

Pulsar timing array and the implication

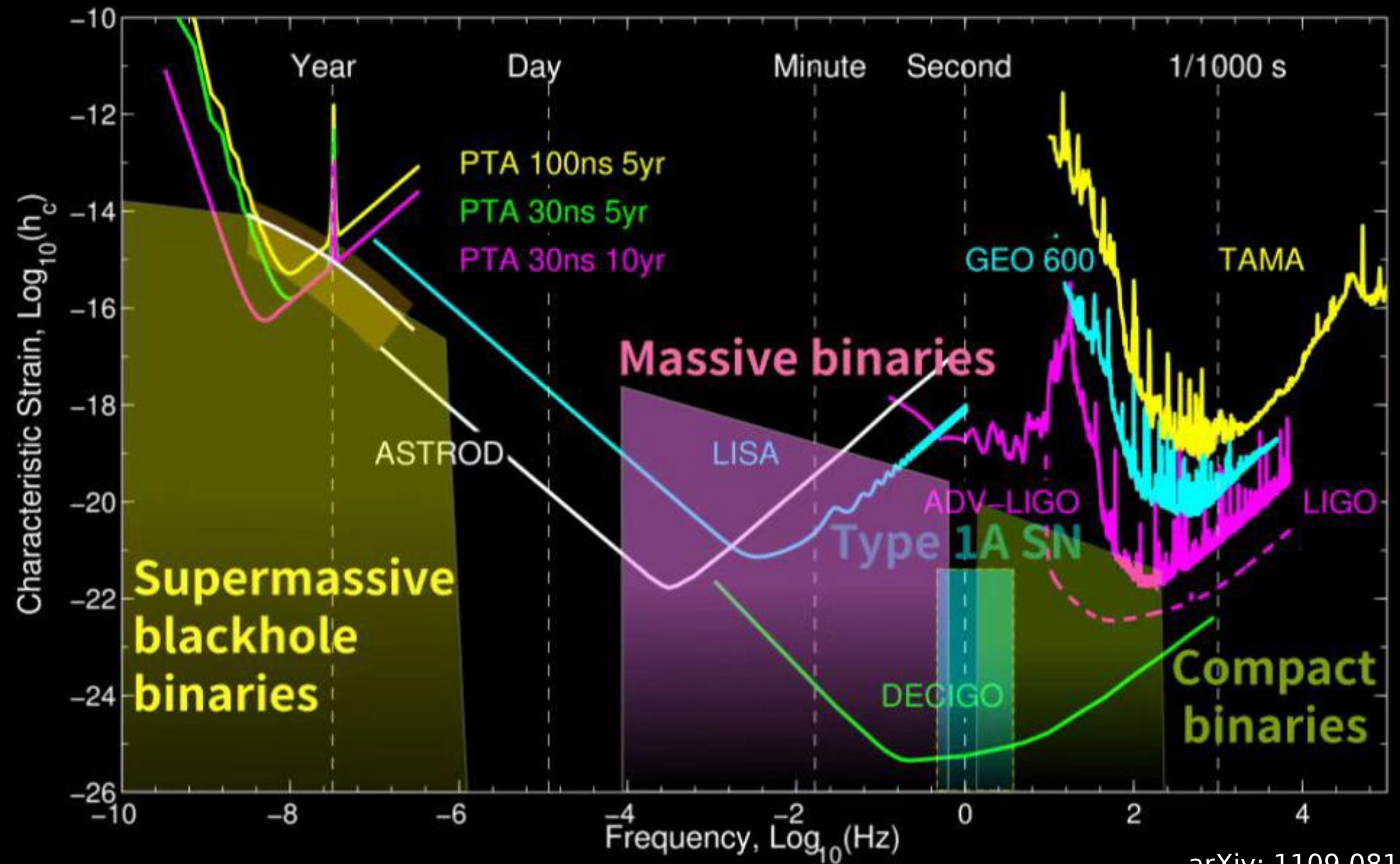
K. J. Lee

**Department of Astronomy, Peking university
National astronomical observatory, CAS**

kjlee@pku.edu.cn

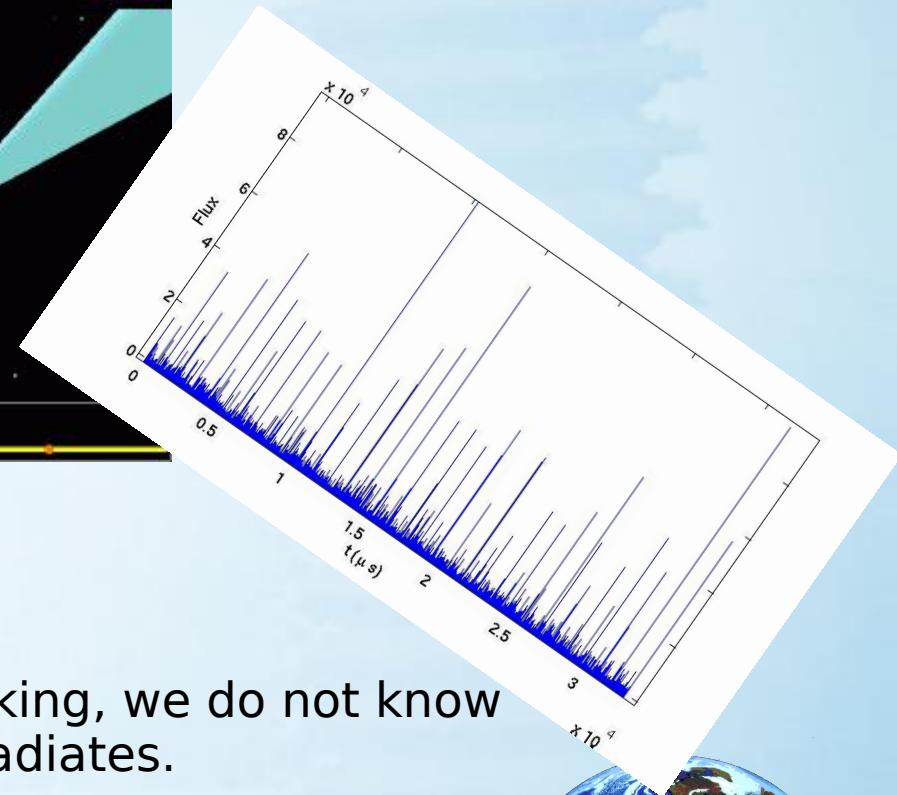
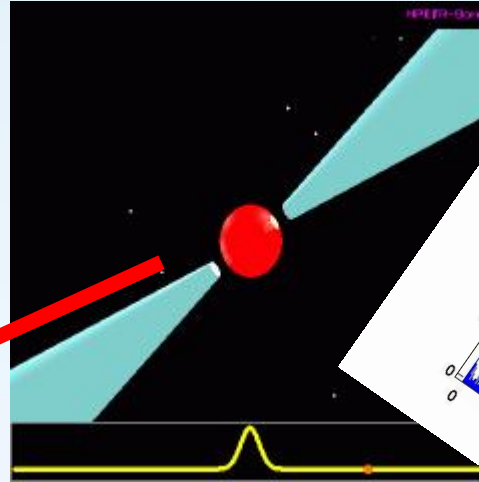
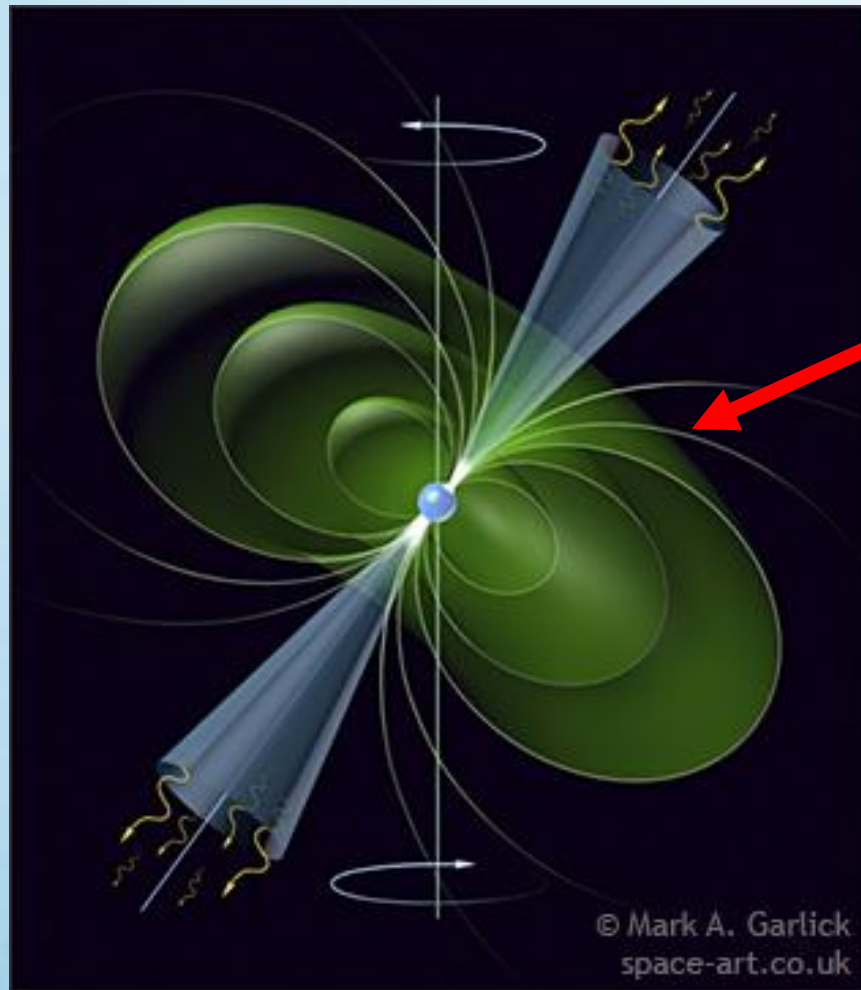
**@The XIX Int. Conf. TAUP, Xichang
2025**

GW landscape



Quick guide to the GW detection using pulsar timing array

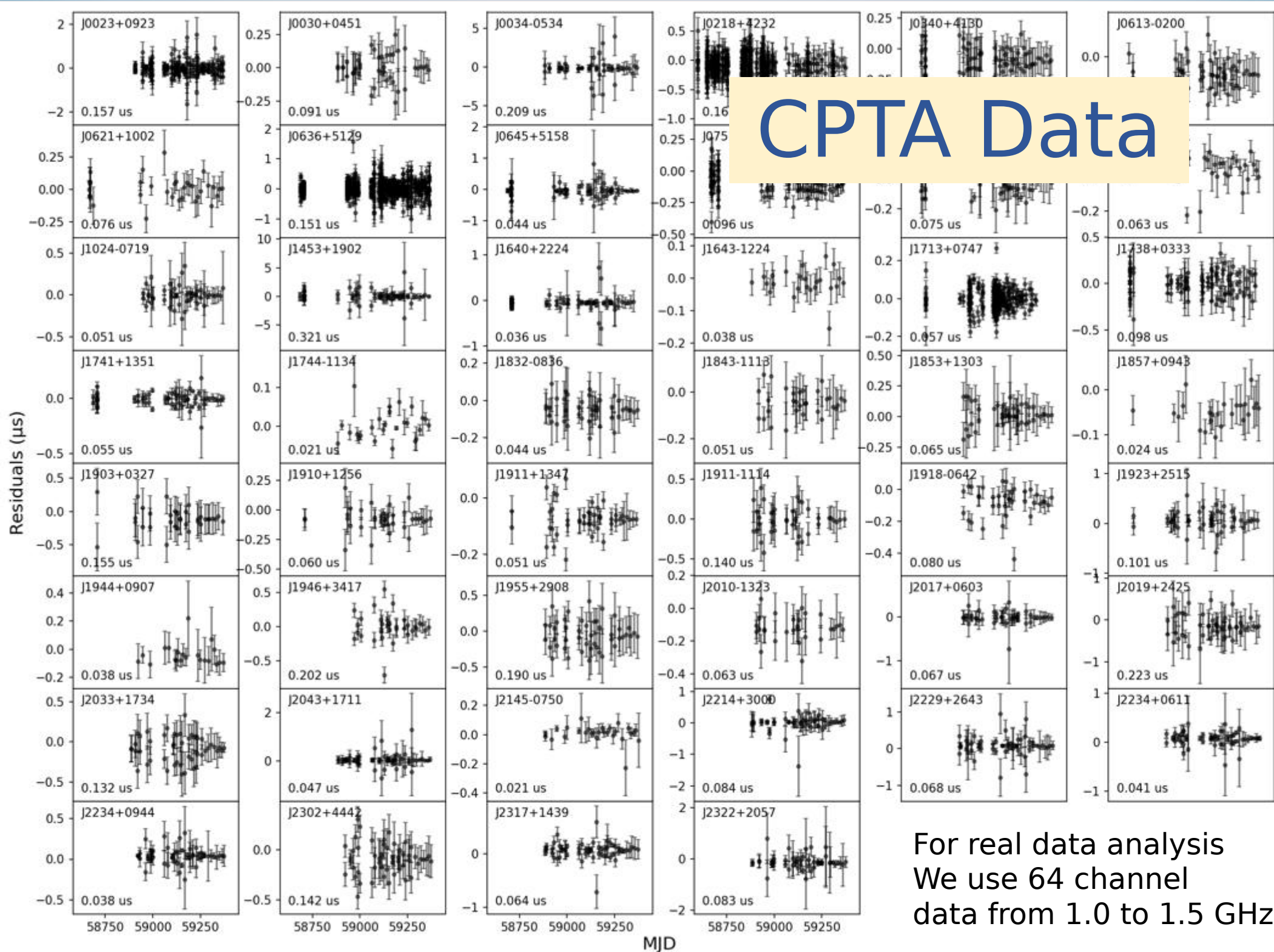
Phenomenology model of pulsars



Frankly speaking, we do not know how pulsar radiates.

But the pulse time of arrivals are so accurate.

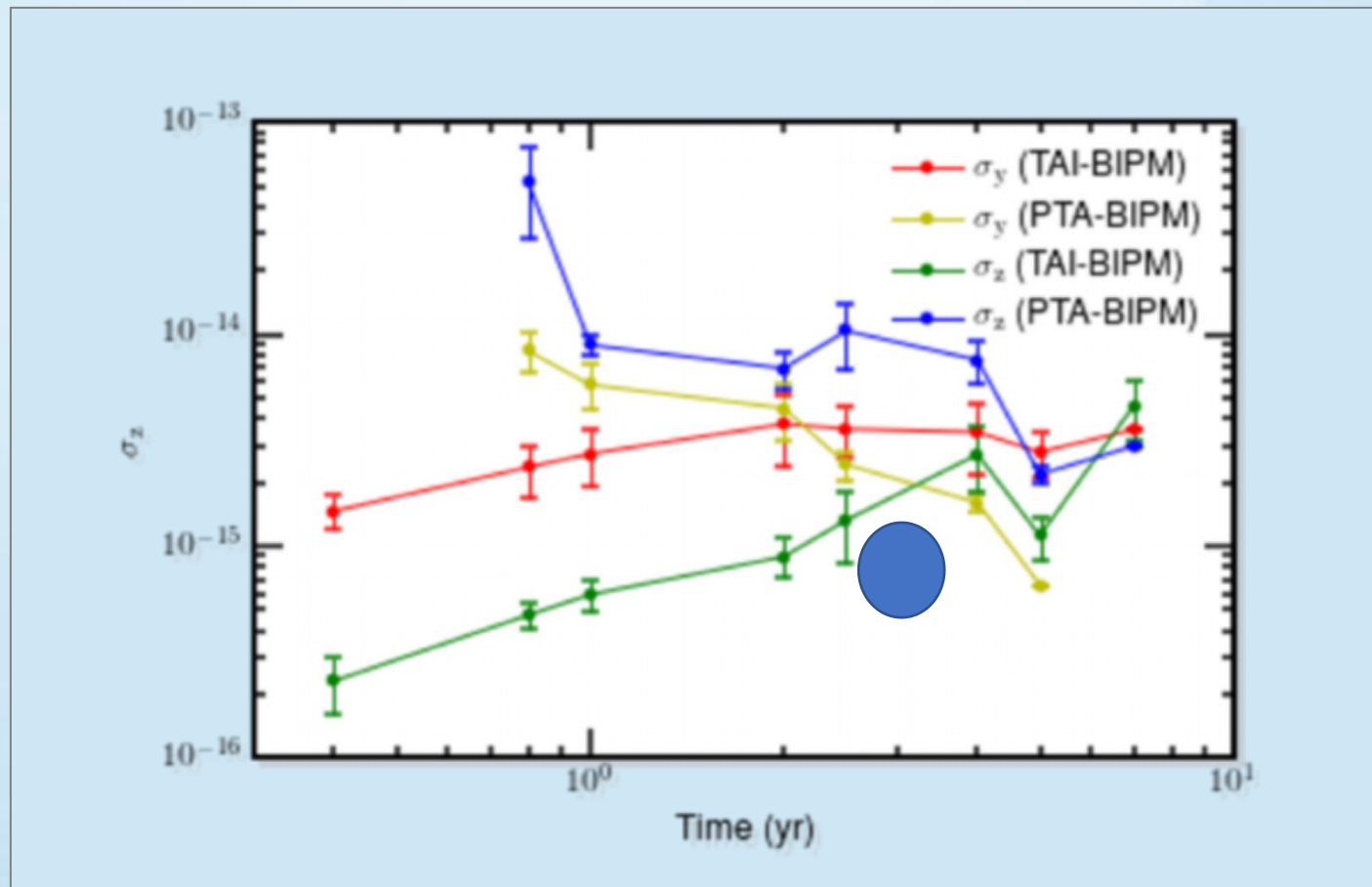




What does it means

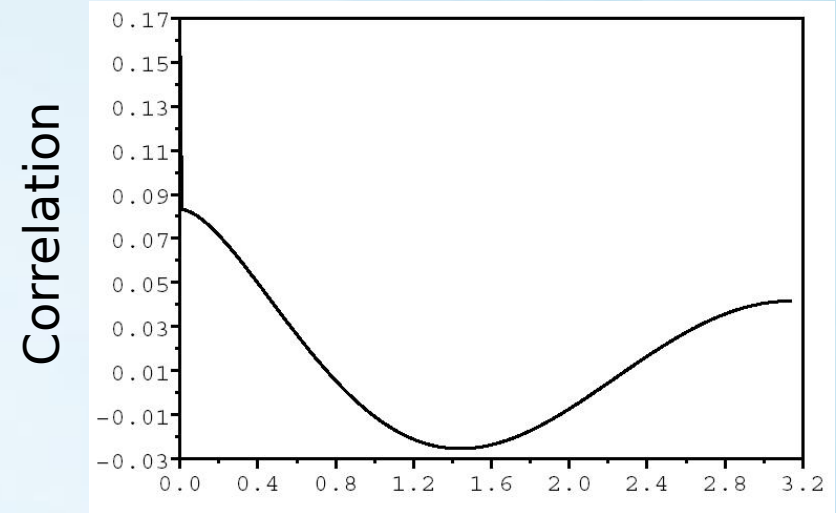
$$100\text{ns} / 3 \text{ yr} = 10^{-7} \text{ s} / 10^8 \text{ s} \sim 10^{-15}$$

~Measure 1 proton radius over 1 meter and do it over several years

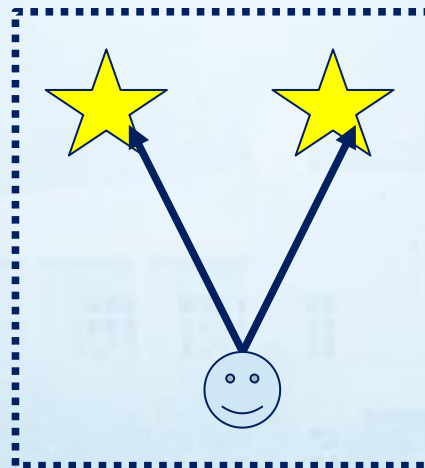


How to identify GW signal?

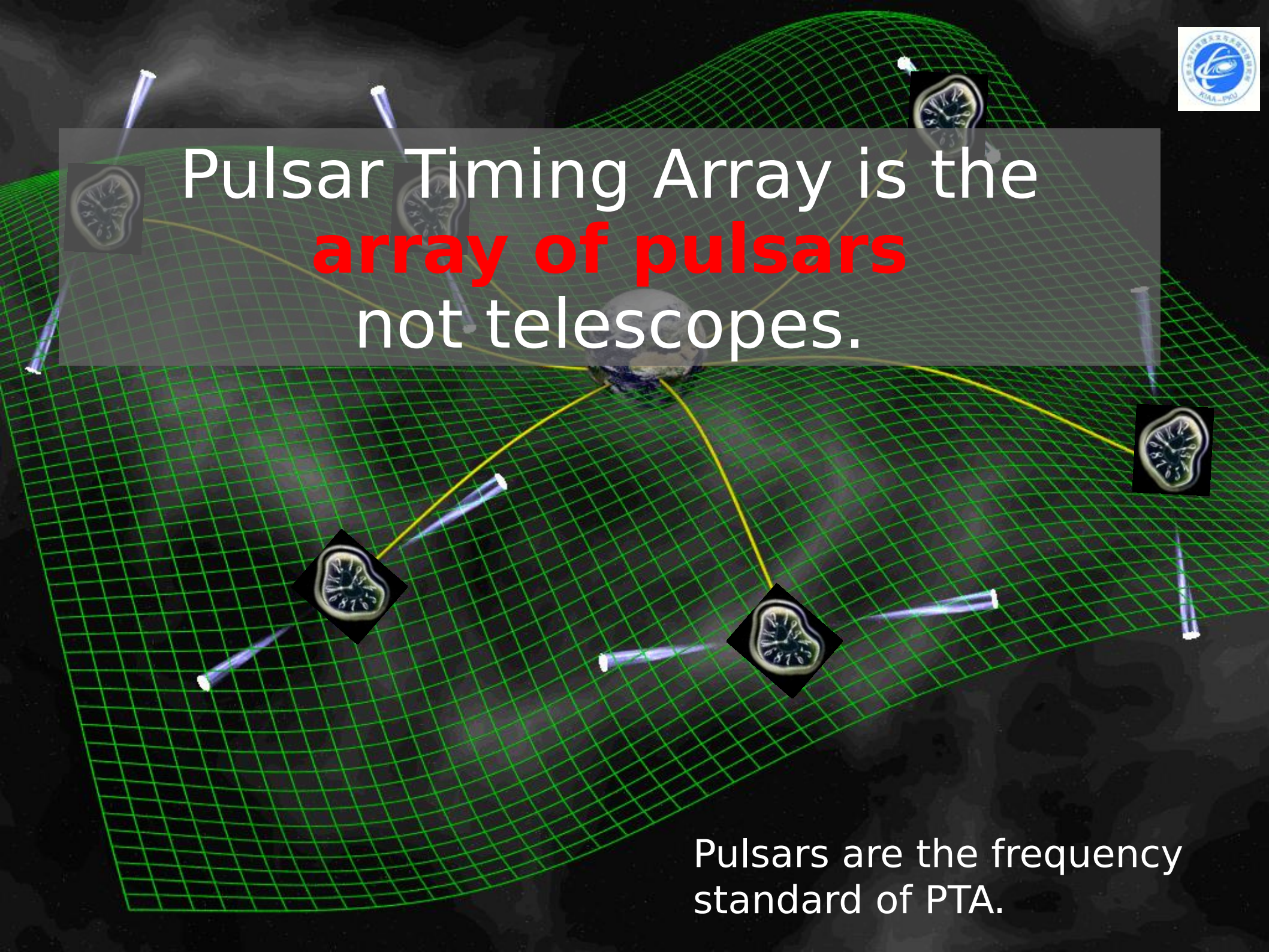
PTA=Multibeam-oneway interferometer



Angle between psr pairs



Hellings and Downs 1983



Pulsar Timing Array is the
array of pulsars
not telescopes.

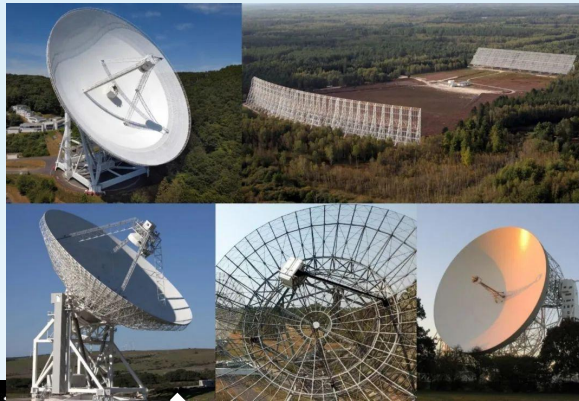
Pulsars are the frequency
standard of PTA.

International PTAs

NANOGrav
2004—



EPTA
~1996—



CPTA
2019—

PPTA
2004—



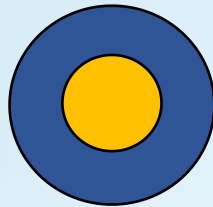
MPTA
2019—



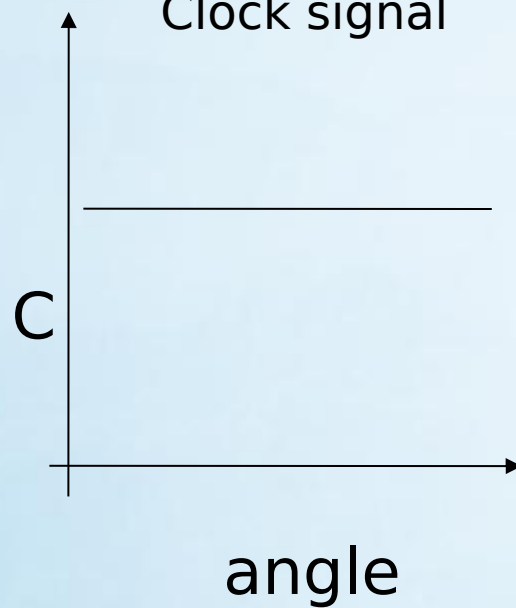
InPTA
2004—



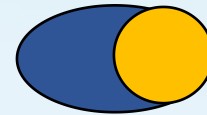
Other correlation



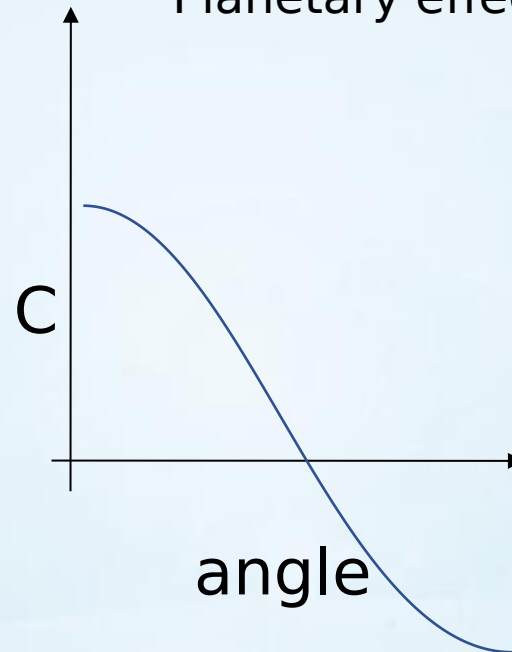
Clock signal



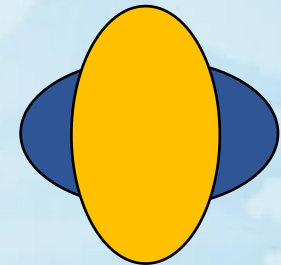
Clock noise



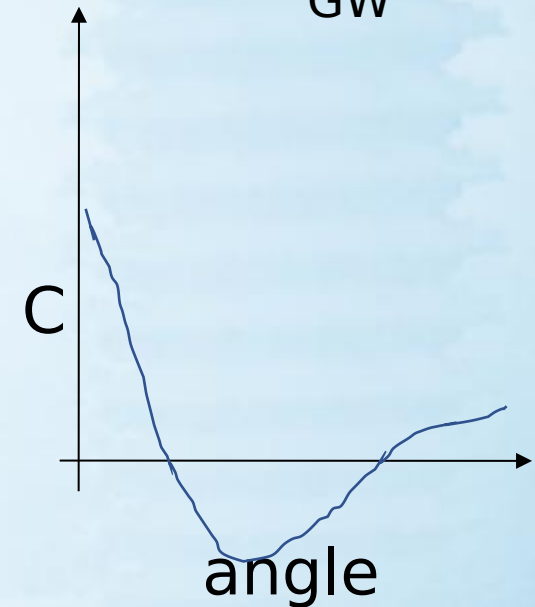
Planetary effects



Planet ephemeris

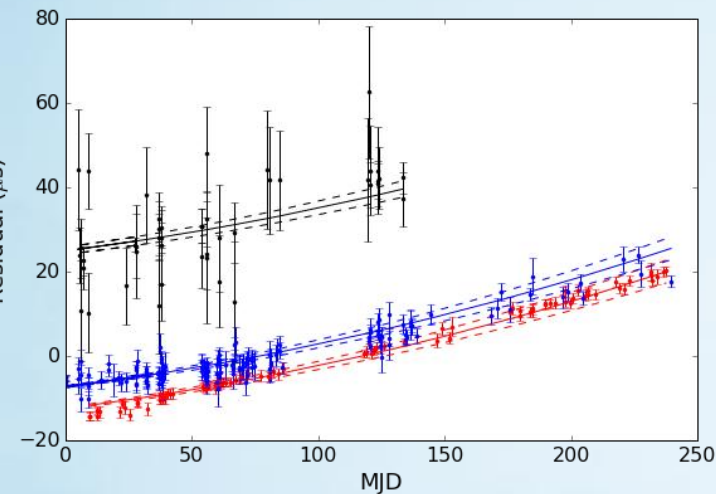


GW

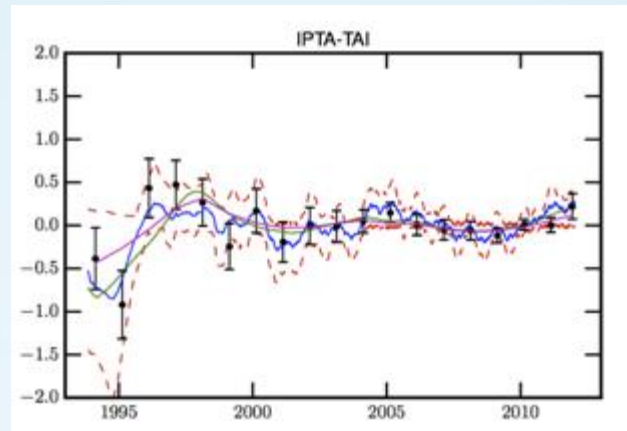


Pulsar to recover local clock

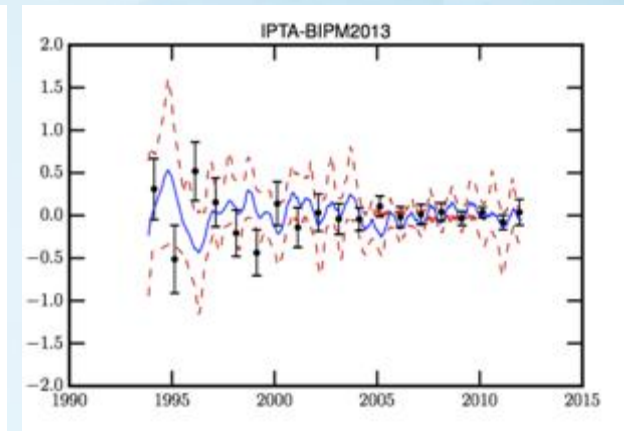
100ns 1yr= 3×10^{-15}
100ns 10yr= 3×10^{-16}



Yunnan 40m, 1×10^{-14} @ 3yr
Unpublished

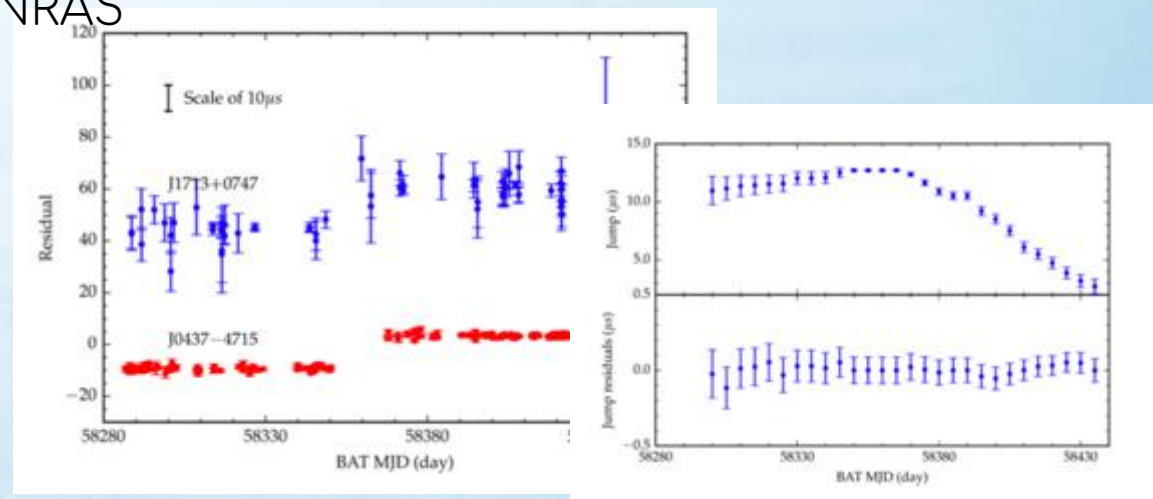


IPTA, 5×10^{-16} @ 20yr



Hobbs, Guo, Caballero, Coles, Lee, et al., 2020,
MNRAS

Recover local clock jump at
precision level of 80ns.

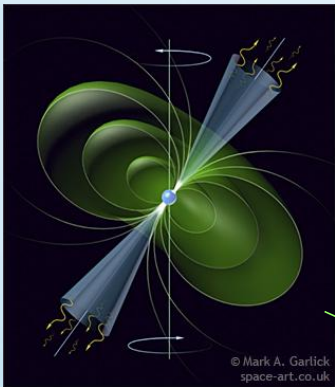
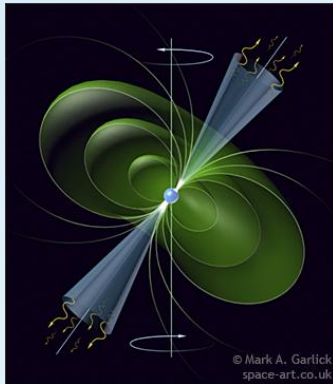


PTA and Solar system dynamics

$$\Delta_{R\odot} = -\frac{1}{c} \vec{r} \cdot \hat{s}$$

$$\frac{d\Delta_{E\odot}}{dt} = \sum_i \frac{GM_i}{c^2 r_i^E} + \frac{v_E^2}{2c^2} - \text{constant}$$

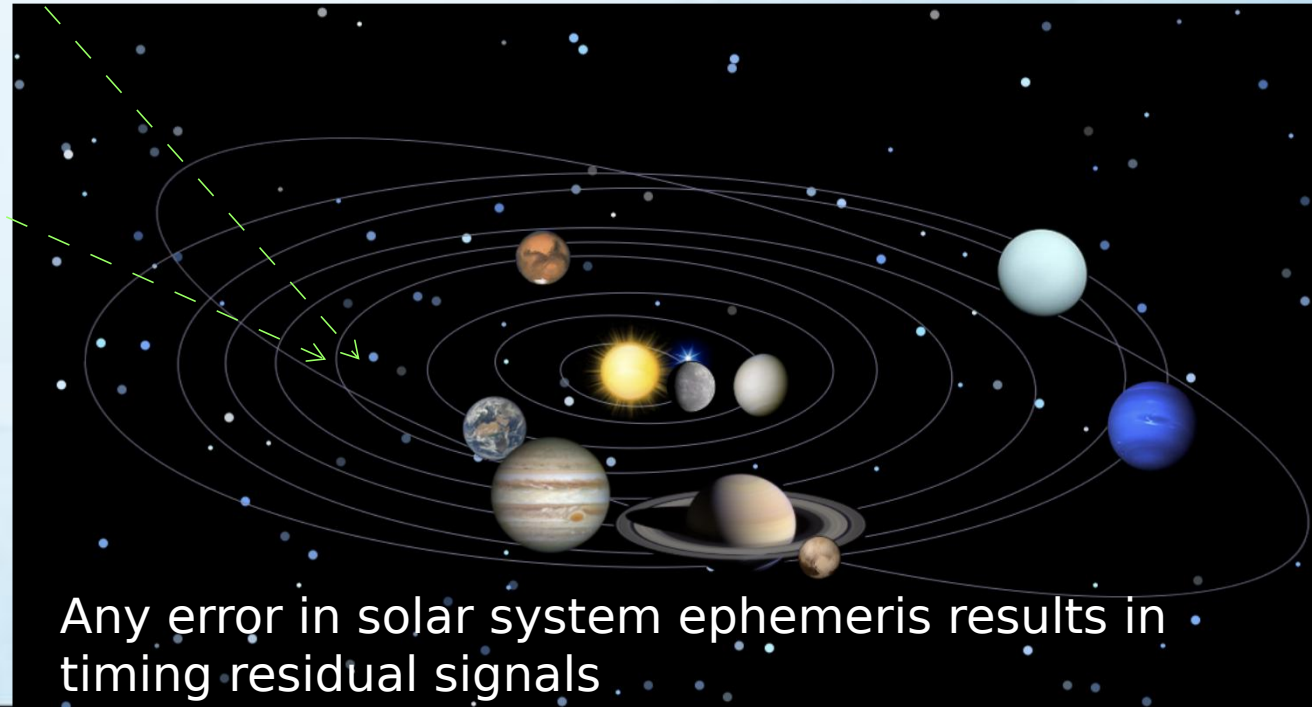
$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{a}_{A,pm-pm} = & \sum_{B \neq A} \frac{GM_B(\mathbf{r}_B - \mathbf{r}_A)}{r_{AB}^3} \left\{ 1 - \frac{2(\beta + \gamma)}{c^2} \sum_{C \neq A} \frac{GM_C}{r_{AC}} - \frac{2\beta - 1}{c^2} \sum_{C \neq B} \frac{GM_C}{r_{BC}} \right. \\ & + \gamma \left(\frac{v_A}{c} \right)^2 + (1 + \gamma) \left(\frac{v_B}{c} \right)^2 - \frac{2(1 + \gamma)}{c^2} \mathbf{v}_A \cdot \mathbf{v}_B \\ & \left. - \frac{3}{2c^2} \left[\frac{(\mathbf{r}_A - \mathbf{r}_B) \cdot \mathbf{v}_B}{r_{AB}} \right]^2 + \frac{1}{2c^2} (\mathbf{r}_B - \mathbf{r}_A) \cdot \mathbf{a}_B \right\} \\ & + \frac{1}{c^2} \sum_{B \neq A} \frac{GM_B}{r_{AB}^3} \left[[\mathbf{r}_A - \mathbf{r}_B] \cdot [(2 + 2\gamma)\mathbf{v}_A - (1 + 2\gamma)\mathbf{v}_B] \right] (\mathbf{v}_A - \mathbf{v}_B) \\ & + \frac{(3 + 4\gamma)}{2c^2} \sum_{B \neq A} \frac{GM_B \mathbf{a}_B}{r_{AB}} \end{aligned}$$



1PN

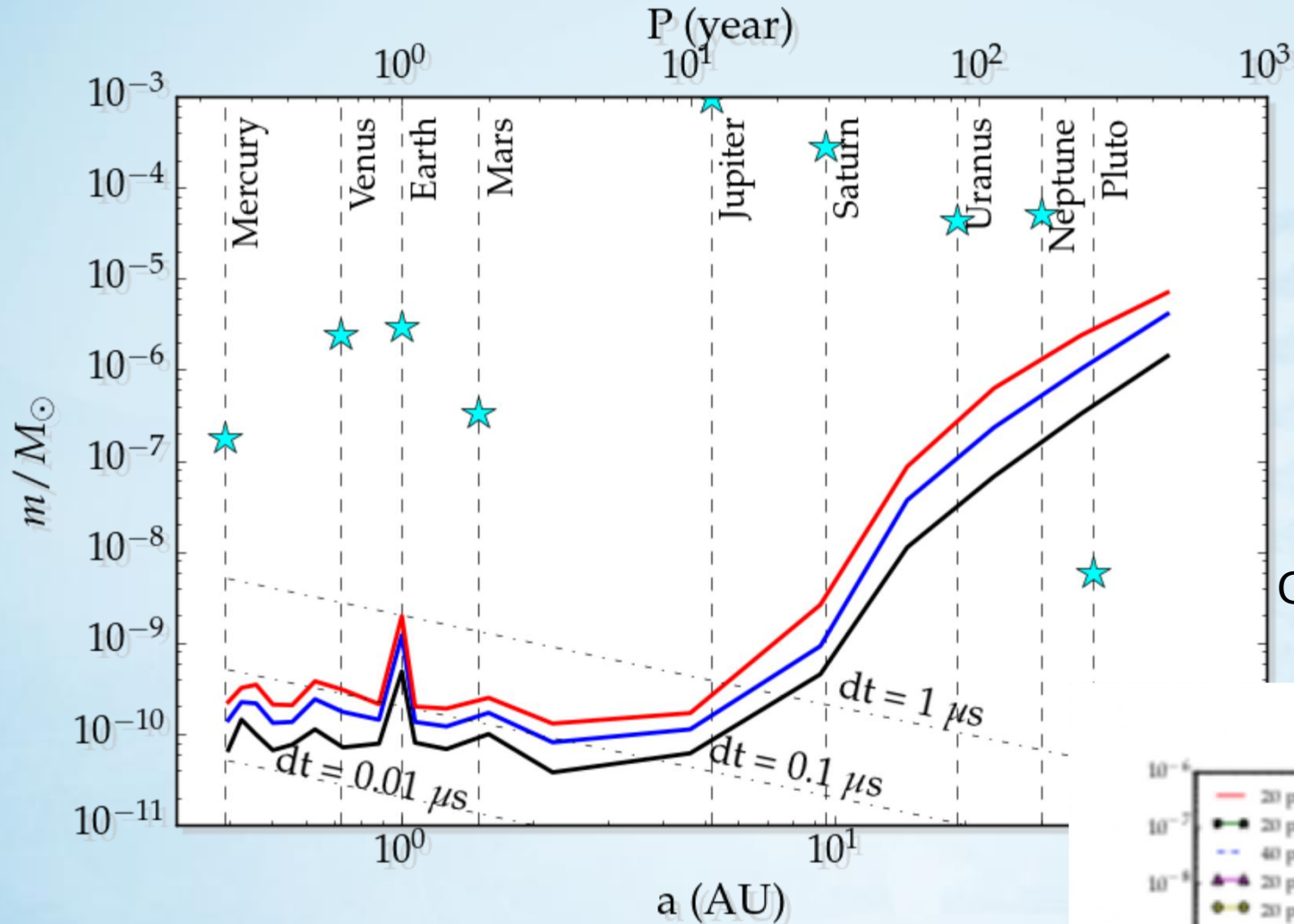
1 star, 8 planets, 300+ astroid

Observations: Radar ranging,
fly-by, laser ranging,
VLBI, optical astrometry



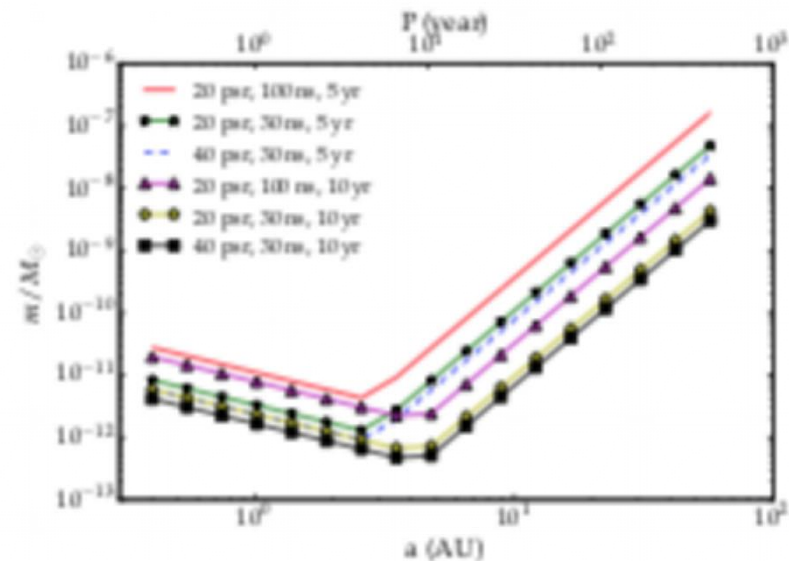
Any error in solar system ephemeris results in
timing residual signals

UMO limits

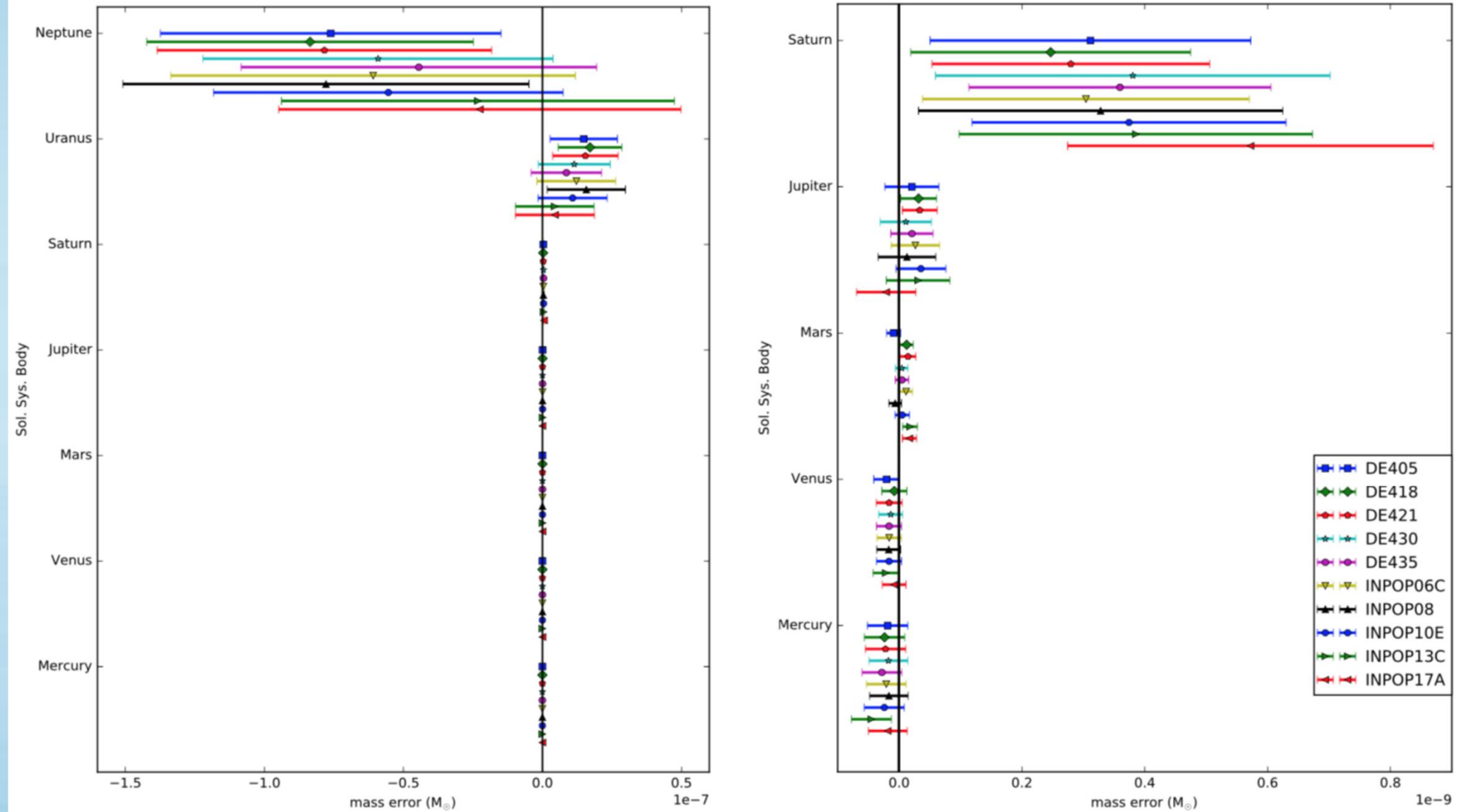


Guo & Lee 2018 MNRAS

There is no planets, dwarf, rock, black hole, cosmic string loop, ASP heavier than $1e20$ kg nearby (practically rocks larger than 500km).



Planet mass measurements

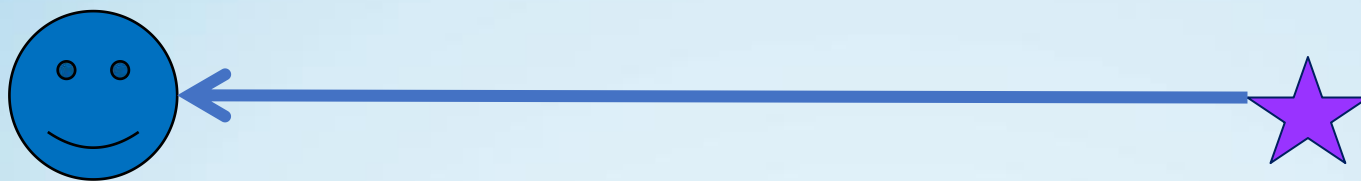


GWs

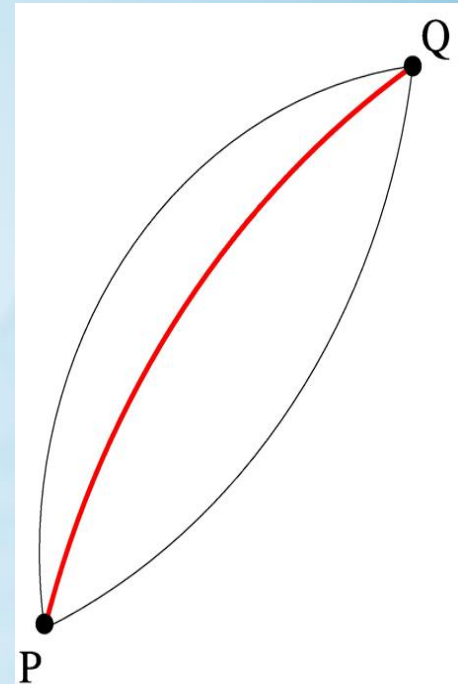
We have seen that **stochastic background** is detected by identification of Hellings-Downs correlation.

However,

PTA is not only for stochastic background, but also capable of **detecting single sources**, if one regard **PTA as multi-path interferometer**.



$$\frac{dk}{d\lambda} \sim k \frac{\partial h}{\partial k}$$

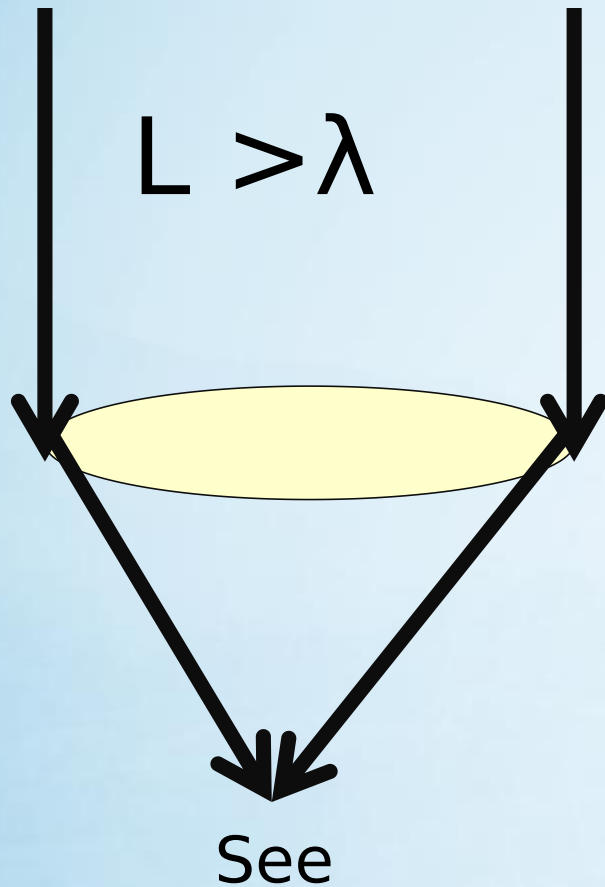


$$\frac{\Delta\omega}{\omega} \sim g(h(t, 0) - h(t - r, r))$$

"See" the SMBH



The size make big difference



$$h = \Delta p \Delta x$$

$$h = \Delta \theta p \Delta x$$

$$\Delta \theta = \frac{h}{p} \frac{1}{\Delta x} = \frac{\lambda}{\Delta x}$$

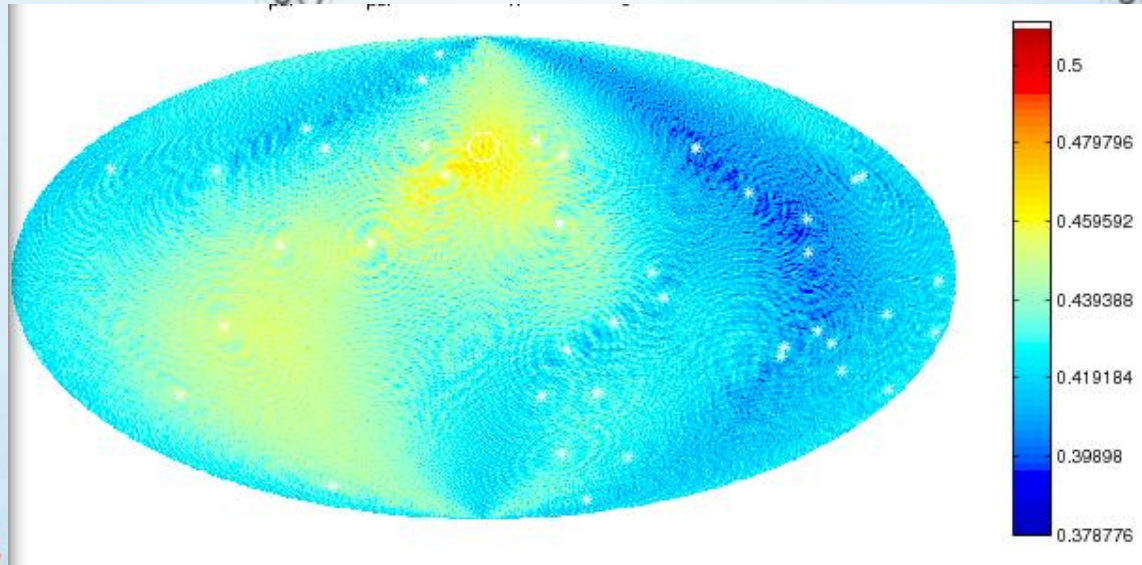
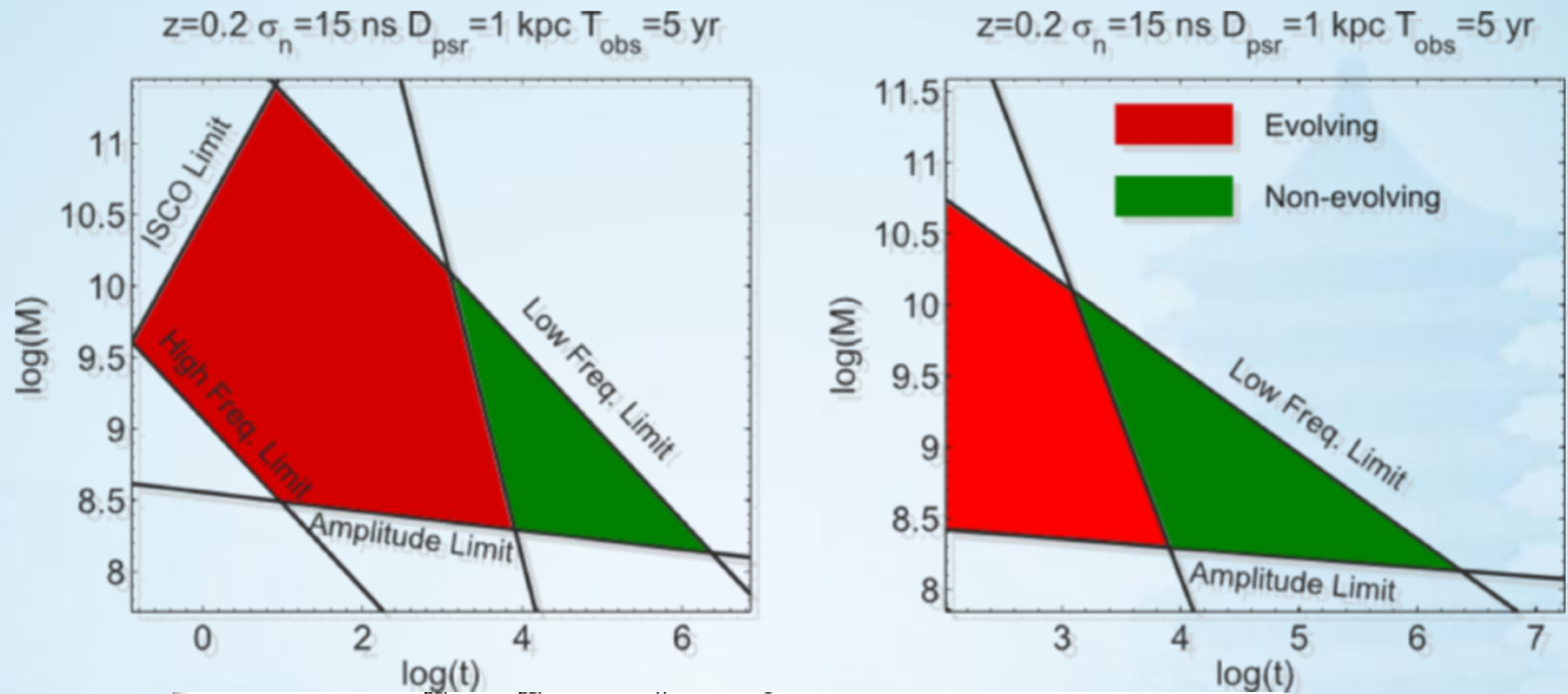
$$L < \lambda$$



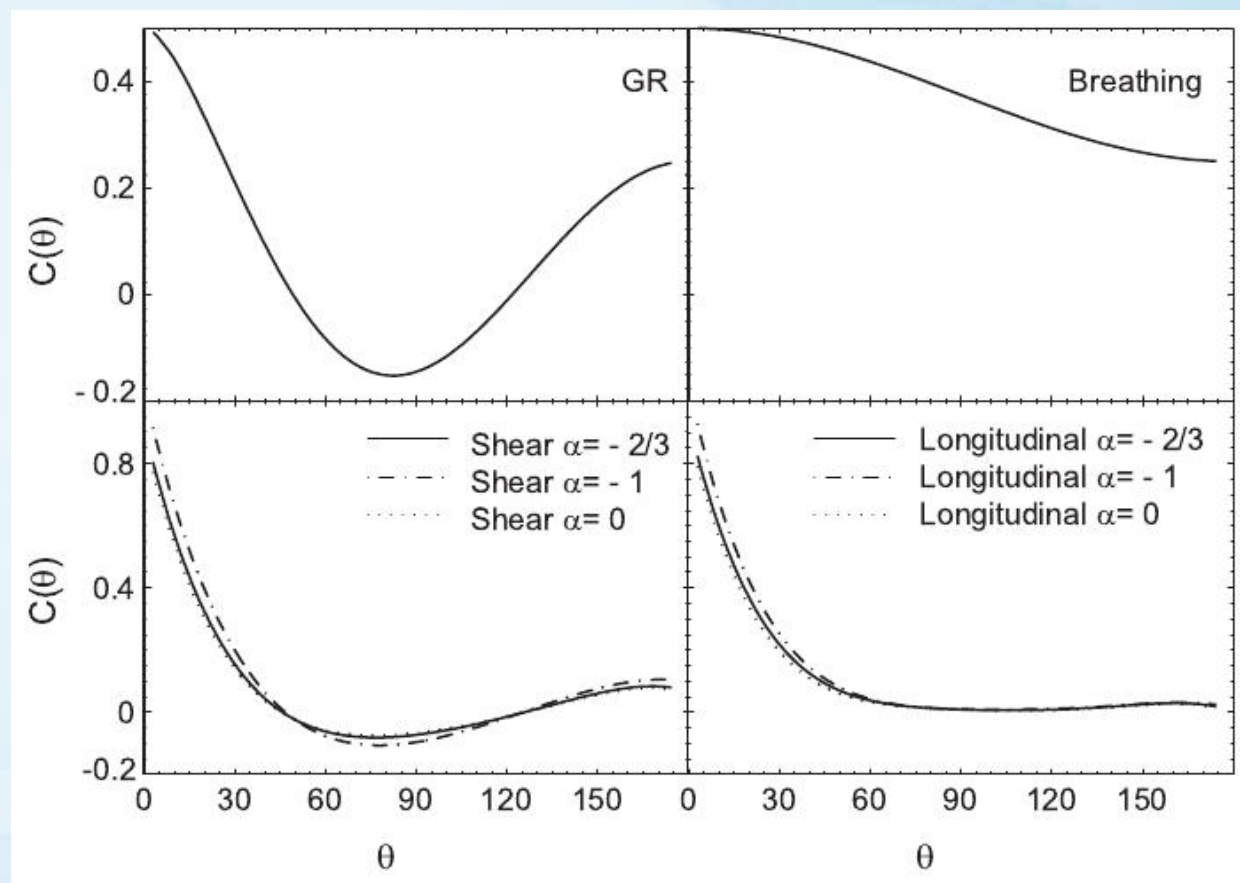
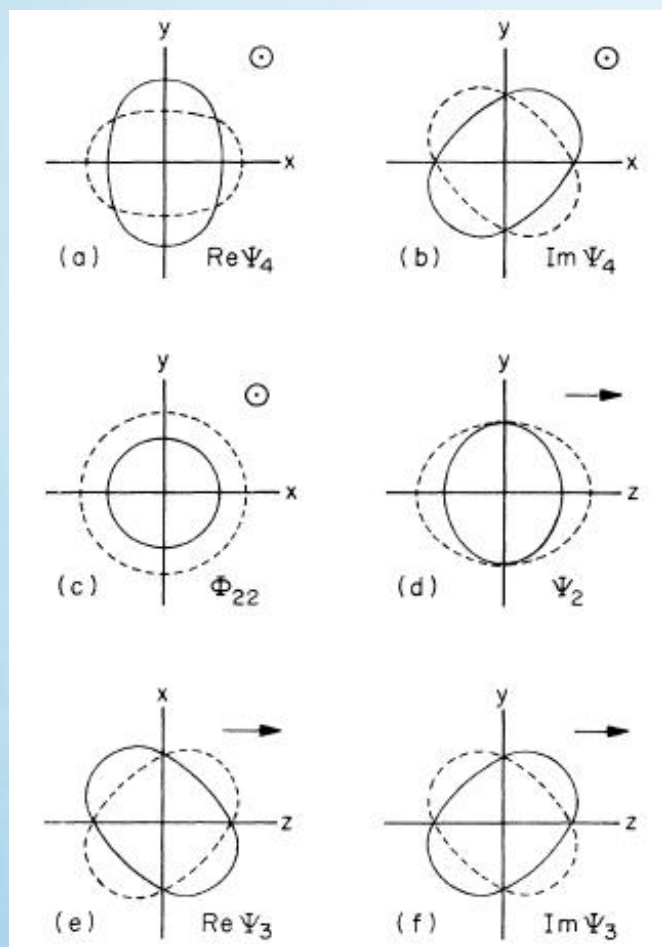
Hear



PTA can resolve and localize the single GW source

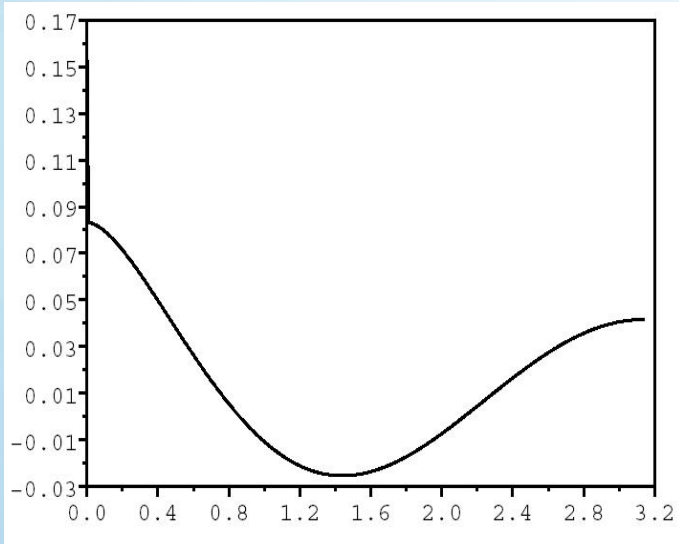


Polarization of GW and gravity test

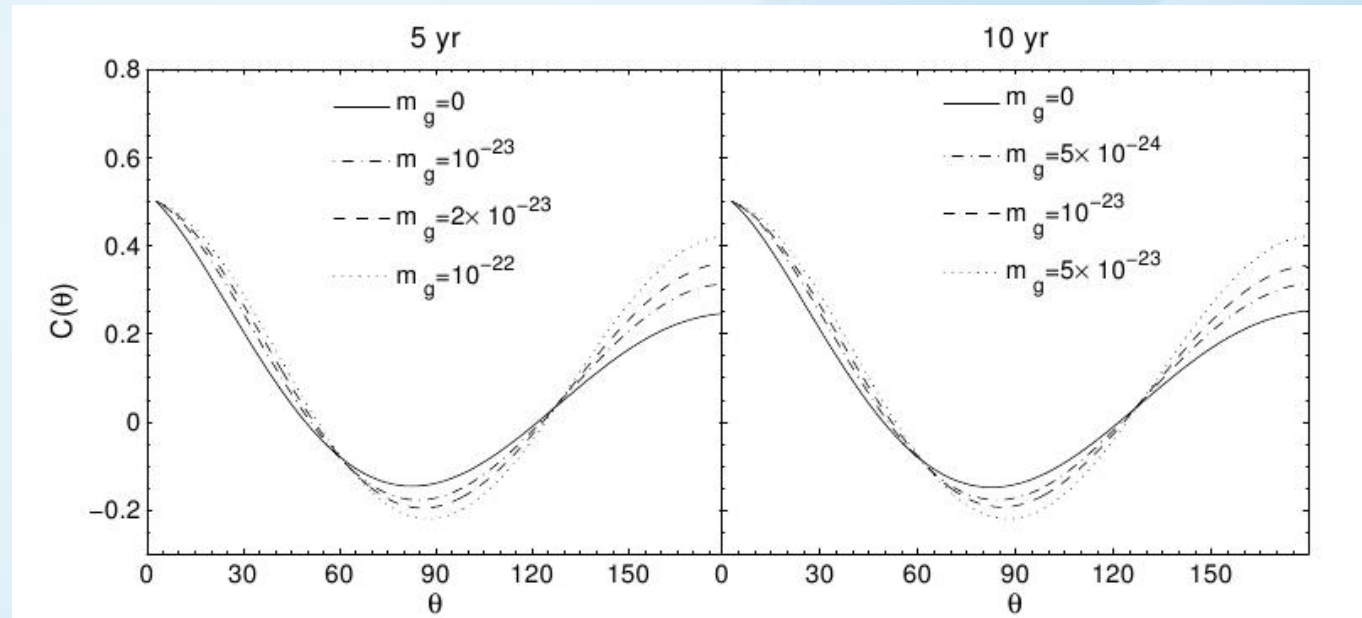


Dispersion / graviton mass

$$\frac{\Delta\omega(t)}{\omega} = -\frac{\hat{\mathbf{n}}^i \hat{\mathbf{n}}^j}{2(1 + (c/\omega_g)\mathbf{k}_g \cdot \hat{\mathbf{n}})} [h_{ij}(t, 0) - h_{ij}(t - |\mathbf{D}|/c, \mathbf{D})]$$



GR case



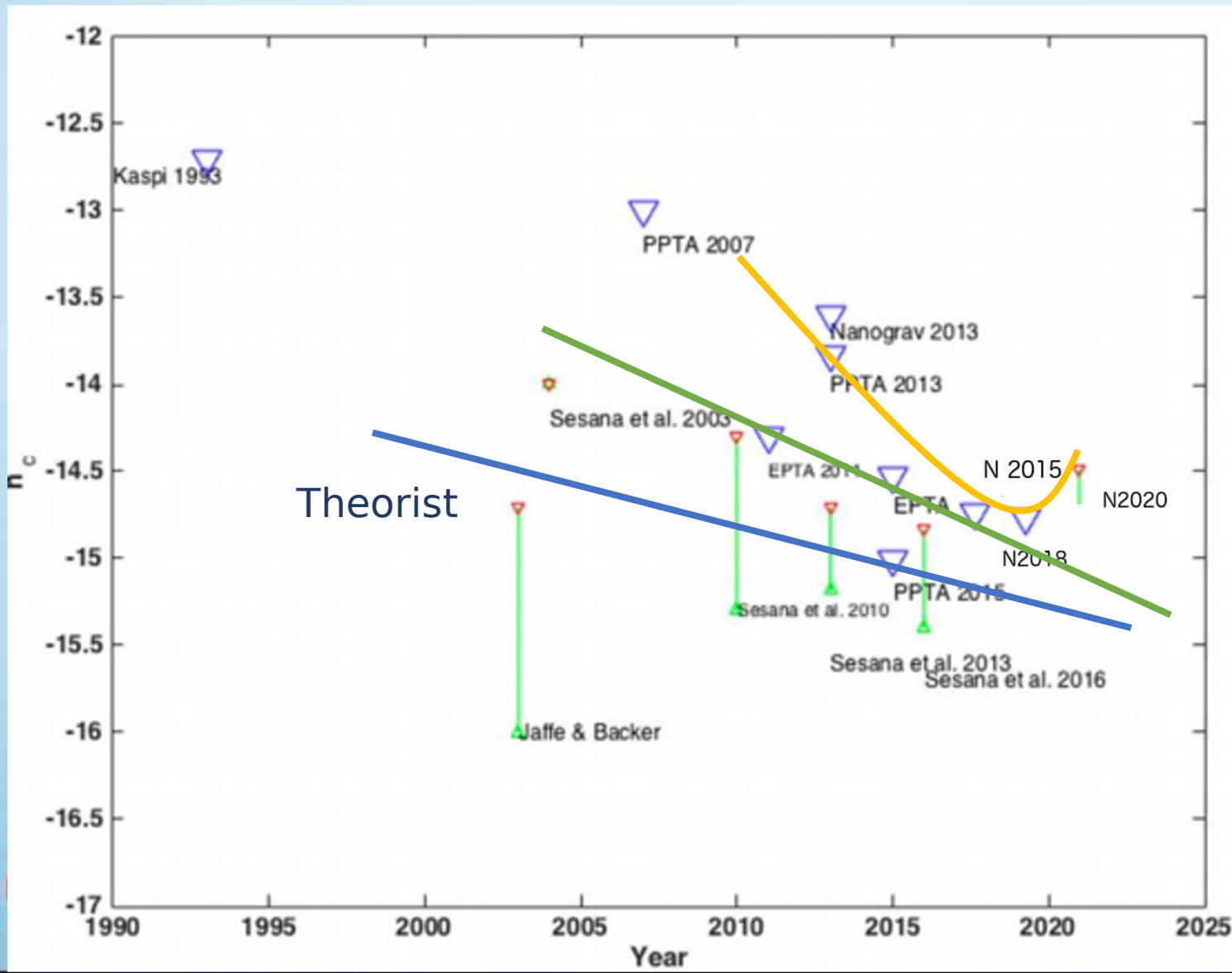
Lee et al. 2010

Recap:

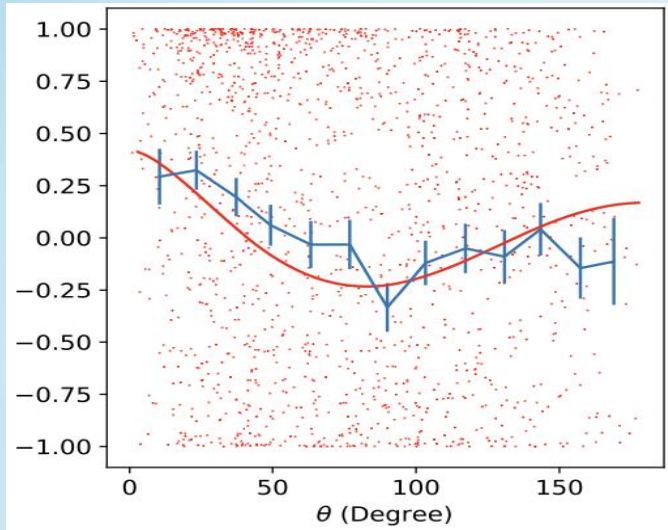
- PTA is **array of pulsars**
- PTA can
 - Provide long-term **stable clock**
 - **Explore the solar system** and searching for hidden objects
 - Detect **stochastic GW background**
 - Supermassive BH binaries
 - Early universe
 - Resolve **single GW sources**
 - SMBHBs ($1e8$ - $1e12$ Msun)
 - Cosmic string loops
 - **Test gravity theory** via polarization and dispersion relation measurements

Where we were before 2023?

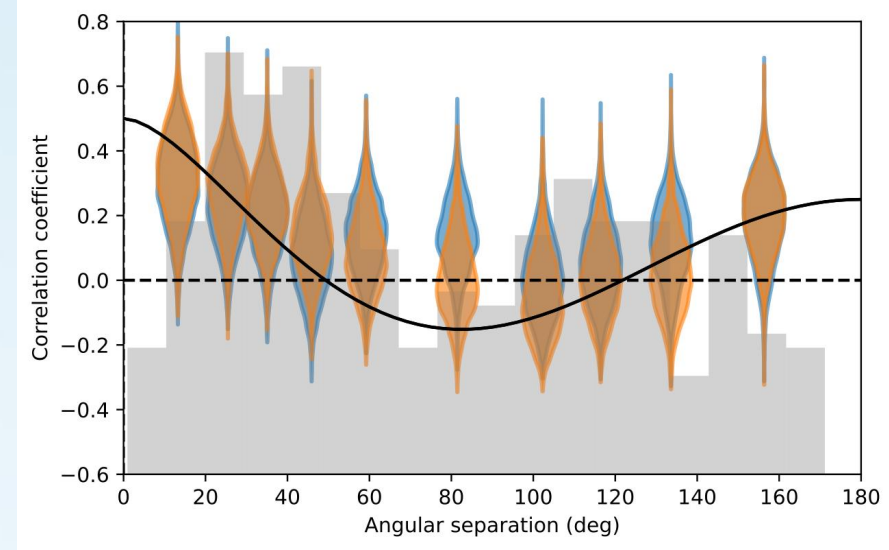
Good news, Theorists low the bar slower than observation.
Bad news, Observer may contradict with each other.



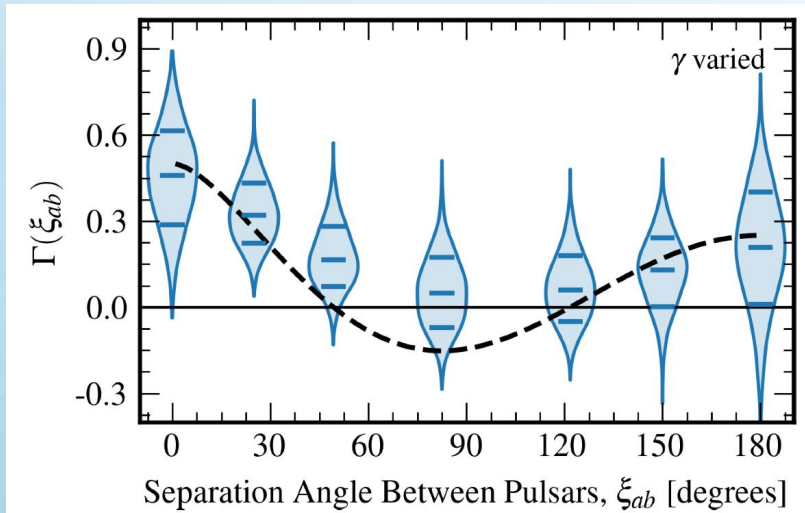
2023 major progress



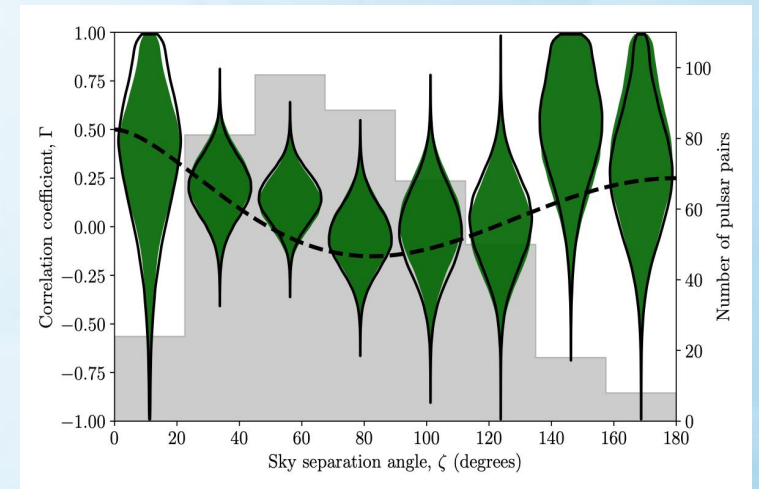
4.6 σ ; CPTA
Xu et al., 2023, RAA



3 σ
EPTA & InPTA, 2023, A&A



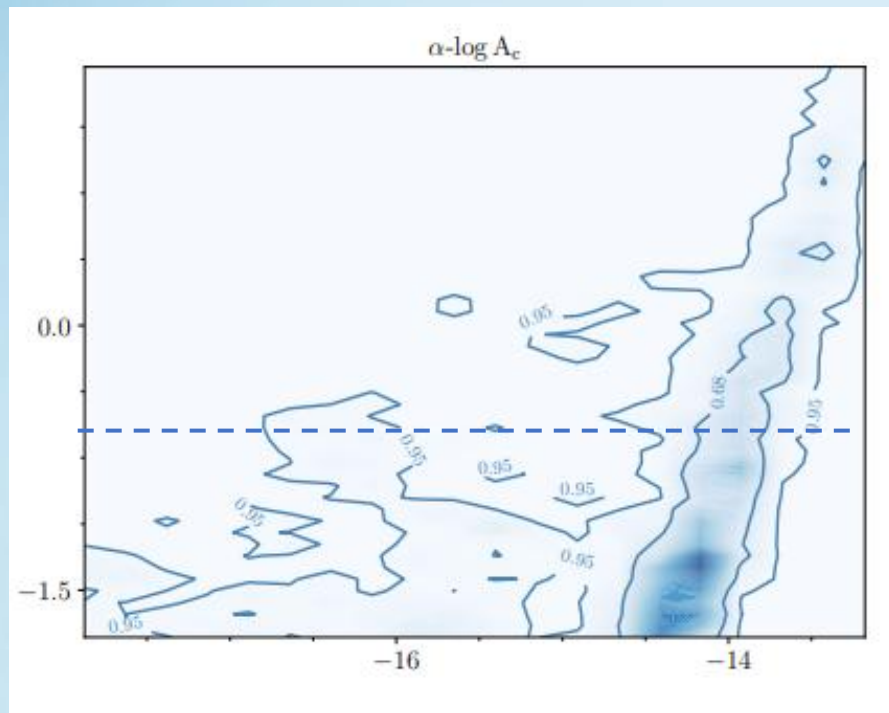
3-4 σ ; NANOGrav
Agazie et al., 2023, ApJL



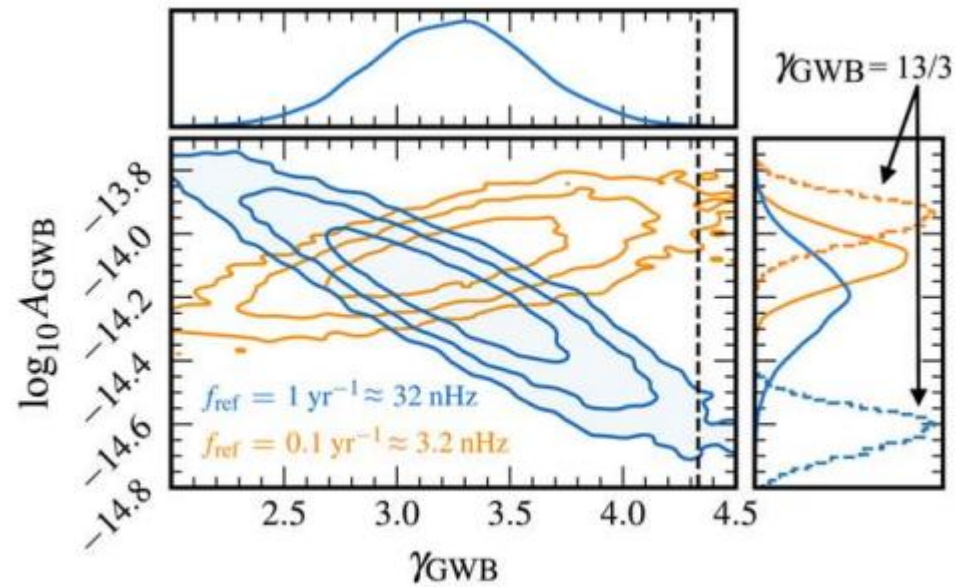
2 σ ; PPTA
Reardon et al., 2023 ApJL

CPTA 2023

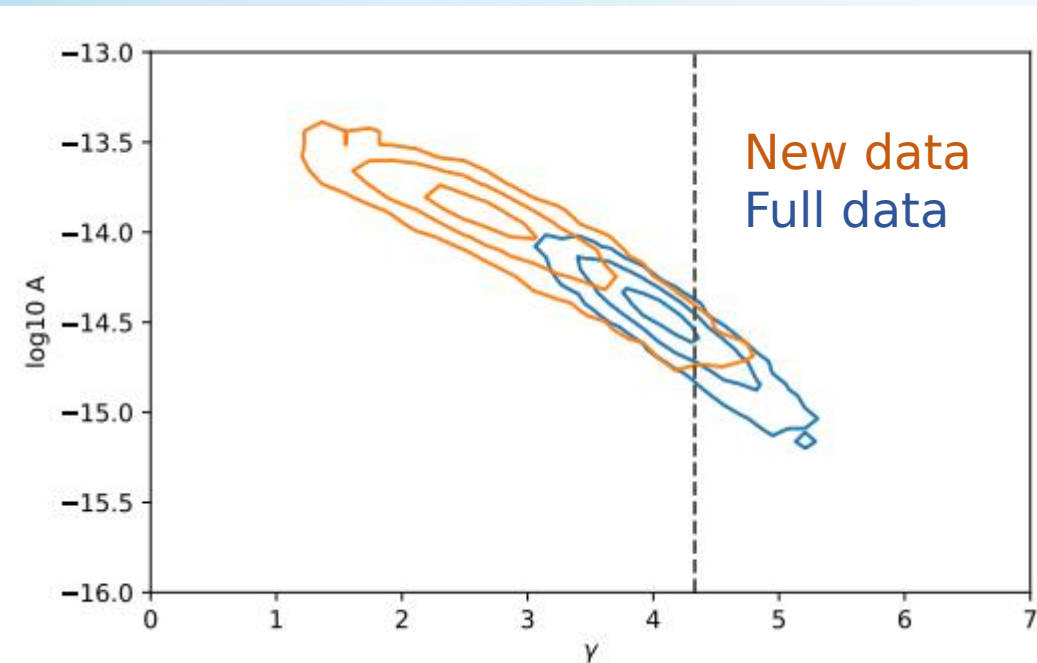
alpha



Nanograv 2023



EPTA 2023



$$2 \cdot \alpha - 3 = \gamma$$

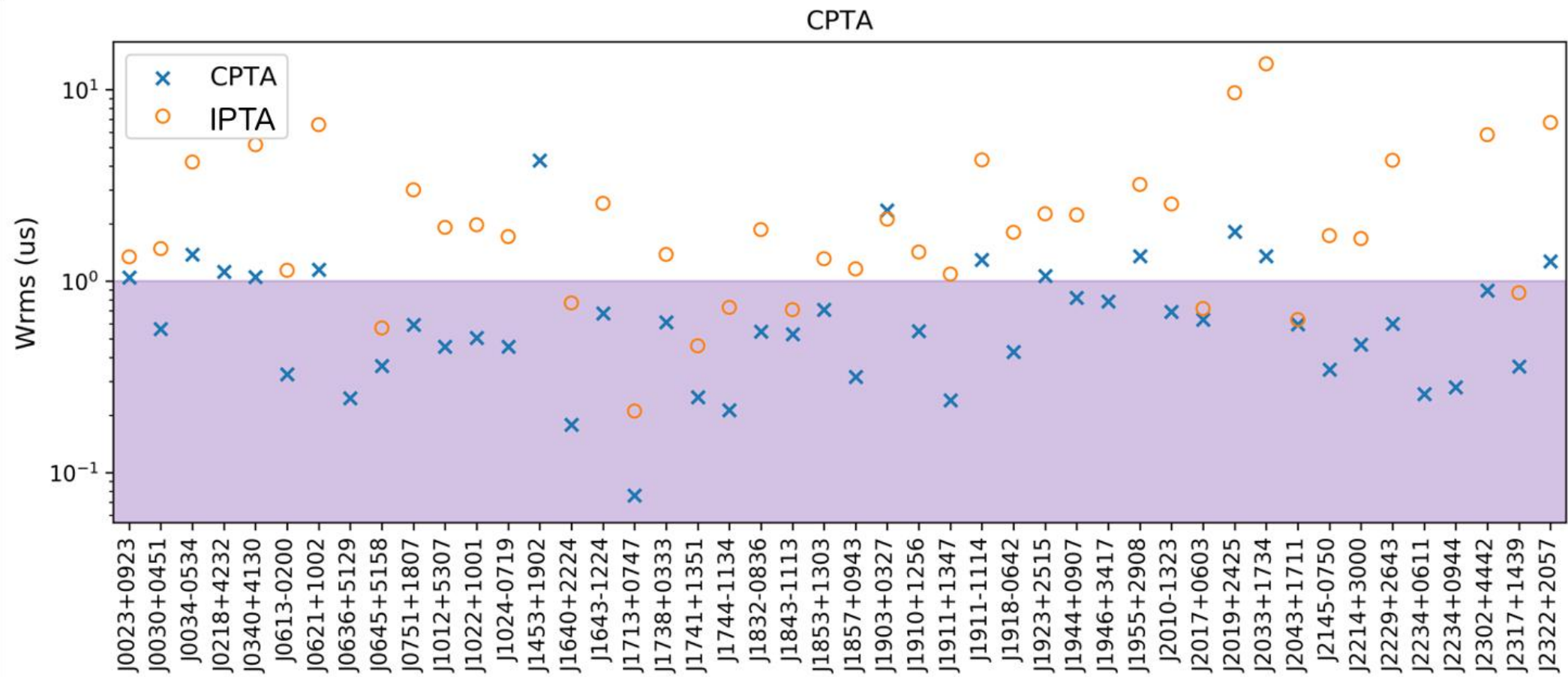
$$A(f) = A_c \left(\frac{f}{1 \text{ yr}^{-1}} \right)^\alpha$$

$$S(f) = \frac{A(f)^2}{12\pi^2 f^3}$$



Data quality

CPTA data precision is improved.



International Efforts



VLA



SKA



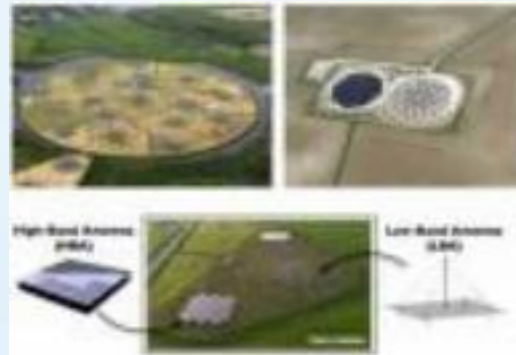
ngVLA



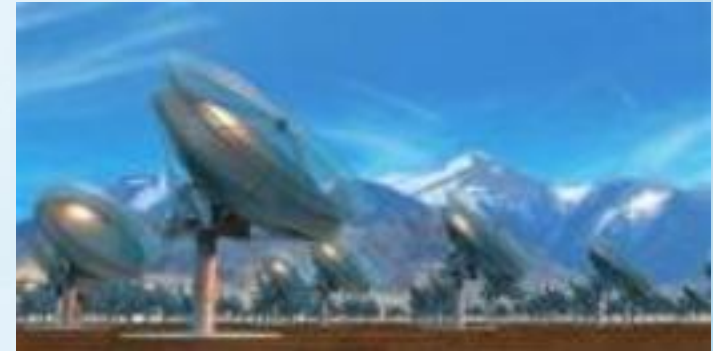
CHIME



MeerKAT



LOFAR



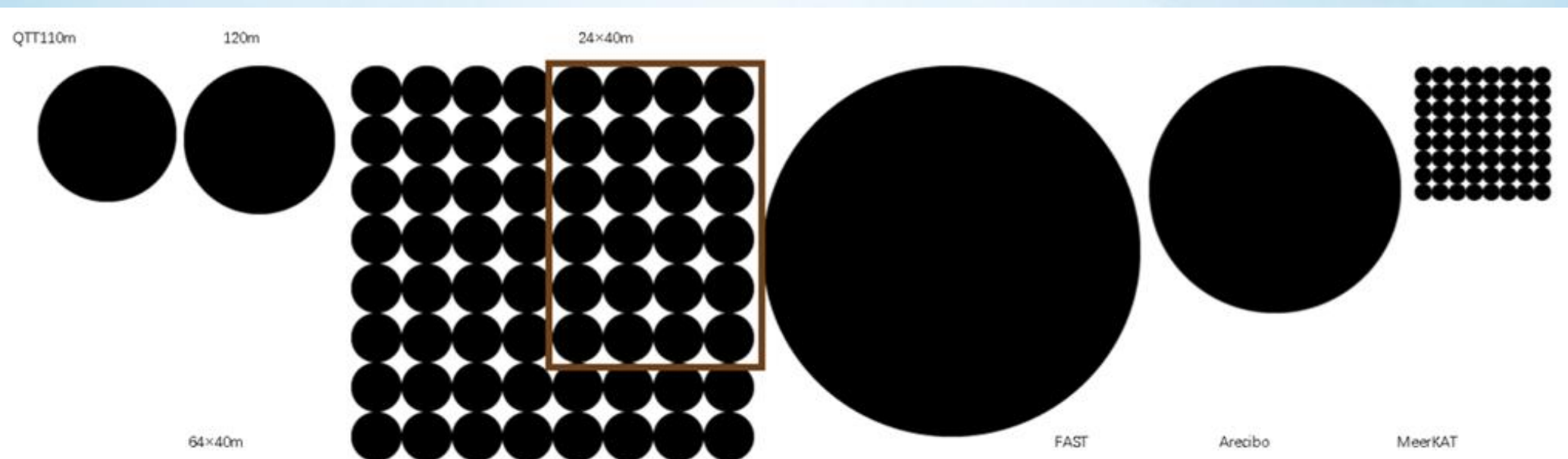
DSA2000

Domestic efforts

- 3 x 100 meter radio telescopes
- 64x 40m telescope array
- 81x 127 antenna low frequency array
- ...



- FAST Array (aims for $64 \times 40\text{m}$)
 - $\text{FAST} + 24 \times 40\text{m} = 1.4\text{-}1.7 \text{ FAST}$, 50% more precise, sky coverage leads to double the pulsar number
- $3 \times 120\text{m}$
- low-frequency array (21CMA)



Progress of Chinese **Radio Trinity**

QTT 110m fullband radio telescope at Xinjiang
In construction, should be ready in 3-5 years.



JRT/RST 120m low frequency (10GHz) radio telescope at Yunnan and Jilin. **Under construction.**



FAST EXT array

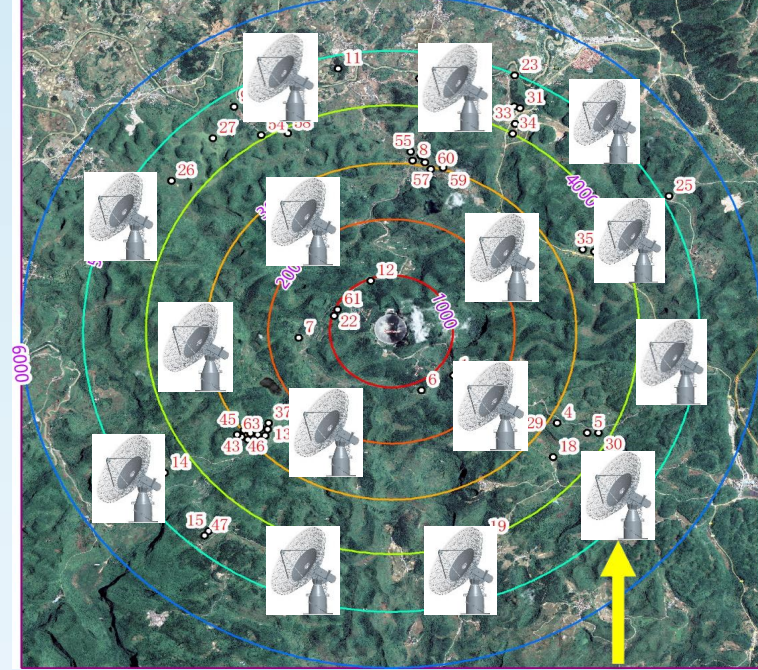
64 x 40m telescope around the FAST.



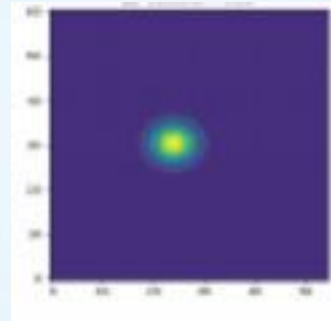
FAST



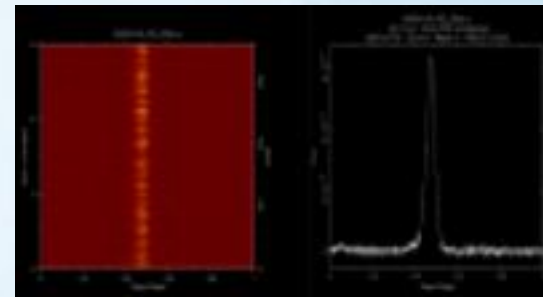
FAST EXTA



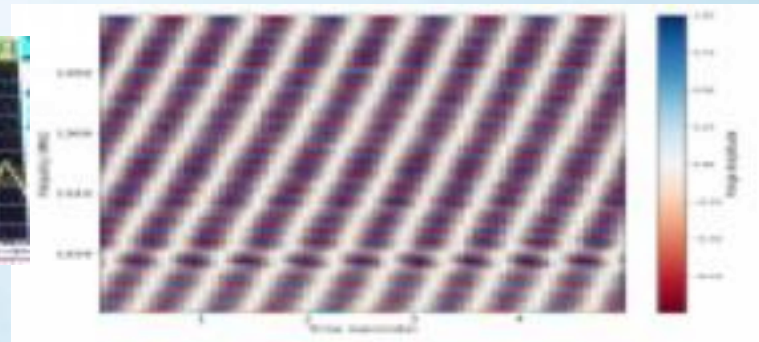
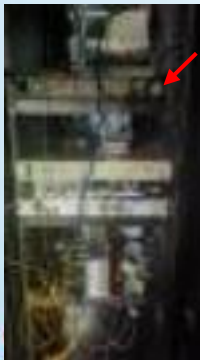
- **Tsys : ~20K**
- **Efficiency : 54.3%**



40m station OTF



40m pulsar test obs.



40m-FAST fringe

21CMA upgrade



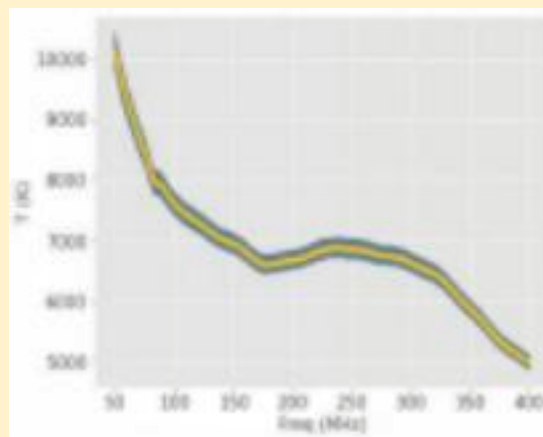
LNA 50-250MHz NF 0.4dB
VSWR < 1.5 δ DB<1dB



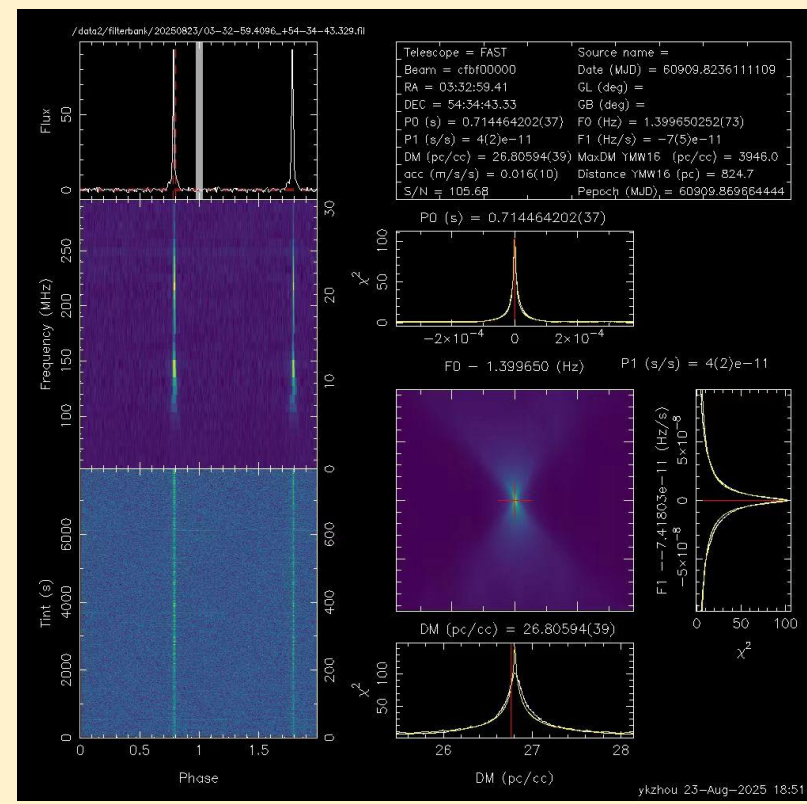
21CMA 127X81 dipoles

SKA-low pilot project

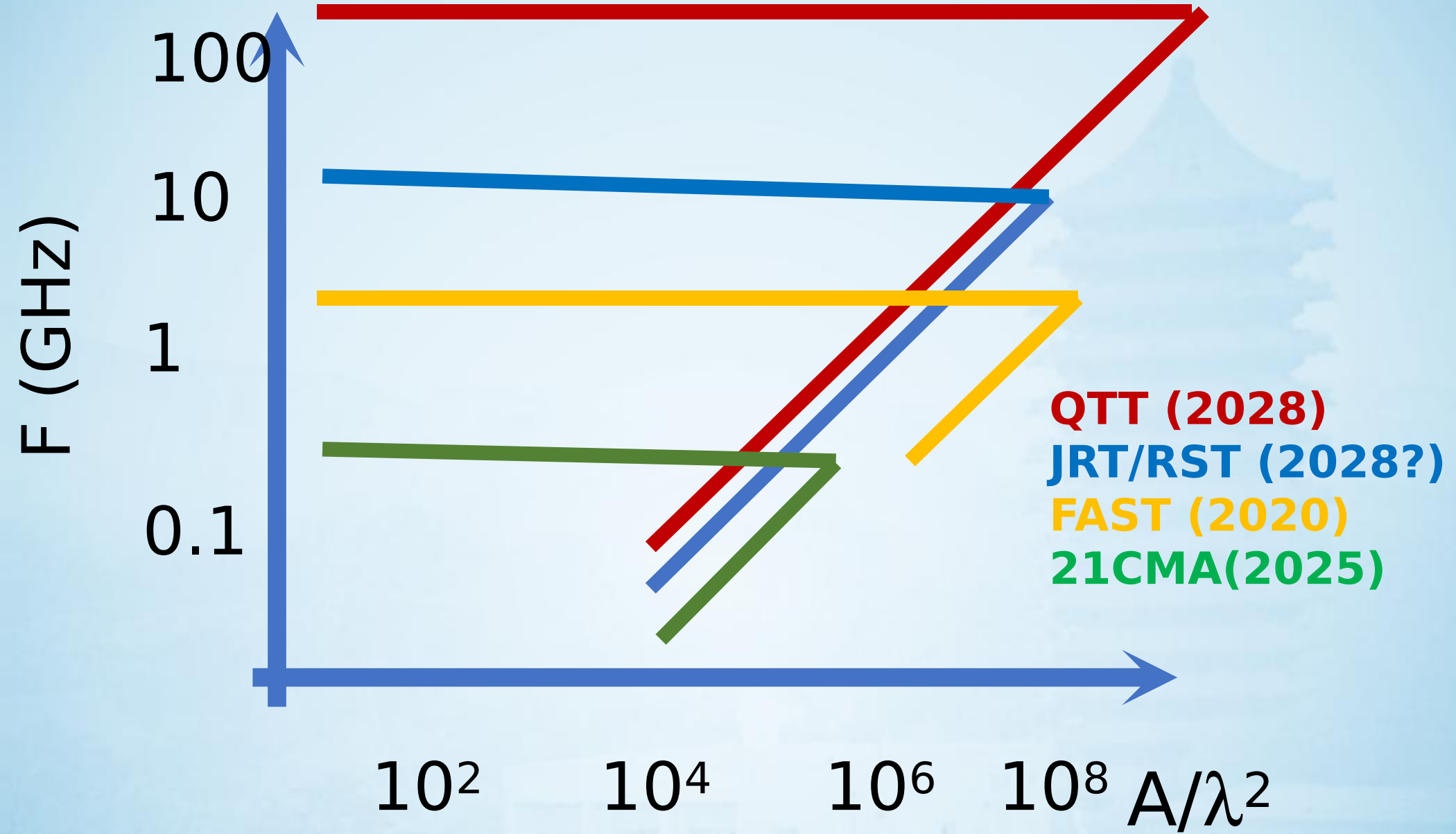
Re-designed all of the RF front-end and backends.



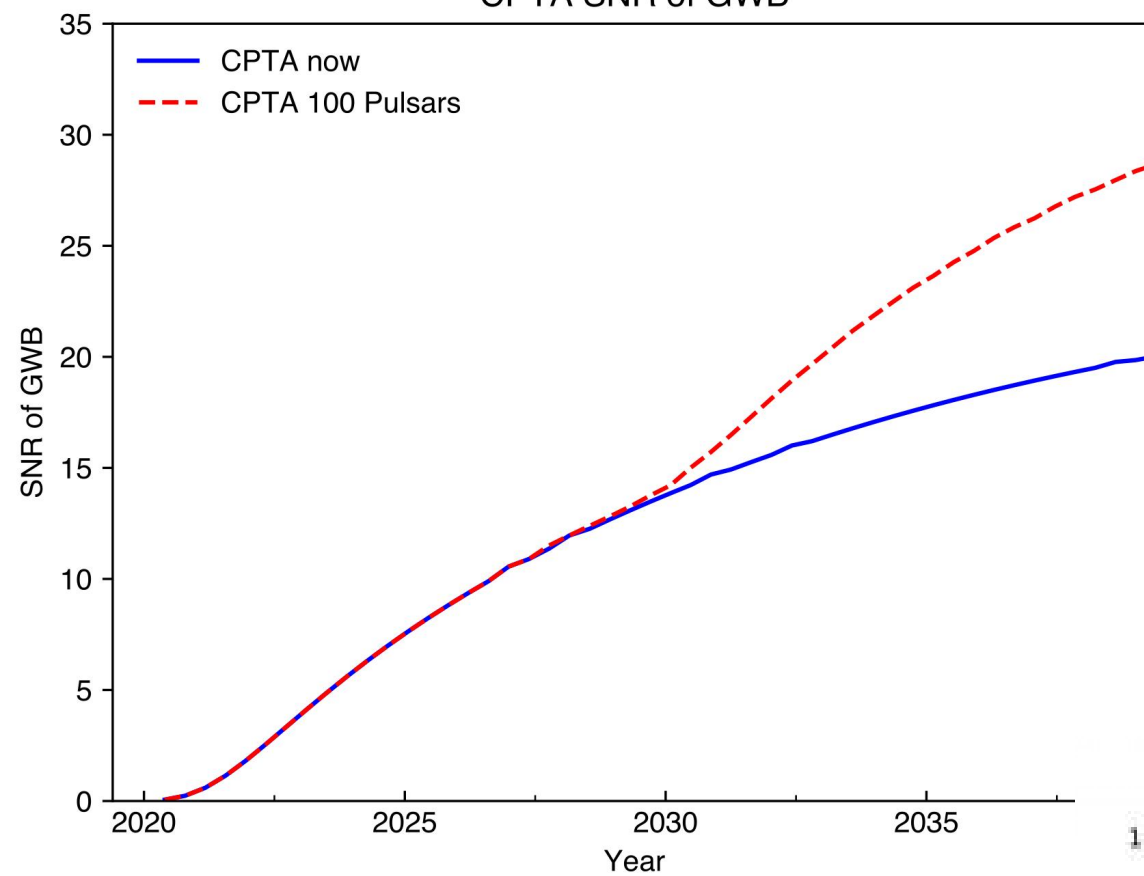
2025 08 21 after first array upgrade



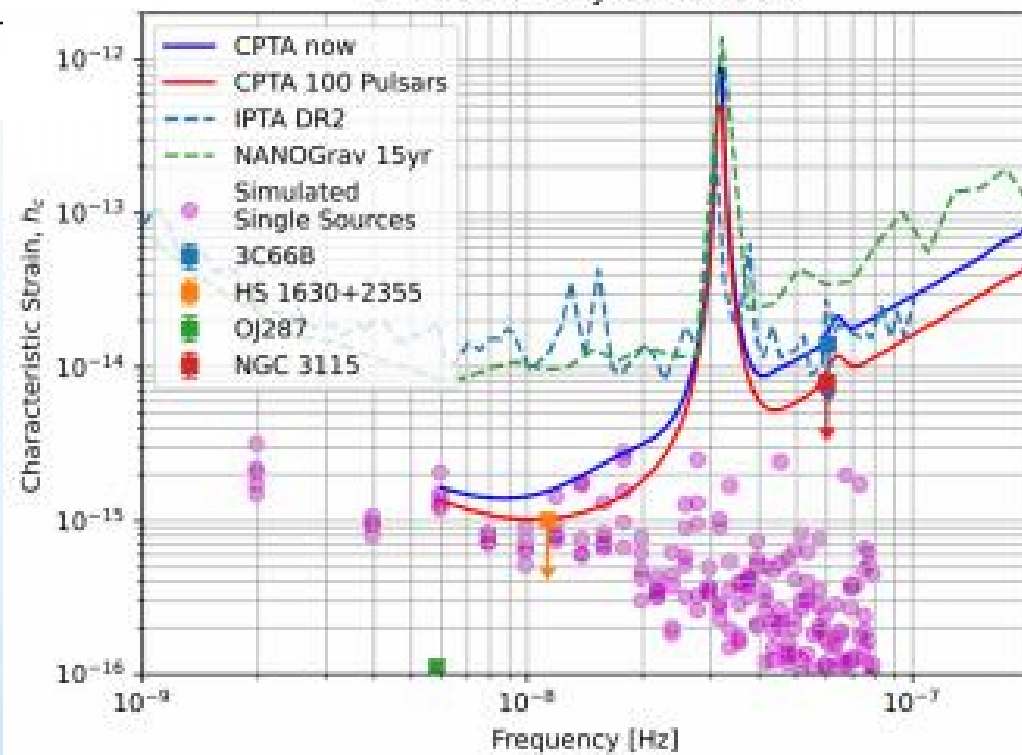
Noise calibrator, $1e-4$ variation over 90 hour, $T_{noise} > 6500$ K, VSWR < 1.12



CPTA SNR of GWB



CPTA Sensitivity Curve--CGW



**We are at the dawn of
the NanoHz GW
astronomy.**

Thanks