

## Astrophysicists unveil shape of dark matter's distribution

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TAIPEI, Taiwan -- An international team of astrophysicists including Japanese scholars working at Academia Sinica discovered clear, direct evidence about the shape of dark matter's distribution, according to a press release from Taiwan's top research institute yesterday.

Dark matter is an enigma of the cosmos that has fascinated astrophysicists for many years. The existence of dark matter was originally hypothesized to account for discrepancies found between measurements of the mass of galaxies, clusters of galaxies and the entire universe.

As dark matter is invisible and no "dark matter particle" has been discovered, its existence is only inferred from a gravitational effect on other visible celestial matter or theoretical models, the scientists said.

Recently, astrophysicists from Japan and Taiwan, including Postdoctoral Fellow Nobuhiro Okabe from the Institute of Astronomy and Astrophysics at Academia Sinica (ASIAA), have evidence that dark matter is distributed in an elliptical shape in massive clusters of galaxies, a finding that confirms a major prediction in the prevailing theory about dark matter.

The team observed the clusters of galaxies using the Subaru Telescope's Prime Focus Camera (Suprime-Cam). Observations with Suprime-Cam yielded wide field images of massive clusters of galaxies -- typically located 3 billion light years from Earth -- which the team then used to measure and analyze dark matter distribution, the institute said in a press statement.

From their analysis of the images, the team obtained evidence that the distribution of dark matter in the clusters has, on average, an extremely flattened shape rather than a simple spherical shape. The degree of the flattening was quite large, corresponding to ratio of 2:1 in terms of the ratio of the major to minor axes of the ellipse.

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