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Optimum Interpolation Analysis of Surface Pressure Using SEASAT-A Scatterometer Wind Data

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1. Introduction

In June 1978, an experimental oceanographic satellite known as SEASAT-A was launched. The main objectives of this satellite program include ocean global measurements of the surface wind vectors, surface temperature, wave heights and marine geoid. The satellite carries, among five microwave sensors, a SEASAT-A Satellite Scatterometer (SASS), which can be used to infer surface wind vectors over the world's oceans. Algorithms for inferring surface wind stress and wind vectors have been under development (Jones et al. 1978).

Instrumentally, SASS measures normalized backscattering radiation with two radar beams on SEASAT-A such that the pointing directions of these two beams differ by 90°. The normalized backscattering radiation depends on wind speeds over the sea surface, incident angles that the radar beams make with the sea surface, and aspect angles (defined as the wind direction relative to the pointing direction of the radar beams). The two scanning modes of the SEASAT-A yield one true wind vector and up to three incorrect aliases. These incorrect aliases must be resolved before the data may be used.

Further, remotely-sensed data from a polar-orbiting spacecraft such as SEASAT-A are asynoptic, and their error structures are different from those of conventional data sources. Proper inclusion of SASS winds in meteorological analyses calls for a special analysis scheme. For this study, we shall use an operational optimum interpolation scheme of the National Meteorological Center (Bergman, 1979). This scheme, which possesses the flexibility required by

different data bases with different error characteristics, is
suitable for treating the SASS wind data.

The SASS wind data provide fine resolution wind vectors (about
100 km spatial resolution) over the world's oceans. These wind
data may be used to improve surface pressure analyses that are
currently generated by using sparsely available ship reports. The
improved pressure analyses may in turn be used in the NMC's global
data assimilation system (McPherson et al. 1979).

The main purpose of this paper is to present some results of
surface pressure analysis experiments using the SASS wind data.
Section 2 discusses the nature of the SASS wind data and Section
3, elements of the data processing procedure where an alias remover
scheme will be presented for resolving the aliasing problems of the
SASS wind data. Some examples of the surface pressure analyses
are given in Section 4. A summary concludes the paper.

2. Nature of the SASS Wind Data

As pointed out earlier, the surface wind fields derived from
SASS contain one true wind vector and up to three aliases. Fig. 1
shows the nature of the SASS wind data from two partial orbits,
i.e., Revolutions 575 and 576. We see that the majority of the
SASS winds are four-fold vectors at each observation point, only
one of which is the true wind; the other are aliases. Moreover,
wind directions at the nadir locations are indeterminate due to
limitations in the sensor configurations. Consequently, these
winds at nadir cannot be used.

The SASS data, provided to us by the Langley Research Center,
including Rev. 575 and Rev. 576, were processed using Wentz's

algorithm (Jones et. al. 1978). Although Jones et al. (1978) have

tested the algorithm with a simulated SASS data set and concluded

the algorithm's performance is good, the algorithm does not yet

account for the atmospheric attenuation effects. As a consequence,

wind speeds from the SASS data tend to be biased high near the

center of a storm. Black (1979), comparing SASS wind speeds with

surface wind speeds from ships, aircrafts, and cloud trajectories,

concluded that the SASS winds were biased high by 4-8 m/s in Hurri-

cane FICO. Jones and Pierson (1978), by comparing surface observed

ship winds with SASS winds derived for Rev. 575 and Rev. 576,

reached a similar conclusion. It should be pointed out that both

orbits Rev. 575 and Rev. 576 were derived during fair weather

conditions. Thus, it seems clear that lack of a correction factor

for atmospheric attenuation effects causes a high bias to the SASS

wind speeds under all weather conditions, On the other hand,

Jones and Pierson (1978), by manually selecting the correct wind

directions from both Rev. 575 and Rev. 576, found that the observed

ship wind directions agreed quite well with the SASS wind directions.

3. Preprocessing of the SASS Wind Data

In this section, we discuss an alias removal scheme making use

of the NMC's analysis fields. The scheme is an iterative method

consisting of five passes:

(a) First pass - This step resolves the SASS data in areas of

uniform wind direction. Abundant examples of uniform wind

fields are observed over the trade wind regimes in the

tropics. Here we define uniform winds as winds with
their directions coming from the same quadrant within a
specified area. During the pass, the scheme locates the
areas of uniform winds. Then, NMC's operational 1000 mb
wind analysis is used to select correct wind directions
over a 5° by 5° longitude-latitude grid box. Vectors
thus resolved are then separated from ambiguous winds.

(b) Second pass - The SASS wind data are searched for non-
ambiguous winds. If the non-ambigous wind distribution
from the SASS data contains at least three vectors in the
four quadrants of the 5° by 5° longitude-latitude box,
these winds are used to resolve ambiguous vectors in the
box. These resolved winds are then used for the next
pass.

(c) Third pass - Optimum interpolation of the winds already
resolved from the previous passes is used to select most
probable wind directions from two-fold ambiguity winds.

(d) Fourth pass - Same as the third pass except that three-fold
ambiguous winds are resolved.

(e) Fifth pass - Same as the fourth pass except that four-fold
ambiguous winds are resolved.

Before it was used to process the real SASS data, the alias
remover scheme was tested on a set of simulated satellite data
generated for us by Langley Research Center. The test wind field
selected was for an extratropical cyclone over the North Atlantic for
00Z, Feb. 5, 1978. The reader is referred to Jones et al. (1978)
for details of the simulation studies. The advantage of using the

simulated case is that we can compare the final dealiased wind field with the starting wind field; thereby we may evaluate the performance of the alias removal scheme. Our alias removal scheme was applied to the simulated satellite data using, as an aid, the following four cases selected from NMC archives:

Case 1: 1000 mb wind analysis valid at 00Z Feb. 5, 1976.

Case 2: 1000 mb wind analysis valid at 18Z Feb. 4, 1976.

Case 3: 1000 mb wind analysis valid at 12Z Feb. 4, 1976.

Case 4: 6-hour forecast field of 1000 mb winds valid at 00Z Feb. 5, 1976.

For each case, the recovered wind field (after alias winds were removed) was compared with the starting wind field and errors were calculated. Here, error is defined as percentage of resolved wind directions which do not agree with those of tthe starting wind field. The errors for the four cases are, respectively 3%, 7%, 29% and 3%. Thus, use of a timely NMC analysis to resolve aliasing problems appears satisfactory; however, use of 12-hr persistence (Case 3) could cause as much as 29% error.

The valid times for the two orbits, i.e., Revolutions 575 and 576 are respectively 0600 GMT and 0730 GMT, Aug. 6, 1978. Thus, based on the above results, it was deemed desirable to use the NMC 1000 mb wind analysis valid at 0600 GMT Aug. 6, 1978 for resolving the aliasing problem in the two orbits of the SASS wind data. It should be mentioned that among 338 winds in Rev. 575, there were 72 winds at the nadir locations. Similarly, among 185 winds in Rev. 576, there were 32 winds at the nadir locations. These winds at nadir locations were discarded in our alias removal effort

and not used in the surface pressure analysis.

Fig. 2 shows the dealiased SASS wind field for both orbits 575 and 576. Superimposed on Fig. 2 is the NMC subjective surface pressure analysis. We see that orbit 575 passed through the right side of the surface high centered at 40°N latitude and 142°W longitude; and orbit 576 passed through the surface low centered at 49°N latitude and 160°W longitude. In general, the dealiased wind field agrees well with the surface pressure pattern except in the two shaded areas: one over the north-eastern part of the surface high; the other over the western part of the surface low. Within these areas, the resolved wind directions using the removal scheme did not agree well with the pressure pattern. The dealiased winds in these two areas constitute about 15% and 10% of the total SASS winds for orbits 575 and 576 respectively—these are the errors incurred by the alias removal scheme. These erroneous winds were further corrected by manually selecting the wind directions which were most consistent with the surface pressure pattern. These manually selected winds are shown in the shaded areas in Fig. 2. It should be noted that some of the manually selected winds were still not quite fitting the pressure pattern.

4. Surface Pressure Analysis Experiments

We mentioned earlier that the model used for surface pressure analysis was based on an optimum interpolation scheme. A brief summary of the interpolation scheme follows. Let the observed surface pressure and wind components (P, U, V) be composed of a "guess" value ($\bar{p}$, $\bar{u}$, $\bar{v}$) plus a deviation (p, u, v). Then the analyzed surface pressure at a grid point p_g may be expressed as a

linear combination of the deviation quantities,

$$P_g = \bar{P}_g + \sum_{i=1}^{\ell} a_i P_i + \sum_{j=1}^{m} b_j u_j + \sum_{k=1}^{n} c_k v_k$$

where there are ℓ pressure deviations, m west wind deviations, and
n south wind deviations. The quantity $\bar{P}_g$ is the guess value of
surface pressure at the grid point. The unknown coefficients a,
b, c, etc., may be determined by minimizing the mean-square inter-
polation error,

$$E = \left(P_g - \bar{P}_g - \sum_{i=1}^{\ell} a_i P_i - \sum_{j=1}^{m} b_j u_j - \sum_{k=1}^{n} c_k v_k \right)^2$$

where the overbar denotes an ensemble average. For details of the
scheme, the reader is referred to Bergman (1979).

As pointed out earlier, the SASS wind data must be corrected
for the surface frictional effect before they may be used in the
optimum interpolation of surface pressure; for this study, we used
a simple regression equation developed by Druyan (1972) to account
for this effect. Because of these two simplifications, we realized
that the error level for the SASS wind data might be larger than
it was originally specified. In the following pressure analysis
experiments, we thus decided to arbitrarily specify an error level
for the SASS wind data to be the same as that for ship wind data.
The area chosen for analyzing the surface pressure is between
120°W and 180°W in longitude and between 10°N and 70°N in latitude-
covering the eastern part of Pacific Ocean (see Fig. 2). Within
this limited area, there were about 85 ship reports of pressure
and winds and 500 SASS winds at 0600 GMT 6 August 1978--the time
of the surface pressure analysis. The majority of the ship reports
lie between 55°N and 15°N--only 4 ship reports south of 15°N and 3

ship reports north of 55°N. The guess pressure field is a 6-hour forecast of sea level pressure by the NMC hemispheric primitive equation model.

Two basic pressure analyses were performed: (1) coarse-mesh analysis with a 2.5° longitude-latitude grid, and (2) fine-mesh analysis with a 1.25° longitude-latitude grid. The coarse-mesh analysis has a grid length of 390 km at 60°N, and consequently, only the synoptic scale pressure wave may be resolvable. On the fine-mesh analysis, meso-scale pressure waves may be resolvable. Fig. 3 shows the coarse-mesh surface pressure analysis without SASS wind data. The corresponding pressure analysis with SASS wind data is shown in Fig. 4. A comparison of the two figures shows little difference in surface pressure within the area of 15°N and 55°N. The positions and intensities of the surface low and high centers are unchanged by the addition of the SASS wind data, and the isobar pattern also remains unchanged.

However, south of 25°N and north of 55°N significant differences in surface pressure analyses exist between those made with SASS winds and those without SASS wind data; this might be due to the lack of ship reports (less than 4) in this area. As a consequence the optimum interpolation scheme places more weight on SASS wind data. On the other hand, due to the large number of ship reports within the area of 15°N and 55°N, the addition of SASS wind data causes no significant changes in surface pressure. Under this circumstance, the SASS winds may not improve the definition of the pressure field.

Finally, to determine the effect of grid size on the surface pressure analysis, we also performed a fine-mesh analysis. The changes between pressure analysis made with SASS wind data and that without are consistent with the results of the coarse-mesh analysis (not shown). This suggests that the grid size of the analysis system has little effect on the surface pressure.

5. <u>Summary</u>

In this paper we discussed the nature of the SEASAT-A satellite scatterometer (SASS) wind data, a procedure to process them and a way to use them. An alias removal scheme designed for resolving the directional ambiguity was presented, and the scheme was tested with two partial orbits of the SASS wind data. As the scheme must rely on a guess pressure field, we find that errors amounting from 10% to 15% in the resolved SASS wind field can occur because of use of the alias remover scheme.

We showed that one way to use the SASS wind data was through an optimum interpolation of the surface pressure analysis. Comparison of a surface pressure analysis with SASS wind data against one without, showed a large pressure difference over the areas where ship reports are sparse. On the other hand, over the areas where ship reports are plentiful, the change in pressure analysis due to addition of the SASS wind data is negligible. This result suggests that, in operational use, it may be desirable to use SASS winds only in those areas where ship density falls below an assigned threshold value. This result further suggests that the most beneficial

use of the scatterometer wind data may come not in the surface

pressure analysis but in the lower tropospheric wind field. However,

more orbits of the SASS wind data are required for demonstration

of this potential.

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McPherson, R. D., K. H. Bergman, R. E. Kistler, G. E. Rasch, and D. S. Gordon, 1979: The NMC global data assimilation system, submitted to Mon. Wea. Rev.
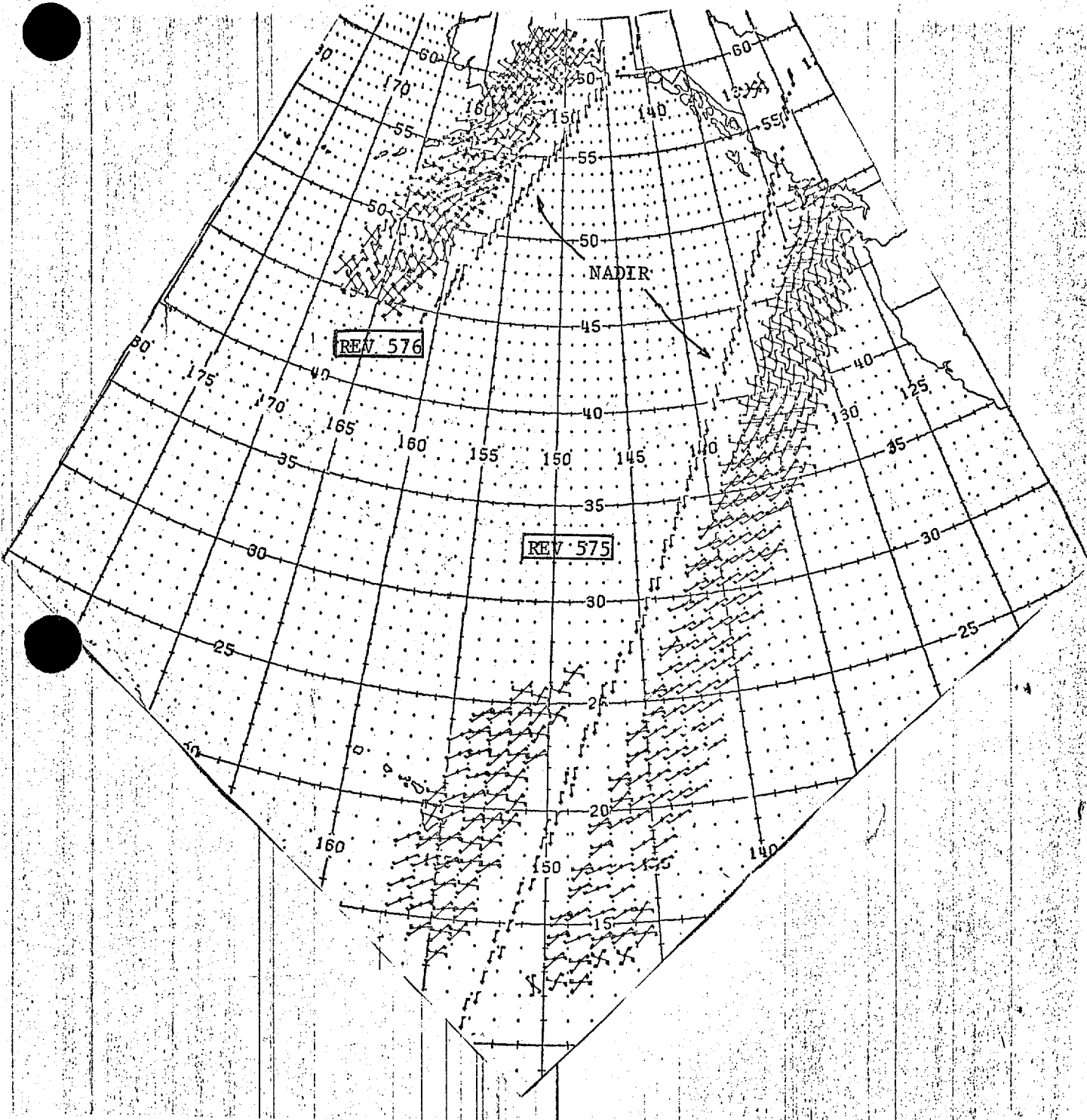
Fig. 1   Two partial orbits (Revolutions 575 and 576) of scatterometer-
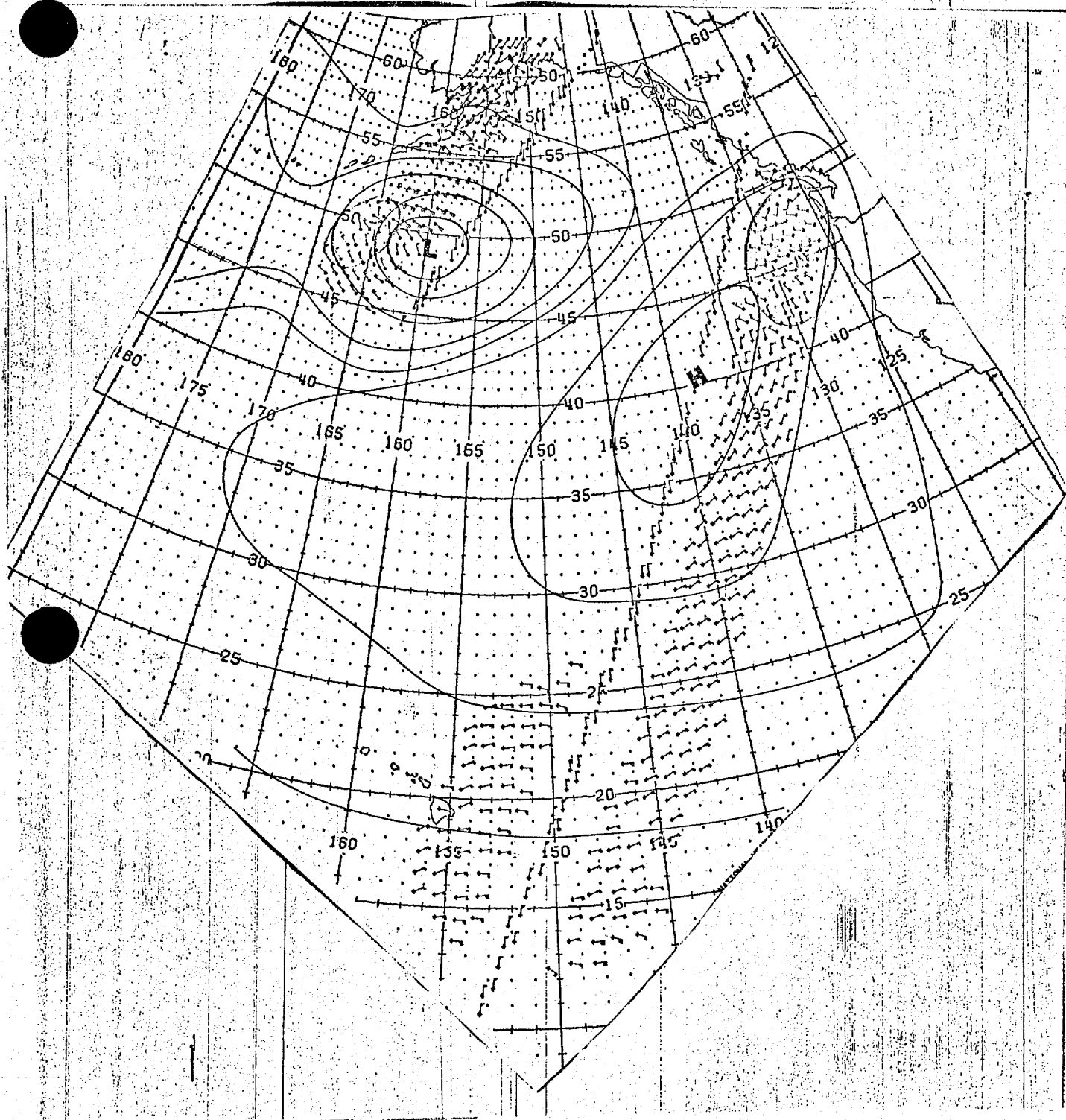derived wind vectors from SEASAT-A satellite.

Fig. 2   Dealiased scatterometer wind vectors from SEASAT-A satellite.
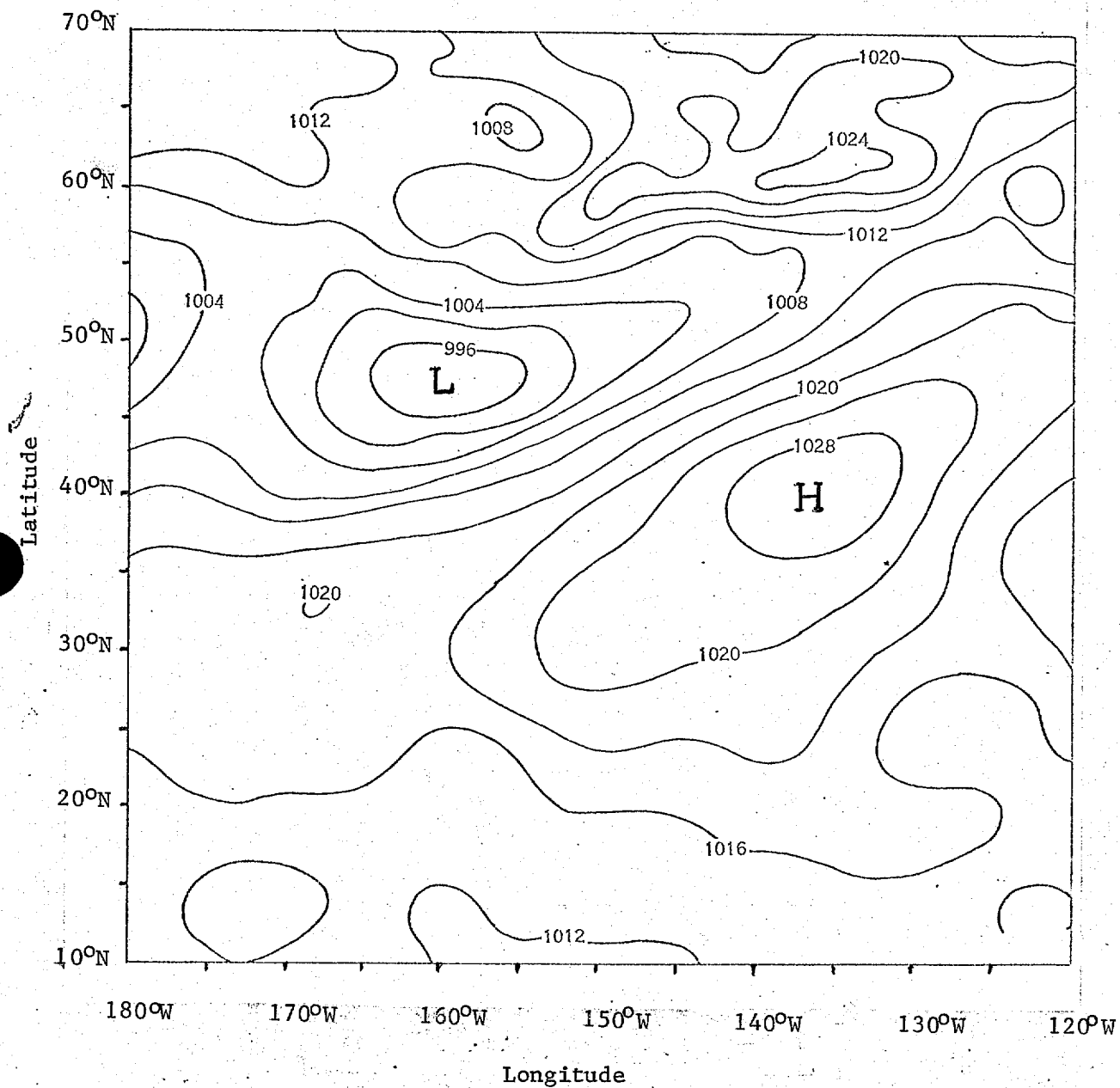Superimposed is the NMC's subjective surface pressure analysis.

Fig. 3 Optimum interpolation analysis of surface pressure using ship winds and pressure data.
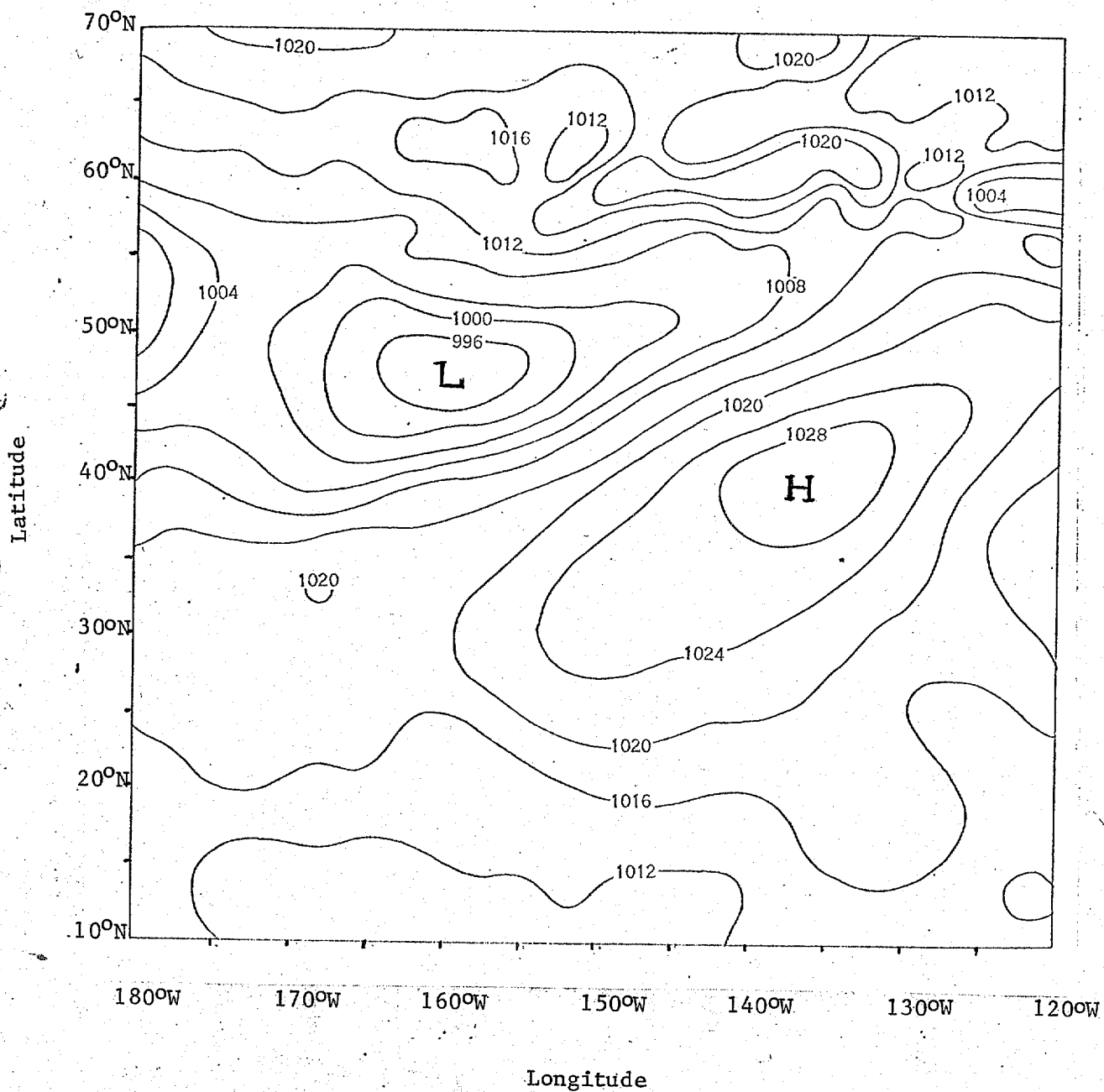
Fig. 4 Optimum interpolation analysis of surface pressure using scatterometer-derived wind data (Revolutions 575 and 576) in addition to ship wind and pressure data.