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HIGH SENSITIVE RADIO RECEIVER SYSTEM AND HIGH FREQUENCY RECEIVER UNIT FOR USE THEREIN

TECHNICAL FIELD

5 The present invention relates to a high sensitive radio receiver system including bandpass filters which are cooled for reception of a desired high frequency signal as may be used in a base station radio equipment for mobile communication system, for example, and a high frequency receiver unit for use in such a receiver system.

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PRIOR ART

 For a base station of a mobile communication system which includes a plurality of sectors, space diversity reception technique is employed for each sector in order to attain high sensitive reception of the signal transmitted from
15 a mobile station. In this instance, the transmitted signal from the mobile station is received by the plurality of antennae, and in order to achieve high C/N(carrier to noise ratio) characteristics, the received high frequency (hereafter h.f.) signals from the antennae in each sector are processed by the bandpass filters of predetermined characteristics which are cooled with
20 extremely low temperature, and one of the filter outputs which exhibits a highest level is selected for demodulation by an associated receiver.

 If the cooling function applied to these bandpass filters ceases to operate and allows the temperature to rise, thermal noises generated within the bandpass filters increase, and there results a degradation in the noise
25 figure which has been kept improved by the cooling function, leading to a degradation in the received signal or a failure of reception. In particular, when the bandpass filters are composed of superconducting bandpass filters, a



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fault in the cooling unit results in not only a degradation of the noise figure, but also a problem that the reception is disabled in all the sectors. This is because the superconducting bandpass filters cannot be maintained in the superconducting state after exceeding the critical temperature. This problem is quite remarkable when the bandpass filters connected to the plural antennae in each sector are cooled in a single vacuum chamber (heat shielding box) to reduce the total number of the cooling units corresponding to the sectors for economic purpose. However, a failure in one of these cooling units disables the reception of the corresponding sector, even though the cooling unit is provided separately for each sector.

An arrangement which overcomes this problem is disclosed in U. S. Patent No. 5,828,944, and is illustrated in Fig. 1. As shown, two antennae are arranged in each of three sectors and three vacuum chambers 8₁, 8₂, 8₃. Each chamber contains a pair of superconducting bandpass filters. Antennae 1₁, 1₂ of sector SC1 are connected to bandpass filters 3₁, 3₂ contained in different chambers 8₁, 8₃; antennae 1₃, 1₄ of sector SC2 are connected to bandpass filters 3₃, 3₄ contained in different chambers 8₁, 8₂; and antennae 1₅, 1₆ of sector SC3 are connected to bandpass filters 3₅, 3₆ contained in different chambers 8₂, 8₃. Outputs from the bandpass filters 3₁, 3₂ are connected to a diversity receiver 9₁, outputs from the bandpass filters 3₃, 3₄ are connected to a diversity receiver 9₂, outputs from the bandpass filters 3₅, 3₆ are connected to a diversity receiver 9₃.

With this arrangement, if a failure occurs with the chamber 8₁ which contains the bandpass filter 3₁, 3₃ for sectors SC1 and SC2, for example, the diversity effect is no longer available, but the reception in these sectors are not disabled because the remaining bandpass filters 3₂, 3₄ for these sectors are contained in the chambers 8₃, 8₂, respectively. According to this patent,

received h.f. signals are processed by superconducting bandpass filters 3₁ to 3₆, the outputs of which are directly led out of the chambers to be input to the diversity receivers 9₁, 9₂, 9₃, for amplification, and accordingly, C/N of received h.f. signals is degraded due to thermal noises generated during the
5 amplification.

In a high sensitive radio receiver system employing superconducting bandpass filters, an extremely high-reliable cooling unit is used because the filter performance is degraded rapidly if the temperature to which the superconducting bandpass filters are cooled exceeds a critical temperature to
10 render them non-superconducting. However, there remains a problem that the reception by the high sensitive radio receiver system may be disabled by a rapid degradation in the performance of superconducting bandpass filters as a result of an aging effect of the cooling unit or a rise in the cooling temperature upon occurrence of a failure. This is because even an extremely
15 high-reliable cooling unit cannot be free from a failure.

It is an object of the present invention to provide a high sensitive radio receiver system which has an excellent noise figure and which is operable even when one of a plurality of cooling units fails. It is another object of the present invention to provide a high frequency unit for use in the high sensitive
20 radio receiver system which is capable of delivering a received h.f. signal even if a fault occurs with the cooling of a superconducting bandpass filter.

DISCLOSURE OF THE INVENTION

A high sensitive radio receiver system for receiving signals from at
25 least two antennae provided in each of a plurality of sectors according to the present invention comprises;

a plurality of vacuum chambers;

a plurality of cooling units each cooling the interior of each of the plurality of vacuum chambers;

a plurality of bandpass filters each contained in one of the vacuum chambers for deriving a received h.f. signal in a predetermined frequency
5 band, said at least two antennae of each sector being connected to the bandpass filters contained in different ones of the plurality of vacuum chambers; and

a low noise amplifiers each contained in corresponding one of said vacuum chambers and connected in series with a corresponding one of the
10 plurality of bandpass filters for amplifying and delivering the received h.f. signal;

wherein a combination of each series connection of the bandpass filter and the low noise amplifier, a vacuum chamber which contains the series connection and the cooling unit which cools the series connection forms a high frequency
15 receiver unit.

A high frequency receiver unit according to the present invention comprises:

a vacuum chamber;

a cooling unit for cooling the interior of the vacuum chamber;

20 a first signal path contained within the vacuum chamber and including a series connection of a superconducting bandpass filter which operates in a superconducting state at or below a critical temperature and a low noise amplifier for passing a received h.f. signal therethrough; and

a second signal path including a normal conducting bandpass filter
25 operative at least at or above the critical temperature of the superconducting bandpass filter and having substantially the same passband as the superconducting bandpass filter, for delivering the received h.f. signal by

bypassing the first signal path whenever the superconducting bandpass filter is not in a superconducting state.

BREIF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

5 Fig. 1 is a block diagram illustrating an example of prior art high sensitive radio receiver system;

 Fig. 2 is a block diagram illustrating an example of a first embodiment of a high sensitive radio receiver system according to the present invention;

 Fig. 3 is a block diagram illustrating an example of an antenna
10 duplexer;

 Fig. 4 is a block diagram illustrating a second embodiment of the present invention;

 Fig. 5 is a block diagram illustrating a third embodiment of the present invention;

15 Fig. 6 is a block diagram illustrating an embodiment of a high frequency receiver unit according to the present invention;

 Fig. 7 is a schematic illustration of an output selection circuit shown in Fig. 6;

 Fig. 8 is a Smith chart representing an example of input impedance
20 when a bandpass filter 3 is in its superconducting state and non-superconducting state;

 Fig. 9 graphically shows signal transfer characteristics from point O to point T of an output selection circuit when the bandpass filter 3 is in its superconducting state;

25 Fig. 10 graphically shows signal transfer characteristics from point O to point S of the output selection circuit when the bandpass filter 3 is not in its superconducting state;

Fig. 11 is an illustration of an output selection circuit when an MEMS RF switch is used for the switch element;

Fig. 12 is a block diagram showing another arrangement of the high frequency receiver unit according to the present invention;

5 Fig. 13 is a block diagram showing a further arrangement of the high frequency receiver unit according to the present invention;

Fig. 14 is a block diagram showing yet another arrangement of the high frequency receiver unit according to the present invention;

10 Fig. 15 is a block diagram showing still another arrangement of the high frequency receiver unit according to the present invention;

Fig. 16 is an illustration of an example of input selection circuit used in the high frequency receiver unit shown in Fig. 15;

Fig. 17 is a block diagram of an additional arrangement of the high frequency receiver unit according to the present invention; and

15 Fig. 18 is an illustration of an example of input selection circuit when an MEMS RF switch is used for the switch element.

BEST MODE OF CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION

FIRST EMBODIMENT

20 An embodiment of the invention for a conventional high sensitive radio receiver system is shown in Fig. 2 where three sectors are used.

In a mobile communication in which the high sensitive radio receiver system is used, a signal is received by applying the space diversity technique using two antennae per sector. In the example shown in Fig. 2, one of the
25 two antennae is shared for transmission and reception. The high sensitive radio receiver system comprises an antenna terminal 2_1 to which a received signal from an antenna 1_1 of sector SC1 is input, a bandpass filter 3_1 which

selects a signal in a desired band from the received h.f. signal input from an antenna terminal 2_1 , a low noise amplifier 4_1 for amplifying an output from a bandpass filter 3_1 with a low noise response, and an output terminal 5_1 which delivers the received h.f. signal that is amplified by the low noise amplifier 4_1 .

- 5 The high sensitive radio receiver system is often installed outdoors or in the vicinity of the top of an antenna tower in order to reduce a feeder loss from antenna 1_1 to antenna terminal 2_1 .

(The receiver system also comprises an antenna terminal 2_2 to which a received h.f. signal from an antenna 1_2 is input, a bandpass filter 3_2 for
10 selecting a signal in a desired band from the received h.f. signal which is provided from the antenna terminal 2_2 , an antenna duplexer 6_1 which allows the common antenna 1_2 to be shared between the transmission and the reception, a low noise amplifier 4_2 for amplifying an output from the bandpass filter 3_2 to a desired level with a low noise response, and an output
15 terminal 5_2 for delivering the received h.f. signal which is amplified by the low noise amplifier 4_2 . The antenna duplexer 6_1 has an input terminal 7_1 to which a transmitting h.f. signal is input.

(As one of diversity reception techniques, selection combining is performed by a selector 20 which selects one of the received h.f. signals from
20 the output terminals 5_1 and 5_2 on the basis of the received strength information so that a signal which exhibits a higher sensitivity is selected to be delivered through a selector output terminal 22_1 .

In the similar manner as mentioned above in connection with the sector SC1, the receiver system also comprises antennae 1_3 and 1_4 , antennae
25 terminals 2_3 and 2_4 , bandpass filters 3_3 and 3_4 , an antenna duplexer 6_2 , low noise amplifier 4_3 and 4_4 , output terminals 5_3 and 5_4 and an input terminal 7_2 for the sector SC2 and also comprises antennae 1_5 and 1_6 , antenna terminals

2₅ and 2₆, bandpass filters 3₅ and 3₆, an antenna duplexer 6₃, low noise amplifier 4₅ and 4₆, output terminals 5₅ and 5₆ and an input terminal 7₃ for the sector SC3.

For each of the sectors SC2 and SC3, one of the received h.f. signals from the pair of output terminals 5₃ and 5₄ or 5₅ and 5₆ is selected by the selector 20 to be delivered through a selector output terminal 21₂ or 21₃.

In this embodiment, a series connection of the bandpass filter 3₁ and the low noise amplifier 4₁ is confined in a vacuum chamber 8₁ to be thermally insulated from the exterior and is cooled by a cooling unit 9₁. The bandpass filter 3₁, the low noise amplifier 4₁, the vacuum chamber 8₁ and the cooling unit 9₁ form in combination a high frequency receiver unit 50₁. A series connection of the bandpass filter 3₂ and the low noise amplifier 4₂ is also contained in a vacuum chamber 8₂ and is cooled by a cooling unit 9₂. The bandpass filter 3₂, the low noise amplifier 4₂, the vacuum chamber 8₂ and the cooling unit 9₂ form in combination a high frequency receiver unit 50₂. In the similar manner, a series connection of each of the bandpass filters 3₃ to 3₆ and corresponding one of the low noise amplifiers 4₃ to 4₆ is contained in corresponding one of vacuum chambers 8₃ to 8₆, and is cooled by corresponding one of cooling units 9₃ to 9₆, respectively, thus forming high frequency receiver units 50₃ to 50₆. Antenna duplexers 6₁ to 6₃ and the high frequency receiver units 50₁ to 50₆ are housed in a casing 10.

While not shown, the low noise amplifiers 4₁ to 4₆ and the cooling units 9₁ to 9₆ are fed with an operating power.

One of the antenna duplexers 6₁ to 6₃ is illustrated in Fig. 3, and comprises a directional filter. Specifically, in the example shown, the directional filter comprises a bandpass filter 6A which passes a received h.f. signal from an antenna to a receiver side, a bandpass filter 6B which passes a

transmitted h.f. signal from a transmitter side to the antenna, and a directional coupler 6C for coupling one ends of the both filters to the antenna side. The receiver h.f. signal from the antenna side is blocked by the bandpass filter 6B from being transmitted to the transmitter side while the transmitted h.f. signal
5 from the transmitter side is blocked by the bandpass filter 6A from being transmitted to the receiver side. In this manner, both the transmitter and receiver circuits can be connected to a single antenna.

Each of the vacuum chambers 8_1 to 8_6 is constructed to interrupt a heat flow from the exterior by vacuum heat insulation, for example, and
10 accordingly, the bandpass filters 3_1 to 3_6 and the low noise amplifiers 4_1 to 4_6 which are confined in the vacuum chambers 8_1 to 8_6 are cooled by the cooling units 9_1 to 9_6 to an extremely low temperature on the order of several tens K in a stable manner for prolonged period of time. Each of the cooling units 9_1 to 9_6 comprises a cryogenic refrigerator capable of maintaining an extremely
15 low temperature such as tens K in a stable manner for a prolonged period of time by utilizing a heat exchange cycle through the compression and the expansion of a helium gas or the like, and commercially available products may be used at this end.

When the bandpass filters 3_1 to 3_6 and the low noise amplifiers 4_1 to 4_6
20 are cooled in this manner to a extremely low temperature in stable manner and for a prolonged period of time, thermal noises which may be added in the bandpass filters 3_1 to 3_6 and the low noise amplifiers 4_1 to 4_6 can be reduced ultimately. Consequently, when the high sensitive radio receiver system shown in Fig. 2 is used, a received output of a given C/N(Carrier power/Noise
25 power) can be obtained from a low level received signal and also it is possible to reduce the transmission power required at the transmitting side to allow reception of signal with the given C/N at the receiving side.

In the present embodiment, the series connection of the bandpass filter 3_i and the low noise amplifier 4_i which corresponds to each antenna is cooled by the cooling unit 9_i ($i=1,2,\dots,6$) which is provided separately. As a result, for each sector, it is assured that if either one of the two cooling units which
5 correspond to the two antennae of the sector fails and prevents the bandpass filter and the low noise amplifier disposed in that path from being cooled, the combination of the bandpass filter and the low noise amplifier in the other path is capable of deriving a received h.f. signal.

10 SECOND EMBODIMENT

Fig. 4 shows a second embodiment of the high sensitive radio receiver system according to the present invention. In this embodiment, two vacuum chambers $8_1, 8_2$ are disposed in the casing 10. The vacuum chamber 8_1 contains superconducting bandpass filters $3_1, 3_2, 3_3$ and low noise amplifiers
15 $4_1, 4_2, 4_3$ which are connected to the filter outputs. The vacuum chamber 8_2 contains superconducting bandpass filters $3_4, 3_5, 3_6$ and low noise amplifiers $4_4, 4_5, 4_6$ which are connected to the filter outputs. Outputs from the low noise amplifiers 4_1 to 4_3 and 4_4 to 4_6 are connected through output terminals 5_1 to 5_3 and 5_4 to 5_6 selectively to the three diversity amplifiers which are
20 located outside the casing 10 though not shown in Fig. 4. The interior of vacuum chambers 8_1 and 8_2 is cooled by cooling unit 9_1 and 9_2 , respectively. In this embodiment, three sets of the bandpass filters 3_1 to 3_3 and the low noise amplifiers 4_1 to 4_3 which are connected in series, the vacuum chamber 8_1 and the cooling unit 9_1 constitute three high frequency receiver units while
25 utilizing the vacuum chamber 8_1 and the cooling unit 9_1 in common. Similarly, three sets of the bandpass filters 3_4 to 3_6 and the low noise amplifiers 4_4 to 4_6 which are connected in series, the vacuum chamber 8_2 and the cooling unit 9_2

constitute three high frequency receiver units while utilizing the vacuum chamber 8₂ and the cooling unit 9₂ in common.

Received h.f. signals from the two antennae 1₁ and 1₂ of a first sector are applied to antenna terminals 2₁ and 2₂, respectively, and thence input, one
5 directly and the other through an antenna duplexer 6₁, to the bandpass filters 3₁ and 3₄ which are contained in different vacuum chambers 8₁ and 8₂, respectively.

The same applies to the second sector. A received h.f. signal from an antenna 1₃ is supplied through an antenna terminal 2₃ to the bandpass filter 3₂
10 which is contained in one of the vacuum chambers, 8₁, while an antenna 1₄ is connected through an antenna terminal 2₄ and an antenna duplexer 6₂ to the bandpass filter 3₅ contained in the other vacuum chamber 8₂. The same applies to the third sector where a received h.f. signals from an antenna 1₅ is supplied through an antenna terminal 2₅ to the bandpass filter 3₃ which is
15 contained in one vacuum chamber 8₁ while an antenna 1₆ is connected through an antenna terminal 2₆ and an antenna duplexer 6₃ to the bandpass filter 3₆ contained in the other vacuum chamber 8₂.

In this manner, in the second embodiment, the high frequency receiver units are divided into one set including the bandpass filters 3₁ to 3₃ and the
20 low noise amplifiers 4₁ to 4₃ and another set including the bandpass filters 3₄ to 3₆ and the low noise amplifiers 4₄ to 4₆. The bandpass filters 3₁ to 3₃ and the low noise amplifiers 4₁ to 4₃ are confined in the vacuum chamber 8₁ and are cooled by the cooling unit 9₁ while the bandpass filters 3₄ to 3₆ and the low noise amplifiers 4₄ to 4₆ are confined in the vacuum chamber 8₂ and
25 cooled by the cooling unit 9₂. In this manner, two receiving paths, each comprising the bandpass filter and the low noise amplifier, of the same sector are cooled by separate cooling units.

The connection of two antennae of each sector to the bandpass filters which are contained in different vacuum chambers 8_1 and 8_2 is merely exemplified in Fig. 4. Alternatively, the connection between the antenna terminals 2_1 and 2_2 and the bandpass filters 3_1 and 3_4 shown in Fig. 4 may be
5 interchanged, and the connection between the antenna terminals 2_3 and 2_4 and the bandpass filters 3_2 and 3_5 may also be interchanged. Four different combinations of different connections are possible. With such a connection, if a fault occurs in either the cooling unit 9_1 or 9_2 to disable the cooling function in a similar manner as in the prior art illustrated in Fig. 1, at least one
10 path of each sector is not influenced, thus avoiding a degraded reception or an inability of reception of all the sectors. As before, in this embodiment, each bandpass filter and its connected low noise amplifier are contained in a vacuum chamber to be cooled, resulting in the addition of thermal noises in the amplifier to be drastically reduced, allowing a received h.f. signal of a
15 high quality to be obtained.

THIRD EMBODIMENT

Fig. 5 shows a third embodiment of the high sensitive radio receiver system according to the present invention. In this embodiment, three
20 vacuum chambers 8_1 , 8_2 , 8_3 and associated cooling units 9_1 , 9_2 , 9_3 are disposed in a casing 10, respectively. Two antennae of each sector are connected to different bandpass filters which are contained in two of the three vacuum chambers 8_1 , 8_2 , 8_3 , in a similar manner as in the prior art shown in Fig. 1. The vacuum chamber 8_1 contains bandpass filters 3_1 , 3_2 and low
25 noise amplifiers 4_1 , 4_2 connected thereto; the vacuum chamber 8_2 contains bandpass filters 3_3 , 3_4 and low noise amplifiers 4_3 , 4_4 connected thereto; and the vacuum chamber 8 contains bandpass filters 3_5 , 3_6 and their connected low

noise amplifiers 4₅, 4₆ connected thereto.

In this embodiment, two sets of bandpass filters 3₁, 3₂ and the low noise amplifiers 4₁, 4₂ which are connected in series, the vacuum chamber 8₁ and the cooling unit 9₁ form two high frequency receiver units while sharing the vacuum chamber 8₁ and the cooling unit 9₁. Similarly, two sets of bandpass filters 3₃, 3₄ and the low noise amplifier 4₃, 4₄ which are connected in series, the vacuum chamber 8₂ and the cooling unit 9₂ form two high frequency receiver units while sharing the vacuum chamber 8₂ and the cooling unit 9₂. Two sets of bandpass filters 3₅, 3₆ and the low noise amplifiers 4₅, 4₆ which are connected in series, the vacuum chamber 8₃ and the cooling unit 9₃ form two high frequency units while sharing the vacuum chamber 8₃ and the cooling unit 9₃.

The connection between the antenna terminals 2₁ to 2₆ and the bandpass filters 3₁ to 3₆ shown in Fig. 5 is merely an example, and there are eight ways of connecting to the antennae of each sector to the bandpass filters which are contained in different two of the three vacuum chambers.

With this connection, even if a fault occurs with either one of the cooling units 9₁, 9₂ and 9₃ to disable the cooling function, at least one path of each sector is not influenced, thus avoiding a degraded reception or an inability of reception of all the sectors, in a similar manner as in the embodiments shown in Figs. 2 and 4.

A three-sector arrangement has been mentioned above, but a high sensitive radio receiver system can be constructed with a different sector arrangement. For example, a six-sector arrangement can be constructed in entirely the same manner as for the three-sector arrangement. For example, for the six-sector arrangement, twelve antennae are required. The connection between the twelve antennae to the series connections, each comprising the

bandpass filter and the low noise amplifier, of all the paths may be contemplated as follows:

- (1) A set of a vacuum chamber and a cooling unit may be provided for each path as in the embodiment shown in Fig. 2;
- 5 (2) two sets of vacuum chambers and cooling units may be provided as in the embodiment shown in Fig. 4, each set contains six paths each comprising a series connection of a bandpass filter and a low noise amplifier;
- 10 (3) three sets of vacuum chambers and cooling units may be provided as in the embodiment shown in Fig. 5, each set contains four paths each comprising a series connection of a bandpass filter and a low noise amplifier;
- 15 (4) while not shown in the drawings, four sets of vacuum chambers and cooling units may be provided, each set containing three paths each comprising a series connection of a bandpass filter and a low noise amplifier; or
- (5) six sets of vacuum chambers and cooling units may be provided, each set containing two paths each comprising a series connection of a bandpass filter and a low noise amplifier.
- 20 What is required in each instance is to avoid that series connections of bandpass filters and low noise amplifiers representing two paths for one sector are confined in a common vacuum chamber to be cooled by a common cooling unit. Obviously, if a compact cooling unit of a low power consumption is available, a vacuum chamber and a cooling unit may be
- 25 provided for each of the twelve paths.

In the described embodiments, one of two antennae for a sector is used as one which is shared for the transmission and the reception while the other

antenna is used exclusively for the reception. However, alternatively, three or more antennae may be provided for one sector, one of the antennae may be shared for the transmission and the reception while the remaining two antennae may be used for the reception. As a further alternative, all the
5 antennae may be used for the reception, thus avoiding the use of antenna duplexers.

In the described embodiments, each of the bandpass filters 3_1 to 3_6 may comprise a microstrip line, for example. A ground layer and a signal line are formed by superconducting material so that a loss of a resulting
10 bandpass filter can be substantially reduced, allowing a significant improvement of the noise figure of the receiver, and accordingly, significant improvement of the sensitivity of the receiver.

Copper oxide superconductors containing Bismuth (Bi), Thallium (Tl), Lead (Pb) or Yttrium (Y), for example, are known as high temperature
15 superconductors, and can be used as the superconducting material for the purpose of the present invention. Some high temperature superconductors have a critical temperature exceeding 100K below which the superconducting state is achieved. When such superconductor is used, the superconducting state is achieved by merely cooling to the order of 77.4 K which is the boiling
20 point of the liquid nitrogen, thus alleviating the cooling capability of unit 9 and permitting a compact and inexpensive cryogenic refrigerator to be used. As a result, a high sensitive radio receiver system can be constructed in a compact manner and inexpensively.

However, even if the bandpass filter is formed by a normally
25 conducting (non-superconducting) material, the noise figure can be improved by the refrigeration.

FOURTH EMBODIMENT

The above described embodiment provides an improvement so that even when one of the cooling units fails, not all of the receiver units for the corresponding sectors become disabled. Now, another embodiment of a high
5 frequency receiver unit will be described, which enables the reception along a path formed by each set of a bandpass filter and a low noise amplifier being cooled even if a cooling unit fails.

An embodiment shown in Fig.6 is arranged such that when the temperature within a vacuum chamber 8 such as any one of the vacuum
10 chambers 8₁ to 8₆ shown in Fig. 2, for example, has exceeded the critical temperature for reason of some fault, a bandpass filtering and an amplification required for an input received h.f. signal can be assured through a bypass path.

A high frequency receiver unit of this embodiment comprises a
15 superconducting bandpass filter 3 which selects a signal in a desired band from a received h.f. signal which is input through a coaxial cable 8a and a coaxial connector 8C1, a low noise amplifier 4 which amplifies an output from the bandpass filter 3 to a desired level with a low noise response, a
coaxial cable 8b and a coaxial connector 8C2 which deliver the received h.f.
20 signal that is amplified by the low noise amplifier 4. This signal path is referred to as a first signal path SP1. The superconducting bandpass filter 3 and the low noise amplifier 4 are secured to a cooling substrate 8S within the vacuum chamber 8 in close contact therewith, and the cooling substrate 8S is cooled by a cooling unit 9.

25 In addition, in this embodiment, an output selection circuit 11 and a coupler 17 are connected to the input side and the output side of a series connection of the bandpass filter 3 and the low noise amplifier 4, respectively,

and there is provided a second received signal path SP2 which extends from the output selection circuit 11 to the coupler 17 through a series connection of a switch element 13, a normal conducting bandpass filter 15 and a low noise amplifier 16.

5 The output selection circuit 11 determines which one of the first signal path SP1 passing through a series connection of the superconducting bandpass filter 3 and the low noise amplifier 4 and the second signal path SP2 passing through a series connection of the normal conducting bandpass filter 15 and the low noise amplifier 16 is to be selected, and a received h.f. signal is
10 transmitted thorough the selected signal path. The normal conducting bandpass filter 15 has a passband which is substantially the same as that of the superconducting bandpass filter 3. The outputs of the first and the second signal paths SP1, SP2 are coupled with coupler 17, whereby a signal from the signal path which is selected by the output selection circuit 11 is delivered.

15 A circulator 12 is connected in the first signal path SP1 between the output selection circuit 11 and the coaxial connector 8C1, and the received h.f. signal from the output selection circuit 11 passes through the circulator 12 to be directly fed to the coaxial connector 8C1. If the temperature of the cooling substrate 8S exceeds the critical point to cause a change in the
20 impedance of the bandpass filter 3 to thereby produce an impedance mismatch with the coaxial cable 8C1, the received h.f. signal input to the bandpass filter 3 is reflected to pass through the circulator 12 to be fed to a level detector 14. If the level detector 14 detects a reflected wave equal to or above a predetermined level, it turns the switch element 13 on, thus rendering
25 the second signal path SP2 conductive.

Fig. 7 shows an example of the output selection circuit 11, which comprises a T-shaped microstrip line. Point O represents an input end for

received signal, point S is connected to the switch element 13, and point T is connected to the input of the superconducting bandpass filter 3. L1, L2 and L3 in Fig. 7 represent line lengths to the branch point, respectively.

Although L1 is to be determined depending on the peripheral settings, L1 is
5 desirable to be chosen as short as possible in view of reducing the signal loss.

The line length L2 and L3 are determined as follows: Fig. 8 shows an example of the input impedance of the superconducting bandpass filter 3 on a Smith chart. Point A indicates the impedance when the superconducting bandpass filter 3 is in its superconducting state and is matched to the
10 characteristic impedance of coaxial cable 8a. If the superconducting bandpass filter 3 is not in its superconducting state, the impedance of the superconducting bandpass filter 3 transfers to point B, thereby producing an impedance mismatch with the coaxial cable 8a. When the bandpass filter 3 is in its superconducting state, it is necessary that the signal be transmitted to
15 point T shown in Fig. 7 without transferring it to point S. The signal transfer in a direction toward point S is blocked by turning the switch element 13 off to produce an impedance mismatch for point S and choosing L3 so that an impedance at point R is infinity.

Fig. 9 shows signal transfer characteristics from point O to point T
20 shown in Fig. 7 when the bandpass filter 3 is in its superconducting state. The abscissa represents the frequency and the center frequency of the input h.f. signal is located at the center of the abscissa. The ordinate represents the transfer characteristics where 0dB stands for a no loss transmission while -10 dB indicates a signal attenuation by a factor of ten. In this manner, in the
25 superconducting state, an efficient signal transfer is possible from point O to point T, that is, from the input end to the output end of the superconducting bandpass filter 3.

On the other hand, if the superconducting bandpass filter 3 is not in its superconducting state, it is necessary to set the impedance at point P as close to infinity as possible in order to transfer the signal to point S in Fig. 7 without being fed to the superconducting bandpass filter 3. Accordingly, the parameter L2 is determined so that the impedance at point P in Fig. 7 be set as closed to the infinity as possible on the basis of point B in Fig. 8. It is to be understood that at this time, the impedance matching is achieved at point S in Fig. 7 by turning the switch element 13 on.

Assuming that the characteristic impedance of the line L2 is equal to that of a succeeding superconducting bandpass filter 3, the locus of the impedance at point P in Fig. 7 depicts a circle Q which passes through point B in Fig. 8 as the line length L2 is changed from 0 to $\alpha/2$. Here, α represents the wavelength of the center frequency of the signal transferred on the output selection circuit 11. In the actual design of the line length L2, the characteristic impedance of the line from point P to point T shown in Fig. 8 is chosen to be equal to that of the superconducting bandpass filter 3 when the superconducting bandpass filter 3 is in its superconducting state. Point I indicates the point where the impedance at point P is most close to infinity on the circle Q. The line length L2 is designed so that the impedance at point P in Fig. 7 is set to point I shown in Fig. 8.

Fig. 10 shows a signal transfer characteristic from point O to point S in Fig. 7 when the line length L2 is designed in the manner mentioned above and the bandpass filter is not in its superconducting state. As in Fig. 9, the center frequency of the desired input h.f. signal is located at the center of the abscissa. When not in the superconducting state, an efficient signal transmission can be achieved from point O to point S, that is, to the normal conducting bandpass filter 15 on the second signal path SP2 while bypassing

the superconducting bandpass filter 3 on the first signal path SP1.

Fig. 11 shows an embodiment of the output selection circuit 11 when an MEMS RF switch is used as the switch element 13. The difference between Figs. 7 and 11 is that L_3 is equal to zero. This is because physical
5 connection between switch terminals in MEMS RF switch is established when the switch is turned on while there is no physical connection between the switch terminals when it is turned off. As a result, the impedance of point S'' is matched if the MEMS RF switch is turned on and is open if the MEMS RF switch is turned off. Since L_3 is equal to zero, signal transmission to the
10 bandpass filter 15 can be achieved with a lower loss compared with the output circuit shown in Fig. 7.

The switch element 13 comprises an RF switch formed by PIN diode or an MEMS(microelectromechanical system) RF switch (see, for example, J.J. Yao and M. F. Chang: A Surface Micromachined Miniature Switch for
15 Telecommunications Applications with Signal Frequencies from DC up to 4 GHz, *ibid*, pp. 384-387), for example.

The level detector 14 turns the switch element 13 on if it detects a reflected wave from the superconducting bandpass filter 3 (or a mismatch condition) through the circulator 12 when the temperature of the bandpass
20 filter 3 exceeds the critical point. Consequently, the received h.f. signal from the output selection circuit 11 is routed through the second signal path SP2 to the coupler 17. If the level detector 14 detects no reflected wave, this means that the superconducting bandpass filter 3 is in its superconducting state, and the switch element 13 is maintained off.

25 The bandpass filter 15 and the low noise amplifier 16 on the second signal path SP2 are such ones that the former is operable at a temperature above the critical point and the latter exerts the best performance at a

temperature above the critical point.

In the embodiment shown in Fig. 6, a temperature detecting element 18S provided in the vacuum chamber 8 as indicated in broken lines in Fig. 6 may be utilized to detect that the temperature of the superconducting
5 bandpass filter 3 has exceeded the critical point to turn the switch element on. The detected temperature may be compared against a critical temperature value in a decision unit 18 so that the switch element 13 can be turned on if the detected temperature is above the critical temperature. The embodiment of the high frequency unit shown in Fig. 6 is applicable to any embodiment of
10 the high sensitive radio receiver system shown in Figs. 2, 4 and 5. However, when applied to the embodiments shown in Figs. 4 and 5, each set of the vacuum chamber 8 and the cooling unit 9 is shared by a plurality of high frequency receiver units.

15 FIFTH EMBODIMENT

Fig. 12 shows another embodiment of the high frequency receiver unit according to the present invention. As a distinction from the embodiment shown in Fig. 6, the output selection circuit 11, the switch element 13, the normal conducting bandpass filter 15, the low noise amplifier 16, the
20 circulator 12 and the level detector 14 are also contained in the vacuum chamber 8 to be cooled by the cooling unit 9. This allows thermal noises which are added in the output selection circuit 11 and the circulator 12 to be reduced when the superconducting bandpass filter 3 is its superconducting state.

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SIXTH EMBODIMENT

In the embodiment shown in Fig. 12, the switch element 13, the

normal conducting bandpass filter 15 and the low noise amplifier 16 on the second signal path SP2 may be disposed outside the vacuum chamber 8, as shown in Fig. 13, thus avoiding a cooling of these elements. In the example shown in Fig. 13, the superconducting state is monitored rather than by the
5 detection of reflected wave, but by sensing a cooling temperature through the temperature sensor 18S disposed within the vacuum chamber 8. The decision unit 18 determines whether the detected temperature by the temperature sensor 18S is above the critical point or not. If the detected temperature is equal to or above the critical point, the switch element 13 is set
10 to turn on.

SEVENTH EMBODIMENT

Fig. 14 shows a further embodiment of the high frequency unit according to the present invention. In this embodiment, the coupler 17 shown
15 in the embodiment of Fig. 12 is also contained within the vacuum chamber 8 to be cooled. This allows thermal noises which are added by the coupler 17 to be reduced when the superconducting bandpass filter 3 is in its superconducting state. In this case, since the coupler 17 is disposed in the vacuum chamber 8, the number of coaxial cables connected to the vacuum
20 chamber 8 can be reduced, whereby a heat flow from the outside of the vacuum chamber 8 through the coaxial cable 8c and a coaxial connector 8C3 shown in Fig. 12 can be eliminated, contributing to a reduction in the power consumption and the size of the system.

Alternatively, the switch element 13, the normal conducting bandpass
25 filter 15 and the low noise amplifier 16 may be disposed outside the vacuum chamber 8 to avoid their cooling, even though this increases the number of coaxial cables and connectors.

EIGHTH EMBODIMENT

Fig. 15 shows still another embodiment of the high frequency receiver unit according to the present invention. This embodiment is a modification of the embodiment shown in Fig. 14 in that the two low noise amplifiers 4, 16 and the coupler 17 are replaced by an input selection circuit 19 and a single low noise amplifier 4. The input selection circuit 19 selects either output from the bandpass filters 3 and 15 to feed it to the low noise amplifier 4. The low noise amplifier 4 is designed to operate not only below but also equal to or above the critical temperature.

Fig. 16 shows an example of the input selection circuit 19 shown in Fig. 15. L4, L5 and L6 represent line lengths, respectively. The line length L4 is determined depending on the peripheral settings as mentioned with L1, but is desirable to be chosen as short as possible in view of reducing the signal loss. The line lengths L5 and L6 are determined in the similar manner as mentioned above for the choice of those of L2 and L3 described above in connection with Figs. 7 and 8, respectively. Specifically, L6 is chosen so that the impedance at point R' is infinity when the bandpass filter 3 is in its superconducting state and switch element 13 is turned off, whereby the impedance at point S' is mismatched. The line length L5 is chosen so that the impedance at point P' is infinity when the bandpass filter 3 is not in its superconducting state. As a consequence, when the bandpass filter 3 is in its superconducting state, the signal from the bandpass filter 3 is delivered to the low noise amplifier 4, while when the bandpass filter 3 is not in its superconducting state, the signal from the normal conducting bandpass filter 15 is delivered to the low noise amplifier 4. The input selection circuit 19 avoids the need for the provision of the low noise amplifier on the second signal path SP2, contributing to a reduction in the power consumption and the

size of the receiver system.

NINTH EMBODIMENT

Fig. 17 shows yet another embodiment of the high frequency receiver unit according to the present invention. This embodiment is also a modification of the embodiment shown in Fig. 15 in that a switch element 31 is connected between the normal conducting bandpass filter 15 and the input selection circuit 19. The both switch elements 13 and 31 are set to turn on if the level detector 14 detects that the bandpass filter 3 is not in its superconducting state. The connection of switch element 31 between the bandpass filter 15 and the input selection circuit 19 yields that only the switch element 31 determines the impedance at point S' in Fig. 16 regardless of what type of filter is used as the bandpass filter 15. Based on this impedance, L6 can be determined such that the impedance at point R' may be infinity when the bandpass filter 3 is in its superconducting state. As a result, any filter can be used as a normal conducting bandpass filter 15 without any modification of L6, allowing the use of the bandpass filter 15 for higher general purposes compared to the embodiment of Fig. 15. The switch element 31 is set to turn off when the bandpass filter 3 is rendered in a superconducting state by the level detector 14 and turn on when not rendered in a superconducting state in a similar manner as the switch element 13.

Fig. 18 shows an embodiment of the input selection circuit 19 when an MEMS RF switch is used as the switch element 31. The input selection circuit 19 differs from that in Fig. 16 in that L6 is equal to zero. This is because the MEMS RF switch is used for the switch element, in a similar manner as in the embodiment of the output selection circuit 11 shown in Fig. 11. By reducing L6 to zero, the signal transmission to the low noise

amplifier 4 can be made with a lower loss.

In the described embodiments shown in Figs. 6, 12 to 15 and 17, the output selection circuit 11 and the input selection circuit 19 are constructed with microstrip lines, but other lines having similar characteristics may be used such as coaxial cables, strip lines, or lumped parameter networks, for example. Each embodiment of the high frequency receiver units shown in Figs. 6, 12 to 15 and 17 is applicable to any embodiment of the high sensitive radio receiver system shown in Figs. 2, 4 and 5.

10 EFFECTS OF THE INVENTION

As described above, according to the present invention, if a fault occurs with a cooling unit of a high sensitive radio receiver system, a degraded reception or the inability of reception for all the sectors can be avoided.

Also with the high frequency receiver unit according to the present invention, when a rapid degradation in the performance of the superconducting bandpass filter occurs as a result of a temperature rise or a failure, a change in the input and output impedance of the superconducting bandpass filter can be utilized to transfer a received signal to an auxiliary circuit, thus avoiding inoperability of the receiver system.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A high sensitive radio receiver system for receiving a signal from at least two antennae provided in each of a plurality of sectors, comprising:

a plurality of vacuum chambers;

a plurality of cooling units each for cooling the interior of each of the plurality of vacuum chambers;

a plurality of bandpass filters each contained in one of the vacuum chambers and deriving a received h.f. signal in a predetermined frequency band, said at least two antennae of each sector being connected to the bandpass filters contained in different ones of the plurality of vacuum chambers; and

low noise amplifiers each contained in corresponding one of said vacuum chambers and connected in series to an output of corresponding one of the plurality of bandpass filters, for amplifying and delivering the received h.f. signal;

wherein each combination of each series connection of the bandpass filter and the low noise amplifier, the vacuum chamber which contains the series connection and the cooling unit which cools the series connection constitute a high frequency receiver unit.

2. A high sensitive radio receiver system according to Claim 1, in which each of the bandpass filters comprises a superconducting bandpass filter formed by superconducting material which is in its superconducting state at or below a critical temperature when cooled by the cooling unit.

3. A high sensitive radio receiver system according to Claim 2, in which the superconducting material is a high temperature superconducting

material.

4. A high sensitive radio receiver system according to any one of Claims 1 to 3, further comprising:

an antenna duplexer connected between one of the plurality of antennae in each sector and the bandpass filter connected thereto, and having a transmission input terminal so that the antenna is shared for the transmission and reception.

5. A high sensitive radio receiver system according to Claim 2, in which a signal path through series connection of the superconducting bandpass filter and the low noise amplifier is defined as a first signal path and each of the high frequency receiver units also has a second signal path including a normal conducting bandpass filter which operates not only below but also equal to or above the critical temperature of the superconducting bandpass filter and having a substantially same passband as the superconducting bandpass filter for delivering the received h.f. signal while bypassing the first signal path whenever the superconducting bandpass filter is no longer in its superconducting state.

6. A high sensitive radio receiver system according to Claim 5, in which each high frequency unit has an output selection circuit which delivers the received h.f. signal from the antenna to which the superconducting bandpass filter is connected to the first signal path when the superconducting bandpass filter is in its superconducting state and to the second signal path when the superconducting bandpass filter is not in its superconducting state.

7. A high sensitive radio receiver system according to Claim 6, in which a second low noise amplifier which operates not only below but also equal to or above the critical temperature is connected in series to the output of the normal conducting bandpass filter in the second signal path, and further comprising a coupler which combines the output of the first signal path and the output of the second signal path to deliver the received h.f. signal.

8. A high sensitive radio receiver system according to Claim 6, in which an input selection circuit is connected between the superconducting bandpass filter and the low noise amplifier on the first signal path of each high frequency receiver unit for selecting either an output from the superconducting bandpass filter or an output from the normal conducting bandpass filter for input to the low noise amplifier.

9. A high sensitive radio receiver system according to Claim 8, further comprising:

a signal path output switch element connected to the output of the normal conducting bandpass filter on the second signal path of each high frequency unit to be turned off when the superconducting bandpass filter is in its superconducting state and to be turned on when the superconducting bandpass filter is not in its superconducting state.

10. A high sensitive radio receiver system according to any one of Claims 7 to 9, in which each high frequency receiver unit comprises a signal path input switch element connected to the input of the normal conducting bandpass filter in the second signal path, and detecting means for detecting whether or not the superconducting bandpass filter is in its superconducting

state to turn the signal path input switch element off when the superconducting bandpass filter is in its superconducting state and to turn the signal path input switch element on when the superconducting bandpass filter is not in its superconducting state.

11. A high sensitive radio receiver system according to Claim 10, in which said detecting means comprises means which detects a reflected wave from the superconducting bandpass filter when it is not in its superconducting state and which turn the signal path input switch element on in response to a detection output.

12. A high sensitive radio receiver system according to Claim 10, in which said detecting means comprises means which detects a temperature within the vacuum chamber and which turn the signal path input switch element on whenever the temperature is equal to or above the critical temperature.

13. A high sensitive radio receiver system according to any one of Claims 6 to 9, in which the output selection circuit is disposed within the vacuum chamber.

14. A high sensitive radio receiver system according to any one of Claims 6 to 9, in which the normal conducting bandpass filter is disposed within the vacuum chamber.

15. A high sensitive radio receiver system according to Claim 7, in which the coupler is disposed within the vacuum chamber.

16. A high frequency receiver unit for filtering, amplifying and delivering a received h.f. signal which is input thereto, comprising

a vacuum chamber;

a cooling unit for cooling the interior of the vacuum chamber;

a first signal path contained within the vacuum chamber and including a series connection of a superconducting bandpass filter which operates in its superconducting state at or below a critical temperature and a low noise amplifier for passing a received h.f. signal therethrough; and

a second signal path including a normal conducting bandpass filter which operates at least above the critical temperature of the superconducting bandpass filter and having a substantially same passband as the superconducting bandpass filter and which delivers the received h.f. signal while bypassing the first signal path whenever the superconducting bandpass filter is no longer in its superconducting state.

17. A high frequency receiver unit according to Claim 16, further comprising an output selection circuit which delivers the received h.f. signal which is input to the high frequency unit to the first signal path when the superconducting bandpass filter is in its superconducting state and to the second signal path when the superconducting bandpass filter is not in its superconducting state.

18. A high frequency receiver unit according to Claim 17, in which the second signal path comprises a second low noise amplifier which operates not only below but also equal to or above the critical temperature and connected in series to the output of the normal conducting bandpass filter of the second signal path, and a coupler which combines an output from the first signal path

and an output from the second signal path to deliver the received h.f. signal.

19. A high frequency receiver unit according to Claim 17, further comprising an input selection circuit connected between the superconducting bandpass filter and the low noise amplifier on the first signal path for selecting either an output from the superconducting bandpass filter or an output from the normal conducting bandpass filter for input to the low noise amplifier.

20. A high frequency receiver unit according to Claim 19, further comprising:

a signal path output switch element connected to the output of the normal conducting bandpass filter on the second signal path and adapted to be turned off when the superconducting bandpass filter is in its superconducting state and to be turned on when the superconducting bandpass filter is not in its superconducting state.

21. A high frequency receiver unit according to any one of Claims 18 to 20, further comprising:

a signal path input switch element connected to the input of the normal conducting bandpass filter on the second signal path; and

detecting means for detecting whether or not the superconducting bandpass filter is in its superconducting state and for turning the signal path input switch element off when the superconducting bandpass filter is in its superconducting state and turning the signal path input switch element on when the superconducting bandpass filter is not in its superconducting state.

22. A high frequency receiver unit according to Claim 21, in which the output selection circuit comprises a microstrip line having a predetermined characteristic impedance and having a branch port.

23. A high frequency receiver unit according to Claim 22, in which the switch element comprises an MEMS RF switch formed at the branch point.

24. A high frequency receiver unit according to Claim 21, in which the detecting means comprises means which detects a reflected wave from the superconducting bandpass filter when it is not in its superconducting state and which turns the signal path input switch element on in response to a detection output.

25. A high frequency receiver unit according to Claim 21, in which the detecting means comprises means which detects a temperature within the vacuum chamber and which turns the signal path input switch element on whenever the temperature is equal to or above the critical temperature

26. A high frequency receiver unit according to any one of Claims 17 to 20, in which the output selection circuit is disposed within the vacuum chamber.

27. A high frequency receiver unit according to any one of Claims 17 to 20, in which the normal conducting bandpass filter is disposed within the vacuum chamber.

28. A high frequency receiver unit according to Claim 18, in which the

coupler is disposed within the vacuum chamber.