DESPEC Phase-0 campaign at GSI


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Summary. — This paper reports preliminary results of the DESPEC campaign at GSI, focused on the study of neutron-deficient nuclei approaching $^{100}$Sn. The results presented show the isomeric decays of excited states with $I^\pi = 14^+$ and $8^+$ in $^{96}$Pd and $^{94}$Pd, respectively. The detailed characterisation of the DESPEC set-up and analysis methodologies, proven in this experimental run, are crucial for the future campaigns.

1. – Introduction

The HISPEC-DESPEC Collaboration aims at investigating the nuclear structure of exotic nuclei formed in high-energy projectile-fragmentation reactions by performing decay spectroscopy measurements at GSI, as part of the Phase-0 GSI-FAIR experiments. $^{100}$Sn, having $N = Z = 50$, is the heaviest self-conjugate doubly magic nucleus that is stable with respect to particle emission. Therefore, nuclei in the south-west region of $^{100}$Sn are subject to extensive experimental and theoretical studies [1]. In particular, the structure of $^{94}$Pd is an excellent case for understanding the effects of proton-neutron pairing, suggested to explain structural properties in the intermediate $N = Z$ nuclei $^{96}$Cd [2, 3] and $^{92}$Pd [4]. The triplet $^{92}$Pd, $^{94}$Pd and $^{96}$Cd is predicted to show a sharp reduction in $B(E2)$ values for the yrast $8^+ \to 6^+$ transition. A measurement of the $B(E2)$ transition strength in $^{94}$Pd following population of the yrast cascade through the $I^\pi = 14^+$ isomer will allow a stringent test of state-of-the-art shell model calculations for $N \sim Z$ nuclei approaching $^{100}$Sn and prove the role of $p$-$n$ pairing in their structural evolution. The aim of this experiment was to study excited states in $^{94}$Pd and several proton emitters along the $N = Z$ line between $A = 90$ and $A = 100$. A second aim of this experimental run is the search for direct evidence of proton emission in $^{89}$Rh and $^{93}$Ag as an important input for the modeling of the astrophysical rp-process. The prediction of the composition of rp-process ashes is important for the understanding of neutron-star crusts [5] and of the origin of the nuclei $^{92,94}$Mo and $^{96,98}$Ru, found in large quantities in the Solar System [6].

2. – Experiment and preliminary results

The experiment was performed at the GSI accelerator facility, where the nuclei of interest were produced in fragmentation reactions induced by a $^{124}$Xe beam at an energy of 850 MeV/$A$ impinging on a 4 g/cm$^2$ thick $^9$Be target. The selection and transport of the ions of interest was performed using the FRS magnetic spectrometer (the FRagment Separator) through the $Bp$-$\Delta E$-$Bp$ method. The ions were identified using the $ToF$-$Bp$-$\Delta E$ method, with a measurement of the mass number over ionic charge ($A/Q$) and the atomic number $Z$. The study of the structure of the nuclei of interest was performed using $\gamma$-ray spectroscopy following the internal decay of metastable isomeric states. The same set-up allows to measure lifetimes of excited states populated by $\beta$ decay through ion-$\beta$ and $\beta - \gamma$-ray correlations. These measurements can be performed using a composite detector array. Fragments are implanted in the Advanced Implantation Detector Array (AIDA) [7], composed of three layers of high-pixelated DSSSDs, used also to detect $\beta$ particles. Timing measurements of $\beta$ particles are performed by sandwiching
Fig. 1. – Panels (a), (b): Two-dimensional histograms of the energy spectrum from FATIMA vs. the time difference between a γ-ray detected in FATIMA and an ion signal in the last scintillator of the FRS. Panels (c), (d), (e), (f) give γ-ray energy spectra for FATIMA and Galileo. The panels are for \( ^{96}\text{Pd} \) (left) and for \( ^{94}\text{Pd} \) (right).

The previously reported yrast isomeric states, with half-lives 499(13) ns and 2.2(1) \( \mu \)s in \( ^{94}\text{Pd} \) and \( ^{96}\text{Pd} \), respectively [12,13], were identified using particle-id gated γ-ray spectra using both LaBr₃(Ce) and the HPGe detectors. The individual, discrete transitions which are emitted in the decay of these isomeric cascades are characterised by horizontal lines in the 2D matrix of particle gated γ-ray energy vs. the time difference between γ-ray emission and the ions passing through the final scintillation detector at the focal plane of the FRS (SC41). The energy vs. time plot gated on \( ^{94}\text{Pd} \) and \( ^{96}\text{Pd} \) ions for the FATIMA detectors is show in fig. 1. Transitions following the decay of the \( I^\pi = 8^+ \) isomer in \( ^{96}\text{Pd} \) and \( I^\pi = 14^+ \) in \( ^{94}\text{Pd} \) are clearly seen in the energy spectra shown in fig. 1. Results from this experiment were exploited to tune a GEANT4 [14] simulation of help for future proposals and experiments preparation. In fig. 2 we report a comparison of simulated and measured spectra relative to the isomeric decay in \( ^{96}\text{Pd} \) for FATIMA and
GTC systems. Further analysis of the data is ongoing to extract level lifetimes of states below the isomer in $^{94}$Pd and surrounding nuclei. The $\beta$ decay of the other species produced in the fragmentation reaction is also currently being studied.

3. – Conclusions

This paper reports the preliminary results of the first experiment of the DESPEC Phase-0 campaign, focused on the study of proton-rich nuclei in the $^{100}$Sn region. In particular, the isomeric lines of $^{94,96}$Pd are identified. These results are intended as a proof of the correct functioning of the detector system and analysis techniques employed and will be used in future campaigns with the DESPEC set-up.

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