A single TESS dip of Boyajian's star and a 776-day timing alignment

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15 November 2026. The TESS measurement and the timing test are new. The dip catalog is taken from the papers cited, at the precision those papers give.

Abstract

TESS observed KIC 8462852 (TIC 185336364) in eight sectors between 2019 and 2024. Sector 75 puts the star on a CCD gap and is discarded. The other seven sectors contain one dip. Its flux-weighted center, from 20-minute bins deeper than 0.8 percent, is 2019 September 3 at 15:24 UTC. Against a local continuum the hourly PDCSAP minimum is 1.33 percent, and the hourly means stay below 1 percent for about 10 hours. The raw aperture shows the same shape. The image centroid does not kick with the flux. A period search from 0.4 to 1700 days finds no repeat.

The Kepler and ground-based dips do not share one period either. Three of them do fall on a single ephemeris of 776.10 days: the 16 percent dip of 2011 March 5, the 8 percent dip of 2013 April 18, and the TESS dip. That period is fixed by the first and the third, so the real test is the middle event, which lands 0.35 day early, and the 21 percent dip of 2013 March 1, which lands 49 days early. The 2011 and 2013 events last days and are asymmetric. They are not repeats of the one-day TESS dip. The TESS length is about what a circular orbit of this period would produce, and the bottom of the dip is rounder than a central transit of an opaque 1.3 percent body. The 2026 January 17 return transited in daylight from southern California. The next epoch that can be observed at night is 2028 March 4 at 01:04 UTC.

1. Introduction

KIC 8462852 is an ordinary F3 V star in Cygnus, about 450 pc away, with a wide M-dwarf companion at a projected separation of about 880 AU (Boyajian et al. 2016; Pearce et al. 2021). Kepler watched it almost continuously from 2009 to 2013 and recorded irregular dips of up to about 20 percent, lasting from a few days to a couple of months, with no simple period (Boyajian et al. 2016). Full-frame images from the same mission show a slow fade of about 0.9 percent over the first thousand days and a further drop of more than 2 percent in the next two hundred (Montet & Simon 2016). Ground telescopes picked the star up again in 2015. The first clear post-Kepler dips came in 2017, at the 1 to 2.5 percent level, and were deeper in the blue than in the red (Boyajian et al. 2018).

This note does three things. It measures the TESS light curve, including the sectors from 2021 and 2024 that a short search of the early sectors would miss. It asks whether the published dip times, Kepler plus ground plus this TESS event, lie on one period. It writes down the one ephemeris that three of those times do satisfy, and the date on which that ephemeris can next be tested.

2. TESS data

The star is TIC 185336364, at right ascension 301.5644 degrees and declination +44.4569 degrees. The TESS cutout service, queried in November 2026, returns this coordinate in sectors 14, 15, 41, 54, 55, 75, 81, and 82 only. Sectors 83 through 98 do not contain it. The 2025 and 2026 TESS pointings are southern, and Cygnus at this declination is outside them.

Sectors 14, 15, 41, 54, and 55 have SPOC two-minute light curves. Both the pipeline-corrected flux (PDCSAP) and the simple aperture flux (SAP) were used, restricted to cadences with quality flag zero. Sectors 81 and 82 have no SPOC product. Their QLP light curves were used, with the column DET_FLUX in place of the KSPSAP column of the earlier QLP files. Each sector was divided by its own median. Cameras change between visits, so the sector-to-sector zero point is not a measurement of a slow fade. For the period search, about 0.7 day was cut from each end of a sector to keep the scattered-light ramps out of the low frequencies.

Sector 75 is on camera 4, CCD 2. An 11 by 11 pixel cutout has RAW_CNTS equal to minus one in every pixel, and the calibrated flux is consistent with zero. The star falls in a CCD gap. No Sector 75 dip is quoted here. A larger aperture cannot repair a cutout that is empty in every pixel. Leaving this sector in a periodogram is harmful: the empty pixels

produce a spurious rms of tens of percent and dominate both a Lomb-Scargle search and a box least-squares search.

Sector	Product	UTC span	rms	Note
14	SPOC	2019 Jul 18 to Aug 14	0.23%	CROWDSAP 0.86
15	SPOC	2019 Aug 15 to Sep 10	0.30%	CROWDSAP 0.92; the dip
41	SPOC	2021 Jul 24 to Aug 20	0.24%	flat
54	SPOC	2022 Jul 9 to Aug 4	0.27%	flat
55	SPOC	2022 Aug 5 to Sep 1	0.24%	flat
75	cutout	2024 Jan 30 to Feb 26	--	CCD gap, unused
81	QLP	2024 Jul 15 to Aug 10	0.30%	DET_FLUX
82	QLP	2024 Aug 10 to Sep 5	0.27%	DET_FLUX

Table 1. TESS visits of TIC 185336364 used in this note. The rms is the sector scatter of the pipeline flux after a quality cut, and it includes the Sector 15 dip. CROWDSAP is the SPOC estimate of the fraction of aperture flux that belongs to the target.

The seven usable visits span 2019 July 19 to 2024 September 5, a baseline of about 1870 days, and they cover about 185 days of that baseline. Every visit falls between mid-July and early September. A dip in winter is invisible to this data set. A dip that repeats in late summer would have been inside the window in 2019, 2021, 2022, and 2024.

3. The dip of 2019 September 3

Sector 15 is the only visit with a coherent dip. The continuum was taken from two stretches clear of the event: 2019 September 2 at 12:00 UTC through September 3 at 04:00, and September 4 at 02:00 through September 4 at 14:00. Fluxes in the figures and in Table 2 are measured against the median of that continuum, not against the sector median. A sector-wide threshold is a bad way to center this event. The ends of a sector throw out enough low points to pull a flux-weighted time off the dip and onto the ramp.

Twenty-minute medians were formed from the two-minute cadences. The center adopted here is the flux-weighted mean time of those bins that sit deeper than 0.8 percent. That time is 2019 September 3, 15:24:15 UTC. The deepest 20-minute bin is 1.46 percent, at 14:50 UTC. The bottom is flat from about 13:00 to 18:00, so the weighted center is the right midpoint and the single deepest bin is not. The deepest 15-minute bin is 1.45 percent, at 14:45 UTC, from eight cadences.

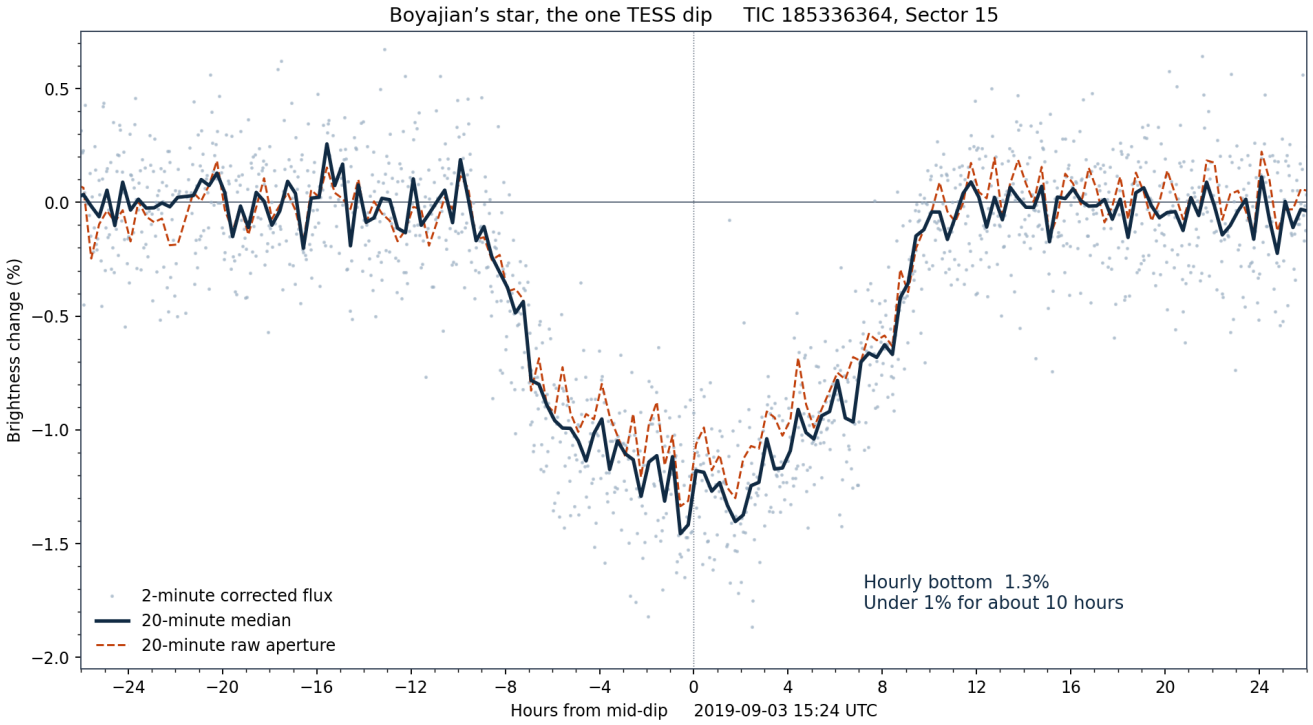


Figure 1. Sector 15 around the dip. Gray points are the two-minute PDCSAP flux. The navy line is the 20-minute median. The dashed line is the 20-minute SAP median. Time is hours from 2019 September 3 at 15:24 UTC. The same figure and the binned numbers are in the data products named at the end of the note.

Table 2 gives the hourly medians. PDCSAP and SAP track each other through the ingress, the bottom, and the egress. The hourly PDCSAP minimum is 1.33 percent at 17:00 UTC. The hourly SAP minimum is 1.10 percent at the same hour. Hours with the PDCSAP mean below 1 percent run from about 10:00 through 19:00, roughly ten hours. The 20-minute bins stay below 0.8 percent for 13.3 hours. By 01:00 UTC on September 4 the hourly mean is back at the continuum. A three-day mean around the event is only about 0.15 percent deep. This is a half-day to one-day dip. It is not one of the multi-day Kepler complexes.

UTC hour	PDCSAP %	SAP %	UTC hour	PDCSAP %	SAP %
Sep 3, 04:00	+0.04	-0.04	Sep 3, 16:00	-1.19	-1.08
06:00	-0.12	-0.14	17:00	-1.33	-1.10
07:00	-0.39	-0.34	18:00	-1.11	-0.96
08:00	-0.64	-0.60	19:00	-1.04	-0.90
09:00	-0.90	-0.83	20:00	-0.95	-0.90
10:00	-1.01	-0.92	21:00	-0.83	-0.73
11:00	-1.00	-0.90	22:00	-0.69	-0.63
12:00	-1.04	-0.98	23:00	-0.59	-0.57
13:00	-1.11	-1.02	Sep 4, 00:00	-0.27	-0.29
14:00	-1.14	-1.08	01:00	~0	~0
15:00	-1.18	-1.05			

Table 2. Hourly medians of Sector 15 on the local continuum defined in the text. A negative number is a deficit.

Two checks argue that the dip belongs to the star. The flux-weighted centroid (MOM_CENTR) drifts by about 0.02 pixel across the event and does not step when the flux drops. Its correlation with the flux is about 0.1. The background rises through the dip, from roughly 1160 electrons per second in the core of the event to roughly 1210 afterward, and it keeps rising after the star has recovered. A background spike would have the opposite time behavior. The pipeline correction is not inventing the dip: SAP and PDCSAP have the same shape. A six-day rolling median of the SAP flux in Sector 14 does manufacture a 0.77 percent wiggle near 2019 July 31. The pipeline 12-hour mean at that time is 0.07

percent. That feature was not kept.

CROWDSAP in Sector 15 is 0.92, so about 8 percent of the aperture flux is from other stars. If those stars are constant, the dip on KIC 8462852 itself is deeper than the aperture dip by a factor of about 1.09. The depths in this note are the aperture measurements, without that correction. The corrected hourly minimum would be about 1.45 percent.

No other sector has a second event. Twelve-hour means, with the sector edges cut, bottom out at 0.064, 0.049, 0.078, 0.056, 0.047, and 0.055 percent in Sectors 14, 41, 54, 55, 81, and 82. Sector 15 reaches 1.01 percent because of this dip. Thirty-minute medians below 0.4 percent occur in Sector 15, all inside this event, and in two isolated QLP bins in Sector 81: 0.52 percent at 2024 July 24 15:06 UTC and 0.52 percent at 2024 August 7 19:21 UTC. The neighboring bins are about 0.36 percent. A single 30-minute bin is not a dip. The one-year anniversary of September 3 was not observed. The five-year anniversary, 2024 September 2, falls inside Sector 82, and the 12-hour mean that day is 0.04 percent bright.

4. Dips recorded by other means

Boyajian et al. (2016) list ten discrete dips in the Kepler light curve. Their times are Kepler barycentric days, BKJD = BJD minus 2454833. Table 3 converts those times to UTC. The depths are theirs. In the same paper the light-curve discussion describes the 2011 event as a 15 percent drop and says the 2013 complex reaches 22 percent. Table 1 of that paper, which is the list used here, gives 16 and 21. The difference is a choice of which point in a structured dip is called the depth. Both numbers are from the same light curve.

Name	BKJD	UTC	Depth
D140	140.49	2009 May 21	0.5%
D260	261.00	2009 Sep 19	0.5%
D360	359.11	2009 Dec 26	0.2%
D425	426.62	2010 Mar 4	0.2%
D800	792.74	2011 Mar 5	16%
D1200	1205.96	2012 Apr 21	0.4%
D1500	1495.97	2013 Feb 5	0.3%
D1520	1519.60	2013 Mar 1	21%
D1540	1540.40	2013 Mar 21	3%
D1570	1568.49	2013 Apr 18	8%

Table 3. The ten Kepler dips in Table 1 of Boyajian et al. (2016). UTC is the conversion of their BKJD. D800 is one asymmetric dip, about a week in ingress and a couple of days in egress. The 2013 group is several dips piled on each other across about 100 days.

On top of the dips, the Kepler full-frame images fade by 0.341 plus or minus 0.041 percent per year for the first thousand days, 0.9 percent in total, and then by more than 2 percent in about 200 days (Montet & Simon 2016). That is a fade. It is not another short dip, and a per-sector TESS normalization cannot see it.

Regular ground photometry began in 2015 October. No dip at the percent level was reported through 2016 December (Meng et al. 2017; Boyajian et al. 2018). Four dips then arrived between 2017 May and the end of that season, named Elsie, Celeste, Skara Brae, and Angkor, with depths 1 to 2.5 percent and durations of days to weeks (Boyajian et al. 2018). Schaefer et al. (2018) place Celeste at 2017.46 and 1.3 percent, Skara Brae at 2017.60 and 1.2 percent, and Angkor at 2017.69 and 2.4 percent. Those decimal years fall in 2017 on June 17, August 8, and September 9. The centers are good to several days, which is enough for a 776-day test and not enough for a one-day test. The dips are deeper in the blue than in the red. Spectra and polarimetry through Elsie showed no change in the star itself (Boyajian et al. 2018). Gary's photometry adds an unnamed dip of about 1.25 percent in 2017 November, spread over weeks, so its center is loose.

Two more dips followed in 2018 March, after the annual gap near the Sun. Caral-Supe began about March 16 and Evangeline about March 24. Reported depths reach about 5 percent, deeper in the blue, and Evangeline was recovering by March 27 (the campaign reports collected by Boyajian and by AAVSO; Bodman et al. 2018). These are the deepest ground-based dips since Kepler. Their published times are start dates, good to a couple of days.

Gary's Hereford Arizona summary of 11 January 2020 describes at least seven further dips between 2019 October and December, the deepest about 2 percent, added by him to a combined depth of about 11 percent. Individual mid-times from

that summary are not sharp enough to use as epochs, so they are left out of the period test. They do show that 2019 produced more than the one TESS dip. A 1574-day repeat of the 16 percent Kepler dip had been predicted for 2019 October 17, and a 21 percent repeat for 2021 October 13 (Sacco, Ngo & Modolo 2018). What arrived in October 2019 was this shallow cluster. In October 2021 Gary reported a possible feature near 1 percent around October 18 and wrote that he had not caught an ingress or an egress.

A century of Harvard plates was read as a fade of 0.164 plus or minus 0.013 magnitudes per century (Schaefer 2016). Sonneberg plates of the same star, 1934 to 1995, are constant to 0.033 magnitudes per century and disagree with that fade at about five standard deviations (Hippke et al. 2016). The century fade is not used here. One plate study has also claimed an 8 percent dip on 1978 October 24. A single photographic point is not entered in Table 3.

The star does have a spot-scale signal, and it is not these dips. With the dips cut out, the Kepler light curve shows a period of 0.88 day (Boyajian et al. 2016). After a principal-component cleaning, the half-amplitude is about 90 parts per million, which is 0.009 percent (Makarov & Goldin 2016). The projected rotation speed, 84 plus or minus 4 km/s, matches that period for a star of this radius. A dark patch large enough to remove 1 percent of the light, let alone 16 percent, would return every 0.88 day for as long as it survived. The percent-level dips occur once. The 2017 events are also deeper in the blue, which is the signature of sub-micron dust rather than a cool patch on the photosphere (Boyajian et al. 2018; Schaefer et al. 2018). Boyajian et al. (2018) left open an intrinsic contribution to the slow fade. They did not leave the short dips looking like spots.

5. Period tests

The TESS series was searched on its own before any Kepler time was introduced. Cadences were averaged into bins of about 1.2 hours, Sector 75 was omitted, and the sector ends were trimmed. A Lomb-Scargle periodogram from 0.4 to 20 days has its strongest peak at 5.27 days, with a sine amplitude of 0.016 percent and a power of about 0.017. From 20 to 1700 days the strongest amplitudes are 0.01 to 0.09 percent. A peak near 367 days at 0.093 percent is still at the noise level of a gapped series. A box least-squares search at short periods prefers a depth of 0.17 percent, a period near 24 days, and a duration of 0.25 day. At long periods it prefers 0.38 percent, a period near 110.6 days, and a duration of 1.5 days. Every point inside that long-period box is the 2019 September 3 dip. A shuffle of the times gives a median box depth of about 0.08 percent and a maximum of about 0.19 percent. The 110-day peak is one event looked at by a periodic window.

The published epochs were then tested as event times, which is a different question from a sinusoid in the flux. An eclipsing clock puts every event on one phase. The deep events used for that test are D800, D1520, D1540, D1570, the four named 2017 dips, the November 2017 dip, the two 2018 March dips, and the TESS dip. Twelve times. A scan from 20 to 2000 days, scoring how tightly all twelve cluster on a single phase, peaks near 810 days with a mean resultant length of 0.75 and with only four of the twelve inside a window 5 percent of the period wide. That is not a period.

Particular published spacings do better on a subset and then lose the rest. Boyajian et al. (2016) noticed that 48.4 days separates D800, D1520, and D1570 to about a day. D1540 falls almost half a cycle off that spacing, and several of the shallow early dips do the same. Four continuous years of Kepler would have been full of repeats of a 48-day eclipse. They recorded ten dips. The paper declined to treat 48.4 days as a period, and the later times do not revive it.

The interval from D800 to D1520 is 726.86 days. Folding on that number hits those two events by construction and misses the TESS dip by 197 days. The interval from D1520 to the Celeste year-fraction is 1569 days, five days from the 1574-day period of Sacco, Ngo & Modolo (2018). That is how their period was built: one peak in the 2013 complex and one peak in the 2017 complex. The 2017 complex is itself a hundred days wide, so a family-scale period can be made to fit by choosing which peak is the clock. Their predicted 16 percent and 21 percent returns, in 2019 October and 2021 October, did not arrive at those depths.

6. The 776-day alignment

One spacing survives a stricter test. The TESS center and D800 are separated by 3104.40 days. Divided by four, that is a period of 776.10 days. D1570, which was not used to set the period, falls 0.35 day before the first return. Three events on a ruler, with the middle one free, is the entire positive result.

Event	Depth	Cycles from D800	Residual
D800, 2011 Mar 5	16%	0	0
D1520, 2013 Mar 1	21%	0.94	-49.2 d
D1540, 2013 Mar 21	3%	0.96	-28.4 d
D1570, 2013 Apr 18	8%	1.00	-0.35 d
Elsie, 2017 May	~2%	2.92	-62 d
Celeste, 2017 Jun 17	1.3%	2.96	-32 d
Skara Brae, 2017 Aug 8	1.2%	3.03	+20 d
Angkor, 2017 Sep 9	2.4%	3.07	+51 d
TESS, 2019 Sep 3	1.3%	4.00	0

Table 4. Residuals from the ephemeris defined by D800 and the TESS dip, P = 776.10 days. Residuals of zero in the first and last rows are by construction. Ground centers for 2017 are the Schaefer et al. (2018) year-fractions and are uncertain by several days. Elsie is the start of the family, not a formal center.

D1520 is the deepest dip in the whole record, and it misses this clock by 49 days. D1540 misses it by 28 days. The 2017 dips are a season, from May to September, draped across the third return rather than sitting on it. Skara Brae is the closest, 20 days late, and that is several times the uncertainty in its date. The 2018 March dips fall about 240 days after the third return. A clock that skips the deepest event, and that treats a whole observing season as one tick, is not the period of the dips.

It is a real alignment of three times. Whether it is one orbiting body is a separate question, and the shapes answer it. D800 is asymmetric, a week down and two days back up, at 16 percent. D1570 sits inside a complex of overlapping dips and reaches 8 percent. The TESS dip is symmetric, about a day long, and 1.3 percent deep. Those are not three appearances of one opaque object.

The TESS dip, taken alone, has the scale of a transit on this period. With the Boyajian et al. (2016) mass and radius, 1.43 solar masses and 1.58 solar radii, a circular orbit of 776.10 days has a semimajor axis of 1.86 AU. The stellar radius is 0.00395 of that axis. An opaque disk that removes 1.33 percent of the light has a radius 0.115 times the star, about 1.8 Jupiter radii, if the transit is central and the depth equals the area ratio. The central-transit duration is then about 26 hours from first to fourth contact, with a flat bottom of about 21 hours. Socas-Navarro (2026) finds about 20.5 hours for his maximum-likelihood period of 781.6 days and the published stellar parameters. The measured event is in that neighborhood: the hourly means are below 1 percent for about 10 hours, the whole decline and recovery runs from about 06:00 to about 01:00 UTC, and the flat portion is only the five hours from 13:00 to 18:00. The bottom is rounder than a central transit of a 1.3 percent opaque body. A high impact parameter shortens the flat bottom, and it does not by itself turn a 21-hour flat bottom into a 5-hour one. The length matches an orbit of this size. The shape is softer than a sharp planetary limb.

Socas-Navarro (2026) fits a family recurrence at 781.6 days with a dispersion of 80 days, and reports a Bayes factor of 44.9 against a null of unrelated family centers, under a stated choice of topology, priors, and selection function. He identifies D800 with cycle 0, the 2013 activity with cycle 1, the 2017 and 2018 activity with cycle 3, and the TESS dip with cycle 4. The paper says the result does not prove orbital recurrence. The 776.10-day number in this note is the same D800-to-TESS spacing he quotes, 776.1 days for four revolutions. The residual table above is the part that spacing does not absorb: the 21 percent dip is 49 days off the tick he would call cycle 1, and the 2017 dips are spread across two months around cycle 3.

7. Ephemeris

If the three aligned events are used as an ephemeris anyway, the returns are fixed. Cycle 0 is D800 and cycle 4 is the TESS dip. The dates below use P = 776.10 days and no free phase. The sun-star angle is the great-circle separation. A large separation can still leave the star up in the daytime, because the star is at declination +44 degrees and the winter Sun is far south of it. Night-time usefulness was checked for a site at latitude 33.9 N, longitude 117.8 W, by asking when the star is above 25 degrees while the Sun is below minus 12.

n	UTC	Separation	What was on the sky
0	2011 Mar 5, 05:44	64 deg	D800, 16%
1	2013 Apr 19, 08:09	79 deg	D1570, 8%, 0.35 day early
2	2015 Jun 4, 10:34	99 deg	On the sky. Campaign not yet started. No published dip.
3	2017 Jul 19, 12:59	115 deg	Between Celeste and Skara Brae
4	2019 Sep 3, 15:24	116 deg	TESS, 1.33% hourly
5	2021 Oct 18, 17:49	103 deg	Gary: near 1%, edges not timed
6	2023 Dec 3, 20:14	82 deg	Up after midnight from California. No published dip.
7	2026 Jan 17, 22:39	65 deg	Daytime transit from California. Not a test.
8	2028 Mar 4, 01:04	64 deg	Next night-time epoch

Table 5. The 776.10-day ephemeris. Cycles 0 and 4 define it. Separation is the angle between the star and the Sun.

Cycle 7 has already passed. On 2026 January 17 the star and the Sun differed in right ascension by only a few degrees, and from southern California there was no hour with the star above 25 degrees in a dark sky. A dip centered that afternoon would have been missed by a California observer. It does not count as a non-detection. TESS was not looking at Cygnus then.

Cycle 8 is 2028 March 4 at 01:04 UTC. That is 17:04 PST on March 3, still daylight in California. The only dark window from that site, with the star above 25 degrees, is about 03:30 to 05:00 PST on the mornings of March 3 and March 4, and the star is then 27 to 43 degrees up. A 20-hour dip centered at 01:04 UTC would be in its egress during the March 4 dawn window. A telescope in the Canary Islands or in Europe has the star high through the middle of that night. The confirming signature of a repeat of the TESS event would be a symmetric dip of about a day, with a depth of order 1 percent or less, inside about a day of this epoch. The depth is not required to match 1.33 percent. If D800, D1570, and the TESS dip were one body, the depth has already fallen from 16 percent to 8 percent to 1.3 percent, and the next appearance could be shallower still. If only the TESS dip is a compact transit, and the earlier dips are dust, the depth should come back near 1 percent.

A dust clump on a nearby orbit is a wider appointment. The 80-day dispersion in Socas-Navarro (2026) puts related activity anywhere from about mid-December 2027 through May 2028. That window includes the annual gap, when the star transits in the daytime, and the weeks on either side of it, when the star is a morning or evening object. The sharp date in Table 5 is only the date for a repeat of the symmetric dip.

8. Conclusions

TESS has one dip of this star. It is centered at 2019 September 3, 15:24 UTC, reaches 1.33 percent in the hourly PDCSAP mean, lasts about ten hours below 1 percent, and is present in the raw aperture. Nothing else in the seven usable sectors, and nothing in a search out to 1700 days, is a second event.

The percent-level dips from Kepler and from the ground are not the 0.88-day rotation signal. That signal has an amplitude of about 0.009 percent. The short dips are single events, and the ones with colors are deeper in the blue.

No period carries the whole catalog. Three times lie on a 776.10-day ephemeris: 2011 March 5 at 16 percent, 2013 April 18 at 8 percent, and 2019 September 3 at 1.3 percent. The 21 percent dip misses that ephemeris by 49 days, and the shapes do not match. The TESS event has the duration of a transit on a 776-day orbit and a rounder bottom than a central transit of an opaque body at that depth.

The next epoch of that ephemeris that falls at night is 2028 March 4 at 01:04 UTC. A symmetric dip of about a day, within a day of that time, would be the same event coming back. A miss, or a dip tens of days away, would retire the clock.

Data

The light curves are the MAST SPOC and QLP products for TIC 185336364 in the sectors of Table 1, retrieved in November 2026. The 20-minute medians of the September 2019 dip, from September 2 at 12:00 through September 4 at 18:00, are in boyajian-2019sep03-20min.csv, with columns hours_from_mid, utc, pdc_median_percent, n, and

sap_median_percent. Hours are measured from 2019 September 3 at 15:24:15 UTC. Figure 1 is boyajian-2019sep03-dip.png. Both files are alongside this note.

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