For large ground-based astronomical telescopes, adaptive optics (AO) technique\cite{1-14} can be used to correct the distortion induced by atmospheric turbulence and the optical aberration of the telescopes. After correction, the quality of the image remains limited by the size of the telescope aperture. For astronomical observations, the aberrations occur near the end of the optical path, both in Earth’s atmosphere and in the telescope itself. If uncorrected, these aberrations cause the image of a star to spread into a “seeing disk”, which may be 10–100 times larger than the diffraction limit of the telescope itself. This results in angular resolution degradation and greatly reduces peak intensity. An AO system measures this phase disturbance and compensates in real time, restoring the image quality to a useful fraction of the diffraction-limited capability of the telescope. In 1996, a 21-element AO system\cite{2,3} was built and installed on the 2.16-m telescope of the Beijing Astronomical Observatory for high-resolution observation in K band. A 61-element adaptive optical system in the 1.2-m telescope of the Beijing Astronomical Observatory was built for observation with a visible wave range in 2000\cite{4,5}. This system was upgraded and operated in May 2004\cite{6,7}. A 127-element adaptive optical system has been developed\cite{8}, and was integrated into the 1.8-m astronomical telescope installed at the Yunnan observatory in LiJiang in September 2009. The first light on high-resolution imaging for the stars was achieved on September 23, 2009. In this letter, we briefly introduce the 127-element adaptive optics system and present the first result of high-resolution imaging for the stars.

The 1.8-m telescope is a classical Cassegrain optical system with two optical focuses: Coude and Nasmyth (Fig. 1). The primary mirror of the 1.8-m telescope is F/1.5 parabolic and its clear diameter is 1760 mm. The parameters of the Coude optical system are shown in Table 1.

A 127-element adaptive optical system has been developed and integrated into a 1.8-m astronomical telescope in September 2009. In addition, the first light on a high-resolution imaging for stars has been achieved (September 23, 2009). In this letter, a 127-element adaptive optical system for 1.8-m telescope is described briefly. Moreover, star observation results in the first run are reported. Results show that the angular resolution of the system after adaptive optics correction can attain 0.1 arcsec, which approaches the diffraction limit of 1.8-m telescope at 700–900 nm band.

The light from the 1.8-m telescope was reflected by the primary, secondary, and tertiary mirrors, as well as the five reflective mirrors in the Coude room wherein the 127-element adaptive optical system was installed (Fig. 2). In the Coude room, the telescope optics output was deflected by a pick-off mirror into AO system, where it was compensated for both tilt and high-order disturbances induced by atmospheric turbulence and telescope optics. When the pick-off mirror is removed, the telescope optics output can be directed to other systems. A He-Ne laser source was used to calibrate the AO system.

In the AO system, the telescope output was collimated to match the pupil of the tip-tilt mirror and the 127-element deformable mirror using relay optics with four reflective mirrors. We used second relay optics, also with four reflective mirrors, to reduce the beam size to match the pupil of the lens array of Hartmann-Shack (H-S)
Table 2. Main Specification of the AO System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specification</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Actuators of the Deformable Mirror</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lens Array of the H-S Wavefront Sensor</td>
<td>13×13, Square</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frame Rate of the H-S Wavefront Sensor</td>
<td>500, 1000, and 2000 Hz Selectable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Resolution I-Band Imaging</td>
<td>700–900 nm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imaging FOV</td>
<td>27×27 arcsec</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The developed 127-element AO system was integrated into the 1.8-m astronomical telescope in September 2009. The first light on the high-resolution imaging for the stars was achieved on September 23, 2009. Figure 5 presents the open- and closed-loop star images of the 127-element AO system in the first run. The sampling frequency was 1000 Hz. The imaging wavelength of the star was I band.

The open- and closed-loop images of the binary star
Fig. 5. (a) Open- and (b) closed-loop star images of the 127-element AO system; (c) two-dimensional section of the closed-loop image.

Fig. 6. (a) Open- and (b) closed-loop images of the binary star WDS BU 989 on October 21, 2009. The magnitude is 4.1. The angular separation is 0.245 arcsec.

WDS BU 989 on October 21, 2009 are shown in Fig. 6. The images had a magnitude of 4.1 and an angular separation of 0.245 arcsec. The full-width at half-maximum (FWHM) of the star image with AO was approximately 0.1 arcsec, which approached the diffraction limit of the 1.8-m telescope at 700–900-nm band.

The star observation results illustrated that the AO system can be used to correct the aberration induced by the atmosphere turbulence efficiently. The resolution of the closed-loop image attained the diffraction limit of the system.

In conclusion, a 127-element adaptive optical system has been developed and integrated into the 1.8-m astronomical telescope in September 2009. The first light on the high-resolution imaging for the stars was achieved on September 23, 2009. The star observation results show that the AO system can be used to correct the aberration induced by the atmosphere turbulence efficiently. The resolution of the closed-loop image attains the diffraction limit of the system.

References