TEMPERATURE ANALYSIS OF THE POST-FLARE LOOPS OF JUNE 25 – 26, 1992

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Abstract

We have performed an analysis of temperatures and emission measures of thermal plasma on a post-flare loop system following an X3.9 flare of June 25, 1992, at 20:14 UT in NOAA active region 7205 near the west limb (N09, W67). The filter ratio method was applied to the data sets taken using the Al 0.1 μm (thin Al) and Al 12 μm (thick Al) filters of the Yohkoh Soft X-ray Telescope (SXT). We found that the plasma temperature of the top of loops was in the range 5 – 8 x 10^6 K and log emission measure between 44.6 and 46.7 cm^-3 for data sets taken from 22:55:57 UT of June 25 to 09:00 UT of June 26. Furthermore, the occurrence of a C1-class flare at the top of the flare loops increased the plasma temperature from 5.5 x 10^6 K to 6.6 x 10^6 K at 06:57:11 UT. The loops top was much brighter than the legs and footpoints, with ΔT was about 0.1 x 10^6 K.

Key words: Flare loops – Thermal X-ray plasma

1. Introduction

Post-flare loops are probably the most spectacular features associated with the large Hα two-ribbon flares where the footpoints of the flare loops are rooted. Our understanding on the physical state and evolution of the post-flare loops has been much improved by studies using data from ground-based observatories, such as Hα filtergrams and spectrograms, as well as from space observatories (Skylab, SMM, Hinotori) which provide EUV spectra, X-ray spectra and images (see e.g. Moore et al., 1980; Hanako et al., 1986; Schmieder et al., 1988; Poletto and Švestka, 1990; Heinzel et al., 1992; Poletto and Švestka, 1992)

It is widely accepted that the post-flare loops are formed via successively magnetic reconnection as an open magnetic field configuration evolves to a closed configuration (Kopp and Pneuman, 1976). The loops system does not appear to consist of single loops rising upward but, rather, of newly formed or activated stationary loops appearing at successively higher
levels (Moore et al., 1980). The new loops are seen in X-ray as hot loops with temperature of about $10^7$ K which then cooled to form Hα cool loops during the decay phase.

In this paper we present a preliminary results of an analysis on temperatures and emission measures of the thermal X-ray plasma of the flare loops using data from the Yohkoh Soft X-ray Telescope (SXT).

2. Observation

The Yohkoh SXT (Tsuneta et al., 1991) observed a post-flare loops on June 25–26, 1992, which occurred close to the west limb (N09, W67) following an X3.9 flare (20:14 UT) in NOAA 7205. This event can be seen for more than 16 hours after the flare maximum. It was also observed by the Nobeyama Radioheliograph in 17 GHz (Haseoka 1993, private communication) as well as by the Domeless Solar Telescope of Hida Observatories in Hα (Furakoshi and Kita 1992, private communication). According to GOES X-ray time profiles, two flares (M- and C-class flares) were occurred during this interval at 04:15 UT and 06:57 UT of June 26, respectively. The C-class flare at the top of loops was observed during a real time contact between the Yohkoh and Kagoshima Space Center, while the M-class flare could not be observed since Yohkoh entered the night side. Prior to the C-class flare, there was a sequential brightening of small loop system beneath the flare loops which may triggered the flare at the top of loops (Anwar et al., 1993). Other X-class flare (X1.8) was also occurred in the same region on June 28 at 05:14 UT, when NOAA 7205 was located just behind the west limb.

SXT provides X-ray images of multi-wavelengths of an active region, based upon an observation mode selected (Tsuneta et al., 1991). During the Hα two-ribbon flare of June 25, 1992, which accompanied by a beautiful post-flare loops, for example, SXT has took X-ray images using Al 0.1 μm (thin Al) and Al 12 μm (thick Al) filters during the decay phase. Unfortunately, SXT lost the important data during the impulsive phase and the next three hours data of the decay phase caused by a failure in the software onboard Yohkoh and Yohkoh's night time. Therefore, we could only present an analysis using the X-ray images taken during the decay phase from 22:56:57 UT of June 25 to 09:00 UT of June 26. The data are consist of Full resolution (1 × 1 pixels summation, 1 pixel = 2.46 arc sec) images taken during Flare and Quite modes with 64 × 64 and 128 × 128 pixels field of view, respectively. It should be noted that some data could not be obtained as the spacecraft entered the night side. A rather detail description on morphological evolution of the loop system was given by Anwar et al. (1993).

3. Temperature and emission measure

Using the above data sets, we calculated the temperatures and emission measures of the flare loops based on the filter ratio method (Vaiana et al., 1973; Gerassimenko and Nolle, 1978). This method has been used for determining temperatures and emission measures of an active region (Hara et al., 1992) and a limb flare (Tsuneta et al., 1992) using Yohkoh SXT images.

Fig. 1 shows locations at the flare loops where the temperatures (T) and emission measures (EM) were calculated, which are marked with boxes and numbers. We sequentially measured an average of T and EM in boxes from the smallest number to the largest one. By this method, we obtained a general characteristics of T and EM, as well as we could identify the source of new energy generation as an input to the flare loops. Some examples are presented in Fig. 2 for box No. 3 (loops top) during Quite mode.

In general, the temperature profiles of the loops top showed a decay pattern with time, from $8.0 \times 10^5$ K to $5.3 \times 10^5$ K within 10 hours after 22:56:57 UT of June 25, while the log emission measures decreased from 46.7 to 44.6 cm$^{-3}$. The difference of temperature and log emission measure of the loops top and the legs were about $0.1 \times 10^5$ K and 0.5 cm$^{-3}$,
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respectively. Meanwhile, the occurrence of a C-class flare at the top of loops (06:57:11 UT) has increased significantly the temperature from $5.5 \times 10^6$ K to $6.6 \times 10^6$ K within 2 min. The temperature was almost constant during the next 10 min (Flare mode), but returned to $5.5 \times 10^6$ K 7 min later.

The Flare mode data have also been obtained about 3 hours after the maximum intensity, from 22:56:57 UT to 23:06:20 UT. The temperature showed a decreasing pattern, in general, but there was an increasing temperature at loops top approximately within box No. 12 in Fig. 1. This increasing temperature seems to be a clear evidence of magnetic reconnection process proposed by Kopp and Pneuman (1976).

![Fig. 1. Locations of boxes at the flare loops for temperatures and emission measures calculation.](image)

4. Conclusion

We have performed an analysis of temperatures and emission measures of the flare loops of June 25–25, 1992. In general, the time profiles of the temperatures and emission measures were in agreement with the previous studies. Although the C-class flare at the top of loops gave a rise in temperature of about $1.1 \times 10^6$ K for 17 min, we ruled out a possibility that it is the main mechanism of heating responsible for maintaining the long–live flare loops.

A continuing activities in the lower atmosphere – e.g. sequentially brightening of small loop system beneath the flare loops – and their interaction with the footpoints and the legs of the flare loops, after the impulsive phase, may produce an additional energy for the flare loops. A slow magnetic reconnection in the loop system may also contribute to the heating process within the flare loops. Further study in this direction is needed to find a clue in the energy balance problem by comparing the Yohkoh SXT data, Nobeyama Radioheliograph and Hida Ha data, as well as performing a MHD simulation.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to express their thanks to the Yohkoh team for providing a nice database and software for this study. BA would like to acknowledge support by the Organizing Committee of the Kofu symposium. He also thanks to the staff of the Solar Division, NAOJ, Mitaka, and the staff of the Solar Radio Division, Nobeyama Radio Observatory, for their nice
Fig. 2. The time profiles of temperatures and emission measures of the top of loops during Quiet mode observation. The box size is in pixel unit and $t(-)$ is the decay time in hours estimated from the data sets used in each figure.

hospitality and support during his stay. The work of Hudson has been supported by NASA under contract NAS8-37334. Most of this work was done at the Data Analysis Center of Yohkoh, ISAS.

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