CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Measurements of aerosol have been used for decades from in-situ measurements through the use of balloons and sondes and globally through the use of satellites. These datasets have been used to determine radiative forcing changes on the earth such as the recent global warming hiatus inferred from the record. However, current generation instruments are aging and operating well beyond their lifetimes. New instrumentation to continue the long term global aerosol dataset is required to continue to monitor climate change. This work has been focused on developing a prototype instrument to capture images of polarized radiance from a limb scatter geometry in order to determine aerosol profiles in two dimensions. ALI is the proposed prototype instrument and was designed as an engineering test to be launched from a stratospheric balloon to determine aerosol extinction and microphysics.

ALI was designed and developed using an AOTF to spectrally filter measured radiance from 650 to 950 nm in two dimensional images with exposure times on the order of seconds. A simple three lens linear optical system using a telescoptic layout consisting of the telescope for the FEO and a focusing lens for the BEO to resolve the image was used for ALI. The system had a large FOV of 6o to image from a tangent point on the ground to float altitude (approximately 35 km). This resulted in significant aberrations being present in the last degree of the FOV, which was also partially outside of the acceptance angle of the AOTF. From testing and simulations in Code V optical design software the optical resolution of the instrument was a nominal 210 m both in the vertical and horizontal directions. ALI was calibrated accounting for DC offset, dark current, stray light, flat fielding, and relative spectral calibrations.

With the completion of ALI, a simulation study was underwent to determine if there was any advantage or disadvantage to measuring a linear polarization over the total radiance. Overall it was determined that there is no distinctive advantage to measuring a linear polarization over the total radiance. However, a polarized measurement only observes a fraction of the signal compared to the total radiance case which would need to be mitigated in the optical design or operation. One exception to poor instrument performance is measuring the 90 degree SSA with the vertical polarization due to the extremely low signal levels.

The test flight for ALI occurred in Timmins, Ontario from the CSA balloon launch facility. ALI was mounted on board the CNES CARMEN-2 gondola and the launch of the stratospheric balloon occurred at 05:35 UTC on September 19, 2014 and had a flight duration of 16 hours and 14 minutes. Float altitude was 36.5 km and ALI captured aerosol images for five hours resulting in 216 measurements. These images were used to compute one dimensional aerosol extinction profiles from the flight which agreed well to the nearest OSIRIS scans but had some large discrepancies in extinction values from 20-25 km. This may have been from unaccounted for systematics in the retrieval or the SSA being relatively close to 90o at 98o which is known to yield systematics in the retrieval. Overall, however the results are promising and work on a second iteration of the instrument has already begun. Furthermore, the particle size retrievals agree with accepted values for the background stratospheric aerosol. A large error bar is associated with the determine particle size since the wavelength range is limited. Even with this limitation, ALI in its current state could notice large particle size trends in the stratosphere, such as the effect of a volcanic eruption. A satellite version of ALI would be able to accurately model aerosol trends on a global basis and be able to continue the global aerosol dataset.

This first prototype ALI instrument has allowed for the measurement of stratospheric aerosol through polarized images and with the continuation of the ALI project some recommendations for future work are suggested. First, an azimuth scan occurred during the flight to test the sensitivity of the measurement to aerosol and provide some verification for the simulation study. These measurements should be analyzed to better understand the correct orientation for the second generation of ALI. A future iteration of ALI that is vertically polarized should be orientated so that the SAA is in between 45-60o to avoid the problematic scattering angles of 80-100o that causes a bias in the retrieved aerosol profile or reorientate the instrument to measure the horizontal polarization instead to avoid this problem.

During the mission, unknown stray light was noted in some of the images and a back end telescopic chain should be added to help further reduce internal stray light from the rejected polarization. Replacing the back end polarizer with a Glan-Taylor prism would allow the unwanted polarization to be reflected off axis and help reduce this stray light issue. Additionally the addition of a back end telescope between the AOTF and the camera could further be used to help separate the desired diffracted signal from the undesired outputs in space to remove more stray light. Lastly, the addition of an absolute calibration would allow the direct determination of albedo which would help improve the retrievals due to the highly dependent nature between polarized albedo and retrieved aerosol extinction.

Some recommendation are for the camera could also improve the quality of the measurements. The addition of a shutter or masked pixels on the CCD would be useful to calibrate DC offset and dark current changes during the flight due to temperature changes. Also and extended range camera and/or AOTF could be used to measure radiances from 500-1500 nm to allow for short wavelength normalization and added particle size sensitivity.

For an additional improvement, to be able to test the platform in a low earth orbit satellite geometry as well as a functional test for a balloon geometry, a zoom lens could be added to the front of a future iteration to allow the verification of both geometries with a single flight. Addition the adaptation of a folded optics design will be required for a space platform and should be tacked in a future iteration. All of these improvements would help to improve the image quality of the next generation instrument.