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Experimental study of the β decay of the very neutron-rich nucleus ^{85}Ge

A. Korgul, K. P. Rykaczewski, R. K. Grzywacz, C. R. Bingham, N. T. Brewer, C. J. Gross, C. Jost, M. Karny, M. Madurga, C. Mazzocchi, A. J. Mendez, II, K. Miernik, D. Miller, S. Padgett, S. V. Paulauskas, M. Piersa, D. W. Stracener, M. Stryjczyk, M. Wolińska-Cichocka, and E. F. Zganjar

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M. Karny,^{1, 5} M. Madurga,³ C. Mazzocchi,¹ A.J. Mendez II,² K. Miernik,^{1, 2} D. Miller,³ S. Padgett,³

S.V. Paulauskas,³ M. Piersa,¹ D.W. Stracener,² M. Stryjczyk,^{1,6} M. Wolińska-Cichocka,^{7,2,8} and E. F. Zganjar⁹

¹Faculty of Physics, University of Warsaw, PL 02-093 Warsaw, Poland

²Physics Division, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Oak Ridge, TN 37831, USA

³Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN 37996, USA

⁴Department of Physics and Astronomy, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN 37235, USA

⁵Oak Ridge Associated Universities, Oak Ridge, TN 37831, USA

⁶KU Leuven, Instituut voor Kern-en Stralingsfysica, B-3001 Leuven, Belgium

⁷Heavy Ion Laboratory, University of Warsaw, PL 02-093 Warsaw, Poland

⁸ Joint Institute for Nuclear Physics and Applications, Tennessee 37831, USA

⁹Department of Physics and Astronomy, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70803, USA

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The β -decay properties of the very neutron-rich nucleus ⁸⁵Ge, produced in the proton-induced fission of ²³⁸U, were studied at the Holifield Radioactive Ion Beam Facility at Oak Ridge National Laboratory. The level scheme of ⁸⁵₃₃As₅₂ populated in ⁸⁵Ge $\beta\gamma$ decay was reconstructed and compared to shell model calculations. The investigation of the systematics of low-energy levels in N=52 isotones together with shell-model analysis, allowed us to provide an estimate of the low-energy structure of the more exotic N=52 isotone ⁸¹Cu.

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I. INTRODUCTION

It has been predicted by various calculations [1-4] that a large excess of neutrons may significantly modify the shell structure with respect to the structure observed close to the β -stability line. β decay studies in the vicinity of the very exotic nucleus ${}^{78}_{28}Ni_{50}$, which is located significantly farther away from the stability path than any other doubly-magic nucleus on the neutron rich side, are particularly well suited for testing such predictions. Moreover, other calculations predict deformation in $_{34}$ Se and $_{32}$ Ge nuclei with four neutrons beyond the N=50 shell closure [5]. Further theoretical efforts tested with new experimental data are required. The starting point can be the study of excited states in N=52 isotones with odd Z, which are good candidates to probe proton singleparticle states. Our recent experimental data on the excited states in ${}^{83}_{31}$ Ga₅₂ suggest a different ordering of the low-lying levels than predicted by the shell model [6]. The next N=52 isotone is 85 As.

The first spectroscopic information on the β -decay ${}^{85}\text{Ge} \rightarrow {}^{85}\text{As}$ was obtained at the OSIRIS facility in Studsvik [7], where the half-life of ${}^{85}\text{Ge}$ (T_{1/2}=580(50) ms) was measured and two γ transitions of 102 and 116 keV were identified. Our later experiments confirmed these two lines and assigned a few more transitions in ${}^{85}\text{As}$ at energies of 206, 268, and 396 keV [8–11]. Furthermore, the more precise half-life T_{1/2}=494(8) ms obtained from this data set [8] is in agreement with the previous results T_{1/2}=580(50) ms [7] and T_{1/2}=535(47) ms [12]. In this work, the partial decay scheme of ${}^{85}\text{Ge}$ is presented for the first time with several new γ - transitions included.

II. EXPERIMENTAL SETUP

The experiment was performed at the Holifield Radioactive Ion Beam Facility (HRIBF) at Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL).

Fission fragments were produced by proton-induced fission of 238 U on a UC_x target [13] and subsequently ionized in a hot-plasma ion source to form a radioactive ion beam for experiments. The nuclei of interest, ⁸⁵Ge, were produced in the target, combined with sulfur, and then extracted from the ion source as molecular ions, ${}^{85}\text{GeS}^+$. The purified ${}^{85}\text{GeS}^+$ was selected after two stages of mass separation with a Cs-vapor cell in between to break up the molecule [14]. In the first stage of mass selection, a dipole magnet with mass resolution of $m/\Delta m \approx 1000$ separated all singly-charged positive ions with A=117 (85+32) from other products. The A=117 beam was then passed through a low-density Cs-vapor cell where the ${}^{85}\text{GeS}^+$ molecular ion broke up and ${}^{85}\text{Ge}^+$ ions were formed. The A=85 ions were then selected using a high-resolution dipole magnet with mass resolution of m/ Δ m \approx 10,000. This process resulted in an almost pure ⁸⁵Ge beam (some contamination of ⁸⁵As was present).

This beam was implanted into the tape of the Moving Tape Collector (MTC) positioned in the center of the detection set-up at the Low-energy Radioactive Ion Beam Spectroscopy Station (LeRIBSS) [15, 16]. An electrostatic deflector periodically deflected the beam away from the implantation point. The MTC periodically removed the implanted activity to avoid accumulation of longlived contaminants and daughter activities. The measurement was structured in three phases: a 1.5 s period for the accumulation of the activity (beam-on), a 1.5 s period when beam was deflected away (beam-off) and a 0.36 s transport time to remove the radioactivity out of the detection setup. The detection setup consisted of four HPGe clover γ -ray detectors (6% efficiency at 1.3 MeV) and two plastic scintillation counters for β -particle detection surrounding the beam line at the activity-deposition point. Trigger-free data from all detectors were collected by a fully digital acquisition-system based on the XIA Pixie-16 Rev. D modules with a 100 MHz clock synchronized across all modules [17–19].

III. RESULTS

The strongest transitions presented in the β -gated γ ray spectrum at mass 85 (see Figure 1) belong to the β or β n decay of ⁸⁵Ge. The weaker lines correspond to the daughters activities in the mass A=85 chain [20]. There are a few γ lines observed and marked with star symbols, which are unassigned. The half-life and $\beta - \gamma - \gamma$ coincidence analysis did not provide evidence for their belonging to ⁸⁵Ge decay nor any of the daughter activities.

The analysis of the $\beta - \gamma$ (see Figure 1) and $\beta - \gamma - \gamma$ (see Figure 2) data confirmed all five lines previously identified [7–11] and added several new transitions to the β decay of ⁸⁵Ge. The transitions observed and assigned to the decay of ⁸⁵Ge are summarized in Table I together with their intensities. Relative γ intensities ($I_{\gamma+CE}^{rel}$) were determined with respect to the 268 keV line. For $I_{\gamma+CE}^{rel}$ of the weakest transitions, $\beta - \gamma - \gamma$ coincidences were used. The partial decay scheme of ⁸⁵Ge is proposed here for the first time (see Figure 3). A transition at 345 keV, which was observed in the coincidence spectrum, was added tentatively, since a line at the same energy was reported as following ⁸⁵Se \rightarrow ⁸⁵Br decay [20].

A substantial β -n decay branch is present in ⁸⁵Ge decay due to the large energy window of $Q_{\beta n}$ =4659(5) keV available for this channel [20]. Its probability was recently measured, $P_n = 17.2(18)\%$ [22]. In our data four γ transitions in ⁸⁴As were observed at 42.7, 100.1, 242.5 and 347.1 keV [23]. The 100.1 keV line is a doublet with the 102.0 keV line in ⁸⁵As. The intensity of the 102.0 keV transition reported in Table I is corrected for the intensity of the 100.1 keV line, which is estimated from the $\beta - \gamma - \gamma$ coincidence spectrum to be about 2.4 % of the sum of the intensities of the 102.0 keV and 100.1 keV lines.

Apparent β feeding $I_{\beta}(rel)$ was calculated by normalizing the relative γ intensity to the sum of all observed intensities feeding the ground state (g.s.) (102.0, 218.3, 267.8, 500.9, 745.4, 979.0 keV) and corrected for $P_n =$ 17.2(18)% [22]. Our experiment was not sensitive to direct β -transitions to the ground-state of ⁸⁵As. Taking a typical value of ~6.5 for the *logft* of a first-forbidden transition between the (3/2⁺) and (5/2⁻) ground states, we obtain an estimation of $I_{\beta} \sim 5\%$. Therefore we list our β -intensities as *apparent*, i.e., without taking into ac-

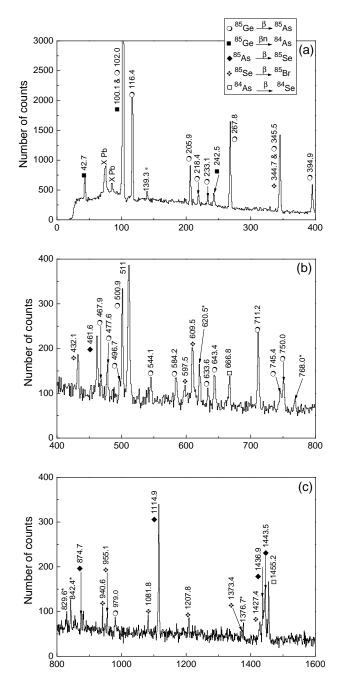


FIG. 1. Portions of the β -gated γ -ray spectrum obtained at mass A=85 collected during both beam-on and beam-off periods: 0-400 keV (a), 400-800 keV (b), 800-1600 keV (c). The strongest transitions belong to the ⁸⁵Ge \rightarrow ⁸⁵As β decay and ⁸⁵Ge \rightarrow ⁸⁴As β n decay. The weaker transitions correspond to decays in the daughters, ⁸⁵As, ⁸⁴As and ⁸⁵Se [20]. Four lines marked with a star are unassigned.

count this relatively small g.s. to g.s. β -feeding.

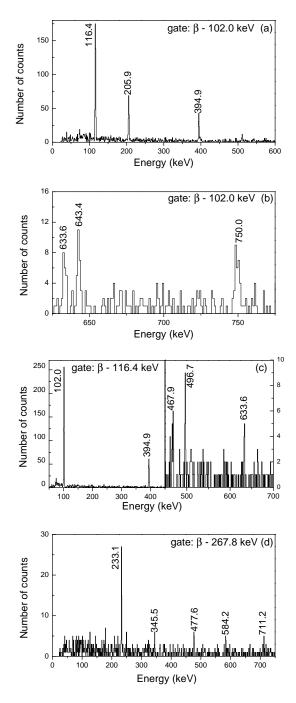


FIG. 2. The β -gated γ -ray spectra in coincidence with the 102 keV transition (a),(b), 116 keV (c) and 268 keV(d) which belong to the ⁸⁵Ge \rightarrow ⁸⁵As β decay.

IV. DISCUSSION

The parent nucleus ⁸⁵Ge (Z=32, N=53) has a positiveparity ground state with $I_{g.s.}^{\pi}=(3/2^+, 5/2^+)$ [11]. Systematics of N=53 isotones [24], together with SM calculations [25], favour the $(3/2^+)$ assignment over $(5/2^+)$. A tentative value for I^{π} of the ground state and the first excited state of the daughter nucleus 85 As can be estimated on the basis of systematics of the N=52 isotones 83 Ga [6, 26] and 87 Br [27].

For ⁸³Ga, the assignment $I_{g.s.}^{\pi} = (5/2^{-})$ was made on the basis of information about absolute β feeding [26]. Two γ -transitions in ⁸³Ga de-exciting levels at 218 and 109 keV in cascade were registered in later studies and identified as of M1 character. The level ordering was suggested to be $I^{\pi} = (1/2)^{-}, (3/2)^{-}, (5/2)^{-}$ for the 218 keV, 109 keV and ground state, respectively [6]. Spin/parity $(5/2^{-})$ was assigned to the ⁸⁷Br ground state [27]. The recent assessment of ⁸⁷Br states by the ENSDF evaluators [28] based primarily on Refs. [27, 29] follows the $(5/2^{-})$ g.s. assignment and lists (1/2, 3/2, 5/2) possibilities for the spins of all known levels, from the 243 keV, 334 keV, 573 keV states up to 3987 keV one, compare Figure 4a.

Assuming similar behaviour in ⁸⁵As as observed in ⁸³Ga, we propose M1 character for the 102.0 and 116.4 keV transitions. This is consistent with the fact that the γ -rays are in prompt coincidence with β particles. For both transitions multipolarity E2 or larger would give rise to a measurable lifetime ($\sim 1\mu s$) [31], which was not observed in the data. Assuming I^{π}_{g.s.}=(5/2⁻) and keeping in mind the systematic behaviour described above, we propose I^{π}=(3/2⁻) for the first excited state at E^{*}=102.0 keV.

The 116.4 and 218.3 keV transitions depopulate the 218.3 keV level to the first excited and ground states, respectively. Assuming M1 character for the 116.4 keV and E2 for the 218.3 keV transitions, the calculated ratio of their intensities would be about 4 [30, 31], which is consistent with the experimental intensity ratio $I_{\gamma}(116.4 \text{ keV})/I_{\gamma}(218.3 \text{ keV})=8(1)$. This points towards a spin difference of 2 between the 218 keV level and ground state, suggesting $I^{\pi}=(1/2^{-})$ spin for the 218.3 keV state.

These low-lying negative-parity and low-spin states will be befed in the beta decay of 85 Ge by first-forbidden transitions. Apparent log(ft) values for decay to these levels range from 5.8(1) to 7.5(1) (Table I, Figure 3), confirming such picture. Positive-parity states that could be populated by allowed Gamow-Teller transitions are expected to occur at higher excitation energies by shell model (SM).

Shell-model calculations were performed using the NushellX code [32] with the N3LO nucleon-nucleon interaction [33] and valence space containing all active orbitals above the ⁷⁸Ni core, as described in Ref. [6]. The ⁸⁵As level scheme (up to 1 MeV) predicted by the SM is compared with the experimental data in Figure 3. The structure of sequence of the calculated levels are in fair agreement with the ones arising from experiment. Below 1 MeV, three groups of levels are predicted by the SM in the range 0-100, 350-450, and 700-1000 keV correspond to the levels observed in experiment.

Only excited states of negative parity are present in the shell model calculations, which suggest that the lowestenergy part of the 85 As level scheme is fed by firstforbidden β transitions, which is consistent with experimental data. The first group of excited states with positive parity is expected at ~3.3 MeV. Its population by Gamow-Teller β transitions was not observed in the experiment.

In order to comprehend the evolution of the level structure in N=52 isotones, the SM calculations were extended to the neighbouring ⁸¹Cu, ⁸³Ga, ⁸⁵As and ⁸⁷Br nuclei, see Figure 4(b). The number of levels predicted in the calculations for ⁸³₃₁Ga, ⁸⁵₃₃As and ⁸⁷Br are in good agreement with experimental data at low-excitation energies, although its order is not in agreement with experimental systematics. A similar picture can then be expected for the next N=52 isotone ⁸¹Cu. The lower-energy portion of the ⁸¹Cu level scheme predicted by the SM seems to agree with the observed smooth trend visible in the experimental data, suggesting that for ⁸¹Cu I^{π}_{g.s.}=(5/2⁻). A cascade of two M1 transitions is therefore expected in the low-energy part of the ⁸¹Cu level scheme.

An investigation of the wave function for all low-energy $5/2^-$, $3/2^-$ and $1/2^-$ states in ${}^{87}\mathrm{Br}$, ${}^{85}\mathrm{As}$, ${}^{83}\mathrm{Ga}$ and ⁸¹Cu shows that the neutron wave function is dominated by the $\nu d_{5/2}$ orbital component, of about 70-80 %. The $\nu s_{1/2}$ orbital contributes only up to 20% to the these wave functions, compare Ref. [26]. The proton wave functions are more complex, due to a strong competition between $\pi f_{5/2}$ and $\pi p_{3/2}$ single particle orbitals energies. Both components have contributions ranging from 40% to 50% in ⁸⁷Br, ⁸⁵As and ⁸³Ga. The general similarity of the experimentally determined and calculated structures of ⁸³Ga and ⁸⁵As encourages the extrapolation to ⁸¹Cu. One would expect that the valence proton is the main player to determine the nature of low-energy excited levels in ⁸¹Cu, compare, e.g., [34–36]. This is supported our SM calculations. The main proton component of the wave function has an amplitude of about 80%: the single proton outside the Z=28 core seems to prefer occupying either the $\pi p_{3/2}$ orbital (3/2⁻ level) or the $\pi f_{5/2}$ orbital $(5/2^{-}$ level). On the other hand, the first $1/2^{-}$ level has a similar structure as the other heavier N=52 isotones $(30-40\% \pi f_{5/2} \text{ and } \pi p_{3/2})$. Experimental data on the spin of the lowest-lying states in $^{81}\mathrm{Cu}$ is needed in order to verify the inversion of the $3/2^-$ and $5/2^-$ lowest-lying state and hence the reliability of the SM predictions on its structure. The experiment using a total gamma absorption technique might be an ultimate tool to determine the β -feeding pattern including the g.s. to g.s. transition [37].

V. SUMMARY

We have investigated the β and β -n decay of ⁸⁵Ge produced at the HRIBF using the online mass separation technique enhanced by a formation and break up of molecular ions. The partial level scheme with several new transitions in the daughter ⁸⁵As nucleus was proposed for the first time. Assuming our experimental results and taking into account the systematic behaviour for N=52 isotones, spin and parity values were tentatively assigned to the ground and low-energy states in the ⁸⁵As as (5/2⁻), (3/2⁻) and (1/2⁻), respectively. Shell model calculations reproduced the experimental trend of the low-lying states for N=52 isotones which allowed us to suggest the main features of excited states to be expected in the very exotic nucleus ⁸¹Cu.

VI. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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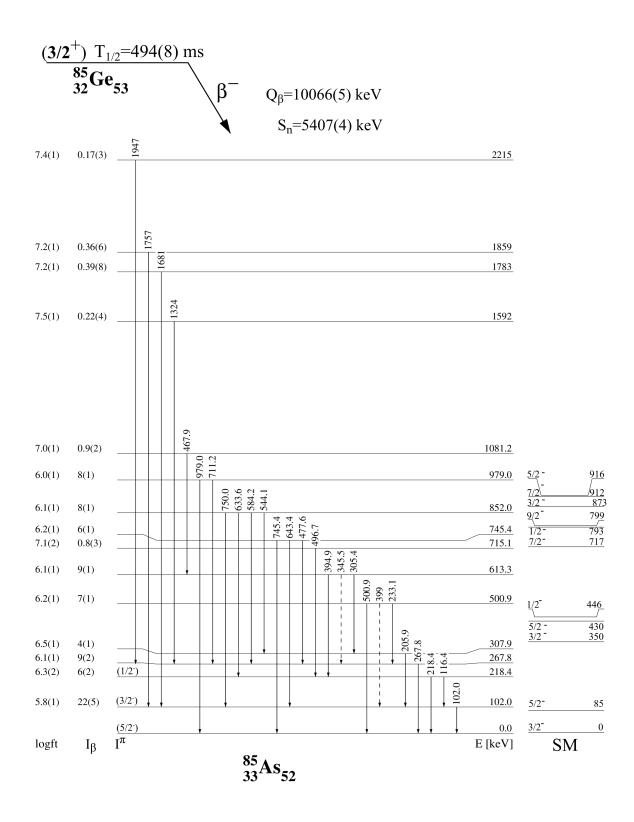


FIG. 3. Partial decay scheme of ⁸⁵Ge as obtained in this work. Dashed transitions were tentatively assigned on the basis of weak $\beta - \gamma$ coincidence. The Q_{β} and neutron-separation S_n energy were adopted from [20, 21], the half life is taken from [8]. Listed β -feeding intensities were obtained as "apparent", i.e., assuming no direct feeding to the ⁸⁵As^{gs}, compare text.

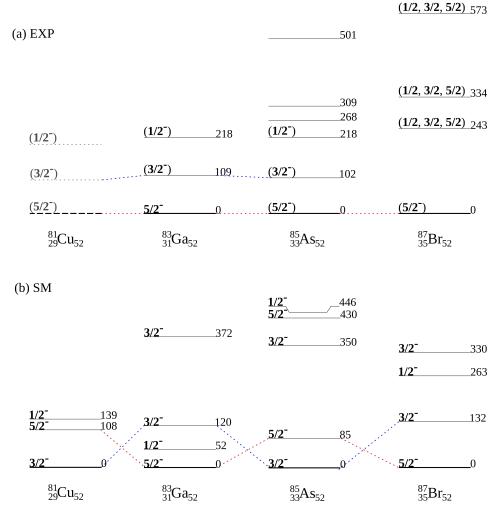


FIG. 4. Experimental (a) [6, 28, 29] and shell model (SM) predictions (b) of low-energy levels in N=52 isotones. The lowest energy $5/2^-$, $3/2^-$ and $1/2^-$ states occur within first 200-300 keV in experimental data and calculations. In panel (a) the level scheme of ⁸¹Cu is predicted from systematic of heavier N=52 isotones. Energies are expressed in keV.

TABLE I. Relative $(I_{\gamma+CE}^{rel}) \gamma$ -ray intensities for the β decay of ⁸⁵Ge normalized to the 267.8 keV transition. Energy values expressed in keV. E_f is the energy of the final level. I_{β}(rel) represent the apparent β -feeding determined from I^{rel}_{$\gamma+CE$}. Apparent log(ft) determined from I_{β}(rel) is also given.

			β decay channel			
E_{level}	E_{γ}	\mathbf{E}_{f}	Coincidence	$\mathbf{I}_{\gamma+CE}^{rel}$	$I_{\beta}(rel)$	log(ft)
102.0	102.0(2)	0	116.4, 205.9, 305.4,	*248(20)	22(5)	5.8(1)
			394.9, 399, 467.9,			
			496.7, 544.1, 633.6,			
			643.4, 750.0, 1681,			
			1757			
218.4	116.4(2)	102.0	102.0, 394.9, 467.9,	*76(6)	6(2)	6.3(2)
			496.7, 633.6	*76(6)	6(2)	6.3(2)
	218.4(5)	0	394.9, 467.9, 496.7,	9(1)		
	2.0 - 0 (2)		633.6	9(1)	0 (0)	
267.8	267.8(2)	0	233.1, 345.5, 477.6,	100(8)	9(2)	6.1(1)
			584.2, 711.2, 1324			
	227 2 (2)	100.0	1947	22(1)		
307.9	205.9(2)	102.0	102.0, 305.4, 467.9,	33(4)	4(1)	6.5(1)
	000 1 (5)		544.1	0(1)		
500.9	233.1(5)	267.8	267.8	6(1)	7(1)	6.2(1)
	$^{@}399(1)$	102.0	102.0	97(9)		
<u> </u>	500.9(2)	0	100 0 116 4 010 4	27(3)	0(1)	0.1(1)
613.3	394.9(2)	218.4	102.0, 116.4, 218.4, 467.0	45(4)	9(1)	6.1(1)
	$^{@}345.5(5)$	967 9	467.9			
	#345.5(5) #305.4(5)	267.8 307.9	$267.8, 467.9, \\102.0, 205.9, 467.9$	4(1)		
715.1	$\frac{496.7(8)}{496.7(8)}$	218.4	102.0, 205.9, 407.9 $102.0, 116.4, 218.4$	4(1) 4(1)	0.8(3)	7.1(2)
745.4	$\frac{490.7(8)}{643.5(5)}$	102.0	102.0, 110.4, 218.4	12(2)	$\frac{0.8(3)}{6(1)}$	$\frac{7.1(2)}{6.2(1)}$
745.4	477.6(5)	267.8	267.8	8(1)	0(1)	0.2(1)
	745.4(5)	201.8	207.0	11(2)		
852.0	633.7(5)	218.3	102.0, 116.4, 218.4	4(1)	8(1)	6.1(1)
002.0	544.1(5)	307.8	102.0, 110.4, 210.4	$\frac{4(1)}{8(2)}$	0(1)	0.1(1)
	584.2(5)	267.8	267.8	12(2)		
	750.1(5)	102.0	102.0	13(2)		
979	711.2(5)	267.8	267.8	27(3)	8(1)	6.0(1)
	979.0(5)	0		12(3)	- ()	()
1081.2	467.9(8)	613.3	102.0, 116.4, 205.9,	4(1)	0.9(2)	7.0(1)
			218.4, 267.8, 305.4,			
			345.5, 394.9			
1592	#1324(1)	267.8	267.8	1.1(2)	0.22(4)	7.5(1)
1783	#1681(1)	102.0	102.0	1.9(3)	0.39(8)	7.2(1)
1859	#1757(1)	102.0	102.0	1.8(2)	0.36(6)	7.2(1)
2215	#1947(1)	267.8	267.8	0.8(1)	0.17(3)	7.4(1)
			$\beta - n$ decay channel			
42.7	42.7(5)	0	100.1	*45(4)	7.9(9)	
142.8	100.1(5)	42.7	42.7	*6(1)	1.2(3)	
242.5	242.5(5)	0	347.1	15(2)	2.9(4)	
589.6	347.1(8)	242.5	242.5	0.4(1)	0.07(2)	

* $\alpha_{tot}(M1)=0.0855(23)$ for $E_{\gamma}=102$ keV, $\alpha_{tot}(M1)=0.0589(16)$ for $E_{\gamma}=116$ keV, $\alpha_{tot}(M1)=0.896(24)$ for $E_{\gamma}=43$ keV are included in the calculation.

 $^{\#}\,$ Only seen in coincidence spectra.

^(a) Tentatively assigned on the basis of very weak coincidences and therefore its intensity is not included in the balance.

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