

QUP: the hub of KEK's quantum strategy

Introduction of QUP

International Center for **Q**uantum-field Measurement
Systems for Studies of the **U**niverse and **P**articles

Toshiyuki Azuma

Director of QUP, KEK

(WPI International Center for Quantum-field
Measurement Systems for Studies of the
Universe and Particles)



Chief Scientist, AMO Physics Laboratory

Deputy Director of Pioneering Research Institute



Just 40 years before ...

Muon spin resonance

in my graduate school days

@KEK_Japan

Muon avoided level crossing

in my Post-Doc. days

@PSI_Switzerland

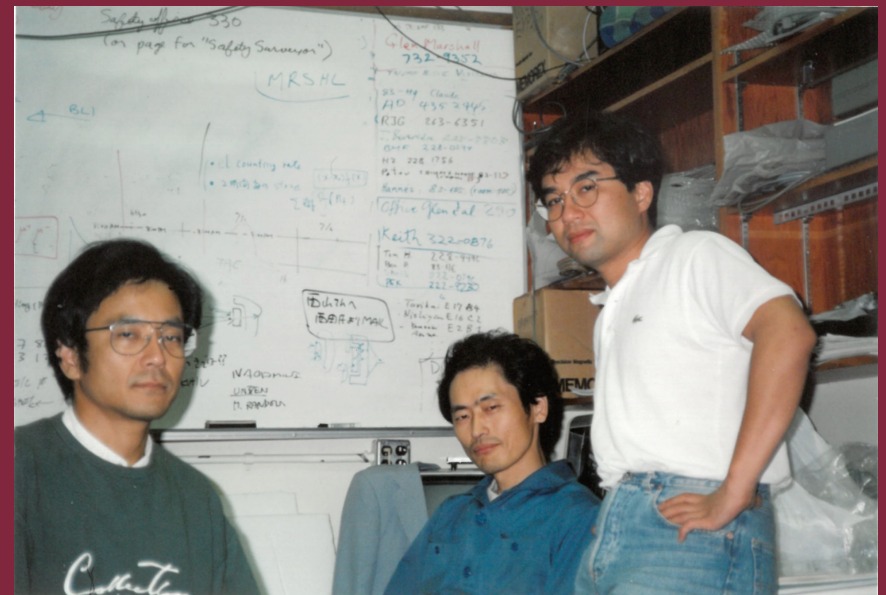
Barkas Effect

The difference between positive and negative muons in energy loss in the low-energy region

as Research Associate at Univ. Tokyo

@TRIUMF_Canada

POSITIVE/NEGATIVE MUON





Weak coupling

Precision Frontier
through Quantum technology

Dark Matter, Axion, Gravity, ...

QUP pioneers a new frontier,
bringing new ways to explore physics
at high-energy scale

Ultimate Goal of
understanding
the fundamental physics

Physics at the GUT
and Planck scales

Fusion



Energy Frontier
through Particle physics

J-PARC, SuperKEKB, LHC

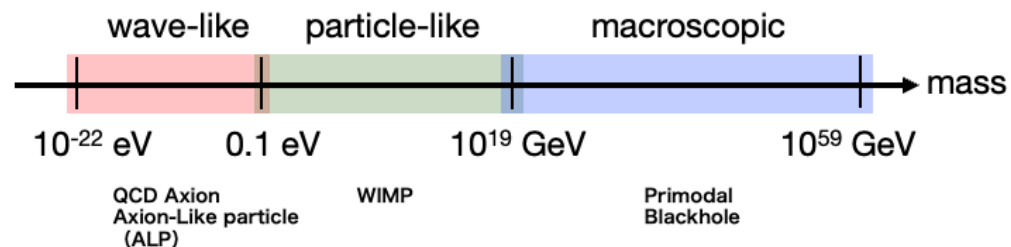
Ultimate goal of the research

reveal the invisible Universe with quantum eyes



■ Dark Matter (DM)

- ~85% of matter in the Universe is dark and remains unknown
- Compelling **Ultra-Light DM** candidates ($\ll 1$ eV), such as axions and dark photons, remain experimentally elusive

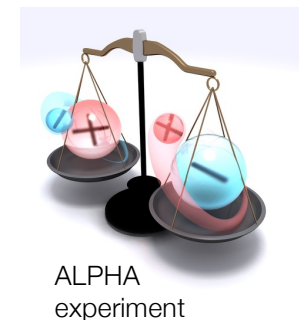


the projects outside QUP



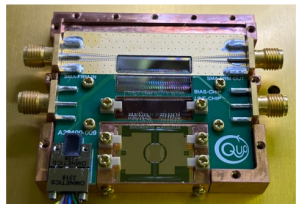
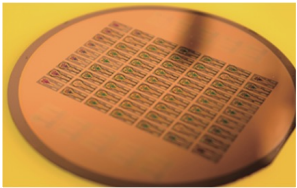
■ Gravity

- Weakest fundamental force with several insufficiently tested regimes
- Probing gravity at sub-micron scales and with antimatter
- LIGO/VIRGO/KAGRA established sub-kHz gravitational wave detection, higher frequencies remain uncharted territory



■ New Regimes of Other Fundamental Forces, Symmetries

Opening new research frontiers to drive discovery at the intersection of particle physics, astrophysics and quantum science



Pillar 1 Fundamental Forces & Hidden Sectors

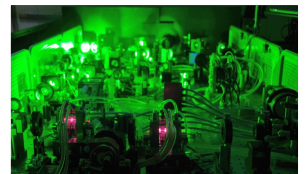
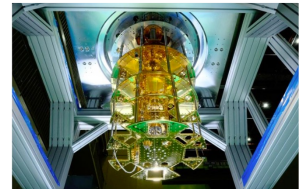
- TES for QED Test with Muonic Atoms

Pillar 2 Light Dark Matter

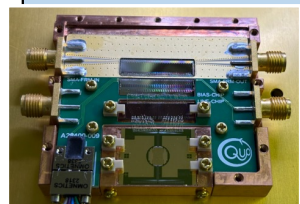
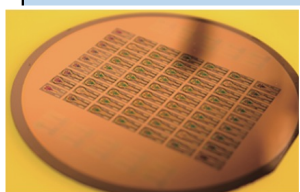
- Superconducting Qubits
- Kamioka TES
- NV Center Diamond

Pillar 3 Gravity

- Superconducting RF Cavities for GW
- Atomic Fountain for Antimatter Gravity



Theory Group Pls: Nakayama, Takhistov



Pillar 1
Fundamental Forces
& Hidden Sectors

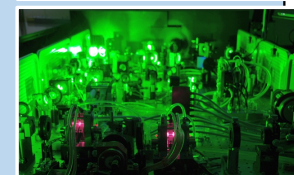
PI:
Azuma

Pillar 2
Light Dark Matter

PI:
Nitta, Garcia-Sciveres
Hasegawa, Herbschleb

Pillar 3
Gravity

PI:
Nitta, Fujiwara



Technology Advancement

Superconducting Detectors

Pls:
Yamasaki, Lee

Semiconductor Detectors

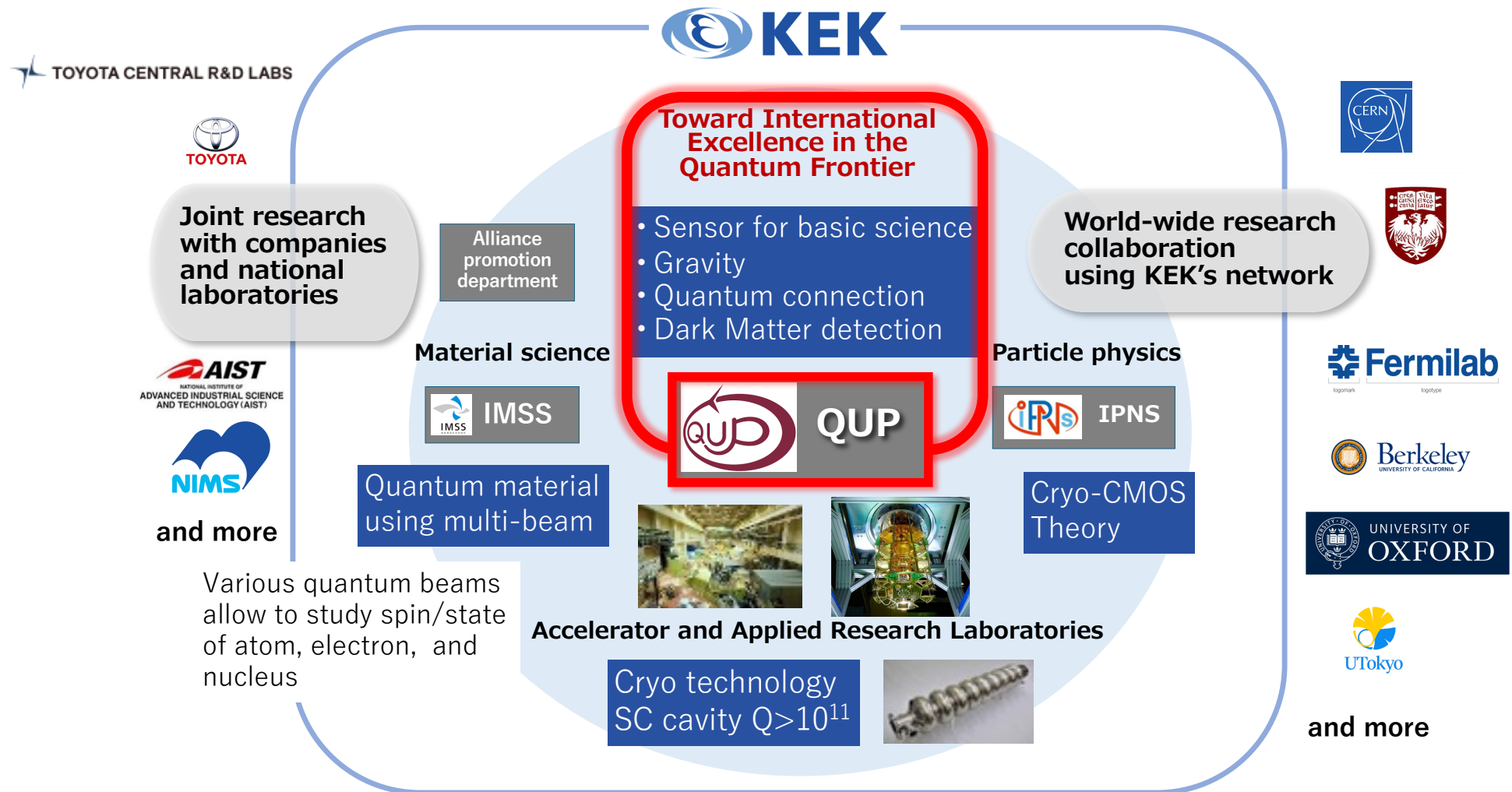
Pls:
Bortoletto, Takahashi, Togawa,
Miyahara, Nakahama

Cryogenic Engineering

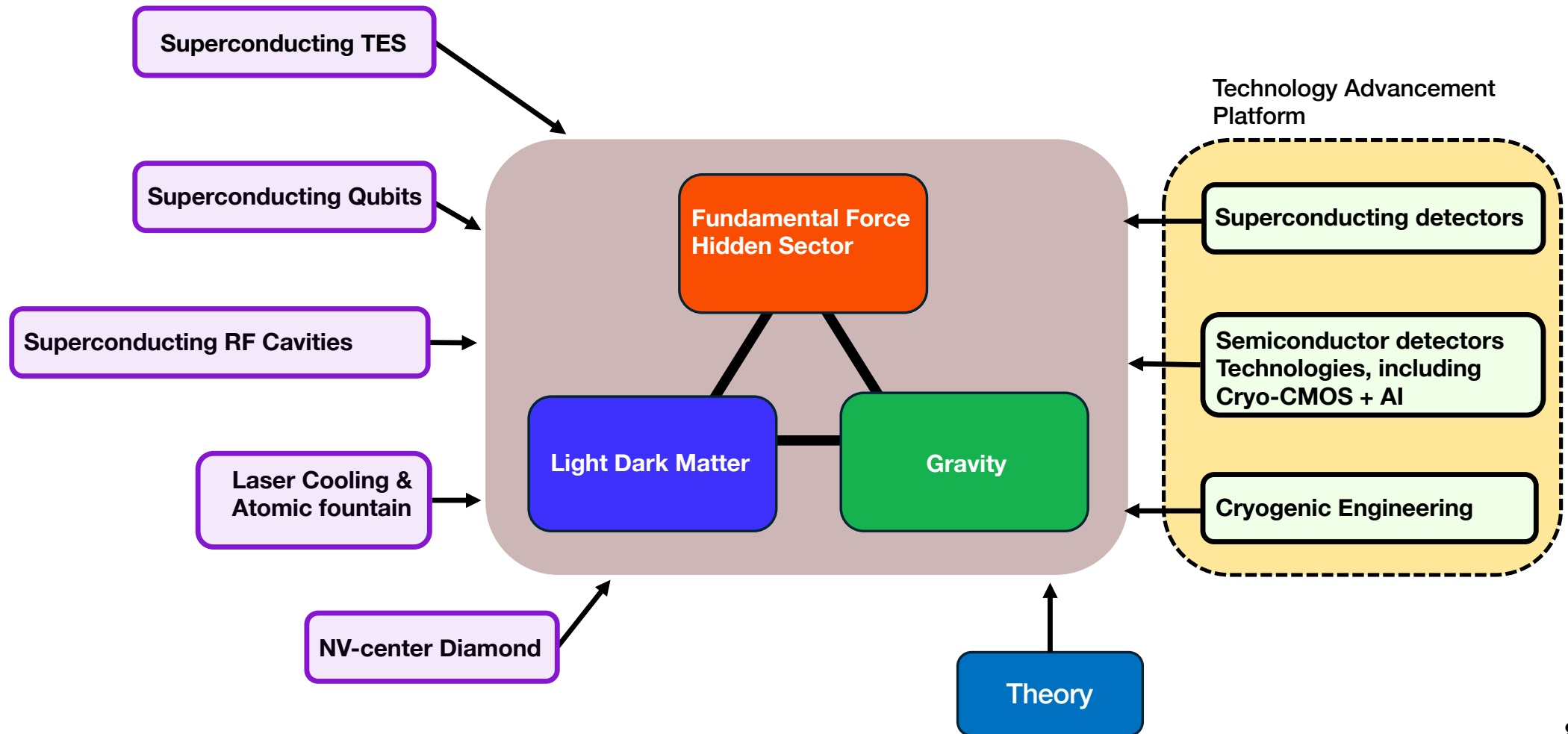
PI: Okamura

Engineering support section led by Haba

QUP as a Core of KEK Quantum Research



New framework



New PI and Leading Council member



◎ New Director Toshiyuki Azuma



◎ New Leadership Council

Deputy Director: Tsutomu Mibe

Executive Assistant to Director:

Tadayuki Takahashi



◎ New PIs

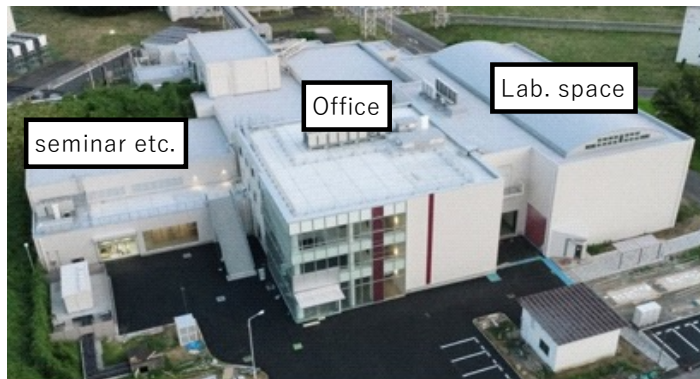
- Tatsumi Nitta
- Makoto Fujiwara
- David Herbschleb
- Takahiro Okamura
- Toshiyuki Azuma
- Tadayuki Takahashi



New Building for under one roof: QUP Office + Facility



moved to the new QUP building in FY2025.



The opening of the new complex was celebrated at an inauguration ceremony held in March 2026.

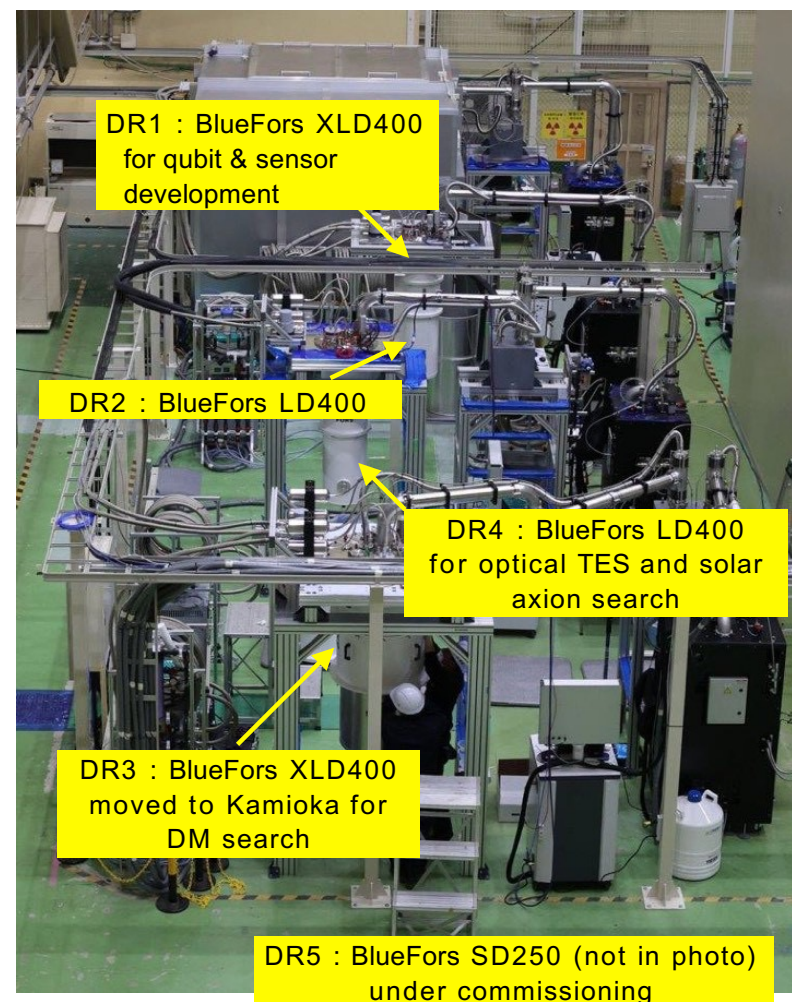
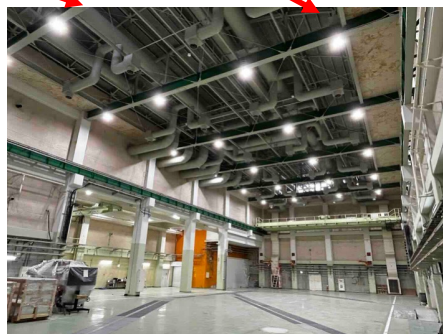
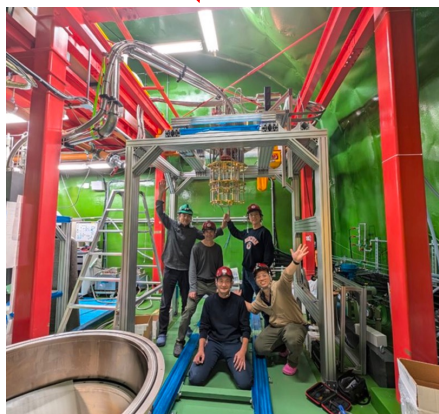
Many leading researchers from collaborating and closely related institutes and universities came together.



Five Cryogenics (Dilution Refrigerators)

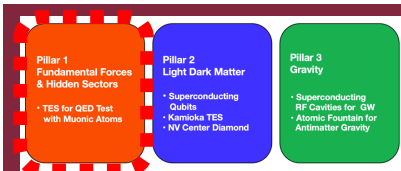


DR1	DM search by qubit & sensor development
DR2	commissioning → DM/axion search by qubit
DR3	Kamioka DM search
DR4	Optical TES & Solar axion search
DR5	commissioning → wide applications



New QUP: output and perspective





Science Target I: Fundamental Forces, Hidden Sectors

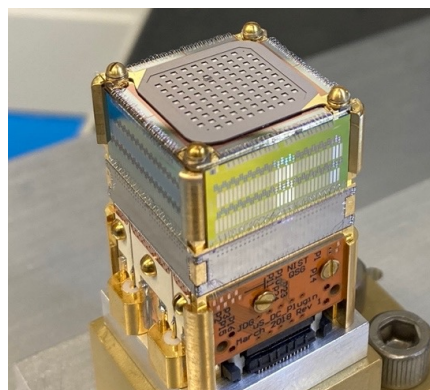
QED Test with Muonic Atoms



led by T. Azuma

Superconducting TES (Transition Edge-type Sensor)
for **x-ray detection covering the energy region from 1 keV to 150 keV**

Drastic improvement in the resolution (more than 50 times) compared with the traditional semiconductor device (ex. Silicon Drift Detector)



for 6 keV X-rays

SDD

FWHM ~150 eV

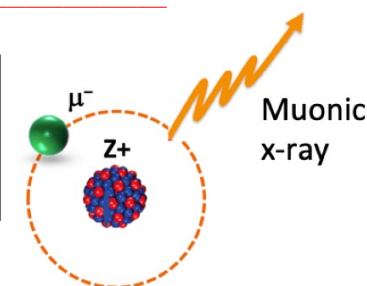


TES

FWHM ~5 eV

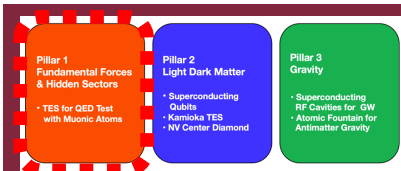


The world's highest-intensity slow **NEGATIVE MUON** beam supplied from **J-PARC/KEK** enables the preparation of **muonic atoms** isolated in a vacuum



already excellent results based on our original idea:

- [1] **BSQED test**: **PRL** 126,173001(2021) + **PRL** 130,173001(2023)
- [2] **Exotic highly-charged ions**: **PRL** 134,193001(2025) + **PRL** 134,243001(2025) *Editors' Suggestion*
- [3] **fs dynamics of muon and electrons**: **PRL** 127, 053001(2021) *Editors' Suggestion*

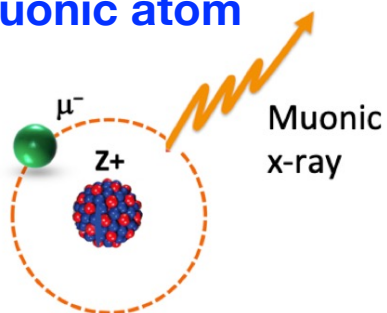


Science Target I: Fundamental Forces, Hidden Sectors

QED Test with Muonic Atoms

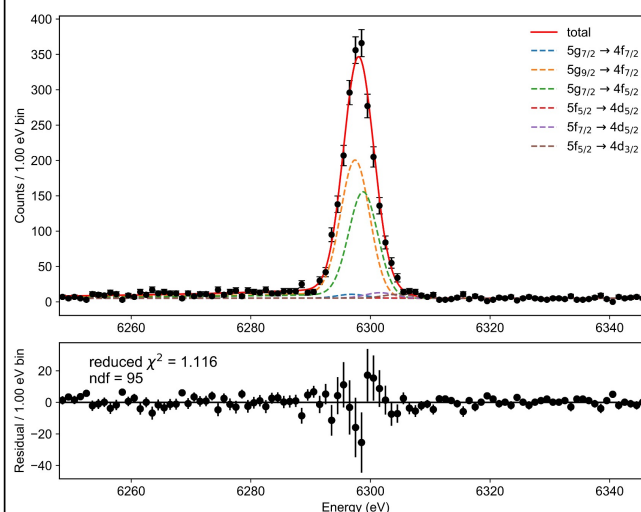
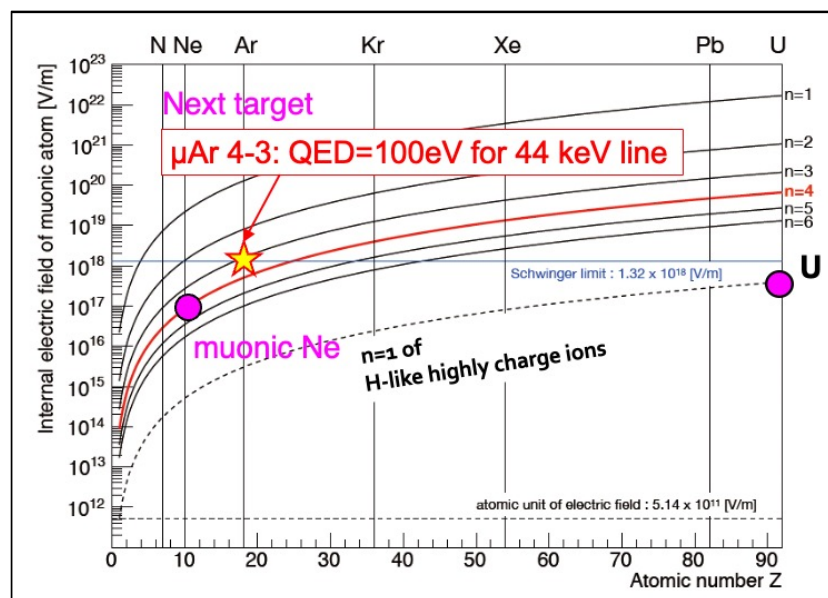


muonic atom

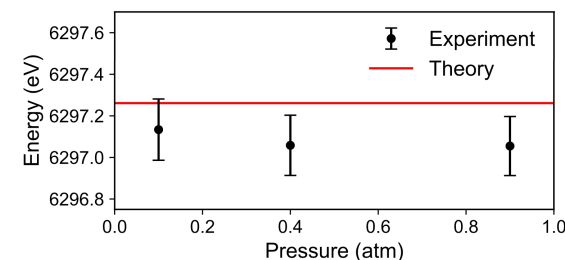


The orbit of a negative muon is located very close to, or even inside, the nucleus of a muonic atom.

Ideal probe to explore QED (Quantum ElectroDynamics) test under the strongest fields

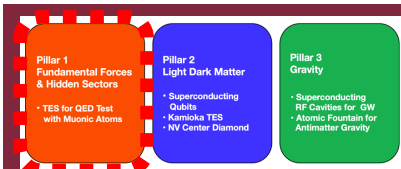


μNe μAr
accuracy of **5.8% → < 1%**



the $5g_{9/2} - 4f_{7/2}$ transition energy of μNe :
our experiment:
 6297.08 ± 0.04 (stat.) ± 0.13 (syst.) eV
most advanced theory:
 6297.26 eV.

Phys. Rev. Lett. 126,173001(2021) + *Phys. Rev. Lett.* 130,173001(2023) 14



QED Test with Muonic Argon

X-ray region: 44 keV



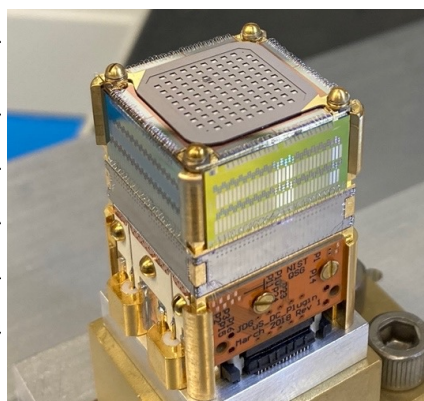
Muonic Ar 4f-3d transition

- **Ar gas** target 0.9 atm, 17 hours
- Fit with double Voigt + constant
- Estimated statistical error
~ 0.4 eV against **100 eV QED**

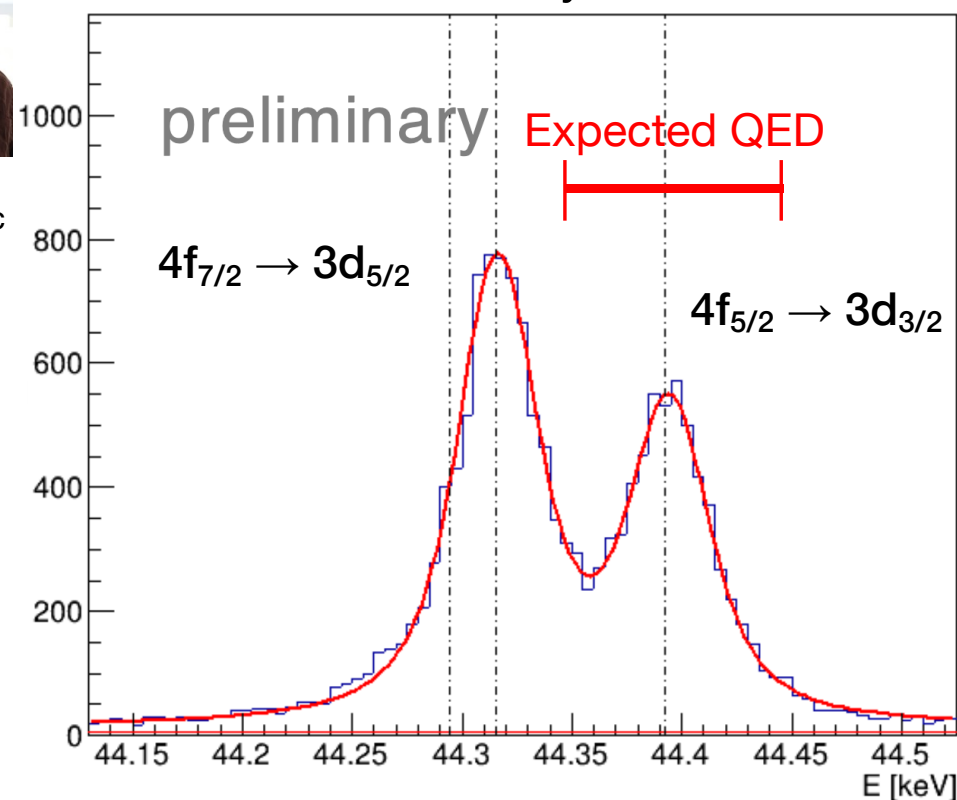


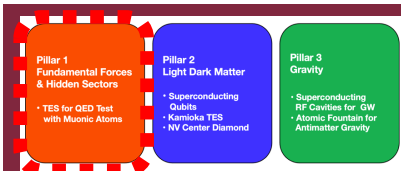
Unger,
QUP Postdoc

	50 keV TES
Saturation energy	70 keV
Readout system	microwave
Absorber thickness (material)	1.85 μm (Au) & 20 μm (Bi)
Absorber area	0.73 x 0.73 mm ²
Absorber collimated area	0.67 x 0.67 mm ²
Number of pixel	96
Total collection area	43.1 mm ²
ΔE (FWHM)	20 eV @ 40 keV (8 eV @ 17 keV)



under analysis





Muonic molecules

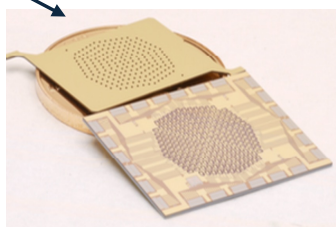
X-ray energy: 2 keV



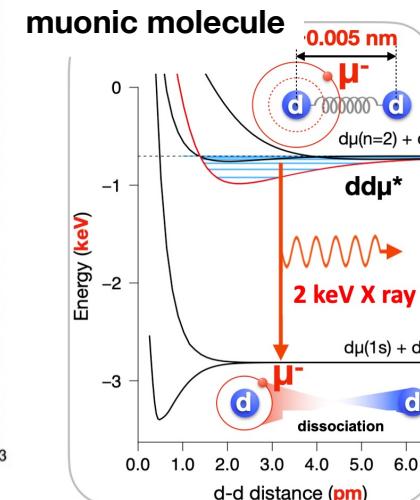
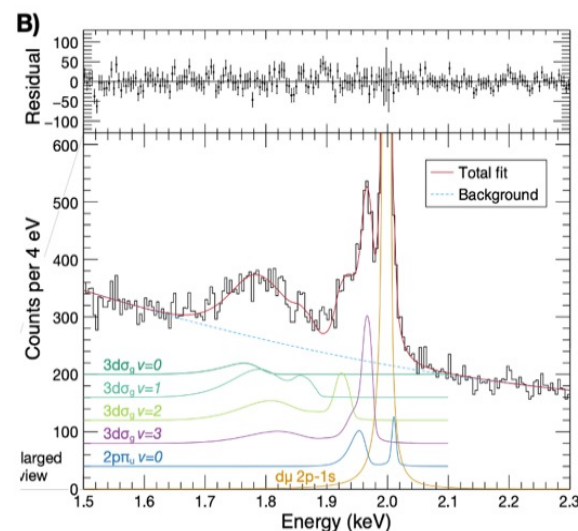
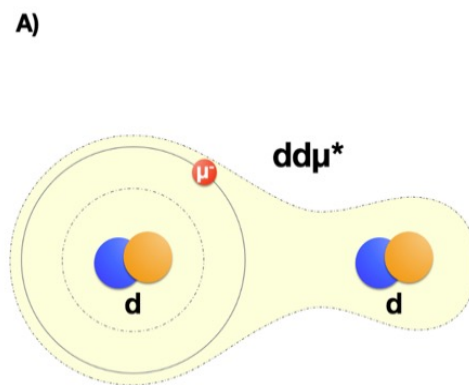
Science Advances 12 (2026) eaed3321

We are also pioneering precision studies of **muonic molecules** —an extension of muonic atom research— where the vibrational structure can only be described through rigorous few-body calculations. This represents the first high-precision experimental exploration of such systems.

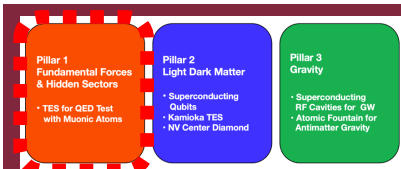
$dd\mu$ / $dt\mu$: key for muon catalyzed fusion



Rev. Sci. Instrum. 90, 123107 (2019)



X-ray spectrum associated with the dissociation of resonance states in the muonic deuterium molecule. A) Schematic diagram of $dd\mu^*$. B) Observed X-ray energy spectrum and the theoretical calculation.

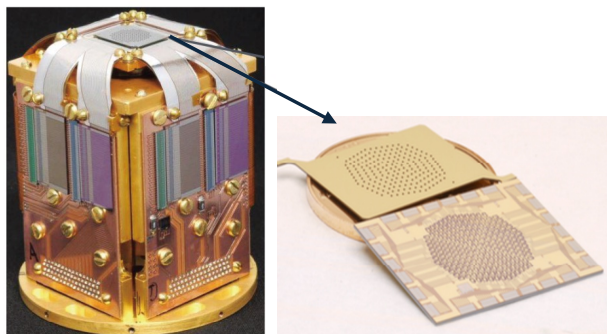


Muonic molecules

X-ray energy: 2 keV



We are also pioneering precision studies of **muonic molecules**



Rev. Sci. Instrum. 90, 123107 (2019)

Present Drawback:

The major source of uncertainty is unwanted particles (e.g., electrons) accompanying the pulsed muon beam, which cause heating of the TES detector.

Next Step:

Pulsed muon beam @J-PARC → DC muon beam @TRIUMF ??

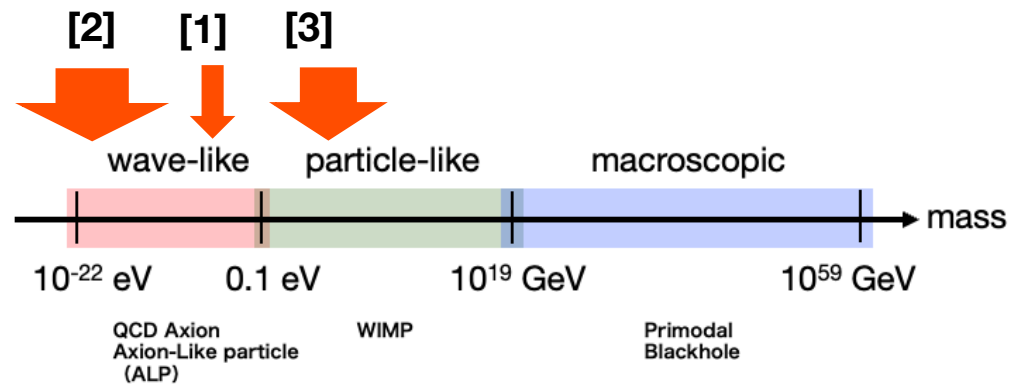


Light Dark Matter / Axion Search



Overview: A Coherent Strategy for the Low-Mass Frontier

	Approach	DM-type	Mass range (eV)	Interaction
[1]	Superconducting Qubit	wave-like	$10^{-5} - 10^{-2}$	photon coupling
[2]	NV-diamond	wave-like	$10^{-22} - 10^{-8}$	fermion spin coupling
[3]	TES @ Kamioka	particle-like	$10^0 - 10^9$	scattering





Science Target II: Dark photon/Axion Search with a Qubit System in Superconducting Circuits

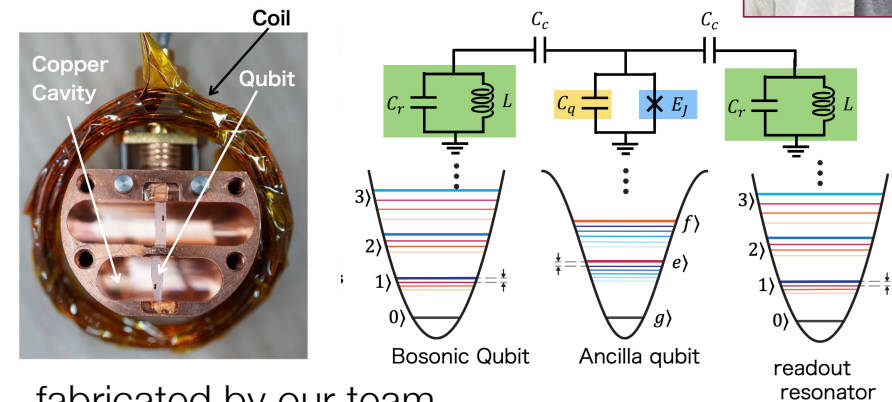
led by T. Nitta



old exp. using a huge
magnet at CERN
(~ 10 m size)



state-of-the-art quantum technologies:
quantum qubit (~ cm size)



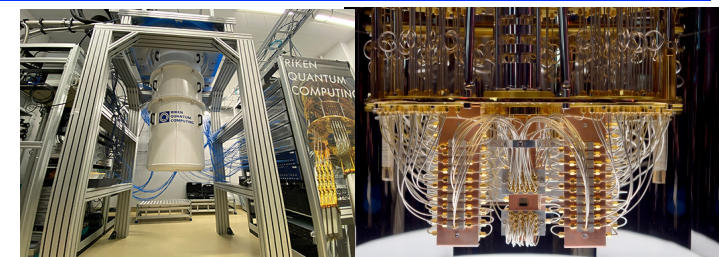
fabricated by our team

Why superconducting qubits?

Alternative Applications of Superconducting Quantum Computer Technology

- **Working at GHz**
perfectly match the promising dark matter signal frequency range
- **Very sensitive**
- **Designable circuit**

Our original proposal: **PRL**131,211001 (2023) + **PRL**133,021801 (2024)

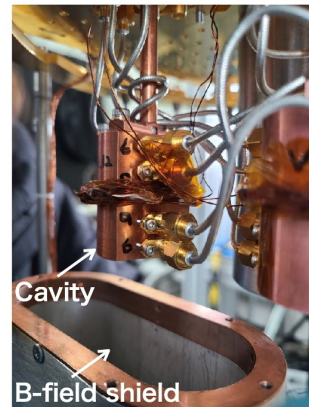
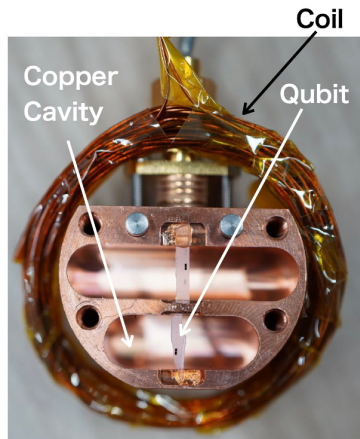


RIKEN

U-Tokyo & IBM



Qubit System in Superconducting Circuits

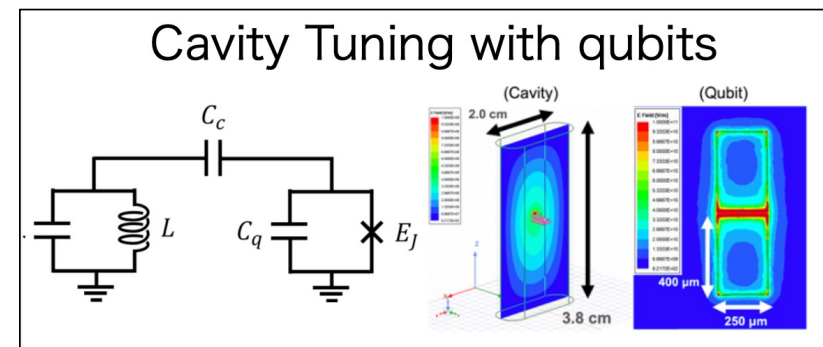


Dil-fridge



Developed cavity for qubit control under cryogenic environments

DarQ-Lamb



DarQ-Direct

Quantum computer is DM sensor



Qubit System in Superconducting Circuits

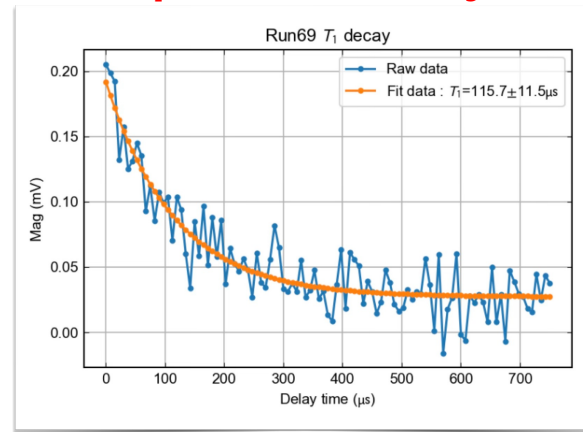


In-group fabricated qubits

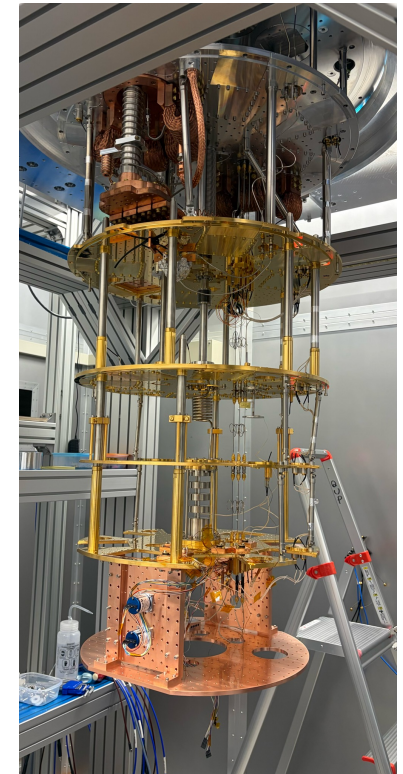


Qubit control system

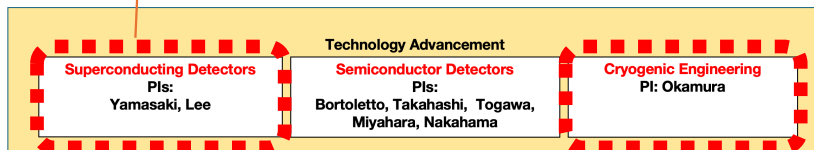
- 2 of 5 QUP dilution refrigerators equip qubit RF lines
- Recently qubit control system was installed
- **Established qubit readout system**



In-group fabricated qubits have decent performance
(**T1 and T2 > 100μs**)



QUP dilution refrigerator





Science Target III: Light Dark Matter Search Using NV center in diamond

led by D. Herbschleb



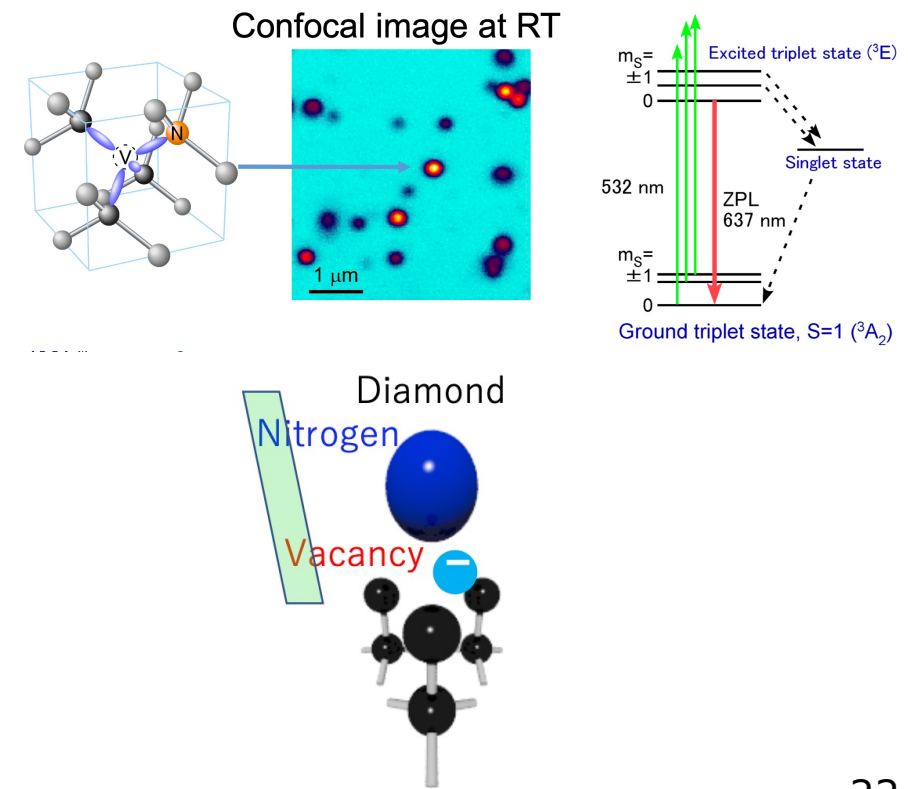
New ideas beyond qubits for DM search, including **qutrits**, are emerging from QUP theory (QUP, **Kyoto-U**, **Tohoku-U**)

Goal:

- Ensemble NV measurements under cryogenic (4K) conditions
- Searching for axion-like particles and dark-photon-type dark matter using a magnetic sensor based on NV-center **electron and nuclear spins**.
- Setting constraints on their couplings to electrons at least at one mass point in the range **$M=10^{-22} \sim 10^{-8} \text{ eV}$**

Approach:

- **High-purity diamond synthesis** by Mizuochi-Lab. for longer coherence time
- Lensing system and broader laser irradiation
- Antenna development for a cryogenic environment in collaboration with **TOYOTA Satellites**
- **Parallel setup at QUP and Kyoto** for simultaneous measurements





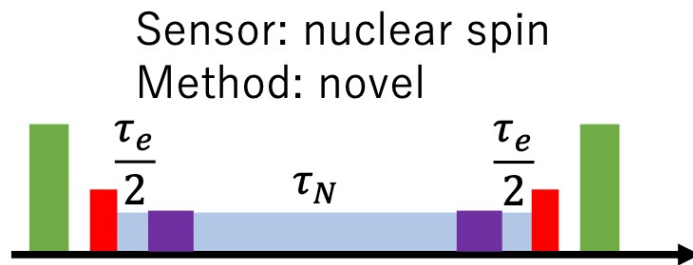
Science Target III: Light Dark Matter Search Using NV center in diamond



New ideas: Original and Unconventional NV sensing for DM detection

one-to-one electron-nuclear spin

Hybrid-spin decoupling for noise-resilient DC quantum sensing

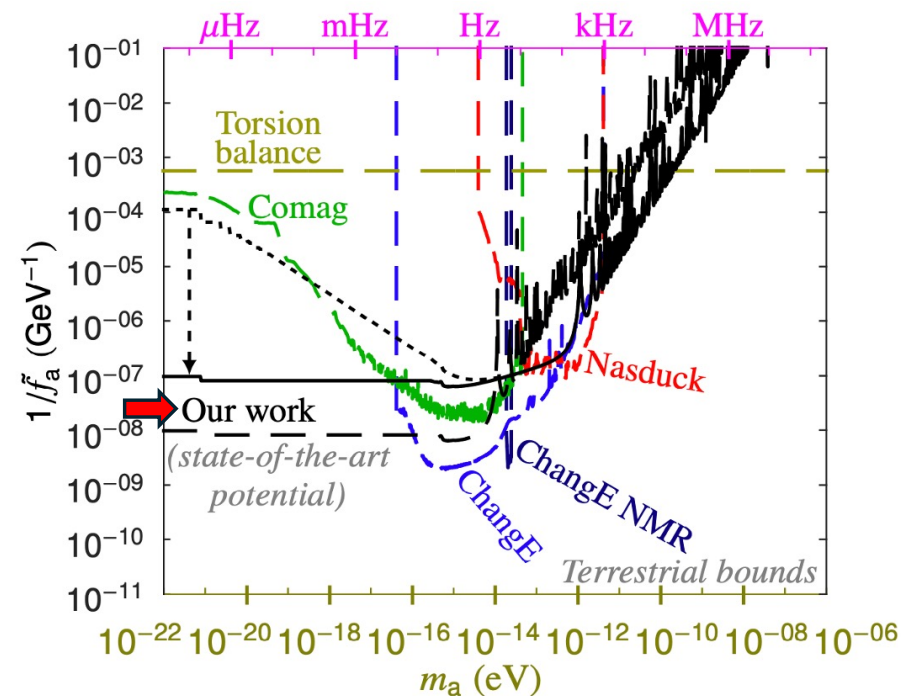


Magnetic field sensitivity: none
Frequency range: broad

Pseudo magnetic field

$$B_{ps} \approx 4 \times 10^4 \text{ aT} \times \left(\frac{g_{aNN}}{10^{-10}} \right)$$

Axion sensitivity: excellent



S. Chigusa[†], M. Hazumi, E. D. Herbschleb[†], Y. Matsuzaki,
N. Mizuochi, K. Nakayama, [arXiv:2511.16732 \(2025\)](https://arxiv.org/abs/2511.16732).

extended coherence time at low-temperature



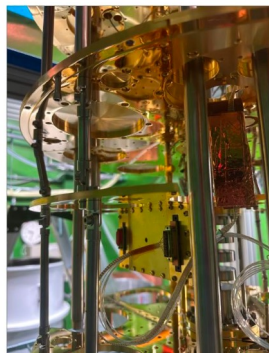
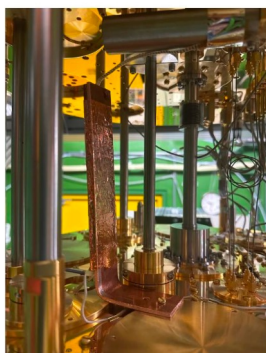
Science Target IV : **Light Dark Matter Search** led by Garcia-Sciveres at the underground of Kamioka Using Superconducting TES



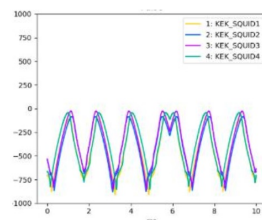
Cryogenic platform in a low-background underground environment
(collaboration of QUP, LBNL, Tohoku-U.)

- Dilution Refrigerator successfully commissioned, and SQUID is ready
- The movable table for Lead Shielding was already installed in April, and full construction is scheduled to finish in September 2026.

Cryostat

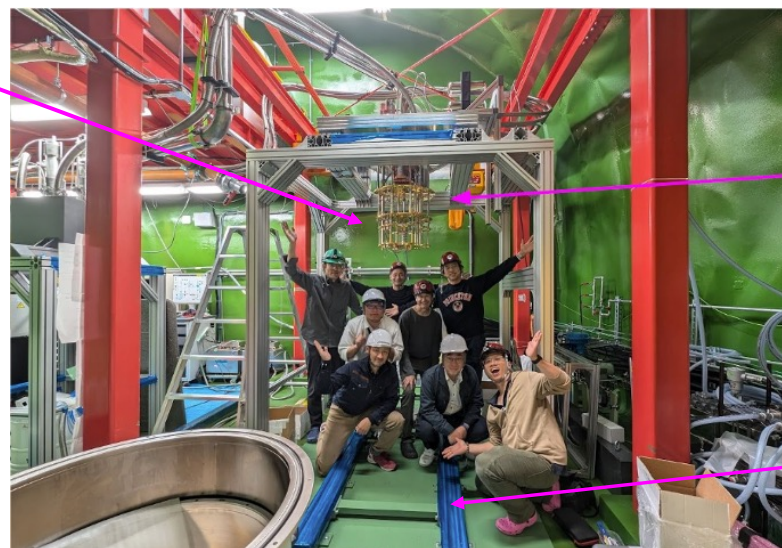
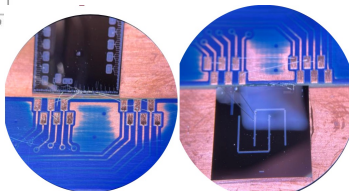


Voltage-flux from SQUID in Kamioka
(measured in Sep)



Same SQUID
measured in LBL

TES detector



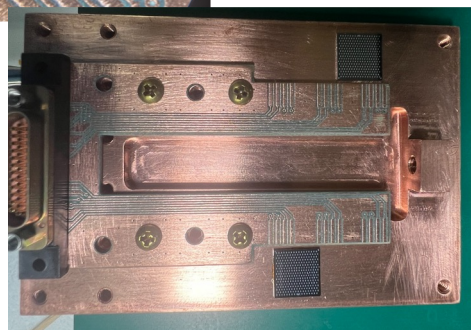
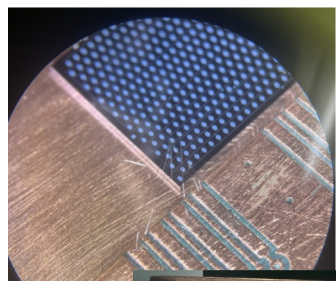
Rails for lead shield



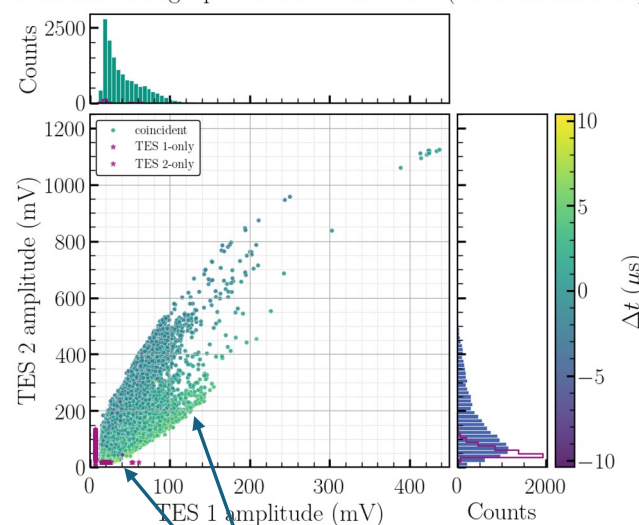
Detector operation results from Kamioka



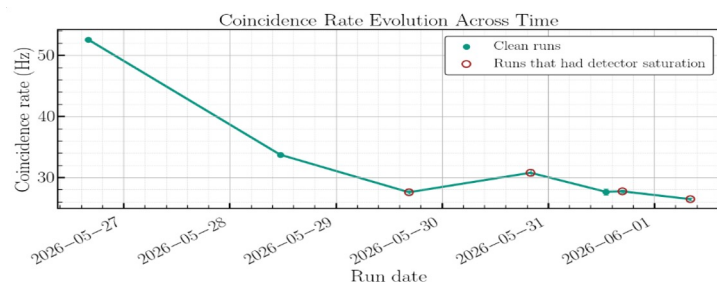
Low-Energy Excess (origin of major background) LEE Measurement on Silicon QET chips



Coincident vs single pulses: TES 1 vs TES 2 (14272 coincidences)

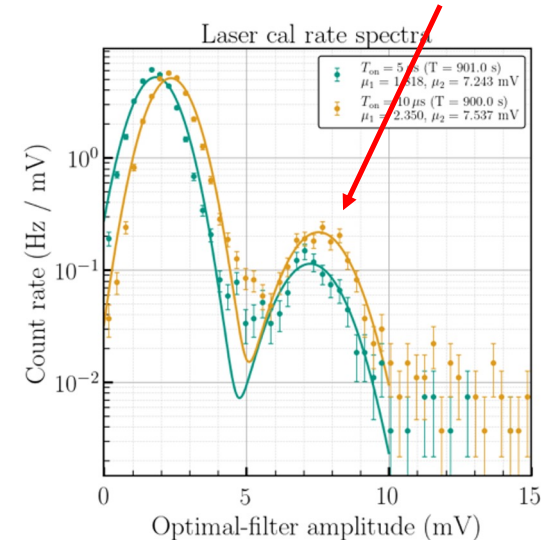


bulk LEE
metal film LEE

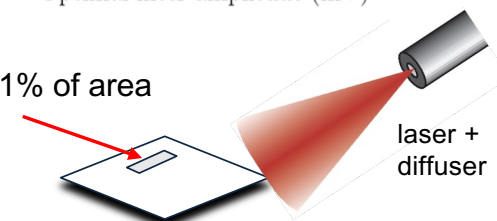


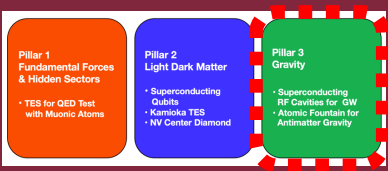
LEE decreases as time advances

Laser calibration on single TES (on Si) single photon signal



TES <1% of area





Science Target VI : Gravitational Wave Detection Using Superconducting RF (SRF) Cavities

led by T. Nitta with T. Kubo (KEK)



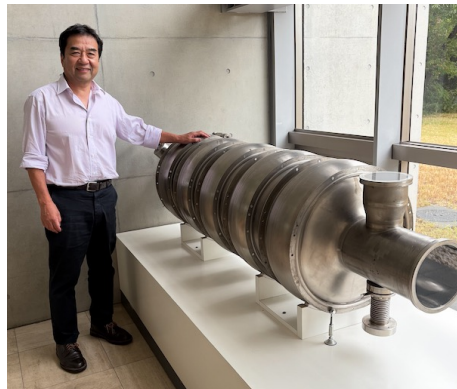
KEK's SRF technology
(~ m size)



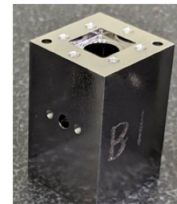
gravitational wave interferometers (~ km size)

Superconducting RF Cavities

**Q-value: 10^{11}
minimal energy loss**



state-of-the-art quantum technologies:
(~ cm size)

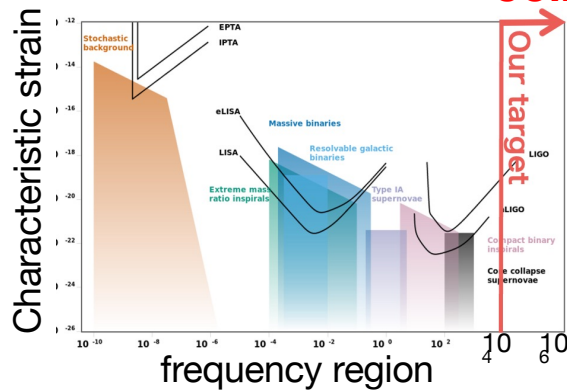


fabricated by our team



Joint Research and Cross-disciplinary Collaboration with KEK

Gravitation wave detection in the unexplored high-frequency region:



→ kHz - MHz GW can be detectable



Superconducting RF (SRF) Cavities



Phys. Rev. Applied 25, 034076 (2026)

Editors' suggestion

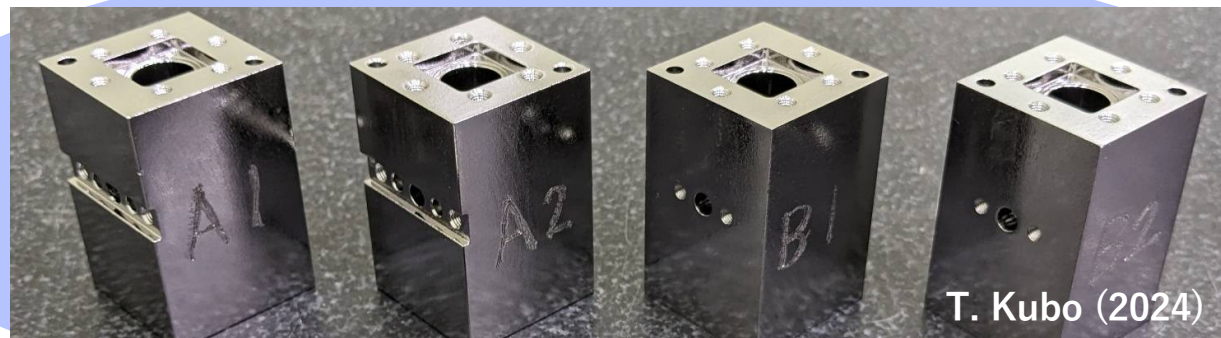
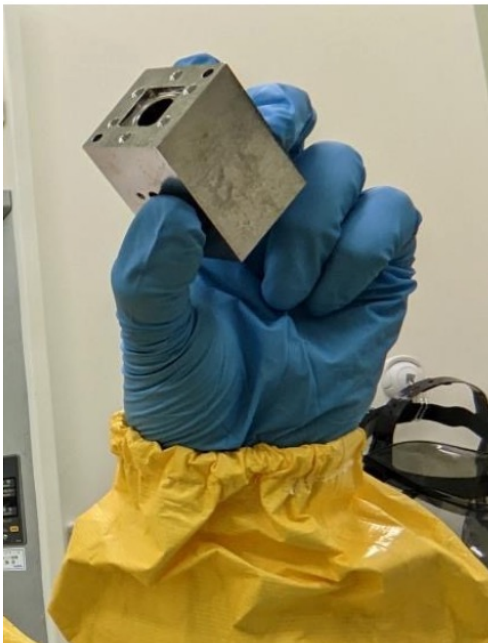
Achievement 2025

Three-dimensional niobium coaxial cavity

Q-value: $3 \times 10^9 = T_1 \sim 0.1$ sec
World record in coaxial cavities

Stable upon exposure to air

collaboration with NTT



Insight through Accelerators.





Superconducting RF (SRF) Cavities



Outlook

Gravitational Wave

A. Cavity Q-factor at single photon regime

Conservative: 4×10^9 with Nb coax cavity (almost achieved)

B. Magnetic field introduced in the superconducting cavity

(Nobody realized yet)

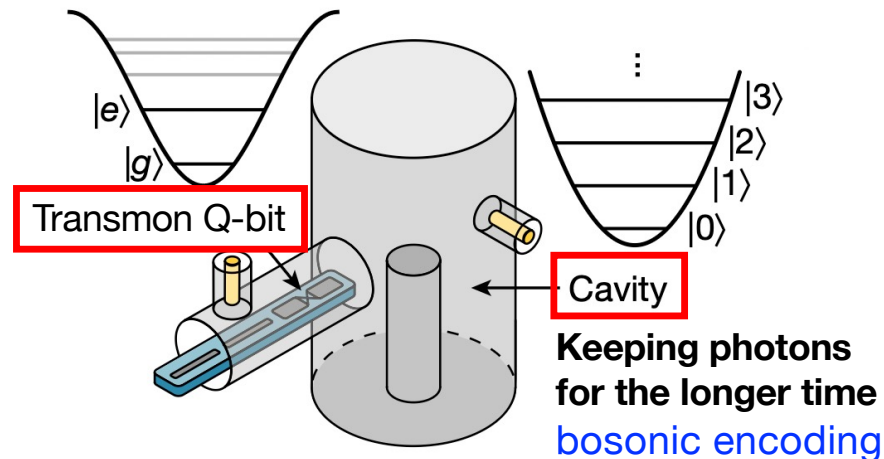
Conservative: 100 Gauss Nb cavity for cavity tuning with lower Q

Collaboration with **Akito KUSAKA** (Uni.of Tokyo)

C03 超伝導・量子技術によるマイクロ波
重力波探索で挑む宇宙創生

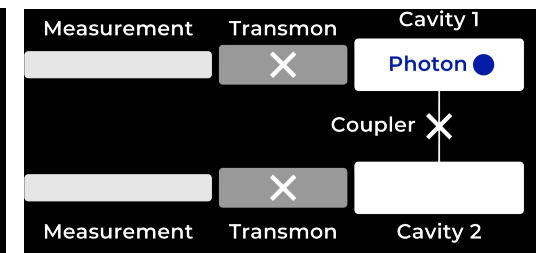
Grant-in-Aid for Transformative Research Areas (A)

Quantum Memories → Hybrid with Transmon Q-bit + Cavity



Yale group: Brock et al., Nature 2025

a different approach from
integrated quantum bits on a chip



Company: Quantum Circuit



PI
Makoto Fujiwara (TRIUMF)
joined QUP
from April 2026
(as cross appointment)



Momose (UBC)
joined QUP
from August 2026
(as cross appointment)

Collaboration between KEK and TRIUMF

Antimatter Gravity Using Atomic Fountain

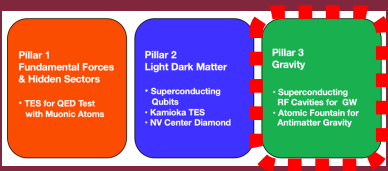
already started from April 2026

Today

Letter of Intent for Collaboration between KEK-QUP and TRIUMF

Pursuant to the Memorandum of Understanding between **the High Energy Accelerator Research Organization (“KEK”)** and **TRIUMF INC. (“TRIUMF”)**, effective **January 30th, 2025**, KEK’s International Center for Quantum-field Measurement Systems for Studies of the Universe and Particles (QUP) and TRIUMF wish to further express their mutual interest in developing a collaborative research program on **atomic hydrogen fountains and interferometry for antimatter gravity studies**. The collaboration will bring together expertise in atomic and laser physics, quantum control, and precision measurement, with the aim of developing techniques that may ultimately be applied to gravitational studies of antihydrogen.

Through this Letter of Intent, KEK-QUP and TRIUMF affirm their intention to further develop this collaboration and to work toward a formal Project Agreement, as provided in the MOU, which will define its scope and other terms and conditions. This Letter of Intent reflects the parties’ present intentions and does not create legally binding commitments.



Science Target V : Antimatter Gravity Using Atomic Fountain

led by M. Fujiwara

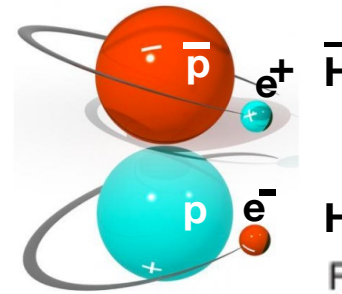


Fujiwara(TRIUMF):PI
(Apr 26 -)

Test of **CPT** & **Weak Equivalence Principle**

**Precision Antimatter Gravity Measurement
with Quantum Techniques**

– (Anti)Atomic Fountains, (Anti)Atom Interferometer



Fountain and
interferometer

3D laser cooling

Magnetic trap

VUV laser

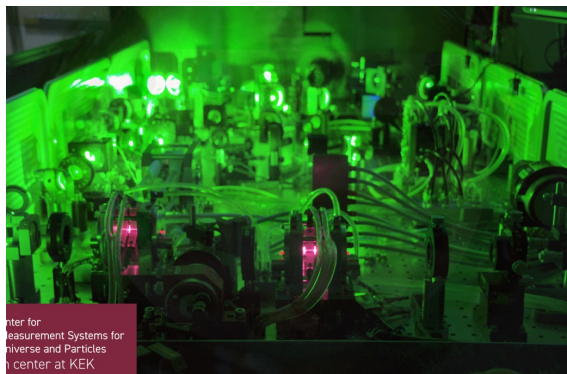
H source and
decelerator

VUV laser



starting with hydrogen
@ TRIUMF, Canada

Key technologies: high-intensity, short-wavelength lasers



originally cultivated in
[low-energy muon beam applications](#)
@ **J-PARC, KEK** plays a central role.

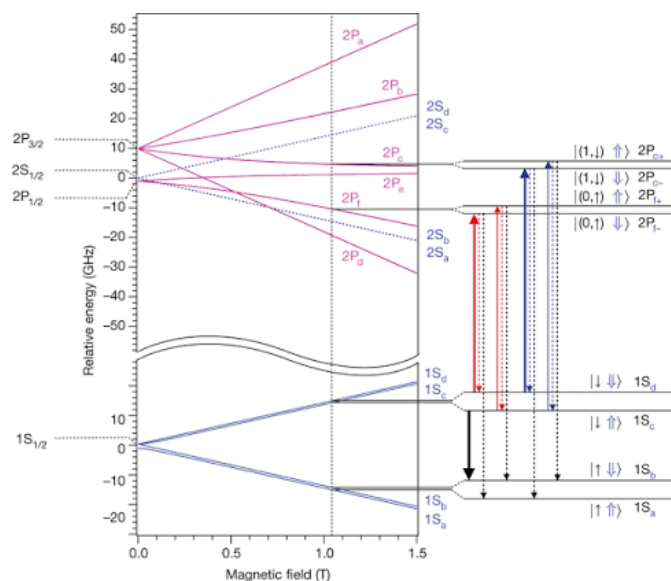
Joint Research and
Cross-disciplinary Collaboration with KEK



Why is quantum manipulation of (anti)H so hard?



Antihydrogen / Hydrogen



Fundamental Transitions
121 nm
(10.2 eV)

Vacuum-ultra violet light:

- Does not transmit in air
- No solid-state laser medium
- Optics; e.g. windows only 50% efficiency

QUP

Goal

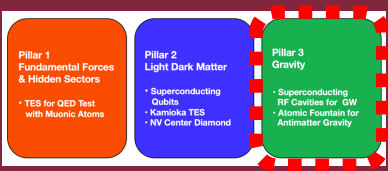
10 μ J/pulse
100 MHz width
5 ns pulse length

World's Highest Power
Narrow Line Pulse
Laser at 121 nm

New VUV technologies
(phase & time shape control
of ns pulses)

Insight through Accelerators.





Progress from the startup

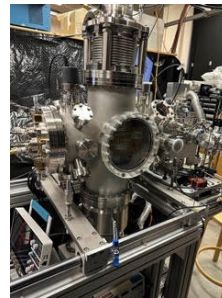


1. Laser development

- 2nd J-PARC Lyman- α laser achieved 5 μ J pulse energy
- Diode laser transferred from Canada, being commissioned at J-PARC

2. Atomic Hydrogen Source Development

- Required for demonstrating a 100 MHz linewidth
- Design completed
- Source chamber being fabricated



Hydrogen source at UBC (Momose)

3. Theory & Simulations

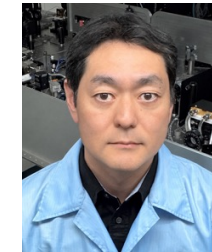
- New postdoc, **Amer**, driving the quantum calculations
- In collaboration with world experts incl. Müller (Berkeley)

4. Funding applications

- Major efforts in Japan (MEXT) and Canada (CFI, NSERC)



Momose
(UBC), QUP
Researcher
(Aug 26-)



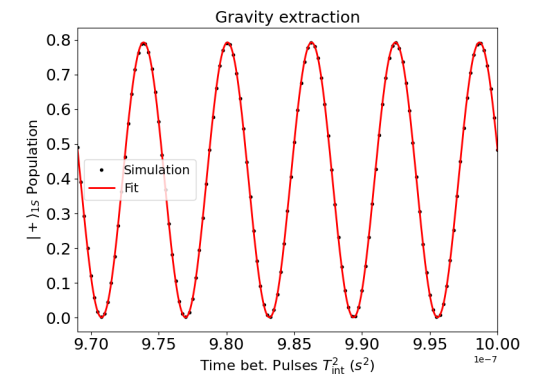
Oishi, QUP
Researcher
(June 26-)



Imai, QUP
Postdoc
(Jul 26 -)



Amer, QUP
Postdoc (Aug -)



1S-2P (anti)H
Interferometer simulations (Amer)

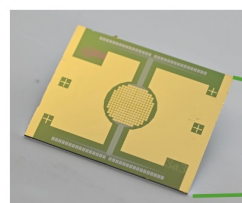
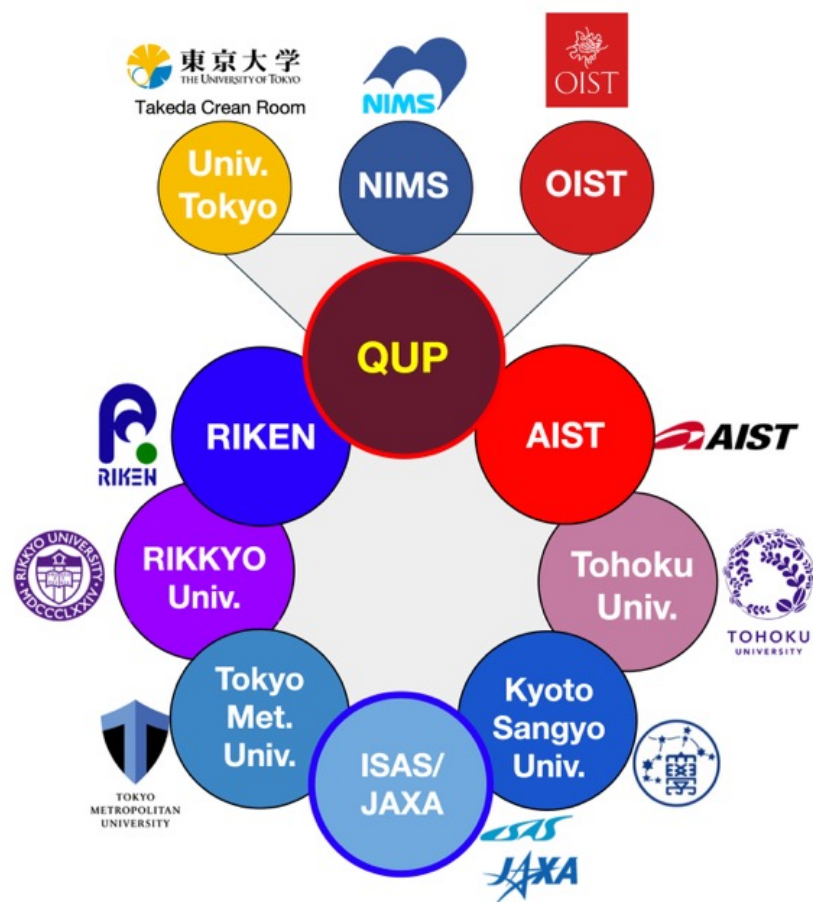
Technology Advancement Platform

Superconducting Detectors Pls: Yamasaki, Lee	Technology Advancement Semiconductor Detectors Pls: Bortoletto, Takahashi, Togawa, Miyahara, Nakahama	Cryogenic Engineering PI: Okamura
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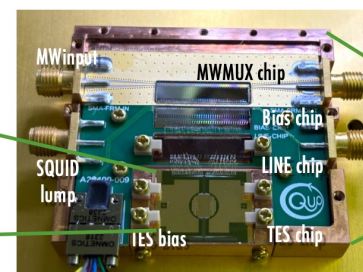
Superconducting Detector Platform closely connected with the JAXA satellite



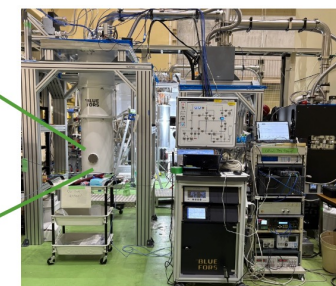
led by N. Yamasaki



ISAS/JAXA



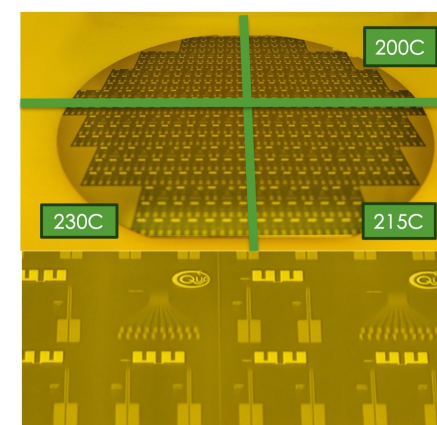
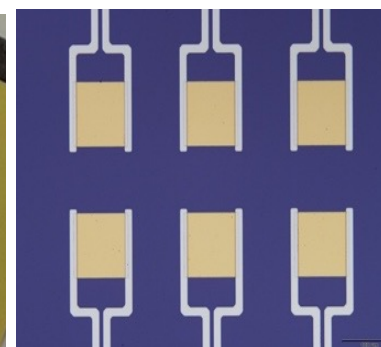
AIST



QUP



NIMS/QUP



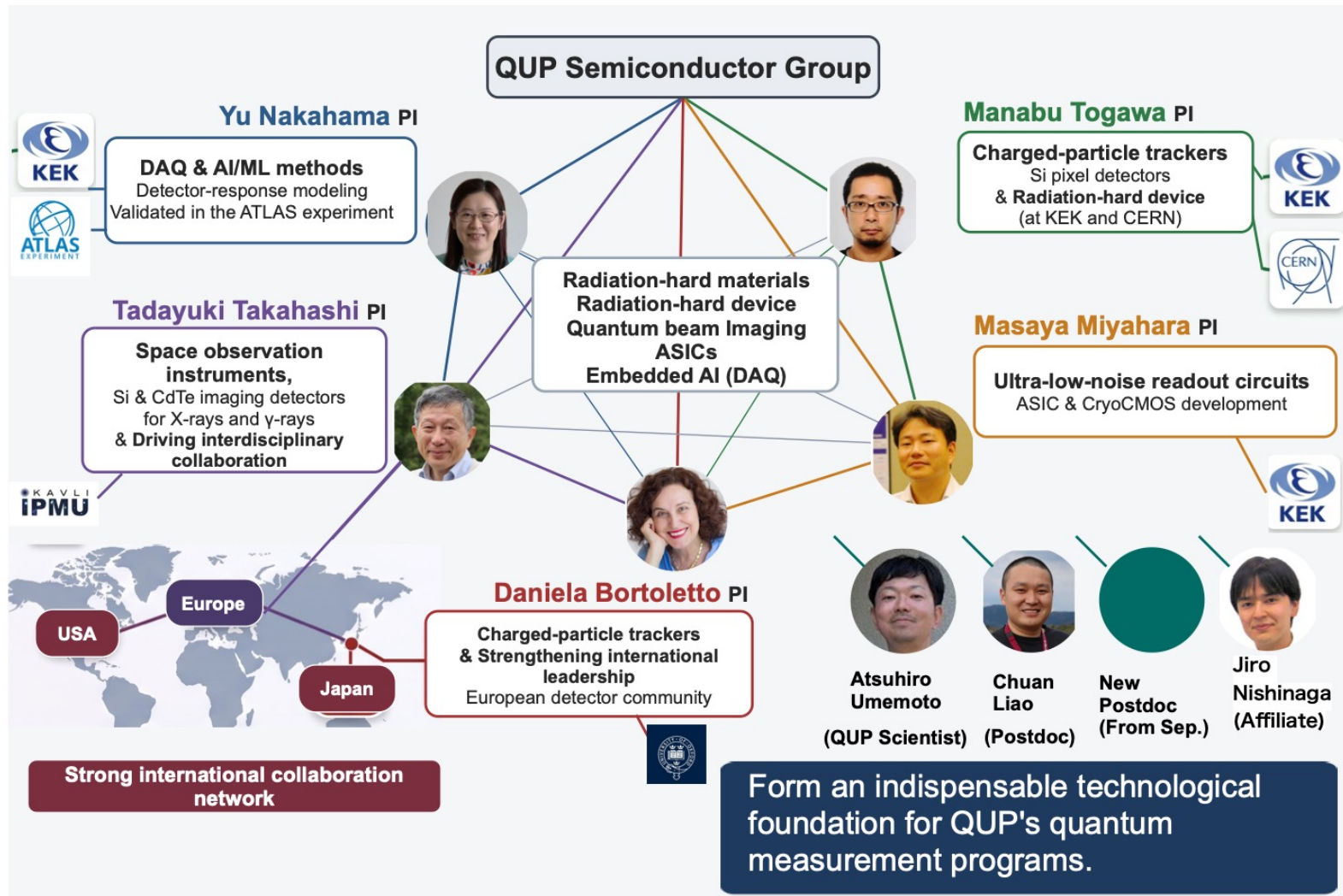
Berkeley/QUP

Superconducting Detectors
PIs:
Yamasaki, Lee

Semiconductor Detectors
PIs:
Bortoletto, Takahashi, Togawa,
Miyahara, Nakahama

Cryogenic Engineering
PI: Okamura

Semiconductor platform



Superconducting Detectors
PIs:
Yamasaki, Lee

Technology Advancement
Semiconductor Detectors
PIs:
Bortoletto, Takahashi, Togawa,
Miyahara, Nakahama

Cryogenic Engineering
PI: Okamura

CryoCMOS development: Cryo-CMOS ADC Verified at 4.2 K



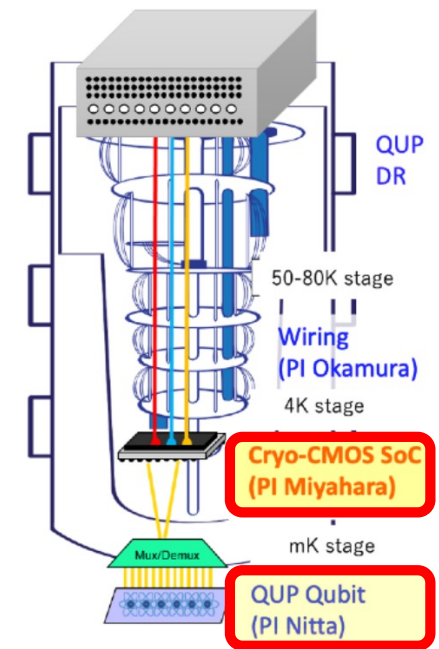
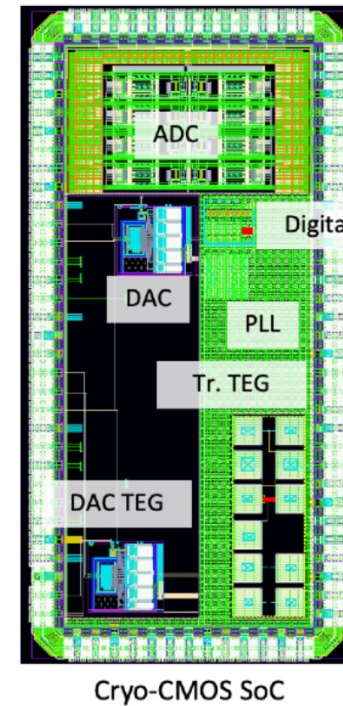
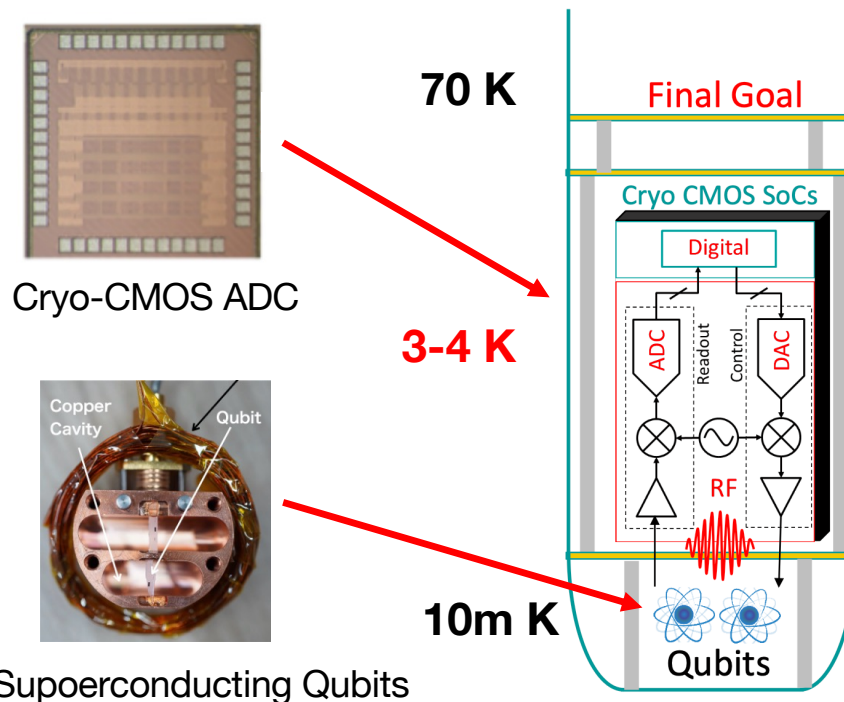
led by M. Miyahara

Cryo-CMOS ASIC for Quantum Qubit control
/ Quantum Computing

Essential technologies for high-density quantum computers

This technology is a key to QUP Superconducting Qubits (led by Nitta)

ここから、新・未来へ



Superconducting Detectors
PIs:
Yamasaki, Lee

Technology Advancement

Semiconductor Detectors
PIs:
Bortoletto, Takahashi, Togawa,
Miyahara, Nakahama

Cryogenic Engineering
PI: Okamura

Cryogenic Engineering platform

led by T. Okamura



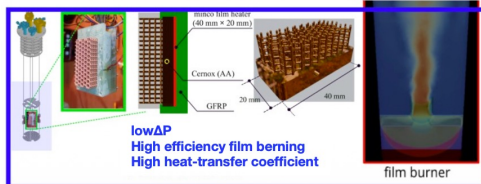
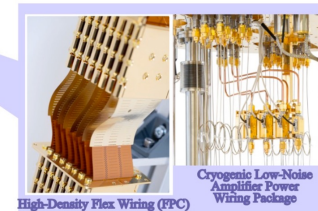
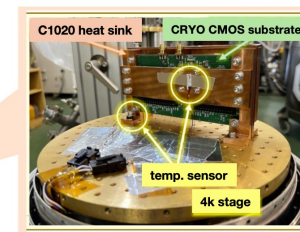
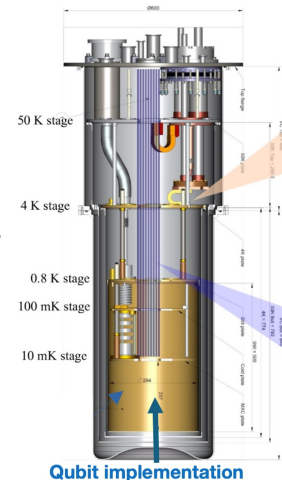
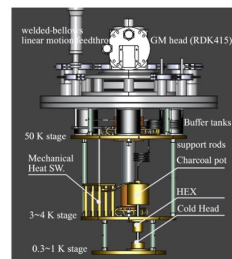
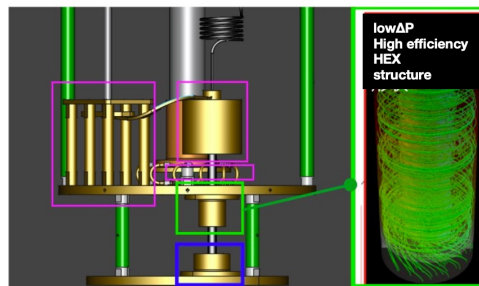
Newly established platform due to its strategic importance to QUP

Research Field of PI Okamura (from **KEK**)

In collaboration with
Toyota Central R&D Labs

- Cryogenic system development for **Cryo-CMOS**
- Sub-Kelvin Cryogenic system development for Quantum Technologies.

Reduced He consumption and increased cooling capacity through optimized Kapitza thermal resistance, fluid control, and Adsorption.



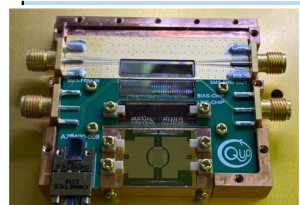
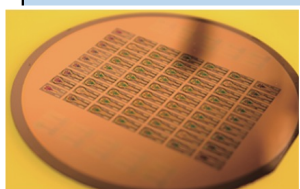
Reduced He consumption & enhanced cooling power
Kapitza reduction + Efficient utilization of He heat-transfer
4He sorption
0.8K > 1.5mW
3He sorption
0.3K > 100 uW



QUP member: **Dr. H. Fukuyama**
(Former Director of Cryogenic Research Center, The University of Tokyo)

Specialist in mK cryogenic system

Theory Group Pls: Nakayama, Takhistov



Pillar 1
Fundamental Forces
& Hidden Sectors

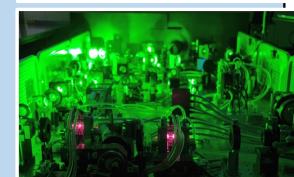
PI:
Azuma

Pillar 2
Light Dark Matter

PI:
Nitta, Garcia-Sciveres
Hasegawa, Herbschleb

Pillar 3
Gravity

PI:
Nitta, Fujiwara



Technology Advancement

Superconducting Detectors

Pls:
Yamasaki, Lee

Semiconductor Detectors

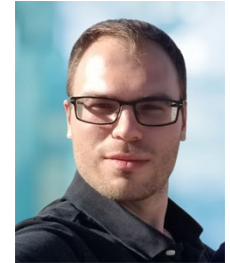
Pls:
Bortoletto, Takahashi, Togawa,
Miyahara, Nakahama

Cryogenic Engineering

PI: Okamura

Engineering support section led by Haba

Foundational role in QUP's scientific program :
defining observables, developing search concepts, guiding sensitivity studies, and connecting QUP programs to fundamental physics discovery



- 22 small-team papers submitted or published since July 2025
- 9 WPI posters, multiple visiting international student/postdoc projects near publication



QUPIPs (internship students) were actively involved in research resulting in scientific publications" (ex: Arakawa, Takhistov, et al, JCAP 02 (2026) 026; de Giorgi, Takhistov, et al, JHEP accepted)

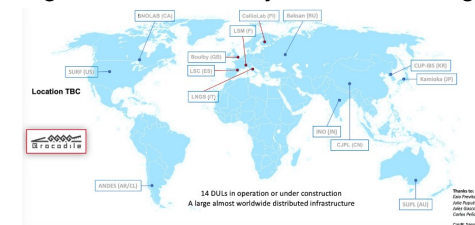
Growing Global Momentum

- Worldwide expansion of quantum-enabled searches for fundamental physics
- Similar initiatives emerging at major laboratories and universities

Strong communications with leading international partners: CERN, CEA, Fermilab, DESY, INFN

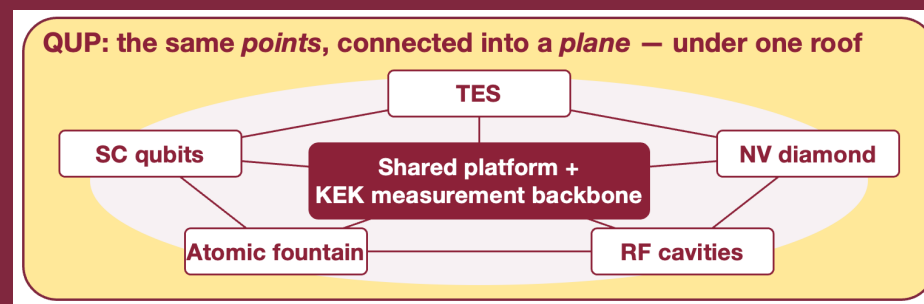


Cryogenic Detectors for LDM
Figure from the talk by Belina von Krosigk



Conclusion Quantum Sensing for New Physics

*Not one detector. Not one experiment.
One international center exploring nature through many quantum technologies.*



**We recently launched a collaboration between QUP-KEK and QTI-CERN.
Why not build an even broader and stronger collaboration with TRIUMF?**

Thank you