The new AM Her system RX J0704.2+6203

Northern twin of BL Hydri

G. H. Tovmassian1, P. Szkody2,*, J. Greiner3, S. V. Zharikov1, F.-J. Zickgraf4, A. Serrano5, J. Krautter6, I. Thiering6, and V. Neustroev7,**

1 OAN, Instituto de Astronómía, UNAM, Mexico
2 Department of Astronomy, Box 351580, University of Washington, Seattle, USA
e-mail: szkody@astro.washington.edu
3 Astrophysical Institute Potsdam, An der Sternwarte 16, 14482 Potsdam, Germany
e-mail: jgreiner@aip.de
4 Observatoire Astronomique de Strasbourg, France
5 Instituto Nacional de Astrofísica Optica y Electrónica, AP 51 y 216, Puebla, Pue., México
6 Landessternwarte Königstuhl, 69117 Heidelberg, Germany
7 Udmurtia State University, Universitetskaya st., Izhevsk, Russia

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Abstract. We report here on the identification and study of the optical counterpart of the ROSAT source RX J0704.2+6203. Extensive spectral and photometric observation showed that the object belongs to the class of magnetic Cataclysmic Variables. We determined the orbital period of the system to be 97.27 and estimated the strength of its magnetic field to be on the order of 20 MG. The system was observed in both high and low states, common for its class. Other parameters of the magnetic close binary system were estimated. The spectral and photometric behavior of the object is similar to that of the well studied polar BL Hyi.

Key words. stars: novae, cataclysmic variables – stars: individual: RX J0704.2+6203 – stars: magnetic field – binaries: close – X-rays: stars – accretion

1. Introduction

As part of a program devoted to the optical identification of a complete sample of northern ROSAT all-sky survey (RASS) X-ray sources, we identified a new magnetic cataclysmic variable (CV). Since October 1991 nearly 800 X-ray sources have been observed within the identification program1. A detailed description of the project is given by Zickgraf et al. (1997). Here we report the identification and detailed follow-up observations of the optical counterpart of the ROSAT all-sky survey X-ray source RX J0704.2+6203 (= 1RX J070409.2+620330). It is the fourth magnetic cataclysmic Variable (CV) discovered within this collaboration (Tovmassian et al. 1998, 1999, 2000).

Magnetic CVs (Polars) are close interacting double systems comprised of a white dwarf (WD) and a pre-main sequence red dwarf, in which the accretion of matter onto the WD is governed by its strong magnetic field. Instead of forming an accretion disc, as common in most other CVs, matter is funneled to the magnetic pole on the WD through the magnetic lines. A standoff shock forms near the surface of the WD. The shocked plasma cools through bremsstrahlung and cyclotron radiation as it settles onto the WD (Warner 1995). Polars tend to cluster below the “period-gap”, i.e. periods less than 2 hours, and they often exhibit characteristic light curves, spectral distribution and profiles of emission lines easily distinguishable from other types of CVs. BL Hyi is one of the well studied examples of a polar. We found a number of similarities in behavior and the parameters of RX J0704.2+6203 with those of the well studied BL Hyi. Here we report our
the hardness ratio \( HR \) was 0.13 cts/s, and of 340 s. Its mean count rate in the ROSAT position of 2.5 days in Sep. 20{23, 1990 for a total observing time scanned during the ROSAT all-sky-survey over a period of

The optical counterpart was identified on the 2.1 m telescope with the faint object spectrograph (LFOSC, Zickgraf et al. 1997) at Guillermo Haro Observatory, Cananea, Mexico (Appenzeller et al. 1998). The finding

2. Observations

2.1. X-ray observations

RX J0704.2+6203 was scanned during the ROSAT all-sky-survey over a period of 2.5 days in Sep. 20–23, 1990 for a total observing time of 340 s. Its mean count rate in the ROSAT position-sensitive proportional counter (PSPC) was 0.13 cts/s, and the hardness ratio \( HR1 = -0.00 \pm 0.15 \) where \( HR1 \) is defined as \((H-S)/(H+S)\), with \( H(S) \) being the counts above (below) \( 0.4 \) keV over the full PSPC range of \( 0.1-2.4 \) keV. Thus, the X-ray spectrum is comparatively hard. Despite the small number of counts a fit with a one-component model, like a pure blackbody model, is not acceptable. Applying a sum of a black body and a thermal bremsstrahlung model with the temperature of the latter component fixed to \( 20 \) keV (it is not constrained at all by the ROSAT data) gives a good reduced \( \chi^2 = 1.04 \) (see Fig. 1) and the following fit parameters: \( kT_{\text{bbdy}} = 19 \pm 15 \) eV, \( N_{\text{H}} = 3.1 \times 10^{21} \) cm\(^{-2} \). For a better comparison to the parameters of similar sources we also fixed the black body temperature to \( kT_{\text{bbdy}} = 25 \) eV, and derive \( N_{\text{H}} = 4.5 \times 10^{20} \) cm\(^{-2} \), \( \text{Norm}_{\text{bbdy}} = 0.23 \) and \( \text{Norm}_{\text{bbr}} = 3.0 \times 10^{-4} \). This gives an unabsorbed 0.1–2.4 keV flux of \( 1.1 \times 10^{-11} \) erg cm\(^{-2} \) s\(^{-1} \) (or \( 2.9 \times 10^{-11} \) erg cm\(^{-2} \) s\(^{-1} \) bolometric), corresponding to an unabsorbed bolometric luminosity of \( 3.5 \times 10^{31} \) (D/100 pc\(^2 \) erg s\(^{-1} \).

2.2. Optical observations

The optical counterpart was confirmed as a CV with a few epochal spectra obtained at the 2.1m telescope of Observatorio Astronómico Nacional de San Pedro Mártir (OAN SPM) in Mexico. The Boller & Chivens spectrograph with moderate 4–5 Å FWHM resolution was used. But the faintness of the object prevented us from obtaining a set of data with sufficient time resolution. Using the same telescope with the f/13.5 secondary focus of the 2.1 m telescope (instead of f/7.5 as used for spectroscopy), infrared J band photometry of the object, covering multiple orbital periods was accomplished on Nov. 24, 1998. The Camila IR camera operating NICMOS3 256 × 256 detector sensitive from 1 to 2.5 microns was used. IR standard objects were observed for magnitude calibration.

RX J0704.2+6203 was observed extensively at the 1 m telescope Zeiss-1000 of the Special Astrophysical Observatory of Russian Academy of Sciences (SAO RAS) with the CCD in Johnson-Kron-Cousins photometric \( BVRIc \) system. In total, the observations span a long baseline of several years. Here, again, we observed standard fields in order to not only perform differential photometry, but also calculate the visual magnitudes of the object. The log of these and all other optical observations is presented in Table 1.

Observations with low spectral resolution were obtained using the long slit spectrograph (UAGS) at the prime focus of the 6m telescope of SAO RAS on Nov. 04 & 05 1999. The data were obtained with \( \approx 10 \) Å FWHM resolution in the 3630–8340 Å spectral range. These spectra were flux calibrated using spectrophotometric standard star observation during the same nights and were instrumental for the study of the continuum flux distribution.
Higher spectral resolution observations of RX J0704.2+6203 were performed on the 3.5 m telescope at Apache Point Observatory. The double-imaging spectrograph (DIS) was used in the two wavelength regions 4200–5100 and 5800–6800 Å to obtain a set of medium-high-spectral resolution (FWHM 2.5 Å) and high-time resolution (0.1 Porb) spectra covering almost two orbital periods. Once again we observed spectrophotometric standards for flux calibration. Both spectral and photometric observations were reduced with IRAF2 packages.

3. The orbital period

3.1. Photometric

The orbital period of the system was determined based on the full set of observations that we collected over 3 years. The light curves in the different bands and in the different luminosity states were all normalized to the same minimum level. These also include fluxes derived from the spectral observations. The light curves all display distinct hump structure with varying amplitude depending on wavelength and luminosity state. This feature served for period determination almost as well as an eclipse does in high-inclination systems. Thus, we were able to derive the orbital period from photometry with high precision.

We used discrete Fourier transformation techniques for our period search, combined with the CLEAN procedure (Roberts et al. 1987), which basically deconvolves the window function with the actual power spectrum in order to depress spectral peaks originating from the temporal distribution of the data. We first calculated the power spectra of sufficiently long individual data sets. They all were consistent with each other in showing the maximum peak in the power spectral distribution at around 0.0675 days. Finally we performed the analysis on the combined set of data.

Figure 3 presents the CLEANed power spectrum of the combined data. The strongest peak corresponds to the value obtained previously from the separate sets of data. The strength and narrowness of the single peak (see the inset of the figure for the zoomed up profile of the central peak) shows the coherence of the periodic signal in the data comprised of measurements at different wavelengths and even at different luminosity states of the object. Our estimate is accurate to 0.007 min. According to our analysis the orbital period of RX J0704.2+6203 is

\[ P_{\text{orb}} = 0.06754658 \pm 0.000005 \text{ days} = 97.2671 \text{ min}. \]

3.2. Spectroscopic

After we had a photometric period, we could determine the spectroscopic period of the system for comparison. We used the set of higher resolution spectra obtained at the APO 3.5 m telescope for that purpose.

We used the two strongest lines in the spectrum of RX J0704.2+6203 (Hβ and He ii). Analysis of the profiles of these emission lines has been shown to be an efficient way to distinguish the various emission components that are present in magnetic CVs. A brief examination of the line profiles and constrained two-dimensional images (trailed spectra) showed that there is a dominant component of the emission lines in both the Balmer and ionized Helium lines. Thus, it was relatively simple to disentangle it from the underlying fainter component(s) by simple deblending the line with two Gaussians. As soon as we

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2 IRAF is the Image Reduction and Analysis Facility, a general purpose software system for the reduction and analysis of astronomical data. IRAF is written and supported by the IRAF programming group at the National Optical Astronomy Observatories (NOAO) in Tucson, Arizona. NOAO is operated by the Association of Universities for Research in Astronomy (AURA), Inc. under cooperative agreement with the National Science Foundation.
had line centers determined for the dominant component of the emission lines it was easy to fit them with a regular \( \sin \) curve with the period determined from photometry. Then the re-calculated values of line centers of that component from the fit were used for a second iteration of de-blending, with one Gaussian fixed at the calculated wavelength, to refine the parameters of the second component. Although some polars show more than two components in the emission lines, in this case, we reached a satisfactory fit and could not find any evidence of additional sources. Usually two prominent components are easily distinguishable. They are narrow emission line (NEL) component originating from irradiated secondary, and high velocity component (HVC) which probably emitted by the stream of matter free-falling from the inner \( L_1 \) point toward the WD. The former has \( FWHM \) about 2.5 A or less, it may reach up to 400 km s\(^{-1}\) semi-amplitude of radial velocity in high-inclination, eclipsing systems, and its flux is significantly higher at around 0.5 orbital phase, when it is behind WD and faces observer with heated side of its surface. While the latter, due to the gradient of intrinsic velocities inside the stream is broader and fuzzy (usually about 7–8 A) reaching up to 1500 km s\(^{-1}\) in higher inclination systems, but can be much lower in others. HVC reaches maximum positive velocity at around orbital phase zero, when it is behind WD and faces observer with heated side of its surface. 

Thus, the \( RV \) of emission lines were successfully separated into two components shown with different symbols in Fig. 4. Both are modulated with the photometric orbital period. Both show a relatively large amplitude of radial velocity variation. The component drawn by filled squares is very distinct and is well described by

\[
V_{\text{em}} = \gamma + K_{\text{em1}} \sin(2\pi(t - t_0)/P_{\text{orb}}).
\]

We obtained \( K_{\text{em1}} = 387 \) and \( 422 \) km s\(^{-1}\) for H\(\beta \) and He\(\text{II} \) respectively. The phase shift of 0.06 \( P_{\text{orb}} \) between same component of two different lines is remarkable in the sense that, the high values of \( K_{\text{em1}} \) combined with the phase shift between lines of various excitation in a relatively low–inclination system (absence of eclipses), indicates that this component of the emission line probably originates in the stream. Our designation of this component as pertaining to the stream (HVC) in spite of its relatively low amplitude is further supported by Doppler tomography (see below).

The other curve, marked by a dashed line fitted to the second component of the emission lines, is not as well defined. This component fitted with a \( \sin \) curve with semi-amplitude of 540 km s\(^{-1}\) supposedly also comes from the stream, but from the magnetically controlled part. Open squares are measurements of the unblended emission line in the low resolution spectra. They bear signs of both components with predominant influence of the stronger and lower velocity component. We present these measurements in order to show how good the observations, that are separated by a large time gap, fold together with the orbital period determined from the photometry. Note that radial velocity variations are caused by the matter orbiting in the binary system frame, while humps in the light curve arise from the magnetic pole spinning with WD. Therefore, the coincidence of the photometric and
spectroscopic periods provides good evidence of synchronized rotation of the WD in the system i.e. a polar.

4. The nature of the object and its behavior

4.1. Photometric characteristics

The light curves of RX J0704.2+6203 folded with the orbital period in different bands are presented in Fig. 5. They include light curves derived from spectrophotometric observations by measuring flux in narrow bands (upper panels) as well as broad-band CCD photometry (lower).

The light curves exhibit prominent humps that vary insignificantly in amplitude from band to band and are almost identical in shape. Although the large number of sub-classes of CV's display a large range of light curves due to the numerous sources of radiation, there are easily distinguishable shapes depending on particular affiliation to one or another class. The humps in the light curve of RX J0704.2+6203 are typical of those due to a large contribution of cyclotron radiation being beamed from the accretion column. The shape and duration of the humps suggests that the spot is being eclipsed by the WD itself in its synchronized rotation with the binary period. The hump duration is about 0.6 $P_{\text{orb}}$. There is some indication of a secondary peak at phase 1.4, which may be attributed to the presence of the second weak accretion pole in the system. The light curve is remarkably similar to that of BL Hyi (Wolff et al. 1995).

RX J0704.2+6203 was observed in $R_c$ band in a high luminosity state as well as in a low state. The phase folded light curve in the low state is presented in Fig. 6 along with the high state light curve in the same filter for comparison. Interestingly, the light curve shape in the low state remains remarkably similar to the shape in high state. However, the amplitude of the cyclotron humps in the low state is a factor of two less than the in high state.

4.2. Spectrophotometric characteristics

The low resolution spectra of RX J0704.2+6203 obtained at the 6m telescope SAO RAS were used for a study of
the continuum variation over the orbital period. As can be seen from flux measurements in narrow bands covering the continuum spectrum in Fig. 5, the spectrum undergoes large changes in the course of the orbit. It can be better demonstrated by comparison of the averaged spectrum of RX J0704.2+6203 at the maximum of the light curve humps with the averaged spectrum at the bottom (see Fig. 7). There is an enormous change in shape of the spectrum, confirmed by the multicolored photometry also shown in the figure.

Besides the usual set of Balmer and He lines in emission common for CVs, the spectrum at the maximum of the light curve shows a steep increase in the blue and small humps in the red. No traces of lines from the secondary could be found. Change of shape of the spectrum and continuum humps are common for magnetic CVs. Similar spectral changes were observed in another magnetic CV recently reported by Tovmassian et al. (2000). Particularly, the spectra of RX J0704.2+6203 very much resemble those of the well studied BL Hyi (Schwope et al. 1995).

The humps seen in the continuum of magnetic CVs are actually lines of cyclotron emission emitted from the magnetic column of matter accreting onto the magnetic pole of the WD in the binary system. The cyclotron emission originates in the column of in-falling matter above the magnetic pole, where it slows down and heats up before settling on the surface of the WD. It is emitted in a wide range of wavelengths from the near UV to the infrared region. Since cyclotron radiation is beamed perpendicular to the magnetic lines and since the WD is locked by its magnetic field in a synchronous rotation with the binary system, we see periodic maxima in the light curve and cyclotron spectrum appear and disappear depending on the viewing angle of the magnetic pole of the WD.

In order to separate the bulk of cyclotron emission from the rest of the emitting sources and estimate the strength of the magnetic field, the averaged spectrum at the minimum was subtracted from the spectrum at the maximum of the light curve. The spectra were shifted according to radial velocity measurements corresponding to the orbital motion. The residual spectrum is presented in Fig. 8. The lines are clearly gone, thus their contribution to the luminosity change is negligible. The continuum bears apparent signs of cyclotron lines seen as humps.

We used the theory developed by Chanmugam & Dulk (1981), Wickramasinghe & Meggitt (1985) to constrain our models in order to describe the observed differential flux of RX J0704.2+6203 assuming its cyclotron nature. Similar models were applied by Schwope et al. (1995) and Ferrario et al. (1996) to estimate the magnetic field of the WD in BL Hyi. We calculated a set of models for emission cyclotron spectra that rises from the slab of plasma representing the post-shock region of the accretion column to our observations. We took the simplest view assuming a homogeneously emitting plasma.

Assuming a typical value of the order of the shock temperature for $kT = 20$ keV the observed cyclotron lines in the red portion of the spectrum can be identified as 8, 7 & 6 harmonics (corresponding to peaks at $\approx 7450$, $6600$ & $5950$ Å) of cyclotron emission, thus leading to a moderate 20 MG magnetic field strength. Since cyclotron emission is described by a number of parameters (temperature $kT$, the polar angle between the line of sight and the magnetic field $\theta$, the field strength $B$ and a plasma parameter $\Lambda = ln_e/B$, where $l$ is geometric size, $n_e$ – electron density, (Wickramasinghe & Meggitt 1985), there is some ambiguity of chosen parameters and they can be traded against each other (e.g., lower values of $B$ and $T$ require higher values of $\Lambda$ in order to shift the cyclotron
peak to the observed value and vice versa). Alternatively, the observed lines could be 9, 8 & 7 harmonics (a shift by one), which will require lower value of $kT = 10 \text{ keV}$ in order to successfully fit the cyclotron spectrum, which in turn will lead to an increment of the magnetic field up to $24 \text{ MG}$. The difference is not significant, taking into account the much wider range of magnetic fields observed in mCVs. The suggested rather low value of the magnetic field strength is supported by the relatively hard X-ray spectrum typically found in low-field polar (Beuermann & Burwitz 1995; Schwope 1996).

Meanwhile, the thick straight line in the Fig. 8 is a linear fit to the differential energy distribution between the maximum and minimum of the light curve, derived from photometry. It extends beyond the optical range thanks to our measurements in near IR-band $J$. Its steepness is an additional confirmation of the cyclotron nature of the observed radiation.

Thus, our tentative classification of RX J0704.2+6203 as a member of AM Her class of magnetic Cataclysmic Variables based on the shape of the lightcurve, presence of significant X-ray radiation and strong He\textsc{ii} line, characteristic profiles of emission lines and the semiamplitude of $RV$, as well as defined high and low luminosity states, is confirmed by direct estimate of the magnetic field of WD by fitting the cyclotron emission spectrum. We can go one step further and estimate other parameters of the system. From the fact that the light curves show no eclipses, other than self eclipse of the accreting, magnetic pole by WD, it is much stronger than the second component. While in He\textsc{ii} the second component has more contribution and easily could be traced by eye in the phase-folded trailed spectrum (between phases 1.0–1.5) as well as on the velocity map. It is seen as extension of the main spot towards negative $V_y$ velocities. For indication of Roche lobe of secondary, location of primary WD and the stream of matter in the map we selected reasonable binary parameters (the inclination angle of $30^\circ$, primary mass $M_1 = 0.7$ with mass ratio $q = 0.25$) to fit the observed characteristics of the stream.

The absence of evidence for secondary heating in RX J0704.2+6203 in the Doppler map is noteworthy. The single spot on the maps clearly can not belong to the irradiated secondary due to its extremely high velocity and its elongated shape. This particular feature is another characteristic that makes RX J0704.2+6203 a twin of BL Hyi (Mennickent et al. 1999), since the majority of AM Her systems show a significant contribution from the irradiated secondary in the line emission.

6. Conclusions

We found that the optical counterpart of X-Ray source RX J0704.2+6203 is a magnetic CV (AM Her type).

The orbital period of the system is 97 min and it increments the number of polars that are clustered around a 100 min peak.

The preliminary estimate of magnetic strength of probably dipole WD in the system is $B = 20–24 \text{ MG}$. 
The system resembles the southern polar BL Hya in its characteristics. The most striking similarity is that both systems have no signs of an irradiated secondary star in their emission lines, unlike other AM Her objects (Mennickent et al. 1999).

Our rough estimate of the inclination angle is $30^\circ < i < 60^\circ$ and of the angle between the rotation axis and field vector is $120^\circ < \beta < 150^\circ$.

Photometry obtained in low and high states shows that the magnetically driven accretion does not halt but reduces its magnitude at the low state. The reduction of cyclotron luminosity by $\approx 2$ magnitudes leads to the conclusion that either accretion area or accretion rate decreases by a factor of 6.

The absence of secondary irradiation does not support speculations that the accretion rate changes could be the result of the heating of a part of that star.

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