

# High-order solar migrating tides quench at SSW onsets

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## Key Points:

- First six solar tidal harmonics occur in the mesospheric wind during SSW 2018 among which the 4th, 5th, and 6th harmonics quench at the SSW onset.
- Wavenumber diagnosis using multi-station techniques suggests all six harmonics are dominated by migrating tides.
- In a near-12-year statistics, the six harmonics and quenching also occur.

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## Abstract

Sudden stratospheric warming events (SSWs) are the most spectacular atmospheric vertical coupling processes, well-known for being associated with diverse wave activities in the upper atmosphere and ionosphere. The first four solar tidal harmonics have been reported as being engaged. Here, combining mesospheric winds detected by three mid-latitude radars, we demonstrate at least the first six harmonics occur during SSW 2018. Wavenumber diagnosis demonstrates that all six harmonics are dominated by migrating components. Wavelet analyses reveal that the 4th, 5th, and 6th harmonics quench after the SSW onset. The six harmonics and the quenching appear also in a statistical analysis based on near-12-year observations from one of the radars. We attribute the quenching to reversal of the background eastward wind.

## Plain Language Summary

Solar tides are the most predictably-occurring waves in the upper atmosphere. Although the dynamical theory can be dated back to Laplace in the 16th century, upper atmospheric tides were rarely studied observationally until satellites and ground-based radars became common. To date, observational studies have mainly dealt with low-order solar-day harmonics. Here, we combine mesospheric wind observations from three longitudinal sectors to investigate high-order harmonics. Results illustrate that the first six harmonics appear in early 2018, all of which are dominated by sum-synchronous components. Among these harmonics, the 4th, 5th, and 6th quench at the sudden stratospheric warming onset, which we attribute to variations in the background zonal wind.

## 1 Introduction

Solar tides are excited by heating due to the diurnal cycle of solar radiation absorption by various chemical species throughout the atmosphere, as well as the release of latent heat associated with convection in the troposphere. There is also substantial evidence that solar tides can also be produced by nonlinear interactions between various tidal components, and between tides and stationary planetary waves. Readers are referred to Truskowski et al. (2014) for a review of how various observed migrating (sun-synchronous) and non-migrating tides are thought to be excited. The diurnal cycle of heating generates a series of solar harmonics (designated in this paper as S1, S2,..., S7

corresponding to periods of 24hr, 12hr, ..., 24/7hr). Harmonics at least up to S7 were observed in the low atmospheric meteorological observations (e.g., Hedlin et al., 2018), most of which exist also in the upper atmosphere as illustrated in the power spectral density of multi-year observations of mid-latitude mesospheric wind, in Figure S1 in the supporting information. Based on numerous modeling efforts and data analyses since the early work of Lindzen and Hong (1974), it is now known that at least for S1 to S4 the atmosphere responds in a quasi-linear fashion to each of these harmonics separately.

Most of the tidal literature is devoted to data analyses, modeling, and interpretation of S1, S2, and S3. Recently, S4 has received some attention in terms of ground-based observations (e.g., Guharay et al., 2018; Jacobi et al., 2017; Smith et al., 2004), space-based observations (e.g., Azeem et al., 2016; Xu et al., 2012; M. H. Liu et al., 2015) and modeling (e.g., Geissler et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2004). The ground-based observations have the advantage of high temporal resolution, but cannot distinguish between migrating and non-migrating tidal components from single-station measurements. On the other hand, tidal determinations from single-spacecraft observations provide a global view but one that is typically an average over periods of order 30-60 days, and thus subject to underestimation due to phase cancellation effects. With respect to harmonics at higher orders, to our knowledge, the only modeling and observational investigation pertaining to S5 and S6 was performed by Miyoshi et al. (2009) in the context of solar terminator waves.

In the present paper we employ a special technique to identify migrating tides S2-S6 from three radars separated in longitude at a near-constant latitude of  $\sim 55^\circ\text{N}$ , and thus eliminate some of the shortcomings noted above. We furthermore pursue this in the context of the behaviors of S2-S6 during the stratosphere sudden warming (SSW) of 2018. SSWs are the most spectacular meteorological processes of the atmospheric vertical coupling, in which the polar vortex is destroyed in a couple of days (e.g., Scherhag, 1952; Reed, 1963). SSWs are associated with diverse wave activities in the upper atmosphere and ionosphere, including planetary waves, gravity waves, and lunar and solar tides (e.g., Chau et al., 2012; Pedatella & Forbes, 2010). Among the solar tides, variations of the first four harmonics were reported, among which S2 has attracted most intensive attention. Early results on S2 exhibited a contradiction. Some reported an increase during SSWs (e.g., according to TIMEGCM model H. L. Liu et al., 2010) while others shown a decrease (e.g., according to WAM model in Fuller-Rowell et al., 2011). Later studies with zonal wavenumber constraint suggested that the migrating component decreases

(at least after the SSW onset and at mid- and high- latitude, e.g., He & Chau, 2019; Hibbins et al., 2019) whereas two non-migrating components enhance (e.g., Smith, 2012; Xiong et al., 2013). Recently, high-frequency-resolved spectral analyses with zonal wavenumber constraint suggested that the enhancements of the non-migrating components are just aliasing of secondary waves of nonlinear interactions between the migrating tides and traveling planetary waves (He, Chau, Stober, et al., 2018; He & Chau, 2019).

In addition to the responses of S2, enhancements of S3 and S4 were also reported during SSWs (e.g., Gong & Zhou, 2011; Gong et al., 2018). The S3 and S4 enhancements were detected using single-station approaches and therefore it is still not clear that are they associated with migrating or non-migrating components. The first purpose of the current work is to implement the multi-station approach to diagnose the zonal wavenumbers of S3 and S4 signatures during SSWs. We are also aim to explore the behaviors of higher order solar tidal harmonics during SSWs.

For the above purposes, we investigate the mesospheric wind observations collected by three meteor radars in three longitudinal sectors during SSW 2018. Figure S2 in the supporting information displays the distribution of the radars, at Juliusruh (53.5°N,122.3°E), Mohe (53.5°N,122.3°E), and Kazan (55.7°N,49°E) (readers are referred to Singer et al., 2013; Yu et al., 2013; Korotyshkin et al., 2019, for the radar frequencies, antenna configurations, and other setups). Combining three radars allows us to diagnose the horizontal scale of the tides. Among the radars, the one at Juliusruh collected continuous observations for more than 12 years, which will be used for a multi-year statistic study.

## 2 Results

In Section 2.1, we diagnose the dominant zonal wavenumber of tidal harmonics in SSW 2018 through a phase differencing approach (developed in He, Chau, Stober, et al., 2018), and explore the temporal evolution of the harmonics during SSWs through wavelet analysis in Section 2.2.

### 2.1 Zonal wavenumber diagnosis

Figure 1a displays the Lomb-Scargle spectra of the zonal wind at 90 km altitude during SSW 2018, between 01 January and 31 March 2018. The three colors represent the three radars. At the first six harmonics,  $f=1,2,\dots,6$  cpd, peaks occur above the sig-

nificant level  $\alpha = 0.01$ . At each individual harmonic the three complex amplitudes are combined to diagnose the zonal wavenumber  $m$  of the underlying wave through two approaches, the dual- and triple-station approaches detailed in Appendices A1 and A2, respectively. The corresponding dual- and triple-station results are denoted as  $\hat{m}_k^D$  ( $k=1,2,3$  denotes three combinations of radar pairs) and  $\hat{m}^T$ , illustrated in Figure 1b as the colored and white symbols, respectively. The shape of the colored symbols represents different whole cycles in-between each radar pair. For example, the longitudinal separation between Kazan and Juliusruh is shorter than wavelengths at all harmonics, whereas that between Mohe and Juliusruh is shorter than the wavelengths only at the first two harmonics. In Figure 1b, the black dashed line denotes the isoline of sun-synchronous phase velocity  $v_p \equiv f/m = \Omega := 1\text{cpd}$ . The estimated wavenumber  $\hat{m}_k^D(f)$  and  $\hat{m}^T(f)$  consistently distribute along the dashed line, suggesting that the underlying waves at all harmonics are dominantly sun-synchronous, namely, migrating components associated with zonal wavenumber  $m_s(f) = f/\Omega$ .

## 2.2 Quenching of high-order tidal harmonics during SSW

The current Section investigates the temporal evolution of the harmonics in the window in which data are used in Figure 1. We carry out Morlet wavelet at each altitude and station, and average the resultant spectra in the altitude range  $80 < h < 100$  km. The average spectra for the three radars are displayed in Figures 2a-c, respectively. The spectra share the following characters. S2 is almost always the most dominant harmonic, whereas S3, S4, S5 and S6 also occur unstably with short time variabilities. The variabilities are potentially due to interactions with planetary waves (e.g., Pancheva et al., 2002; He et al., 2017), gravity waves (e.g., Miyahara & Forbes, 1991) or other tidal components (e.g., Lilienthal & Jacobi, 2019). The high order harmonics, e.g., S4, S5, and S6, occur stronger or more often before the SSW onset (displayed as the magenta line, referring to the central day of polar vortex weakening, PVW, cf., Zhang & Forbes, 2014) than after the onset. For comparison, the three spectra are averaged in two time windows displayed by the blue and red horizontal bars before and after the onset in Figures 2a-c. The average, displayed in Figure 2e, exhibits the most significant difference at S4, S5, and S6 which are suppressed or quenched after the onset. S6 quenches by about 2/3 according to the ratio shown in Figure 2f.

For a statistical perspective, the same wavelet analysis is implemented on the near-12-year data used in Figure S1, generating an altitude-averaged spectrum similar to Figure 2c but for the period between January 01, 2007 and March 03, 2019. The spectral intensity is averaged with respect to all SSW onsets (referring to PVWs). Such an average is called composite analysis (CA) or superposed epoch analysis. The CA result is displayed in Figure 3a, and its altitude structure, averaged within the time window indicated by the blue horizontal bar in Figure 3a, is displayed in Figure 3b. Similar to Figures 2a-c, in Figures 3a and 3b the first six harmonics occur, all of which increase with altitude exponentially. Among the harmonics, S4, S5 and S6 quench or weaken around the onset. In addition to the quenched harmonics, S2 exhibits, in both Figure 2e and 3c, a weakening after the onset, which is out of our focus hereafter given that the S2 weakening has been reported and discussed individually (Hibbins et al., 2019; He & Chau, 2019).

### 3 Discussions

In this paper we report the quenching of high-order migrating tides in connection with SSW onset. The existence of migrating tides under undisturbed winter conditions at middle to high latitudes is not surprising. Linear tidal modeling of S2 taking into account forcing by ozone heating alone (Hagan et al., 1999) shows that the tidal amplitudes in zonal wind are significantly enhanced between 75-100 km at the poleward of 30° latitude in the winter hemisphere (January and July for the northern and southern hemispheres, respectively) compared to the summer hemisphere where the maximum heating occurs. This is due in part to the Doppler-shifting of westward-propagating waves to higher frequencies as they preferentially propagate through prevailing eastward winds with reduced susceptibility to dissipation, and with the Doppler-shifting effect increasing with zonal wavenumber. Winter maxima are in fact revealed for S2, S4, S5 and S6 in Figure 4, which displays the similar plot as 3a, but averaged with respect to calendar date. The existence of significant amplitudes for S2 and S3 during non-winter months in Figure 4 likely reflects the importance of tropospheric sources and tide-tide nonlinear interactions, which were not considered by Hagan et al. (1999). In addition, ozone heating also plays a role. As shown by Xu et al. (2012), while maximum forcing of S2 and S4 occur in the winter hemisphere, that of S3 occurs in the summer hemisphere.

The above simple picture of seasonal variations is significantly disrupted during SSWs. With respect to tidal quenching at the SSW onset, a potential explanation is the variation of the background zonal flow which is prevailingly eastward and reverses to westward during SSWs (e.g., McLandress, 2002). In addition, the linearized momentum equations contain terms dependent on the meridional and vertical gradients of the mean zonal wind (Hagan et al., 1999), which might be expected to assume significant importance compared to the above seasonal effects during SSWs. Figure 3d displays low-passed filtered zonal winds at the three radars. At all radars, the wind is eastward before the onset but westward after that, and decreases by 40-60m/s, from the maximum immediate before the onset to the minimum immediately after the onset. The wind reversal might account for the fact that in Figures 2e and 3c the spectral density, not only at the quenched tidal frequencies but in the whole range  $f > 3\text{cpd}$ , is stronger before the onset than after. This fact suggests that other westward-propagating waves existing before the onset, e.g., gravity waves, might also quench after the onset.

The reverse of eastward wind was used to explain the S2 weakening after SSW onset (Hibbins et al., 2019). Besides its weakening after SSW onset, S2 also exhibits a weakening on a shorter time scale, namely, the S2 minimum at exactly the onset lasting less than ten days in Figure 3a. This minimum was also reported and attributed to nonlinear interactions with planetary waves (He et al., 2017; He & Chau, 2019). Among all harmonics above  $f \geq 2\text{cpd}$ , S3 is an exception which does not respond significantly to the reversal; the reasons are not obvious. Furthermore, besides the zonal wind, changes in ozone density (Goncharenko et al., 2012) and accompanying tidal heating might also alter the magnitudes of migrating tides during SSWs. Evaluation of the roles of ozone heating and wind variations on the tidal harmonics during SSWs would benefit from global-scale modeling focused on this topic.

## 4 Summary

The current work investigates high order solar tidal harmonics in the mid-latitude mesospheric wind during SSWs. We present a case study of SSW 2018 using zonal wind observations from three longitudinal sectors and a statistic study using near-12-year of observations from a single station. In both studies, occur the first six solar tidal harmonics, among which S4, S5, and S6 signatures enhance before SSW onset and quench at the onset, potentially due to the enhance and reverse of easterly during SSWs. In the

case study and using multi-station approaches, wavenumber diagnosis illustrates that the dominant components of all harmonics are migrating tides. Our results demonstrate that the wave activities during SSWs are more diverse than we known.

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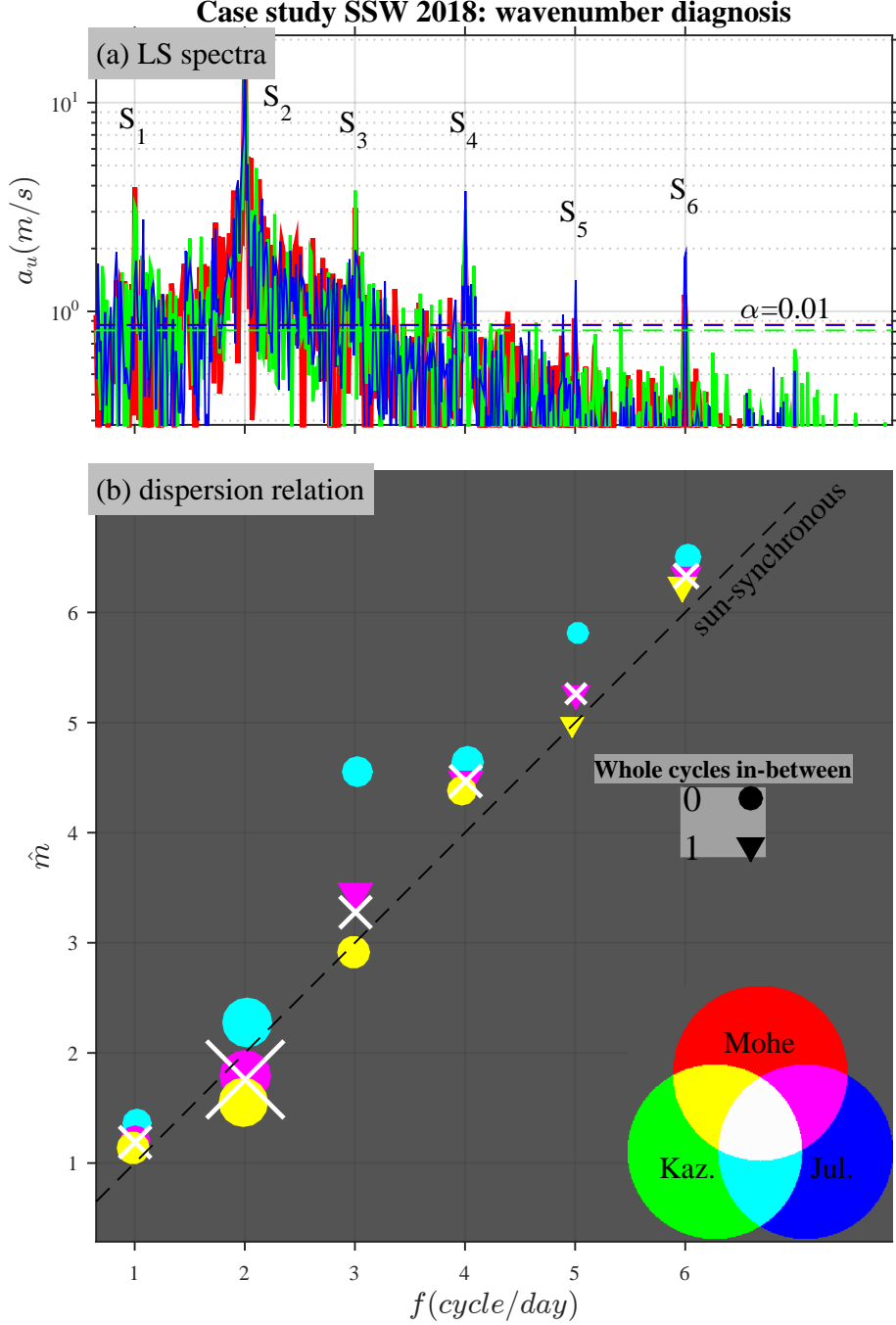


Figure 1: (a) Lomb-Scargle periodograms of the mesospheric zonal wind over Mohe, Kazan, and Juliusruh, at 90 km altitude between 30 November 2017 and 15 February 2018. (b) Dispersion relation of oscillations at periods of solar-day harmonics through dual-station PDT (colored elements) and triple-station LS approach (white crosses). The dashed line represents the phase velocity  $v_p = f/m = 360^\circ/day$  in longitude. Referring to the color code on the right bottom of (b), the primary colors (red, green and blue in (a)) and their secondary colors (cyan, magenta and yellow in (b)) denote three single radars and three of their pairs, respectively.

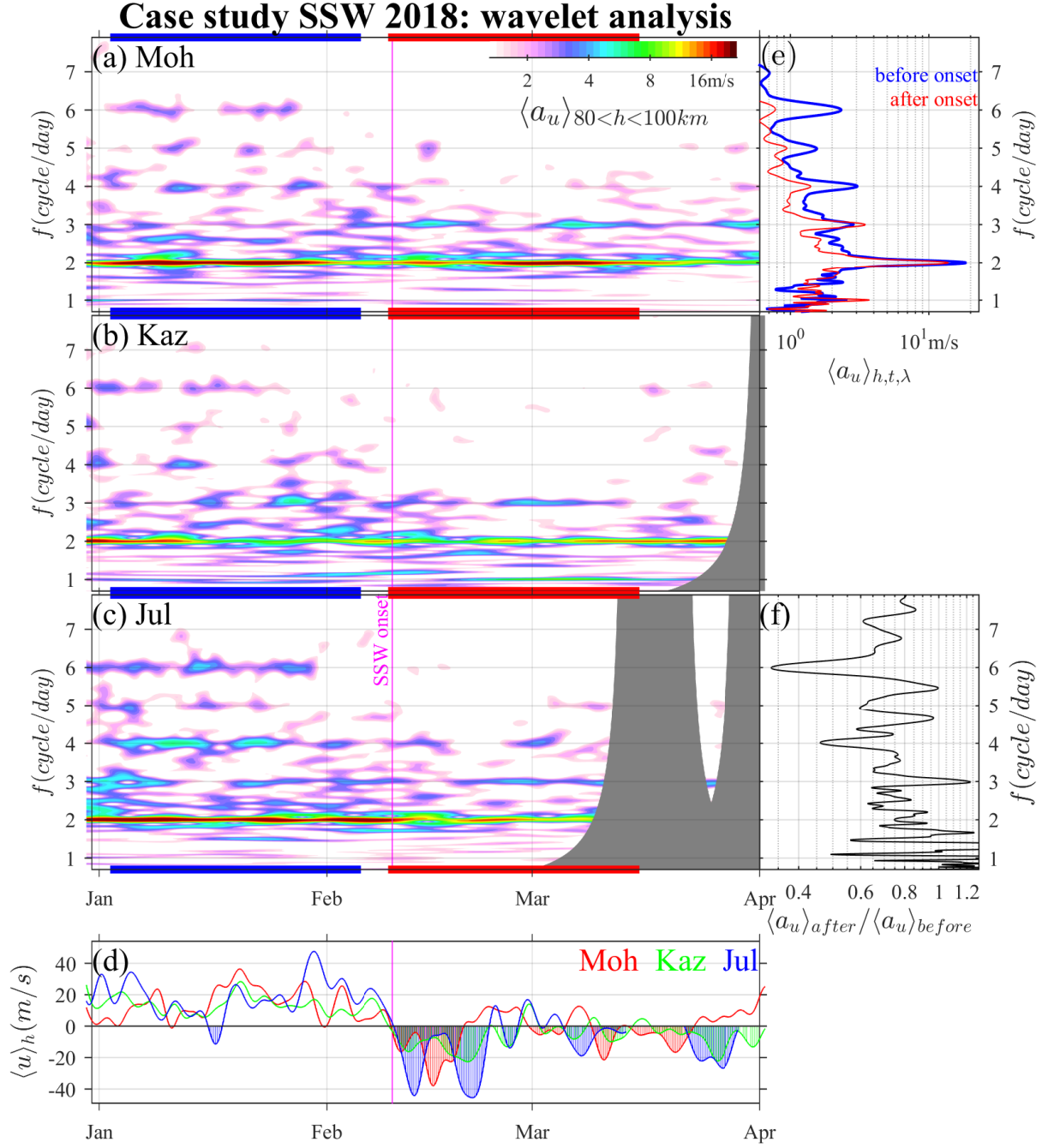


Figure 2: Wavelet spectra of the mesospheric zonal wind over (a) Mohe, (b) Kazan, and (c) Juliusruh, in early 2018. (d) Low-pass filtered zonal wind. (e) Temporally-averaged spectra within the time windows color-indicated by the blue and red segments in (a-c). (f) The ratio of the read of the red line over that of the blue in (e). (a-d) are the average of the corresponding results at individual attitudes between 80-100 km.



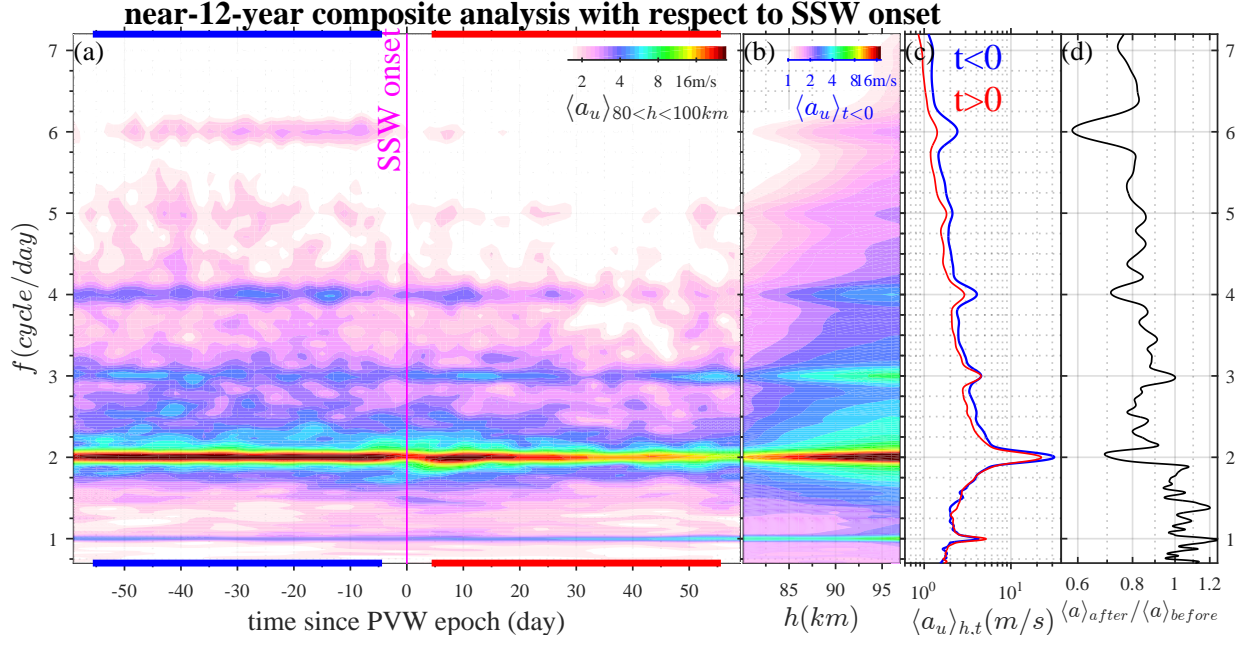


Figure 3: (a) Composite analysis of altitude-averaged (over 80-100 km) wavelet spectrum of the zonal wind over Juliusruh with respect to SSW onsets referring to the PVWs. (b) The wavelet spectrum averaged in the time window indicated by the blue lines before the onset in (a). (c) Temporal average of (a) within the time window indicated by the blue and red lines in (a). (d) The ratio between the red and the blue lines in (d).

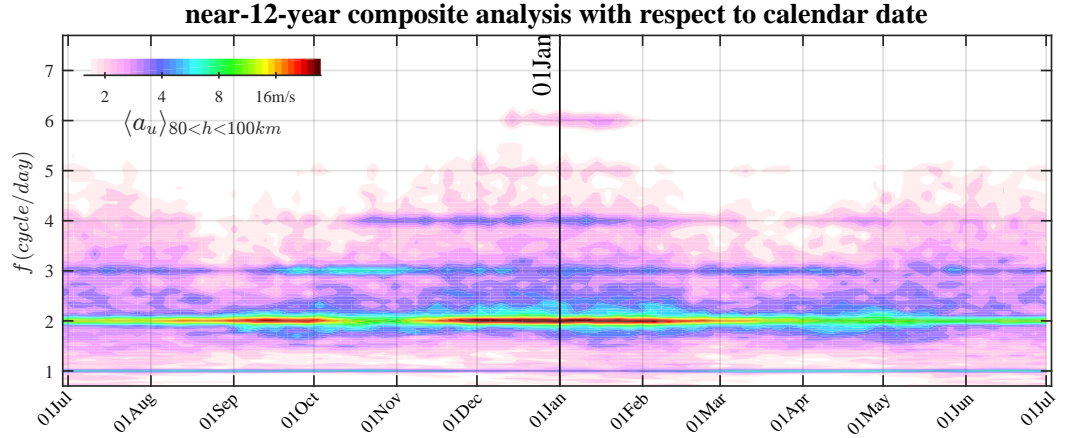


Figure 4: Same plot as Figure 3a, but averaged with respect to calendar date.



## Appendix A Approaches for wavenumber diagnosis

### A1 A dual-station approach

Ground-based radars provided long continuous records of mesospheric winds but are available only at a limited number of sites. Radars can hardly compose a functional network for exploring the horizontal scale of global-scale waves, but do provide high spatial and temporal information on local dynamics. Efforts have been made in the past to join two zonally aligned detectors to diagnose the zonal scale of waves through analyzing the phase variations of the wave-like oscillations (e.g., Clark et al., 2002; Pogoreltsev et al., 2002; Won et al., 2003). Recently, this approach was consolidated into a compact method, called the phase differencing technique (PDT He, Chau, Stober, et al., 2018; He, Chau, Hall, et al., 2018; He et al., 2019), in which PDT was used to explore a variety of waves. As summarized in, e.g., Equation 19 in He, Chau, Stober, et al. (2018), if a single wave with an unknown zonal wavenumber  $m$  at given frequency  $f$  is coherently detected at two longitudes  $\lambda_1$  and  $\lambda_2$  with amplitudes  $\tilde{a}_1$  and  $\tilde{a}_2$ , then  $m$  has a solution,

$$m = \frac{\arg\{\tilde{a}_2^* \tilde{a}_1\} + 2C\pi}{\lambda_1 - \lambda_2} \quad (\text{A1})$$

Here,  $\tilde{a}_1$  and  $\tilde{a}_2$  could be estimated from spectral analysis as in Figure 1a; and  $C \in \mathbb{Z}$  represents the whole-cycle ambiguity. To deal with the ambiguity, traditional approaches required that the underlying wavelengths are long enough so that  $C = 0$  (e.g., Walker et al., 2004; Isoda et al., 2002) which was released to  $C \in \{-1, 0, 1\}$  through assuming  $m \in \mathbb{Z}$  (e.g., Equation 14 He, Chau, Stober, et al., 2018). Here, the three radars allow us to release the  $C$  further conservatively and subjectively to  $C \in C_c := \{-1, 0, 1, \dots, 10\}$ . Note that the maximum possible  $C_c$  is different at harmonic as discussed in the end of current Section.

The three radars compose three combinations of radar pairs,  $k = 1, 2, 3$ , allowing three solutions  $m_k(C)$  for each  $C \in C_c$  at each frequency according to Equation A1. If only one wave  $m$  exist (namely, satisfies the single wave assumption, cf, He, Chau, Hall, et al., 2018), then  $m_k(C_k)$  from the three pairs should converge, namely,  $C_1^m$ ,  $C_2^m$ , and  $C_3^m$  exist so that  $m_1(C_1^m) = m_2(C_2^m) = m_3(C_3^m)$  or their variance  $\sigma^2(m_k(C_k^m)) := \sum_k (m_k - \bar{m}_k)^2 / 3 = 0$ .  $C_k$ , and  $m_k$  can be optimized through minimizing  $\sigma^2(m_k)$ ,

$$\hat{C}_k^m = \underset{C_k^m \in C_c}{\operatorname{argmin}} \sigma^2(m_k) \quad (\text{A2})$$

The resultant  $\hat{m}_k(C_k^m)$  is displayed in Figure 1b, in which three colors, yellow, magenta and cyan, of the symbols represent  $k=1,2,3$ , while the circular and triangle shapes represent  $C_k^m=0$  and 1, respectively.

In Figure 1b and at most harmonics, the separation between the cyan symbol and any of the other two is larger than the separation between the other two, which might due to the associated longitudinal difference, i.e., between Kazan and Juliusruh, is smaller than the longitudinal difference of other pairs. A smaller separation in longitude, according to Equation A1, will be associated with a larger uncertainty in the wavenumber estimation. Besides, in Figure 1b the estimations at S3 and S5 do not converge as good as those at the rest harmonics, which might due to the relative intensity (the ratio between tidal peak and the background noise) is lower at S3 and S5 than at other harmonics. The relative intensity might affect the maximum possible  $C_c$  defined subjectively above. For example, if we expand  $C_c$  in Equation A2 to  $\{-1, 0, \dots, 27\}$ , the estimation  $\hat{m}_k$  varies at S3 and S5, but not at the rest four harmonics.

## A2 A triple-station approach

Following, e.g., Equation 1 in He and Chau (2019), the complex amplitude  $\tilde{a}_k$  of an oscillation due to a single zonally traveling wave with wavenumber  $m$  detected by a radar at longitude  $\lambda_k$ ,  $k=1,2,3$ , could be represented as  $\tilde{a}_k = \tilde{a}_0 e^{i2\pi m \lambda_k}$ . The estimation of  $\tilde{a}_k$  in Figure 1a allows estimating  $\tilde{a}_o(m)$  at arbitrary  $m$  through a least square regression, denoted as  $\hat{\tilde{a}}_o(m)$ . We estimate  $\hat{\tilde{a}}_o(m)$  on a candidate grid  $m \in M_s = -1, -0.9, -0.8, \dots, 70$ , and optimize  $m$  through

$$\hat{m}^T = \underset{m \in M_s}{\operatorname{argmin}} \sum_k |\tilde{a}_k - \hat{\tilde{a}}_o(m) e^{i2\pi m \lambda_k}|^2 \quad (\text{A3})$$

where the superscript 'T' denotes triple-station analysis. The optimization results are displayed in Figure 1b as white crosses. Note that as the selection of  $C_c$  in the previous section,  $M_s$  is preassigned subjectively, and at most harmonics the estimation will still stand in a broader  $M_s$  range.