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SEARCH FOR ^4H , ^5H AND ^6H NUCLEI
IN THE ^{11}B -INDUCED REACTION ON ^9Be

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1. INTRODUCTION

Heavy ion reactions have been widely used to synthesize new isotopes. The fusion reactions, having become already traditional ^{/1/}, lead mainly to the formation of neutron-deficient isotopes in a wide range of masses with relatively high cross sections. The use of the deep inelastic ^{/2/} as well as fragmentation ^{/3/} reactions has allowed one to extend the investigations to the region of neutron-rich nuclei far from the β -stability line. In addition to the production of new isotopes, the aim of the majority of previous works has been to measure the mass excess of these nuclei as it constitutes the first quantitative information on their structure. Such information serves to test the predictions of different models whose parameters have been determined from nuclei lying closer to the valley of stability, and, in turn, permits the upgrading of these parameters to allow a more accurate prediction of the masses farther from the β -stability line, and thus a more precise definition of the limits of nuclear stability. In these studies very light elements play a special role as they may serve as a good test for different theoretical calculations. However, the above-mentioned reactions enable us to study only those nuclei which are stable against nucleon decay.

On the other hand, the use of the few-nucleon transfer reactions and the single as well as double charge exchange reactions opens up new possibilities for measuring the mass excess. These reactions yield two products in the exit channel and this fact allows one to draw conclusions about one product from the

measurement of the energy spectrum of the other. This approach becomes particularly important, when the product under study is weakly bound or even unbound. In this case the other product which has to be a particle stable nucleus is measured and its spectrum gives us accurate information about the ground state mass and the low-lying excited states of the product under study.

In recent years, a good deal of work ^{/4,5/} has been reported on using these so-called "two-body" heavy ion reactions to study neutron-rich light nuclei with $Z=6-20$. On the contrary, the very light nuclei ($Z < 6$) have been studied only scarcely and the main source of information has come from light-particle and pion beams. Moreover, this information is sometimes contradictory: for example, the broad levels of ${}^4\text{H}$ observed in three different works ^{/6,7,8/} do not agree with each other. The search for levels in ${}^5\text{H}$ has been performed in refs. ^{/9,10,11/} in which no evidence for either bound or unbound state of ${}^5\text{H}$ has been found. Only Seth ^{/12/} claims to have observed a bump at 11 MeV in the reaction ${}^6\text{Li}(\pi^-, p){}^5\text{H}$. Recently, the ${}^7\text{Li}({}^7\text{Li}, {}^8\text{B}){}^6\text{H}$ reaction has been investigated ^{/13/} which is the first attempt to synthesize the ${}^6\text{H}$ isotope by a heavy ion reaction. The cross section for ${}^6\text{H}$ formation turned out to be high enough to support the idea that heavy ion reactions may be a promising tool for the studies of light exotic nuclei.

Up to now, information about the neutron-rich hydrogen isotopes has come from reactions of different kinds. The aim of the present work was to study these neutron-rich isotopes of hydrogen in one single reaction ${}^{11}\text{B} + {}^9\text{Be}$ using its different exit channels. For this purpose, the energy spectra of ${}^{16}\text{O}$, ${}^{15}\text{O}$ and ${}^{14}\text{O}$ have been measured and this gives information about the corresponding products - ${}^4\text{H}$, ${}^5\text{H}$ and ${}^6\text{H}$, respectively.

2. EXPERIMENTAL

The schematic view of our experimental set-up is shown in Fig.1 and it has been described in detail elsewhere [14]. The $^{11}\text{p}^{1+}$ (88.0 MeV) beam delivered by the Dubna U-300 cyclotron, after being collimated by three carbon slits, reached a Be target with an intensity of up to $1.5\ \mu\text{A}$. The thickness of the ^9Be target was $230\ \mu\text{g}/\text{cm}^2$. The reaction products emitted within a 0.6 mrad solid angle were analyzed by a magnetic spectrograph. The position-sensitive double ionization chamber served as a focal plane detector. The ionization chamber measured three parameters (energy losses dE , position x , residual energy E) in order to identify and determine the energy of the reaction products. The energy resolution of the dE and E sectors of the ionization chamber was 3.2% and 2%, respectively. The energy resolution is strongly influenced by the angular dispersion (about ± 1.5 degrees at the entrance to the ionization chamber), which causes different energy-losses due to unequal trajectory lengths in the detectors. The position resolution at the focal plane was about 0.7 mm.

Fig.1 The experimental set-up. B - beam, R - reaction chamber, C - collimators, M - monitor, T - target, S - entrance slit of the MSP-144 magnetic spectrograph, F - focal plane of the spectrograph, IC - ionization chamber.

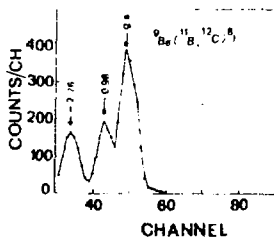
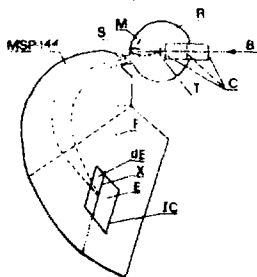


Fig.2. The ^{12}C spectrum along the focal plane (x - coordinate) from the $^9\text{Be}(^{11}\text{B}, ^{12}\text{C})^8\text{Li}$ reaction.

The elastic scattering of ^{11}B on a Ag target was used to measure the beam energy. To test the possibilities of our experimental apparatus the calibration reaction $^9\text{Be}(^{11}\text{B}, ^{12}\text{C})^8\text{Li}$ was measured. In fig.2 we present the position spectrum of the ^{12}C nuclei measured at an angle of (8 ± 0.5) degrees. The right peak corresponds to the formation of ^8Li in its ground state, the two other ones represent low-lying excited states at 0.98 and 2.26 MeV, respectively. The obtained energy resolution (~ 600 keV) is mainly due to the energy spread of the incident beam and to the target thickness. The uncertainty in the evaluation of the mass of ^8Li is equal to ± 280 keV.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

a) The $^9\text{Be}(^{11}\text{B}, ^{16}\text{O})^4\text{H}$ Reaction

The energy spectrum of the ^{16}O ions is presented in fig. 3. The arrow at 79.3 MeV indicates the energy of ^{16}O ions, corresponding to the formation of the ^4H unbound system at zero excitation energy. As can be seen, the absence of any events of higher energies indicates the non-existence of any bound states in ^4H . In such a case the energy spectrum of ^{16}O , in principle, should be described by the sum of the phase space contributions from different multi-body exit channels. As the starting point of each contribution (the maximum energy of ^{16}O available in the given decay mode) depends on the threshold of the corresponding break-up there is some possibility to distinguish among different phase space contributions. Starting at zero excitation energy the only contributing channel is the three-body break-up $^{16}\text{O} + ^3\text{H} + n$ with ^{16}O being emitted in its ground state. At 6.05 MeV, where the first excited level of ^{16}O lies, another three-body break-up had to be taken into account. The other multi-body break-up channels, such as the four-body break-up $^{16}\text{O} + ^2\text{H} + n + n$ as well

as the five-body break-up $^{16}\text{O} + \text{H} + \text{n} + \text{n} + \text{n}$ start at excitation energies 6.28 MeV and 8.49 MeV, respectively. We assumed that the above-mentioned contributions prevail in the studied region and thus no contribution from other channels should be included.

The sum of weighted phase space distributions of different multi-body break-up channels folded with our experimental resolution is represented by the solid line in fig.3. One can see that the agreement with the experimental data is rather good. However, at 77.5 MeV, an enhancement over the phase space distribution is clearly seen. The difference between the experimental points and the phase space distribution is shown in the inset. The observed peak lies at (3.5 ± 0.5) MeV above the mass of $^3\text{H} + \text{n}$ and its

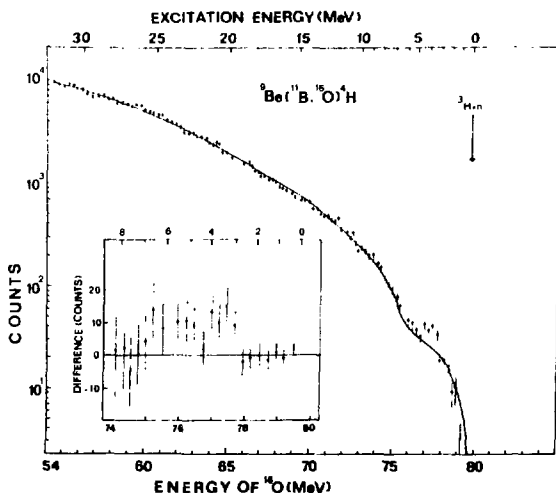


Fig.3. Energy spectrum of ^{16}O ions from the $^9\text{Be}(^{11}\text{B}, ^{16}\text{O})^4\text{H}$

reaction. The full line represents the sum of phase space contributions of $^{16}\text{O} + ^3\text{H} + \text{n}$, $^{16}\text{O}^* + ^3\text{H} + \text{n}$, $^{16}\text{O} + ^2\text{H} + \text{n} + \text{n}$ and $^{16}\text{O} + \text{H} + \text{n} + \text{n} + \text{n}$ exit channels. The difference between experimental points and full line is shown on linear scale in the inset.

width is about 1 MeV. The area under the peak implies a cross section of 150 ± 50 nb/sr and can be attributed to the ${}^3\text{H} + n$ final-state interaction corresponding to transitions to the ground state of unbound ${}^4\text{H}$. A similar level has been observed in the reaction ${}^6\text{Li}({}^6\text{Li}, {}^8\text{B}){}^4\text{H}$ /9/ and in the π^- -induced reactions on ${}^6\text{Li}$ /15/ and on ${}^7\text{Li}$ /7/. The evidence for the existence of a strong resonant behaviour at 3.4 MeV in the ${}^3\text{H} + n$ system follows from a phase-shift analysis /6/ and also from the total cross section data of Phillips /16/ for n-t scattering. As for the enhancement at an excitation energy of about 5 MeV our experimental counting rate does not allow one to draw any positive conclusion about a statistically significant peak at this energy despite the fact that the authors of refs. /6,8,17/ claim to have observed levels in this region.

b). The ${}^9\text{Be}({}^{11}\text{B}, {}^{15}\text{O}){}^5\text{H}$ Reaction.

Figure 4 shows the energy spectrum of ${}^{15}\text{O}$. Over a wide energy range no sharp states are evident in the data. Instead, the spectrum rises rather smoothly above the threshold for ${}^5\text{H}$ particles

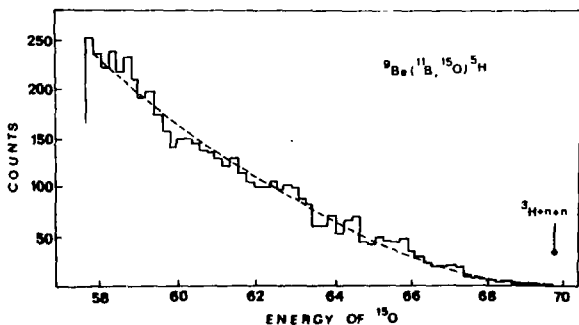


Fig.4. Energy spectrum of ${}^{15}\text{O}$ ions from the ${}^9\text{Be}({}^{11}\text{B}, {}^{15}\text{O}){}^5\text{H}$ reaction. The four-body phase space contribution of the ${}^{15}\text{O}+{}^3\text{H}+n+n$ channel is shown by a dashed line.

stability (relative to decay into ${}^3\text{H} + n + n$). The dashed line represents the phase space contribution from the four-body break-up ${}^{15}\text{O} + {}^3\text{H} + n + n$. As one can see, agreement with the experimental data is quite good, so no other break-up channels have to be involved. The spectrum is rather smooth and presents no evidence for bound or unbound levels of the ${}^5\text{H}$ system. This result is in agreement with other attempts to study the ${}^5\text{H}$ nucleus in the ${}^7\text{Li}({}^6\text{Li}, {}^8\text{B})$ /9/, ${}^3\text{H}(t, p)$ /10/ and ${}^9\text{Be}(\alpha, {}^8\text{B})$ /18/ reactions where no sharp peaks have been observed either. The broad unbound level at 11 MeV seen in the ${}^6\text{Li}(\pi^-, p){}^5\text{H}$ reaction /12/ has not been observed in the present experiment.

In conclusion one may say that neither bound nor unbound levels in the ${}^5\text{H}$ system have been populated with statistical significance in our experiment.

c) The ${}^9\text{Be}({}^{11}\text{B}, {}^{14}\text{O}){}^6\text{H}$ Reaction.

The resulting spectrum of ${}^{14}\text{O}$ measured in ten independent runs is shown in fig.5. Despite the rather low number of counts, the enhancement at 53 MeV is clearly observed. We have attempted to fit the spectrum with the five-body ${}^{14}\text{O} + {}^3\text{H} + n + n + n$ phase space contribution (dashed line) but with little success. In order to explain the experimental data which cannot be reproduced by either five- or four-body phase space we had to include the three-body exit channel ${}^{14}\text{O} + {}^5\text{H} + n$, though neither bound nor unbound levels have been observed in the ${}^9\text{Be}({}^{11}\text{B}, {}^{15}\text{O}){}^5\text{H}$ reaction. A similar situation has appeared in the ${}^7\text{Li}(\pi^-, \pi^0){}^7\text{H}$ reaction /12/, where the contribution from the ${}^5\text{H} + n + n$ exit channel had to be included. This fact can only be understood as a consequence of the final state interaction in the ${}^5\text{H}$ system with a very large width ($\Gamma \sim 10$ MeV), that makes it very difficult to observe this interaction as a peak in the reactions leading directly to the ${}^5\text{H}$ nucleus.

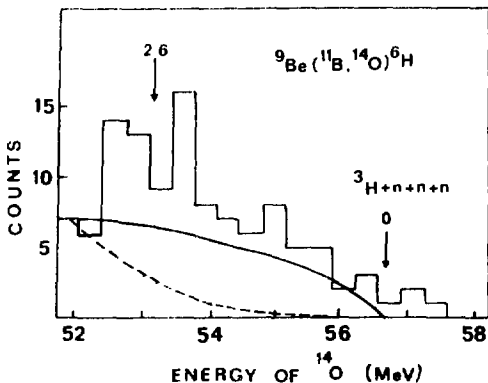


Fig.5. Energy spectrum of ^{14}O ions from the $^9\text{Be}(^{11}\text{B}, ^{14}\text{O})^6\text{H}$ reaction.

The phase space corresponding to the five-body exit channel ($^{15}\text{O} + ^3\text{H} + n + n + n$) is shown by a dashed line. The phase space corresponding to the three-body exit channel ($^{15}\text{O} + ^5\text{H} + n$) is shown by a full line.

The three-body phase space normalized to the experimental spectrum in the vicinity of 52 MeV is shown by a solid curve. The enhancement above the phase space distribution is still seen.

In order to estimate the contribution from the main contaminants in the target, the reactions $^{12}\text{C}(^{11}\text{B}, ^{14}\text{O})^9\text{Li}$ and $^{16}\text{O}(^{11}\text{B}, ^{14}\text{O})^{13}\text{B}$ have been measured. These measurements have shown that the contribution from both of the above-mentioned reactions to the ^{14}O spectrum does not exceed 5% of the peak height. In order to estimate the yield under the observed bump the phase space contribution has been subtracted from the experimental data. The resulting value of the cross section under the peak is $d\sigma/d\Omega = 16$ nb/sr. Such an evaluation is of course affected by some uncertainty. A 50% error of this estimate is quite possible. The peak has been

attributed to the level of particle unstable ${}^6\text{H}$ lying (2.6 ± 0.5) MeV above the ${}^3\text{H} + n + n + n$ mass and having a width of (1.3 ± 0.5) MeV. This value agrees well with that found in ^{/13/}. The difference in the cross sections can be explained as due to the use of the $3p$ transfer reaction in our experiment instead of the $2p-n$ reaction studied in ref. ^{/13/}.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In measuring the energy spectra of ${}^{14,15,16}\text{O}$ in one reaction, some information has been obtained about the unbound ${}^4,5,6\text{H}$ systems. Using the oxygen nuclei whose first excited states lie at least 5 MeV higher than their ground states we were able to explore the relatively wide energy region in which the peaks corresponding to the ground state formation of the unstable products were expected to appear.

The exit channels leading to the formation of ${}^4\text{H}$, ${}^5\text{H}$, and ${}^6\text{H}$ are characterized by the decreasing complexity of the reactions: $3p2n$, $3p1n$ and $3p$ transfers, respectively. On the other hand, the corresponding Q -values are 1.73, -13.93 and -27.16 MeV. In the present experiment unbound levels assigned to the ground states of the ${}^4\text{H}$ and ${}^6\text{H}$ systems have been found at (3.5 ± 0.5) and (2.6 ± 0.5) MeV, respectively. The widths of these levels indicate lifetimes of the order of few units of 10^{-22}s . The cross section for populating the ${}^4\text{H}$ level is higher than that for the ${}^6\text{H}$ level. No sharp states have been observed in the ${}^5\text{H}$ system.

Finally one may draw the following conclusions:

- (1) The change of about 29 MeV in the reaction Q -value prevails over the transfer of extra two neutrons in the reaction leading to the ${}^4\text{H}$ nucleus compared to ${}^6\text{H}$.
- (2) The ${}^6\text{H}$ system is almost 1 MeV more bound than the ${}^4\text{H}$ system. This binding may result from the additional pair of neutrons.

A similar situation is observed in the unbound ${}^7\text{He}-{}^5\text{He}$ as well as in the bound ${}^3\text{He}-{}^6\text{He}$ pairs.

(3) The pairing between the two neutrons in the ${}^5\text{H}$ system plays an important role. Though the spectrum of ${}^{15}\text{O}$ shows no evidence for a sharp unbound state in the ${}^5\text{H}$ system, there is a phase space contribution from the ${}^{14}\text{O} + {}^5\text{H} + n$ exit channel indicating a strong final state interaction with a rather large width ($\Gamma \sim 10$ MeV).

As a result of our investigations we can make up relatively simple systematics of neutron-rich hydrogen isotopes. The final state interaction in the ${}^4\text{H}$ and ${}^6\text{H}$ system between ${}^3\text{H} + n$ and ${}^5\text{H} + n$ has a narrow width ($\Gamma \leq 2$ MeV) and produces relatively pronounced peaks above the phase space distribution. At the same time the final state interaction in the ${}^5\text{H}$ system between ${}^3\text{H}$ and a pair of neutrons has a much larger width.

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Белозеров А.В. и др.
Исследование ядер ${}^4\text{H}$, ${}^5\text{H}$, ${}^6\text{H}$ в реакции ${}^{11}\text{B} + {}^9\text{Be}$

E7-85-966

В реакции ${}^{11}\text{B}$ (88,0 МэВ) + ${}^9\text{Be}$ измерялись энергетические спектры ${}^{14}\text{O}$, ${}^{15}\text{O}$, ${}^{16}\text{O}$, являющихся сопряженными продуктами нейтроноизбыточных изотопов водорода ${}^6\text{H}$, ${}^5\text{H}$, ${}^4\text{H}$, которые могут образоваться в этой реакции. В спектрах ${}^{14}\text{O}$ и ${}^{16}\text{O}$ наблюдались пики, которые можно интерпретировать как несвязанные состояния ${}^4\text{H}$ ($3,5 \pm 0,5$) МэВ, $\Gamma = 1$ МэВ и ${}^6\text{H}$ ($2,6 \pm 0,5$) МэВ, $\Gamma = (1,5 \pm 0,5)$ МэВ. Энергетический спектр ${}^{15}\text{O}$ хорошо описывается кривой фазового пространства многочастичного развала без взаимодействия в конечном состоянии.

Работа выполнена в Лаборатории ядерных реакций ОИЯИ.

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Belozyorov A.V. et al.
Search for ${}^4\text{H}$, ${}^5\text{H}$ and ${}^6\text{H}$ Nuclei
in the ${}^{11}\text{B}$ -Induced Reaction on ${}^9\text{Be}$

E7-85-966

In the reaction ${}^{11}\text{B}$ (88.0 MeV) + ${}^9\text{Be}$ the energy spectra of the ${}^{14}\text{O}$, ${}^{15}\text{O}$ and ${}^{16}\text{O}$ nuclei have been measured to obtain some information about their partners in the exit channel - the neutron-rich hydrogen isotopes ${}^4\text{H}$, ${}^5\text{H}$ and ${}^6\text{H}$. The unbound levels in the ${}^4\text{H}$ and ${}^6\text{H}$ systems have been observed at excitation energies of 3.5 ± 0.5 MeV ($\Gamma \sim 1$ MeV) and 2.6 ± 0.5 MeV ($\Gamma = 1.5 - 0.3$ MeV), respectively. No evidence for the existence of any bound or unbound state in ${}^5\text{H}$ has been found.

The investigation has been performed at the Laboratory of Nuclear Reactions, JINR.

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