Two long H_I tails in the outskirts of Abell 1367

T. C. Scott^{1,2,*}, L. Cortese³, E. Brinks², H. Bravo–Alfaro⁴, R. Auld⁵,

and R. Minchin⁶

¹Instituto de Astrofísica de Andalucía (CSIC), C/ Camino Bajo de Huétor, 50, 18008 Granada, Spain

²Centre for Astrophysics Research, University of Hertfordshire, College Lane, Hatfield, AL10 9AB, UK

³European Southern Observatory, Karl-Schwarzschild Str. 2, 85748 Garching bei Muenchen, Germany

⁴Departamento de Astronomía, Universidad de Guanajuato, Apdo, Postal 144, Guanajuato 36000, Mexico

⁵School of Physics and Astronomy, Cardiff University, Cardiff CF24 3AA, UK

⁶NAIC-Arecibo Observatory, HC3 Box 53995, Arecibo, PR 00612, USA

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ABSTRACT

We present VLA D-array H_I observations of the RSCG42 and FGC1287 galaxy groups, in the outskirts of the Abell 1367 cluster. These groups are projected ~ 1.8 and 2.7 Mpc west from the cluster centre. The Arecibo Galaxy Environment survey provided evidence for HI extending over as much as 200 kpc in both groups. Our new, higher resolution observations reveal that the complex HI features detected by Arecibo are in reality two extraordinary long H I tails extending for ~ 160 and 250 kpc, respectively, i.e., among the longest H I structures ever observed in groups of galaxies. Although in the case of RSCG42 the morphology and dynamics of the H_I tail, as well as the optical properties of the group members, support a low-velocity tidal interaction scenario, less clear is the origin of the unique features associated with FGC1287. This galaxy displays an exceptionally long 'dog leg' HI tail and the large distance from the X-ray emitting region of Abell 1367 makes a ram-pressure stripping scenario highly unlikely. At the same time a low-velocity tidal interaction seems unable to explain the extraordinary length of the tail and the lack of any sign of disturbance in the optical properties of FGC1287. An intriguing possibility could be that this galaxy might have recently experienced a high-speed interaction with another member of the Coma-Abell 1367 Great Wall. We searched for the interloper responsible for this feature and, although we find a possible candidate, we show that without additional observations it is impossible to settle this issue. While the mechanism responsible for this extraordinary HI tail remains to be determined, our discovery highlights how little we know about environmental effects in galaxy groups.

Key words: galaxies: galaxies: clusters individual Abell 1367 galaxies:groups: RSCG 42 galaxies: ISM

1 INTRODUCTION

H I tails and streams represent some of the clearest observational evidence of the effect of the environment on the gas content of galaxies. It is now well established that several environmental mechanisms can be responsible for such remarkable features. Late-type, gas-rich systems entering the central region of clusters (within a radius of ~1 Mpc of the cluster centre) can have their gas stripped by ram pressure, $P_{\rm ram} = \rho_{\rm ICM} v_{\rm rel}^2$ (van Gorkom 2004; Roediger & Brüggen 2007). Several examples have been found in Virgo (Chung et al. 2007) as well as in Abell 1367 where Scott et al. (2010) report a 70 kpc tail emanating from CGCG 097-087. Moreover, Oosterloo & van Gorkom (2005) presented a 110 kpc HI structure emanating from NGC 4388, proposing that it is a result of ram pressure stripping although not by the hot intracluster gas centred on M87, but rather by the hot halo gas of M86.

H I tails can also be generated, under suitable initial conditions, from tidal interactions. A pair of stellar tails are expected to result from a tidal interaction and depending on the gas content of the progenitors, one or both of the tails may have a gaseous complement (Struck 1999). In galaxy groups the lower relative velocities ($< 500 \text{ km s}^{-1}$) favour

slow tidal interactions that can displace a large fraction of the H I from the parent galaxies and lead to lasting changes in their morphology. Bekki et al. (2005a) provide models in which they describe the formation of massive H I clouds with no optical counterparts as high–density regions of intragroup H I rings and arcs. In Compact Groups such as Stephan's Quintet interactions can cause as much as 60% of the group's H I to be found in tidal tails and bridges (Williams et al. 1991). Even in clusters of galaxies, high–speed interactions can produce incredibly long H I tails. The best example is probably the case of NGC 4254 (Minchin et al. 2005, 2007; Haynes et al. 2007). Simulations (Bekki et al. 2005b; Duc et al. 2008) suggests that the H I stream in this system is tidal debris from an interaction.

As explained by Haynes et al. (2007), the location of NGC 4254 at ~ 1 Mpc from M87 argues against ram pressure being the main cause of this tail. Instead, they claim that a more likely cause is a tidal interaction, of the type expected under the harassment scenario proposed by Moore et al. (1996). This idea was taken further by Duc & Bournaud (2008). The latter authors presenting a careful modelling of the tail originating from NGC 4254 leading them to propose a high–speed interaction with the more massive galaxy NGC 4192 (M98) to be at the source of the huge tail.

All these observational studies highlight the importance of H_I tails for our understanding of environmental effects. Usually, the information provided by H_I observations, such as velocity, mass and H_I distribution provides crucial constraints for theoretical predictions of different environmental mechanisms (Vollmer 2003; Duc & Bournaud 2008).

In order to unveil the main environmental mechanisms driving galaxy evolution in nearby clusters, we are conducting an HI, molecular gas, and star formation study of latetype galaxies in the spiral-rich cluster Abell 1367 (Scott et al. 2010, Scott et al. in preparation). Abell 1367 (z=0.022) lies at about the same distance as Coma, but with only about half the Coma ICM mass, and consists of two approximately equal-mass sub-clusters (SE and NW) that are in the process of merging (Cortese et al. 2004). We are particularly interested to know if the young dynamical state of Abell 1367 and its lower ICM content has any bearing on the relative roles of ram pressure and tidal interactions in driving the evolution of its spirals. The Arecibo Galaxy Environment Survey (AGES; Cortese et al. 2008) survey revealed HI extending over up to 200 kpc in two groups, RSCG 42 and FGC 1287, located in projection beyond the cluster's 1.1 degree virial radius (Rines et al. 2003). This letter reports on follow-up VLA-D array HI mapping of the galaxies in these groups.

Based on a redshift to the cluster of 0.022 and assuming $\Omega_M = 0.3$, $\Omega_{\Lambda} = 0.7$, and $H_0 = 72$ km s⁻¹ Mpc⁻¹ (Spergel et al. 2007) the distance to the cluster is 92 Mpc with an angular scale of 1 arcmin ≈ 24.8 kpc. The virial radius then corresponds to ~ 1.64 Mpc. We use J2000.0 coordinates throughout. Section 2 details the observations, observational results are given in section 3 with discussion and concluding remarks in section 4.

2 OBSERVATIONS

H I was observed in two fields (VLA–A and VLA–B) with the NRAO¹ VLA in D–array configuration with ~2.5 hr integrations. The FWHM (32 arcmin) of the VLA primary beams for each of the observed fields (large white circles) and the intensity of the X–ray emission (ROSAT) from the cluster's ICM (cyan contours) are shown in the top panel of Figure 1. In addition we made two follow-up pointings with the Arecebo 305–m telescope². The observational set up for each of the VLA fields is listed in Table 1, including integration time, velocity resolution and velocity range.

The observations were made on April 16, 2007. The data were calibrated and imaged with the AIPS software package, but the standard calibration and reduction procedures had to be adapted to overcome a number of issues associated with the VLA-to-EVLA transition. For both fields self-calibration (phase only) was carried out to mitigate the effects of side lobes from strong continuum sources. The continuum was fitted in line-free channels and subtracted from the cubes using the AIPS task UVLSF. Two of the observed galaxies have long, low surface brightness H I tails. In order to highlight the extent of these tails we applied natural weighting resulting in a synthesised beam of ~65 arcsec.

Field VLA–A encompasses the galaxy group RSCG 42 which has a velocity of 6296 km s⁻¹ and lies ~ 108 arcmin (2.7 Mpc) West of the A 1367 cluster centre. In this data set the H_I mass detection threshold is ~1×10⁸ M_☉ (corresponding to 3σ over 2 consecutive 21 km s⁻¹ channels). The equivalent column density sensitivity for emission filling the beam is then ~ 2 ×10¹⁹ cm⁻². Field VLA–B contains the FGC 1287 triplet. The H_I mass detection threshold is the same as for field A.

We used the ALFA feed array at the 305-m Arecibo Telescope to observe H_I towards two positions near LSBC D571-03 in a 5 and 10 minute on-source integration on June 8, 2011. LSBC D571-03 is a candidate to have interacted with FGC 1287; the original H_I detection of LSBC D571-03 in AGES was heavily contaminated by RFI.

3 RESULTS

The properties for each of the H I detections in both observed VLA fields and in one of the Arecibo follow–up pointings are set out in Table 2. The table shows the field, galaxy name, morphological type, optical velocity, H I mass, H I velocity, H I velocity width, and H I mass.

Field VLA-A: RSCG 42

The positions of the H_I detections in field VLA–A are shown in the bottom right panel of Figure 1. All detections, except AGC 210538, fall within the 32 arcmin FWHM of

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Figure 1. Upper panel: Relative location of the RSCG 42 (VLA –A) and FGC 1287 (VLA–B) groups with respect to the Abell 1367 cluster centre. The FWHM of the primary beam (32 arcmin) for each of the VLA D–array fields is indicated with a white circle. X–ray emission (*ROSAT*) from the cluster ICM is indicated with cyan contours. The cluster's virial radius (1.64 Mpc ~ 1.1°) is indicated with a dashed cyan chord. Lower left panel FGC 1287 triplet: white contours trace the natural weight H_I surface density, with the outer contour indicating a column density of $N_{HI} = 2.0 \times 10^{19} \text{ cm}^{-2}$, with higher levels at (5, 10, 15, 20 and 40) x 10^{19} cm^{-2} . Lower right panel RSCG 42 compact group: the contours trace the natural weight H_I surface density, with the outer contour indicating a column density of $N_{HI} = 1.7 \times 10^{19} \text{ cm}^{-2}$, with higher levels at (3, 6, 10, 15, 25, 35, 50 and 70) x 10^{19} cm^{-2} . In all three panels the first H_I contour corresponds to a 3 σ detection in two channels. The contours are overlaid on SDSS u, g and r–band composite images. In the lower panels the size of the D–array synthesised beam is indicated with the white boxed ellipse.

Table 1.	VLA	observational	parameters
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Field a	α_{2000}	δ_{2000}	Array	Integration	$Beam^b$	$Channel^{c}$	Velocity	rms	rms
			config	time	size	separation	range		
	$\begin{bmatrix} h & m & s \end{bmatrix}$	[°′″]		[hours]	['']	$[\rm km \ s^{-1}]$	$[\rm km \ s^{-1}]$	$[mJy beam^{-1}]$	[K]
A	$11 \ 37 \ 01.0$	$20 \ 02 \ 08.8$	D	2.7	$69 \ge 60$	21	5763 - 6859	0.33	0.05
В	$11 \ 39 \ 08.3$	$19 \ 39 \ 02.2$	D	2.3	$72 \ge 60$	21	6261 - 7362	0.36	0.05

^a Fields VLA-A and VLA-B (D-array) correspond to VLA Project ID: AC857

^b Beam size for the natural weight cubes

 $^c\,$ post Hanning smoothing the velocity resolution is 2 \times channel separation

Table 2. Properties of HI detections

Field	Galaxy ID	RA $(2000)^a$	Dec $(2000)^{a}$	$Type^{b}$	V_{opt}^c	V _{HI}	W ₂₀	M _{HI}
	Identifier	[h m s]	[° ′′′]		$[{\rm km} {\rm s}^{-1}]$	$[\text{ km s}^{-1}]$	$[\text{ km s}^{-1}]$	$[10^9 M_{\odot}]$
VLA-A	MAPS–NGP O 434 2505	$11 \ 36 \ 49.61$	$20 \ 09 \ 40.5$	S	6296	6285 ± 5	$150{\pm}10$	1.2
VLA-A	MRK 0182	$11 \ 36 \ 54.00$	$19\ 55\ 34.81$	Compact	6328	6245 ± 6	70 ± 2	0.4
VLA-A	CGCG 097-027	$11 \ 36 \ 54.23$	$19 \ 59 \ 50.04$	\mathbf{Sc}	6630	$6630 {\pm} 48$	240 ± 96	1.2
VLA-A	CGCG 097-026 (disk +tails)	$11 \ 36 \ 54.40$	$19\ 58\ 15.00$	SBa pec	6191	6195 ± 2	390 ± 4	17.8
VLA-A	SDSS J113655.45 $+200645.1$	$11 \ 36 \ 55.45$	$20\ 06\ 45.1$	_	_	6120 ± 9	60 ± 18	0.2
VLA-A	SDSS J113709.84 $+200131.0$	$11 \ 37 \ 09.84$	$20 \ 01 \ 31.0$	_	6056	6140 ± 11	240 ± 22	2.3
VLA-A	AGC 210538	$11 \ 38 \ 03.82$	$19 \ 51 \ 41.9$	—	6196	6195 ± 13	210 ± 26	1.9
VLA-B	CGCG 097-036	$11 \ 38 \ 50.98$	$19\ 36\ 05.24$	S0/a	6787	6810 ± 6	100 ± 12	0.8
VLA-B	FGC 1287 (disk +tail)	$11 \ 39 \ 10.90$	$19 \ 35 \ 06.0$	Sdm	6825	6780 ± 2	220 ± 4	9.4
VLA-B	CGCG 097-041	$11 \ 39 \ 24.40$	$19 \ 32 \ 7.2$	$^{\mathrm{Sb}}$	6778	6778 ± 5	$259{\pm}10$	2.8
Arecibo	LBSC D571-03	$11 \ 38 \ 28.15$	$19\ 58\ 50.0$	Sm	6989	6983 ± 1	124 ± 2	1.8

^a Optical position from NED.

 b Hubble type from GOLDMine (Gavazzi et al. 2003b) or if unavailable NED.

^c Optical velocity from NED or if unavailable from SDSS redshift.

the primary beam. The Redshift Survey of Compact Groups (RSCG; Barton et al. 1996) catalogues RSCG 42 as a compact group with 3 members (CGCG 097-026, CGCG 097-027 and MRK 0182). The most striking H I feature is the ~160 kpc tail extending NE from CGCG 097-026 towards SDSS J113709.84+200131.0, with an indication of a smaller tail extending W of CGCG 097-026 which are consistent with a tidal interaction between these two group members. The orientation of the tails is approximately perpendicular to the major axis of CGCG 097-026. Both galaxies are significantly bluer (SDSS g-i = 0.2 and 0.21 respectively) than the other galaxies detected in H I in this VLA field.

Based on the method from Kewley et al. (2002) the SFR(FIR) for CGCG 097-026 is ~5.7 M_☉ yr⁻¹. The optical, NIR and H α disks of both CGCG 097-026 and CGCG 097-027 ($\Delta V \sim 400 \text{ km s}^{-1}$) are highly perturbed and the H I velocity field (not shown) reveals H I at intermediate velocities between the two galaxies, providing confirmation that CGCG 097-027 is involved in the interaction as well. The complementary H I deficiencies (-0.84 and 0.48 respectively) suggests that H I from CGCG 097-027 (an Sc spiral) has been displaced in the interaction. We estimate the H I mass of the tail to be $9.3 \pm 1 \times 10^9 \text{ M}_{\odot}$. Overall the distribution and kinematics of the H I is consistent with a tidal interaction amongst the group members.

Field VLA-B: FGC 1287

H I was detected in FGC 1287 (Sdm, g-i = 1.21) and two neighbouring galaxies (CGCG 097-041 and CGCG 097-036) with a remarkably small spread in H I velocities (32 km s⁻¹). Their positions are shown in the lower left panel of Figure 1. All three detections in H I including the FGC 1287 tail, lie within the FWHM of the field's primary beam. H I velocities along the optical major axis of FGC 1287 are consistent with a rotating H I disk with velocities in the range of ~ 6600 km s⁻¹ to 6800 km s⁻¹. An additional velocity component along the major axis (~6900 km s⁻¹) is located near the NE edge of the optical disk and contains ~ 25 % of the H I mass in the disk. We estimate the H I mass of the tail to be $5.7 \pm 1 \times 10^9 \,\mathrm{M_{\odot}}$.

A faint H_I bridge, seen just below the 3σ level, seems



Figure 2. LSBC D571–03 Arecibo H I spectrum at the position of the optical galaxy. The velocity resolution is 4 km s⁻¹; the rms noise is 1.22 mJy.

to be joining the FGC1287 H I tail to CGCG 097-036, suggesting an interaction. However, no sign of a perturbed optical/H α morphology is observed in either CGCG 097-036 or FGC 1287. For FGC 1287 log(F(H α)) = -13.42 ± 0.06 erg cm⁻² s⁻¹, EW(H α) = 25.1 ± 3.5 Å (Gavazzi, priv. comm.). It is important to remember that FGC 1287 is almost perfectly edge-on, making it difficult to clearly determine its optical morphology.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

As the lower panels of Figure 1 clearly show, RSCG 42 and FGC 1287 both contain spectacular H I tails with projected lengths of ~ 160 kpc and 250 kpc respectively. The large H I masses in these groups imply they are on their initial infall to the cluster. Had the groups previously transited the cluster core almost all the H I would be expected to have been removed (Abadi et al. 1999; Bravo-Alfaro et al. 2000). Moreover, the cluster crossing time of ~ 2.5×10^9 yr being much larger than the H I tail survival time scale, together with the tail orientations, rules out a cluster core transit

as the origin of the tails. In both cases the H I mass in the tails is approximately equal to the H I in the two galaxies from which the tails appear to emanate (CGCG 097-026 and FGC 1287). Overall the available evidence seems to favour a tidal interaction amongst the RSCG 42 group members as the cause of the CGCG 097-026 H I tail.

For FGC 1287 the cause of the tail is less clear. Whereas the morphology of the tail could at a first sight resemble similar features observed in ram-pressure stripped cluster galaxies, the ICM densities extrapolated from the cluster X–ray emission at the distance of this group would require unrealistically high relative velocities and is inconsistent in direction with infall to the cluster. Although we cannot exclude that the group harbours a hot intra-group medium component, a hydrodynamical mechanism would not be able to explain why only FGC 1287 was subject gas stripping, and cannot easily reproduce the change in direction along the tail.

Tidal interactions amongst the low velocity dispersion triplet could account for the large H I mass which appears to have been removed from the disk of FGC 1287, but is inconsistent with the lack of disturbed features in the other group members. More importantly, the extraordinary length of the HI tail suggests that the interaction forces operated principally in the plane of the sky. Moreover, the interaction which produced the H_I tail appears to have caused remarkably little damage to the stellar and H α disk of FGC 1287. This lack of stellar disk perturbation is more characteristic of a highspeed velocity tidal interaction than a low-velocity gravitational encounter amongst the group members. Observations of other groups, such as Stephan's Quintet show that high density groups with a high speed intruder can have a large fraction of their H I outside the disks of the group members and lead to long tails with changes in direction along the tails (Williams et al. 2002; Renaud et al. 2010), although in that case with damage to the optical disks and associated stellar tails. The only other HI tail over 200 kpc long known to date is the one associated with NGC 4254 and, in that case, a high-speed interaction has emerged as the most likely scenario. In order to look for possible candidate intruders we used NED to search all galaxies within a \pm 500 km s⁻¹ velocity range and 750 kpc radius to find any additional bound group members and non-bound, high-velocity interaction partners.

Our search revealed a single low surface brightness galaxy, LSBC D571-03 (11h38m28.1s, +19d58m50s), V_{opt} = 6989 km s⁻¹ projected 25.1 arcmin (640 kpc) from FGC 1287. Intriguingly, this galaxy lies exactly on the continuation of the HI tail of FGC 1287. The projected separation from FGC 1287 is consistent with an interaction with a motion in the plane of the sky of 1000 km s⁻¹ that happened ~ 6 × 10⁸ years ago; such a high speed encounter would be compatible with the lack of optical disturbance in FGC 1287. In addition, the velocities at the end of the H_{II} tail (6820 km s⁻¹) are intermediate between those in the rotating disk of FGC 1287 (6600 $\rm ~km~s^{-1}$ to 6750 $\rm ~km~s^{-1})$ and the H_I detection of LSBC D571-03 (Figure 2). Finally, the velocity of the anomalous HI component in the disk of FGC1287 (6850 km s⁻¹ to 7000 km s⁻¹) is similar to that of LSBC D571-03 ($V_{\rm HI} = 6983$ km s⁻¹). However, the optical morphology and the Arecibo HI single dish spectrum (Fig. 2) do not show any obvious sign of disturbance. Moreover, the fact that LSBC D571-03 at $m_g = 16.4$ appears to be significantly fainter than FGC 1287 ($m_B = 14.31$)raises the question why only the brightest system is showing clear signs of interaction. Thus, for the moment, we can only speculate that this tail may have been produced by a high speed encounter with another galaxy and only additional data will allow us to gain additional insights into this unique system.

Whatever the true mechanism(s) at work here, our new discoveries highlight how little we know about environmental effects in groups infalling to clusters and emphasize the importance of group interactions in the evolution of cluster spirals beyond the central cluster region.

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