

A NEW LOW POWER MEMS DUAL MODE CLOCK WITH PPB STABILITY OVER TEMPERATURE

Lizmarie Comenencia Ortiz¹, Hyun-Keun Kwon¹, Janna Rodriguez¹, David B. Heinz¹, Yunhan Chen², Gabrielle D. Vukasin¹, Dongsuk D. Shin¹ and Thomas W. Kenny¹

¹Stanford University, California, USA

²Apple Inc., California, USA

ABSTRACT

In this paper, we demonstrate a novel dual-mode clock with an in-chip device layer micro-oven which operates at 10X reduced power consumption and provides more than 30X improved stability when compared to a recent result with a micro-oven embedded in the cap [2]. The decrease in the thermal time constant and in the micro-oven power dissipation improves compensation for ambient temperature variations and allows for significant improvements in the stability. This device layer micro-oven enables correction for ambient temperature fluctuations and achieves long-term stability over temperature in ppb, which is better than the stability of TCXOs and competes with state-of-the-art OCXOs, while requiring much less power.

BACKGROUND AND DEVICE DESIGN

A combination of passive and active temperature compensation methods can significantly improve the stability of encapsulated MEMS clocks [1-4]. Active compensation has been achieved previously with the use of a micro-oven embedded in the encapsulation lid of the die; while this method is successful in compensating for temperature changes (± 0.9 ppb/ $^{\circ}\text{C}$), it requires substantial power (approximately 3mW/ $^{\circ}\text{C}$) [2]. The dissipated heat can affect the stability and performance of the device due to temperature gradients and thermal stresses. Previous work has shown that a micro-oven isolated within the device layer of the die can significantly reduce thermal stresses and the power required to ovenize [4, 9].

Here, we extend these efforts by combining the low-power of the device-layer planar suspension with the high-Q and high-linearity of a temperature-compensated Lamé-mode resonator. As shown in Figure 1A, micro-oven structures provide support and thermal isolation for a frame that contacts the dual-mode MEMS resonator at nodes of both vibrational modes.

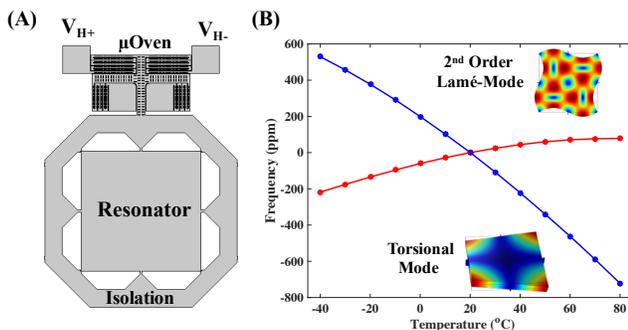


Figure 1: Schematic of dual mode clock: (A) dual Lamé-mode clock, (B) temperature dependence of frequency for each mode using closed loop frequency sweeps.

The devices are fabricated on p-type SOI wafer with a 40 μm device layer using commercially-available, high-volume epitaxial thick film encapsulation processes. The temperature dependence of frequency for both modes was determined within a range of -40°C to 80°C , as shown in Figure 1B. Each mode was excited with a

Zurich Instruments digital lock-in amplifier and transimpedance amplifiers to amplify the resonators' signal as shown in Figure 2.

Table 1: Summarized clock properties and measurements.

Properties		Lamé-Mode Clock
Doping		P-type: $1e20\text{cm}^{-3}$
Geometry		$400\mu\text{m} \times 400\mu\text{m}$
Mode 1	f_1	20.16MHz
	Q_1	950k
Mode 2	f_2	1.19MHz
	Q_2	770k
$\mu\text{Oven Power}$		0.18mW/ $^{\circ}\text{C}$
Temperature Stability		$< \pm 1.5\text{ppb}$

By simultaneously exciting a pair of modes in the same structure, we can continuously determine temperature and provide a frequency reference using a control scheme that is common for quartz OCXOs [5]. The frequency for both modes was tracked with phase lock loops and the frequency difference was regulated by application of voltage across the micro-oven terminals using proportional and integral control.

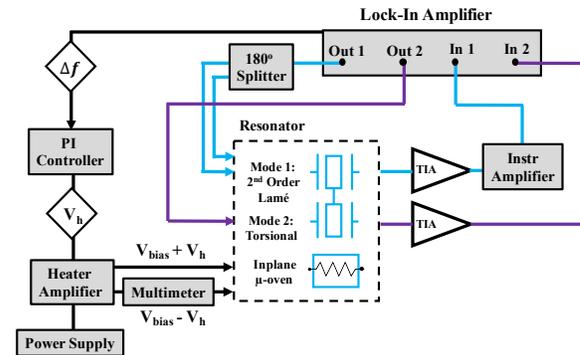


Figure 2: Schematic of experimental set up: a phase locked loop was used to simultaneously track the frequencies of two modes in one resonator. A PI controller was used to control the micro-oven voltage and maintain a constant turnover temperature of 80°C .

RESULTS

This dual-Lamé-mode clock was operated at steady state at -40°C over 12 hours, where 22mW of micro-oven power is required to bring the resonating element to its turnover temperature of 80°C . The Allan Deviation corresponding to this data indicates a minimum of $< 0.2\text{ppb}$ at 1000s.

A stability of $\pm 1.4\text{ppb}$ was achieved while ramping temperature from -40°C to 60°C over 10 hours, as shown in Fig. 4. These results exceed the best performance of all previously-published MEMS-based time references. Notably, this is the first MEMS device to demonstrate single-digit ppb stability over time and temperature. Figure 6 shows this new result in the context of prior products and academic demonstrations of MEMS-based and macroscopic time references.

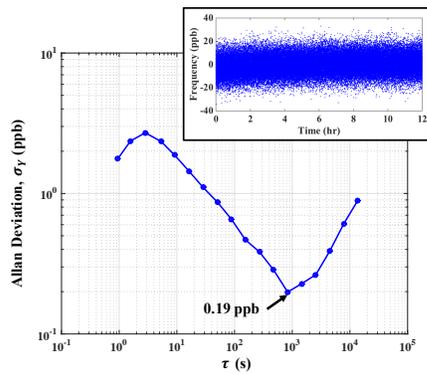


Figure 3: Allan deviation for 2nd order Lamé-mode at an ambient temperature of -40°C with +/-0.3°C temperature fluctuations.

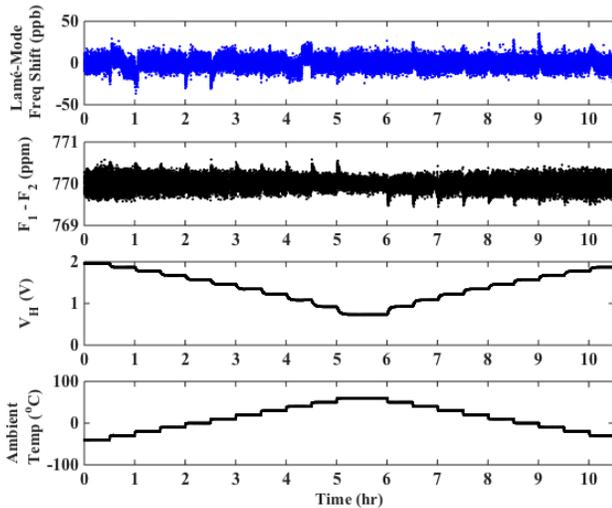


Figure 4: Frequency stability of 2nd order Lamé-mode with changes in ambient temperature. Heater voltage is applied through the micro-oven to maintain the frequency at the turnover temperature.

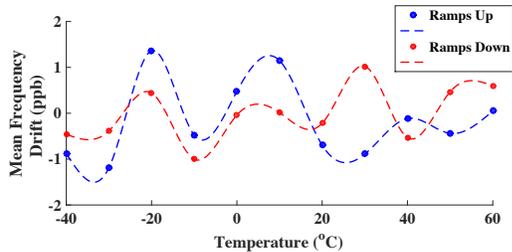


Figure 5: Mean frequency error of 2nd order Lamé-mode at steady state with changes in ambient temperature.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we demonstrate more than 30X improvement in the stability of a dual Lamé-mode clock and 10X reduction in the power consumption. We show that stiff Lamé-mode bulk resonators are ideal candidates for ultra-precise ovenized clocks since they are less susceptible to thermal expansion nonlinearities. Our results for temperature and long-term stability are the best of any previously-published or commercially produced MEMS-based clock, while also operating with heater power far below any conventional quartz OCXO.

These devices have the potential to revolutionize applications that require ultra-stable references and low power.

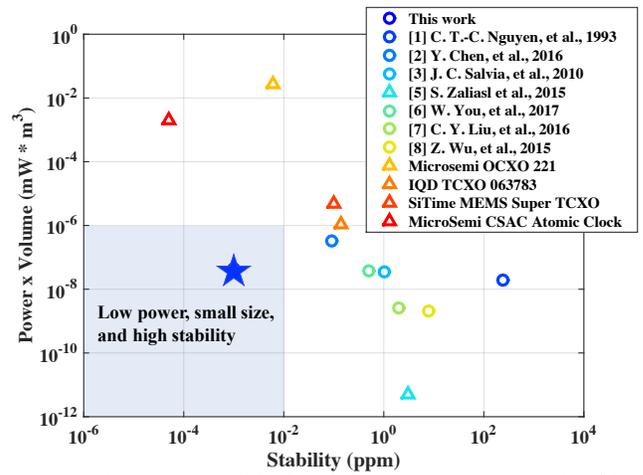


Figure 6: Comparison of clock stability over temperature (-40°C to 80°C) for range of devices shows that the dual Lamé-mode clock (starred) has better stability and power consumption than leading TCXOs and OXCOs used in industrial applications.

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CONTACT

*L. Comenencia Ortiz, tel: +1-787-608-9044; lcomenen@stanford.edu