

# Estimation of Nighttime Aerosol Optical Depths Using the Ground-based Microwave Radiometer

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## 7 Abstract

Aerosol optical depth (AOD) is a crucial parameter for understanding the impact of aerosols on Earth's atmosphere and air quality. Nevertheless, most existing remote sensing techniques rely on the shortwave spectrum, precluding nighttime measurements, While lunar and stellar photometry can measure nighttime AOD, their data availability is limited due to the scarce moonlight for lunar photometry and the rarity of application for stellar photometry. In this study, we made a first attempt to retrieve AOD from ground-based microwave radiometer (MWR) measurements, in Beijing Nanjiao Meteorological Observatory in China. Brightness temperatures (BT) at the K band (from 22.23 GHz to 30.00 GHz) and V band (from 51.25 GHz to 58.80 GHz) are trained against daytime spectral AOD from sun-photometer measurements together with temperature profile using the random forest regression (RFR) retrieval model, and the model is then used to retrieve nighttime AOD. The algorithm demonstrates satisfactory performance, with reasonable agreements with lunar AOD retrievals, from the lunar photometer (R=0.91 and RMSE=0.14). The results also reveal a distinct day-night cycle of AOD, with nighttime AOD typically higher than its daytime value, for the Beijing-CAMS Aerosol Robotic Network (AERONET) site and AOD estimated based on MWR measurements. The physical basis of our approach is verified using vertical temperature and humidity profiles from sounding observation and simulation results from WRF-Chem as well as the MonoRTM. Our

27 study provides an effective and convenient approach to estimate nighttime aerosol  
28 loading from surface, which has great potential in environmental monitoring and  
29 climate forcing research.

30

31 **1. Introduction**

32 Aerosols have a significant impact on weather patterns and the Earth's climate (Huang  
33 et al., 2014; Li et al., 2022; Li et al., 2019; Riemer et al., 2019), offsetting about  
34 one-third of the warming effect by anthropogenic greenhouse gases and influence  
35 large-scale circulation (Huang et al., 2014; Li et al., 2022). However, accurately  
36 assessing their role in radiative forcing is a major challenge (Fan et al., 2016; Ghan et  
37 al., 2016; [IPCC, 2021](#); Seinfeld et al., 2016). Monitoring aerosol optical depth (AOD)  
38 is crucial for understanding aerosol impacts on climate and air quality, as it reflects  
39 the total amount of aerosols in the atmosphere [from its direct radiative impact](#) (Visioni  
40 et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2020). As a result, there have been extensive efforts to  
41 measure AOD by various methods.

42 [The AOD is firstly measured through the inversion of the Beer-Bouguer-Lambert law,](#)  
43 [which describes the attenuation of spectral direct normal irradiance \(DNI\) \(Gueymard,](#)  
44 [2012\). This process typically involves the use of a spectrometer or spectroradiometer](#)  
45 [to measure direct solar irradiance as monochromatically as possible on a specific](#)  
46 [spectral channel \(Gueymard, 2012\). This can be achieved using either a filter-based](#)  
47 [photometer or a narrow-band spectroradiometer. The ground-based Cimel CE318-T](#)  
48 [sun photometer is widely used within the Aerosol Robotic Network \(AERONET\) to](#)  
49 [provide relatively accurate estimates of daytime AOD serving as referenced values](#)  
50 [since 1980s \(Holben et al., 1998\).](#) Other observations measure physicochemical  
51 properties of aerosols instead of optical properties like AOD (Kremser et al., 2016; Li  
52 et al., 2016b). Mainstream aerosol remote sensing techniques rely on aerosol  
53 scattering of shortwave radiation in the ultraviolet and/or visible spectrum, thus only  
54 daytime AOD can be obtained (Sayer et al., 2019; Sun et al., 2021). However,  
55 aerosols typically have day-night variability, due to factors such as different emission  
56 sources, boundary layer structure, etc (Arola et al., 2013; Cachorro et al., 2004;  
57 Cachorro et al., 2008; Guo et al., 2017). Aerosols at nighttime also have detectable

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borne, is an effective way to retrieve column AOD  
(Chaikovsky et al., 2020; Mhawish et al., 2017; Omar et al.,  
2013; Sinyuk et al., 2020).

58 impacts on the radiative balance, since they usually exert a warming effect in contrast  
59 to the cooling effect at daytime (Chen and Zhao, 2024; Colarco et al., 2014; Zhang et  
60 al., 2022), particularly in polar regions with the rapid change of AOD between  
61 daytime and nighttime (Chen and Zhao, 2024; Stenchikov et al., 2002; Wei et al.,  
62 2021). In special cases such as aerosols above the open oceans, they consistently exert  
63 a cooling influence in both shortwave and longwave, yet for dust aerosols, they  
64 potentially exert a warming effect in longwave during both day and night (Adebiyi et  
65 al., 2023; Feng et al., 2022; Song et al., 2022).

66 Remote sensing of aerosol properties at night is a challenging task. Lunar photometer  
67 emerges during recent years as an effective and relative accurate nighttime AOD  
68 retrieval technique, and has been widely used within the AERONET since 2013  
69 (Barreto et al., 2013; Barreto et al., 2016). However, this method is limited in its  
70 temporal coverage, providing data for only approximately half of each month. This  
71 limitation arises because the method requires a substantial amount of moon-reflected  
72 solar radiation, which is not consistently available due to the imperfect  
73 anti-correlation between the lunar and solar set/rise cycles (Barreto et al., 2017;  
74 Berkoff et al., 2011). Compared with the lunar photometer method, stellar photometry,  
75 despite its rarity of use, provides nighttime AOD measurements by leveraging stellar  
76 irradiance, eliminating lunar phase corrections, with long-term datasets revealing  
77 diurnal aerosol dynamics (Pérez-Ramírez et al., 2011; Pérez-Ramírez et al., 2016;  
78 Pérez-Ramírez et al., 2008; Pérez-Ramírez et al., 2015). Arctic deployments and  
79 further development such as using a wide-field imager enhance its adaptability in  
80 extreme environments and spatiotemporal resolution, addressing gaps in traditional  
81 sun-photometer-based nocturnal monitoring (Ebr et al., 2021; Ivanescu et al., 2021;  
82 Ivanescu and O'Neill, 2023). However, this method is not widely adopted globally  
83 due to the bulkiness of the facilities and the complex operational processes required  
84 for deployment (Herber et al., 2002; LEITERER, 1995). Other researches take  
85 advantage of urban light to retrieve nighttime AOD from space from multiple sensors

删除[gyliu]: Aerosol Robotic Network (AERONET) (Barreto et al., 2016). However, this method can only provide data at ~ halftime each month since it requires a relatively large amount of moon-reflected solar radiation

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86 (Jiang et al., 2022; Meng et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2020; Zhou et  
87 al., 2021). For example, Zhang et al. examined the effectiveness of retrieving  
88 nighttime AOD over urban areas by utilizing city lights observed through the  
89 satellite-based instrument VIIRS (Visible Infrared Imaging Radiometer Suite)  
90 Day-Night Band (DNB) (Zhang et al., 2019). However, this approach has limitations  
91 as it does not account for multiple scattering and gas absorption, which can potentially  
92 reduce the signals from aerosols (Zhou et al., 2021). Furthermore, these studies are  
93 constrained to the spatial scale of urban areas, resulting in vast rural regions being  
94 unexplored (Meng et al., 2023). Active remote sensing, such as lidars, can provide  
95 aerosol measurements at both day and night time (Balmes et al., 2021; Jiang et al.,  
96 2024). Nonetheless, solving the lidar equation requires assumption of the lidar ratio,  
97 and this assumed lidar ratio often causes large uncertainty of the retrieved extinction  
98 profiles as well as column integrated AOD usually (Liu et al., 2018; Rogers et al.,  
99 2014; Santa Maria and Winker, 2005). For the day-night difference of AOD, previous  
100 studies find slight increases of nighttime AOD using the long-term sun-and-star  
101 photometry data (Pérez-Ramírez et al., 2012; Pérez-Ramírez et al., 2016; Wang et al.,  
102 2004). Moreover, using Infrared Atmospheric Sounder Interferometer (IASI) and  
103 Cloud-Aerosol Transport System (CATS) are also effective methods to understand  
104 day-night differences in dust aerosols (Tindan et al., 2023; Yu et al., 2021). Grassl et  
105 al. (2024) also presented a homogenized dataset derived from a sun and star  
106 photometer operated in the European Arctic over a 20-year period. However, existing  
107 research regarding day-night difference of AOD only focuses on special types of  
108 aerosols such as dust aerosols, and has low availability due to the moon phase and  
109 urban light extent (Barreto et al., 2017; Jiang et al., 2022; Meng et al., 2023; Wang et  
110 al., 2023; Wang et al., 2020; Zhou et al., 2021). Due to our limited capability to  
111 measure nighttime AOD, there is a significant knowledge gap between daytime and  
112 nighttime aerosol properties.

113 In contrast to shortwave radiation which is only available during daytime, longwave  
114 radiation, especially in the thermal infrared and microwave spectrum, exists during  
115 both day and night, and offers the potential to derive nighttime aerosol property  
116 (Dufresne et al., 2002; Panicker et al., 2008). Previous research has explored the  
117 possibility to retrieve aerosol loading using longwave measurements, but mostly  
118 focused on large particles such as dust (Clarisso et al., 2019; DeSouza-Machado et al.,  
119 2010; Klüser et al., 2012; Pierangelo et al., 2004; Pierangelo et al., 2005; Zheng et al.,  
120 2022; Zheng et al., 2023). For example, using collocated thermal infrared  
121 observations from MODIS and dust optical depth from Cloud-Aerosol Lidar with  
122 Orthogonal Polarization (CALIOP), Zheng et al. simultaneously retrieve the thermal  
123 infrared dust optical depth and coarse-mode effective diameter over global oceans  
124 (Zheng et al., 2023). Observational and simulation studies indicate that the microwave  
125 brightness temperatures (BTs) and brightness temperature polarization differences  
126 may be both useful for estimating the dust mass loading (Ge et al., 2008; Hong et al.,  
127 2008; Huang et al., 2007; Mitra et al., 2013). Our previous study utilized  
128 satellite-based thermal infrared measurements in the atmospheric window region to  
129 retrieve nighttime AOD (Liu et al., 2024), and proves the effectiveness of these  
130 longwave measurements in deriving aerosol properties.

131 Ground-based microwave radiometer (MWR) is a widely used remote sensing  
132 instrument to retrieve temperature and humidity profiles using emitted longwave  
133 radiation by the surface-atmosphere system (Bianco et al., 2005; Greenwald et al.,  
134 2018; Knupp et al., 2009). Considering the aforementioned concepts of utilizing  
135 longwave radiances to retrieve aerosol properties and the potential alterations in  
136 microwave BTs due to the modified temperature and humidity profiles resulting from  
137 the shortwave radiation effect of aerosols, there is potential that aerosol information  
138 can be derived from MWR measurements, thereby further filling the gaps of previous  
139 retrieval methods. Therefore, in this study, we explore the possibility to retrieve AOD  
140 using surface based MWR measurements in the K spectral bands (22.23 GHz, 22.50

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141 GHz, 23.03 GHz, 23.83 GHz, 25.00 GHz, 26.23 GHz, 28.00 GHz, and 30.00 GHz)  
142 and V spectral bands (51.25 GHz, 51.76 GHz, 52.28 GHz, 52.80 GHz, 53.34 GHz,  
143 53.85 GHz, 54.40 GHz, 54.94 GHz, 55.50 GHz, 56.02 GHz, 56.66 GHz, 57.29 GHz,  
144 57.96 GHz, and 58.80 GHz). A machine learning based algorithm is developed to  
145 estimate AOD during both day and night. The theoretical basis of the method is  
146 further verified using regional model and radiative transfer simulations. The  
147 difference between day and night time AOD is also examined using the retrieval  
148 results.

## 149 **2. Data and Methods**

150 The retrieval algorithm used in this study is described in Figure 1 and includes four  
151 main steps: (1) preprocessing of input variables, (2) training the Random Forest  
152 Regression (RFR) retrieval model, (3) estimation of AOD using the trained model,  
153 and (4) independent validation to refine the model and assess its performance  
154 compared to lunar photometer observations. The details of the datasets and methods  
155 are explained below.

### 156 **2.1 Datasets**

157 The study area is located at the northern edge of the North China Plain, featuring a  
158 temperate continental monsoon climate with four distinct seasons (Yu et al., 2009).  
159 Spring is occasionally influenced by dust episodes transported by northwesterly and  
160 westerly winds from the Kumutage and Taklimakan deserts in western China, or by  
161 norterly winds from the Mongolian deserts (Liu et al., 2022a). Summer is marked by  
162 relatively hot and humid conditions and accounts for approximately 74% of the  
163 annual precipitation. Autumn is mild and dry, with clear skies and cooling  
164 temperatures. Winter is cold and dry, with occasional snowfall and minimal  
165 precipitation (Feng et al., 2010; Hao et al., 2017).

166 In this study, we utilized BT data collected from the MP-3000A MWR, which was  
167 stationed at the Beijing Nanjiao Meteorological Observatory located in China  
168 (39.80°N, 116.47°E, <http://bj.cma.gov.cn/>) (Ding et al., 2010; Lei et al., 2011; Zhou et  
169 al., 2024). The MP-3000A MWR is capable of detecting signals in the K-band (22 to  
170 30 GHz) and V-band (51 to 59 GHz), and it is also equipped with additional features  
171 such as a precipitation sensor, an infrared radiation thermometer, and other relevant  
172 instruments. To maintain the accuracy and consistency of the atmospheric BT  
173 measurements, the MWR undergoes regular real-time calibration. These  
174 measurements are essential for obtaining temperature profiles and AOD data. Our  
175 analysis focuses on the K and V band of BT observations with 22 available channels,  
176 because BT observations at the K band are sensitive to water vapor absorption and BT  
177 observations at the V band are sensitive to oxygen absorption and temperature  
178 changes. We use the data ranging from December 2019 to October 2020 with a  
179 temporal resolution of one minute due to limitations of data distribution policy. We  
180 also aim to extend the temporal range of our analysis in the future study.

181 The measured BTs include inaccuracies and unusual values caused by instrumental  
182 faults, calibration problems, and environmental factors. Hence, it's crucial to conduct  
183 quality control (QC) checks on the BT data before processing it further. These checks  
184 involve removing abnormal values to ensure that the BTs fall within a reasonable  
185 temperature range of 2.7 to 330 Kelvin, and inspecting for data consistency over time  
186 as per the methodology of Zhang et al. (Zhang, 2024). Ultimately, nearly 4.36% of BT  
187 data were excluded from the study due to a combination of instrumental faults,  
188 calibration problems, and environmental factors. Notably, the Level 2 sun photometer  
189 AOD products from AERONET are already validated and represent clear-sky  
190 conditions. Therefore, the collocation of MWR data with these AERONET products  
191 inherently excludes cloudy conditions. While AERONET data can be cloud-free in  
192 the direction of the sun, the MWR, which measures in the zenith direction, may still  
193 detect the presence of clouds. Therefore, we further conducted an additional cloud

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194 screening following the method by the previous study to ensure the clear-sky  
195 conditions in the analysis (Zhang, 2024).

196 AOD retrieved using the solar and lunar methods at the Beijing-CAMS AERONET  
197 site, (39.95°N, 116.32°E, located in the Chinese Academy of Meteorological Sciences,  
198 see Table S1), which is the closest site to the MWR location, (20.77 km), is used as  
199 training and validation data in the retrieval algorithm. For training our model, we  
200 utilized Level 2 sun photometer AOD products at the wavelengths of 440 nm, 500 nm,  
201 675 nm, 870 nm, and 1020 nm during the day. Version 3 Level 1.5 lunar AOD  
202 products at the same wavelengths to validate AOD retrievals at night. It is noteworthy  
203 that the distance between the Beijing-CAMS AERONET site and MWR site is 20.77  
204 km. Considering the vast urban area of Beijing, which spans approximately 160 km  
205 both east-west and north-south, this distance is relatively short. We specifically chose  
206 this AERONET station other than others because it is the only one that provides  
207 consistent Version 3 Level 1.5 lunar AOD products from 2019 to 2020, ensuring a  
208 consistent dataset with daytime AOD for our analysis.

209 Given that MWRs are instrumental in tracking atmospheric temperature and humidity  
210 profile changes (Zhang et al., 2024), our method retrieves vertical temperature  
211 profiles concurrently. This is achieved by using temperatures at different pressure  
212 levels obtained from the European Center for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts  
213 (ECMWF) Reanalysis version 5 (ERA-5) as the target for our training. (Hersbach,  
214 2023). We chose the ECMWF products mainly because of their hourly temporal  
215 resolution, which provides more training samples for the RFR model than the  
216 twice-daily sounding data. This enhances the model's ability to capture temporal  
217 variability and improve prediction accuracy of the predicted variables. To further  
218 assess the accuracy of the model in predicting vertical temperature profiles, we  
219 utilized the collocated sounding data obtained from Beijing Meteorological Station  
220 (station ID: 54511) during the corresponding time frame. The collocation process

221 involves identifying the temporally nearest valid BT measurement and subsequently  
222 inputting this BT value into the model to generate the MWR-based vertical  
223 temperature profile prediction. The radiosonde temperature profiles are then vertically  
224 interpolated to the standard pressure levels (100 hPa, 200 hPa, 500 hPa, 700 hPa, 850  
225 hPa, and 1000 hPa) using a linear interpolation method, allowing for direct  
226 comparison with the MWR-based temperature profile prediction. These sounding data  
227 were collected twice daily respectively at 00:00 and 12:00 UTC from December 2019  
228 to October 2020.

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229 For the physical interpretation of our retrieval method, we employed collocated  
230 vertical profiles of temperature and relative humidity (RH) from the same sounding  
231 data under varying aerosol loadings to explore the effects of aerosol loading on the  
232 vertical profiles of meteorological variables. These vertical profiles were further  
233 utilized to compute BTs using the monochromatic radiative transfer model  
234 (MonoRTM).

235 In summary, our study primarily relies on in-situ measurements from three sites: the  
236 MWR site, the AERONET site, and the sounding site (see Table S1 and Figure 2b for  
237 details). These sites are located at the Beijing Nanjiao Meteorological Observatory,  
238 the Chinese Academy of Meteorological Sciences, and the Beijing Meteorological  
239 Station, respectively. All three sites are situated within the urban or suburban areas of  
240 Beijing, with relatively close proximity to each other. The aerosol types expected at  
241 these sites include urban aerosols and mixed aerosols, with dust aerosols peaking  
242 during the boreal spring season (Chen et al., 2016; Ou et al., 2017).

## 243 2.2 Retrieval Algorithm

244 Because the relationship between aerosol loading and microwave radiation is  
245 complicated and could be nonlinear, we use a machine learning based retrieval  
246 method focusing on the RFR method (Svetnik et al., 2003). The RFR model leverages

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space and time. Specifically, AOD from sun photometer  
measurements and BTs from the MWR are matched within a  
5-minute time window, while hourly temperature profiles from  
ERA-5 reanalysis datasets and BTs from the MWR are  
collocated within a 30-minute time window and a 15 km  
spatial radius.

247 the power of ensemble learning, integrating multiple decision trees to enhance  
248 prediction accuracy and robustness. Each decision tree within the ensemble is  
249 constructed using a random subset of the training data and a random selection of  
250 features, thereby reducing overfitting and improving generalization capabilities.  
251 Through this mechanism, the RFR model can effectively capture the complex  
252 interactions between aerosol properties and microwave radiation signals, providing a  
253 reliable and efficient approach for aerosol retrieval.

254 All variables are rigorously matched in both temporal and spatial dimensions to  
255 ensure consistency and accuracy. Specifically, AOD data derived from sun  
256 photometer measurements are temporally matched with BTs from the MWR within a  
257 5-minute time window. Meanwhile, hourly temperature profiles from the ERA-5  
258 reanalysis datasets are collocated with MWR BTs within a 30-minute time window  
259 and a 15 km spatial radius. It should be noted that the acquisition of temperature  
260 profiles relies solely on the ERA-5 reanalysis data and does not require data from the  
261 AERONET station, and that the 15 km spatial radius only refers to the distance  
262 between the ERA-5 grid point and the MWR site location.

263 We first apply the relative importance feature selection technique, which is based on  
264 the Gini importance measure (Nembrini et al., 2018), to identify significant  
265 independent variables and build a generalized model. In the context of random forests,  
266 the relative importance of each predictor variable (feature) is quantified by a numeric  
267 array of size 1-by-Nvars. The importance measure for each variable is defined as the  
268 increase in prediction error that results from permuting the values of that variable  
269 across the out-of-bag observations. This measure is calculated for each tree in the  
270 ensemble, then averaged across all trees. To standardize the importance scores, the  
271 average values are normalized by dividing them by the standard deviation computed  
272 over the entire ensemble. This process yields a normalized importance measure that  
273 provides a robust assessment of each feature's contribution to the model's predictive

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274 performance. The relative importance of each factor is presented in Figure 3. It is  
275 observed that BTs across various frequency bands carry similar levels of importance,  
276 suggesting that the BTs are almost equally important for retrieving AOD.

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277 The retrieval algorithm is subsequently trained using eight selected K-band BTs and  
278 fourteen V-band BTs from the MP-3000A MWR as input variables. The target  
279 variables include AOD at 440 nm, 500 nm, 675 nm, 870 nm, and 1020 nm from the  
280 Beijing-CAMS AERONET site, as well as ERA-5 vertical temperature profiles at 100  
281 hPa, 200 hPa, 500 hPa, 700 hPa, 850 hPa, and 1000 hPa. To ensure the  
282 representativeness of the sampling, we select the first 3/4 of the data in each month as  
283 the training set and the last 1/4 of the data as the testing set. Additionally, the  
284 algorithm is adapted to estimate nighttime AOD using nighttime BTs from microwave  
285 radiometry as inputs, which is then validated against nighttime AOD observations  
286 from lunar measurements in lunar photometer for the same period. Moreover, AOD,  
287 whether in the visible or microwave region, is associated with aerosol loading, which  
288 serves as the foundation for retrieving visible AOD using microwave observations.  
289 Since we primarily aim at retrieving AOD rather than aerosol type, we did not  
290 consider AOD at the other wavelengths when building the AOD retrieval model. The  
291 relationship between AOD at 440 nm, 500 nm, 675 nm, 870 nm, and 1020 nm (the  
292 output wavelengths of the RFR model) and at the microwave band is enclosed in the  
293 random forest model. The model performance is assessed against photometer  
294 retrievals using metrics such as linear regression slope and intercept, correlation  
295 coefficient (R), root-mean-square error (RMSE), and mean absolute percentage error  
296 (MAPE).

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297 The RFR model is built by varying the number of decision trees from 8 to 256.  
298 Through validation analysis, it is determined that the optimal number of trees is 128,  
299 based on the best performance during validation. The super parameters of this RFR  
300 model are detailed in Table S2. After refining the algorithm through extensive training

301 and testing, it is used to retrieve nighttime AOD from nighttime MWR BTs, with  
302 validation against collocated lunar AOD measurements from the lunar photometer.  
303 Moreover, before investigating the diurnal cycle of MWR derived AOD, we perform  
304 a quality control on the minute-resolution retrieval results that typically have a higher  
305 noise level. Specifically, for each specific minute, we extract the AOD for this minute  
306 from each day to form an AOD sequence. We then calculate the mean and standard  
307 deviation of this AOD sequence. Finally, we remove AOD that exceeds three times  
308 the standard deviation. Considering the suitable quantity of outliers procured by  
309 setting the threshold at three standard deviations and the prevalently utilized 3-sigma  
310 rule, we used three standard deviations as the threshold (Li et al., 2016a; Liu et al.,  
311 2024; Wang et al., 2012).

312 **2.3 WRF-Chem simulations**

313 To investigate the effect of aerosols on downward microwave radiation, we use the  
314 Weather Research and Forecasting model with Chemistry (WRF-Chem) simulations  
315 combined with the MonoRTM radiative transfer model. Because MWR-observed BT  
316 change is not only due to AOD change but also reflects the change of meteorological  
317 conditions due to the AOD change, we apply WRF-Chem and MonoRTM radiation  
318 transfer model instead of radiative transfer simulations only.

319 WRF-Chem simulation runs from 00:00 UTC on 17 December 2016 to 00:00 UTC on  
320 20 December 2016 (a 72-hour period). The simulation period is different from that of  
321 the retrieval because there are no updated emission fields for 2019 and 2020. The  
322 initial meteorological conditions used for the simulations are based on the National  
323 Center for Atmospheric Research (NCEP) Final Global Forecast System Operational  
324 Analysis (FNL) provided by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
325 (NOAA), with a  $1^\circ \times 1^\circ$  spatial resolution and a 6-hour temporal interval. The  
326 emission fields used here are Emissions Database for Global Atmospheric Research  
327 (EDGAR), MIX, and Multi-resolution Emission Inventory for China (MEIC) (Crippa

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328 et al., 2018; Li et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2014). The surface emissivity we used for  
329 simulation is the default data for WRF-Chem. The simulation domain encompasses  
330 the area of Beijing, Tianjin, and Hebei province (as shown in Figure 2a), with a center  
331 point at 40.00°N, 116.25°E. The model employs a three-tiered nesting configuration,  
332 featuring outer grids of  $40 \times 46$  with a 90 km horizontal spacing, middle grids of  $48 \times$   
333 60 with a 30 km horizontal spacing, and inner grids of  $51 \times 72$  with a 10 km  
334 horizontal spacing. The vertical atmosphere is segmented into 47 levels, ranging from  
335 the model's ground level to 100 hPa, encompassing both the surface and the upper  
336 atmosphere. Figure 3 illustrates the domains of the WRF model simulations and the  
337 location of the MWR deployed at the Beijing Nanjiao Meteorological Observatory in  
338 China. To further confirm our findings, we perform another set of parallel  
339 experiments lasting from 00:00 UTC on 3 December 2016 to 00:00 UTC on 5  
340 December 2016 (a 48-hour period) with the same settings. Additionally, to augment  
341 the representativeness of our results, analogous WRF-Chem simulations were  
342 executed during the boreal summer from 00:00 UTC on 5 July 2016 to 00:00 UTC on  
343 8 July 2016 (a 72-hour period). The choice of these simulation periods is based on the  
344 presence of significant pollution events, which provide a robust basis for examining  
345 the influence of aerosols on meteorological fields and the associated microwave BTs.  
346 The first day of both sets of experiments is used for model stabilization, and the  
347 subsequent days are utilized for analysis.

348 For the choices of physical parameterization schemes, we employ the Lin  
349 microphysics scheme, the rapid radiative transfer model for global climate model  
350 (GCM) applications (RRTMG) for shortwave radiation, the Yonsei University (YSU)  
351 boundary layer scheme, the Monin-Obukhov ground layer scheme, the Carbon-Bond  
352 Mechanism version Z (CBM-Z) for gas-phase chemistry, and the Model for  
353 Simulating Aerosol Interactions and Chemistry (MOSAIC). The model output has a  
354 one-hour temporal resolution. Here, we utilize AOD at 550 nm instead of 500 nm

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355 because WRF-Chem does not simulate AOD at 500 nm. Thus, 550 nm was selected as  
356 the closest available alternative wavelength in the WRF-Chem output.

357 To investigate the responses of surface downward microwave radiation to aerosol  
358 loadings, we also conducted two parallel experiments with and without aerosol  
359 emissions in the study. Two simulations that are respectively, designated as  
360 “EXP\_AER” and “EXP\_NOAER” are carried out. The EXP\_AER experiment is  
361 defined as a control simulation in which aerosol and aerosol precursor emission  
362 scheme is turned on. This aerosol emission includes emissions of carbon monoxide,  
363 nitrogen oxides, sulphate oxides, dust aerosols, biomass aerosols, biomass burning  
364 aerosols, sea salt aerosols and anthropogenic aerosols. The sensitivity experiment  
365 (“EXP\_NOAER”) is also conducted by closing corresponding aerosol and aerosol  
366 precursor emission scheme. The difference between control and sensitivity results are  
367 considered as the adjustments of vertical meteorological profiles to aerosol loadings.  
368 This method is also widely used to explore the radiative forcing of different kinds of  
369 aerosol and its effects on meteorological fields in previous studies (Chen et al., [2023c](#); 删除[gyliu]: 2023  
370 Matsui et al., 2018).

371 It is important to note that the aerosol-radiation interaction feature is activated in the  
372 WRF-Chem model to investigate the impact of aerosol loadings on meteorological  
373 fields. Subsequently, we input meteorological profile data from pollution cases  
374 without cloud cover at each grid point into the monochromatic radiative transfer  
375 model (MonoRTM) to calculate the corresponding BT responses at various  
376 frequencies within the K-band.

## 377 2.4 MonoRTM

378 The MonoRTM ([Clough et al., 2005; Huang et al., 2013](#)), developed by Atmospheric 删除[gyliu]: ,  
379 and Environmental Research (AER), is a radiative transfer model specifically

380 designed for microwave and millimeter-wave applications (Clough et al., 2005; |  
381 Huang et al., 2013). This model is particularly useful in the microwave radiation |  
382 calculation (Payne et al., 2011). In this study, it is used to calculate the brightness |  
383 temperatures (BTs) associated with the simulated temperature and humidity vertical |  
384 profiles from WRF-Chem.

删除[gyliu]: (Clough et al., 2005).

### 385 3. Results

#### 386 3.1 Model fitting and validation

387 The AERONET AOD data are used for training and validating the model. Specifically, |  
388 daytime AERONET AOD data are used for model training and testing. To ensure the |  
389 representativeness of the sampling, we have partitioned the data such that the 3/4 of |  
390 the data in each month are designated as the training set, while the remaining 1/4 |  
391 serves as the testing set. After training, nighttime MWR BT measurements are input |  
392 into the model to generate nighttime AOD estimates. These estimates are then |  
393 compared with nighttime AERONET lunar AOD measurements for validation.

394 The retrieval model has great fitting performance, as shown by Figure 4. The model |  
395 fitting reaches correlation coefficients of 0.98 for the 440 nm, 500 nm, 675 nm, 870 |  
396 nm, and 1020 nm, respectively, albeit with a minor systematic low bias for high AOD |  
397 scenarios, which is similar to MODIS AOD products (Levy et al., 2013). Due to the |  
398 consistent model performance in all wavelengths (Figure 4), we will focus on results |  
399 at 500 nm in the following discussions since this is typically the reference wavelength |  
400 for satellite remote sensing (Levy et al., 2013).

删除[gyliu]: Due to the consistent model performance in all wavelengths (Figure 4), we will focus on results at 440 nm in the following discussions.

401 Figure 5 displays the comparison between the daytime and nighttime AOD |  
402 independently retrieved by MWR using our algorithm and those from the sun and |  
403 lunar photometer from December 2019 to October 2020. The model, tested during the |  
404 daytime, utilized a dataset of over 3,000 samples and achieved correlation coefficients

405 of 0.96 for 500 nm (Figure 5a). The performance in 500 nm of the test set (R = 0.96, | 删除[gyliu]: 440  
406 RMSE = 0.08, and MAPE = 0.11) is slightly inferior to the train set (R = 0.98, RMSE  
407 = 0.07, and MAPE = 0.10) regarding the statistical metrics (Figure 5a). Most points  
408 are concentrated on the 1:1 line, with RMSE within 0.08 and MAPE within 0.11. The | 删除[gyliu]: 11  
409 accuracy of this estimation is similar to existing shortwave-based algorithms based on  
410 the satellite sensor such as the MODIS aerosol products (Levy et al., 2013). However,  
411 the key advantage of using microwave BT is the capability to retrieve AOD at night, a  
412 feature lacking in these shortwave-based algorithms (Figure 5b). Nighttime AOD  
413 retrieval reaches comparable performance to that for daytime, exhibiting a high  
414 correlation of 0.91 with lunar AOD. A minor systematic bias towards lower values in  
415 high AOD scenarios is also noted, with RMSE about 0.14 and MAPE approximately  
416 0.27, indicating the overall satisfactory performance of MWR retrievals. In addition, | 删除[gyliu]: 28  
417 the MWR results also well capture the spectral variation of AOD for fine (440 nm to  
418 870 nm Angstrom index > 1) and coarse mode particles (440 nm to 870 nm Angstrom  
419 index < 1), as shown in Figure 6. Moreover, the MWR tends to underestimate AOD  
420 during both daytime and nighttime, particularly at shorter wavelengths. As the  
421 wavelength increases, this underestimation diminishes, and the MWR measurements  
422 align more closely with AERONET observations (Figure 6). This trend is observed  
423 for both fine-mode and coarse-mode aerosols (Figure 6).

424 For retrieving vertical temperatures profiles, similarly to the AOD, we also partitioned  
425 the data such that the 3/4 of the data in each month are designated as the training set,  
426 while the remaining 1/4 serves as the testing set. Our algorithm simultaneously  
427 retrieves daytime and nighttime temperature profiles. As shown in Figure 7 & Figure  
428 8, atmospheric temperature retrieval results also demonstrate good performance and  
429 exceed those of AOD. This is expected since the main signals in the microwave come  
430 from emitted radiation by the atmosphere that is directly related to temperature. In  
431 detail, R is generally above 0.98 and all of the RMSEs are around 1.0 K in the training  
432 set (Figure 7). Similarly, the model's performance on the test set is somewhat lower | 删除[gyliu]: for

433 compared to the training set, but remains satisfactory overall. Specifically, R is above  
434 0.95 and all of the RMSEs are around 1.8 K the test set (Figure 8), comparable to  
435 previous studies using MWR to retrieval temperature profiles with an optimal  
436 estimation method (Cimini et al., 2006). The significant biases at some pressure levels  
437 may be attributed to the larger biases between sounding data and reanalysis data that  
438 is used to train the model (Varga and Breuer, 2022). Our model also well captures the  
439 characteristics of the climatological mean temperature vertical profile, with the error  
440 in each pressure layer within 1.5 K (Figure 9a). There exist greater RMSE and bias in  
441 low pressure levels partially due to the higher temperature variations in these levels,  
442 the overall RMSE and bias serve to illustrate the exemplary performance of the model  
443 in estimating the vertical temperature profiles (Figure 9b & c).

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444 In summary, the day and nighttime MWR-based AOD and vertical temperature  
445 profiles derived from our algorithm successfully capture the AOD variability and  
446 vertical temperature profile characteristics with satisfactory accuracy. This model also  
447 unveils the spectral characteristics of AOD, with higher wavelengths corresponding to  
448 lower AOD. With great performance through model validation, we will investigate the  
449 diurnal cycle of AOD in the following section.

### 450 **3.2 The diurnal cycle of MWR derived AOD**

451 We further examine the day-night differences in the AOD retrieved by MWR and  
452 compare them to those revealed by surface photometer. It should be noted that the  
453 analysis period in the following section remains from December 2019 to October  
454 2020, contingent upon the availability of data. We acknowledge that the analysis  
455 period may not fully represent typical regional conditions due to COVID-19 (Lv et al.,  
456 2020; Sulaymon et al., 2021). However, the impact of COVID was mainly confined to  
457 January–March 2020. By April 2020, Beijing had largely recovered, with industrial  
458 and anthropogenic pollution sources returning to normal (Liu et al., 2022b; Tao et al.,  
459 2021).

460 Figure 10a-b illustrates the mean diurnal cycles of the photometer AOD and  
461 MWR-based AOD derived from BT observations at the Beijing Nanjiao  
462 Meteorological Observatory in China. Although the MWR-based AOD tends to  
463 underestimate extreme values relative to the photometer AOD, the MWR  
464 measurements exhibits strong agreement with the photometer AOD (Figure 10a-b).

465 As shown in Figure 10a, mean diurnal AOD follows a bi-modal temporal distribution,  
466 with a greater peak  $\sim$ 21:00 and a secondary peak at  $\sim$ 03:00. The AOD stays relatively  
467 low from 06:00 to 10:00, gradually rises from 10:00 to 21:00, reaching the first peak  
468 at 21:00. After that greater peak, the AOD decreases from 22:00 to 00:00, and then  
469 increases again until it reaches the second peak at 03:00. This pattern is consistent  
470 across other spectral bands (675 nm, 870 nm, and 1020 nm, not shown here). This  
471 decrease may be attributed to the higher relative humidity near 23:00 and the  
472 corresponding aerosol scavenging effect, but further investigation is needed in future  
473 studies. Moreover, although the MWR-based AOD seems to underestimate the  
474 extreme pollutions with high AOD compared with photometer observation, since the  
475 number of upper outliers of AOD of the photometer is higher than that of MWR, the  
476 overall temporal pattern is similar to that of the photometer (Figure 10a).

477 The mean and median AOD values further support the above findings, highlighting  
478 higher nighttime AOD compared to daytime (Figure 10b). This difference is validated  
479 by the boxplots of MWR-based AOD and photometer AOD (Figure 10c), passing the  
480 Student's *t*-test significance test with  $p \leq 0.05$ . Specifically, the median daytime  
481 AOD is in the range of 0.15 to 0.28 for MWR and 0.15 to 0.27 for the photometer,  
482 while the median nighttime AOD is greater than 0.34 for MWR and higher than 0.30  
483 for the photometer. Similarly, the mean daytime AOD is in the range of 0.25 to 0.35  
484 for MWR and 0.24 to 0.32 for the photometer, while the mean nighttime AOD is  
485 greater than 0.40 for MWR and over 0.44 for the photometer. This discrepancy  
486 between daytime and nighttime AOD has also been observed in previous studies  
487 estimating nighttime AOD by incorporating infrared radiance measurement from the

刪除[gyliu]: Because the number of nighttime AODs from the photometer is smaller than that during the daytime, but the number of nighttime AODs from the MWR is nearly equal to that during the daytime, this

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488 Atmospheric InfraRed Sounder (AIRS) instrument into the machine learning model,  
489 further corroborated by surface and space lidar measurements (Liu et al., 2024).

490 Notably, the mean AOD tends to exceed the median AOD, partly due to the long-tail  
491 distribution of AOD and the presence of high extreme values (Sayer et al., 2019).  删除[gyliu]: Moreover, AOD at the other wavelengths (

492 We have further divided the results into four seasons and validated that the diurnal  
493 cycle of AOD is consistent across all seasons, with the most pronounced diurnal  
494 difference occurring in summer (Figure S1). It is noted that the lunar AOD is not  
495 available for JJA, which further underscores the supplementary role of  
496 MWR-predicted AOD in complementing lunar AOD measurements. The seasonal  
497 variation of AOD diurnal cycle agrees with previous studies derived from  
498 downscaling reanalysis datasets (Wang et al., 2025). The more significant diurnal  
499 difference in AOD during summer can be attributed to two primary factors. Firstly,  
500 the intense solar radiation and high temperatures prevalent in summer significantly  
501 promote the formation of aerosol particles through the process of gas-to-particle  
502 conversion (Chen et al., 2023a). Secondly, the high humidity levels in summer  
503 facilitate aerosol hygroscopic growth, which enhances aerosol extinction (Chen et al.,  
504 2023b; Lv et al., 2017). AOD at the other wavelengths (440 nm, 675 nm, 870 nm, and  
505 1020 nm) exhibit similar diurnal patterns with peaks at about 20:00-22:00 (not shown  
506 here) and higher nighttime AOD in general (Figure 6).

507 The increase in nighttime AOD compared to daytime can be attributed to various  
508 factors, including a shallower mixed layer due to reduced horizontal mixing and  
509 transport, a decrease in atmospheric environmental capacity, higher relative humidity,  
510 enhanced aerosol hygroscopic growth, or intensified pollution emissions (Brock et al.,  
511 2016). Similar observations of elevated nighttime particle matter concentration have  
512 been reported in previous studies (Perrone et al., 2022; Su et al., 2023). However,  
513 research on nighttime aerosol properties is limited, warranting further analysis to fully  
514 understand these discrepancies, which exceeds the scope of this study.

515 In summary, by using the BT measured by the MWR to retrieve AOD during  
516 nighttime, we can uncover the daily cycle of AOD. This improves our understanding  
517 of the day-nighttime AOD variability, provides insights into the diurnal changes of  
518 atmospheric pollution and sheds light on nighttime aerosol radiative effects.

519 **3.3 Physical interpretation**

520 Since the machine learning technique does not necessarily represent the physical  
521 relationship between aerosol loading and microwave radiances, we further verify the  
522 theoretical basis of our technique by analyzing the observed temperature and RH  
523 profiles under various AOD levels and using WRF-Chem combined with MonoRTM  
524 simulations. The simulation is designed to establish a connection between aerosol  
525 loadings and microwave radiances. A set of sensitivity experiments with and without  
526 aerosol forcing is conducted using WRF-Chem as described in Section 2, whose  
527 atmospheric profiles, including temperature, water vapor, gases and aerosols, are then  
528 used as the inputs to the MonoRTM to simulate the downward microwave radiances  
529 (represented by BT) observed by the MWR. To mitigate the influence of surface  
530 temperature on BT, we maintained a consistent surface temperature range (265 K-270  
531 K) throughout the simulation.

532 We first analyze the temperature and RH profiles from sounding observations under  
533 various AOD levels (Figure 11a-b & d-e). These AOD levels include light pollution  
534 ( $AOD < 0.2$ ), medium pollution ( $0.2 < AOD < 0.5$ ), and heavy pollution ( $AOD > 0.5$ )  
535 scenarios. The selection of this threshold is to ensure a balanced sample size for each  
536 scenario. All differences in the temperature and RH profiles under different AOD  
537 scenarios passed the significance test with  $p \leq 0.1$  by the  $t$ -test. For the temperature  
538 profiles, a higher AOD corresponds to a lower temperature in the upper atmosphere,  
539 and vice versa (Figure 11a). However, for the low-level atmosphere, the temperature  
540 might first increase as AOD increases and then decrease with AOD as increases. This

541 is associated with aerosol type and optical properties (Che et al., 2024; Mahowald et  
542 al., 2011). For the RH vertical profiles, RH increases as AOD increases at all pressure  
543 levels (Figure 11b). This may be attributed to aerosol hygroscopic growth effect,  
544 leading to a higher AOD (Quan et al., 2018). Notably, since the collocation between  
545 MWR and Level 2 sun photometer AOD products from the AERONET is already  
546 clear-sky data, the vertical profiles of RH is relatively low. BTs at 22.23 GHz  
547 calculated by these vertical profiles from MonoRTM also demonstrate that BTs tend  
548 to increase with AOD (Figure 11c). BTs at other frequencies in the K band also show  
549 similar trend (not shown here). We have also conducted a detailed seasonal analysis  
550 and found similar responses in temperature, RH, and BT to AOD, with minor  
551 differences likely attributable to variations in aerosol types (Figure S2). Similarly, the  
552 WRF-Chem output also demonstrates the sensitiveness of temperature and RH  
553 vertical profiles to aerosol loading, contributing to statistically significant BT  
554 difference under different pollution levels (Figure 11d-f). Although there might be a  
555 significant discrepancy of BT between WRF simulation results and observations with  
556 regards to the range, the trend and overall pattern is quite similar, revealing the similar  
557 trends in BT as a function of AOD (Figure 11f). This suggests that despite the range  
558 discrepancies, the fundamental relationships between BT and AOD are consistent  
559 between observation and simulation. The above observational evidence might indicate  
560 that MWR estimate AOD by detecting the temperature and humidity profile  
561 differences caused by the presence of aerosols, but the impact of aerosols on  
562 microwave radiative transfer is highly complex, involving multiple processes such as  
563 aerosol scattering and absorption, changes in surface temperature and  
564 temperature/humidity profiles due to aerosol radiative and hygroscopic effects, and  
565 the nonlinear relationship between aerosol properties in the microwave and visible  
566 spectra. The above-mentioned complexities inspire us to conduct further simulation to  
567 verify the theoretical basis of our technique.

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568 Furthermore, to isolate the impact of AOD on BT, we have fixed the surface  
569 temperature between 270 K and 275 K in our analysis. The selection of this specific  
570 surface temperature range effectively minimizes the influence of temperature  
571 variability on BT. Our simulation results, illustrated in Figure 12 and 13, indicate that  
572 for all frequencies in the K band, BT increases as AOD levels increase. This  
573 phenomenon exists in both the daytime and nighttime. Specifically, at 22.23 GHz, BT  
574 levels for clean conditions range from 60 K to 80 K, while for polluted conditions  
575 they range from 80 to 130 K, showing a statistically significant difference at both  
576 daytime and nighttime (Figure 12a & 13a). BT levels at other frequencies support this  
577 trend, indicating that BT tends to increase with AOD (Figure 12b-d & 13b-d). The  
578 increase of K band BT with AOD might be related to coherent changes of water vapor  
579 and aerosols, either due to aerosol absorption of water or meteorological conditions  
580 that affect both water vapor and aerosols. When AOD is higher, RH is typically also  
581 higher, accompanied by more water vapor due to the hygroscopic growth effect of  
582 aerosols, as supported by previous analysis (Figure 11a & c). Since the K band  
583 includes the water vapor absorption line near 22.235 GHz, the BT in the K band is  
584 sensitive to water vapor, and thus the BT increases as AOD increases (Liu et al., 2014;  
585 Xie et al., 2013), further strengthening the theoretical foundation of the proposed  
586 approach.

587 In contrast to the observations in the K band, an analysis of the V band frequencies  
588 reveals a consistent decrease in BT with the reduction of AOD levels, applicable to  
589 both diurnal and nocturnal periods (Figure 12e-h & 13e-h), which well corresponds to  
590 the cooling effect of aerosols. Notably, at a frequency of 51.76 GHz, the BT levels  
591 exhibit a range of 264 K to 270 K under pristine atmospheric conditions, whereas  
592 under polluted conditions, these levels are observed to be between 262 K and 265 K.  
593 Although the magnitude of this change is less pronounced than that observed in the K  
594 band, it passes the statistical significance ( $p \leq 0.1$  by the *t*-test), indicating a reliable  
595 and measurable effect. The detailed physical interpretation as follows: due to the

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删除[gyliu]: The above-mentioned conclusion was further verified by simulations lasting from 0000 UTC on 3 December 2016 to 0000 UTC on 5 December 2016 (a 48-hour period) with the same settings (not shown).

596 presence of the oxygen absorption band within the frequency range of the V band, it is  
597 highly sensitive to changes in atmospheric temperature (Van Leeuwen et al., 2001).  
598 Variations in AOD can influence the atmospheric temperature profile as shown by  
599 observation and simulation (Figure 11b & d). Consequently, in cases when AOD is  
600 high, the BT in the V band decreases.

601 The above-mentioned conclusion was further verified by simulations lasting from  
602 00:00 UTC on 3 December 2016 to 00:00 UTC on 5 December 2016 (a 48-hour  
603 period) with the same settings (not shown). In conclusion, MWR has the potential to  
604 estimate AOD by identifying the differences in temperature and humidity profiles, as  
605 well as the direct scattering and absorption signals that arise from varying aerosol  
606 loadings. While previous studies have demonstrated that large aerosol particles,  
607 particularly dust aerosols, can significantly influence microwave radiation and BT (Ge  
608 et al., 2008; Hong et al., 2008), the primary mechanism by which MWR estimates  
609 AOD in this study might be through detecting the changes of temperature and RH  
610 profiles.

611 To deepen our understanding of the impact of aerosol loading on longwave radiation,  
612 we conducted a comparative analysis using WRF-Chem. By comparing scenarios with  
613 aerosol loadings (EXP\_AER) and without aerosol loadings (EXP\_NOAER), we  
614 examined the differences in AOD, surface temperature (ST) and ground downward  
615 longwave radiation (GDLR). This comparison is specifically designed to examine the  
616 impact of aerosol loading on longwave radiation, particularly its spatial distribution.  
617 As such, no BT information is generated or output in this comparison experiment. The  
618 findings reveal that higher aerosol concentration levels have a negative effect on ST  
619 (Figure 14b & e), particularly during the daytime (Figure 14b), while positively  
620 influencing GDLR (Figure 14c & f), especially at nighttime (Figure 14f), which is  
621 consistent with the above MonoRTM calculations.

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622 The validity of the aforementioned conclusion was further corroborated through  
623 simulations that spanned from 00:00 UTC on 3 December 2016 to 00:00 UTC on 5  
624 December 2016, encompassing a continuous 48-hour period, utilizing identical  
625 settings (not shown here). Additionally, to augment the representativeness of our  
626 results, analogous WRF-Chem simulations were executed during the boreal summer.  
627 Specifically, these simulations were conducted from 00:00 UTC on 5 July 2016 to  
628 00:00 UTC on 8 July 2016, covering a 72-hour duration, and they also yielded  
629 consistent conclusions (Figure S3-S5).

## 630 4. Conclusions and Discussions

631 This study introduces a new method for estimating clear sky AOD using BT  
632 measurements in the K and V band obtained from the MWR. By establishing a strong  
633 correlation ( $R = 0.96$ , RMSE = 0.11, and MAPE = 0.11 in the daytime test set)  
634 between the photometer AOD and multiple BTs derived from the MWR at the Beijing  
635 Nanjiao Meteorological Observatory using a machine learning algorithm, we were  
636 able to accurately retrieve nighttime AOD ( $R = 0.91$ , RMSE = 0.14, and MAPE =  
637 0.28) and vertical temperature profiles ( $R > 0.95$  for all levels and RMSE < 2.20 K for  
638 all levels). This model also well captures the spectral characteristics of AOD with  
639 higher Angstrom index for fine-mode dominated AOD and lower Angstrom index for  
640 coarse-mode dominated AOD. After applying this model with satisfactory  
641 performance, we show that the AOD diurnal cycle and find that AOD values follow a  
642 bi-modal diurnal cycle temporal distribution, with a greater peak ~21:00 and a  
643 secondary peak at ~03:00, suggesting higher nighttime AOD compared with daytime.  
644 The difference between daytime and nighttime AOD observed in the MWR data well  
645 agrees with sun and lunar photometer observation as well as particle matter  
646 concentration observations.

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647 The theoretical basis of our algorithm is also confirmed by analyzing observational  
648 vertical profiles of temperature and RH under various AOD levels and WRF-Chem as

649 well as MonoRTM simulations. Observation indicated that the vertical profiles of  
650 temperature and RH have statistically significant differences ( $p \leq 0.1$ ) under different  
651 AOD levels, suggesting that MWR might estimate AOD by detecting the temperature  
652 and humidity profile differences caused by various aerosol loadings. Simulation  
653 further indicated a consistent and mostly linear increase in BTs in the K band  
654 (increasing from ~70 K to ~105 K at 22.23 GHz) and decrease in BTs in the V band  
655 (decreasing from ~265 K to ~257 K at 51.76 GHz) with AOD (550 nm, the  
656 wavelength of WRF-Chem simulated AOD) across all time periods. Aerosols tend to  
657 induce a cooling effect at surface while increasing ground downward longwave  
658 radiation, especially at the nighttime. This study holds significant promise for  
659 environmental and climate research as MWR BT measurements can be obtained day  
660 and night without being hindered by bright surfaces. The methodology developed here  
661 can potentially be applied to MWRs in other locations worldwide to retrieve both  
662 daytime and nighttime AOD values. However, it is important to note that this  
663 investigation is preliminary and may contain uncertainties. It is also applicable under  
664 clear sky since during cloudy sky, the downward microwave radiation will be  
665 dominated by that emitted by clouds.

666 It is important to note that the analysis of AOD is specifically conducted for the  
667 Beijing Nanjiao Meteorological Observatory in China, covering the period from  
668 December 2019 to October 2020. This timeframe encompasses various climate and  
669 pollution conditions and is contingent upon the availability of data. Moving forward,  
670 we aim to extend the time range of our analysis and explore additional aerosol  
671 characteristics that may be inferred from BT measurements, such as aerosol  
672 absorption and layer height. This will enhance our understanding of aerosol  
673 distribution and properties, ultimately improving our ability to monitor and predict  
674 aerosol impacts on climate and the environment.

675

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676 **Code and data availability**

677 The sun photometer AOD data was obtained from [https://aeronet.gsfc.nasa.gov/new\\_web/webtool\\_aod\\_v3.html](https://aeronet.gsfc.nasa.gov/new_web/webtool_aod_v3.html), last access: 20 Apr 2024; the lunar photometer  
678 AOD data was obtained from [https://aeronet.gsfc.nasa.gov/new\\_web/webtool\\_aod\\_v3\\_lunar.html](https://aeronet.gsfc.nasa.gov/new_web/webtool_aod_v3_lunar.html), last access: 20 Apr 2024; the temperature profile from the ER  
679 A-5 reanalysis data was downloaded from <https://cds.climate.copernicus.eu/cdsap/p#!/dataset/reanalysis-era5-pressure-levels?tab=overview>, last access: 24 Apr 2024;  
680 the MonoRTM source code is available on <https://github.com/AER-RC/monoRTM>, last access 18 Apr 2024. The sounding data obtained from Beijing Meteor  
681 ological Station (station ID: 54511) was obtained from <https://weather.uwyo.edu/upperair/bufrrob.shtml>.  
682

687 **Author contributions**

688 GL and JL conceived the study and wrote the original draft. GL, SY, LZ, and CZ ran  
689 the simulation and conducted the corresponding analysis. All authors revised and  
690 reviewed the draft.

691 **Competing interests**

692 The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal  
693 relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

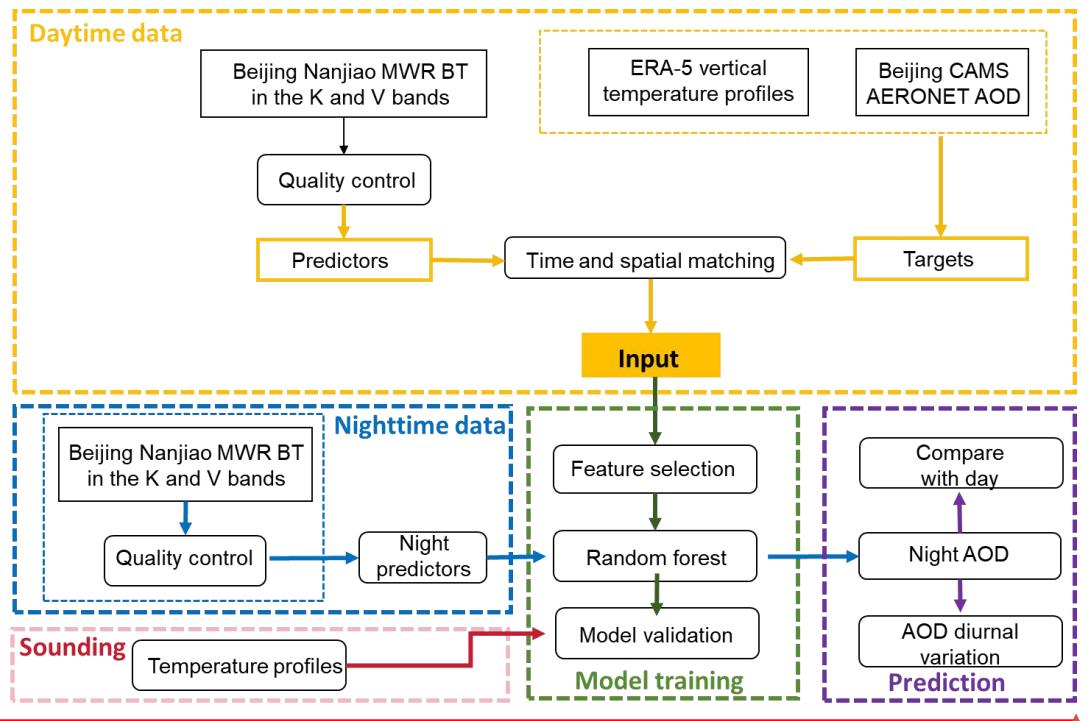
694 **Acknowledgments**

695 The authors thank Pawan Gupta and Elena Lind for their effort in establishing and  
696 maintaining Beijing-CAMS AERONET site.

697 **Financial support**

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699 42425503 and No. 42175144, and National Key Research and Development Program  
700 of China (grant no. 2023YFF0805401).

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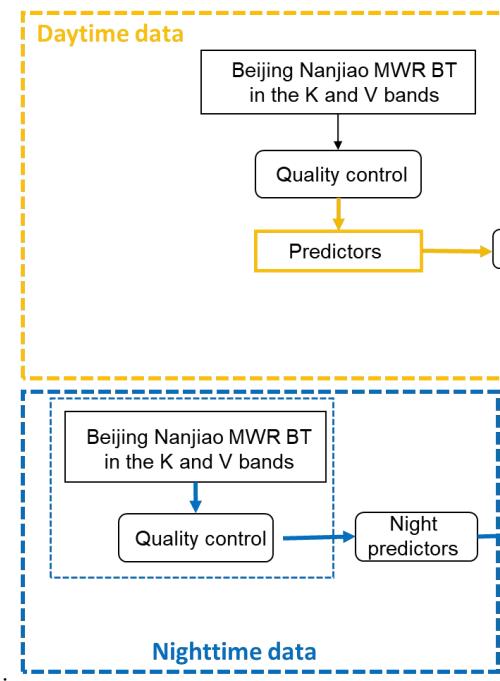
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Figure 1. The flowchart for clear sky nighttime AOD and vertical temperature profiles retrieval algorithm.

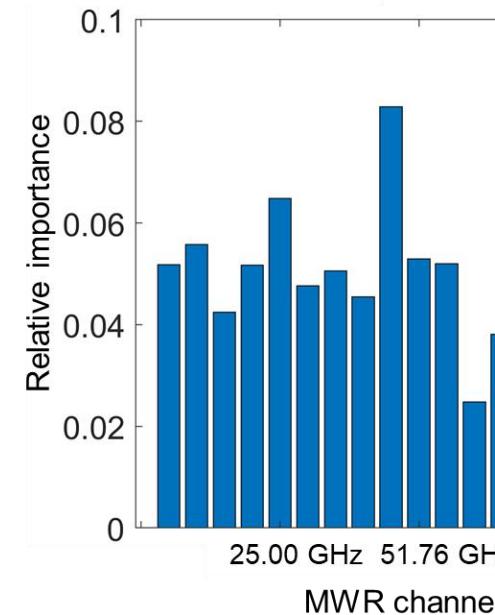
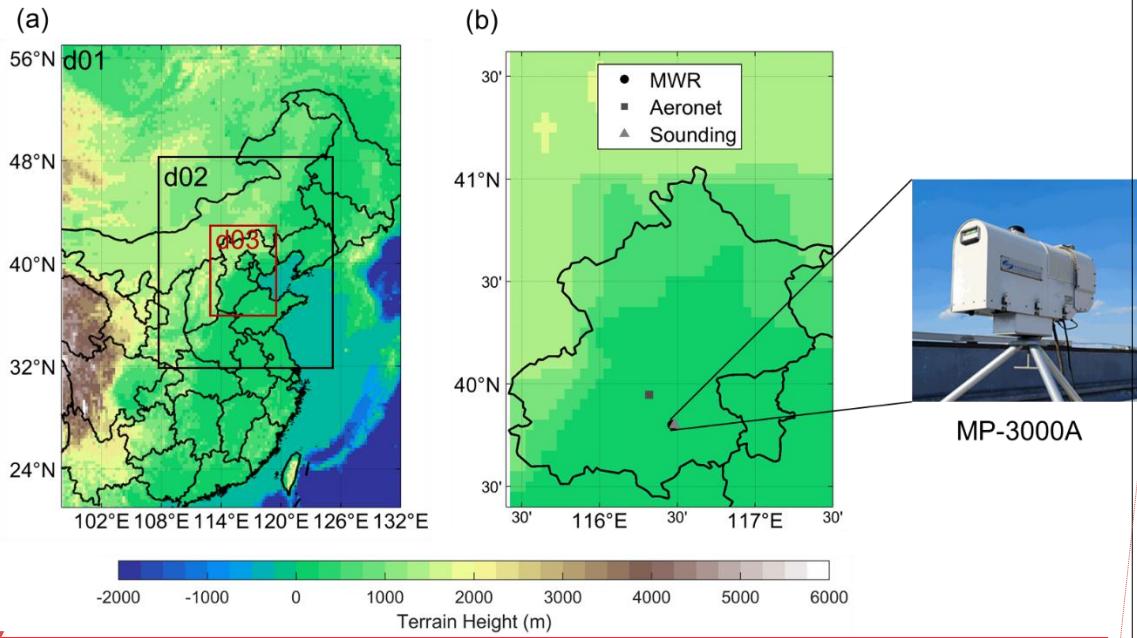
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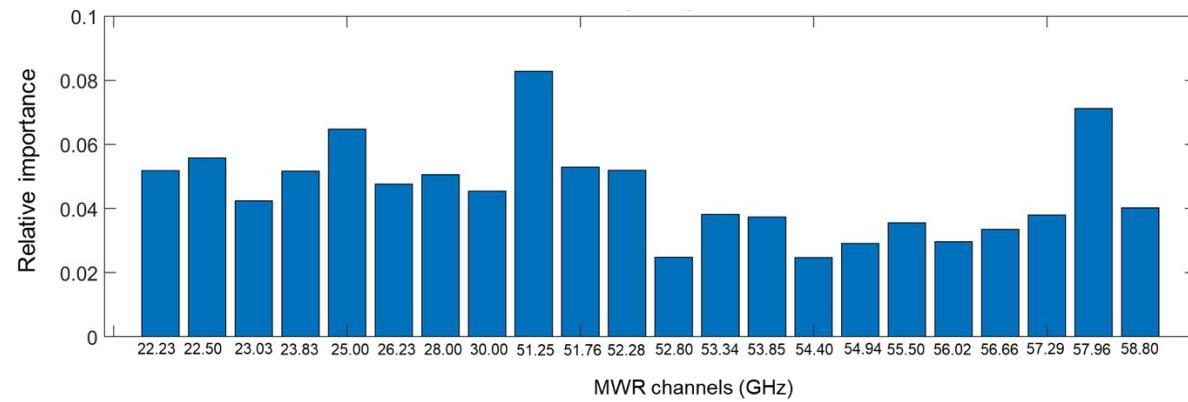
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706  
707 **Figure 2.** (a) Simulation domains of the WRF-Chem experiments. (b) Left panel: the  
708 locations of observation sites in this study. The black circle indicates the MWR, the  
709 dark grey square indicates the photometer, and the light triangle indicates the  
710 sounding. Right panel: the MWR used in this study is located in domain 3. This  
711 domain has a spatial resolution of 10 km. The MP-3000A MWR by Radiometrics is  
712 deployed at the Beijing Nanjiao Meteorological Observatory (39.80°N, 116.47°E) in  
713 China for brightness temperature (BT) measurements.

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Figure 2.



714

715 **Figure 3.** Relative importance of all BTs in different frequencies measured by MWR

716 in the RFR model. The vertical axis represents relative importance (unitless), and the

717 horizontal axis corresponds to different variable inputs (BTs in different frequencies

718 measured by MWR in the RFR model). These channels include eight K bands (22.23

719 GHz, 22.50 GHz, 23.03 GHz, 23.83 GHz, 25.00 GHz, 26.23 GHz, 28.00 GHz, 30.00

720 GHz) and fourteen V bands (51.25 GHz, 51.76 GHz, 52.28 GHz, 52.80 GHz, 53.34

721 GHz, 53.85 GHz, 54.40 GHz, 54.94 GHz, 55.50 GHz, 56.02 GHz, 56.66 GHz, 57.29

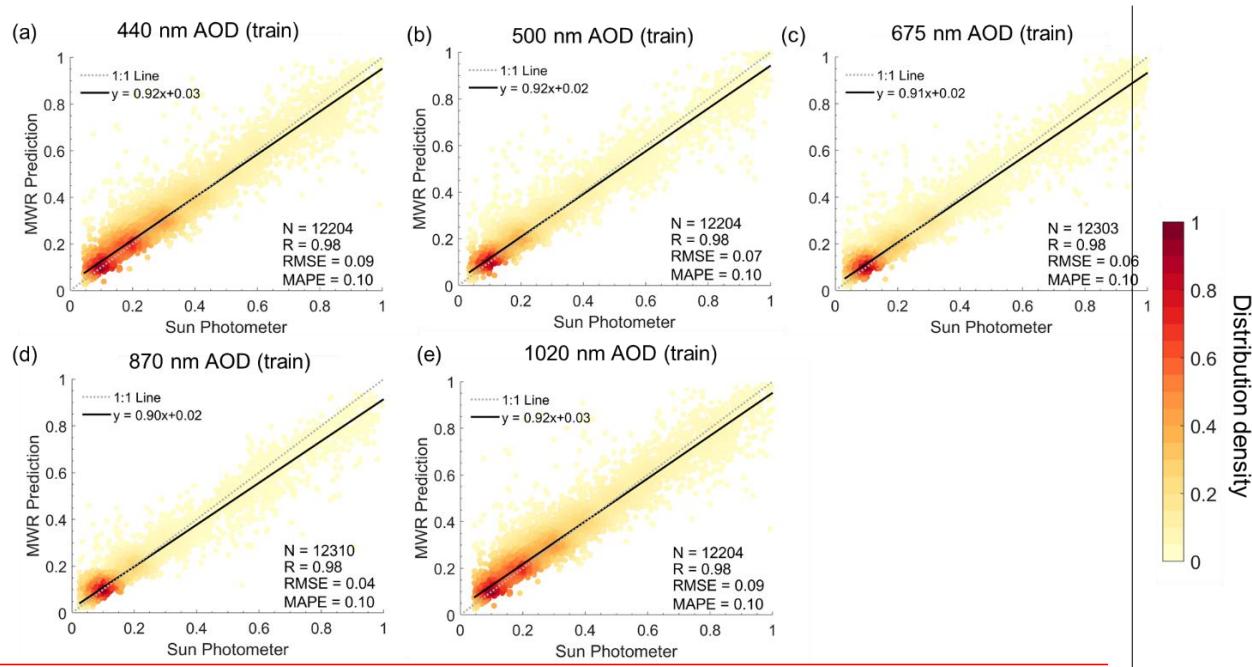
722 GHz, 57.96 GHz, 58.80 GHz).

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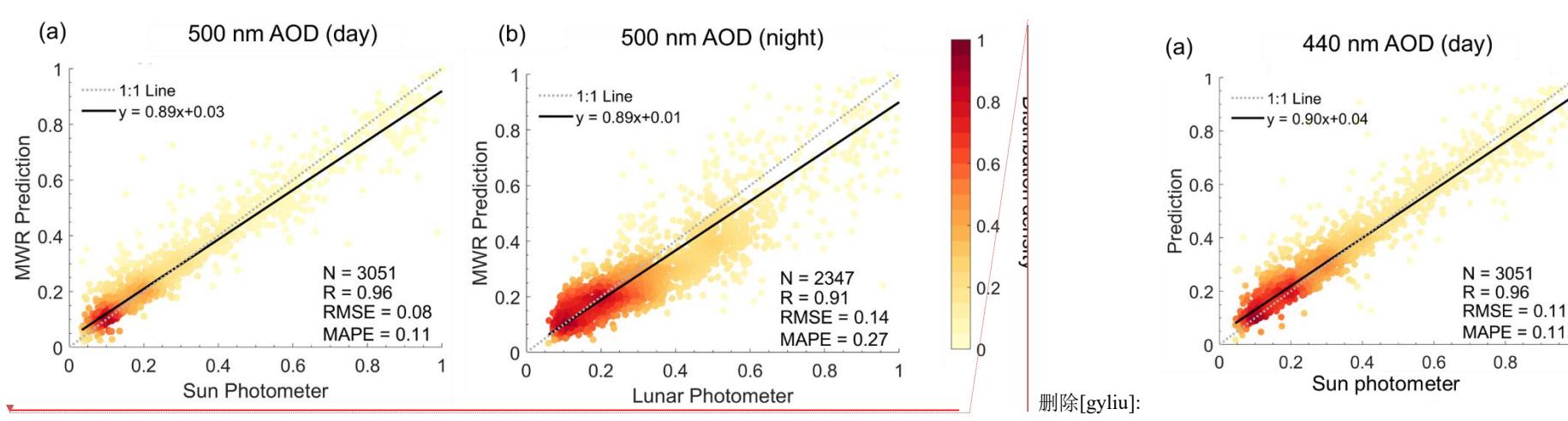
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725 **Figure 4.** Density scatterplots of daytime AOD in the train set of MWR and sun  
 726 photometer with (a) 440 nm, (b) 500 nm, (c) 675 nm, (d) 870 nm, and (e) 1020 nm.  
 727 The dashed dark gray line represents the 1:1 line, and the black solid line represents  
 728 the linear regression line.

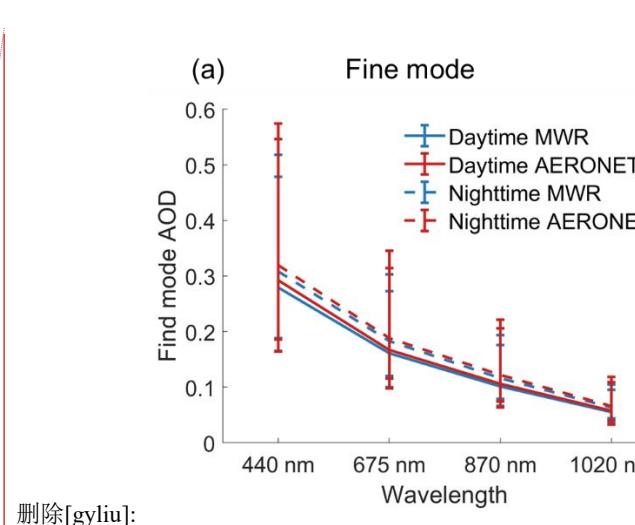
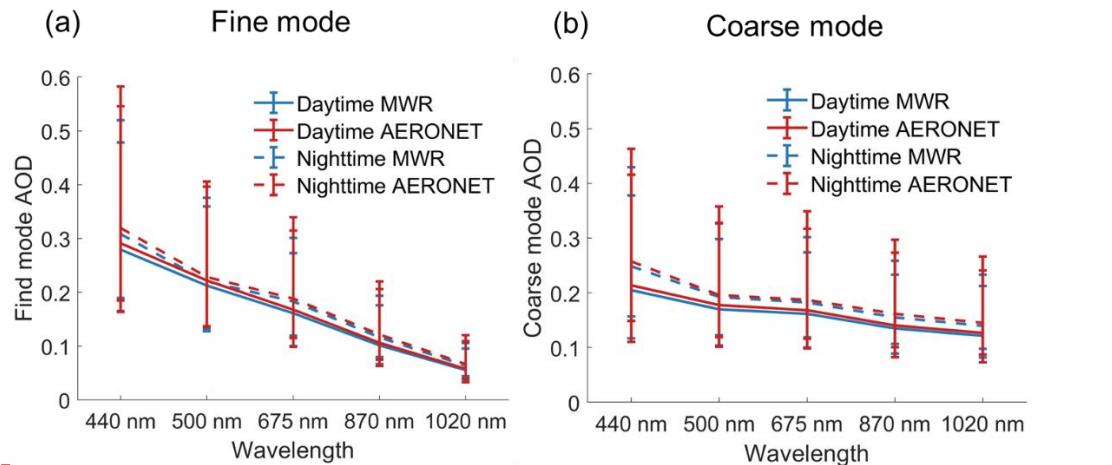
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**Figure 5.** Density scatterplots of 500 nm AOD in the test set of MWR and the photometer with (a) daytime, and (b) nighttime. The dashed dark gray line represents the 1:1 line, and the black solid line represents the linear regression line. Note that the daytime corresponds to 6:00 am to 6:00 pm for the local time (UTC+8), and nighttime corresponds to the remaining time.



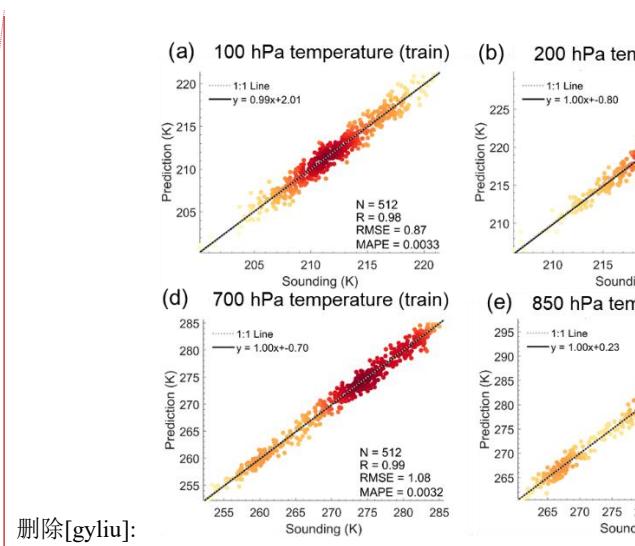
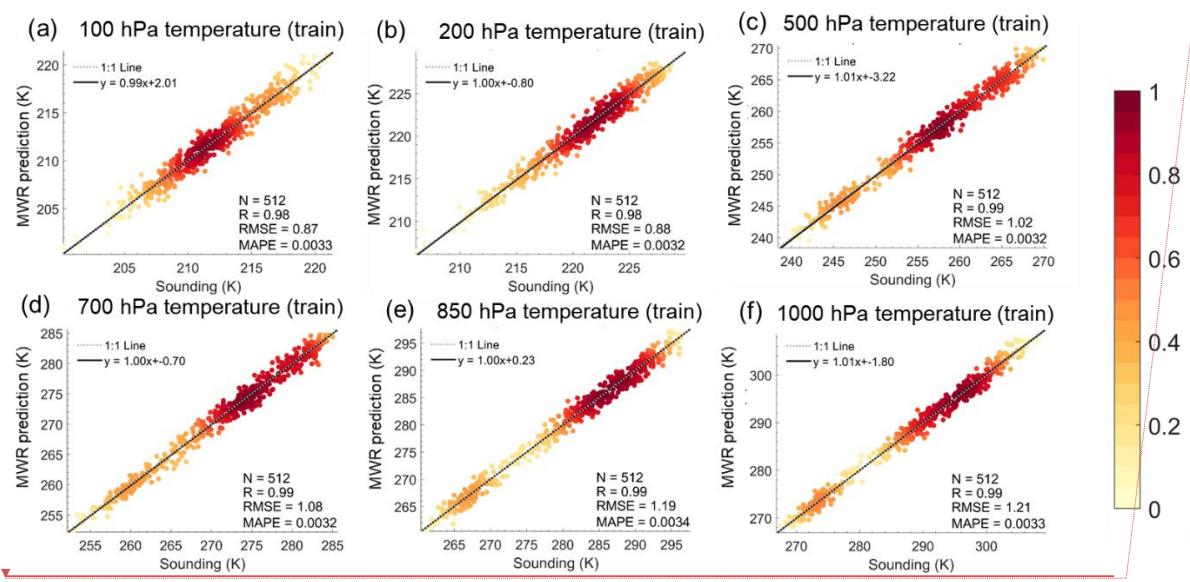


Figure 7. Density scatterplots of the vertical temperature profile in the train set of MWR and sounding data at (a) 100 hPa, (b) 200 hPa, (c) 500 hPa, (d) 700 hPa, (e) 850 hPa, and (f) 1000 hPa. The dashed dark gray line represents the 1:1 line, and the black solid line represents the linear regression line.

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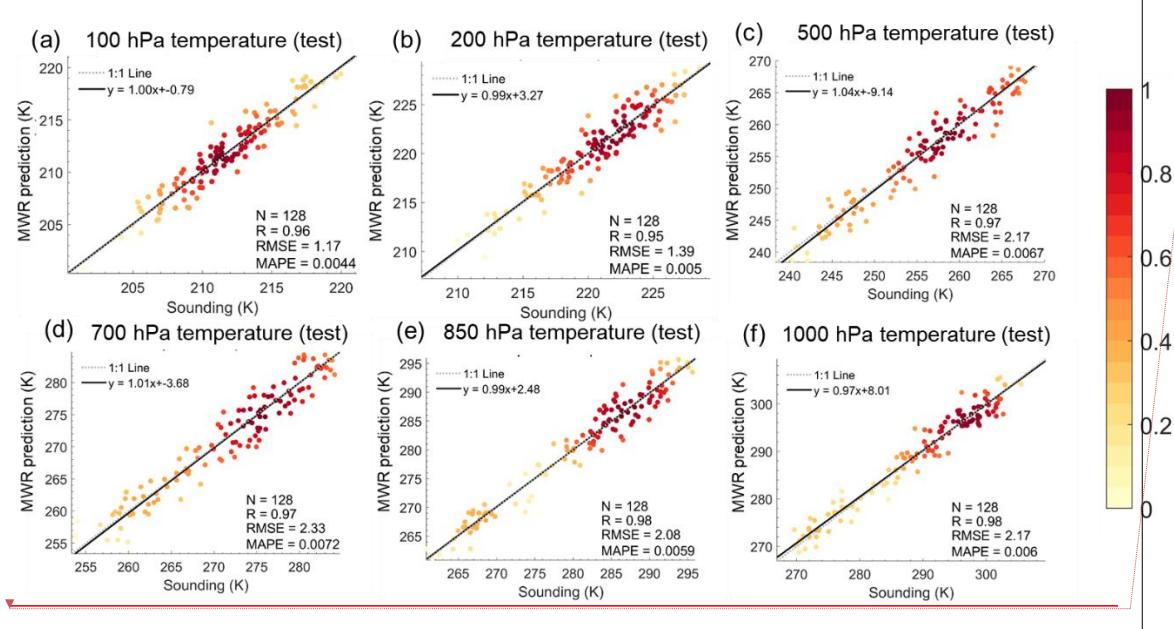
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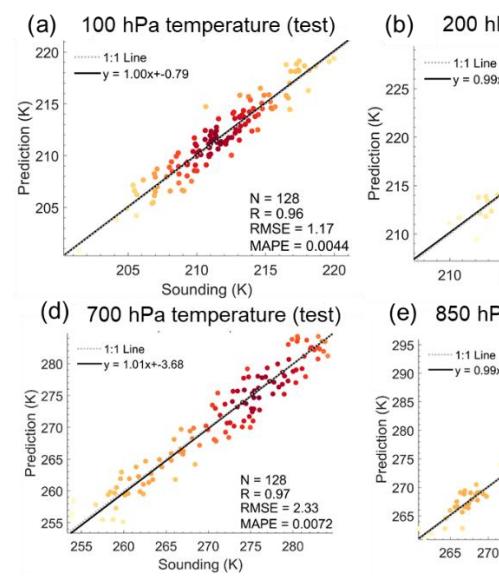
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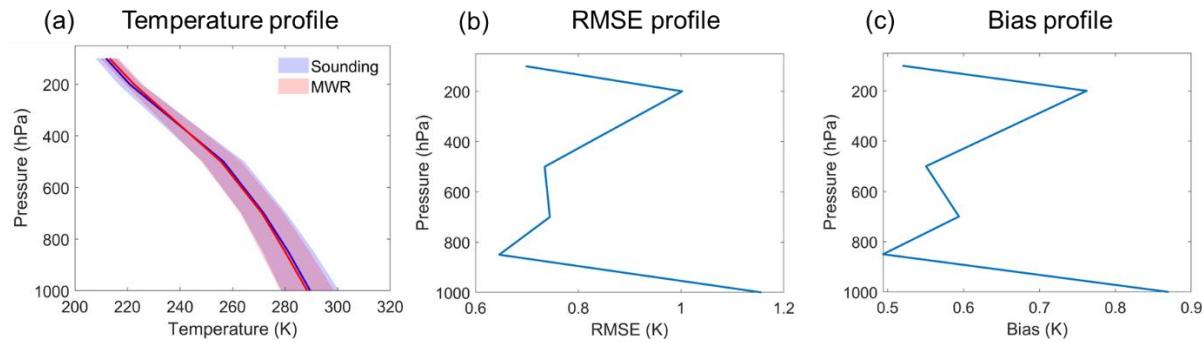
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753 **Figure 8.** Density scatterplots of the vertical temperature profile in the test set of  
 754 MWR and sounding data at (a) 100 hPa, (b) 200 hPa, (c) 500 hPa, (d) 700 hPa, (e)  
 755 850 hPa, and (f) 1000 hPa. The dashed dark gray line represents the 1:1 line, and the  
 756 black solid line represents the linear regression line.

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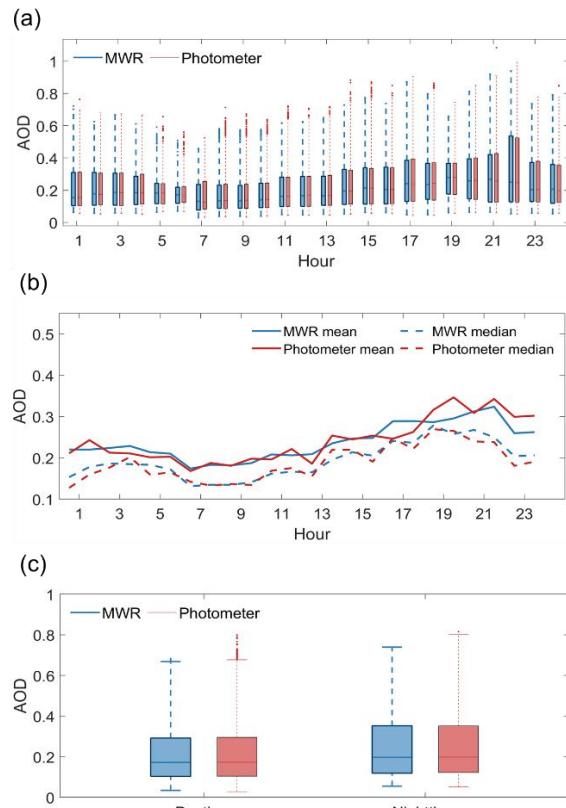


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759 **Figure 9.** (a) Climatological mean vertical temperature profiles from sounding (the  
 760 blue shading and line) and MWR (the red shading and line). (b) RMSE vertical profile  
 761 calculated between sounding and MWR temperature, and (c) Similar to (b), but for the  
 762 bias vertical profile.

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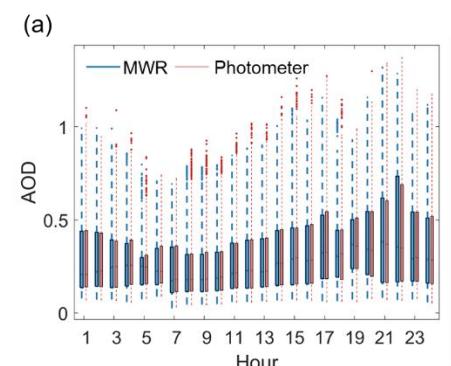
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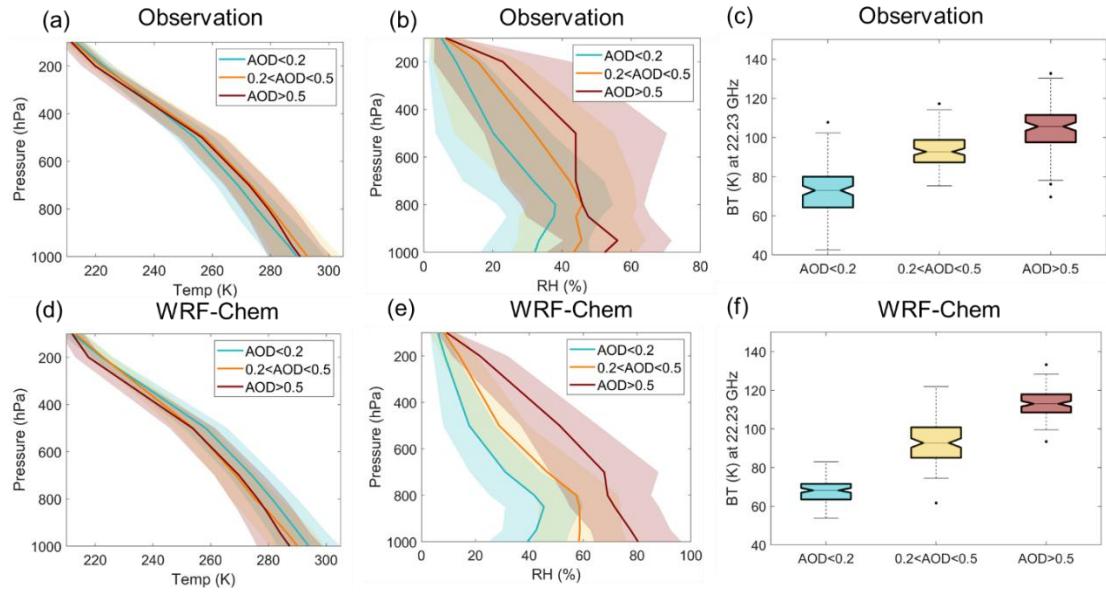
765 **Figure 10.** The diurnal cycle of annual mean MWR AOD and photometer AOD at  
 766 500 nm. (a) The boxplot of hourly MWR AOD (red boxplots) and photometer AOD  
 767 (blue boxplots). The small dots represent outliers greater than  $q_{75} + 1.5(q_{75} - q_{25})$   
 768 or less than  $q_{25} - 1.5(q_{75} - q_{25})$ , where  $q_{75}$  and  $q_{25}$  correspond to 75<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>  
 769 percentile. (b) The time series of mean AOD (solid lines) and median AOD (dashed  
 770 lines) of MWR AOD (red lines) and photometer AOD (blue lines). (c) The boxplot of  
 771 daytime and nighttime AOD. Blue boxes correspond to MWR data, and red boxes  
 772 correspond to photometer data.

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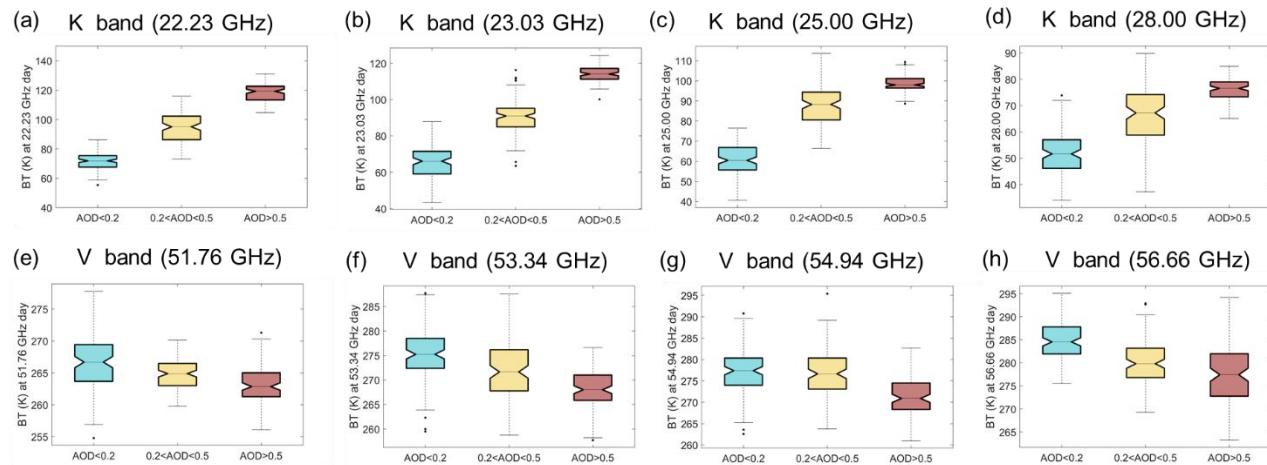


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775 **Figure 11.** (a-b) The observational vertical profiles of temperature (Temp, unit: K)  
 776 and relative humidity (RH, unit: %) under various AOD levels at 550 nm. The cyan,  
 777 orange, and red solid lines correspond to low-level polluted scenarios (AOD<0.2),  
 778 mid-level polluted scenarios (0.2<AOD<0.5), and high-level polluted scenarios  
 779 (AOD>0.5). (c) Their corresponding brightness temperature (BT, unit: K) at 22.23  
 780 GHz calculated by MonoRTM. (d-f) Similar to a-c, but for the WRF-Chem simulation.  
 781 The shadings represent the spread of samples with one standard deviation. All  
 782 differences have passed the significance test of  $p\text{-value}\leq 0.01$  by Student's  $t$ -test.

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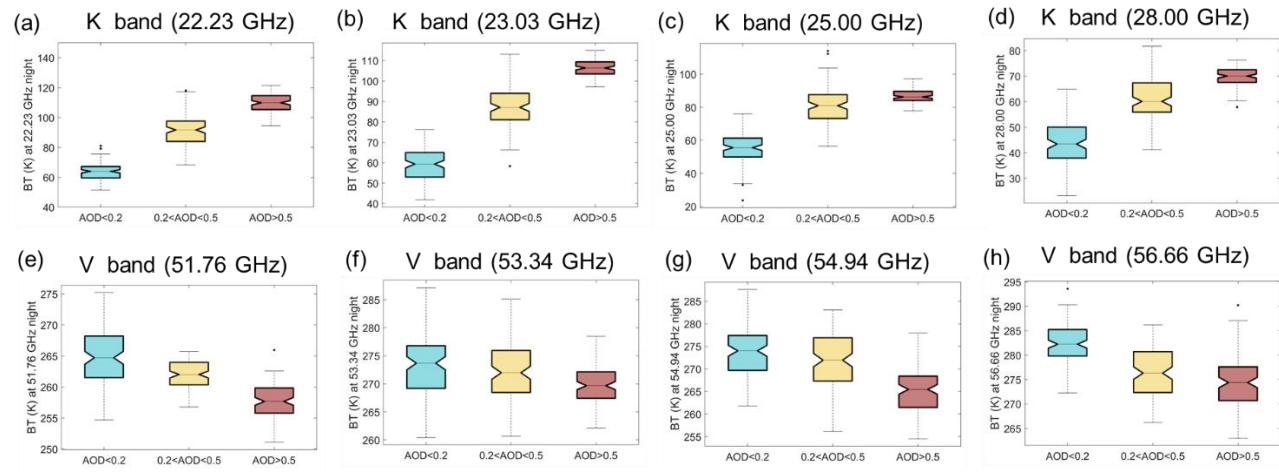


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786 **Figure 12.** The boxplots of relationship between BT and AOD at 550 nm when fixing  
 787 the surface temperature at 270-275 K from 00:00 UTC 18 December 2016 to 00:00  
 788 UTC 20 December 2016 in the WRF-Chem simulation. The frequencies of BT are (a)  
 789 22.23 GHz, (b) 23.03 GHz, (c) 25.00 GHz, (d) 28.00 GHz, (e) 51.76 GHz, (f) 53.34  
 790 GHz, (g) 54.94 GHz, and (h) 56.66 GHz during the daytime.

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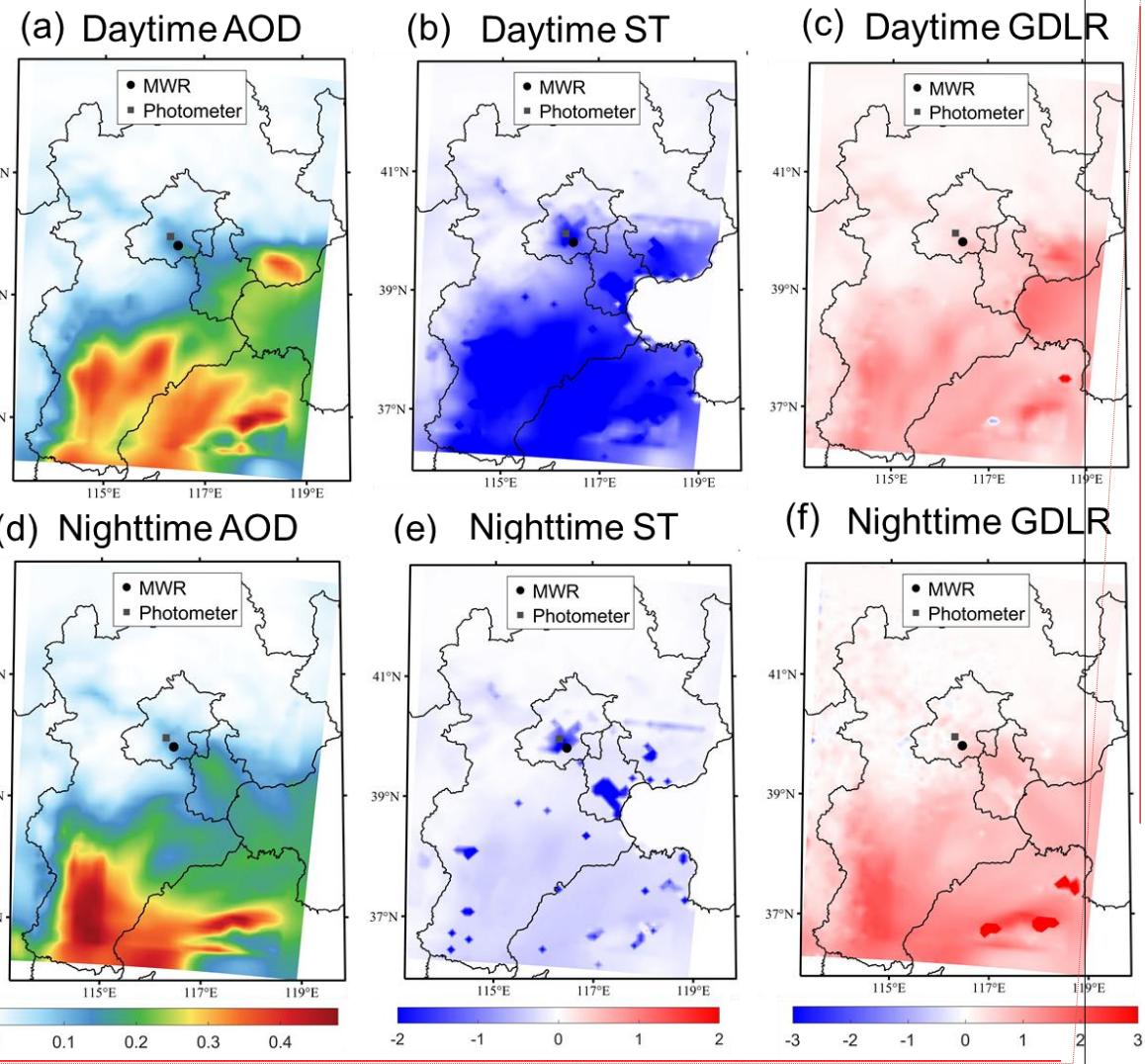
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793 **Figure 13.** Similar to Figure 12, but for the nighttime.

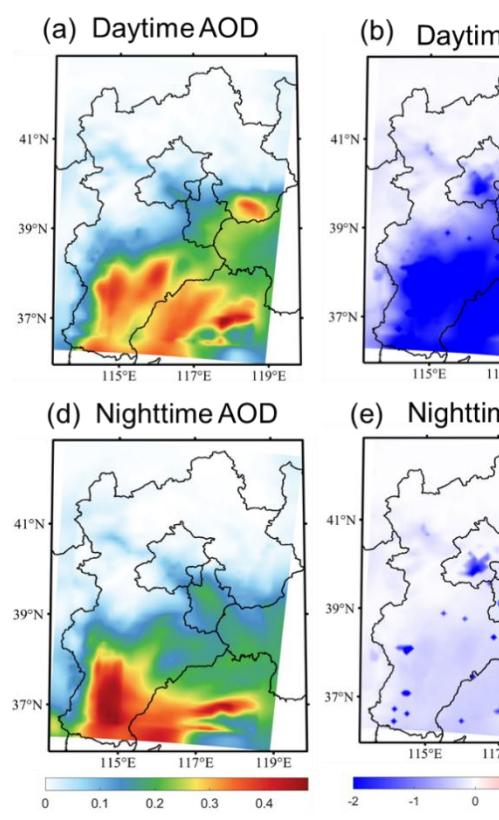
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797 **Figure 14.** The difference of (a, d) aerosol optical depth (AOD, unitless), (b, e)  
 798 surface temperature (ST, K), and (c, f) ground downward longwave radiation (GDLR,   
 799 W/m<sup>2</sup>) between EXP\_AER and EXP\_NOAER experiments  
 800 (EXP\_AER-EXP\_NOAER) during the (a-c) daytime and (d-f) nighttime. The black  
 801 circle indicates the MWR, and the dark grey square indicates the photometer. The  
 802 daytime corresponds to the period from 22:00 UTC 18 December 2016 to 10:00 UTC  
 803 19 December 2016. The nighttime corresponds to the period from 10:00 UTC 19  
 804 December 2016 to 22:00 UTC 19 December 2016.

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