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DECIGO : The Japanese space gravitational wave antenna

Shuichi Sato¹, Seiji Kawamura², Masaki Ando³, Takashi Nakamura⁴, Kimio Tsubono³, Akito Araya⁵, Ikkoh Funaki⁶, Kunihito Ioka⁷, Nobuyuki Kanda⁸, Shigenori Moriwaki⁹, Mitsuru Musha¹⁰, Kazuhiro Nakazawa³, Kenji Numata¹¹, Shin-ichiro Sakai⁶, Naoki Seto², Takeshi Takashima⁶, Takahiro Tanaka¹², Kazuhiro Agatsuma³, Koh-suke Aoyanagi²⁷, Koji Arai², Hideki Asada¹³, Yoichi Aso¹⁴, Takeshi Chiba¹⁵, Toshikazu Ebisuzaki⁴⁴, Yumiko Ejiri¹⁶, Motohiro Enoki⁴⁵, Yoshiharu Eriguchi³⁵, Masa-Katsu Fujimoto², Ryuichi Fujita⁴⁶, Mitsuhiro Fukushima², Toshifumi Futamase⁴³, Katsuhiko Ganzu⁴, Tomohiro Harada⁴⁷, Tatsuaki Hashimoto⁶, Kazuhiro Hayama⁴⁸, Wataru Hikida³⁸, Yoshiaki Himemoto⁴⁹, Hisashi Hirabayashi¹⁷, Takashi Hiramatsu¹⁸, Feng-Lei Hong¹⁹, Hideyuki Horisawa²⁰, Mizuhiko Hosokawa²¹, Kiyotomo Ichiki³, Takeshi Ikegami¹⁹, Kaiki T. Inoue²², Koji Ishidoshiro³, Hideki Ishihara⁸, Takehiko Ishikawa⁶, Hideharu Ishizaki², Hiroyuki Ito²¹, Yousuke Itoh⁵⁰, Nobuki Kawashima²², Fumiko Kawazoe²³, Naoko Kishimoto⁶, Kenta Kiuchi²⁷, Shiho Kobayashi²⁴, Kazunori Kohri²⁵, Hiroyuki Koizumi⁶, Yasufumi Kojima⁵¹, Keiko Kokeyama¹⁶, Wataru Kokuyama³, Kei Kotake², Yoshihide Kozai²⁶, Hideaki Kudoh³, Hiroo Kunimori²¹, Hitoshi Kuninaka⁶, Kazuaki Kuroda¹⁸, Kei-ichi Maeda²⁷, Hideo Matsuhara⁶, Yasushi Mino¹⁴, Osamu Miyakawa¹⁴, Shinji Miyoki¹⁸, Mutsuko Y. Morimoto⁶, Tomoko Morioka ³, Toshiyuki Morisawa⁴, Shinji Mukohyama³⁹, Shigeo Nagano²¹, Isao Naito⁵⁷, Kouji Nakamura², Hiroyuki Nakano⁵², Kenichi Nakao⁸, Shinichi Nakasuka³¹, Yoshinori Nakayama²⁹, Erina Nishida¹⁶, Kazutaka Nishiyama⁶, Atsushi Nishizawa³⁰, Yoshito Niwa³⁰, Taiga Noumi³¹, Yoshiyuki Obuchi², Masatake Ohashi¹⁸, Naoko Ohishi², Masashi Ohkawa³², Norio Okada², Kouji Onozato³, Kenichi Oohara³², Norichika Sago³³, Motoyuki Saijo³⁴, Masaaki Sakagami³⁰, Shihori Sakata², Misao Sasaki¹², Takashi Sato³², Masaru Shibata³⁵, Hisaaki Shinkai⁵³, Kentaro Somiya¹⁴, Hajime Sotani³⁶, Naoshi Sugiyama³⁷, Yudai Suwa³, Rieko Suzuki¹⁶, Hideyuki Tagoshi³⁸, Fuminobu Takahashi³⁹, Kakeru Takahashi³, Keitaro Takahashi¹², Ryutaro Takahashi², Ryuichi Takahashi³⁷, Tadayuki Takahashi⁶, Hirotaka Takahashi⁵⁴, Takamori Akiteru⁵, Tadashi Takano⁴⁰, Keisuke Taniguchi⁵⁰, Atsushi Taruya³, Hiroyuki Tashiro⁴, Yasuo Torii², Morio Toyoshima²¹, Shinji Tsujikawa⁴¹, Yoshiki Tsunesada⁵⁵, Akitoshi Ueda², Ken-ichi Ueda¹⁰, Masayoshi Utashima⁵⁶, Yaka Wakabayashi¹⁶, Hiroshi Yamakawa⁴², Kazuhiro Yamamoto²³, Toshitaka Yamazaki², Jun'ichi Yokoyama³,

Chul-Moon Yoo⁸, Shijun Yoshida⁴³, Taizoh Yoshino²⁸,

¹Faculty of Engineering, Hosei University, kajinocho, Tokyo 184-8584, Japan, ²National Astronomical Observatory Japan, Osawa 2-21-1, Tokyo 181-8588, Japan, ³Department of Physics, The University of Tokyo, Tokyo 113-0033, Japan, ⁴Department of Physics, Kyoto University, Kyoto 606-8502, Japan, ⁵Earthquake Research Institute, The University of Tokyo, Tokyo 113-0032, Japan, ⁶Institute of Space and Astronautical Science, Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), Kanagawa 229-8510, Japan, ⁷Institute of Particle and Nuclear Studies, High Energy Accelerator Research Organization (KEK), Ibaraki 305-0801, Japan, ⁸Department of Physics, Osaka City University, Osaka 558-8585, Japan, ⁹Department of Advanced Materials Science, The University of Tokyo, Chiba 277-8561, Japan, ¹⁰Institute for Laser Science, The University of Electro-Communications, Tokyo 182-8585, Japan, ¹¹NASA Goddard Space Flight Center, Code 663, 8800 Greenbelt Rd., Greenbelt, MD20771, USA, ¹²Yukawa Institute for Theoretical Physics, Kyoto University, Kyoto 606-8502, Japan, ¹³Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, Hirosaki University, Aomori 036-8560, Japan, ¹⁴California Institute of Technology, 1200 E. California Blvd. MC 18-34, Pasadena, CA 91125, USA, ¹⁵Nihon University, Setagaya, Tokyo 156-8550, Japan, ¹⁶Ochanomizu University, 2-1-1, Tokyo 112-0012, Japan, ¹⁷Space Educations Center, Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), Kanagawa 229-8510, Japan, ¹⁸Institute for Cosmic Ray Research, The University of Tokyo, Chiba 277-8582, Japan, ¹⁹National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology (AIST), Ibaraki 305-8563, Japan, ²⁰Department of Aeronautics and Astronautics, Tokai University, Kanagawa 259-1292, Japan, ²¹National Institute of Information and Communications Technology (NICT), Tokyo 184-8795, Japan, ²²School of Science and Engineering, Kinki University, Osaka 577-8502, Japan, ²³Max-Planck-Institute for Gravitational Physics (Albert-Einstein-Institute), Callinstr. 38 D-30167 Hannover, Germany, ²⁴Astrophysics Research Institute, Liverpool John Moores University, Twelve Quays House, Egerton Wharf, Birkenhead L41 1LD, UK, ²⁶Gunma Astronomical Observatory, Agatsuma-gun, Gunma 377-0702, Japan, ²⁷Department of Physics, Waseda University, Tokyo, 169-8555, Japan, ²⁸Nakamura-minami Nerima, Tokyo 176-0025, Japan, ²⁹Department of Aerospace Engineering, National Defense Academy, Yokosuka 239-8686, Japan, ³⁰Faculty of Intergrated Human Studies, Kyoto University, Kyoto 606-8501, Japan, ³¹Department of Aeronautics and Astroautics, The University of Tokyo, Tokyo 113-8656, Japan, ³²Niigata University, Niigata 950-2181, Japan, ³³Highfield, Southampton SO17 1BJ, United Kingdom, ³⁴Department of Physics, Rikkyo University, Tokyo 171-8501, Japan, ³⁵Department of Earth Science and Astronomy, the University of Tokyo, Tokyo 153-8902, Japan, ³⁶Theoretical Astrophysics, Institute for Astronomy and Astrophysics, Eberhard Karls University of Tuebingen, Auf der Morgenstelle 10, 72076 Tuebingen, Germany, ³⁷Nagoya University, Graduate School of Science, Aichi 464-8601, Japan, ³⁸Department of Earth and Space Science, Osaka University, Osaka 560-0043, Japan, ³⁹Institute for Physics and Mathematics of the Universe (IPMU), The University of Tokyo, Chiba 277-8568, Japan, ⁴⁰Department of Electronics and Computer Science, Nihon University, Funabashi 274-8501 Japan, ⁴¹Department of Physics, Tokyo University of Science, Tokyo, 162-8601, Japan, ⁴²Research Institute for Sustainable Humanosphere, Kyoto University, Kyoto 611-0011, Japan ⁴³Astronomical Institute, Tohoku University, Sendai 980-8578, Japan, ⁴⁴RIKEN, 2-1 Hirosawa, Wako 351-0198, Japan, ⁴⁵Faculty of Business Administration, Tokyo Keizai University, Tokyo 185-8502, Japan, ⁴⁶Theoretical Physics, Raman Research Institute, Sir C.V.Raman Avenue, Sadashivanagar P.O., Bangalore 560 080, India, ⁴⁷Department of Physics, Rikkyo University, Tokyo 171-8501, Japan, ⁴⁸University of Texas, 80 Fort Brown, Brownsville 78520, Texas, U.S.A., ⁴⁹Center for Educational Assistance, Shibaura Institute of Technology, Saitama 337-8570, Japan, ⁵⁰Department of Physics, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 1900 East Kenwood Blvd. Milwaukee, WI 53211, USA, ⁵¹Graduate School of Science, Hiroshima University, Hiroshima 739-8526, Japan, ⁵²Rochester Institute of Technology, 78 Lomb Memorial Drive, Rochester, NY 14623, USA, ⁵³Dept of Information Systems, Osaka Institute of Technology, Hirakata 573-0196, Japan, ⁵⁴Department of Management and Information Systems Science, Nagaoka University of Technology, Niigata 940-2188, Japan, ⁵⁵Graduate School of Science and Engineering / Physics, Tokyo Institute of Technology, Tokyo 152-8550, Japan, ⁵⁶Tsukuba Space Center, Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), Ibaraki 305-8505, Japan, ⁵⁷Numakage, Saitama-shi, Saitama 336-0027 Japan,

Abstract. DECi-hertz Interferometer Gravitational wave Observatory (DECIGO) is the

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planned Japanese space gravitational wave antenna, aiming to detect gravitational waves from astrophysically and cosmologically significant sources mainly between 0.1 Hz and 10 Hz and thus to open a new window for gravitational wave astronomy and for the universe. DECIGO will consist of three drag-free spacecraft, 1000 km apart from each other, whose relative displacements are measured by a differential Fabry-Perot interferometer. We plan to launch DECIGO in middle of 2020s, after sequence of two precursor satellite missions, DECIGO pathfinder and Pre-DECIGO, for technology demonstration required to realize DECIGO and hopefully for detection of gravitational waves from our galaxy or nearby galaxies.

1. Introduction

DECIGO (DECi-hertz Interferometer Gravitational wave Observatory) is the planned Japanese space gravitational wave antenna mission [1][2, 3, 4]. DECIGO is targeting to observe gravitational waves from astrophysically and cosmologically significant sources mainly between 0.1 Hz and 10 Hz, thus, to open a new window of observation for gravitational wave astronomy, and also for the universe.

The scope of DECIGO is to bridge (Fig. 1) the frequency gap between LISA [5] band and terrestrial detectors band such as advanced LIGO and LCGT [6]. The major advantage of DECIGO specializing in this frequency band is that the expected confusion limiting noise level caused by irresolvable gravitational wave signals from many compact binaries, such as white dwarf binaries in our Galaxy, is quite low above 0.1 Hz [7], therefore there is a potentially extremely deep window in this band.

Thus, as DECIGO will have sensitivity in the frequency range between LISA and terrestrial detectors band, DECIGO can serve as a follow-up for LISA by observing inspiraling sources that have moved above the LISA band, or as a predictor for terrestrial detectors by observing inspiraling sources that have not yet moved into the terrestrial detectors band.



Figure 1. DECIGO design sensitivity with LISA and LCGT (on behalf of terrestrial detectors).

2. Pre-conceptual design

The pre-conceptual design of DECIGO consists of three drag-free spacecraft which keep triangular configuration with formation flying technique. The separation of each spacecraft (proof mass) is designed to be 1,000 km, whose relative displacements are measured by a

differential Fabry-Perot (FP) interferometer (Fig. 2). The laser source is supposed to be frequency-doubled Nd:YAG laser with $\lambda = 532$ nm yielding output power of 10 W. The mass of the mirror is 100 kg with 1 m diameter, with low-loss High-reflectivity coatings, which enables the finesse of FP cavity to reach 10 with green light. Three sets of such interferometers sharing the mirrors as arm cavities comprise one cluster of DECIGO. As shown in Fig. 3, four clusters of DECIGO, located separately in the heliocentric orbit with two of them nearly at the same position, form the constellation DECIGO.



Figure 2. The pre-conceptual design of DECIGO. Three drag-free spacecraft keep 1000 km triangular configuration with formation flying technique. Each spacecraft will have light source and two proof masses.

The advantage of FP configuration is clearly that it can utilize much power of light for a better shot-noise-limited sensitivity than the transponder-type configuration (e.g. LISA). On the other hand, the FP configuration requires very accurate formation flying: the FP configuration requires the distance between two mirrors, thus, the distance between two spacecraft to be constant during continuous operations. This is a major difference between DECIGO and a transponder-type configuration, where the spacecraft are freely falling according to their local gravitational field.

3. Sensitivity goal and science

The target sensitivity of DECIGO, as shown in Fig. 4, is supposed to be limited by quantum noise in all frequency band: by the radiation pressure noise below 0.15 Hz, and by the shot noise above 0.15 Hz. In order to reach this sensitivity, all the practical noise should be suppressed well below this level. This imposes more stringent requirements than LISA for some subsystems of DECIGO, especially in the acceleration noise and frequency noise, therefore rigorous investigations are supposed to be indispensable for attainment of design sensitivity. Nonetheless, full success of DECIGO is expected to extract fruitful sciences.

• Characterization of dark energy: DECIGO will have enough sensitivity to detect gravitational waves coming from neutron star binaries at z=1 for five years prior to coalescences. Within this observable volume, about 50,000 neutron star binaries are expected to coalesce every year [8]. In addition to the physics of the neutron star, with precise analysis resolving gravitational wave signals coming from a number of binaries, it is possible to determine the acceleration of the expansion of the universe [1]. The constellation DECIGO is expected to have an angular resolution of about 1 arcsec, therefore, there is a chance to identify the host galaxies of each binary system. Thus, the acceleration of the expansion of the universe can also be measured by determining their red shifts optically [9], which will lead to better characterization of dark energy.



Figure 3. Constellation DECIGO in its orbit, which will have four clusters of DECIGO in total.



Figure 4. DECIGO design sensitivity (for 1unit and for 3 years correlation) and expected gravitational wave souces.

• Formation mechanism of supermassive black holes: DECIGO can detect gravitational waves coming from coalescences of intermediate-mass black hole binaries with an extremely high fidelity. For example the coalescences of black hole binaries of 1,000 solar masses at z = 1 give a signal to noise ratio of 6,000. This will make it possible to collect numerous data about the relationship between the mass of the black holes and the frequency of the coalescences, which will reveal the formation mechanism of supermassive black holes

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Figure 5. Roadmap of DECIGO. Pre-conceptual design of Pre-DECIGO is shown in addition to DPF and DECIGO.

in the center of galaxies.

• Verification and characterization of inflation: With correlation analysis of the data from the two clusters of DECIGO at nearly same location for three years, DECIGO will capable to detect stochastic background gravitational waves corresponding to $\Omega_{\rm GW} = 2 \times 10^{-16}$. According to the standard inflation model, it is expected that we could detect gravitational waves produced at the inflation period of the universe with DECIGO. This could be an extremely significant science driver for DECIGO because gravitational waves are the only means which make it possible to directly observe the inflation of the universe.

4. Roadmap

DECIGO is expected to be launched in the middle of 2020s (Fig. 5), before that, we plan to launch two precursor satellites: DECIGO pathfinder (DPF) [?] and pre-DECIGO(See Fig. 5). Major objective of these missions is a demonstration of key technologies for DECIGO just as LISA pathfinder [12] does for LISA, in addition, we also hope we can extract some scientific achievements with limited equipments allowed for these satellites in phases.

DPF tests the key technologies for DECIGO such as drag-free control of the spacecraft, stabilized laser system in space, precision laser metrology in space and test mass lock mechanism. At the same time, as DPF will have gentle sensitivity to the gravitational waves, it is expected that DPF will put some upper limit to the gravitational waves from the sources around center of our galaxy.

The technical objectives of Pre-DECIGO are demonstration of accurate formation flying, precision laser metrology with long baseline FP cavity and drag-free control for multiple spacecraft. Pre-DECIGO will have 100 km-scale FP cavity, therefore, it is supposed to have reasonable sensitivity to detect gravitational waves with minimum specifications. We hope that

it will be launched around 2018.

Finally DECIGO is supposed to be launched around 2024 to open a new window of observation for gravitational wave astronomy.

5. DECIGO Pathfinder

DPF [10, 11] will employ a small-sized drag-free spacecraft that contains two freely falling proof masses, whose relative displacement is measured with a Fabry-Perot interferometer. A short Fabry-Perot cavity with finesse of 100 is illuminated by the frequency-stabilized Nd:YAG laser light yielding output powe rof 100 mW. The proof masses are clamped tightly for the launch and released gently in orbit. DPF is supposed to be delivered in the geocentric sun-synchronous orbit with an altitude of 500km. DPF will have strain sensitivity of $\sim 10^{-15}$ around the frequency band of 0.1-1 Hz.

The primary objective of DPF is to demonstrate key technologies for DECIGO such as dragfree control system, FP cavity precision metrology system in orbit, frequency-stabilized laser in orbit, and the clamp release mechanism. In addition, the scientific objective of DPF is to detect rather unlikely events of intermediate-mass black hole $(10^3 - 10^4 M_{\rm sol})$ inspirals in our galaxy; it is possible to detect such events with the aimed sensitivity of DPF.

Recently, DPF was identified as one of the candidate missions for the small satellite mission series which had been initiated by the Japanese space agency, JAXA/ISAS. This program is to launch at least 3 small satellites in upcoming 5 years using standard bus systems, whose scope is to reduce the cost of missions significantly compared with the conventional missions, and thus to increase a chance to go to space for a variety of fields. DPF is now selected as one of the potential mission candidates for the second or third missions, so DPF will be launched in 2012 (second mission) in the best and earliest case.

6. Conclusions

The future Japanese space gravitational wave antenna, DECIGO, is expected to detect gravitational waves from various kinds of sources and thus to open a new window of observation for gravitational wave astronomy. We have started serious R&D for DPF as one of the candidate missions for the small-spacecraft mission series to demonstrate the technologies required to realize DECIGO.

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