 May)  
529 corresponded to episodes with elevated observed PAN concentrations, which indicates that photochemical formation of PAN  
530 were determinative of its day-to-day variability. Compared to O<sub>3</sub>, PAN was sensitive to concentrations of both OVOCs and  
531 NO<sub>2</sub>, since some of the OVOCs are direct precursors of PA radicals, which combine with NO<sub>2</sub> in PAN formation. According  
532 to modelling results in Fig. S17, acetaldehyde oxidation contributed majorly to PA radical formation at Nam Co (71.8%),  
533 followed by methylglyoxal (9.0%) and biacetyl (5.1%). Still, NO<sub>2</sub> was more decisive of the overall O<sub>3</sub> and PAN production,  
534 since without its constraint, O<sub>3</sub> net loss and negligible PAN net formation would be yielded.

535 It should also be noted that both observed O<sub>3</sub> and PAN were not necessarily formed within the local boundary layer, since  
536 springtime winds in the TP were very strong, especially during daytime. Due to its relatively long lifetime, PAN might have  
537 been formed on the transport pathway to NMC, while O<sub>3</sub> might undergo both destruction and production during air mass  
538 transport. This might partly explain why PAN formation was overestimated by simulations representing surface conditions.

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543 But overall, it could be concluded that O<sub>3</sub> was mainly determined by physical transport, particularly STE processes, while  
544 PAN was largely determined by local photochemistry and that along the transport passageway. Fresh STE plumes reaching  
545 NMC from the north where PAN concentrations result in depleted surface PAN, while relatively aged STE air masses  
546 crossing over polluted regions of Indo-Gigantic Plain led to simultaneous enrichment in surface O<sub>3</sub> and PAN. The high  
547 sensitivity of O<sub>3</sub> and PAN formation towards NO<sub>x</sub> indicates that increased natural emission of NO<sub>x</sub> under global warming,  
548 enhanced anthropogenic emissions of NO<sub>x</sub> within the TP region due to the development of highways and transportation as  
549 well as increased transport input from South Asia might greatly enhance O<sub>3</sub> and PAN formation in background regions,  
550 while increased VOCs emissions and regional transport promotes PAN formation more than that of O<sub>3</sub>.

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#### 552 4 Conclusions and implications

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553 In this study, continuous measurements of O<sub>3</sub> and PAN as well as its precursors were conducted during the spring and  
554 summer season at a very pristine high-altitude site in the southern TP (NMC station) to investigate the factors determining  
555 their variations. Due to the local topography, surface observations at NMC reflect free tropospheric air conditions during  
556 daytime and nocturnal boundary layer conditions during nighttime. Both O<sub>3</sub> and PAN revealed steep increases after sunrise  
557 and reached a flat plateau during daytime. While average diurnal variations of O<sub>3</sub> and PAN highly resembled each other,  
558 their day-to-day variations were often different, suggesting that they might have been influenced by distinct physicochemical  
559 processes.

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560 Backward trajectory modelling and PSCF analysis revealed distinct source regions connected to high O<sub>3</sub> and PAN. During  
561 spring, air masses rich in O<sub>3</sub> were mainly associated with high altitude westerly air masses that either entered the TP from  
562 the west or from the south, while PAN was only rich in westerly air masses that transported along the polluted regions in  
563 North India and Nepal before entering the TP from the south or in southerly air masses of maritime origin that crossed over  
564 polluted South Asian regions before entering the TP. During the summer monsoon season, air masses from the north were  
565 associated with the highest O<sub>3</sub> levels, while westerly and southerly air masses revealed lower O<sub>3</sub> levels. Elevated PAN  
566 concentrations, however, were still linked to westerly and southerly air masses crossing over polluted South Asian regions.  
567 O<sub>3</sub> at NMC was strongly influenced by STE, which brought down high stratospheric O<sub>3</sub> concentrations from the southwest  
568 route during spring and from the northwest during summer, explaining 77% and 88% of the observed O<sub>3</sub> level in spring and  
569 summer, respectively. PAN concentrations were, however, typically lower in air masses with strong stratospheric influence,  
570 except if they transported over polluted regions south of the TP.

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571 Photochemistry resulted in positive net formation of both O<sub>3</sub> and PAN. While only 28±19% of the observed daytime growth  
572 in O<sub>3</sub> could be explained by photochemical simulations, the daytime growth of PAN was highly overestimated by the model  
573 if OVOCs and NO<sub>2</sub> were both constrained. Photochemistry was not the factor determining the day-to-day variability of O<sub>3</sub>,  
574 however, explained observed PAN variabilities well. While both O<sub>3</sub> and PAN formation were highly sensitive to NO<sub>x</sub> levels,  
575 PAN was also quite sensitive to VOCs concentrations. Therefore, future concentrations of O<sub>3</sub> and PAN over the TP may be  
576 significantly impacted by increases in the concentrations of NO<sub>x</sub>, VOCs, and other precursors (Cui et al., 2016), which either

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591 originate from the surrounding regions (in particular South Asia) or from anthropogenic and natural sources within the TP.  
592 Special attention should be **paid** to PAN, which is mostly determined by photochemical processes sensitive to both NO<sub>x</sub> and  
593 VOCs and can be transported over very long distances.

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595 **Data availability.** The data used in this study are available on the @Tibet ftp server (<http://at-tibet.quickconnect.cn/>) and  
596 can be applied for upon request to the corresponding authors ([zhanggen@cma.gov.cn](mailto:zhanggen@cma.gov.cn) and [c.ye@pku.edu.cn](mailto:c.ye@pku.edu.cn))

597  
598 **Author contributions.** WX and CY designed the experiment and led the research. WX, GZ, CY, YW, YZ, YB, WL, XX  
599 were responsible for the maintenance of trace gas and meteorology measurements in the experiment and WX, YZ and YW  
600 processed the data. WX analyzed the data and wrote the paper with help from XZ, XX and GZ.

601  
602 **Competing interests.** The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

#### 603 604 **Acknowledgments, Samples, and Data**

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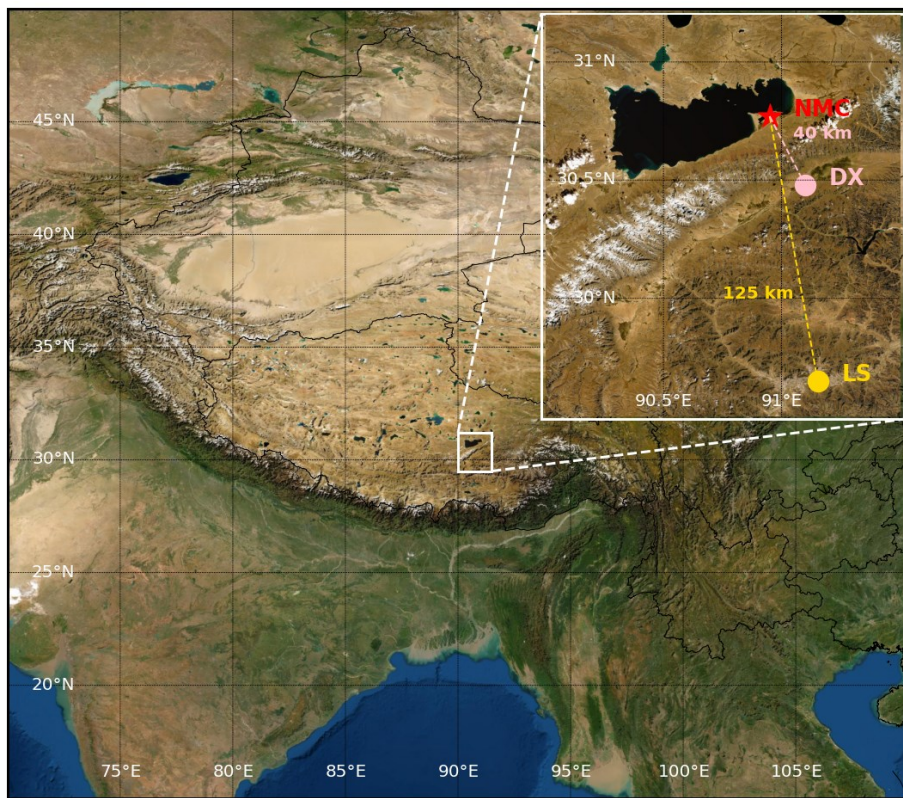
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733 **Table 1** Statistics of trace gases (including O<sub>3</sub>, PAN, NO<sub>2</sub>, CO, OVOCs, aromatics, alkanes and alkenes), photolysis rates (jO<sup>1</sup>D and jNO<sub>2</sub>),  
 734 meteorological variables, as well as the Y index

Variable	Unit	Spring			Summer		
		all	day (8:00-20:00)	night (20:00-8:00)	all	day	night
O <sub>3</sub>	ppb	59.8±13.4	67.8±9.0	52.2±12.4	53.6±13.2	58.3±12.5	48.8±12.1
PAN	ppb	0.27±0.08	0.30±0.07	0.24±0.07	0.20±0.05	0.21±0.05	0.18±0.05
NO <sub>2</sub>	ppb	0.12±0.05	0.11±0.07	0.13±0.04	0.09±0.05	0.08±0.03	0.10±0.06
CO	ppb	108±26	108±16	107±33	117±29	116±33	118±24
CH <sub>4</sub>	ppm	1.890±0.024	1.884±0.012	1.895±0.030	1.886±0.021	1.883±0.017	1.887±0.024
OVOCs		2.49±2.16	3.10±2.60	1.88±1.34		-	-
Aromatics	Propy-Equiv. ppbC	0.56±1.29	0.61±1.74	0.51±0.55	-	-	-
Alkanes		0.47±0.50	0.48±0.59	0.46±0.40	-	-	-
Alkenes		0.59±0.57	0.71±0.68	0.47±0.39	-	-	-
jO <sup>1</sup> D	10 <sup>-7</sup> s <sup>-1</sup>	-	277±183	-	-	275	-
jNO <sub>2</sub>	10 <sup>-4</sup> s <sup>-1</sup>	-	70±27	-	-	66±29	-
Temperature	°C	4.2±4.1	6.6±3.4	2.0±3.5	9.3±3.5	10.9±3.5	7.7±2.8
RH	%	50±19	41±18	59±17	61±19	55±19	68±17
Cumulated Rain	mm	1.0	0.8	0.2	37.3	24.1	13.2
Wind Speed	m s <sup>-1</sup>	4.0±2.6	4.8±2.3	3.3±2.6	3.9±2.3	4.2±2.2	3.6±2.4
Y index	-	1.7±0.9	2.1±0.9	1.4±0.6	0.8±0.3	0.9±0.4	0.7±0.3

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736

737 **Figure 1.** Map displaying the locations of the Nam Co site (NMC), Dangxiong (DX) county and Lhasa city (LS). The topographical  
 738 background figure was provided by the ArcGIS World Imagery Map service ([https://doc.arcgis.com/en/data-appliance/6.4/maps/world-](https://doc.arcgis.com/en/data-appliance/6.4/maps/world-imagery.htm)  
 739 [imagery.htm](https://doc.arcgis.com/en/data-appliance/6.4/maps/world-imagery.htm)).

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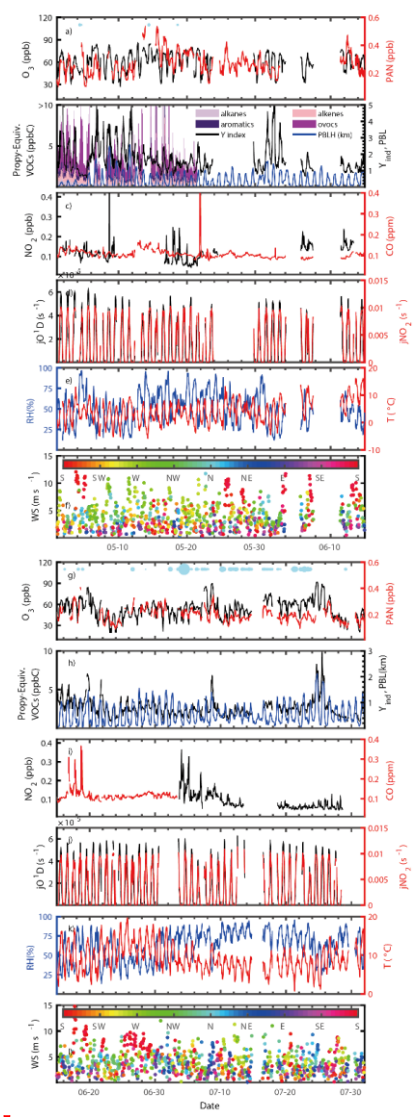
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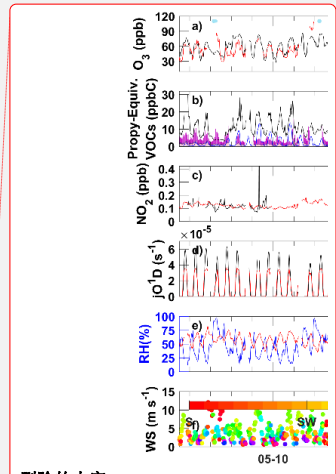
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**Figure 2.** Timeseries of (a,g) O<sub>3</sub> (black), PAN (red), (b,h) VOCs (bars), Y index (black), PBLH (blue), (c,i) NO<sub>2</sub> (black), CO (red), (d,j) jO'D (black), jNO<sub>2</sub> (red), (e,k) RH (blue), T (red), (f,l) wind speed and wind direction (colored dots) during the spring (a-f, 1 May to 15 Jun.) and summer (g-j, 15 Jul. to 30 Jul.) period at Nam Co.



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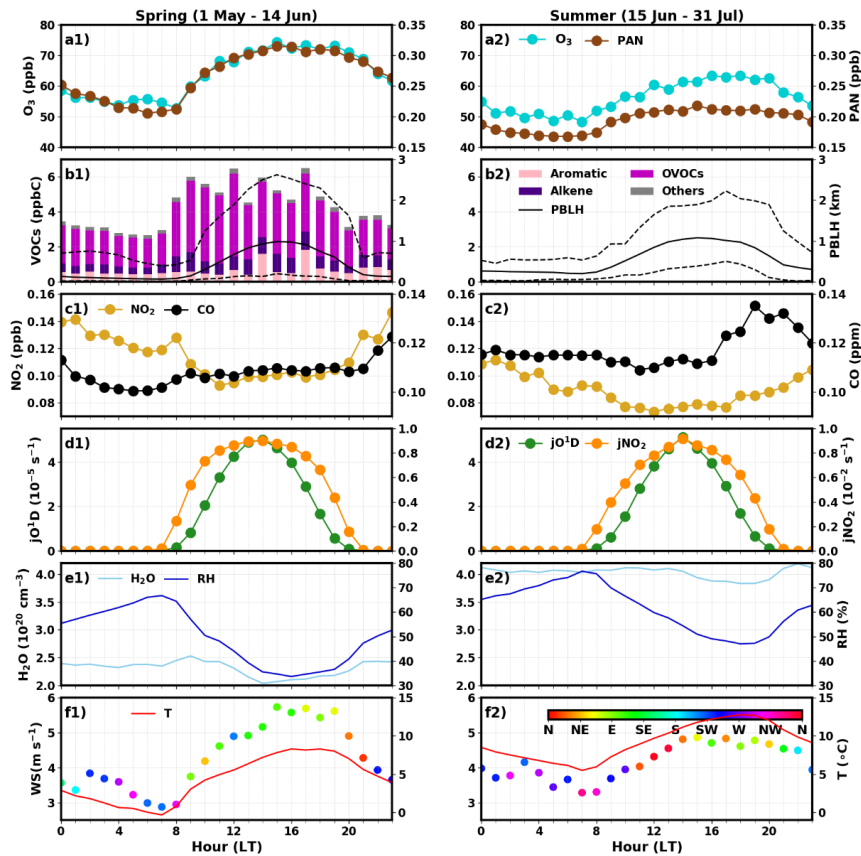
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Figure 22 Timeseries of a) O<sub>3</sub>, PAN, b) NO<sub>2</sub>, CO, c) jO'D, jNO<sub>2</sub>, d) RH, T, e) wind speed and wind direction during the Nam Co campaign from 1 May to 31 Jul. .

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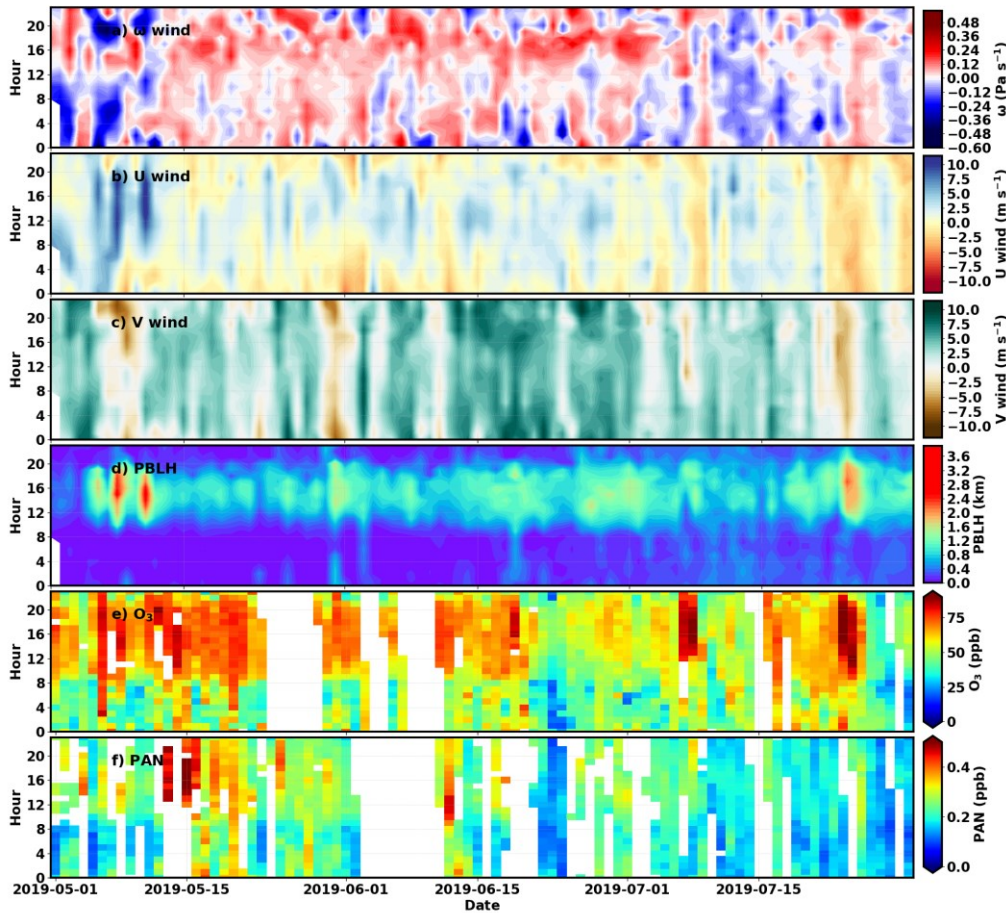


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756 | **Figure 3.** Averaged diurnal variations of a) O<sub>3</sub> (blue), PAN (brown), b) VOCs (bars), PBLH (solid line black line: average value, dashed  
 757 black lines: minimum and maximum value) c) NO<sub>2</sub> (yellow), CO (black), d) jO<sup>1</sup>D (green), jNO<sub>2</sub> (orange), e) H<sub>2</sub>O (light blue), RH (dark  
 758 blue) and f) temperature (red), wind speed and wind direction (colored dots) during the 1) spring and 2) summer period, respectively.

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761 | **Figure 4.** Season-diurnal variations of ERA5 550 hPa a)  $\omega$  wind (vertical wind,  $\text{Pa s}^{-1}$ ), b)  $u$  wind (zonal wind), c)  $v$  wind (meridional  
 762 | wind), d) ERA5 PBLH, e) observed surface  $\text{O}_3$  and f) PAN between 1 May and 31 Jul 2019 at Nam Co.

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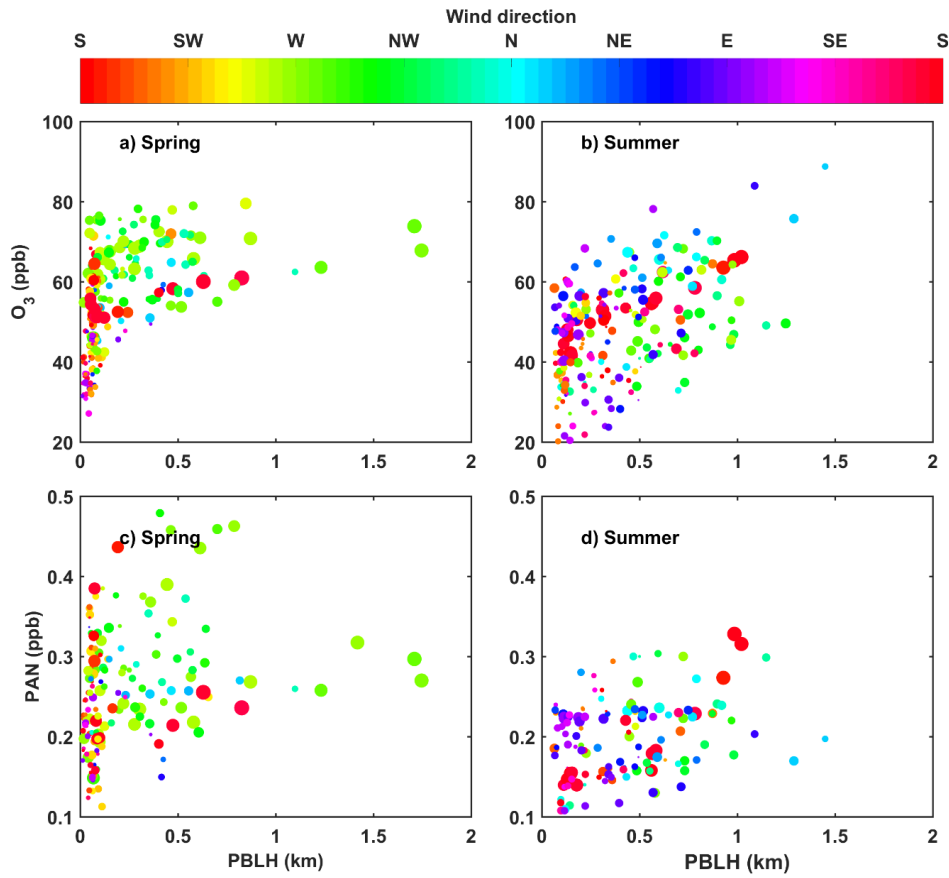
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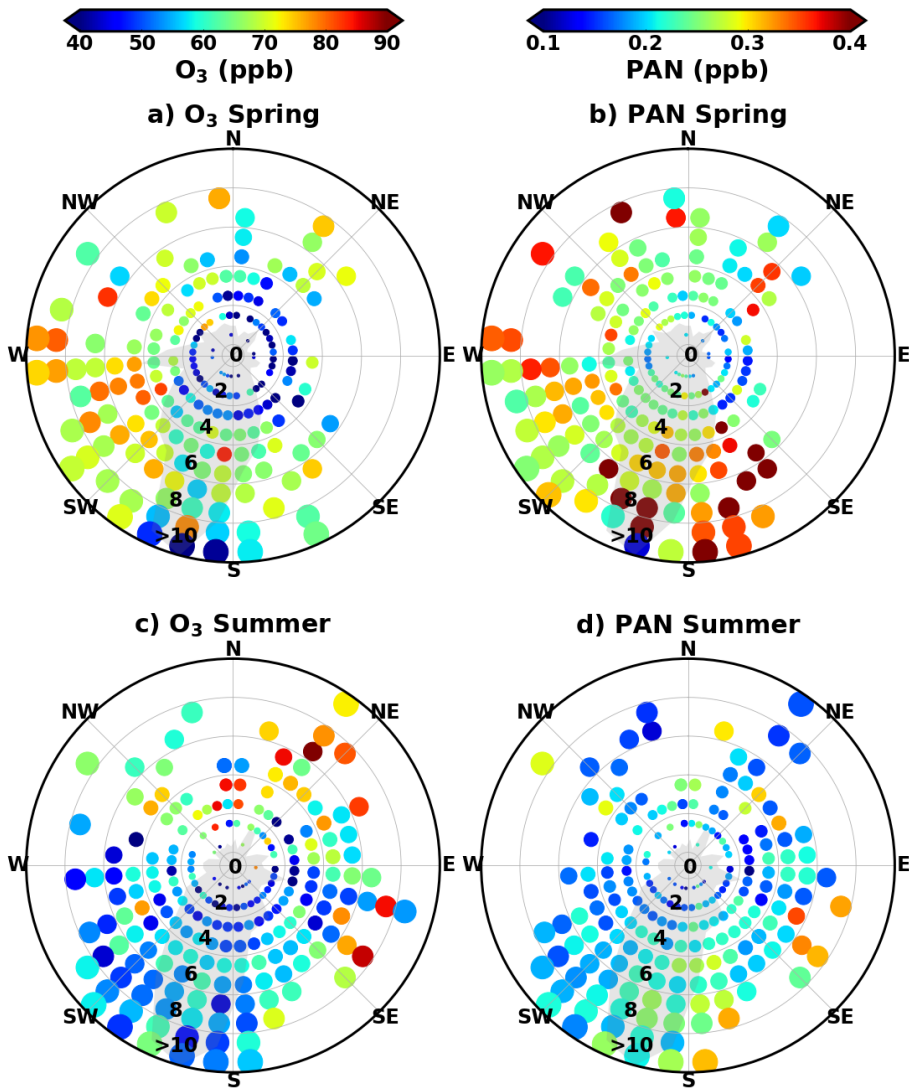
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767 **Figure 5.** Variation of prenoon (6:00-12:00) O<sub>3</sub> (a,b) and PAN (c,d) with PBLH (from ERA5 reanalysis data) during spring (a,c) and  
 768 summer (b,d) periods, with wind speeds and directions indicated by sizes and colors of scattered dots (precipitation associated data points  
 769 excluded).

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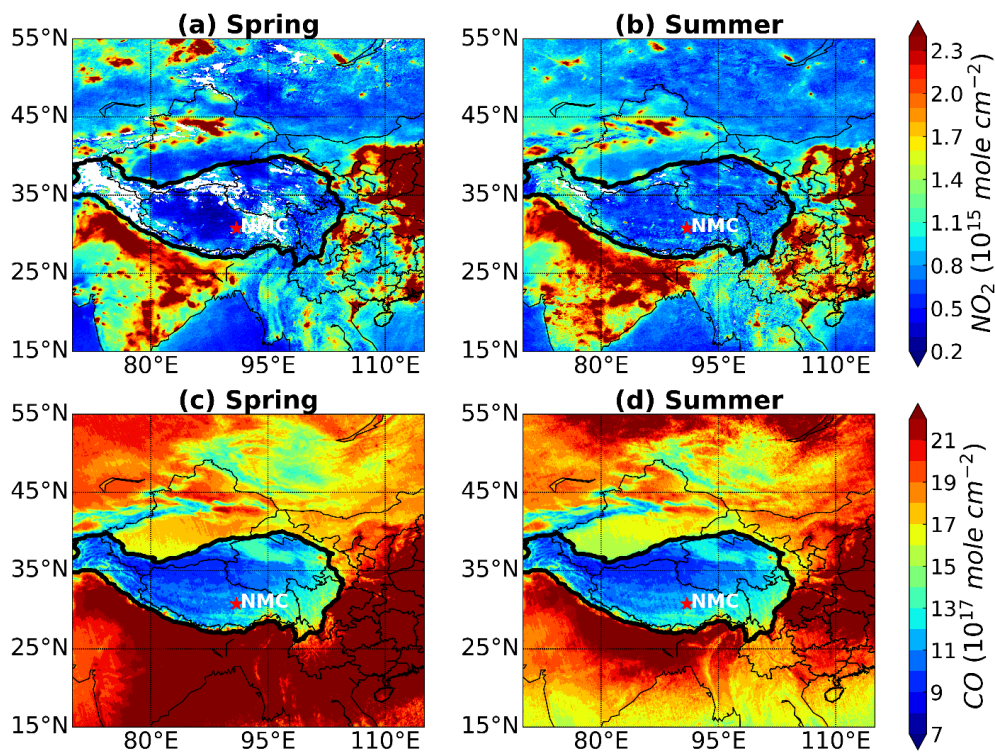
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772 | **Figure 6.** Variation of springtime (a,b) and summertime (c,d) O<sub>3</sub> (a,c) and PAN (b,d) concentrations with 2m wind speeds and 500-  
 773 | 550 hPa wind directions from ECMWF ERA5 data. Gray shading represents the relative occurrence frequency of wind directions.

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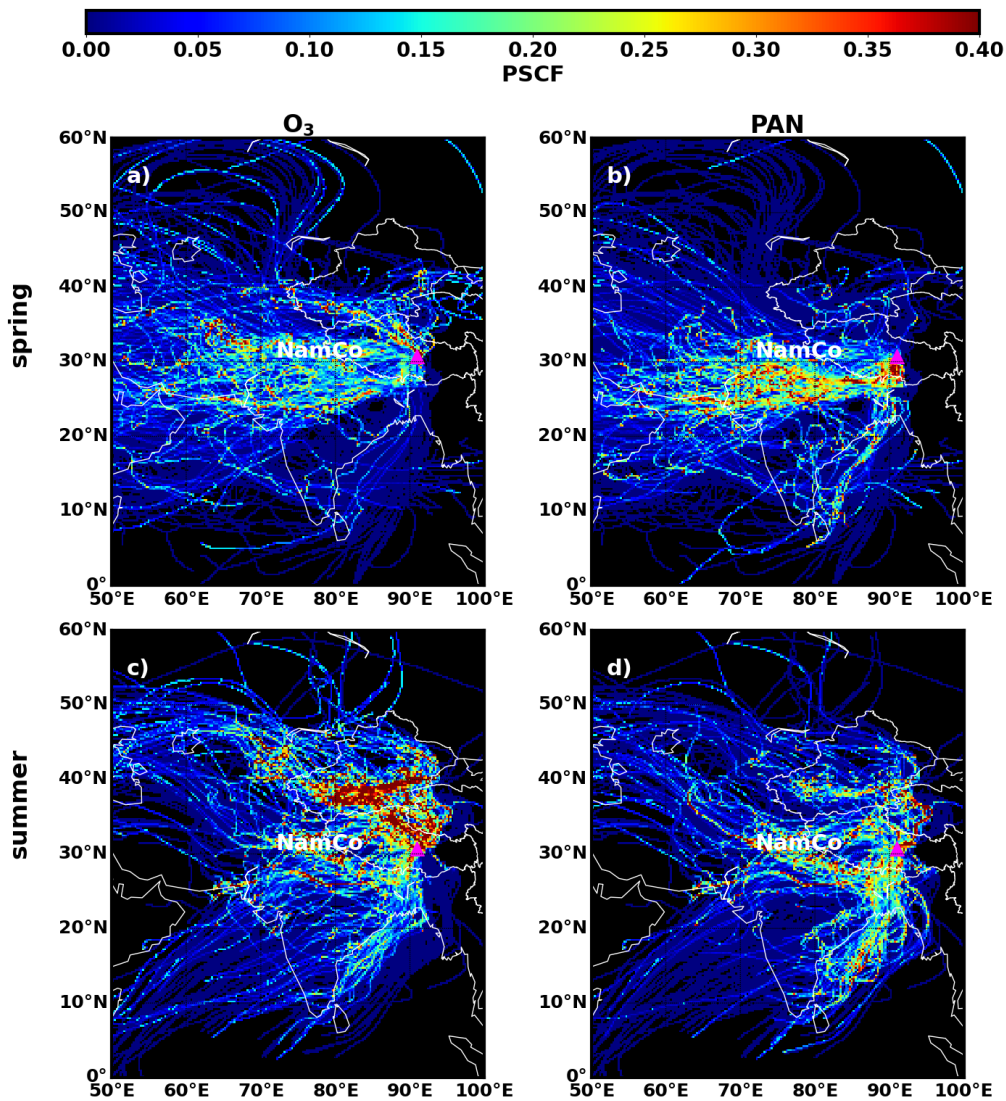
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776 | **Figure 7.** TROPOMI NO<sub>2</sub> (a,b) and CO (c,d) column concentration distributions averaged over spring (a,c) and summer (b,d) periods.

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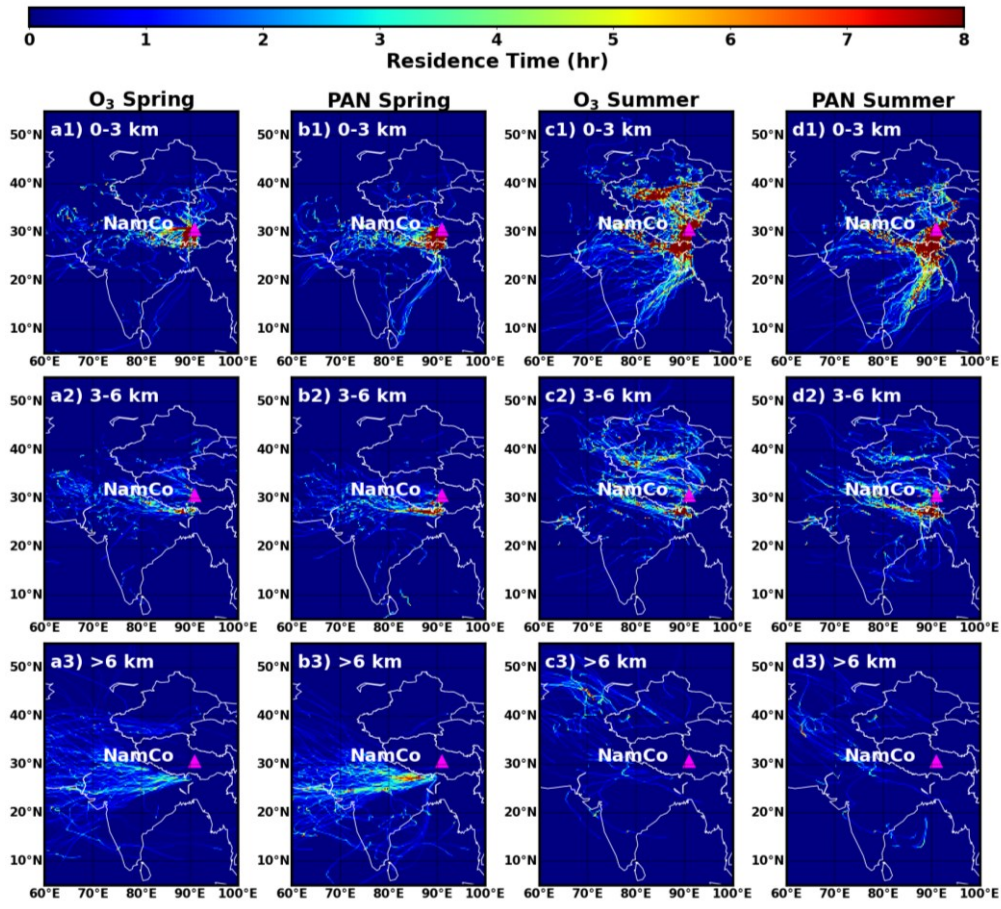
779 | **Figure 8.** Potential Source Contribution Function (PSCF) of O<sub>3</sub> (a,c) and PAN (b,d) during spring (a,b) and summer (c,d) periods.

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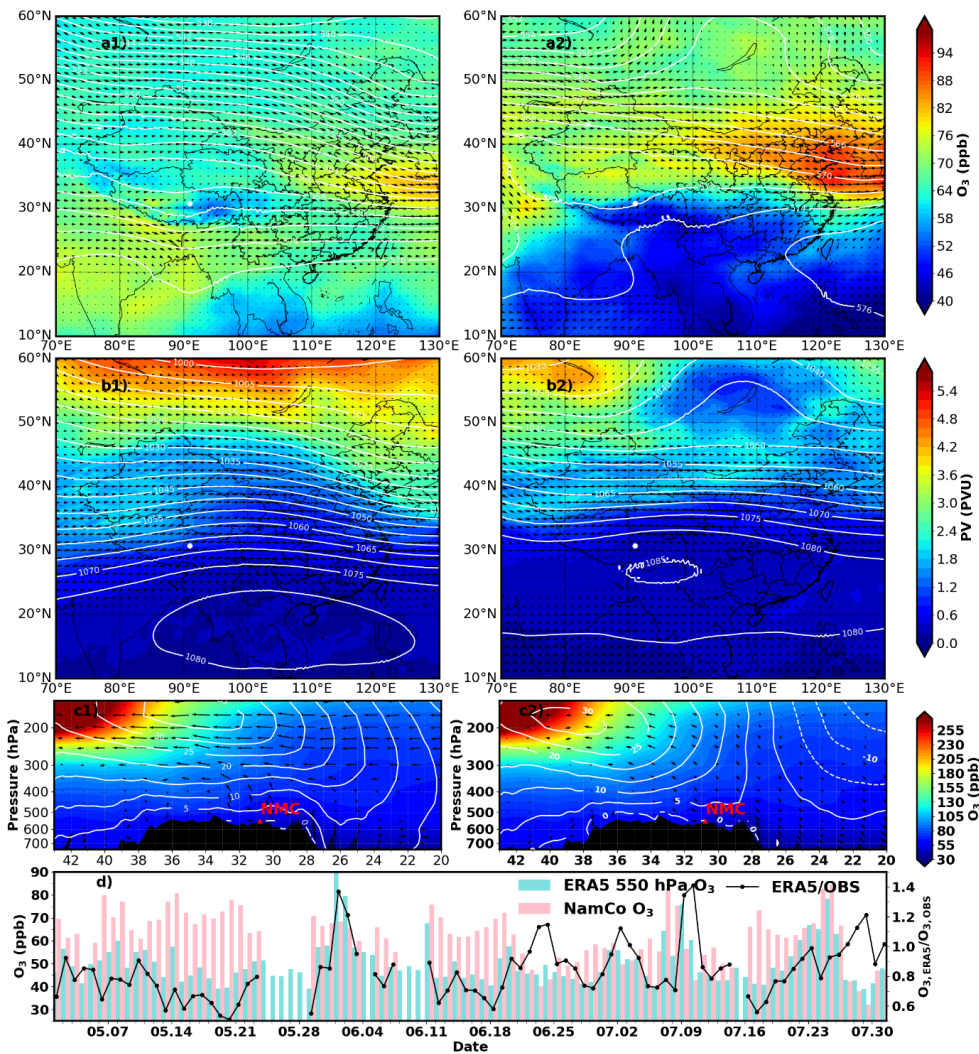
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782 **Figure 9.** Residence time of trajectories associated with O<sub>3</sub> (a,c) and PAN (b,d) above their respective 67<sup>th</sup> percentiles during spring (a,b) and summer (c,d) periods within height ranges (above ground level) of 1) 0-3 km, 2) 3-6 km and 3) >6 km.

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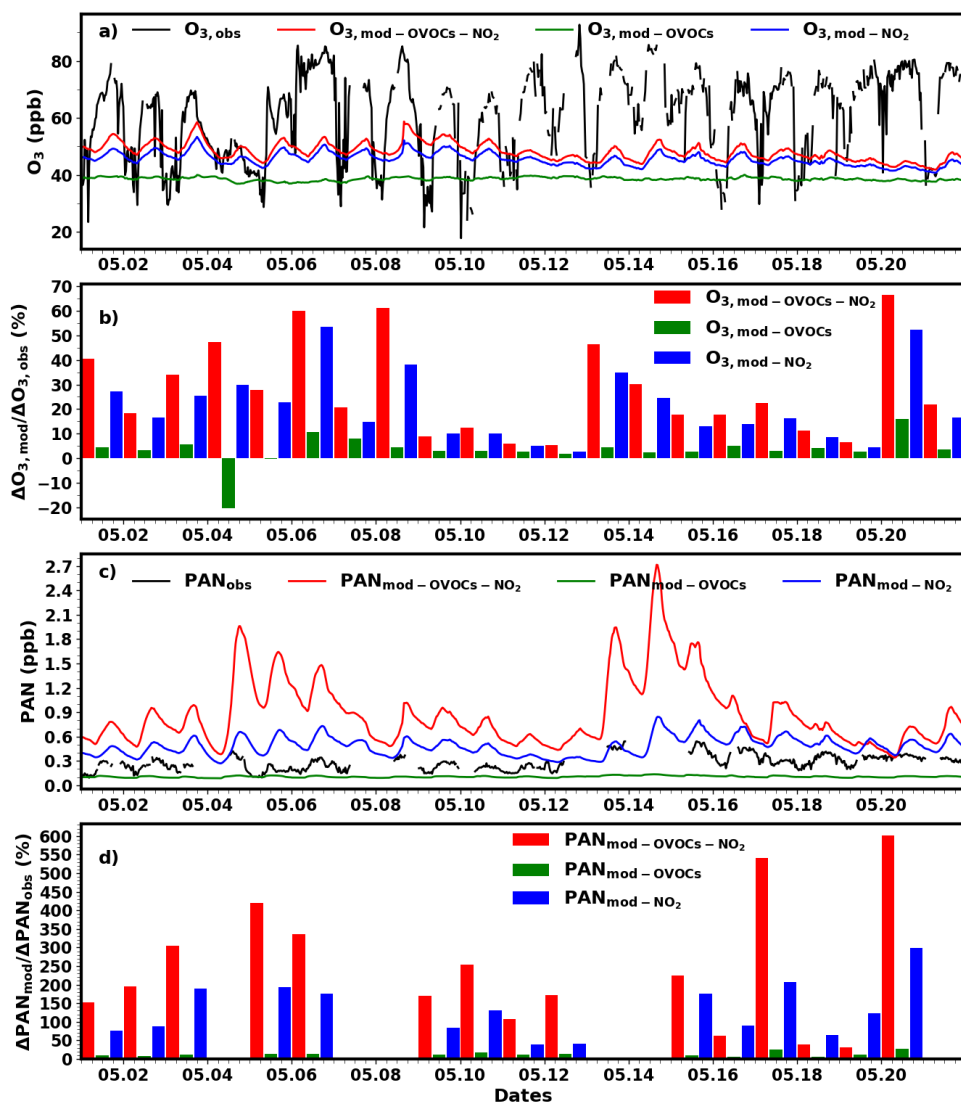


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786 **Figure 10.** Distribution of a) ERA5 550 hPa O<sub>3</sub> mixing ratio, geopotential height (white contour lines) and winds (black arrows), b)  
 787 250 hPa potential vorticity, geopotential height and winds, c) cross-section of O<sub>3</sub> mixing ratio, u winds (white contour lines), v winds and  
 788 vertical velocity (black arrows) at the longitude of Nam Co station and d) the comparison between daytime ERA5 550 hPa (blue bars) and  
 789 observed O<sub>3</sub> mixing ratio (pink bars) at Nam Co.

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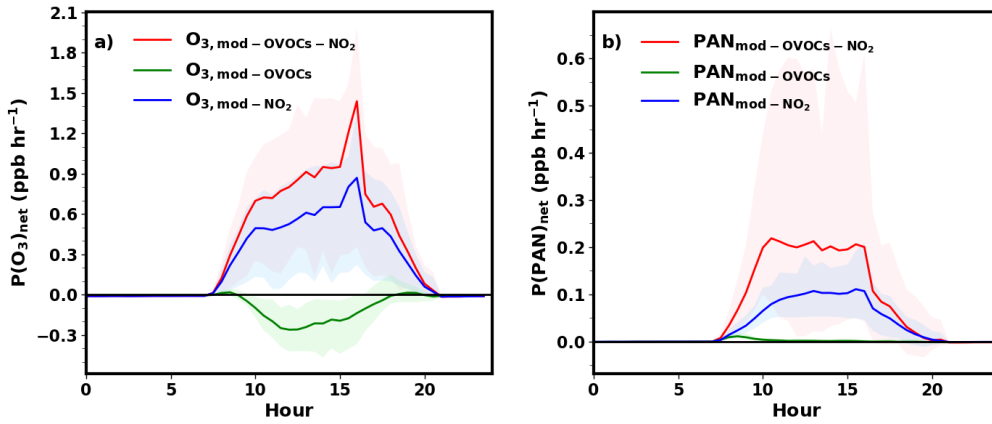
794 **Figure 11.** a) Observed (black) and modelled O<sub>3</sub> using constraints on OVOCs (green), NO<sub>2</sub> (blue) and both (red), b) percentage of  
 795 observed daytime O<sub>3</sub> concentration increment ( $\Delta O_{3, \text{obs}}$ ) that can be explained by those modelled under different constraints ( $\Delta O_{3, \text{mod}}$ ), c)  
 796 observed (black) and modelled PAN under OVOCs (green), NO<sub>2</sub> (blue) and both constraints (red), d) percentage of observed daytime PAN  
 797 concentration increment ( $\Delta \text{PAN}_{\text{obs}}$ ) that can be explained by those modelled under different constraints ( $\Delta \text{PAN}_{\text{mod}}$ ).

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799 | **Figure 12.** Net production rate of a) O<sub>3</sub> and b) PAN simulated under OVOCs (green), NO<sub>2</sub> (blue) and OVOCs+NO<sub>2</sub> combined (red) measurement constraints. Shaded areas represent calculated ranges of 5<sup>th</sup> to 95<sup>th</sup> percentiles.  
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