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Publication date

2018

Document Version

Final published version

Published in

The astronomer's telegram

License

Unspecified

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Homan, J., Uttley, P., Gendreau, K., Arzoumanian, Z., Saylor, M., Steiner, J. F., Pasham, D., Stevens, A. L., Altamirano, D., Kara, E., & Fabian, A. C. (2018). A rapid state transition in MAXI J1820+070. *The astronomer's telegram*, 11820.

<http://www.astronomerstelegam.org/?read=11820>

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A rapid state transition in MAXI J1820+070

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on 5 Jul 2018; 21:59 UT

Credential Certification: Jeroen Homan (jeroen@space.mit.edu)

Subjects: X-ray, Black Hole, Transient

Referred to by ATel #: [11823](#), [11827](#), [11831](#), [11855](#), [11887](#), [11899](#), [11936](#), [11951](#), [12057](#), [12061](#), [12064](#), [12068](#), [12128](#), [12157](#)

We report on ongoing NICER monitoring observations of the black hole transient MAXI J1820+070 (ATel #[11399](#), #[11400](#), #[11418](#), #[11423](#), #[11420](#), #[11426](#)).

Following a fast rise upon its discovery in March 2018 and an extended hard state plateau, the 0.2-12 keV count rate of the source began a steady decline in mid-May (see link below for light/hardness curves). A reversal of this behavior was observed in mid-June. The NICER X-ray Timing Instrument (XTI) showed a broad minimum (at ~ 5600 cts/s) yielding to an increase in count rate, along with a softening of the spectrum. This increase and softening have both been accelerating in the past week. On July 5 the average 0.2-12 keV count rate was ~ 34300 cts/s, up from ~ 9300 cts/s on June 27.

Rapid evolution has also been seen in the power density spectra. The low-frequency QPOs, which have been reported previously (ATel #[11488](#), #[11510](#) #[11576](#), #[11578](#)), have increased in frequency from ~ 0.35 Hz on June 27 to ~ 3.0 Hz on July 5. To emphasize the rate of evolution, we note that the QPO frequency doubled in less than 18 hours between the July 4 and 5 observations.

The spectrum of the July 5 observation is reasonably well described by an absorbed continuum model consisting of a disk component, a power law, and reflection. The slope of the power law (~ 2.4) is considerably steeper than during the hard state observations of the source (1.6-1.7, ATel #[11576](#)). The unabsorbed 0.3-10 keV flux on July 5 was $9.8e-8$ erg/cm²/s. For a distance of 3.2 kpc (Gandhi et al. 2018, arXiv:1804.11349) this corresponds to a luminosity of $1.2e38$ erg/s.

The above behavior suggests that MAXI J1820+070 is currently in a hard intermediate state and transitioning, at an unusually rapid rate, toward the soft state. Since the soft state may already be reached within a few days, NICER observations of the source are continuing at an intensive rate and we strongly encourage observations at all wavelengths in the coming days to follow this state transition in detail.

NICER is a 0.2-12 keV X-ray telescope operating on the International Space Station. The NICER

Related

- 12534** MAXI J1820+070 is close to quiescence
- 12157** MAXI 1820+070 has completed the decline from the recent optical re-brightening following the soft to hard transition
- 12128** Optical brightening of MAXI J1820+070 over the soft to hard transition observed with LCO and the AI Sadeem Observatory
- 12068** MAXI J1820+070 continuing its rapid evolution toward the hard state
- 12064** Swift observes MAXI J1820+070 in transition from the soft to the hard-intermediate state
- 12061** AMI radio detection of the black hole candidate MAXI J1820+070 during the soft to hard transition.
- 12057** MAXI/GSC detection of a rapid increase in the hard X-ray flux of MAXI J1820+070
- 11960** The 55 Hz signal we detected in MAXI J 1820+070 is not a QPO
- 11951** Detection of a 55 Hz high-frequency QPO in MAXI J1820+070 with NICER
- 11936** Optical timing observations of MAXI J1820+070 with IFI+IQUEYE and AQUEYE+ soon after state transition
- 11899** Short-lived episodes of emission line splitting in the candidate black hole X-ray binary MAXI 1820+070
- 11887** LOFAR observations of MAXI J1820+070 (ASASSN-18ey) during its recent state transition
- 11855** Polarimetric monitoring of the MAXI J1820+070 in optical and near-infrared wavelengths
- 11833** Declining near-infrared flux from the black-hole candidate MAXI J1820+070 (ASASSN-18ey) in transition
- 11831** (Sub)-millimetre Observations of MAXI J1820+070 (ASASSN-18ey) Suggest Jet Quenching on July 6

mission and portions of the NICER science team activities are funded by NASA.

Count rate and hardness evolution of MAXI J1820+070

11827	AMI-LA 15.5 GHz observations of radio flaring from the black hole candidate MAXI J1820+070 in transition
11824	Other low-frequency optical QPO-like features in MAXI J1820+070 detected with IFI+IQUEYE@Galileo
11823	Continuing NICER observations of the state transition in ASASSN-18ey/MAXI J1820+070
11820	A rapid state transition in MAXI J1820+070
11723	Low-frequency optical QPO in MAXI J1820+070 detected with IFI+IQUEYE@Galileo
11661	KEGS Discovery of 9 Supernova Candidates in the K2 Campaign 17 field with Pan-STARRS PS1
11609	Simultaneous LOFAR and AMI-LA observations of MAXI J1820+070
11596	MAXI J1820+070 has optical period of 3.4 hours
11591	Further detection of the optical low frequency QPO in the black hole transient MAXI J1820+070
11578	Exponential increase in X-ray QPO frequency with time in MAXI J1820+070
11576	NICER observations of MAXI J1820+070: Continuing evolution of X-ray variability properties
11574	Optical/X-ray Flux Decoupling in MAXI J1820+070
11540	VLITE meter-wavelength detection of MAXI J1820+070 at 339 MHz
11539	The 30-day monitoring of MAXI J1820+070 at 4.7 GHz
11533	A bright mid-infrared excess in MAXI J1820+070
11510	Detection of optical and X-ray QPOs at similar frequencies in MAXI J1820+070
11490	INTEGRAL observations of MAXI J1820+070: public data products
11488	Low-frequency QPOs in MAXI J1820+070 as seen by INTEGRAL/SPI
11482	Palomar 60-inch SEDM classification of optical transients
11481	MAXI J1820+070: VLT and GTC spectroscopic follow-up shows a significant spectral evolution from the early stages of the outburst
11480	ePESSTO spectroscopic classification of optical transients
11478	INTEGRAL observations of MAXI J1820+070
11462	Near Infrared JHKs observations of the transient MAXI J1820+070 / ASASSN-18ey: Erratum on 2MASS counterpart designation
11458	Near Infrared JHKs observations of the transient MAXI J1820+070 / ASASSN-18ey
11451	Fast infrared photometry of the black-hole candidate MAXI J1820+070

11445	First measurements of linear polarization of MAXI J1820+070
11440	NOEMA Sub-millimetre Detection of MAXI J1820+070
11439	A flat radio spectrum of MAXI J1820+070
11437	Red sub-second optical flaring in MAXI J1820+070 observed by ULTRACAM/NTT
11432	Correlated Optical/X-ray Timing Variations in MAXI J1820+070 found by Swift UVOT and XRT
11427	The hard X-ray spectrum of MAXI J1820+070 observed by Swift/BAT
11426	Detection of 10-msec scale optical flares in the black-hole binary candidate MAXI J1820+070 (ASASSN-18ey)
11425	Optical Spectra of MAXI J1820+070 with Keck
11424	SOAR/Goodman optical spectroscopy of MAXI J1820+070
11423	NICER observations of MAXI J1820+070 suggest a rapidly-brightening black hole X-ray binary in the hard state
11421	Fast optical flaring in the suspected black-hole binary MAXI J1820+070 (ASASSN-18ey)
11420	AMI radio observations of the black hole candidate MAXI J1820+070
11418	Optical observations of MAXI J1820+070 suggest it is a black hole X-ray binary
11406	MAXI J1820+070: Errata and updated XRT Position
11404	MAXI J1820+070: Swift/UVOT counterpart correction
11403	Swift detection of MAXI J1820+070
11400	Optical follow-up of MAXI J1820+070 and possible identity with ASASSN-18ey
11399	MAXI/GSC detection of a probable new X-ray transient MAXI J1820+070
10459	Ongoing radio monitoring of Cyg X-1 with the RATAN-600 radio telescope

[**Telegram Index**]

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