

Nodal to nodeless superconducting energy gap structure change concomitant with Fermi surface reconstruction in the heavy-fermion CeCoIn₅

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The London penetration depth, $\lambda(T)$, was measured in single crystals of Ce_{1-x}R_xCoIn₅, R=La, Nd and Yb down to $T_{min} \approx 50$ mK ($T_c/T_{min} \sim 50$) using a tunnel-diode resonator. In the cleanest samples $\Delta\lambda(T)$ is best described by the power law, $\Delta\lambda(T) \propto T^n$, with $n \sim 1$, consistent with line nodes. Substitutions of Ce with La, Nd and Yb lead to similar monotonic suppressions of T_c , however the effects on $\Delta\lambda(T)$ differ. While La and Nd dopings lead to increase of the exponent n and saturation at $n \sim 2$, as expected for a dirty nodal superconductor, Yb doping leads to $n > 3$, suggesting a change from nodal to nodeless superconductivity. This superconducting gap structure change happen in the same doping range where changes of the Fermi surface topology were reported, implying that the nodal structure and Fermi surface topology are closely linked.

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Magnetically mediated pairing is believed to be responsible for unconventional superconductivity found in materials ranging from the high- T_c cuprates to the iron-based superconductors [1] to heavy fermion compounds [2–4]. For a long time, this pairing was thought to always result in d -wave superconducting gap symmetry. While unconventional pairing does require a sign changing gap, nodal lines are not actually required, and most iron-based superconductors have an s_{\pm} gap structure, where any nodes are merely accidental. Recently there have been some suggestions of fully gapped [5] or s_{\pm} [6, 7] superconductivity in heavy fermion materials. In this Letter, we present London penetration depth measurements showing that nodes in the gap of pure CeCoIn₅ are *removed* by substituting Yb for Ce, revealing the clear example of a nodeless heavy fermion superconductor.

CeCoIn₅ has one of the highest transition temperatures among heavy fermion superconductors, $T_c=2.3$ K [8] and reveals quantum criticality when tuned by either pressure [9] or magnetic field [10–13]. The criticality is thought to be due to magnetic fluctuations, making it an intriguing material in which to study the relationship between magnetism, quantum criticality and the superconducting energy gap structure.

Several experimental studies suggested the presence of line nodes in the superconducting gap of pure CeCoIn₅ [14–17]. Magnetic field direction - dependent thermal conductivity and heat capacity [18, 19] were interpreted [20] as evidence for a $d_{x^2-y^2}$ gap. This conclusion is supported by directional point contact spectroscopy [21], k -space resolved quasiparticle interference scanning tunneling microscopy (STM) [22, 23], and spin resonance found at a three-dimensional (π, π, π) wavevector [24].

However, some other experiments are difficult to reconcile with the d -wave scenario. Most importantly, de-

spite very low residual resistivity $\rho_0=0.2\mu\Omega\text{cm}$ [25], the London penetration depth of pure CeCoIn₅ has never shown the linear temperature dependence expected in clean d -wave superconductors. Instead, if it is parameterized by a power - law, $\Delta\lambda(T) = AT^n$, measurements on crystals from different sources that presumably have different amounts of scattering and by different techniques [16, 26–28] yield a variation of the exponent n between 1.5 and 2, where $n = 2$ represents the dirty limit in the gapless regime for any pairing symmetry [29]. Similar conclusions about the presence of a large density of uncondensed quasi-particles over an extremely broad temperature and field range were made from doping-dependent thermal conductivity studies [30–32]. The origin of this unusual response in a nominally very clean material remains unclear, and several explanations were put forward, including non-local electrodynamics [27] and a temperature dependent quasi-particle mass enhancement within the superconductor due to a nearby QCP [28, 33]. Deviations from a simple d -wave scenario have stimulated discussions of alternative models in which the Fermi surface topology plays an important role in the superconducting pairing [6, 7], inspired by the ideas put forward for iron-based superconductors [34, 35].

To gain an insight into this unusual superfluid response, here we report a systematic study of the London penetration depth in crystals of CeCoIn₅, with Ce substituted by both magnetic and non-magnetic rare-earth ions: La, Nd and Yb. Surprisingly, these three dopants lead to very similar rates of T_c suppression, despite their very different nature: La acts as a non-magnetic impurity; excess f -electrons on Nd ions remain localized and induce long range magnetic order with $T_N < T_c$ in compositions $x \geq 0.05$ [36, 37]; and Yb substitution provides

hole doping, leading to a change in the Fermi surface topology [38, 39]. We found that low - temperature variation of the London penetration depth with La and Nd substitutions is consistent with the presence of line-nodes and evolution from clean to dirty behavior. In stark contrast, Yb substitution leads to a nodal to nodeless transformation of the superconducting gap concomitant with the Fermi surface topology change. This observation is a challenge for the conventional d -wave picture of magnetically mediated pairing, and difficult to reconcile with the large Coulomb repulsion that should strongly suppress any on-site pairing. A follow-up theoretical paper shows how local, non-Cooper d -wave pairing can still be consistent with the absence of nodes [40].

Single crystals of $\text{Ce}_{1-x}\text{R}_x\text{CoIn}_5$ ($R=\text{La, Nd, Yb}$) were grown using In flux method [36, 41–43]. In all cases the values of x were determined using electron-probe microanalysis with wavelength dispersive spectroscopy (WDS) on the same samples as used in the penetration depth measurements. While compositions for La and Nd substitutions are close to nominal, a large, nearly three-fold, discrepancy between nominal and actual x is found for Yb doping [45, 46]; note that our actual $x = 0.015$ and $x = 0.037$ correspond to nominal $x = 0.1$ and $x = 0.2$. Samples for in-plane London penetration depth measurements were cut and polished into rectangular parallelepipeds with typical dimensions $\sim 0.6 \times 0.6 \times 0.1 \text{ mm}^3$ ($a \times b \times c$). Details of the TDR measurements of London penetration depth in a dilution refrigerator and their analysis can be found elsewhere [47–49].

Figure 1 shows the temperature-dependent normalized rf magnetic susceptibility of the samples used in this study over the range from base temperature to T_c . In all cases, chemical substitution suppresses T_c , with $T_c(x)$ in agreement with previous studies [36, 41, 45, 46] as shown in Fig. 1 (d)-(f). The transitions remain sharp even in doped samples, suggesting a homogeneous dopant distribution.

In Fig. 2 we show the temperature variation of $\Delta\lambda(T)$ in three nominally pure samples of CeCoIn_5 , S1, S2 and S3. For reference we show measurements made in slightly Yb doped sample, $x=0.002$, with all measurements taken in identical conditions in the same setup and using the same thermometry. This comparison clearly shows that the T_c of nominally pure samples varies by as much as 0.1 K, possibly due to different amounts of scattering. Not unexpectedly, the low-temperature variation, $\Delta\lambda(T)$, changes with T_c . Fitting data with a power-law function, $\Delta\lambda(T) = AT^n$, we find that n is a strong function of T_c , as shown in the inset in Fig. 2. In the highest T_c sample (S1), the exponent $n = 1.25$ is below 1.5 and is close to 1, as expected for superconductors with line nodes in the clean limit. We use the data for this sample as the reference in the following. For sample S3 and the Yb-doped sample ($x=0.002$) the exponent is significantly higher, tending toward $n = 2$, consistent with

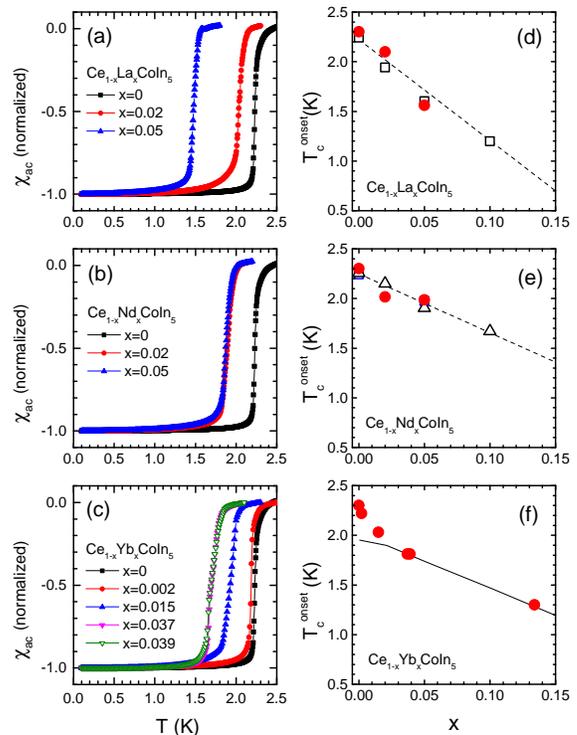


FIG. 1. (Color online) Left column panels (a) to (c) show the temperature-dependence of normalized rf magnetic susceptibility of $\text{Ce}_{1-x}\text{R}_x\text{CoIn}_5$ for $R=\text{La}$ (top panel (a), $x=0, 0.02$ and 0.05 right to left), $R=\text{Nd}$ (middle panel (b), $x=0, 0.02$ and 0.05 right to left) and $x=\text{Yb}$ (bottom panel (c), $x=0, 0.002, 0.015, 0.037$ and 0.039 , right to left). Right column panels (d) to (f) show $T_c(x)$ as determined in our measurements (red solid dots) in comparison with the literature data for $\text{Ce}_{1-x}\text{La}_x\text{CoIn}_5$ (panel (d), data from Petrovic *et al.* [41]), $\text{Ce}_{1-x}\text{Nd}_x\text{CoIn}_5$ (panel (e), data from Petrovic *et al.* [36]) and $\text{Ce}_{1-x}\text{Yb}_x\text{CoIn}_5$ (panel (f), solid line is from Shimozawa *et al.*) [46].

dirty d -wave behavior [50]. The strong variation of the exponent n with T_c may provide explanation for unusual exponents found in previous studies.

Figure 3 summarizes penetration depth measurements in $\text{Ce}_{1-x}\text{R}_x\text{CoIn}_5$ ($R = \text{La, Nd, Yb}$). Panel (a) shows data for $R=\text{La}$ and Nd ; Yb substitution data are shown in panel (b). The data are plotted versus a normalized temperature $(T/T_c)^2$. For the reference, we include pure CeCoIn_5 , S1, which expectedly shows downward curvature consistent with $n < 2$. Doping with both La and Nd suppresses T_c by as much as 0.5 K and 0.9 K respectively (see Fig. 1) and rapidly saturates the exponent at $n = 2$ for $x = 0.05$, as expected for d -wave superconductors. In contrast, the evolution of $\Delta\lambda(T)$ with Yb doping is unique. The samples with $x = 0.037$ and 0.039 demonstrate clear saturation at low temperatures, showing high exponents $n > 2$, inconsistent with the nodal gap. The increase of the exponent to values much greater than $n = 2$

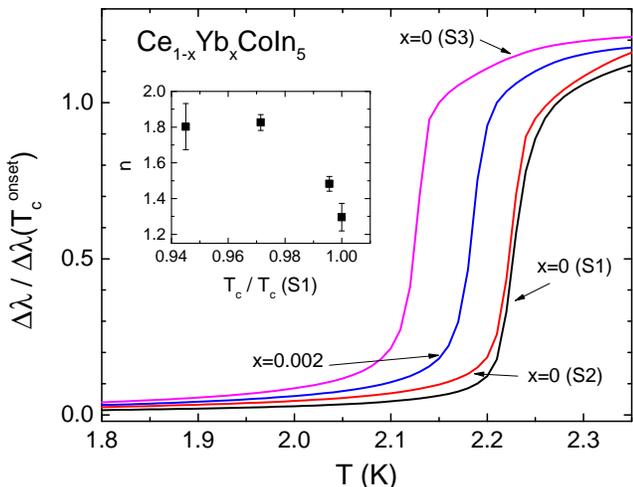


FIG. 2. London penetration depth, $\Delta\lambda(T)$, in three nominally pure samples of CeCoIn_5 (S1, S2, and S3) and in a slightly Yb doped sample $x=0.002$. Note that S3 of the nominally pure CeCoIn_5 has T_c lower than the Yb-doped sample. The exponent n of the power law fit, $\Delta\lambda(T) = AT^n$, (inset) strongly depends on T_c , tending to $n=1$ in the best samples.

can also be clearly seen in samples with $x=0.015$.

As CeCoIn_5 is a multi-gap system [32], we must be careful in our analysis. In single gap s -wave and d -wave superconductors, the characteristic behavior of $\Delta\lambda(T)$ is observed for temperatures $T < T_c/3$, where the temperature dependence of the gap $\Delta(T)$ can be neglected. This assumption is generally not valid for multi-band systems, in which the smallest of the gaps determines the low-temperature limit. Since the range over which the smaller gap can be considered as constant is not known *a priori*, it is important to vary the range of the power-law fitting. We adopted a procedure in which the high temperature end of the fitting interval, T_{up} , was varied and the exponent n was plotted as a function of T_{up} , as shown in panel (c) of Fig. 3. Several conclusions can be drawn from inspecting $n(T_{up})$ and its evolution with Yb doping. In samples with $x=0.015$, $x=0.037$ and $x=0.039$ the data are inconsistent with the existence of nodes in the superconducting gap for any T_{up} . Moreover, the exponent in the highest doped sample attains values which are practically indistinguishable from the exponential behavior observed in full gap superconductors [49]. Hence, we conclude that the superconducting gap in CeCoIn_5 undergoes a topological transition from nodal to nodeless with Yb-substitution, but not with La or Nd substitutions.

We summarize our study of the doping evolution of the London penetration depth and T_c in rare earth substituted CeCoIn_5 in Fig. 4. We plot the exponent n of the power-law analysis as a function of T_c (left panel) and of x (right panel). In La and Nd substituted com-

pounds, $n(x)$ saturates at $n=2$, as expected for superconductors with line nodes. In contrast, Yb substitution brings the exponent above 2, indicating the gap without nodes. Comparison with non-magnetic La and magnetic Nd clearly shows that this effect is neither due to the spin-flip pairbreaking, nor due to doping-induced magnetism. Instead, we conclude that the hole-doping effect of Yb substitution [45], and the resulting change in the electronic structure is an important factor. Therefore, it is natural to link the change of the superconducting gap to a change in the Fermi surface topology as suggested by de Haas-van Alphen studies finding the disappearance of the intermediately heavy α sheet between $x=0.015$ and 0.04 [38, 39, 51], exactly where we find appearance of a nodeless gap. STM studies of CeCoIn_5 [22] indicate that the α Fermi surface sheet plays a key role in superconductivity, and a change in the gap structure with its disappearance seems entirely plausible. However, it is difficult to understand why this transformation does not lead to an anomaly in $T_c(x)$.

We can think of three possible scenarios to explain the observed transition from nodal to nodeless superconductivity in Yb - substituted CeCoIn_5 . The simplest possibility is that the original nodes are accidental and disappear as the Fermi surface changes with hole-doping. This is similar to accidental nodes evolving with doping in some iron - pnictides [52]. However, scattering lifts accidental nodes [53] and this is inconsistent with our results in La - and Nd - substituted samples in which substitution does not change electron count and the nodes are preserved.

A second possibility is a topological transition from d -wave to s -wave pairing at x_c , where the disappearance the α sheet induces a change in superconducting gap structure. A related scenario involves a transition to $d_{x^2-y^2} + id_{xy}$ pairing, or another time-reversal symmetry breaking mixture of two gap symmetries that fully gaps out the Fermi surface [54, 55], where the $d_{x^2-y^2}$ pairing is still dominant, but $d + id$ pairing turns on at a lower temperature $T_{c2} < T_c$, leading to a gapped behavior in the low - temperature penetration depth. This second order phase transition should be visible, for example, in specific heat measurements. Both these scenarios should result in an anomaly in $T_c(x)$, which is not observed at least in our experiments.

A third, more exotic, but attractive possibility, discussed in a follow up theory paper, is that the underlying Fermi surface is unimportant [40], and that the main pairing mechanism is local *composite* pairing, not Cooper pairing. Here, superconductivity arises from cooperative Kondo screening, where two electrons screen the same local moment to form a composite pair [56]. This process is local and does not require an underlying Fermi surface, allowing Yb substitution to tune the heavy Fermi liquid toward a Kondo insulator without affecting the pairing strength or T_c . The resulting superconductivity

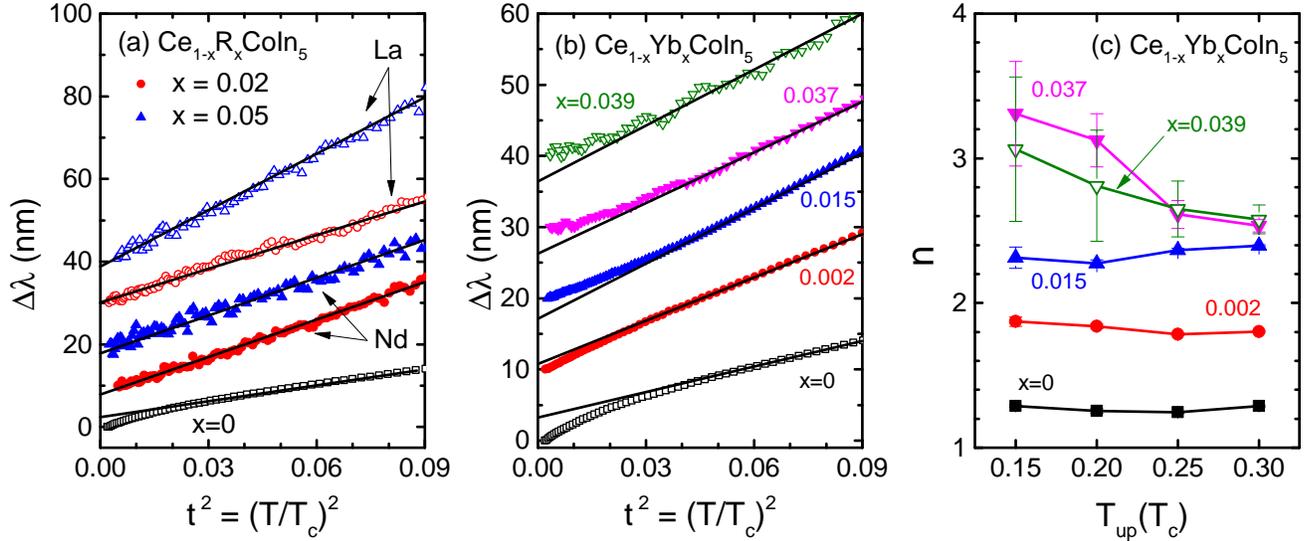


FIG. 3. London penetration depth of (a) La-, Nd- and (b) Yb-substituted substituted CeCoIn_5 , plotted vs a normalized $(T/T_c)^2$ scale. The dependence in pure material S1 shows a clear downturn consistent with $n = 1.2 < 2$. The data for La- and Nd-doped samples closely follow a T^2 dependence, expected in dirty nodal superconductors for all doping levels. In Yb-substituted samples, there is a clear crossover from sub-linear to super-linear, suggesting a rapid increase of the exponent n , and $n > 2$ for samples with $x=0.015, 0.037$ and 0.039 . (c) Floating fitting range analysis in pure and Yb-substituted CeCoIn_5 samples. The data were fit using a power-law function over the temperature range from base temperature to $T_{up} < T_c/3$, and the resultant exponent n was plotted as a function of T_{up} .

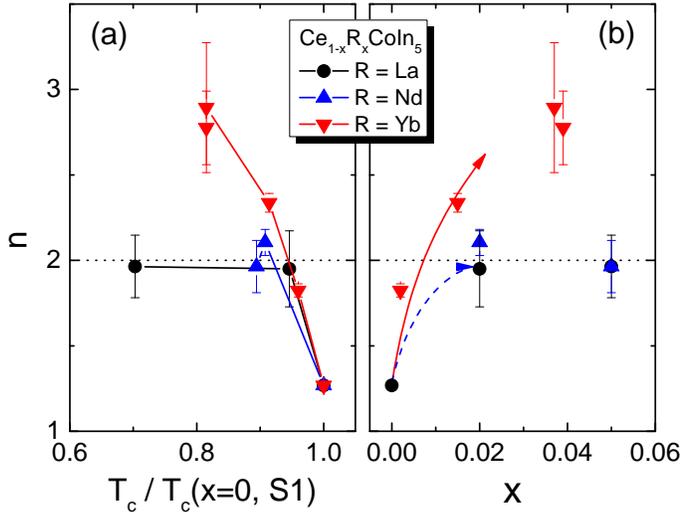


FIG. 4. The average exponent n of the power-law fit of $\Delta\lambda(T)$ as a function of T_c for La (black circles), Nd (blue triangles) and Yb substitution (red squares) (left panel). The values are obtained by the averaging the exponent obtained from the range fitting, see Fig. 3(c). Right panel shows the same data plotted as a function of x .

is still d -wave, but it is nodeless due to the removal of the Fermi surface at x_c , leading to an exponential penetration depth at low temperatures. In reality, CeCoIn_5 has many bands and will not become a Kondo insulator, as only the dominant α band is removed, while its su-

perfluid stiffness remains. However, the remaining bands have unobservably small gaps[22] and the signal from any remaining nodal quasiparticles be within the experimental resolution.

In conclusion, by performing systematic measurements of the London penetration depth in $\text{Ce}_{1-x}\text{R}_x\text{CoIn}_5$, $R=\text{La, Nd}$ and Yb , we find an anomalous evolution of the superconducting gap structure in Yb - substituted compounds from nodal to nodeless, possibly linked with the Fermi surface topology change.

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