

Development and Observation of the Phased Array Radar at X band

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A new Phased Array Radar (PAR) system for meteorological application has been developed by Toshiba Corporation and Osaka University under a grant of NICT, and installed in Osaka University, Japan last year. It is now well known that rapidly evolving severe weather phenomena (e.g., microbursts, severe thunderstorms, tornadoes) are a threat to our lives particularly in a densely populated area and the number of such phenomena tends to increase as a result of the global warming. Over the past decade, mechanically rotating radar systems at the C-band or S-band have been proved to be effective for weather surveillance especially in a wide area more than 100 km in range. However, rapidly evolving weather phenomena have temporal and spatial scales comparable to the resolution limit (-10 min. and -500m) of typical S-band or C-band radar systems, and cannot be fully resolved with these radar systems. In order to understand the fundamental process and dynamics of such fast changing weather phenomena, volumetric observations with both high temporal and spatial resolution are required. The phased array radar system developed has the unique capability of scanning the whole sky with 100m and 10 to 30 second resolution up to 60 km. The system adopts the digital beam forming technique for elevation scanning and mechanically rotates the array antenna in azimuth direction within 10 to 30 seconds. The radar transmits a broad beam of several degrees with 24 antenna elements and receives the back scattered signal with 128 elements digitizing at each elements. Then by digitally forming the beam in the signal processor, the fast scanning is realized. After the installation of the PAR system in Osaka University, the initial observation campaign was conducted in Osaka urban area with Ku-band Broad Band Radar (BBR) network, C-band weather radar, and lightning location system. The initial comparison with C band radar system shows that the developed PAR system can observe the behavior of the thunderstorm structure in much more detail than any other radar system. The observed high temporal resolution images of the severe thunderstorm are introduced, showing the potential capabilities of the PAR system. The correlation coefficient of the reflectivity in PAR with C band radar ranges from 0.6 to 0.9 as a function of the distance from the PAR.

Although the phased array radar system using the digital beam forming technique can estimate the 3 dimensional structure of the precipitation system within 10 to 30 seconds with 100 meter resolution, the observation results also shows the received signal was seriously contaminated by the relatively high received power from ground clutter and strong precipitation echoes through the side lobes of the transmitting beam. To avoid this problem, a beam forming technique using the MMSE (Minimum Mean Square Error) formulation was proposed and tested. This approach can adaptively mitigate the masking interference that results from the standard digital beam forming method in the vicinity of ground clutter and strong precipitation area. The proposed method is compared with the standard beam forming technique by applying to the huge raw IF signal data digitized at each 128 antenna elements. The results show that the proposed technique can correctly estimate the precipitation echo within a few dB even in the presence of a strong ground clutter that is more than 20 dB higher than the precipitation echo with 15 pulse repetition number. The MMSE based technique is shown to be superior to the standard DBF scenarios under the small number of pulse repetitions to achieve the rapid scanning.

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