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Chemical characteristics of submicron aerosols observed at the King Sejong Station in the northern Antarctic Peninsula from fall to spring



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HIGHLIGHTS

GRAPHICAL ABSTRACT

- OM and sea-salts comprised 85% of the PM₁ (686 \pm 226 ng m⁻³) at the KSG.
- The OC/EC ratio was greater than 10 with biogenic source for OC from the ocean.
- Char-EC was enhanced in biomass burning-impacted air from nearby continent.
- Soot-EC is a good tracer indicating local influence in Antarctic environment.



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ABSTRACT

The water-soluble ions and carbonaceous compounds of PM₁ were measured at the King Sejong Station (KSG) in the northern part of Antarctic Peninsula from March to November in 2009. As the sum of all measured species including organic matter [OM; organic carbon (OC)*1.9], the PM₁ mass reached a maximum of 936 ng m⁻³ with the mean of 686 ± 226 ng m⁻³. The most abundant constituents were OM (389 ± 109 ng m⁻³) and seasalts (Na⁺ and Cl⁻, 193 \pm 122 ng m⁻³), which comprised 85% of the PM₁ mass. In contrast, the contribution of SO₄²⁻ was below 1% and its depletion relative to Na⁺ was prevalent particularly during winter, which was attributed to the frost flowers on newly formed sea-ice surface. The OC concentration was the highest in fall and its subcomponents OC2 and OC3 were moderately correlated with sea-salts (r = 0.5), indicating the marine biogenic source for OC. The elemental carbon (EC) concentration was much lower than OC, leading to the mean OC/EC ratio over 10. While the charred fraction of EC (EC1) was elevated by the long-range transport of biomass burning plume from nearby continent, the mass fraction of soot-EC (EC23) was increased concurrently with enhanced NO₃⁻, suggesting EC23 as a good indicator for local influence in pristine environments like Antarctic region.

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1. Introduction

Aerosol plays a significant role in Earth's climate by affecting the global radiative balance (Boucher et al., 2013). Natural or anthropogenic aerosols are emitted to the atmosphere from various sources at the

* Corresponding author. *E-mail address:* meehye@korea.ac.kr (M. Lee). Earth surface or formed from gaseous precursors. Sea salts are important components of natural aerosols, particularly in the marine boundary layer. Sea-salt-containing aerosols are mechanically produced either over ice-free ocean surface by bubble bursting or over freshly formed sea ice (Monahan et al., 1986; Rankin et al., 2000; Wolff et al., 2003). Carbonaceous aerosol (CA) is of major interest owing to its atmospheric abundance, variety of emission sources, and significant climate effects. CA is often divided into organic carbon (OC) and elemental carbon (EC). OC is produced directly from biogenic emissions and combustion processes, and indirectly via formation of secondary particles from the oxidation of precursor gases. It is commonly considered to be the non-absorptive fraction of CA (Jacobson et al., 2000), whereas some OC fractions absorb solar radiation at short wavelength (Andreae and Gelencsér, 2006). EC, referred to as black carbon (BC) or soot, is primarily emitted by biomass burning and fossil-fuel combustion. It is a strong light-absorber and transported over long distance due to its small size in sub-micrometer (Bond et al., 2013; Ramanathan and Carmichael, 2008). For instance, in high-latitude or high-altitude areas EC transported from mid-latitudes (Bisiaux et al., 2012; Lim et al., 2017; Weller et al., 2013) has been identified as a significant contributor to accelerating snowmelt (Hansen and Nazarenko, 2004; Xu et al., 2016).

The Antarctic atmosphere consists of lower number and mass of aerosols as it is geographically isolated from human activities. Consequently, it provides unique place to study the atmospheric chemistry of pristine environment and thus to improve the understanding of the processes governing aerosol formation and transport (Jourdain and Legrand, 2002; Savoie et al., 1993; Weller and Wagenbach, 2007). However, its remote location and harsh environment hinders comprehensive study. Previous studies on aerosol composition reveal that seasalts are most abundant (Minikin et al., 1998; Savoie et al., 1993; Teinilä et al., 2014; Wagenbach et al., 1998) and anthropogenic aerosols such as BC are often long-range transported from other continents (Chaubey et al., 2010; Weller et al., 2013; Wolff and Cachier, 1998).

Aerosols transported to Antarctic regions, particularly CA, show multiple source signature of the Southern Hemisphere, depending on the source strength and wind patterns. The King Sejong Station (KSG), located on the Barton Peninsula of King George Island, Antarctica, was a platform to study aerosol characteristics including chemical composition (Mishra et al., 2004), size distributions (Kim et al., 2017), and single particle properties (Eom et al., 2016). These studies focused mainly on coarse-mode or nano-particles. Here, we report for the first time the chemical characteristics and the variation of sub-micron aerosols (PM₁) collected at KSG from fall to spring with emphasis on sea-salts and CA.

2. Methods

Sub-micron aerosols (PM₁) were collected at KSG, the Korean Antarctic Station in the northern part of the Antarctic Peninsula (62°13'S, 58°47'W; Fig. 1), from March to November in 2009. A low-volume aerosol sampler with PM₁ cyclone (URG, USA) was installed in the laboratory that was approximately 300 m southwest to the power generation building. We used the same inlet system as Mishra et al. (2004) described, which was specially designed for aerosol sampling at harsh environments. PM₁ was collected at 16.7 L min⁻¹ on 37-mm Teflon and Quartz fiber filters (Pall corp., USA) for analysis of water-soluble ions and carbonaceous compounds, respectively. Quartz fiber filters were pre-baked at 485 °C for 6 h. Total 16 samples were collected continuously at ~15-day interval. After collection, the filters were shipped in a refrigerated container from KSG to Korea Polar Research Institute in Korea.

Water-soluble ions laden on the Teflon filter were analyzed with an ion chromatography, and OC and EC were determined, according to the Interagency Monitoring of Protected Visual Environments thermal/optical reflectance protocol (i.e., IMP_TOR; Chow et al., 1993). The IMP_TOR method assumes that EC is a low-volatility carbon fraction that is not liberated in an oxygen-free environment till 550 °C, allowing it to be separated from the more volatile OC that evolves at lower temperatures. Briefly, OC is measured as OC1, OC2, OC3, and OC4 liberated at different temperatures below 120 °C, 250 °C, 450 °C, and 550 °C, respectively. Some OC that is charred during the gradual increase in temperature is defined as pyrolyzed organic carbon (OP) after the split between OC and EC. EC1 and EC23 (sum of EC2 and EC3) are evolved under O2 atmosphere at 550 °C and 700-800 °C, respectively. Finally, OC and EC are reported as the sum of OC1, OC2, OC3, OC4, and OP and the sum of EC1 and EC23, respectively. The mass concentrations of all water-soluble ionic species and carbonaceous compounds were corrected for the mean blank values. The analytical lower detection limit (LDL) of watersoluble ions and total carbon (TC) was defined as 1 standard deviation



Fig. 1. Location of the King Sejong Station (KSG; 62°13'S, 58°47'W). The red symbol indicates KSG.



Fig. 2. Monthly wind rose measured at KSG from March to November in 2009. Sizes of the bins are proportional to the frequency of measurements. (For interpretation of the references to colour in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of this article.)

(σ) of their blank concentrations. For statistics, the values below LDLs were replaced with $1/3\sigma$ of blank concentrations. Of the 16 samples, three samples were discarded due to analytical issues.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Measurement summary

According to the local wind speed and direction measured at KSG (Fig. 2), easterly dominated in May and June (austral fall and early winter) and northwesterly in March, September, October, and November (austral early fall and spring). The other periods show shifting flow patterns. The synoptic wind field at 850 hPa (https://www.esrl.noaa.gov/ psd/data/gridded/data.ncep.reanalysis2.html) also exhibits strong westerly winds passing over the southern part of South America in March, September and October (Fig. S1), indicating that the measured wind pattern is in accordance with synoptic scale of meteorology as well.

The measurement results are summarized in Table 1, Fig. 3, and Fig. 4. In Antarctic coastal regions, aerosol mass is well represented by the sum of ionic species and carbonaceous compounds (Facchini et al., 2008; Kerminen et al., 2000; Teinilä et al., 2000), which were measured in this study. Adopting the upper-bound organic matter (OM)/OC ratio of 1.9 for mid-latitude rural areas (Bae et al., 2006; Simon et al., 2011), the sum of water-soluble ions, OM, and EC was assumed as PM₁ mass. The PM₁ mass ranged from 100 to 936 ng m⁻³ with a mean of 686 ng m⁻³. Of PM₁ constituents, OC was predominant with a mean of 205 ± 57 ng m⁻³. The second most abundant species was Cl⁻ with a mean of 117 ± 78 ng m⁻³. As a result, OM and sea-salts (Na⁺ and Cl⁻) occupied 85% of PM₁. The mean equivalent molar ratio of anion to cation was 0.52 ± 0.23, indicating a greater contribution of alkalinity probably due to anion depletion, which will be discussed in Section 3.3.

Table 1

Statistical summary of the PM1 constituents measured at the King Sejong Station (KSG) from March to November in 2009.

Unit in ng m ⁻³	Water-soluble ions								Carbonaceous compounds		PM_1^a
	Na ⁺	Cl-	NO_3^-	SO_{4}^{2-}	$\rm NH_4^+$	Ca ²⁺	K ⁺	Mg^{2+}	OC	EC	
Mean S.D. ^b	76.7 (46.7)	116.6 (78.2)	10.5 (9.5)	2.9 (1.4)	13.9 (4.4)	18.1 (8.5)	6.5 (4.9)	15.9 (8.9)	204.8 (57.2)	35.4 (18.8)	686.0 (226.5)

^a Sum of water-soluble ions, OM (OCx1.9), and EC.

^b One standard deviation.



Fig. 3. The average chemical composition of PM_1 at KSG. PM_1 mass was estimated as the sum of the water-soluble ions, OM (OCx1.9), and EC mass concentrations.

3.2. Water-soluble ions

The water-soluble ions of PM_1 mass were an order of magnitude lower than that of annual total suspended particle (TSP) measured at KSG (year 2000–2001) (Mishra et al., 2004). Asmi et al. (2010) reported the ratio of coarse ($PM_{8.5}$) to fine (PM_1) sea-salts (sum of Na^+ and Cl^-) of 4 at the Aboa station in Antarctica that is located ~130 km far from the coast. These studies demonstrate that sea-salts are enriched in coarse mode particles of the Antarctic atmosphere. In the PM_1 of this study, OM was the most abundant with considerable contribution of sea-salts.

The mean ratio of Cl⁻ to Na⁺ was 1.75 \pm 0.85, which is close to the ratio in seawater (1.79). The mean ratio of Ca²⁺ to Na⁺ was 0.183, which is five times greater than that of seawater (0.038) but much smaller than those of soil and crust (1.78) (Bowen, 1979; Röthlisberger et al., 2002). These results suggest that the influence of soil is not significant. Thus, the contribution of sea-salt to PM₁ was estimated using the equation of Cl⁻ + 1.47×Na⁺, where 1.47 is the seawater ratio of (Na⁺+K⁺+Mg²⁺ + Ca²⁺ + SO₄²⁻ + HCO₃⁻)/Na⁺ (Asmi et al., 2010; Quinn and Bates, 2005). The sea-salts concentration was 248 \pm 133 ng m⁻³, accounting for 88% of all water-soluble ions measured in this study and 36% of the PM₁ mass. In PM₁, the contribution of sea-salts was considerably large, whereas nitrogen-containing ionic species, i.e., nitrate and ammonium, together with EC comprised only 10%. It is primarily due to stormy current reinforced by westerly jet through the year.

The ionic concentrations were slightly higher in spring (October and November) and fall (April and May) by 61% and 34%, respectively, and lowered in winter (June–August) by 10% with respect to their mean values (Fig. 5). Both Na⁺ and Cl⁻ were also enhanced in spring and fall by ~80% and ~40%, respectively. This seasonal tendency of ionic species was consistent to what was previously observed for TSP at KSG (Mishra et al., 2004). The aerosol number concentrations also showed the maxima during the spring and summer and the minima during the winter (Kim et al., 2017).

The main factor controlling the seasonal loading of sea-salts is the variation in the distance from seawater. In winter, the seawater is frozen along the coast, resulting in the lesser release of sea-salts into the overlying air. It was seen in a firn core record retrieved in the James Ross island, which is about 230 km away from KSG (Aristarain and Delmas, 2002). In addition to the sea-salt transport over the shorter distance from the seawater during the spring and fall, wind direction and strength enhanced sea-salt loading at KSG (Kreutz et al., 2000; Kaspari et al., 2005). The sea-salt concentration was coincidently high with wind speed in May, September, and October (Figs. 2 and 4). The south-easterly (from the Atlantic Ocean) and the northwesterly (from the Pacific Ocean) strong winds probably facilitated the transport of sea-salts into inland. The concentrations of Ca^{2+} , K⁺ and SO_4^{2-} were relatively high during June and July with dominant easterly (>30%) (Fig. 2). It is



Fig. 4. (a) Mean wind speed with the mode of wind direction for each sampling period and mass concentrations of water-soluble ions, OC, and EC in PM₁, and (b) their fractions against PM₁ mass for the whole sampling period. Error bars for wind speed indicate ± 1

standard deviation. The dates on the horizontal axis are the starting day for each sample.

probably due to the impact of ornithogenic soil enriched with guano (Jourdain and Legrand, 2002; Ugolini, 1972), which is related to the topographical feature of KSG.



Fig. 5. For Na⁺, SO₄²⁻, EC1, EC23, OC, and PM₁ mass, the mean concentrations (top) and deviation from the mean (bottom) are compared for different periods. Apr.-May, Jun.-Aug., and Sep.-Nov. are defined as austral fall, winter, and spring, respectively. The data for Oct.-Nov. are further shown. In top panel, PM₁ mass concentration is on the right y-axis and error bars denote ± 1 standard deviation.

3.3. SO_4^{2-} depletion relative to Na⁺

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In Antarctica, SO_4^{2-} aerosol mainly originates from sea-salts. In summer, biogenic SO_4^{2-} is added to bulk aerosols (Curran and Jones, 2000; Saltzman et al., 1986), enhancing SO_4^{2-} concentration in the atmosphere (Minikin et al., 1998; Wagenbach et al., 1998). For instance, the summer to winter ratio of SO_4^{2-} was up to 10 in size-segregated measurements at Dumont d'Urville, a coastal site (Jourdain and Legrand, 2002). The mean SO_4^{2-} concentration was 2.9 ± 1.4 ng m⁻³ in the present study, accounting for 0.4% of the PM₁ mass. The SO_4^{2-} concentration was two orders of magnitude lower than that of TSP at the same site (Mishra et al., 2004). Our lower concentration was attributed to its smaller particle size and the lack of summer samples.

The nss-SO₄²⁻ mass estimated using the ratio of SO₄²⁻ to Na⁺ in seawater (0.25) was less than zero, which resulted from the low SO₄²⁻ to Na⁺ ratio (0.05 \pm 0.04) (Fig. 6) and indicates a systematic depletion



Fig. 6. The concentrations of Na⁺, SO₄²⁻, and nss-SO₄²⁻ and the SO₄²⁻/Na⁺ ratio. The green line indicates the SO₄²⁻/Na⁺ ratio of sea water (0.25). (For interpretation of the references to colour in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of this article.)

of SO_4^{2-} relative to Na⁺ in sea-salt aerosols (Rankin et al., 2002, 2000). It is likely associated with the formation of frost flowers over the newly formed sea-ice surfaces, which are widespread around the Antarctica in the winter months (Minikin et al., 1998; Teinilä et al., 2014; Wagenbach et al., 1998). Frost flowers preferentially precipitate Na⁺ and SO_4²⁻ as mirabilite (Na₂SO₄·10H₂O) at below -8.2 °C. This fractionation was reported to remove most of SO₄²⁻ from seawater at the temperature commonly observed in the Antarctic winter (Rankin et al., 2002), and suggested as a significant source of sea-salt aerosol in winter (Wagenbach et al., 1998). Indeed, the SO₄²⁻ to Na⁺ ratio was below 0.02 with the half of the mean SO₄²⁻ concentration during Julymid August (Fig. 6), revealing the significant SO₄²⁻ depletion during the winter.

3.4. OC and EC

OC was the most abundant component in PM_1 and EC remained in low level (Fig. 3), resulting in the high OC/EC ratio over 10. The OC/EC ratio is typically below 5 at mid-latitudes. Among the OC subcomponents, OC2 and OC3 concentrations were the highest and the refractory components of OC4 and OP concentrations were low. EC1 and EC23 were equally distributed in EC.

OC concentration was slightly elevated in fall by 17% and lowered in spring by 6% relative to the mean (Fig. 5). EC concentration increased in spring by 15% with elevated EC/TC ratio by 33%, and decreased in winter by 16% (Fig. 5). The temporal variation of EC concentration was similar to that of equivalent BC (EBC) that was observed for the same period (Kim et al., 2017), although the mean EC concentration was 2 times lower in our study. The discrepancy is probably due to different measurement techniques used in two studies (Petzold et al., 2013).

Since the water-soluble ionic species originated primarily from marine sources, the relationship between carbonaceous compounds and water-soluble ions were examined (Table S1). OC was moderately correlated with sea-salts including Na⁺ and Cl⁻ (R = 0.5), suggesting that the considerable OC fraction was derived from the marine sources (Antony et al., 2011; Legrand et al., 2013). The temporal variation of OC concentration was unambiguous, being the highest in fall, right after the most extensive period of phytoplankton bloom in the southwest Atlantic sector of the Southern Ocean (Park et al., 2010), and lowest in spring (Fig. 5). Thus, it is highly likely that the enhanced OC was associated with marine biogenic activity particularly during the period of phytoplankton bloom. Both Na⁺ and Cl⁻ were positively correlated with major OC fractions, OC2 and OC3 but negatively with minor fractions, OC1 and OP. This result suggests that among OC components, OC2 and OC3 were derived largely from marine sources. EC1 was also well correlated with Na⁺ and Cl⁻ (R = 0.6) but for different reasons. EC can be subdivided into two classes and operationally defined based on the analytical method used: EC1 as char-EC and EC23 as soot-EC (Han et al., 2007, 2010). EC1 is known as a charred fraction of EC that can be emitted largely from incomplete combustion such as biomass burning (Han et al., 2010; Kumar and Attri, 2016; Lim et al., 2012). Therefore, EC1 and sea-salt concentrations were increased by strong wind that facilitated sea-salt production and EC1 transport. In contrast to EC1, EC23 is generally defined as a carbon particle forming at high temperature via gas-phase processes (Masiello, 2004) and its main source has been apportioned to be vehicle exhaust at mid-latitudes (Cao et al., 2005; Kim, 2004; Lim et al., 2012). In this study, EC23 was correlated with NO₃⁻, SO₄²⁻, and NH₄⁺ (R = 0.5, 0.4, and 0.4, respectively), implying fossil fuel combustion as its main source.

3.5. Enhanced OC and EC mass concentrations

The variation of OC and EC and its controlling factors were further investigated case-by-case. Based on their concentrations and fractional contribution to PM_1 mass, three cases were selected and discussed as follows.

3.5.1. Enhanced OC with sea-salt during April 16-May 02, 2009

OC1 level increased by ~30% in fall and winter (Fig. 4b). The maximum OC1 concentration (72 ng m⁻³) was found together with a moderately high OC concentration (241 ng m⁻³) in the second half of April (Figs. 4a and 7). The enhancement of OC1 concentration was coincident with the high Na⁺ concentration, which was increased by 50%. In addition, the moderate SO_4^{2-} depletion together with a slight Cl⁻ depletion was found, which suggests the influence of frost flowers. OC1 is semivolatile carbon fraction by the analytical definition and thus probably associated with relatively fresh emission sources (Kim, 2004; Lim et al., 2012). These chemical features indicate that OC1 was associated with relatively fresh marine sources during the cold months, when its transport to the inland was promoted. It was partly supported by the dominant local winds of easterly (Fig. 4a) from the Weddell Sea with the largest area covered by sea ice annually (Cavalieri and Parkinson, 2008).

3.5.2. Long-range transport of biomass burning-driven EC during October 09–October 29, 2009

During this period, the maximum ionic mass concentration (493 ng m⁻³) including Na⁺ (165 ng m⁻³) and Cl⁻ (256 ng m⁻³) were observed with the maximum EC1 (41 ng m^{-3}) concentration and EC1/TC ratio (0.2) (Fig. 4a and Fig. 7). In contrast, the OC concentration was similar to its mean with the lowest OC1 concentration. A good correlation between EC1 and Na⁺ was observed with the strong westerly during the entire sampling period. This period was distinguished by strong northwesterly with wind speed 30% higher than the mean (Fig. 2). Large-scale atmospheric circulation seemed to cause the efficient EC1 transport from other continents to the northern part of Antarctica. The broad EC peak of this case was in good agreement with the BC measurements at Neumayer in the Weddell Sea sector, where the maximum BC concentrations were observed in October and November (Weller et al., 2013). In South America as the main BC source region for the Weddell Sea region (Pereira et al., 2006), biomass burning typically peaks in September-October (van der Werf et al., 2006). The variability in biomass-burning source strength and large-scale meridional transport from low- and mid-latitudes were thus the primary factors controlling the annual variability of EC1 over the northern part of Antarctica.

3.5.3. Local effects during July 15-September 16, 2009

In the two cold months, the carbonaceous concentrations remained relatively low with the minimum level of ionic species. While Na⁺ concentration was only the half of its mean, the maximum EC23 concentration was observed in August, albeit low (Fig. 7). It is also noteworthy that the relative fraction of EC23 and NO₃⁻ against mass increased, particularly in association with northerly or northeasterly winds below the annual mean (8.3 \pm 1.2 m s⁻¹) under the relatively calm condition



Fig. 7. Comparison of chemical characteristics of PM₁ for the selected cases: Case I for April 16, 2009–May 02, 2009, Case II for October 09, 2009–October 29, 2009, and Case III for July 15, 2009–September 16, 2009.

(Fig. S2). The enhanced fraction of EC23 is likely due to the local influence of fossil-fuel combustion at KSG and therefore, EC23 is suggested as a good tracer for local effect at pristine environment such as the Antarctic region. The formation of NO_3^- could also be promoted by NOx emissions in the station itself.

4. Conclusions

From March to November 2009, PM₁ atmospheric particulate matter was collected to measure water-soluble ions and carbonaceous compounds at the King Sejong Station (KSG) in the northern part of Antarctic Peninsula. OC was the most abundant in PM₁ and its concentration ranges from 36 to 265 ng m⁻³ with the mean of 205 \pm 57 ng m⁻³. The next most abundant species were Cl^{-} (117 \pm 78 ng m⁻³) and $\mathrm{Na^{+}}$ (77 \pm 47 ng m $^{-3}$), confirming that sea-salts comprised a major fraction of PM1 in Antarctic region. When OC is converted to OM by multiplying the factor of 1.9, the mass of PM₁ was in the range of 100 to 936 ng m^{-3} as the sum of all measured species. The average OM concentration was 389 \pm 109 ng m $^{-3}$ and accounted for 57% of PM $_{1}$ mass. The sea-salt loading was enhanced by the strong northwesterly or easterly winds and the highest during the spring and fall. Particularly, SO₄²⁻ was depleted relative to Na⁺, which was associated with frost flowers over the newly formed sea-ice surfaces. The moderate correlation of OC with sea-salts and its seasonality suggest the predominant marine biogenic source for OC. The EC concentration was much lower than OC, leading to the high OC/EC ratio over 10. As the charred fraction of EC, EC1 was enhanced with strong northwesterly wind, which was attributed to the long-range transport of biomass-burning plume from nearby continent. The mass fraction of EC23 increased with $NO_3^$ under the calm condition during cold months, thus suggesting the EC23 as a good tracer for local effect in pristine Antarctic environment.

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Appendix A. Supplementary information

Supplementary information to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2019.02.099.

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