Inside the whale: the structure and dynamics of the isolated Cetus dwarf spheroidal

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\textbf{ABSTRACT}

This paper presents a study of the Cetus dwarf, an isolated dwarf galaxy within the Local Group. A matched-filter analysis of the INT/WFC imaging of this system reveals no evidence for significant tidal debris that could have been torn from the galaxy, bolstering the hypothesis that Cetus has never significantly interacted with either the Milky Way or M31. Additionally, Keck/Deimos spectroscopic observations identify this galaxy as a distinct kinematic population possessing a systematic velocity of $-87 \pm 2$ km s$^{-1}$ and with a velocity dispersion of $17 \pm 2$ km s$^{-1}$; while tentative, these data also suggest that Cetus possesses a moderate rotational velocity of $\sim 8$ km s$^{-1}$. The population is confirmed to be relatively metal-poor, consistent with [Fe/H] $\sim -1.9$, and, assuming virial equilibrium, implies that the Cetus dwarf galaxy possesses a $M/L \sim 70$. It appears, therefore, that Cetus may represent a primordial dwarf galaxy, retaining the kinematic and structural properties lost by other members of the dwarf population of the Local Group in their interactions with the large galaxies. An analysis of Cetus’s orbit through the Local Group indicates that it is at apocentre; taken in conjunction with the general dwarf population, this shows the mass of the Local Group to be $\gtrsim 2 \times 10^{12} M_\odot$.

\textbf{Key words:} galaxies: dwarf – Local Group: individual – Cetus

\section{INTRODUCTION}

Within the Cold Dark Matter (CDM) paradigm, galaxies grow over time through the continued accretion of smaller systems [White \& Rees 1978]. Dwarf galaxies, therefore, being at the bottom of this hierarchical formation picture (or food chain), are amongst the most ‘fundamental’ of galactic building blocks. While recent metallicity observations of Local Group dwarf galaxies has suggested that the Milky Way could not have formed from systems resembling the current dwarf population [Yee et al. 2004], current accretion events in the Milky Way [Ibata, Gilmore, \& Irwin 1994; Martin et al. 2004] and Andromeda Galaxy [Ibata et al. 2001] illustrate that the galaxy formation process is still ongoing, albeit at a gentle pace.

Dwarf galaxies remain the dominant population of galaxies in the Universe; while the Local Group contains only two dominant, large galaxies (Milky Way \& M31), the population of dwarf galaxies numbers more than 40 [Mateo 1998]. The advent of deep, panoramic surveys of the Local Group has recently revealed several more examples of these galaxies [Zucker et al. 2004; Willman et al. 2005; Belokurov et al. 2006; Zucker et al. 2006; Belokurov et al. 2006; Zucker et al. 2006], but still the apparent conflict between the expected and observed population of dwarf galaxies remains [Klypin et al. 1999; Moore et al. 1999]. The theoretical and observational picture can be brought into agreement if star formation in low mass systems is suppressed via such mechanisms as photoionization in the early universe, leaving only a meager stellar population to reveal their location. Such models, however, predict that dwarf galaxies should be enveloped in massive halos of dark matter [Stoehr et al. 2002]; such haloes would be revealed in the stellar kinematics of the dwarf at large radii.

Dwarf spheroidal galaxies (generally gas-poor, pressure supported systems) are preferentially found as satellites to
the Milky Way and M31, whereas dwarf irregular galaxies (generally gas rich, rotating systems) are preferentially found as isolated systems. This position-morphology relation was first highlighted by Einasto, Kaasik, & Saar (1974) and suggests that the environment of a dwarf galaxy plays a fundamental role in driving its evolution. Mayer et al. (2001, 2006) suggest that tidal effects and ram pressure stripping of dwarf galaxies in the halo of large galaxies may be sufficient to turn a rotationally supported system into a pressure supported system. Isolated dwarf spheroidals are, therefore, particularly interesting as they would have been immune for the shaking and stirring that has occurred to most dwarf systems and hence may represent the dwarf galaxies in their most pristine form. However, such isolated dwarf spheroidal galaxies are rare within the Local Group, with two dwarfs not currently a satellite of either the Milky Way and M31; Cetus and Tucana. Determining the dynamical properties and orbital history of such galaxies can help determine the role of interactions in governing a dwarf galaxy’s morphology.

Discovered by Whiting, Hau, & Irwin (1999) in an eyeball survey of photographic plates, the Cetus dwarf galaxy is seen to lie at a distance of 755±23kpc (McConnachie et al., 2004; assuming E(B − V) = 0.029); it is almost as remote from M31, with a separation of 680kpc. Hence, unlike the vast majority of dwarf systems within the Local Group, Cetus does not appear to be part of the entourage of either the Milky Way or Andromeda Galaxy, and apparently represents an isolated member of the local dwarf population. Furthermore, an analysis of the stellar distribution in this dwarf reveals it to possess a half-light radius of more than 300pc, and a tidal radius of 6.6kpc, making it the largest radial extent dwarf within the local population (McConnachie & Irwin, 2006). Such a large physical extent suggests that Cetus has not undergone a significant interaction with other members of the Local Group and hence provides an ideal testbed for kinematic analysis. To this end, a reanalysis of the INT/WFC data obtained by McConnachie et al. (2003) was undertaken to search for any evidence of tidal disruption due to any previous interactions. This was coupled with a spectroscopic survey of the Cetus dwarf galaxy which was undertaken with Deimos on the Keck 10m telescope with the goal of determining its kinematic and dark matter properties. The details of the observations are presented in Section 2 while a discussion of the results appears in Section 3. This paper closes with Section 4 which presents the implications and conclusions of this study.

2 OBSERVATIONS

2.1 Photometric

The photometric observations were obtained with the INT/WFC on the 2.5m Isaac Newton Telescope on La Palma and were originally presented by McConnachie et al. (2005). As noted in this previous work, the V and I colour magnitude diagram of the Cetus dwarf clearly reveals the presence of a red-giant branch below I=20.5. Furthermore, the presence of the dwarf is clearly revealed in stellar density, as apparent in Figure 1. Hence, this photometric data was used to select targets for spectroscopic followup with the Keck telescope. The stars were chosen to lie within ~ 0.15mags of the Red Giant Branch (RGB) between 22.0 < I < 20.5; the selection box is overlaid on the CMD presented in Figure 1. This selection box was extended to I = 20 to include candidate AGB stars into the sample.

2.2 Spectroscopic

Observations were undertaken with the DEIMOS spectrograph (Faber et al., 2003) on the 10m W. M. Keck-II telescope in Hawaii on the night of the 1st October, 2005. The 1200l/mm grating was blazed to 800nm and, coupled with the OG550 order-blocking filter, provided an effective spectral range from 700nm to 900nm, encompassing the calcium II triplet (CaT); it is this series of lines that provide kinematic and overall abundance ([Fe/H]) measures. Custom made slit masks were used to target stars in the Cetus dwarf galaxy; as noted previously, the astrometry was drawn from the INT/WFC survey presented in McConnachie et al. (2005). The target field is shown

![Figure 1](https://example.com/figure1.png)
The Cetus Dwarf Galaxy

Figure 2. The left-hand panel presents the match filter weight map, constructed by dividing the CMD within the central 3 arcmins of the Cetus dwarf by the CMD from the region beyond 10 arcmins of the dwarf; this enhances the CMD signature of the dwarf. The isochrones from several fiducial systems are overlapped for comparison. The closed box denotes the selection region as described in Section 2.1, while the coloured circles represent the observed stars, with solid circles are those within 30 km s$^{-1}$ of the systemic velocity of Cetus. The colour-coding represents the spectroscopically determined metallicity, as described in Section 3.3 and defined by the key. The right-hand panel presents the logarithm of the stellar density as identified by the matched filtering analysis. The peak value is $\sim 70$ stars per square arcmin, with each contour corresponding to 0.11dex; this is also represented in the greyscale as given in the key. The red ellipse corresponds to the stellar peak seen in Figure 1, whereas the square region in the upper right hand corner represent the region not covered by the INT/WFC field.

While the standard velocity errors are well understood, it is important to estimate any potential systematic uncertainties that may result from the reduction procedure. To this end, fake stellar spectra in the region of the CaT were generated, using sky residuals determined from Poisson sampling of the median observed sky spectrum. The resultant synthetic spectra possessed a S/N $\sim 5$ and were analyzed in the same fashion as the real data. The extracted velocity is compared to the input velocity in Figure 3; in this figure, the top panel presents the results from synthetic spectra generated using the overall median sky spectrum, whereas the lower panel utilized median sky spectra from separate CCDs and hence represents a more extreme estimate of the sky residuals. It can be seen that in the region from $-100 \rightarrow 0$ km s$^{-1}$, the upper panel reveals small systematic uncertainties ($\sim 1$ km s$^{-1}$), whereas the lower panel displays more significant uncertainties of ($\sim 4 - 5$ km s$^{-1}$). It can be concluded that in this region, the systematic uncertainties in the velocity determination are roughly half the value of the mean standard error.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Photometric Search for Extra-Tidal Stars

Given its remote location, Cetus appears to have lived a rather isolated existence, free from the large galactic tides that have influenced other dwarf galaxies. However, given the uncertainty of its orbit, its detailed historical motion through the Local Group is unknown and there is the possibility that it underwent interactions with other members in the past. The result of such interactions would depend upon the specifics of the collisions, although it would be expected that if it interacted with a substantial system then the tidal disruption would result in the formation of tidal tails which could still accompany the dwarf today (e.g. Johnston, Choi, & Guhathakurta, 2002).

Tidal debris, however, typically presents a very low surface brightness and is not apparent in maps of stellar density. However, various statistical techniques exist that allow the extraction of low surface brightness features by identifying the sequence of the dwarf within an overall background CMD. To this end, a matched filter analysis (Kepner et al., 1999; Rockosi et al., 2002) of the INT/WFC data of the Cetus dwarf was undertaken; for this, a background CMD was constructed using stars located more than 10 arcmins from the centre of the Cetus dwarf, where the contribution of stars from Cetus is very small relative to the Galactic foreground, while the CMD of the dwarf was obtained from the inner 3 arcmins; this is presented in the left-hand panel of Figure 2 overlaid with a series of fiducial sequences, confirming the low metallicity of this system. The right-hand panel of this figure presents the logarithm of the density of stars associated with the dwarf as identified by the matched
The systematic error in velocity as determined from the analysis of synthetic spectra, using sky residuals as determined from the data. The error bars represent the uncertainty in the velocity determination. The top panel uses Poisson sampling of the median sky, whereas the lower panel uses the median skies from separate CCDs. The overall results show no substantial velocity systematics in the range of $-100 \rightarrow 0 \text{ km s}^{-1}$ are typically $\sim 1 \text{ km s}^{-1}$ in the upper panel, increasing to $\sim 4-5 \text{ km s}^{-1}$ in the lower panel.

Figure 3. The systematic error in velocity as determined from the analysis of synthetic spectra, using sky residuals as determined from the data. The error bars represent the uncertainty in the velocity determination. The top panel uses Poisson sampling of the median sky, whereas the the lower panel uses the median skies from separate CCDs. The overall results show no substantial velocity systematics in the range of $-100 \rightarrow 0 \text{ km s}^{-1}$ are typically $\sim 1 \text{ km s}^{-1}$ in the upper panel, increasing to $\sim 4-5 \text{ km s}^{-1}$ in the lower panel.

3.2 Kinematics

Figure 4 presents the distribution of Heliocentric stellar velocities obtained from the Keck/Deimos spectra, with a clear peak denoting the presence of the Cetus dwarf galaxy. Overplotted on this figure is the best fit Gaussian, with a systemic velocity of $-85 \text{ km s}^{-1}$ and width of 15 km s$^{-1}$, which is consistent with velocities of three HI clumps (-311, -268 & -262 km s$^{-1}$) in the vicinity of Cetus as measured by Bouchard, Carignan, & Staveley-Smith (2006), and it must be concluded that they do not represent Cetus’s gas content. Following Richstone & Tremaine (1986), we assume the Cetus dwarf can be represented as a simple, spherically symmetric stellar system of central surface brightness $\Sigma_0$, half-brightness radius of $r_{hb}$ and velocity dispersion $\sigma$ and can then estimate the mass-to-light ratio in the system to be

$$\frac{M}{L} = \frac{\eta}{2\pi G \Sigma_0 r_{hb}}$$  \hspace{1cm} (1)$$

where $\eta$ is a dimensionless structure parameter which has a typical value of unity; this formula assumes that mass traces light within the dwarf.

Figure 5 presents the results of a likelihood calculation for this population of RGB stars. Firstly, the right-hand panel presents contours at 1$\sigma$, 2$\sigma$ and 3$\sigma$ of the mean velocity and velocity dispersion of this population, consistent with the fit values presented in Figure 4. The dark line in this figure corresponds to the entire RGB sample, whereas the lighter line utilizes only those stars within 5$'$ of the centre of the dwarf; the results of this analysis suggest that the dwarf itself, it is clear from the scale of the noise over the image, this could not be considered significant.
systemic velocity of Cetus is $-87 \pm 2$ km s$^{-1}$ with an internal velocity dispersion of $17 \pm 2$ km s$^{-1}$. The left-hand figure presents the relatively likelihood for the mass to light ratio of the Cetus dwarf, clearly peaking at a $M/L \sim 70$.

### 3.3 Spectroscopic Metallicities

The equivalent widths of the CaT can be used as a proxy measure of the stellar metallicities. As with our previous Keck/Deimos studies, (e.g. Ibata et al., 2003), the approach of Rutledge, Hesser, & Stetson (1997) is adopted, with:

$$
\frac{[Fe/H]}{[M/H]} = -2.66 + 0.42 \sum Ca - 0.64(V_{H-B} - V)
$$

(2)

where

$$
\sum Ca = 0.5 EW_{\lambda 8498} + EW_{\lambda 8542} + 0.6 EW_{\lambda 8662}
$$

(3)

and the $(V_{H-B} - V)$ provides a surface gravity correction term; for Cetus $V_{H-B} = 25.10$, scaled from the M31 value employed by Ibata et al. (2003). The spectroscopically derived metallicities are presented as colour-coded points are super-imposed on the left-hand panel of Figure 3. The solid points denote stars within 30 km s$^{-1}$ of the systemic velocity, whereas the open circles are the remaining stars in the sample. The errors on the metallicity measures are $\sim 0.2$.

The stars overlay several fiducial tracks of systems with determined metallicities (which are colour-coded on the same scheme as the stars). A comparison of the stellar metallicities and the fiducial tracks reveals that the two measures are consistent and that the Cetus dwarf galaxy is dominated by an old, metal poor population with $[Fe/H] \sim -1.9$, as per the findings of Whiting, Hau, & Irwin (1999).

### 3.4 A Hint of Rotation

Figure 6 presents the spatial distribution of stars along the major axis, with velocities within 30 km s$^{-1}$ of the systemic (filled circles). An eye-ball examination of this figure reveals that there appears to be a velocity offset between those stars to the right and left of the dwarf centre, with those at positive distances possessing a more negative velocity than those at negative distance. Noting the errors to the data points, the signature is somewhat tentative and hence no rigorous kinematic model fitting was undertaken. As an illustration, a simple constant rotational velocity profile was fitted to the stars within 5 arcmins of the centre of the dwarf, with a resultant best fit rotational velocity of 7.7 km s$^{-1}$; this rotation curve is overplotted as a solid line in Figure 6 as well as two additional fiducial rotation curves of 0 and 15 km s$^{-1}$. The dotted line represents a linear model, representing solid body rotation, with a best fit of $2.5 \pm 0.4$ km s$^{-1}$ arcmin$^{-1}$.

In removing the signature of the best fit constant rotation velocity, the velocity dispersion within the inner 5 arcmins falls to 14 km s$^{-1}$ with a $2\sigma$ clipping), and to 8 km s$^{-1}$ when applying a more stringent $2\sigma$ clipping. Hence, if real, the rotation of Cetus represents a significant kinematic component in this system.

### 3.5 Constraints on the Local Group

As noted previously, Cetus is one of only two isolated dSph galaxies in the Local Group. Hence, measurement of its heliocentric velocity provides a vital constraint on its orbit through the Local Group, under reasonable assumptions about its proper motion and the mass distribution of the Local Group.

In estimating the Local Group velocity, $v_{\odot}$, of Cetus, the first step involves transforming its heliocentric velocity into a galactocentric radial velocity, finding $v_g = -25$ km s$^{-1}$. It is assumed that the Milky Way and M31 account for all the mass of the Local Group, and that their mass ratio is $a = 1$. Einasto & Lynden-Bell (1982) present arguments which suggest that the total angular momentum of the Local Group is close to zero, which requires that these two galaxies are on a nearly radial orbit with respect to one another. If Cetus is on a purely radial orbit with respect to the centre of mass of the Local Group then its radial velocity, $v_{\odot}$, is constrained by

$$
v_{\odot} \cdot \hat{r} = v_g - v_{\odot} \cdot \hat{r}.
$$

(4)
where \( \mathbf{r} \) is the unit vector in the direction of Cetus and \( \mathbf{v}_{\text{mw}} \) is the Local Group velocity of the Milky Way (\( \mathbf{v}_{\text{mw}} = -61.5 \, \text{km s}^{-1} \) for \( a = 1 \)). If it is assumed that Cetus is moving radially away from the center of the Local Group then \( r_t = 14 \, \text{km s}^{-1} \), at a barycentric distance of 602 kpc.

Figure 7 shows the Local Group velocity of Cetus plotted against its barycentric distance. Also shown as red open circles are other candidate isolated Local Group dwarf galaxies, while blue open squares represent galaxies belonging to other nearby groups. Magenta and green solid circles represent dwarf galaxies which are satellites of M31 and the Milky Way, respectively. For these galaxies, the approximation that their dynamics are governed by the net Local Group potential is not valid, and so the velocities derived will not be with respect to the Local Group centre of mass. The dot-dashed line represents the apocentre of orbits in the Local Group and the dashed curves represent the maximum distance that a galaxy could reach given its current velocity for a total Local Group mass of 2.3 and \( 4 \times 10^{12} M_\odot \) (inner to outer curves). The solid curves represent the escape velocity of the Local Group for these masses. Thus galaxies which are above the top set of solid lines or below the bottom set of solid lines cannot be bound to the Local Group. Likewise, galaxies to the right of the dashed curves would not have been able to reach their position if they are Local Group members (Irwin, 1999).

Several interesting results are immediately apparent in Figure 7. Cetus is close to the apocentre of its orbit in the Local Group, while the other isolated dSph, Tucana, is similarly at apocentre, along with the Sagittarius dSph and the transition galaxy Aquarius (DDO210). The Sagittarius dSph and Aquarius can only have reaching their current positions if the mass of the Local Group is \( \gtrsim 2 \times 10^{12} M_\odot \), and they are on very radial orbits. There is some overlap in this plot between Local Group galaxies and members of nearby groups, which reflects the well known result that their are no distinct boundaries between the hundred or so groups which form the Local Supercluster. Particularly, the Sculptor group joins with the Local Group via a bridge of galaxies including NGC55, UKS2323-326 and IC5152. Sextans A, B, Antlia and NGC3109 form a distinct grouping in the sky (the NGC3109 group). Figure 7 shows that they are dynamically distinct from other Local Group galaxies and that they can only be bound to the Local Group if its mass is \( \gtrsim 4 \times 10^{12} M_\odot \).

### 4 CONCLUSIONS

This paper has presented a study of the Cetus dwarf galaxy, utilizing a matched filter analysis of the INT/WFC observations of Cetus dwarf galaxy presented by McConnachie et al. (2005). The results of this analysis, however, suggests that Cetus does not possess the extra-tidal stars indicative of any significant interaction in the past. Hence, it can be concluded that Cetus truly does represent a lonely and isolated member of the Local Group.

In addition, this paper has presented a spectroscopic survey of the Cetus dwarf, utilizing a kinematic survey to study its dynamical properties. A maximum likelihood analysis of the kinematic sample reveals that Cetus has a systemic velocity of \( -87 \pm 2 \, \text{km s}^{-1} \) and an internal velocity dispersion of \( 17 \pm 2 \, \text{km s}^{-1} \). Furthermore, a viral analysis of this data suggests that this dwarf possesses a \( M/L \sim 70 \) (assuming mass traces light); however this result may be misleading as the data tentatively reveals the presence of some rotation with a best fit rotational velocity of \( 7.7 \pm 1.2 \, \text{km s}^{-1} \); removing this rotation results in a velocity dispersion between 8 and 14 km s\(^{-1}\), dependent upon the statistical clipping. As ever, more data and accurate kinematic modeling will be required to fully address these issues. Finally, an analysis of Cetus’s orbit through the Local Group find it to be at apocentre, providing a weak additional constraint to the mass of the Local Group. Taken in conjunction with the other members of the dwarf population in the local universe, the mass of the Local Group is found to be \( \gtrsim 2 \times 10^{12} M_\odot \).

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Table 1. Stars observed in this survey

| RA  | Dec | V   | I   | Vel  | σ_{V}\;eK |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|-----------|
| 0 26 | 3.00 | -11 | 4   | 39.9 | 21.68     | -76.7 | 9.1 |
| 0 26 | 9.51 | -11 | 3   | 34.3 | 21.72     | -77.1 | 8.7 |
| 0 26 | 7.88 | -11 | 2   | 41.9 | 21.77     | -51.4 | 6.4 |
| 0 25 | 58.13 | -11 | 5   | 14.1 | 21.90     | -82.6 | 6.7 |
| 0 26 | 2.07 | -11 | 4   | 2.7  | 21.90     | -81.0 | 7.3 |
| 0 26 | 8.68 | -11 | 4   | 3.7  | 21.92     | -84.5 | 5.8 |
| 0 26 | 6.60 | -11 | 3   | 46.5 | 21.94     | -93.8 | 6.9 |
| 0 26 | 20.46| -11 | 4   | 17.4 | 22.05     | -84.8 | 14.9 |
| 0 26 | 11.06| -11 | 3   | 52.3 | 22.09     | -94.0 | 15.3 |
| 0 26 | 1.75 | -11 | 3   | 36.4 | 22.10     | -83.5 | 5.3 |

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Table 2. Stars observed in this survey

| ID  | RA   | DEC  | V    | B    | U    | Y    | DEJ   | DJ   |
|-----|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|------|
| 0   | 25   | 55.02| -11  | 3    | 49.5 | 22.32| 21.18 | -175.4| 3.8  |
| 0   | 26   | 48.57| -11  | 5    | 3.4  | 22.37| 21.19 | 120.3 | 8.7  |
| 0   | 25   | 55.47| -11  | 3    | 27.1 | 22.59| 21.62 | 183.7 | 9.2  |
| 0   | 26   | 3.19 | -11  | 4    | 31.2 | 22.68| 21.61 | 227.5 | 3.6  |
| 0   | 26   | 2.18 | -11  | 2    | 38.1 | 22.69| 21.66 | -56.1 | 7.2  |
| 0   | 25   | 57.69| -11  | 3    | 5.7  | 22.71| 21.58 | -88.7 | 9.6  |
| 0   | 26   | 18.48| -11  | 3    | 19.0 | 22.76| 21.62 | -123.3| 5.7  |
| 0   | 25   | 56.72| -11  | 2    | 36.0 | 22.78| 21.55 | 172.5 | 7.4  |
| 0   | 25   | 53.76| -11  | 1    | 46.8 | 22.79| 21.70 | -91.5 | 15.3 |
| 0   | 26   | 50.97| -11  | 3    | 47.3 | 22.80| 21.62 | 117.4 | 8.6  |
| 0   | 26   | 26.24| -11  | 2    | 7.3  | 22.89| 21.70 | -104.9| 8.8  |
| 0   | 25   | 54.15| -11  | 5    | 35.4 | 22.89| 21.97 | 189.6 | 4.6  |
| 0   | 26   | 8.15 | -11  | 3    | 7.7  | 22.91| 21.85 | -71.4 | 6.3  |
| 0   | 25   | 46.41| -11  | 3    | 51.8 | 22.94| 21.84 | 253.5 | 12.9 |
| 0   | 25   | 59.34| -11  | 2    | 5.6  | 22.96| 21.99 | -119.4| 17.9 |
| 0   | 25   | 54.71| -11  | 3    | 0.5  | 22.99| 21.94 | -129.5| 2.7  |
| 0   | 26   | 40.69| -11  | 2    | 24.6 | 23.00| 21.83 | -51.6 | 7.2  |
| 0   | 25   | 57.79| -11  | 1    | 13.9 | 23.09| 21.61 | 2.6   | 6.4  |

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