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### Measurements of

$$H^{\Lambda} \text{ yields in Au+Au collisions at } \sqrt{s_{NN}} = 3 \text{ TeV}$$

$$H^{\Lambda} \text{ Lifetimes and Yields in Au+Au collisions at } \sqrt{s_{NN}} = 4 \text{ TeV}$$

$$\text{Au+Au collisions at } \sqrt{s_{NN}} = 2.76 \text{ TeV}$$

### Region

M. S. Abdallah et al. (STAR Collaboration)

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# Measurements of ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$ and ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$ Lifetimes and Yields in Au+Au Collisions in the High Baryon Density Region

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We report precision measurements of hypernuclei  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  and  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  lifetimes obtained from Au+Au collisions at  $\sqrt{s_{\text{NN}}} = 3.0$  GeV and 7.2 GeV collected by the STAR experiment at RHIC, and the first measurement of  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  and  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  mid-rapidity yields in Au+Au collisions at  $\sqrt{s_{\text{NN}}} = 3.0$  GeV.  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  and  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$ , being the two simplest bound states composed of hyperons and nucleons, are cornerstones in the field of hypernuclear physics. Their lifetimes are measured to be  $221 \pm 15(\text{stat.}) \pm 19(\text{syst.})$  ps for  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  and  $218 \pm 6(\text{stat.}) \pm 13(\text{syst.})$  ps for  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$ . The  $p_T$ -integrated yields of  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  and  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  are presented in different centrality and rapidity intervals. It is observed that the shape of the rapidity distribution of  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  is different for 0–10% and 10–50% centrality collisions. Thermal model calculations, using the canonical ensemble for strangeness, describes the  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  yield well, while underestimating the  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  yield. Transport models, combining baryonic mean-field and coalescence (JAM) or utilizing dynamical cluster formation via baryonic interactions (PHQMD) for light nuclei and hypernuclei production, approximately describe the measured  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  and  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  yields. Our measurements provide means to precisely assess our understanding of the fundamental baryonic interactions with strange quarks, which can impact our understanding of more complicated systems involving hyperons, such as the interior of neutron stars or exotic hypernuclei.

<sup>1</sup> Hypernuclei are nuclei containing at least one hyperon.  
<sup>2</sup> As such, they are excellent experimental probes to study  
<sup>3</sup> the hyperon-nucleon ( $Y$ - $N$ ) interaction. The  $Y$ - $N$  inter-  
<sup>4</sup> action is an important ingredient, not only in the  
<sup>5</sup> equation-of-state (EoS) of astrophysical objects such as  
<sup>6</sup> neutron stars, but also in the description of the hadronic  
<sup>7</sup> phase of a heavy-ion collision [1]. Heavy-ion collisions  
<sup>8</sup> provide a unique laboratory to investigate the  $Y$ - $N$  inter-  
<sup>9</sup> action in finite temperature and density regions through  
<sup>10</sup> the measurements of hypernuclei lifetimes, production  
<sup>11</sup> yields etc.

<sup>12</sup> The lifetimes of hypernuclei ranging from  $A = 3$  to 56  
<sup>13</sup> have previously been reported [2–11]. The light hyper-  
<sup>14</sup> nuclei ( $A = 3, 4$ ), being simple hyperon-nucleon bound  
<sup>15</sup> states, serve as cornerstones of our understanding of the  
<sup>16</sup>  $Y$ - $N$  interaction [12, 13]. For example, their binding en-  
<sup>17</sup> ergies  $B_{\Lambda}$  are often utilized to deduce the strength of the  
<sup>18</sup>  $Y$ - $N$  potential [14–16], which is estimated to be roughly  
<sup>19</sup> 2/3 of the nucleon-nucleon potential. In particular, the  
<sup>20</sup> hypertriton  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$ , a bound state of  $\Lambda pn$ , has a very small  
<sup>21</sup>  $B_{\Lambda}$  of several hundred keV [17, 18], suggesting that the  
<sup>22</sup>  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  lifetime is close to the free- $\Lambda$  lifetime  $\tau_{\Lambda}$ . Recently,  
<sup>23</sup> STAR [10, 11], ALICE [7, 8] and HypHI [9] have reported  
<sup>24</sup>  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  lifetimes with large uncertainties ranging from  $\sim 50\%$   
<sup>25</sup> to  $\sim 100\%$   $\tau_{\Lambda}$ . The tension between the measurements  
<sup>26</sup> has led to debate [19]. In addition, recent experimental  
<sup>27</sup> observations of two-solar-mass neutron stars [20–22] are  
<sup>28</sup> incompatible with model calculations of the EoS of high  
<sup>29</sup> baryon density matter, which predict hyperons to be a  
<sup>30</sup> major ingredient in neutron star cores [20–22]. These  
<sup>31</sup> observations challenge our understanding of the  $Y$ - $N$  inter-  
<sup>32</sup> action, and call for more precise measurements [12].

<sup>33</sup> In heavy-ion collisions, particle production models  
<sup>34</sup> such as statistical thermal hadronization [23] and co-  
<sup>35</sup> alescence [1] have been proposed to describe hypernu-

<sup>36</sup> clei formation. While thermal model calculations pri-  
<sup>37</sup> marily depend only on the freeze-out temperature and  
<sup>38</sup> the baryo-chemical potential, the  $Y$ - $N$  interaction plays  
<sup>39</sup> an important role in the coalescence approach, through  
<sup>40</sup> its influence on the dynamics of hyperon transporta-  
<sup>41</sup> tion in nuclear medium [24], as well as its connection to  
<sup>42</sup> the coalescence criterion for hypernuclei formation from  
<sup>43</sup> hyperons and nucleons [1]. At high collision energies,  
<sup>44</sup> the  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  yields have been measured by ALICE [8] and  
<sup>45</sup> STAR [10]. ALICE results from Pb+Pb collisions at  
<sup>46</sup>  $\sqrt{s_{\text{NN}}} = 2.76$  TeV are consistent with statistical thermal  
<sup>47</sup> model predictions [23] and coalescence calculations [25].  
<sup>48</sup> At low collision energies ( $\sqrt{s_{\text{NN}}} < 20$  GeV), an enhance-  
<sup>49</sup> ment in the hypernuclei yield is generally expected due  
<sup>50</sup> to the higher baryon density [1, 23], although this has  
<sup>51</sup> not been verified experimentally. The E864 and HypHI  
<sup>52</sup> collaborations have reported hypernuclei cross sections  
<sup>53</sup> at low collision energies [26, 27], however both mea-  
<sup>54</sup> surements suffered from low statistics and lack of mid-  
<sup>55</sup> rapidity coverage. Precise measurements of hypernuclei  
<sup>56</sup> yields at low collision energies are thus critical to ad-  
<sup>57</sup> vance our understanding in their production mechanisms  
<sup>58</sup> in heavy-ion collisions and to establish the role of hy-  
<sup>59</sup> perons and strangeness in the EoS in the high-baryon-  
<sup>60</sup> density region [28]. In addition, such measurements pro-  
<sup>61</sup> vide guidance on searches for exotic strange matter such  
<sup>62</sup> as double- $\Lambda$  hypernuclei and strange dibaryons in low  
<sup>63</sup> energy heavy-ion experiments, which could lead to broad  
<sup>64</sup> implications [29–31].

<sup>65</sup> In this letter, we report  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  and  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  lifetimes ob-  
<sup>66</sup> tained from data samples of Au+Au collisions at  $\sqrt{s_{\text{NN}}}$   
<sup>67</sup> = 3.0 GeV and 7.2 GeV, as well as the first measurement  
<sup>68</sup> of  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  and  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  differential yields at  $\sqrt{s_{\text{NN}}} = 3.0$  GeV. We  
<sup>69</sup> focus on the yields at mid-rapidity in order to investi-  
<sup>70</sup> gate hypernuclear production in the high-baryon-density

71 region. The yields at  $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 7.2$  GeV are not pre-  
 72 sented here due to the lack of mid-rapidity coverage. The  
 73 data were collected by the Solenoidal Tracker at RHIC  
 74 (STAR) [32] in 2018, using the fixed-target (FXT) con-  
 75 figuration. In the FXT configuration a single beam pro-  
 76 vided by RHIC impinges on a gold target of thickness  
 77 0.25 mm (corresponding to a 1% interaction probability)  
 78 located at 201 cm away from the center of the STAR de-  
 79 tector. The minimum bias (MB) trigger condition is pro-  
 80 vided by the Beam-Beam Counters (BBC) [33] and the  
 81 Time of Flight (TOF) detector [34]. The reconstructed  
 82 primary-vertex position along the beam direction is re-  
 83 quired to be within  $\pm 2$  cm of the nominal target posi-  
 84 tion. The primary-vertex position in the radial plane is  
 85 required to lie within a radius of 1.5 cm from the center of  
 86 the target to eliminate possible backgrounds arising from  
 87 interactions with the vacuum pipe. In total,  $2.8 \times 10^8$   
 88 ( $1.5 \times 10^8$ ) qualified events at  $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 3.0$  (7.2) GeV are  
 89 used in this analysis. The  $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 3.0$  GeV analysis and  
 90  $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 7.2$  GeV analysis are similar. In the following,  
 91 we describe the former; details related to the latter can  
 92 be found in the supplementary material.

93 The centrality of the collision is determined using the  
 94 number of reconstructed charged tracks in the Time Pro-  
 95 jection Chamber (TPC) [35] compared to a Monte Carlo  
 96 Glauber model simulation [36]. Details are given in [37].  
 97 The top 0–50% most central events are selected for our  
 98 analysis.  ${}^3_\Lambda\text{H}$  and  ${}^4_\Lambda\text{H}$  are reconstructed via the two-  
 99 body decay channels  ${}^A_\Lambda\text{H} \rightarrow \pi^- + {}^A\text{He}$ , where  $A = 3, 4$ .  
 100 Charged tracks are reconstructed using the TPC in a  
 101 0.5 Tesla uniform magnetic field. We require the recon-  
 102 structed tracks to have at least 15 measured space points  
 103 in the TPC (out of 45) and a minimum reconstructed  
 104 transverse momentum of 150 MeV/c to ensure good track  
 105 quality. Particle identification for  $\pi^-$ ,  ${}^3\text{He}$ , and  ${}^4\text{He}$  is  
 106 achieved by the measured ionization energy loss in the  
 107 TPC. The KFPARTICLE package [38], a particle reconstruc-  
 108 tion package based on the Kalman filter utilizing the er-  
 109 ror matrices, is used for the reconstruction of the mother  
 110 particle. Various topological variables such as the de-  
 111 cay length of the mother particle, the distances of closest  
 112 approach (DCA) between the mother/daughter particles  
 113 to the primary vertex, and the DCA between the two  
 114 daughters, are examined. Cuts on these topological vari-  
 115 ables are applied to the hypernuclei candidates in order  
 116 to maximize the signal significance. In addition, we place  
 117 fiducial cuts on the reconstructed particles to minimize  
 118 edge effects.

119 Figure 1 (a,b) shows invariant mass distributions of  
 120  ${}^3\text{He}\pi^-$  pairs and  ${}^4\text{He}\pi^-$  pairs in the  $p_T$  region (1.0–  
 121 4.0) GeV/c for the 50% most central collisions. The  
 122 combinatorial background is estimated using a rotational  
 123 technique, in which all  $\pi^-$  tracks in a single event are ro-  
 124 tated with a fixed angle multiple times and then normal-  
 125 ized in the side-band region. The background shape is  
 126 reasonably reproduced using this rotation technique for

127 both  ${}^3_\Lambda\text{H}$  and  ${}^4_\Lambda\text{H}$  as shown in Fig. 1 (a,b). The combinato-  
 128 rial background is subtracted from the data in 2D phase  
 129 space ( $p_T$  and rapidity  $y$ ) in the collision center-of-mass  
 130 frame. In addition to subtracting the rotational back-  
 131 ground, we perform a linear fit using the side-band re-  
 132 gion to remove any residual background. The subtracted  
 133 distributions are shown in Fig. 1 (c,d). The target is  
 134 located at  $y = -1.05$ , and the sign of the rapidity  $y$  is  
 135 chosen such that the beam travels in the positive  $y$  di-  
 136 rection. The mass resolution is 1.5 and 1.8 MeV/c<sup>2</sup> for  
 137  ${}^3_\Lambda\text{H}$  and  ${}^4_\Lambda\text{H}$ , respectively.

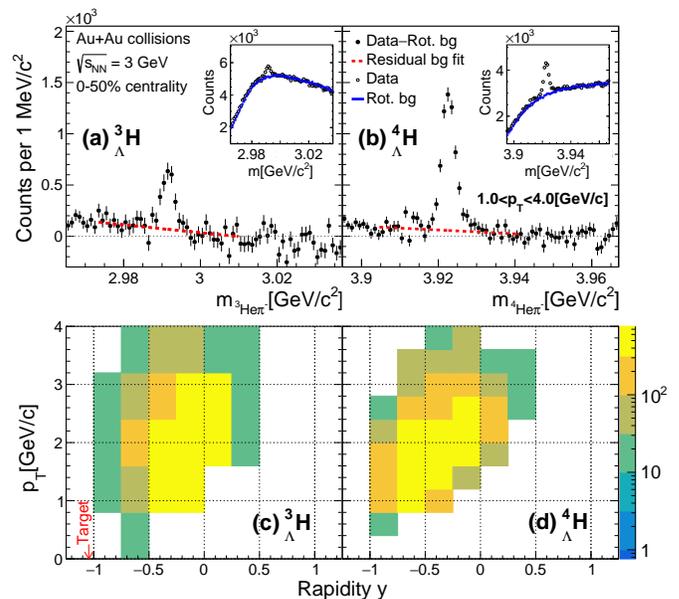


FIG. 1: Top row: Invariant mass distributions of (a)  ${}^3\text{He}\pi^-$  and (b)  ${}^4\text{He}\pi^-$  pairs. In the insets, black open circles represent the data, blue histograms represent the background constructed by using rotated pion tracks. In the main panels, black solid circles represent the rotational background subtracted data, and the red dashed lines describe the residual background. Bottom row: The transverse momentum ( $p_T$ ) versus the rapidity ( $y$ ) for reconstructed (c)  ${}^3_\Lambda\text{H}$  and (d)  ${}^4_\Lambda\text{H}$ . The target is located at the  $y = -1.05$ .

138 The reconstructed  ${}^3_\Lambda\text{H}$  and  ${}^4_\Lambda\text{H}$  candidates are further  
 139 divided into different  $L/\beta\gamma$  intervals, where  $L$  is the de-  
 140 cay length,  $\beta$  and  $\gamma$  are particle velocity divided by the  
 141 speed of light and Lorentz factor, respectively. The raw  
 142 signal counts,  $N^{\text{raw}}$ , for each  $L/\beta\gamma$  interval are corrected  
 143 for the TPC acceptance, tracking, and particle identi-  
 144 fication efficiency, using an embedding technique in which  
 145 the TPC response to Monte Carlo (MC) hypernuclei and  
 146 their decay daughters is simulated in the STAR detector  
 147 described in GEANT3 [39]. Simulated signals are embed-  
 148 ded into the real data and processed through the same  
 149 reconstruction algorithm as in real data. The simulated  
 150 hypernuclei, used for determining the efficiency correc-  
 151 tion, need to be re-weighted in 2D phase space ( $p_T$ – $y$ )  
 152 such that the MC hypernuclei are distributed in a re-

alistic manner. This can be constrained by comparing the reconstructed kinematic distributions ( $p_T, y$ ) between simulation and real data. The corrected hypernuclei yield as a function of  $L/\beta\gamma$  is fitted with an exponential function (see supplementary material) and the decay lifetime is determined as the negative inverse of the slope divided by the speed of light.

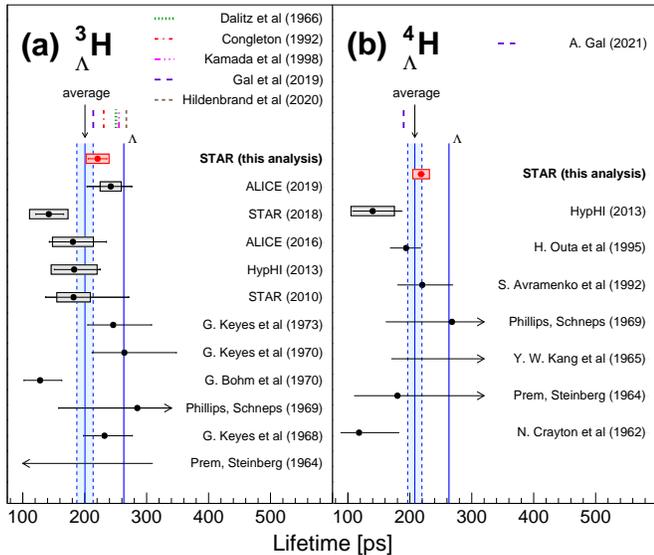


FIG. 2:  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  (a) and  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  (b) measured lifetime, compared to previous measurements [3–5, 7–11, 40–46], theoretical calculations [47–52] and  $\tau_{\Lambda}$  [53]. Horizontal lines represent statistical uncertainties, while boxes represent systematic uncertainties. The experimental average lifetimes and the corresponding uncertainty of  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  and  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  are also shown as vertical blue shaded bands.

We consider four major sources of systematic uncertainties in the lifetime result: imperfect description of topological variables in the simulations, imperfect knowledge of the true kinematic distribution of the hypernuclei, the TPC tracking efficiency, and the signal extraction technique. Their contributions are estimated by varying the topological cuts, the MC hypernuclei  $p_T$ - $y$  distributions, the TPC track quality selection cuts and the background subtraction method. The possible contamination of the signal due to multi-body decays of  $A > 3$  hypernuclei is estimated using MC simulations and found to be negligible ( $< 0.1\%$ ) within our reconstructed hypernuclei mass window. The systematic uncertainties due to different sources are tabulated in Tab. I. They are assumed to be uncorrelated with each other and added in quadrature in the total systematic uncertainty. As a cross-check, we conducted the measurement of  $\Lambda$  lifetime from the same data and the result is consistent with the PDG value [53] (see supplementary material).

The lifetime results measured at  $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 3.0$  GeV and  $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 7.2$  GeV are found to agree well with each other. The combined results are  $221 \pm 15(\text{stat.}) \pm 19(\text{syst.})$  ps for

Source	Lifetime		$dN/dy$	
	${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$	${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$	${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$	${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$
Analysis cuts	5.5%	5.1%	15.1%	6.9%
Input MC	3.1%	1.8%	8.8%	3.8%
Tracking efficiency	5.0%	2.4%	14.1%	5.2%
Signal extraction	1.5%	0.7%	14.3%	7.7%
Extrapolation	N/A	N/A	13.6%	10.9%
Detector material	$< 1\%$	$< 1\%$	4.0%	2.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>8.2%</b>	<b>6.0%</b>	<b>31.9%</b>	<b>16.6%</b>

TABLE I: Summary of systematic uncertainties for the lifetime and top 10% most central  $dN/dy$  ( $|y| < 0.5$ ) measurements using  $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 3.0$  GeV data.

${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  and  $218 \pm 6(\text{stat.}) \pm 13(\text{syst.})$  ps for  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$ . As shown in Fig. 2, they are consistent with previous measurements from ALICE [7, 8], STAR [10, 11], HypHI [9] and early experiments using imaging techniques [3–5, 10, 40–46]. Using all the available experimental data, the average lifetimes of  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  and  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  are  $200 \pm 13$  ps and  $208 \pm 12$  ps, respectively, corresponding to  $(76 \pm 5)\%$  and  $(79 \pm 5)\%$  of  $\tau_{\Lambda}$ . All data from ALICE, STAR and HypHI lie within  $1.5\sigma$  of the global averages. These precise data clearly indicate that the  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  and  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  lifetimes are considerably lower than  $\tau_{\Lambda}$ .

Early theoretical calculations of the  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  lifetime typically give values within 15% of  $\tau_{\Lambda}$  [48–50]. This can be explained by the loose binding of  $\Lambda$  in the  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$ . A recent calculation [47] using a pionless effective field theory approach with  $\Lambda d$  degrees of freedom gives a  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  lifetime of  $\approx 98\%$   $\tau_{\Lambda}$ . Meanwhile, it is shown in recent studies that incorporating attractive pion final state interactions, which has been previously disregarded, decreases the  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  lifetime by  $\sim 15\%$  [19, 51]. This leads to a prediction of the  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  lifetime to be  $(81 \pm 2)\%$  of  $\tau_{\Lambda}$ , consistent with the world average.

For  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$ , a recent estimation [52] based on the empirical isospin rule [54] agrees with the data within  $1\sigma$ . The isospin rule is based on the experimental ratio  $\Gamma(\Lambda \rightarrow n + \pi^0)/\Gamma(\Lambda \rightarrow p + \pi^-) \approx 0.5$ , which leads to the prediction  $\tau({}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H})/\tau({}^4_{\Lambda}\text{He}) = (74 \pm 4)\%$  [52]. Combining the average value reported here and the previous  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{He}$  lifetime measurement [55, 56], the measured ratio  $\tau({}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H})/\tau({}^4_{\Lambda}\text{He})$  is  $(83 \pm 6)\%$ , consistent with the expectation.

Previous measurements on light nuclei suggest that their production yields in heavy-ion collisions may be related to their internal nuclear structure [57]. Similar relations for hypernuclei are suggested by theoretical models [1]. To further examine the hypernuclear structure and its production mechanism in heavy-ion collisions, we report the first measurement of hypernuclei  $dN/dy$  in two centrality selections: top 0–10% most central and 10–50% mid-central collisions. The  $p_T$  spectra can be found in the supplementary material, and are extrapolated down to zero  $p_T$  to obtain the  $p_T$ -integrated  $dN/dy$ . Different functions [58] are used to estimate the systematic un-

224 certainties in the unmeasured region, which correspond  
 225 to 32–60% of the  $p_T$ -integrated yield in various rapidity  
 226 intervals, and introduce 8–14% systematic uncertainties.  
 227 Systematic uncertainties associated with analysis cuts,  
 228 tracking efficiency, and signal extraction are estimated  
 229 using the same method as for the lifetime measurement.  
 230 We further consider the effect of the uncertainty in the  
 231 simulated hypernuclei lifetime on the calculated recon-  
 232 struction efficiency by varying the simulation’s lifetime  
 233 assumption within a  $1\sigma$  window of the average experi-  
 234 mental lifetime, which leads to 8% and 4% uncertainty  
 235 for  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  and  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$ , respectively. Finally, hypernuclei may en-  
 236 counter Coulomb dissociation when traversing the gold  
 237 target. The survival probability is estimated using a  
 238 Monte Carlo method according to [59]. The results show  
 239 the survival probability  $> 96(99)\%$  for  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  ( ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$ ) in the  
 240 kinematic regions considered for the analysis. The disso-  
 241 ciation has a strong dependence on  $B_{\Lambda}$  of the hypernuclei.  
 242 Systematic uncertainties are estimated by varying the  $B_{\Lambda}$   
 243 of the  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  and  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$ , which are equal to  $0.27 \pm 0.08$  MeV  
 244 and  $2.53 \pm 0.04$  MeV, respectively [60]. As a conservative  
 245 estimate, we assign the systematic uncertainty by com-  
 246 paring the calculation using the central values of  $B_{\Lambda}$  and  
 247 its  $2.5\sigma$  limits. A summary of the systematic uncertain-  
 248 ties for the  $dN/dy$  measurement is listed in Tab. I.

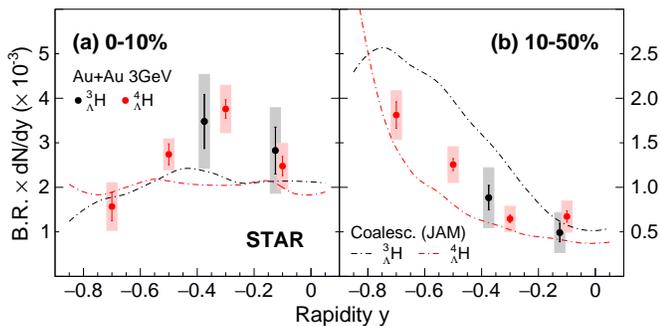


FIG. 3: B.R.  $\times dN/dy$  as a function of rapidity  $y$  for  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  (black circles) and  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  (red circles) for (a) 0–10% centrality and (b) 10–50% centrality Au+Au collisions at  $\sqrt{s_{\text{NN}}} = 3.0$  GeV. Vertical lines represent statistical uncertainties, while boxes represent systematic uncertainties. The dot-dashed lines represent coalescence (JAM) calculations. The coalescence parameters used are indicated in the text.

249 The  $p_T$ -integrated yields of  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  and  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  times the  
 250 branching ratio (B.R.) as a function of  $y$  are shown in  
 251 Fig. 3. For  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$ , we can see that the mid-rapidity distri-  
 252 bution changes from convex to concave from 0–10% to  
 253 10–50% centrality. This change in shape is likely related  
 254 to the change in the collision geometry, such as spectators  
 255 playing a larger role in non-central collisions.

256 Also shown in Fig. 3 are calculations from the trans-  
 257 port model, JET AA Microscopic Transportation Model  
 258 (JAM) [61] coupled with a coalescence prescription to all  
 259 produced hadrons as an afterburner [62]. In this model,  
 260 deuterons and tritons are formed through the coalescence

261 of nucleons, and subsequently,  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  and  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  are formed  
 262 through the coalescence of  $\Lambda$  baryons with deuterons  
 263 or tritons. Coalescence takes place if the spatial coordi-  
 264 nates and the relative momenta of the constituents  
 265 are within a sphere of radius  $(r_C, p_C)$ . It is found  
 266 that calculations using coalescence parameters  $(r_C, p_C)$   
 267 of (4.5fm, 0.3GeV/c), (4fm, 0.3GeV/c), (4fm, 0.12GeV/c)  
 268 and (4fm, 0.3GeV/c) for  $d$ ,  $t$ ,  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  and  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  respectively can  
 269 qualitatively reproduce the centrality and rapidity depen-  
 270 dence of the measured yields. The smaller  $p_C$  parameter  
 271 used for  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  formation is motivated by its much smaller  
 272  $B_{\Lambda}$  ( $\sim 0.3$ MeV) compared to  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  ( $\sim 2.6$ MeV). The data  
 273 offer first quantitative input on the coalescence param-  
 274 eters for hypernuclei formation in the high baryon density  
 275 region, enabling more accurate estimations of the pro-  
 276 duction yields of exotic strange objects, such as strange  
 277 dibaryons [1].

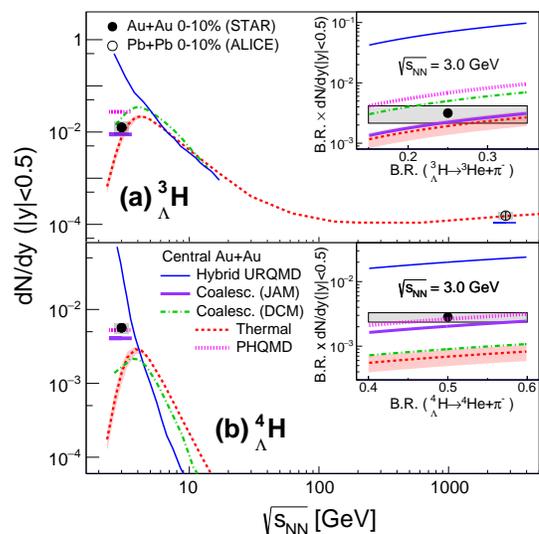


FIG. 4: (a)  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  and (b)  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  yields at  $|y| < 0.5$  as a function of beam energy in central heavy-ion collisions. The symbols represent measurements [8] while the lines represent different theoretical calculations. The data points assume a B.R. of 25(50)% for  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}({}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}) \rightarrow {}^3\text{He}({}^4\text{He}) + \pi^-$ . The insets show the (a)  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  and (b)  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  yields at  $|y| < 0.5$  times the B.R. as a function of the B.R.. Vertical lines represent statistical uncertainties, while boxes represent systematic uncertainties.

278 The decay B.R. of  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H} \rightarrow {}^3\text{He} + \pi^-$  was not directly  
 279 measured. A variation in the range 15–35% for the  
 280 B.R. [11, 49, 50] is considered when calculating the total  
 281  $dN/dy$ . For  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H} \rightarrow {}^4\text{He} + \pi^-$ , a variation of 40–60%  
 282 based on [17, 55] is considered in this analysis.

283 The  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  and  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  mid-rapidity yields for central colli-  
 284 sions as a function of center-of-mass energy are shown  
 285 in Fig. 4. The uncertainties on the B.R.s are not  
 286 shown in the main panels. Instead, the insets show the  
 287  $dN/dy \times \text{B.R.}$  as a function of B.R.. We observe that the  
 288  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  yield at  $\sqrt{s_{\text{NN}}} = 3.0$  GeV is significantly enhanced

289 compared to the yield at  $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 2.76$  TeV [8], likely  
 290 driven by the increase in baryon density at low energies.

291 Calculations from the thermal model, which adopts the  
 292 canonical ensemble for strangeness [63] that is mandatory  
 293 at low beam energies [64] are compared to data. Un-  
 294 certainties arising from the strangeness canonical volume  
 295 are indicated by the shaded red bands.  $\gamma$ -decay of the ex-  
 296 cited state  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}(1^+)$  to the ground state is accounted for  
 297 in this calculation. Interestingly, while the  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  yields at  
 298  $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 3.0$  GeV and 2.76 TeV are well described by the  
 299 model, the  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  yield is underestimated by approximately  
 300 a factor of 4. Coalescence calculations using DCM, an  
 301 intra-nuclear cascade model to describe the dynamical  
 302 stage of the reaction [1], are consistent with the  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  yield  
 303 while underestimating the  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  yield, whereas the coales-  
 304 cence (JAM) calculations are consistent with both. We  
 305 note that in the DCM model, the same coalescence pa-  
 306 rameters are assumed for  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  and  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$ , while in the JAM  
 307 model, parameters are tuned separately for  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  and  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  to  
 308 fit the data. It is expected that the calculated hypernu-  
 309 clei yields depend on the choice of the coalescence param-  
 310 eters [1]. Recent calculations from PHQMD [65, 66], a  
 311 microscopic transport model which utilizes a dynamical  
 312 description of hypernuclei formation, is consistent with  
 313 the measured yields within uncertainties. Compared to  
 314 the JAM model which adopts a baryonic mean-field ap-  
 315 proach, baryonic interactions in PHQMD are modelled  
 316 by density dependent 2-body baryonic potentials. Mean-  
 317 while, the UrQMD-hydro hybrid model overestimates the  
 318 yields at  $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 3.0$  GeV by an order of magnitude. Our  
 319 measurements possess distinguishing power between dif-  
 320 ferent production models, and provide new baselines for  
 321 the strangeness canonical volume in thermal models and  
 322 coalescence parameters in transport-coalescence models.  
 323 Such constraints can be utilized to improve model esti-  
 324 mations on the production of exotic strange matter in  
 325 the high baryon density region.

326 In summary, precise measurements of  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  and  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  life-  
 327 times have been obtained using the data samples of  
 328 Au+Au collisions at  $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 3.0$  and 7.2 GeV. The life-  
 329 times are measured to be  $221 \pm 15(\text{stat.}) \pm 19(\text{syst.})$  ps  
 330 for  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  and  $218 \pm 6(\text{stat.}) \pm 13(\text{syst.})$  ps for  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$ . The aver-  
 331 aged  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  and  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  lifetimes combining all existing measure-  
 332 ments are both smaller than  $\tau_{\Lambda}$  by  $\sim 20\%$ . The precise  
 333  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  lifetime reported here resolves the tension between  
 334 STAR and ALICE. We also present the first measure-  
 335 ment of rapidity density of  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  and  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  in 0–10% and  
 336 10–50%  $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 3.0$  GeV Au+Au collisions. Hadronic  
 337 transport models JAM and PHQMD calculations repro-  
 338 duce the measured midrapidity  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  and  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  yields rea-  
 339 sonably well. Thermal model predictions are consistent  
 340 with the  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  yield. Meanwhile, the same model underes-  
 341 timates the  ${}^4_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  yield. We observe that the  ${}^3_{\Lambda}\text{H}$  yield at  
 342 this energy is significantly higher compared to those at  
 343  $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 2.76$  TeV. This observation establishes low en-

344 ergy collision experiments as a promising tool to study  
 345 exotic strange matter.

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