

Interactive comment on “Optical and physical properties of aerosols in the boundary layer and free troposphere over the Amazon Basin during the biomass burning season” by D. Chand et al.

Anonymous Referee #1

Received and published: 13 July 2005

Title: Optical and physical properties of aerosols in the boundary layer and free troposphere over the Amazon Basin during the biomass burning season

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Atmospheric Chemistry and Physics Discussion Special issue: 2004-si09: Smoke Aerosols, Clouds, Rainfall and Climate (SMOCC)

General Comments:

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This is an interesting and useful manuscript presenting analysis of measurements of the optical properties of biomass burning aerosols during the SMOCC field campaign in Brazil in 2002. The unique aspect of this study is the presentation of optical properties of smoke aerosol measured at differing altitudes: the surface, boundary layer, and free troposphere. However, these in situ measurements are all made of aerosol downstream of drying units, and therefore may differ somewhat from optical properties under ambient atmospheric conditions. The manuscript would be strengthened if data on ambient relative humidity as a function of altitude were presented in order to help in assessing the possible influence of RH on ambient aerosol hygroscopic growth. Differences in aerosol scattering coefficient relationships with altitude are attributed to aerosol growth by coagulation and condensation, however some of this particle growth may be hygroscopic or as a result of interaction with clouds. There are numerous clouds imbedded in the smoke from mid-September through early October in Rondonia (dates of this investigation) and I suspect that there may be significant influences on the aerosol properties from the cloud-smoke interaction or simply by smoke passing through the high humidity environment of these clouds. Some discussion of this issue should be added to the paper.

Specific Comments:

Page 4383 Section 2.3.4: Adding a couple of sentences of explanation regarding the utility and physical significance of the excess ratio would be helpful.

Page 4385 line 1: “The average ω_0 , calculated using Eq. (3), is about 0.92 \pm 0.02. This value is significantly higher than the observations in earlier campaigns.” It should be stated that this is for dry aerosol and if possible it would be useful to give the range of ambient relative humidity during measurement times. I also suggest that the authors compare their estimates of aerosol single scattering albedo (SSA) obtained from their in situ measurements to remote sensing retrievals made from the AERONET measurements in Amazonia. See Dubovik et al. 2002, Table 2 that gives SSA of \sim 0.935 (interpolated to 550 nm) for Amazonian forest sites (which includes sites in Rondonia).

This comparison is of the SSA retrieved for ambient aerosol and the entire atmospheric column versus dried aerosol at the surface, and therefore the implications of the differences should be discussed, such as an expected higher SSA for ambient conditions due to some hygroscopic growth (Kotchenruther and Hobbs, 1998).

Page 4385 lines 9-11: “Observations of higher scattering efficiency for the aerosols at higher altitudes compared with those near ground corroborate our observation of higher ω_0 during the day time.” More explanation or elaboration is needed here. Are you suggesting downward convective mixing of higher altitude aerosols (by convective downdrafts) is increasing the single scattering albedo at ground level at mid-day?

Page 4385 lines 22-29: I suggest that you consider comparing mass scattering efficiencies for aged smoke in Amazonia from the literature (4.1 and 4.2 m^2/g from Reid et al., 2005, ACP, Part 3 - tables 2 and 5 respectively) rather than just discussing data for young smoke from SCAR-B. Also consider adding some comparisons of your mass absorption efficiency data to those given in Reid et al., 2005, Part 3 (0.50 for tropical forest aged).

Page 4386 lines 26-27: You mention two types of aerosol in the BL and FT. I suggest that it would be more accurate to describe these differences as 2 ages (and therefore differing size distributions) of the same aerosol type, which is biomass burning aerosol.

Page 4388 lines 26-27: See my comment for Page 4385 lines 9-11 (above). More explanation/elaboration is needed here for the physical mechanism of relating the altitude gradient in single scattering albedo to the diurnal cycle of SSA at the ground.

Page 4389 lines 6-11: A comparison of the Angstrom exponent computed from in situ measured light scattering coefficient alone to the AERONET sunphotometer based measurements (from total extinction) is given in the text and Table 3. However, I suggest that you explicitly discuss the differences in the quantities utilized to compute Angstrom exponent, such as the fact that the absorption coefficient is expected to have lesser wavelength dependence than the scattering coefficient. Therefore this fact alone

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could partly account for in-situ Angstrom exponent (computed from scattering coefficient only) being greater than sunphotometer measured Angstrom exponent (based on total extinction optical depth). Also, the spectral scattering coefficients measured by the nephelometer are for dry aerosol particles and this could result in somewhat higher Angstrom exponents than for aerosols under ambient humidity that may have experienced some hygroscopic growth.

Technical Corrections:

Page 4376 line 15: Reid et al. 2004 a, b should be changed to Reid et al. 2005 a, b since the final version of this paper is now published in ACP.

Page 4383 Equation 5: Missing parentheses - log should be of the ratio of AOT at the two wavelengths.

Page 4383 line 14: Equation 6 is missing.

Page 4384 line 9: You list September 20 as a rain event at FNS, yet there is no rain event indicated for this date in Figure 2. Either correct this or explain the discrepancy.

Page 4384 line 19: “..and CO ($r^2=0.87$).” In Figure 3c the $r^2=0.88$. These values should be consistent between the text and figure.

Page 4385 line 3: “Ěpronounced diel variations” should be “Ěpronounced diurnal variations”

Page 4389 lines 17-20: Need to refer to Figure 6 here.

Page 4390 line 15: I suggest that you state that the SSA of 0.92 at 540 nm is for dry aerosol particles.

Page 4391 line 3: The light scattering coefficient should be used here, not the light absorption coefficient (i.e. Fig 6).

Page 4391 line 8: I suggest that it would be preferable to avoid referring to Tables in

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the conclusions section.

Page 4400 Table 3: You present a burning period average Angstrom exponent of 2.0 in the text (from the nephelometer data), so why is the period average left blank in Table 3?

Page 4402 Fig. 2: The subscript 'a' should be used in the first line of the caption for the light absorption coefficient.

Page 4404 Fig. 4: "The slopes in the BL and FT are shown by the dashed and long dashed lines." I suggest that using solid lines for the FT would make the figure much easier to read.

Interactive comment on Atmos. Chem. Phys. Discuss., 5, 4373, 2005.

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