Seasonal variations of Saturn’s auroral acceleration region deduced from spectra of auroral radio emissions

Morioka et al. [in press] investigated the spatial distribution of the auroral acceleration region along polar magnetic field lines based on spectra of the terrestrial auroral kilometre radiation (AKR). By application of this approach to Saturn, we deduced the height distribution of the auroral acceleration region in the northern and southern hemispheres from SKR spectra acquired during 2004 to 2010. It was found that the southern (summer) SKR spectral density was 10 db greater at the peak altitude (~0.9Rs) on average, and harder than in the northern (winter) hemisphere. In addition, the southern and northern spectral densities became comparable with each other around equinox. These results suggest stronger field aligned acceleration and current in the southern hemisphere than north depending on season. The main infrared (H3+) auroral oval in IR was similarly more intense in the southern summer hemisphere than in the north [Badman et al. 2011]. Badman et al. [2011] suggested that greater conductivity in the southern polar ionosphere could result in greater precipitating electron flux and/or Joule heating, which are responsible for the stronger southern IR auroral emissions. The north-south asymmetric acceleration region deduced from SKR will be further compared with ionospheric and magnetospheric parameters (e.g., electron density, temperature, conductivity). Finally, comparative discussions of M-I coupling process between Saturn and Earth will also be presented.

Keywords: magnetosphere-ionosphere coupling, Saturn, aurora, radio emissions