

2 0 2 0 年度

(9 月修了)

修士論文発表会

論文要旨集

2 0 2 0 年 8 月 2 8 日 (金)

Lyman α Emitters Explored by the HETDEX Blind Spectroscopic Survey

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We investigate galaxy formation and evolution with Ly α emitters (LAEs) at $z = 2 - 3.5$ obtained by the Hobby Eberly Telescope Dark Energy eXperiment (HETDEX) survey. The HETDEX is a blind spectroscopic survey with a spectral range of 3500–5500 Å that covers Ly α emission lines at $z = 2 - 3.5$. We obtain 1874 spectroscopically identified LAEs on the sky of 1.91 deg². Among the 1874 LAEs, there are 445 type 1 AGNs that have broad Ly α emission lines with FWHM > 1000 km s⁻¹. With our LAE sample, we derive the Ly α luminosity function (LF) in the Ly α luminosity ($L_{\text{Ly}\alpha}$) range of $10^{43.0-45.2}$ erg s⁻¹ with great accuracy. At the bright end of $L_{\text{Ly}\alpha} > 10^{43.5}$ erg s⁻¹, our Ly α LF has a significant hump, spectroscopically confirming the claims given by previous photometric surveys. Exploiting our spectra, we find that this bright-end hump is composed of type 1 AGNs. We show that our Ly α LF can be fitted with the linear combination of the Schechter function and the power law. From the Schechter component of our Ly α LF, we measure the faint-end slope of Ly α LF to be $\alpha = -1.85^{+0.16}_{-0.10}$. Combining with previous results at other redshifts, we find a possible redshift evolution of α at $z \sim 2 - 6$ such that α steepens towards high redshift. The correlation coefficient between α and z is -0.64 that corresponds to the confidence level of 82%. This is the first time that the redshift evolution of α is identified at a reasonable confidence level. We also derive the UV continuum LF (UV LF) of type 1 AGNs in our LAE sample, reaching the very faint absolute UV continuum magnitude (M_{UV}) of ~ -18 . The number densities of our bright UV continuum ($M_{\text{UV}} < -21$) type 1 AGNs agree well with those from previous studies at the similar redshift. On the other hand, our faint AGNs with $-21 < M_{\text{UV}} < -18$ have number densities smaller than those previously reported. We argue that our type 1 AGN UV LF is reliable due to the low uncertainty in our completeness correction. Comparing with the type 1 AGN UV LF at $z \sim 0$, we find that the number densities of faint UV continuum ($M_{\text{UV}} > -21$) type 1 AGNs increases from $z \sim 2$ to $z \sim 0$. This represents the direct identification of the downsizing of faint UV continuum AGNs at $-20 < M_{\text{UV}} < -18$.