

THE VISUAL ORBIT OF 64 PISCUM

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ABSTRACT

We report on the determination of the visual orbit of the double-lined spectroscopic binary system 64 Piscium with data obtained by the Palomar Testbed Interferometer in 1997 and 1998. 64 Psc is a nearly equal-mass double-lined binary system whose spectroscopic orbit is well known. We have estimated the visual orbit of 64 Psc from our interferometric visibility data. Our 64 Psc orbit is in good agreement with the spectroscopic results, and the physical parameters implied by a combined fit to our interferometric visibility data and radial velocity data of Duquennoy & Mayor result in precise component masses that agree well with their spectral type identifications. In particular, the orbital parallax of the system is determined to be 43.29 ± 0.46 mas, and masses of the two components are determined to be $1.223 \pm 0.021 M_{\odot}$ and $1.170 \pm 0.018 M_{\odot}$, respectively. Nadal et al. put forward arguments of temporal variability in some of the orbital elements of 64 Psc, presumably explained by an undetected component in the system. While our visibility data do not favor the Nadal temporal variability inference, neither is it definitive in excluding it. Consequently we have performed both high dynamic-range near-infrared imaging and spectroscopy of potential additional companions to the 64 Psc system. Our imaging and spectroscopic data do not support the conjecture of an additional component to 64 Psc, but we did identify a faint object with unusual red colors and spectra.

Subject headings: binaries: visual — stars: individual (64 Piscium) — techniques: interferometric

1. INTRODUCTION

64 Piscium (HD 4676) is a nearby, short-period (13.8 days) binary system with nearly equal mass ($q \sim 0.96$) components of spectral type F8 V. Further, the 64 Psc binary is the bright component in an apparent visual triple system (Washington Double Star Catalog [Worley & Douglass 1997, hereafter WDS]). The WDS lists two additional visual components, B and C, with V of 12.6 and 13.0 at 77" and 71" separations from 64 Psc, respectively. If these objects are in fact bound to 64 Psc, with a system distance of approximately 24 pc, as determined by *Hipparcos* (ESA 1997; Perryman et al. 1997), the minimum physical separations of the dim B and C components to 64 Psc are approximately 1800 AU, indicating orbital periods of $\sim 5 \times 10^4$ yr.

Abt & Levy (1976, hereafter AL76) determined the first double-lined spectroscopic orbit for the 64 Psc system. Both Nadal et al. (1979, hereafter N79) and later Duquennoy & Mayor (data in 1991a [hereafter DM91a] and solution in 1991b [hereafter DM91b]) have determined additional double-lined orbital solutions for the 64 Psc system, which are all in reasonable agreement with each other. Particularly notable is Nadal's argument for the potential presence of an additional, undetected object in the 64 Psc system from possible time variation in the system velocity, the time of periastron passage, and the argument of periastron. N79 used 1918 data from Lick and Mount Wilson, reanalyzed the AL76 observations, and presented their own data in support of the variation hypothesis. Presumably these time-

variation effects could not be due to either the B or C visual companions listed in the WDS; N79 estimates the period of these effects to be ~ 2700 yr.

Herein we report the determination of the 64 Psc visual orbit from near-infrared, long-baseline interferometric measurements taken with the Palomar Testbed Interferometer (PTI). PTI is a 110 m K -band (2.2 μm) interferometer located at Palomar Observatory and is described in detail elsewhere (Colavita et al. 1999a). PTI has a minimum fringe spacing of roughly 4 mas at the sky position of 64 Psc, making this binary system readily resolvable.

2. OBSERVATIONS

The interferometric observable used for these measurements is the fringe contrast or *visibility* (squared) of an observed brightness distribution on the sky. Normalized in the interval [0:1], a single star exhibits visibility modulus in a uniform disk model given by

$$V = \frac{2 J_1(\pi B \theta / \lambda)}{\pi B \theta / \lambda}, \quad (1)$$

where J_1 is the first-order Bessel function, B is the projected baseline vector magnitude at the star position, θ is the apparent angular diameter of the star, and λ is the center-band wavelength of the interferometric observation. The expected squared visibility in a narrow passband for a binary star such as 64 Psc is given by

$$V^2 = \frac{V_1^2 + V_2^2 r^2 + 2V_1 V_2 r \cos [(2\pi/\lambda)\mathbf{B} \cdot \mathbf{s}]}{(1+r)^2}, \quad (2)$$

where V_1 and V_2 are the visibility moduli for the two stars separately as given by equation (1), r is the apparent brightness ratio between the primary and companion, \mathbf{B} is the

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projected baseline vector at the system sky position, and s is the primary-secondary angular separation vector on the plane of the sky (Pan et al. 1990; Hummel et al. 1995). The V^2 observables used in our 64 Psc study are both narrowband V^2 from individual spectral channels (Colavita et al. 1999a) and a synthetic wideband V^2 , given by an incoherent signal-to-noise (SNR) weighted average V^2 of the narrowband channels in the PTI spectrometer (Colavita 1999b). In this model the expected wideband V^2 observable is approximately given by an average of the narrowband formula over the finite passband of the spectrometer:

$$V_{\text{wb}}^2 = \frac{1}{n} \sum_i^n V_{\text{nb}-i}^2(\lambda_i), \quad (3)$$

where the sum runs over the channels covering the infrared K band (2–2.4 μm) of the PTI spectrometer (Colavita et al. 1999a). Separate calibrations and hypothesis fits to the narrowband and synthetic wideband V^2 data sets yield statistically consistent results, with the synthetic wideband data exhibiting superior fit performance. Consequently we will present only the results from the synthetic wideband data.

64 Psc was observed in conjunction with our selected calibrator list by PTI on 21 nights between 1997 August 30 and 1998 November 16, covering roughly 32 periods of the system. 64 Psc, along with calibration objects, was observed multiple times during each of these nights, and each observation, or scan, was approximately 120 s long. For each scan we computed a mean V^2 value from the scan data and the error in the V^2 estimate from the rms internal scatter (Colavita 1999b). 64 Psc was always observed in combination with one or more calibration sources within $\sim 20^\circ$ on the sky. For our study we have used three late-type main-sequence stars as calibration objects: HD 166, HD 3651, and HD 4628. Table 1 lists the relevant physical parameters for the calibration objects.

The calibration of 64 Psc V^2 data is performed by estimating the interferometer system visibility (V_{sys}^2) using calibration sources with model angular diameters and then normalizing the raw 64 Psc visibility by V_{sys}^2 to estimate the V^2 measured by an ideal interferometer at that epoch (Mozurkewich et al. 1991; Boden et al. 1998). Calibrating our 64 Psc data set with respect to the three calibration objects listed in Table 1 results in a total of 88 calibrated scans on 64 Psc over 21 nights in 1997 and 1998.

3. ORBIT DETERMINATION

The estimation of the 64 Psc visual orbit is made by fitting a Keplerian orbit model with visibilities predicted by

equations (2) and (3) directly to the calibrated (narrowband and synthetic wideband) V^2 data on 64 Psc (see Armstrong et al. 1992; Hummel et al. 1993, 1995; Boden et al. 1999). The fit is nonlinear in the Keplerian orbital elements and is therefore performed by nonlinear least-squares methods (i.e., the Marquardt-Levenberg method; Press et al. 1992). As such, this fitting procedure takes an initial estimate of the orbital elements and other parameters (e.g., component angular diameters, brightness ratio) and evolves that model into a new parameter set that best fits the data. However, the χ^2 surface has many local minima in addition to the global minimum corresponding to the true orbit. Because the Marquardt-Levenberg method strictly follows a downhill path in the χ^2 manifold, it is necessary to survey the space of possible binary parameters thoroughly to distinguish between local minima and the true global minimum. In addition, as the V^2 observable for the binary (eqs. [2] and [3]) is invariant under a rotation of 180° , we cannot differentiate between an apparent primary/secondary relative orientation and its mirror image on the sky. Consequently there remains a 180° ambiguity in our determination of the longitude of the ascending node, Ω , which we quote by convention in the interval $[0:180)$. By similar arguments our V^2 observable does not distinguish the longitude of periastron (ω) for the primary and secondary component. We have quoted our estimate constrained to be grossly (within 180°) consistent with the consensus ω_1 value of approximately 200° (AL76; N79; DM91b).

In addition to our PTI visibility data we have used the double-lined radial velocity data from DM91a. To incorporate this data we have upgraded our orbit estimation software to utilize both interferometric visibility and radial velocity data either separately or simultaneously (see similar remarks in Hummel et al. 1998). The ω -degeneracy discussed above is resolved by the inclusion of radial velocity data in our orbital solution (Table 2); however, the determination of Ω remains ambiguous by 180° .

In the case of 64 Psc the parameter space is significantly narrowed by the high-quality spectroscopic orbit from both N79 and DM91b, and the *Hipparcos* distance determination sets the rough scale of the semimajor axis (ESA 1997). Further, because the 64 Psc system is nearly equal-mass ($q = 0.959 \pm 0.004$; DM91b), and because interferometric V^2 measurements are only weakly sensitive to variations in intensity ratio near equal intensity, we have constrained the intensity ratios in our fits to 0.90 ($\Delta K = 0.11$) as indicated by our component mass solutions (§ 4) and the empirical mass-luminosity relationship of Henry & McCarthy (1992). Finally, at the distance of 64 Psc the apparent diameters of the two main-sequence com-

TABLE 1
PTI 64 PSC CALIBRATION OBJECTS CONSIDERED IN OUR ANALYSIS

OBJECT DESIGNATION	SPECTRAL TYPE	STAR MAGNITUDE (V/K)	64 PSC SEPARATION (deg)	ADOPTED MODEL DIAMETER (mas)
HD 166	K0 V	6.1/4.1	16	0.66 ± 0.06
HD 3651	K0 V	5.9/3.9	4.9	0.79 ± 0.05
HD 4628	K2 V	5.7/3.5	12	0.92 ± 0.05

NOTE.—The relevant parameters for our three calibration objects are summarized. The apparent diameter values are determined from effective temperature and bolometric flux estimates based on archival broadband photometry and visibility measurements with PTI.

TABLE 2
64 PSC DATA SET, BEST-FIT MODEL PREDICTIONS, AND RESIDUALS

MJD	Calendar Date/UT (mm/dd/yy)	Measured V^2	Error	Predicted V^2	Residual	Wavelength (μm)	u (m)	v (m)	Hour Angle
50690.3719	8/30/97 8:55:32	0.816	0.031	0.830	-0.013	2.18	-52.59	-94.30	-1.11
50690.4278	8/30/97 10:15:59	0.621	0.034	0.661	-0.040	2.18	-33.35	-98.75	0.24
50690.4747	8/30/97 11:23:34	0.331	0.026	0.331	0.000	2.17	-13.90	-100.80	1.37
50691.3888	8/31/97 9:19:53	0.613	0.082	0.665	-0.052	2.18	-46.45	-96.08	-0.63
50691.4388	8/31/97 10:31:55	0.313	0.021	0.326	-0.012	2.18	-27.86	-99.52	0.57
50692.3162	9/1/97 7:35:21	0.239	0.019	0.240	-0.002	2.19	-64.43	-88.86	-2.32

NOTE.—Table 2 is published in its entirety in the electronic version of the Astrophysical Journal. A portion is shown here for guidance regarding its form and content.

ponents of the system are not strongly resolved by PTI, so we have constrained the estimated diameters of both components, to 0.5 mas for the primary component and 0.45 mas for the secondary component, as indicated by our system distance and component mass estimates (§ 4) and a fit to empirical mass-radius data for main-sequence eclipsing systems given in Andersen (1991). Given this limited parameter space, the correct orbit solution is readily obtained by exhaustive search.

Figure 1 depicts the relative visual orbit of the 64 Psc system, with the primary component rendered at the origin and the secondary component rendered at periastron. We have indicated the phase coverage of our V^2 data on the relative orbit with heavy lines; our data samples most phases of the orbit well, leading to a reliable orbit determination.

Table 2 lists the complete set of V^2 measurements in our 64 Psc data set and the prediction based on the best-fit orbit

model (our full-fit model, Table 3) for 64 Psc. Table 2 gives V^2 measurements and times, measurement errors, model predictions, the photon-weighted average wavelength, u - v coordinates, and on-target hour angle for each of our calibrated 64 Psc observations. Figure 2a shows four consecutive nights of PTI V^2 data on 64 Psc (1997 August 30–September 2), and V^2 predictions based on the best-fit model for the system (our full-fit model, Table 3). The model predictions are in good agreement with the observed data, with an rms V^2 residual of 0.034 (average absolute V^2 deviation of 0.053) and a χ^2 per degree of freedom of 0.85. Figure 2b gives a radial velocity phase plot of the DM91a radial velocity data and the predictions of our full-fit orbital solution. A radial velocity fit residual histogram is also included.

Spectroscopic orbit parameters (from N79 and DM91b) and our visual and spectroscopic orbit parameters of the 64 Psc system are summarized in Table 3. We give the results of separate fits to only our V^2 data (our V^2 -only fit solution), and a simultaneous fit to our V^2 data and the double-lined radial velocities from DM91a (our full-fit solution)—both with relative intensity and component diameters constrained as noted above. For the orbit parameters we have estimated from our visibility data we list a total 1σ error in the parameter estimate and the separate 1σ errors in the parameter estimates from statistical (measurement uncertainty) and systematic error sources. In our analysis the dominant forms of systematic error are (1) uncertainties in the calibrator angular diameters (Table 1); (2) uncertainty in our center-band operating wavelength ($\lambda_0 \approx 2.2\ \mu\text{m}$), which we have taken to be 20 nm ($\sim 1\%$); (3) the geometrical uncertainty in our interferometric baseline ($< 0.01\%$); and (4) uncertainties in orbital parameters we have constrained in our fitting procedure (i.e., the component intensity ratio and angular diameters in both solutions). Different parameters are affected differently by these error sources; e.g., our estimated uncertainty in the 64 Psc orbital inclination is dominated by measurement uncertainty, while the uncertainty in the angular semimajor axis is dominated by uncertainty in the wavelength scale. Conversely, we have assumed that all of the error quoted by N79 and DM91b in the 64 Psc spectroscopic parameters is statistical.

There is a significant ($\sim 4.2\sigma$) difference in the period as estimated by DM91b and the period estimates of N79 and PTI. For the full-fit solution our period estimate exploits the roughly 7300 day (530 64 Psc orbital cycles) time baseline between the DM91a radial velocity (RV) data and our own visibility data. Both our period estimates agree well

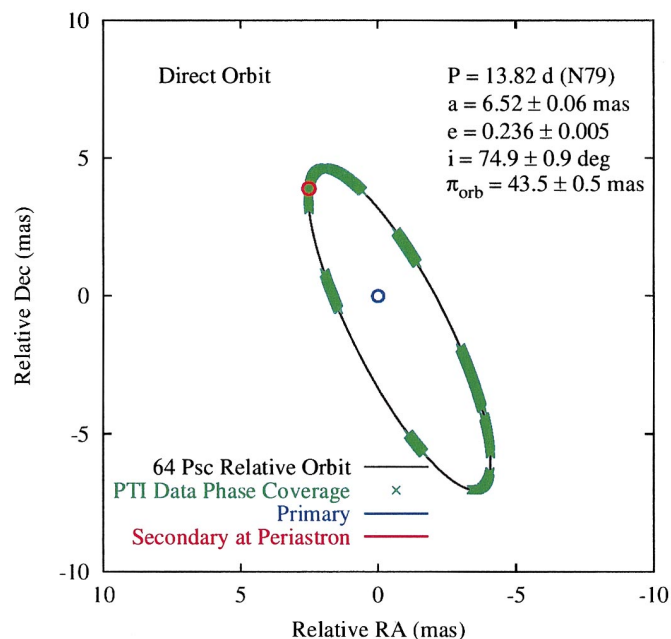


FIG. 1.—Visual orbit of 64 Psc. The relative visual orbit of 64 Psc is shown, with the primary and secondary objects rendered at T_0 (periastron). The heavy lines along the relative orbit indicate areas where we have orbital phase coverage in our PTI data (they are not separation vector estimates); our data sample most phases of the orbit well, leading to a reliable orbit determination.

TABLE 3
ORBITAL PARAMETERS FOR 64 Psc

ORBITAL PARAMETER	N79	DM91b55	PTI 1997/1998	
			V^2 -only Fit	Full Fit
Period (days).....	13.824581	13.8318	13.82407	13.824621
	$\pm 4.0 \times 10^{-5}$	$\pm 1.7 \times 10^{-3}$	$\pm 4.4 (3.8/2.2) \times 10^{-4}$	$\pm 1.7 (1.7/0.4) \times 10^{-5}$
T_0 (MJD).....	41933.702	43468.308	50905.934	50905.984
	± 0.074	± 0.018	$\pm 0.068 (0.048/0.048)$	$\pm 0.015 (0.015/0.003)$
e	0.243 ± 0.010	0.238 ± 0.002	0.2348	0.2376
	...	...	$\pm 0.0052 (0.0035/0.0039)$	$\pm 0.0012 (0.0011/0.0005)$
K_1 (km s $^{-1}$).....	57.53 ± 0.74	57.31 ± 0.19	...	$57.35 \pm 0.31 (0.31/0.01)$
K_2 (km s $^{-1}$).....	58.77 ± 0.75	59.77 ± 0.18	...	$59.95 \pm 0.32 (0.31/0.02)$
ω_1 (deg).....	199.6 ± 2.2	202.3 ± 0.5	$202.2 \pm 1.9 (1.3/1.3)$	$203.56 \pm 0.35 (0.33/0.10)$
Ω_1 (deg).....	...	...	$63.43 \pm 0.68 (0.66/0.16)$	$63.60 \pm 0.82 (0.81/0.16)$
i (deg).....	...	...	$74.37 \pm 0.96 (0.92/0.27)$	$73.80 \pm 0.92 (0.91/0.17)$
a (mas).....	...	...	$6.516 \pm 0.061 (0.016/0.059)$	$6.527 \pm 0.061 (0.015/0.059)$
ΔK (mag).....	...	...	0.11	0.11
χ^2/dof}.....	...	...	0.85	1.2 (0.95 $V^2/2.8$ RV)
$|\overline{R_{V^2}}|$.....	...	...	0.053	0.053
$|\overline{R_{RV}}|$ (km s $^{-1}$).....	...	0.65	...	0.65

NOTE.—Summarized here are the apparent orbital parameters for the 64 Psc system as determined by N79, DM91b, and PTI. We give two separate fits to our data, with and without including the double-lined DM91a radial velocities in the fit (constrained parameters are listed in italics). For parameters we have estimated by including our PTI observations; we separately quote 1σ errors from both statistical and systematic sources, given as $(\sigma_{\text{stat}}/\sigma_{\text{sys}})$, and the total error as the sum of the two in quadrature. We have quoted the longitude of the ascending node parameter (Ω) as the angle between local east and the orbital line of nodes measured positive in the direction of local north. Because of the degeneracy in our V^2 observable there is a 180° ambiguity in Ω ; by convention we quote it in the interval of $[0:180)$. We quote mean absolute V^2 and RV residuals in the fits, $|\overline{R_{V^2}}|$ and $|\overline{R_{RV}}|$, respectively.

with the N79 determination (the full-fit solution agreement with N79 is $\sim 0.9 \sigma$).

4. PHYSICAL PARAMETERS

Physical parameters derived from our 64 Psc full-fit visual/spectroscopic orbit are summarized in Table 4. As in Table 3, for the physical parameters that we have estimated we quote total σ error and its statistical and systematic contributions. Notable among these is the high-precision determination of the component masses for the system, a virtue of the precision of the DM91a radial velocity measurements on both components and the high inclination of the orbit. We estimate the masses of the F8 V primary and secondary components as $1.223 \pm 0.021 M_\odot$ and $1.170 \pm 0.018 M_\odot$, respectively. Remarkably, these are very near the values estimated by N79, based on their radial velocities and the relative magnitude in the system.

The Hipparcos Catalog lists the parallax of 64 Psc as 41.80 ± 0.75 mas (ESA 1997). The distance determination

to 64 Psc based on our orbital solution is 23.10 ± 0.24 pc, corresponding to an orbital parallax of 43.29 ± 0.46 mas, consistent with the *Hipparcos* result at 3.5% and 1.7 σ .

Based on eclipsing binary systems, Popper (1980) and Andersen (1991) list main-sequence linear diameters for stars in the mass range of the 64 Psc components at 1.15–1.25 R_\odot . At a distance of approximately 23 pc this corresponds to apparent angular diameters in the range of 0.42–0.5 mas. This range of apparent diameters is unresolved to our interferometer, with expected component visibility moduli (eq. [1]) of approximately 0.99. Consequently, as discussed above we have adopted model diameters for the two components based on a fit to Andersen’s compilation of eclipsing binary data in this mass range. In particular we have constrained our solutions to a primary diameter of 0.5 mas (1.24 R_\odot at 23 pc) and a secondary diameter 0.45 (1.12 R_\odot at 23 pc), respectively, and included 10% 1σ errors around these constraints into our systematic error computations. We have also ignored any corrections

TABLE 4
PHYSICAL PARAMETERS FOR 64 Psc

Physical Parameter	Primary Component	Secondary Component
a (10^{-2} AU).....	$7.371 \pm 0.052 (0.052/0.006)$	$7.706 \pm 0.054 (0.054/0.07)$
Mass (M_\odot).....	$1.223 \pm 0.021 (0.021/0.002)$	$1.170 \pm 0.018 (0.018/0.002)$
Sp Type (DM91b).....	F8 V	F8 V
Model Diameter (mas).....	0.5 (const)	0.45 (const)
System Distance (pc).....	$23.10 \pm 0.24 (0.13/0.21)$	
τ_{orb} (mas).....	$43.29 \pm 0.46 (0.24/0.39)$	
M_K (mag).....	$2.75 \pm 0.08 (0.07/0.04)$	$2.89 \pm 0.09 (0.08/0.04)$

NOTE.—Summarized here are the physical parameters for the 64 Psc system as derived from the orbital parameters in Table 3. As for our PTI-derived orbital parameters, we have quoted both total error and separate contributions from statistical and systematic sources (given as $\sigma_{\text{stat}}/\sigma_{\text{sys}}$).

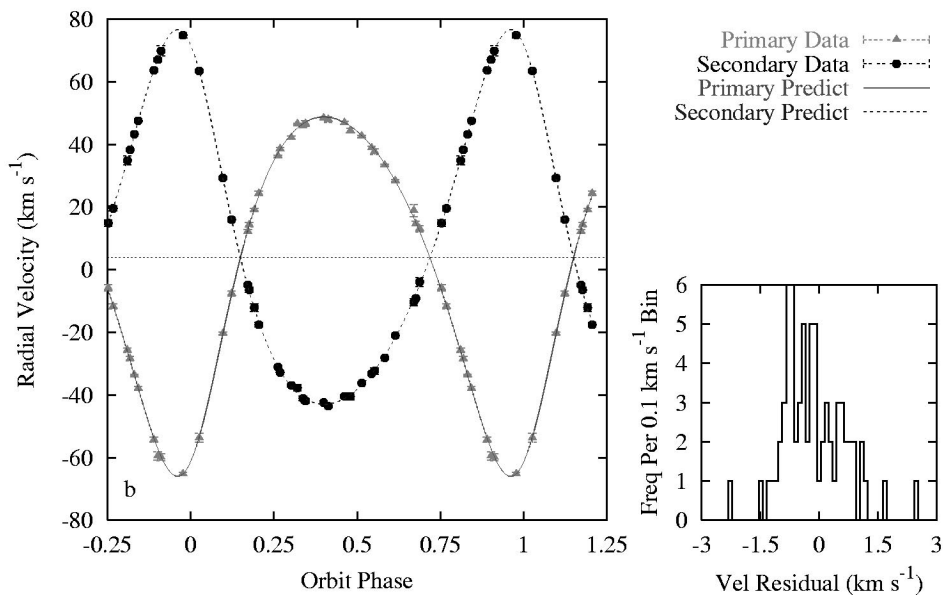
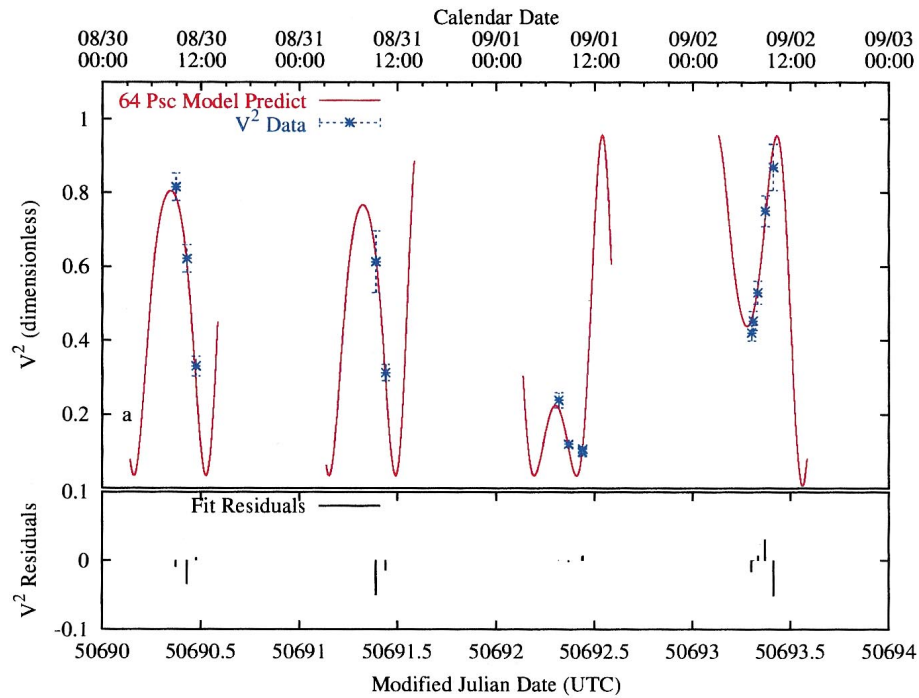


FIG. 2.— V^2 and RV fit of 64 Psc. (a) Four consecutive nights (1997 August 30–September 2) of calibrated V^2 data on 64 Psc and V^2 predictions from the best-fit model for the system. The lower frame shows individual V^2 residuals between the calibrated data and best-fit model. (b) A phase plot of radial velocity data from DM91a and fit predictions from our full-fit solution (Table 3). Also included is a histogram of RV residuals around the double-lined solution.

due to stellar limb darkening; our data would be highly insensitive to these effects.

Similarly, because the system is of nearly equal mass, and hence of nearly equal brightness, our V^2 data are relatively insensitive to the magnitude difference of the two components (see Hummel et al. 1998 for similar comments). Based on our masses and the mass-luminosity models of Henry & McCarthy (1992, 1993), one would expect a K -magnitude difference of 0.11 and a V -magnitude difference of 0.24. For reference, N79 quoted a best-fit component magnitude difference in the visible of 0.16 without a quoted error. An independent fit of our PTI data for a K -band

magnitude difference between the two yields components 0.141 ± 0.076 —well within 1σ of the expected K -band magnitude difference. As noted above, for our orbit fit we have chosen to constrain the K -magnitude difference at its model value and have included a 5% 1σ error around this constraint in our systematic error computations. However, our fitted K -band magnitude difference, system distance estimate, and a 64 Psc apparent (CIT) K -band magnitude estimate of 3.88 ± 0.07 yield K -band absolute magnitude estimates of 2.75 ± 0.08 and 2.89 ± 0.09 for the primary and secondary components, respectively. These estimates agree well with the predictions of the mass-luminosity

model of Henry & McCarthy (1992), which predicts absolute K -band magnitudes of 2.79 and 2.91 for the primary and secondary components, respectively.

5. TEMPORAL VARIATIONS IN ORBITAL ELEMENTS

N79 argued for the possible presence of an additional, undetected object in the 64 Psc system from supposed temporal variations in the systematic velocity, the time of periastron (T_0), and the argument of (primary) periastron (ω_1). In particular, N79 gives plots of systematic velocity, projected T_0 , and ω_1 as a function of observation epoch. Assuming the N79 estimate for the period of the effects (2700 yr), the approximate angular separation between 64 Psc and this third component would be $\sim 10''$, sufficiently distant to not affect our V^2 measurements on the inner pair and thus not perturb our orbit reconstruction.

Our interferometric data do not address the 64 Psc systematic velocity, but we can test the consistency of the N79 orbital element trends with our orbit solution. Because we note that a bias in the period estimate could produce the linear effects in projected T_0 that N79 claims, the comparison is best done with ω_1 . Figure 3 gives a plot of various values of ω_1 as reported by AL76, N79, DM91b, and PTI. Updating the N79 model for ω_1 , we have fitted a linear model to ω_1 based on 1918 measurements made at Lick and Mount Wilson (reduced by N79) by AL76 (reanalyzed by N79), N79 themselves, and DM91b. As depicted in Figure 3, this model is dominated by the estimate determined by N79 from the 1918 Lick/Wilson data, and based on the errors quoted by N79, the data will support a broad range of trends for the time variation of ω_1 —including essentially

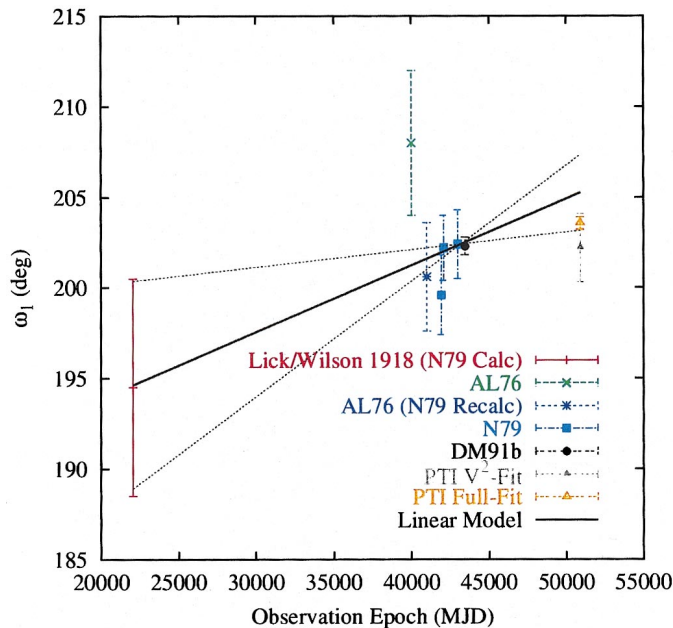


FIG. 3.—Measurements of ω_1 vs. time for 64 Psc. At least as calculated by N79, measurements of ω_1 vs. epoch of observation show a striking linear trend, and N79 suggest the presence of an additional, undetected body in the 64 Psc system to explain these effects. The N79 linear model for ω_1 (updated here to include the DM91b determination but not the PTI result) is not in particularly good agreement with the value for ω_1 estimated from our 1997/1998 PTI observations of 64 Psc (both separately and in combination with the DM91a radial velocity measurements). Our combined interferometry-radial velocity determination of ω_1 is sufficiently accurate to exclude the N79 evolution hypothesis at high confidence formally, but it conceivably may be biased by the older radial velocities.

no variation. The updated N79 model for ω_1 evaluated at the epoch of our 1997/1998 PTI observations is not in particularly good agreement with our V^2 -fit and full-fit values for ω_1 of 202.7 ± 1.9 and 203.56 ± 0.35 , respectively (Table 3); it predicts a value for ω_1 of $205^\circ 0 \pm 2^\circ 0$. Shown in Figure 3, the disagreement (4σ) of our full-fit ω_1 determination to this linear model central projection would seem to cast doubt on the evolving- ω_1 hypothesis at a reasonably high confidence level. The potential problem with drawing a firm conclusion on the evolution question is the inclusion of the older DM91a radial velocities—while the RV data match our recent visibility measurements very well, they may well bias the ω_1 estimate away from its current true value.

6. COMPANION SEARCH

Because our 64 Psc orbital studies do not rule out the presence of a companion, as N79 suggest, we imaged the 64 Psc system with the Near-Infrared Camera (NIRC) on the Keck-I telescope at Mauna Kea on 1998 October 20 and again on 1998 November 28. A panel of near-infrared images of the 64 Psc system is shown in Figure 4.

These images were obtained through the J , H , and K filters with total integration times of 60 s—the data from six 10 s exposures being co-added into a memory buffer before being recorded to disk. In the J band we took 10 such images while moving the telescope pointing by 10 pixels between each exposure to limit the effects of bad pixels on the array. These 10 images were then shifted and added. The same procedure was used at H and K band, but only seven images were taken in H and 1 in K . These were sufficient to detect objects down to $J = 21.0$, $H = 20.2$, and $K = 19.0$, where the total exposure times are 600, 420, and 60 s for J , H and K , respectively. Clearly the presence of the bright 64 Psc system in the images makes detecting faint objects difficult. By reflecting the images along the central vertical axis (where the star was positioned) and subtracting this reflected image from the original, a substantial portion of the star light is removed. (See Matthews et al. 1996 for a detailed description of this technique.) This subtracted image is used for photometry of the remaining objects. We used the standard SJ 9101 (HST P525-E; Persson et al. 1998) to calibrate the instrumental magnitudes and determine the flux density of the point sources we found in these images.

There are two apparent point sources other than 64 Psc itself in our images, which, following the WDS conventions, we will refer to as 64 Psc D and E (momentarily leaving aside the issue of whether these objects are actually associated with the 64 Psc system). To determine the offsets of the D and E objects with respect to 64 Psc we had to determine the position of 64 Psc on the detector, which was completely saturated within a radius of 23 pixels of the star. (The pixel scale is $0''.15$.) The star's position was determined by fitting lines through the unsaturated portions of the six diffraction spikes, yielding a position with a conservative accuracy of better than $0''.05$ (a third of a pixel). The first point source, which we call 64 Psc D, is in the upper right of the images, separated from 64 Psc by $22''.7$ at a position angle of 250° , measured N through E. This point source has the following magnitudes: $J = 17.0 \pm 0.1$, $H = 16.8 \pm 0.1$, and $K = 16.6 \pm 0.1$. This photometry is consistent with that of a background G7 V star at a distance of roughly 4 kpc. It is therefore apparently excluded as a possible companion to 64 Psc.

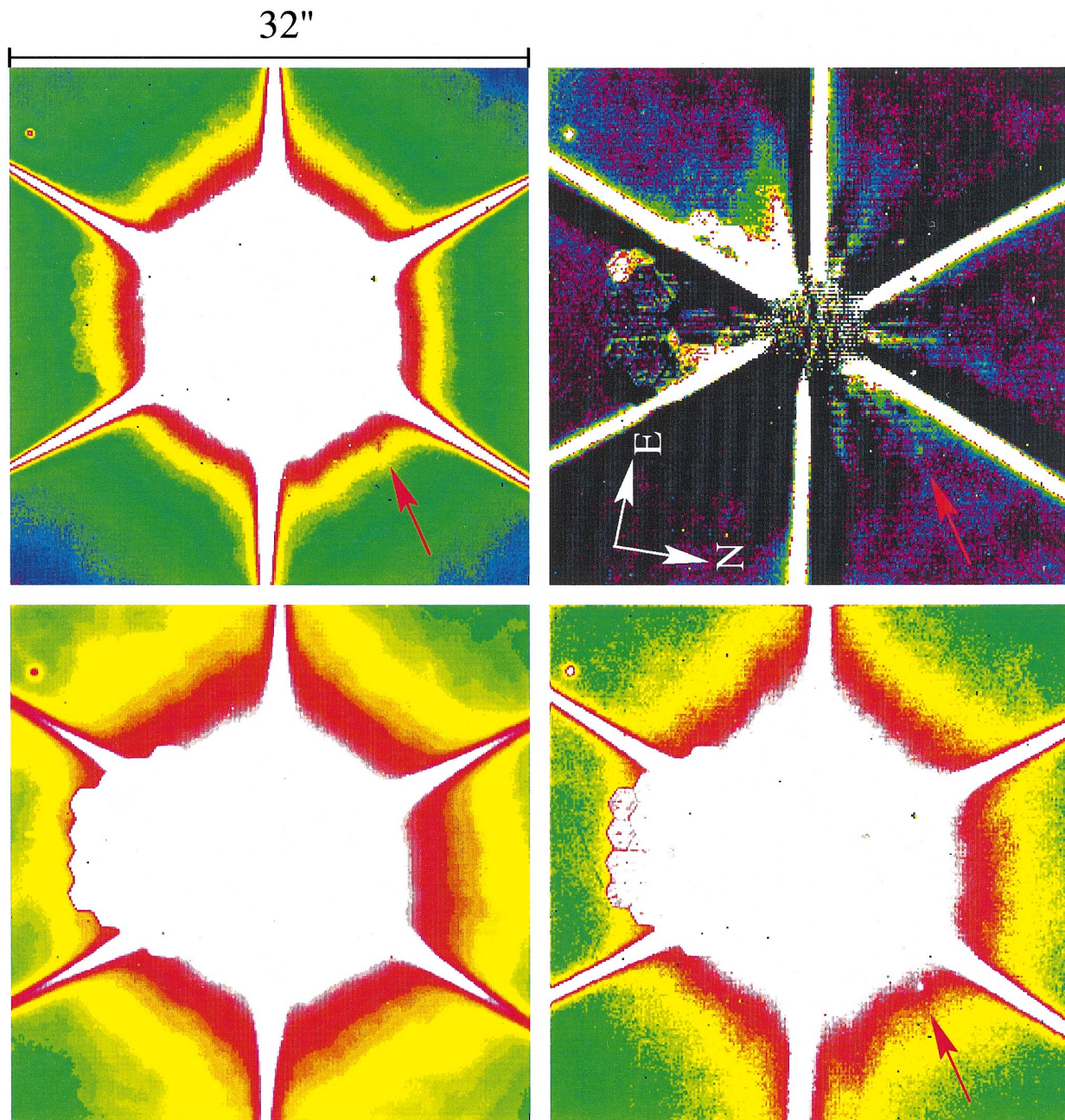


FIG. 4.—Keck NIRC images of 64 Psc. *Left to right, top to bottom*: The images are *J*-band ($1.2\ \mu\text{m}$), *H*-band ($1.6\ \mu\text{m}$), *K*-band ($2.2\ \mu\text{m}$), and a *K* minus *K*-reflected image (see the text for an explanation of this last image). The field of view is $32''$ on a side with a pixel size of $0''.15$. The red arrow indicates the peculiar object, which we call 64 Psc E, whose spectrum is shown in Fig. 5. 64 Psc E's *J*–*K* color is greater than 2.5 mag.

The other point source, 64 Psc E, is much dimmer than the D companion, and we have highlighted it in the figures with a red arrow to indicate its position. 64 Psc E is separated from 64 Psc by $12''.1$ at a P.A. of 60° and is extremely red; it is undetected in the *J* image but visible in *H* and clearly detected at *K* bands. 64 Psc E shows no obvious signs of extended structure in either the *H*- or *K*-band images. Photometric measurements of 64 Psc E yield the following: $J > 21.0$, $H = 19.3 \pm 0.2$, $K = 18.5 \pm 0.15$. If this candidate is physically associated with 64 Psc, it would have an $M_K = 16.7$, making it 2.4 mag fainter than Gliese 229B, the coolest known brown dwarf and the least luminous condensed object directly detected outside the solar system.

Because of 64 Psc E's intriguing red color and the fact that the separation between it and 64 Psc is so near the calculated separation (if the N79 conjecture is correct), we obtained a near-infrared spectrum with NIRC on the night of 1998 November 28.

To obtain the spectrum we used NIRC's $120\ \text{line mm}^{-1}$ grism in conjunction with the 4 pixel slit (chosen to match the seeing) and blocking filters that permit only the *H* and *K* bands to pass through to the detector. The object was positioned on the slit, and 14 exposures of 60 s integration (one co-add) were taken while moving the object along the slit by $10''$ between exposures. This permitted us to extract spectra from every exposure. We then observed the standard G8 III star SAO 92183 to provide a spectral flat field

from the same air mass. SAO 92183 was smeared across the entire length of the slit to produce a “flat field” over the whole detector. A sky frame was taken identically to be used for subtraction from the reference (SAO 92183) spectral image. The data were reduced by summing all the spectral images and dividing by the reference spectral image. Then the spectrum of 64 Psc E and that of one of the diffraction spikes of 64 Psc were extracted separately. The two were separated by $5''$ in the spectral images. This means that it is unlikely that any contamination from 64 Psc is present in the spectrum of 64 Psc E. The spectra were extracted by summing the seven rows over which the signal from each source was visible. The extracted spectra were then wavelength-calibrated using the well-determined 50% transmission points of the *HK* blocking filter. The flux calibration involved first the removal of the Rayleigh-Jeans falloff of the reference G star used to flat-field the data and a matching of the *K*-band-integrated flux to that measured by the photometry.

The spectra from 1.4 to $2.5 \mu\text{m}$ of both the candidate companion 64 Psc E and 64 Psc itself are shown in Figure 5. The candidate spectrum is extremely red, confirming the photometric measurements, and it is substantially different from the composite spectrum of the two late F-star components of 64 Psc. This demonstrates that little or no contamination from 64 Psc itself is present in the spectrum of 64 Psc E. While the SNR is low, there are no apparent molecular features in the spectrum. In particular, the large methane features seen in the spectrum of the cool brown dwarf GL 229B (see Oppenheimer et al. 1995; Geballe et al. 1998; Oppenheimer et al. 1998) are notably absent.

Based on the colors and proximity of the first (64 Psc D) candidate, and the implied large absolute magnitude of the second (64 Psc E) candidate, we think it is unlikely that either object is physically associated with the 64 Psc system. However, 64 Psc E is relatively unusual in its extreme red colors. Based on initial statistics from the 2MASS survey, L

dwarfs typically have *J–K* colors less than 2.1, so that possibility would seem to be unlikely (Kirkpatrick et al. 1999). Other possible explanations for the extreme red nature of 64 Psc E is the possibility of a very red QSO (Beichman et al. 1998), or a red, compact background galaxy (Becklin, Macintosh, & Zuckerman 1995; Graham & Dey 1996; Stanford et al. 1997). It clearly would be interesting to determine whether the 64 Psc E object shows indications of common proper motion with 64 Psc itself, and a higher SNR spectrum of the object would be needed to unequivocally establish the nature of 64 Psc E.

7. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

By virtue of our interferometric resolution and the high precision of the DM91a radial velocity data we are able to determine accurate masses of the 64 Psc constituents and an accurate system distance. Our data favor the earlier spectroscopic period of N79 over the more recent DM91b determination. The approximate determination of relative *K*-brightness ratio of the two nearly equal brightness 64 Psc constituents (best-fit *K*-magnitude difference of 0.141 ± 0.076) prevents us from establishing tight constraints on the absolute magnitudes of the components. This is regrettable, but it is an inherent limitation of our amplitude-only reconstruction technique for nearly equal-brightness systems (Hummel et al. 1998).

The N79 suggestion of an additional body in the system as an explanation for purported orbital parameter variation is intriguing, but our orbital results do not seem to favor this inference. However, these considerations suggest high angular resolution, high dynamic-range imaging of the system to attempt a detection of a companion, and we have imaged the 64 Psc system with NIRC at Keck-I. Neither of the two potential companion candidates apparent in our near-infrared images seem likely to be physically associated with the 64 Psc system. However, the second of these candidates (64 Psc E) would appear to be fairly unusual based on

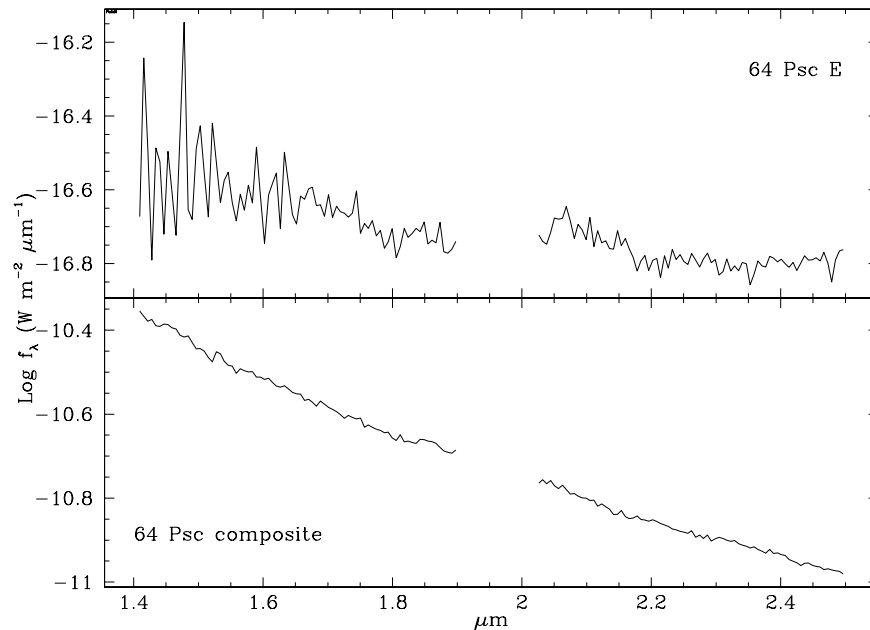


FIG. 5.—Near-infrared spectrum of the candidate companion of 64 Psc, 64 Psc E, is shown in the top panel. The bottom panel is the composite spectrum of the two F stars that comprise 64 Psc. That spectrum was taken from the diffraction spike that passed through the slit of the spectrograph. The gap in both spectra between 1.9 and $2.0 \mu\text{m}$ is where the atmospheric absorption prevented measurement. We estimate that the SNR in the 64 Psc E spectrum is approximately 2 in the blue edge of the *H*-band and 35 in the red end of the *K*-band.

its very red colors and spectrum in the near-infrared, and follow-up proper-motion and spectroscopic observations would be warranted.

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