

Sites of radon gas emission on the lunar surface obtained from the SELENE Alpha-Ray Detector (ARD)

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We report results from the observations by Alpha Ray Detector (ARD) onboard SELENE. ARD observes the alpha-particles from Rn-222 and its radioactive decay products including Po-210. Rn-222 is in the decay sequence of U-238. Since radon is rare gas, it diffuses through the fissures or porosity of the lunar surface structure upon its production and decays with the half life of 3.8 days. About half of the daughter nuclei are adsorbed on the lunar surface, and Po-210 is produced after several radioactive decay stages of which time scale is regulated by one of the intermediate products' half life of 22 years. Thus, the intensity of Po-210 alpha-particles gives information on the radon gas emission integrated over the last several decades whereas that of Rn-222 alpha-particles is an indicator of the current gas emission. By analyzing the ARD data, we obtained the Rn-222 and Po-210 distribution on the lunar surface with the spatial resolution of about 80 km (FWHM) which is about a factor of 4 or 5 times better than the observations in the past. One of the most intense peaks of the alpha-particle signal was at the Aristarchus region where Apollo 15, 16, and Lunar Prospector reported detection of radon alpha-particles. Another peak of Po-210 alpha-particle intensity was discovered in the region of Mare Moscovience on the far side of the moon, where the crust thickness has been found to be exceptionally thin. In terms of large-scale intensity distribution of the Po-210 alpha-particles, northern part of the PKT region showed higher intensity than the southern part of the PKT and FHT regions. This trend is not in complete accordance with the U-238 distribution on the lunar surface derived from gamma-ray observations which shows the highest intensity in the southern part of the PKT region. This is probably because the radon alpha-particle intensity reflects the subsurface distribution of U-238. We will discuss the overall picture of the radon gas emission on the lunar surface based on the results of the ARD observations.

Keywords: Moon, radon gas, alpha particle, lunar crust, SELENE