QPOs in microquasars and Sgr A*: measuring the black hole spin

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Abstract. In all four microquasars which show double peak kHz QPOs, the ratio of the two frequencies is 3:2. This strongly supports the suggestion that twin peak kHz QPOs are due to a resonance between some modes of accretion disk oscillations. Here, we stress that fits to observations of the hypothetical resonances between vertical and radial epicyclic frequencies (particularly of the parametric resonance) give an accurate estimate of the spin for the three microquasars with known mass. Measurement of double peak QPOs frequencies in the Galaxy centre seems also to be consistent with the 3:2 ratio established by previous observations in microquasars, however the Sgr A* data are rather difficult for the same exact analysis. If confirmed, the 3:2 ratio of double peak QPOs in Sgr A* would be of a fundamental importance for the black hole accretion theory and the precise measurement could help to solve the question of QPOs nature.

Key words: black hole physics – X-ray variability

1. Orbital resonance models – the brief sketch

Kluźniak & Abramowicz (2000), motivated by the observed double peak kHz QPOs in X–ray variability of neutron stars sources, introduced models based on the idea of a resonance between the relativistic epicyclic frequencies 1. These models were reviewed, e.g., in Abramowicz & Kluźniak (2004); Török et al. (2005) or Kluźniak (2005, this textbook).

According to the resonance hypothesis, the two modes in resonance have eigenfrequencies νrad (equal to the radial epicyclic frequency) and νv (equal to the vertical orbital frequency νθ or to the Keplerian frequency νK). Several resonances of this kind are possible, and have been discussed (see, e.g., Abramowicz & Kluźniak 2004). Main relations between the eigenfrequencies of resonance and the possibly observable frequencies are summarized in Table 1 for some particular resonances.

Table 1. Relation of observed frequencies for standard (ν = νθ) and “Keplerian” (ν = νK) resonances – while the parametric model identifies the observed νupp, νdown directly with the eigenfrequencies of resonance, forced resonances can give the 3:2 ratio by combinational frequencies.

| Type of resonance | (nνrad + mν) | n | m | νupp | νdown |
|-------------------|---------------|----|----|-----|-----|
| parametric        |               | 3  | 2  | νθ  | νrad |
| 3:1 forced        |               | 3  | 1  | νθ − νrad | νθ  |
| 2:1 forced        |               | 2  | 1  | νθ + νrad | νθ  |
| parametric        |               | 3  | 2  | νK  | νrad |
| 3:1 forced        |               | 3  | 1  | νK − νrad | νK  |
| 2:1 forced        |               | 2  | 1  | νK + νrad | νK  |

2. Estimating the black hole spin

Formulae for the Keplerian and epicyclic frequencies νvert and νrad in the gravitational field of a rotating Kerr black hole with the mass M and internal angular momentum a (here and henceforth spin a) are well known (Fig. 11 – see, e.g., Nowak & Lehr (1999):
2 ESTIMATING THE BLACK HOLE SPIN

2.1 Microquasars observational data

Till this time, double peak kHz QPOs were measured in the case of four microquasars (GRO 1655–40; GRS 1915+105, XTE 1550–564, H 1743–322) and in every case the data show 3:2 ratio of frequencies in the double peak ($\nu_{\text{up}}/\nu_{\text{down}} = 3/2$). Mass estimates for central black holes are known and more firmly established for the three of these four sources, however for the GRS 1915+105 the mass estimate still varies of factor about two (Greiner, Cuby, McCaughrean 2001) and for GRO 1655–40 exists two incompatible studies of the mass (Greene, Bailyn, Orosz 2001; Beer & Podsiadlowski 2002) – for the summary of microquasars data see Table 2 together with its references, while Fig. 3 shows the illustration of significant 3:2 ratio.

2.2. The Sgr A* data

The mass of Galaxy centre black hole have been discussed in several recent studies and the best estimate is usually given as $(3.6 \pm 0.4) \times 10^6 M_\odot$ (e.g. Schoedel et al. 2002, 2003).
3 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{fig3.png}
\caption{Left: In all four microquasars where double peak kHz QPOs were detected, the observed frequencies $\nu_{\text{upp}}$ and $\nu_{\text{low}}$ are clearly in the 3:2 ratio. Right: The same 3:2 ratio seems to be present in double peak QPOs in Sgr A*.}
\end{figure}

Table 2. Frequencies of twin peak QPOs in microquasars and Galaxy centre black hole

| Source  | $\nu_{\text{upp}}$ [Hz] | $\Delta \nu_{\text{upp}}$ [Hz] | $\nu_{\text{down}}$ [Hz] | $\Delta \nu_{\text{down}}$ [Hz] | $2\nu_{\text{upp}}/3\nu_{\text{down}} - 1$ | Mass (b) [$M_\odot$] |
|---------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| GRO 1655–40 | 450 ± 3 | 300 ± 5 | 0.00000 | 6.0 — 6.6 |
| XTE 1550–564 | 276 ± 3 | 184 ± 5 | 0.00000 | 8.4 — 10.8 |
| H 1743–322 | 240 ± 3 | 166 ± 8 | -0.03614 | not measured |
| GRS 1915+105 | 168 ± 3 | 113 ± 5 | 0.00885 | 10.0 — 18.0 |
| Sgr A* | 1.445 ±0.16 mHz | 0.886 ±0.04 mHz | 0.08728 | (2.6 — 4.4) × 10^6 |

(a) Twin peak QPOs first reported by Strohmayer 2001; Remillard et al. 2002; Homan et al. 2003; Remillard et al. 2003; Aschenbach et al. 2004.

(b) See Greene, Bailyn, Orosz 2001; Orosz et al. 2002; Greiner, Cuby, McCaughrean 2001; McClintock & Remillard 2003 for the microquasars. Note that there is the different estimate for GRO 1655–40: $M = (5.4 ± 0.3) M_\odot$ (Beer & Podsialedowsk 2002). Interval for Sgr A* (used in Torok et al. 2005) is resulting from several recent analysis.

3. Discussion and conclusions

In the case of microquasars all resonances discussed here (except the 3:2 Keplerian resonance) are consistent with the existing microquasars data and comparing this data with predictions of the theory gives a clear estimate of the spin for given source and model. The different relativistic QPOs models can be compared at the moment when some independent and convincing estimate of the microquasars spin will be done. For example, the 3:2 parametric resonance model \(^1\) expects high spin ($a \sim 0.95$) for the microquasars, while another relativistic precession model of Morsink & Stella (1999) predicts the spin to be rather low ($a \sim 0.2$). Unfortunately, no such clear spin predictions exist at the present stage. For example, it is often argued that the presence of relativistic jet (which the discussed microquasars show) is a signature of large black hole spin (Blandford & Znajek 1977) but there is some evidence against (Ghosh & Abramowicz 1997). Also the up-and-coming studies of spectral iron lines give contradictory results as well (see, e.g., Martocchia et al. 2002).

\(^1\) One should remind that, in difference to forced resonances, the 3:2 parametric resonance model gives the 3:2 observed ratio naturally without any additional assumptions.
3 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Fig. 4. Left: Mass-spin dependence $M(a)$ calculated from the 3:2 parametric resonance model for the frequencies $\nu_{\text{upp}} = 168$ Hz, 242 Hz, 276 Hz, and 450 Hz (from the top in this order) observed in four microquasars. Shadows show the range $\pm 5$ Hz. Right: the same in the form of fit to the observational data. For both panels, the dashed line $a = 0.968$ corresponds to the observational fit $\nu_{\text{upp}} = 2.793 \, M_\odot / M$ kHz found by McClintock & Remillard (2003).

Fig. 5. Left: The upper frequency of the double peak predicted as the function of mass by 3:2 parametric resonance model. Mass range for Sgr A* corresponds to the range given in Table 1. Dotted lines are for $a = 0$ (lower line) and $a = 1$ (upper line), the solid line is the fit $1 / M$ found by McClintock & Remillard (2003). Right: Spin dependence for 3:2 parametric, 3:1 and 2:1 forced resonance in Sgr A* implied by $\nu_{\text{down}} = 0.886$ mHz measured by Aschenbach et al. (2004), shadows respect accuracy states in that measurement. For the 3:1 forced resonance and very high spin, the estimate is ambiguous what is valid for any epicyclic resonance with $p/q > 2$ – see Török & Stuchlík (2005) where the properties of epicyclic frequencies in the Kerr spacetimes are discussed in detail.

In the case of Galaxy centre black hole the spin estimate following from the measurement of the 3:2 QPOs frequencies ($1/692$):($1/1130$) and the most accepted prediction $M_{\text{Sgr A*}} \sim 3.6 \times 10^6 M_\odot$ rather exclude the 3:2 parametric resonance and imply moderate black hole internal angular momentum for the eventual 2:1 forced resonance while for the 3:1 resonance the spin would be rather high. But, in fact, it is difficult to discuss this spin predictions seriously – the mass of Sgr A* is known with the accuracy of one order of magnitude in present and the frequency measurement by Aschenbach et al. (2004) is not confirmed yet. So one can expect that in principle no of the resonances considered here is excluded (see Fig. 5).

Finally we stress that the 3:2 ratio seems to be now significant for the compact X-ray sources $^4$ and the 3:2 data of Aschenbach et al. (2004) strongly supports the idea of relativistic scaling for QPOs frequencies (Abramowicz et al., 2004) – if confirmed, these would be of a fundamental importance for the black hole accretion theory and the precise measurement can help to solve the question of QPOs nature.

$^4$ For black holes see references in the Table 2 and van der Klis (2005, this textbook). For neutron stars see, e.g., Abramowicz et al. (2003), Belloni et al. (2005), or Bulik (2005, this textbook), Barret (2005, this textbook). Overview of the data and detailed references are given in van der Klis (2005).
Interval of possible spin $\alpha$ relevant for

| Model for $[\nu_K, \nu_r]$ | 1550–564 | 1655–40 | 1655–40' | 1915+105 |
|---------------------------|----------|--------|---------|---------|
| 3:2 $[\nu_K, \nu_r]$ parametric | $+0.89 - 0.99$ | $+0.96 - 0.99$ | $+0.88 - 0.93$ | $+0.69 - 0.99$ |
| 2:1 $[\nu_K, \nu_r]$ forced | $+0.12 - 0.42$ | $+0.31 - 0.42$ | $+0.10 - 0.25$ | $-0.41 - 0.44$ |
| 3:1 $[\nu_K, \nu_r]$ forced | $+0.32 - 0.59$ | $+0.50 - 0.59$ | $+0.31 - 0.44$ | $-0.15 - 0.61$ |
| 3:2 $[\nu_K, \nu_r]$ "Keplerian" p. | | | | $+0.79$
| 2:1 $[\nu_K, \nu_r]$ "Keplerian" f. | $+0.12 - 0.43$ | $+0.31 - 0.42$ | $+0.10 - 0.25$ | $-0.41 - 0.44$ |
| 3:1 $[\nu_K, \nu_r]$ "Keplerian" f. | $+0.29 - 0.54$ | $+0.45 - 0.53$ | $+0.28 - 0.40$ | $-0.13 - 0.55$

Table contains values of dimensionless spin calculated exactly from the upper observed frequency, error $\Delta \alpha$ resulting from uncertainty of frequency measurement $\Delta \nu_{\text{app}}$ is for microquasars XTE 1550-564 (GRO 1655–40, GRS 1915+105) given as $\sim 0.03$ (0.01, 0.05).

* This second column for GRO 1655–40 shows numbers outgoing from the mass analysis by [Beer & Podsiadlowski (2002)]. Theirs estimate $M_{\text{GRO}} \sim 5.4 M_{\odot}$ is nearly one solar mass lower than that by [Greene, Bailyn, Orosz (2001)]. Note that while the estimate of spin from 3:2 parametric resonance is for both cases (6:3: 5:4 $M_{\odot}$) high and in fact similar: $\alpha \approx 0.9$, for other discussed eventualities this difference in the mass results in large difference of spin.

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