

Study of 123 Ag β -decay at ALTO

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Studies of 123 Ag β -decay at ALTO

Dmitry A. Testov^{1,a}, A.P. Severyukhin¹, B. Roussière², N. Arsenyev¹, F. Ibrahim², M. Lebois², I. Matea², Yu. Penionzhkevich^{1,3}, V. Smirnov¹, E. Sokol¹, I. Stefan², D. Susuki², D. Verney², Jh. Wilson²

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Abstract The neutron rich 123 Ag nucleus was pop- 31 ulated via induced photofission of UC_x at the ALTO 32 ISOL facility. Its β -decay properties were studied by 33 means of detecting β -delayed γ and neutron activities. 34 The measured half-life $T_{1/2}=0.350(20)$ s agreed with 35 the earlier data; the β -delayed neutron emission branch- 36

 $_{7}$ ing $\mathrm{P}_{1n}=1.01(24)\%$ was reestablished using γ and neu- $_{37}$

s tron counting.

9 **Keywords** β -decay \cdot β -delayed neutron emission \cdot

beams of radioactive nuclei

1 Introduction

The delayed neutron emission probability (P_n) and the 46 half-life are the two key ingredients of β -decay that de-47 pend on the integrated quantities of the nuclear struc-48 ture. The half-life provides information on an integrated 49 total strength function, whereas P_n value probes the 50 16 part of the strength function above the neutron sepa-51 17 ration energy (S_n) . Therefore, measurements of these 52 18 values in experiments often provides the first insight 53 19 into the nuclear structure. Although the mechanism of 54 β-decay of nuclei is in principle understood, develop-55 ment of a satisfactory description coherent with new 56 data sets for neutron-rich species is highly required. A 57 significant experimental effort is currently underway to 58 reveal the role of neutron excess in the shell evolution 59 25 in these regions [1]. The current experimental study of 60 β-delayed (multi) neutron emission in the regions of the 61 chart of nuclides, which are important from the astro-62 physical point of view, is facing a new era: pure beams 63 of neutron-rich nuclei of hard-to-reach mass regions of 64

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 78 Ni and 132 Sn, have become available at radioactive ion beam facilities [2].

Reliable knowledge of the nuclear physics properties for the extremely neutron-rich nuclei along the rprocess path are needed to interpret the observational data in the framework of proposed astrophysical models [3–5]. As the neutron excess increases near the drip line, we expect the properties of the giant resonances and of the low-lying collective states to be dramatically affected at extreme N/Z ratios [6]. The formation of a neutron-skin may introduce a new type of collective mode in neutron-rich nuclei corresponding to an out-ofphase vibration of the skin against the neutron-proton inert core [7]. The concentration of the electric dipole (E1) strength around the particle separation energy is commonly called the pygmy dipole resonance (PDR). The occurrence of non-negligible low-lying E1-strength can influence the radiative neutron capture cross section by orders of magnitude and, consequently, also the rate of the astrophysical r-process nucleosynthesis (see details in ref. [8]). In case of the neutron-rich nuclei in the vicinity of $A \approx 130$, the E1 strength could be significantly more important than in nuclei close to the valley of β -stability.

In this context, the β -decay properties of heavy Ag and Cd isotopes are ideal candidates for such studies. Particularly, in very neutron-rich Ag nuclei the total energy released through beta-decay, Q_{β} , can go beyond 10 MeV (in case of 130 Ag, for example, $Q_{\beta} = 15.42(30)$ MeV [9]) and subsequently even deeply bound neutrons can decay into protons. When the Cd daughter nucleus is produced in a high-energy configuration above the neutron separation energy (S_n) , it usually de-excites through the neutron emission. On the other hand, the rearrangement of nuclear matter could proceed through collective modes of de-excitation in the

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daughter isotope, involving also the most superficial nu-120 cleons. Namely, microscopic calculations by refs. [10,121 11] showed that the Gamow-Teller (GT) transitions of 122 deeply-bound neutrons can trigger coherent dipolar os-123 cillations (like the PDR), which in turn engender a sig-124 nificant emission of $E1~\gamma$ -radiation. It is worth men-125 tioning that the inclusion of the coupling terms with 126 more complex configurations than 1p-1h ones sub-127 stantially enriches the low-energy spectrum of nuclei in 128 the $A\approx 130$ mass range, see, e.g., ref. [12].

The r-process abundance region around $A \approx 110$,¹³⁰ prior to the A=130 peak, is one of the regions of the regions of intense interest, where the astrophysical models under-¹³² estimate the abundances by an order of magnitude or more [13]. The newly measured P_n values in this re-¹³⁴ gion will directly affect the final r-process abundance pattern between the abundance "trough" the region (A=114-120) and the onset ($A\approx123$) of the $A=130^{137}$ peak region.

The $\beta\text{-delayed}$ neutron emission of $^{123}\mathrm{Ag}$ has been $^{^{139}}$ reported previously from the OSIRIS mass-separator in $^{^{140}}$ refs. [14,15]. The mass separated heavy fission products $^{^{141}}$ have been studied using a neutron counter comprised of $^{^{142}}$ $30\ ^3\mathrm{He}$ tubes. The weak neutron activities seen at the $^{^{143}}$ 122 and 123 masses were assigned to the silver isotopes. $^{^{144}}$ Consequently, due to 390(30) ms half-life measured for $^{^{145}}$ the 123 mass the neutron activity (still weak) was assigned to decay of 123 Ag. Later at the TRISTAN on-line₁₄₆ isotope separator facility at Brookhaven National Laboratory, the half-lifes and P_n values have been measured. for ^{121–124}Ag [16]. In a single set of experiments, us-148 ing mass-separated fission fragments, the neutron and 149 β growth (decay) curves were measured simultaneously 150 at masses 120-124 and at 127. The neutron decay curve₁₅₁ resulted in a 300(10) ms half-life which was assigned to 152 decay of 123 Ag. The P_n value of 0.55(9)% was deter-153 mined as a ratio of the neutron to β saturation activi-154 ties, corrected by the corresponding efficiencies. Neu-155 trons were straight detected by 40 ³He proportional₁₅₆ tubes embedded in polyethylene. The more recent mea- $_{157}$ surements of the β -delayed neutron emission branching 158 for neutron-rich Ag isotopes, populated in a fragmen-159 tation reaction, have been done at the National Su-160 perconducting Cyclotron Laboratory at Michigan State₁₆₁ University [17]. The yielded half-life of 272(24) ms was₁₆₂ derived using time difference between the ion implan-163 tation and the correlated β -decay. The half-life was 164 slightly shorter than reported previously [15,16]. The 165 P_n value was determined as 1.0(5)% based on the num-166 ber of β -neutron coincidence events divided by the num-167 ber of β decays following the implantation of ¹²³Ag₁₆₈ heavy ions. Neutrons were detected by the NERO array₁₆₉ consisting of 60^{3} He and BF₃ counters.

Regardless the numerous studies the 123 Cd level scheme populated in the decay of 123 Ag was only reported in the study performed at the Buenos Aires Tandem accelerator facility [18]. The 123 Ag nuclei was produced as a mass-separated fission product from the fast-neutron fission of natural U. Then γ -spectrometry measurements were performed using two Ge(HP) detectors. Spins and parities for the most important states were suggested upon log(ft) values obtained from measured γ -ray transition intensities.

In the work presented here the neutron-rich ¹²³Ag nucleus was revisited to study for the first time its β decay by simultaneous detection of β -delayed neutronand γ activities. The heavy Ag nuclei were populated using induced photofission of uranium at the ALTO ISOL facility [19,20] and measured at the BEDO β decay tape station [21] equipped with the TETRA neutron detector containing 80 proportional counters of ³He [22]. Up to now at ALTO the studies were concentrated in the region of heavy Ga nuclei crossing the N = 50 neutron closed shell: competition of the neutron emission process with the emission of high energy γ -rays [10]; population in β -decay resonance lowenergy structures [23]. In the present paper we report the first measurement of β -delayed neutron precursor in the ¹³²Sn region performed at ALTO.

2 Experimental details

Neutron-rich isotopes were produced via induced photofission at ISOL facility ALTO [19,20]. A 50 MeV, $\sim 7~\mu A$ electron beam was applied to a UC_x production target heated up to 2000 °C to obtain low energetic beams ($\sim \! \! 30~{\rm keV})$ of radioactive isotopes. Photofission products were extracted from the target with a hot plasma universal ion source FEBIAD (Forced Electron Beam Induced Arc Discharge) [24] with 1+ charge state and delivered to the mass separator PARRNe. The resolution (m/ $\delta m \approx 1500$) was high enough to provide isobaric selection of A = 123. The members of the isobaric chain such as Pd and Rh were refractory metals whose efficiency to release from the source was very low.

The modular detection system equipped with the BEDO tape station [21] was installed behind the mass separator PARRNe and was operated in the neutron detection configuration. It consisted of highly efficient neutron detector TETRA [22]; a $\sim 4\pi~\beta$ scintillator and a High-Purity coaxial Germanium γ -ray detector (EUROGAM-1 type [25]). Mass-separated beams were collected onto an Al-coated Mylar movable tape at the geometrical centre of the array. TETRA is one of the long-neutron counters constructed at JINR Dubna originally for spontaneous fission studies [26] but modified to allow β

delayed neutron measurements. TETRA response to the β -delayed neutron is fully understood by means of MCNP simulations [27] and by the reference measurements of β -decay of heavy 96,97 Rb isotopes [28]. The neutron efficiency $\epsilon_n=53(2)$ % was measured with a 252 Cf source. The Ge(HP) detector was calibrated using standard sources of 60 Co and 152 Eu. The absolute efficiency measured for 1.3 MeV γ -rays was $\epsilon_{\gamma}\sim0.6$ %. The efficiency of the β detector $\epsilon_{\beta}=37(4)$ % was determined using ratios of area under peaks for identified transitions in β -decay daughters in the direct γ and β gated γ -spectra using the coincidence method described in ref. [22, 28].

The measurement cycle was divided into three stages. The data was collected for $T_{meas} = T_{beam} + T_{decay}$: after the accumulation of a source during T_{beam} , the beam was deviated to allow counting the decay of the source for T_{decay} . At the third stage the data acquisition system was stopped and the tape was rewound for 2 m to transport the source, accumulated on the tape, outside the detection system. Adjusting the T_{beam} and T_{decay} parameters, see Table 1, it was possible to favour detection of decay radioactivity from 123 Ag. Since the half-life of 123 Ag is in a hundred ms range, in the offline analysing procedure for every cycle, only the data collected within $\tau_{meas} = \tau_{data} + \tau_{bg}$, defined as in Fig. 1 was sorted. The γ -ray spectra incremented within τ_{data} and τ_{bg} were denoted as S_{data} and S_{bg} correspondingly.

Figure 2 (top), displays the β gated γ -spectrum (S_{data}^{β}) which reveals transitions characterising β -decay of the A = 123 isobaric multiplet (Ag, Cd, In). Whereas the background spectra $\mathbf{S}_{bg}^{\beta},$ Fig. 2 (middle), shows transfer sitions only in the longer lived In and Sn. The subtraction of both spectra resulted in S_{sub}^{β} spectrum plotted in Fig. 2 (bottom). In this spectrum transitions in ¹²³Cd were favoured to be on the positive part of the scale whereas the γ -ray transitions in the longer-lived daughters are "reversed" to the negative part. This method allowed us to clearly observe five transitions previously attributed to ¹²³Cd [18]. The relative intensities measured in both S_{data}^{β} and S_{sub}^{β} are in agreement with the ones quoted in ref. [18], see Table 2. The high production rates of Cd and In isotopes together with a small P_{1n} value for 123 Ag as well as large neutron coincidence window (100 μ s due to the neutron moderation)²²⁵ resulted in a fact that the neutron tag did not lead to further purification of the recorded γ -ray spectra.

$3 P_{1n}$ extraction procedure

The P_{1n} value of a neutron precursor (A, Z) is the ra-232 tio of the number of decays to the β -delayed neutron233 daughter $(N_{\beta dn})$ to the total number of β -decays of the234

Table 1 Tape-cycle parameters in ms used for the A =123 settings: T_{beam} and T_{decay} are the duration of the beam collection and the beam-off source decay running acquisition time correspondingly; τ_{data} , τ_{bg} and τ_{decay} are as defined in Fig. 1 and N_{cycles} is the total number of tape cycles.

| T_{beam} | T_{decay} | $	au_{data}$ | $	au_{decay}$ | $	au_{bg}$ | N_{cycles} |
|------------|-------------|--------------|---------------|------------|--------------|
| 1000 | 4000 | 1500 | 500 | 1500 | 63 |

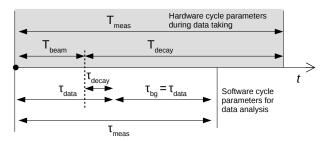


Fig. 1 Time-cycling parameters for the data taking and analysis

Table 2 Transitions observed in 123 Ag $\xrightarrow{\beta^-}$ 123 Cd decay. Relative intensities ($I^{rel}_{\gamma\beta}$) measured in the $\gamma(\beta)$ full (S^{β}_{data}) and subtracted (S^{β}_{sub}) spectra; relative (I^{rel}_{ref}) and absolute (I^{β}_{abs}) intensities taken from ref. [18].

| E_{γ} | ${ m I}^{rel}_{\gammaeta},\%$ | | \mathbf{I}^{rel}_{ref} | ${\rm I}_{abs}^{\beta}$ |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| | $S_{sub}^{\gamma\beta}$ | $\mathbf{S}_{data}^{\gamma\beta}$ | | |
| keV | % | | % | |
| 116.7(5) | 25(3) | 27(3) | 21(4) | 7.6(1) |
| 123.9(5) | 15(2) | n.o. | 16(2) | 5.8(4) |
| 264.3(5) | 100(8) | 100(9) | 100(3) | 36(3) |
| 410.1(5) | 40(5) | 54(7) | 40(12) | 13.2(5) |
| 591.8(5) | 28(4) | 30(6) | 29(15) | 8.2(3) |

precursor (N_{total}) . The experimental methods to derive P_{1n} differ in a way how $N_{\beta dn}$ and N_{total} are inferred. In the present measurements $N_{\beta dn}$ was assumed to be equal to the number of neutrons detected by TETRA corrected by the background events and the neutron efficiency ϵ_n . The integrated neutron activity curve accumulated over 63 cycles for the A=123 mass separator settings is presented in Fig. 3. The neutron background was of the magnitude of ≈ 20 n/s thanks to the boron polyethylene shield of TETRA and to the additional separator shielding (see ref. [22]). Due to a negative $Q_{\beta n}$ window for other members of the A=123 isobaric multiplet the recorded neutron activity was solely at-

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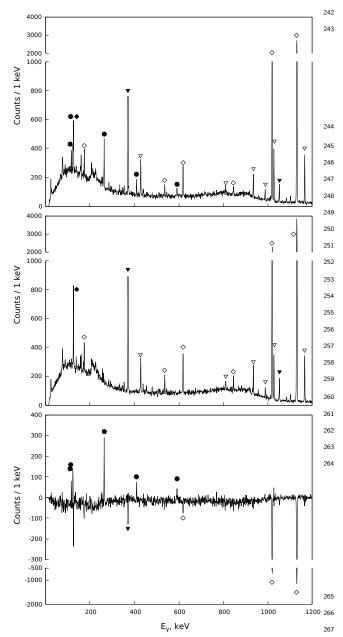


Fig. 2 β gated γ-spectra integrated over 63 cycles recorded for the mass A = 123 settings. S_{data}^{β} (top), S_{bg}^{β} (middle), S_{sub} (bottom) see text for details. Transitions are indicated in the daughter nuclei: $^{123}\text{Ag} \rightarrow ^{123}\text{Cd}$ (•); $^{123}\text{Cd} \rightarrow ^{123}\text{In}$ (∇); $^{123}\text{In} \rightarrow ^{123}\text{Sn}$ (⋄); $^{123}\text{In}^m \rightarrow ^{123}\text{Sn}$ (•)

tributed to the Ag¹²³ $\xrightarrow{\beta-n}$ Cd¹²² decay or background₂₆₈ activity. The half-life found fitting the neutron activity₂₆₉ curve resulted in 0.350(20) s.

The total number of 123 Ag decays (N_{total}) was de- 271 rived using the observed γ -ray transitions, listed in Ta- 272 ble. 2, and known, from ref. [18], absolute intensities 273 of β -decay to the 123 Cd excited states. Thus for a i-th $_{274}$

 $\gamma\text{-ray}$ transition in ^{123}Cd characterized by the I^i_β transition probability, the p^i_{1n} can be found as:

$$p_{1n}^{i} = \frac{N_{\beta dn}}{N_{total}} = \frac{N_{n}}{\epsilon_{n}} \cdot \frac{\epsilon_{\gamma i} \cdot \epsilon_{\beta} \cdot I_{i}^{\beta}}{A_{\gamma}^{i}} \cdot (1 - T_{dead}^{\gamma}), \tag{1}$$

where A_{γ}^{i} is the number of counts under the corresponding peak in the S_{data}^{β} (S_{sub}^{β}) spectra, ϵ_{n} , ϵ_{β} and $\epsilon_{\gamma i}$ are efficiencies of neutron, β and γ (for *i-th* transition) detection respectively and T_{γ}^{dead} is the dead time of the γ electronic channel. The dead time was estimated by monitoring the occupation fraction of the channel. The average dead time over τ_{meas} was $T_{\gamma}^{dead} = 34(6)\%$. The adopted P_{1n} value then was calculated as the weighted average of p_{1n}^{i} extracted for different transitions.

This procedure was applied twice to derive the P_{1n} value using S_{data}^{β} and S_{sub}^{β} spectra. In case of S_{data}^{β} the $N_{\beta dn}$ was measured as the number of neutrons detected within τ_{data} and corrected for the neutron background. In case of S_{sub}^{β} the $N_{\beta dn}$ was defined as the difference between the number of neutrons detected within τ_{data} and τ_{bg} . The 1.01(24) % and 1.03(36) % values for P_{1n} , obtained using S_{data}^{β} and S_{sub}^{β} spectra respectively, are consistent within the error bars. The adopted values $P_{1n}=1.01(24)$ % (as the most precise) and $T_{1/2}=0.350(20)$ ms are in good agreement with the results of different experiments cited in Table 4.

After determining P_{1n} and $T_{1/2}$ the ¹²³Ag production yield (Φ) was estimated to be $\approx 7700 \text{ s}^{-1}$ from the equation:

$$\int_{0}^{T_{beam}} A^{beam}(t) + \int_{T_{beam}}^{\tau_{decay}} A^{decay}(t) = N_{total}$$
 (2)

where $A^{beam}(t)$ and $A^{decay}(t)$ are the activity of ¹²³Ag during the collection and decay measurements respectively defined using the Bateman rules:

$$\int_{0}^{T_{beam}} \Phi \cdot (1 - e^{-t \cdot \lambda}) \delta t +
+ \int_{T_{beam}}^{\tau_{decay}} \Phi \cdot e^{-(t - T_{beam}) \cdot \lambda} (1 - e^{-T_{beam} \cdot \lambda}) \delta t =
= N_{total}.$$
(3)

where λ is the decay constant of ¹²³Ag.

The production yields of 123 Cd, 123 Cd m and 123 In, delivered with the beam in the present experiment and reported in Table 3, were estimated by using sets of Bateman equations similar to Eq. 2 and 3, known half-lives and the absolute intensities of β -decay to excited states in daughter nuclei cited in the literature [32].

Table 3 Measured production yields (Φ) for A =123 mass₂₉₄ isotopes implanted into the tape; P_{1n} and $T_{1/2}$ for ¹²³Ag₂₉₅ as measured in this work, for others as recommended by the evaluator [32].

| | ${ m T_{1/2}}_{ m s}$ | P_{1n} , % | $_{\mathrm{s}^{-1}}^{\Phi}$ | 29 |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------------|----|
| | | | | 30 |
| $^{123}\mathrm{Ag}$ | 0.350(50) | 1.01(24) | $7.7(40)\cdot 10^3$ | 30 |
| $^{123}\mathrm{Cd}$ | 2.10(2) | _ | $\sim 4.7{\cdot}10^4$ | 30 |
| $^{123}\mathrm{Cd}^m$ | 1.82(3) | _ | $\sim 1.4{\cdot}10^5$ | 30 |
| $^{123}{ m In}$ | 6.17(5) | _ | $\sim 1.4{\cdot}10^6$ | 30 |

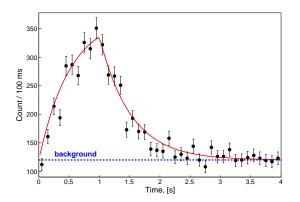


Fig. 3 Neutron activity curve from photo-fission fragments³²¹ recorded for A = 123 mass separator settings. The curve denoted by black points was accumulated within 93 cycles, see Table. 1; the red curve is the result of the obtained fit with³²² $T_{1/2} = 0.350~(20)$ ms.

4 Conclusions

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The paper reports on the first measurement of a de- 328 layed neutron precursor in the neighbourhood of $^{132}\mathrm{Sn}_{_{330}}^{^{329}}$ produced at ALTO facility. β -decay of the neutron-rich₃₃₁ 123 Ag was investigated using a A = 123 mass-separated³³² beam delivered to the neutron detector TETRA set up³³³ at the BEDO tape station. The detector arrangement $^{335}_{335}$ allowed simultaneously recording of β -, neutron- and γ -336 radiation accompanying the decay of $^{123}\mathrm{Ag}$ for the first $^{_{337}}$ time. In addition to the $^{123}\mathrm{Ag}$ ground state, the iso- 339 meric and ground states in ¹²³Cd and ¹²³In were also₃₄₀ populated by induced uranium photofission. The iden-341 tification of the isotopes was reliably performed based³⁴² on the recorded β gated γ -spectra. Due to the fact that $^{^{343}}_{_{344}}$ neutron emission was not energetically possible in the₃₄₅ members of the A=123 isobaric multiplet, other than³⁴⁶ Ag, the observed neutron activity was attributed to the $^{^{347}}\!\!$ β -n decay of ¹²³Ag. The half-life measured from the $_{349}$ detected neutron activity agreed with values reported₃₅₀

from previous experiments. It is worth noting that, in general, T_{1/2} for ¹²³Ag obtained by using neutron activity tends to be slightly longer in comparison to β and ion counting techniques. The P_{1n} value was found as the ratio of detected neutrons (background subtracted, efficiency corrected) to the total number of 123 Ag β -decays determined from the γ -rays observed. The adopted P_{1n} agreed within the error bars with results of another experiments where P_{1n} was derived directly by β - and neutron- countings. This agreement provided the indirect proof of the accuracy of the β -decay intensities to excited states in ¹²³Cd daughter. The results prove the ability of TETRA to be an effective tool using massseparated beams extracted using the plasma ion source. In the particular case of this experiment, as the yield of Pd was negligibly small, and due to the fact that Ag was the only neutron precursor on the isobaric chain, the parameters of β -decay could be still properly measured. Similar techniques will be adopted to study decay of heavier Ag and Cd isotopes to be reported in a forthcoming publication.

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Table 4 T_{1/2} and P_{1n} of ¹²³Ag neutron precursors. The type of β-delayed activity for half-life (γ , β , neutron or i-β — ion-β correlated decay curve) is shown by the superscript; ¹²³Ag production method is indicated as mass. sep. or laser for ISOL mass separated and selectively laser ionized fission fragments correspondingly; or frag. — reaction of fragmentation.

| $T_{1/2}$ ms | P_n % | Measured activities | Neutron detector | Production method | Facility |
|--------------------|----------|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| $350(20)^n$ | 1.01(24) | γ, β, n | TETRA | mass. sep. | ALTO, preser |
| $272(24)^{\beta}$ | 1.0(5) | β , n, ion | NERO | frag. | MSU, [17] |
| $293(7)^n$ | - | β , n | not reported | laser | ISOLDE, [29 |
| $300(10)^n$ | 0.55(9) | β , n | 40 x $^3{\rm He}$ | $mass.\ sep.$ | TRISTAN, [1 |
| $350(40)^{\gamma}$ | - | γ | - | $mass.\ sep.$ | TANDAR [18 |
| $300(20)^{\gamma}$ | - | $\gamma,~eta$ | - | $mass.\ sep.$ | TRISTAN, [3 |
| $390(30)^n$ | - | β , n | 30 x $^3{\rm He}$ | $mass.\ sep.$ | OSIRIS [14,1 |
| 0.296(7) | 0.56(9) | | | recommended | by evaluator [3 |

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