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Prediction of high-K isomeric states in transactinide nuclei close to N=162

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Abstract Transactinide nuclei around neutron number N=162 display axially deformed equilibrium shapes. In the present study we are particularly interested in the occurrence of high-K isomers in the axially deformed isotopes of Rf (Z=104), Sg (Z=106), Hs (Z=108), and Ds (Z=110), with neutron number N=160-166 and the effect of the N=162 closure on the structure and distribution of two-quasiparticle (2qp) states. The evolution of high-K isomers is analyzed in a self-consistent axially symmetric relativistic Hartree-Bogoliubov calculation using the blocking approximation with time-reversal symmetry breaking.

Keywords high-K isomers, transactinides, nuclear density-functionals

INTRODUCTION

Nuclei beyond the actinides owe their existence to the underlying single-nucleon shell structure. These elements often display axially deformed equilibrium shapes and intruder single-nucleon states with high- Ω values (projection of the single-particle angular momentum onto the symmetry axis of the nucleus) appear close to the Fermi level. The unpaired quasiparticle excitations form isomeric states with high values of total $K = \sum_i \Omega_i$ [1]. Because they can only decay by K-forbidden transitions, these states have lifetimes that are significantly longer than most of the neighboring states. The decay of isomeric states provides information on the nuclear wave function, single-nucleon states, pairing gaps and residual interactions [2].

Systematic experimental efforts in the region of very heavy nuclei have produced detailed spectroscopic data in nuclei around ^{254}No [3- 7]. In addition to the detection of α and γ decays, recent studies have made use of conversion electrons (CE) to investigate possible K-isomeric states in heavy high-Z nuclei such as, for instance, ^{256}Rf , in which internal conversion becomes the preferred decay mode [8, 9]. The heaviest nuclei for which characteristic high-K isomeric decays have been investigated are ^{270}Ds and its α -decay daughter ^{266}Hs [10, 11]. Theoretical studies of quasiparticle excitations in the region of transactinide nuclei have been based on the microscopic-macroscopic approach [12-23], self-consistent models with Skyrme functionals [24-29], the Gogny force [30-32], and relativistic energy density functionals [33-38].

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In the present study [39] we extend our resent study of shape evolution, collective excitation spectra, and decay properties of transactinide nuclei based on the microscopic framework of relativistic energy density functionals Ref. [33], to two-quasiparticle excitations in the axially deformed isotopes of Rf ($Z = 104$), Sg ($Z = 106$), Hs ($Z = 108$), and Ds ($Z = 110$), with neutron number $N = 160 - 166$.

QUASI-PARTICLE EXCITATIONS

The two-quasiparticle neutron or proton states are obtained in a self-consistent relativistic Hartree-Bogoliubov calculation [39, 40], based on the functional DD-PC1 [41] and with a separable pairing force of finite range [42, 43], using the blocking approximation with time-reversal symmetry breaking. The $2qp$ states are determined by blocking the lowest neutron or proton quasi-particle orbitals located in the vicinity of the Fermi energy that corresponds to the fully paired equilibrium solution. After performing the iterative minimization, the energy of the two-quasiparticle excitation is obtained as the difference between the energy of the self-consistent blocked RHB solution and the energy of the fully paired equilibrium minimum. The breaking of time-reversal symmetry removes the degeneracy between signature partner states with angular-momentum projection on the symmetry axis $K_{\min} = |\Omega_i - \Omega_j|$ and $K_{\max} = \Omega_i + \Omega_j$, and with parity $\pi = \pi_i \cdot \pi_j$.

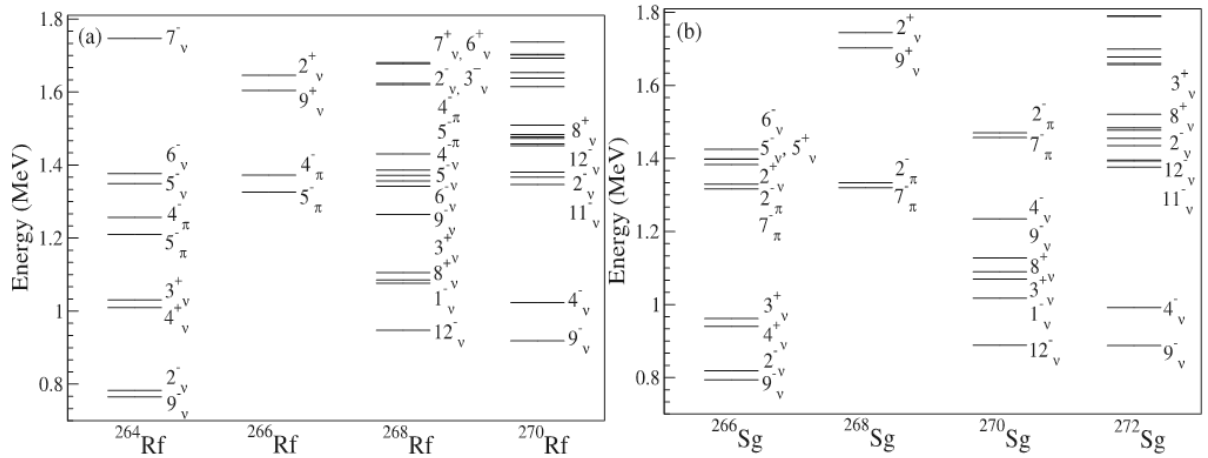


Fig. 1. Lowest two-quasiparticle states in Rf (upper panel) and Sg (lower panel) isotopes with neutron number $N = 160 - 166$. The $2qp$ states correspond to axially symmetric solutions obtained with the relativistic functional DD-PC1 and a pairing force separable in momentum space. The calculation includes time-reversal symmetry breaking.

Figures 1 and 2 display the excitation energies of two-quasiparticle $K_{V(\pi)}$ states for the Rf, Sg, Hs and Ds isotopes with neutron number $N = 160 - 166$. In figure 1 the high density of single-particle levels close to the Fermi surface in the isotopes of Rf and Sg with $N=160$ yields a number of quasiparticle excitations in the energy window below 1.8 MeV. Our calculation predicts the occurrence of the two-neutron isomeric states $K^\pi = 9^-_v$ and 2^-_v

originating from the single-particle orbitals $v7/2^+[613] \otimes v11/2^-[725]$. The neutron orbitals $v1/2^+[620]$ and $v7/2^+[613]$ are coupled to form the states 4^+_V and 3^+_V at excitation energy close to 1 MeV. An interesting result, that can also be noticed in the two other isotopic chains considered in this study, is that the lowest two-quasiparticle states in the $N = 162$ isotones are predicted at considerably higher excitation energies. For the particular choice of the energy density functional and pairing interaction used in this and our previous study [33], the lowest two-quasiparticle states typically occur at ≈ 0.8 MeV, whereas in the $N = 162$ isotones the excitation energies of the lowest $2qp$ states are predicted at $E \geq 1.2$ MeV. For ^{266}Rf , in particular, the doublet of states 5^-_N and 4^-_N states at energy 1.35 MeV originates from the two-proton configuration $n1/2^-[521] \otimes n9/2^+[624]$. The lowest two neutron excitations occur at even higher energies: the 9^+_V and 2^+_V states at 1.60 MeV and 1.65 MeV, respectively, based on the high-j configuration $v7/2^+[613] \otimes v11/2^+[606]$. In ^{268}Sg , as a result of the neutron shell-closure at $N = 162$, the lowest $2qp$ excitations are the proton states 7^-_N and 2^-_N at 1.32 and 1.33 MeV, respectively, originating from the Nilsson levels $n5/2^-[512]$ and $n9/2^+[624]$. We note that for this nucleus the only two-neutron qp states, predicted below 1.8 MeV are the 9^+_V and 2^+_V ($v11/2^+[606] \otimes v7/2^+[613]$) at 1.70 and 1.74 MeV, respectively. The occurrence of $2qp$ excitations in ^{268}Rf and ^{270}Sg already at energies ≈ 1 MeV is consistent with the increase of the single-particle level density near the Fermi surface. The lowest-lying two-neutron excitations 12^-_V and 1^-_V originate from the configuration $v13/2^-[716] \otimes v11/2^+[606]$. In ^{270}Rf and ^{272}Sg the lowest $2qp$ configurations are: $v5/2^+[613] \otimes v13/2^-[716]$ (9^-_V and 4^-_V), $v9/2^+[604] \otimes v13/2^-[716]$ (11^-_V and 2^-_V), $v11/2^+[606] \otimes v13/2^-[716]$ (12^-_V and 1^-_V), and $v5/2^+[613] \otimes v11/2^+[606]$ (8^+_V and 3^+_V).

In ^{268}Hs (left panel of figure 2), the lowest-lying $2qp$ excitations are the signature partner levels 9^-_V , 2^-_V and 4^+_V , 3^+_V . The two configurations coincide in energy, with the aligned Ω -states at 0.86 MeV and the anti-aligned ones at 0.88 MeV. Adding two more protons (right panel of figure 2), the doublet 4^+_V and 3^+_V ($v1/2^+[620] \otimes v7/2^+[613]$) becomes the lowest $2qp$ excitation in the nucleus ^{270}Ds . The partner levels 9^-_V and 2^-_V , which are the lowest $2qp$ states in the $N = 160$ Rf, Sg and Hs isotopes, are calculated ≈ 200 keV higher in energy. The prediction of a high-K two-neutron quasiparticle configuration at energy ≈ 1 MeV is in agreement with the experimental observation of a two-neutron high-K isomeric decay in ^{270}Ds [11]. In ^{270}Hs , because of the deformed shell closure, the neutron two-quasiparticle states 9^+_V and 2^+_V are predicted at energies 1.65 and 1.69 MeV, respectively. The lowest-lying $2qp$ states calculated for ^{270}Hs are the proton excitations 7^+_N and 2^+_N , with the structure of Nilsson orbitals $n5/2^-[512] \otimes n9/2^-[505]$. ^{270}Hs has been observed in the reaction $^{248}\text{Cm} (^{26}\text{Mg}, 4n)$, however,

because of the low production cross section and consequently low number observed events (3), no detailed spectroscopic data are available except for α decay energies and decay times [44]. The calculation for ^{272}Ds predicts the proton two-quasiparticle states 10^-_π and 1^-_π based on the configuration $n9/2^-[505] \otimes n11/2^+[615]$. Because of the $N = 162$ deformed shell gap the two-neutron doublets 9^+_ν , 2^+_ν and 5^+_ν , 6^+_ν , appears only at higher excitation energies (1.5 MeV). ^{272}Ds is the α -decay daughter of ^{276}Cn , which could be produced in a similar way as ^{270}Ds [11] via the reaction $^{207}\text{Pb}(^{70}\text{Sn}, 1n)^{276}\text{Cn}$. An order of magnitude lower production cross section could be compensated by higher beam intensities at future linear accelerator facilities, e.g. the LINAG project presently under construction for SPIRAL2 [45], or the project for a high-intensity continuous wave machine at GSI [45]. Consistent with the results obtained for Rf and Sg isotopes, ^{272}Hs , ^{274}Hs , ^{274}Ds and ^{276}Ds exhibit an increased density of two-quasiparticle states at low excitation energies. The lowest Nilsson levels that form the $2qp$ configurations in the energy window below 1.8 MeV are the $13/2^-[716]$, $11/2^+[606]$, $5/2^+[613]$ and $3/2^+[611]$ for neutrons, and the orbitals $11/2^+[615]$, $9/2^-[505]$ and $5/2^-[512]$ for protons.

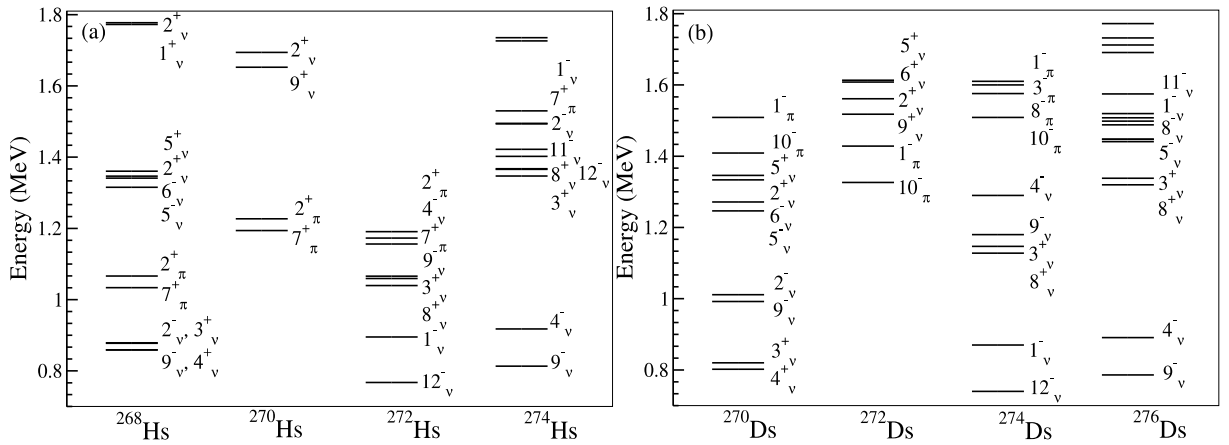


Fig. 2. Same as described in the caption to Fig. 1 but for the isotopes of Hs (upper panel) and Ds (lower panel).

CONCLUSIONS


In summary, we have employed the self-consistent mean-field framework based on relativistic energy density functionals to study the structure of two-quasiparticle excitations in axially deformed Rf, Sg, Hs, and Ds isotopes, with neutron number $N = 160 - 166$. The calculation of excitation energies of $2qp$ states is based on the blocking approximation with time-reversal symmetry breaking. Our microscopic self-consistent calculation has provided a detailed prediction for the evolution of $2qp$ states close to the $N = 162$ deformed-shell

gap. The excitation energies of $2qp$ configurations depend on the specific choice of the energy density functional, and the strength of the pairing interaction. In the particle-hole channel we have used the relativistic functional DD-PC1 that was adjusted to the experimental masses of a set of 64 axially deformed nuclei in the mass regions $A \approx 150 - 180$ and $A \approx 230 - 250$. The strength of the separable pairing force of finite range was fine-tuned to reproduce the odd-even mass differences in the region $A \approx 230 - 250$. A stronger (weaker) pairing would automatically increase (decrease) the energies of the $2qp$ states (shown in Figs. 1 and 2) with respect to the corresponding ground states. The calculation predicts the occurrence of a series of low-energy high-K isomers, most notably the 9^-_{ν} in the $N = 160$ and $N = 166$ isotopes, and the 12^-_{ν} in the $N = 164$ nuclei. A very interesting result is the low density of $2qp$ states in the $N = 162$ isotones, with no two-neutron states predicted below 1.6 MeV excitation energy. The two-proton states in these nuclei are calculated almost 0.5 MeV higher in energy than the lowest $2qp$ states in neighboring isotopes. This is a consequence of the deformed-shell closure at $N = 162$ and presents an interesting observable that can be used, together with the separation energies and Q_{α} -values, to characterize the evolution of deformed shell gaps in this mass region, and possibly verified experimentally in the near future for ^{270}Hs and ^{272}Ds .

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