Call for ISOLDE status reports 2019¨

STATUS REPORT

Experiment IS543

Measurement of the 44Ti(alpha,p)47V reaction cross section, of relevance to gamma-ray observation of core collapse supernovae, using reclaimed 44Ti

Spokesperson: A. Murphy

Total shifts: 28

Shifts Remaining at beginning of 2018 (after addenda etc): 42

Shifts used in 2018:

Remaining shifts: **42**

This status report refers to the accepted ISOLDE proposal IS543 (attached to this letter). The aim of this proposed measurement is to provide a measurement of the ⁴⁴Ti(α ,p)⁴⁷V reaction **cross section, of relevance to gamma-ray observation of core collapse supernovae.**

A first experiment was performed at ISOLDE in 2012, with publication in 2014 (Physics Letters B **731** 358). A 44Ti beam was developed from 50 MBq of 44Ti evaporated on to molybdenum foil mounted within a VADIS FEBIAD ion source. A leak in the ion source limited beam delivery to \sim 10⁶ pps at the helium gas target for a period of \sim 4 days. In turn, this limited the experiment to a single beam energy, with no significant reaction yield observed. Despite this, an upper limit on the cross section was determined which was only \sim 1/2 of the NON-SMOKER expectation. Under the assumption that the present upper limit implies a minimum reduction in the cross section at all energies within the Gamow window, the discrepancy between observed amounts of ⁴⁴Ti produced in SN1987A and Cassiopeia A, and the amount predicted by core collapse supernovae models, would largely be resolved.

A second experiment was scheduled late in 2018. Unfortunately, ion source tests immediately before the run proved disappointing. Together with other uncertainties over the beam development, and the fact that there is only one sample of $44Ti$, together with the ISOLDE & PSI teams a decision was made not to proceed. The shifts were used to focus on understanding the 44Ti extraction from the ions source and other beam development work, using stable Ti. The 44 Ti isotope remains available. Further discussion of the outcome of the Ti development ion source tests is pending.

The great interest in the physics of core collapse supernovae continues, exemplified by the remarkable recent changes being observed of Alpha Orionis (Betelgeuse), the red supergiant that marks the upper left shoulder of the winter-prominent constellation of Orion. At a distance of only 640 ly, its inevitable collapse and explosion will result in a day-time visible star – a once in many generations event. Over the past few weeks the star has dimmed by about a factor of 2 (see photographs below), and while Betelgeuse has long been known to be variable, the speed and magnitude of the dimming is significant. Could this be an indication that its imminent collapse? Probably not. But the remarkable level of media coverage and speculation is a testament to the interest in such events.

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While explosion of Betelgeuse in the near future probably remains unlikely, for any observation of ⁴⁴Ti ejecta, improved knowledge of the ⁴⁴Ti(α ,p)⁴⁷V reaction cross section will be necessary to disentanlge nuclear from astrophysical production effects.

Photographs of the Orion constellation taken on Oct 10 and Dec 24, 2019. The uppermost star is Betelgeuse, with its diminishing brightness clearly visible.

• Was your beam time in **2018** successful (if applicable)? If not, why?

The run was not successful. Due to difficulties in ion source development, liaising between CERN and PSI, no beam time took place. The CERN team spent time performing ion source tests in preparation for a future run. The 44Ti held at PSI remains available.

- Please list/update the name and affiliation of collaborators working on this ISOLDE experiment: IS543 **No significant changes.**
- list the publications originating from **IS543**

No new publications.

EUROPEAN ORGANIZATION FOR NUCLEAR RESEARCH

Proposal to the ISOLDE and Neutron Time-of-Flight Committee

IS543: Measurement of the $^{44}Ti(\alpha,p)^{47}V$ reaction cross section, of relevance to gamma-ray observation of core collapse supernovae, using reclaimed 44 Ti.

January 7, 2020

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Despite decades of research, fundamental uncertainties remain in the underlying explosion mechanism of core collapse supernovae. One of the most direct methods that might help resolve this problem is a comparison of the predicted to the observed flux of γ -rays due to decay of ⁴⁴Ti produced in the explosion, as it is believed this could reveal the location of the *mass cut*, a key hydrodynamical property of the explosion. Such a study is at present limited by the uncertainty in the $^{44}Ti(\alpha, p)^{47}V$ reaction rate. In this experiment we propose to measure the cross section for this reaction at astrophysically relevant energies. The single previous measurement of this reaction was limited to higher energies due to low beam intensities. Here, a more intense beam will be employed, generated from ⁴⁴Ti reclaimed as part of the ERAWAST project at PSI.

Requested shifts: 28 shifts (to be run at the end of the 2012 beam schedule.)

1 Introduction

Core collapse supernovae are truly remarkable astronomical events, exhibiting a combination of temperature, density and energy seen nowhere else in nature. They are central to the formation of many heavy elements, and are now known to be the engines behind many, if not all, gamma ray bursts. Not surprisingly, there is immense interest in attempting to understand the physics that drives them. However, this is made extremely difficult, both by the complexity of the explosion and the fact that the key processes are occurring deep beneath the surface. Major fundamental uncertainties remain, for example, the nature of the explosion mechanism itself: is it a neutrino-driven delayed detonation [1], or is it perhaps mediated by scalar gravitational effects as has recently been suggested $[2]$? In this new model, under the extreme conditions generated by a collapsing stellar core, strong time-varying gravity leads to a parametric instability, in turn stimulating a scalar gravitational field and the emission of scalar gravitational waves sufficient to re-energise the stalled shock. Such a model might resolve the difficulty found in re-energising the stalled shock through neutrino emission alone.

A method which in principle might allow the explosion mechanism to be studied in a reasonably direct way is through comparison of the amount of ⁴⁴Ti observed by satellite (via its beta-delayed gamma-ray emission), to the amount predicted to have been generated in the explosion. The importance of ⁴⁴Ti lies in the expectation that it is synthesised in the alpha-rich freeze out that occurs in the shock-heated silicon layer that lies just above the detonating core [3]. This is also the location of the so-called mass cut [4], that is, the boundary between material that is successfully ejected and that which falls back on to the proto-neutron star. Gamma-rays from material that falls back will be unable to escape the dense environment and thus cannot be observed. Hence, comparison of the observed to the predicted production provides a measure of the location of the mass cut. The mass cut is a key hydrodynamic property of supernova models, and constraining this would be of immense help in finally understanding the explosion mechanism.

Unfortunately, before the comparison outlined above can be made, the models of core collapse supernova require better nuclear physics input. Detailed studies by The *et al.* [5], and more recently Magkotsios *et al*. [6], have explored which nuclear reactions have the most impact on the ⁴⁴Ti abundances produced in core collapse. Both works find that relatively few reactions contribute to the overall uncertainty in ⁴⁴Ti production, and of these, the reaction which most needs to be more tightly constrained is that of $^{44}Ti(\alpha, p)^{47}V$. In this proposal we plan to use the facilities of ISOLDE to conduct direct measurements of the ${}^{44}Ti(\alpha,p){}^{47}V$, at energies relevant to core collapse.

2 Previous studies

Despite obvious experimental difficulties, the $^{44}Ti(\alpha,p)^{47}V$ reaction has been measured once previously, by Sonzogni *et al.* [7]. The data are reproduced from their publication in Figure 1. The temperature of the environment within which this reaction has greatest effect is thought to range from around 2 to 4 GK, corresponding to center-of mass energies (Gamow window values) of around 3 to 7.5 MeV. Improved cross section data are therefore required, especially at lower energies where no data exist. Measurements to an accuracy of around 10% would be desirable.

Figure 1: Measurements of the ⁴⁴Ti(a,p) reaction cross section, reproduced from Sonzogni *et al.* [7].

In [7], and as shown in Figure 1, the measured cross sections were compared to the SMOKER Hauser Feshbach statistical model code. Despite the relatively high excitation energies being populated in the compound nucleus $(Ex(^{48}Cr)=13.4$ MeV for the lowest data point), the data indicate a significantly higher rate than might be expected. The SMOKER model has since been updated and replaced with the NON-SMOKER code, which includes a better treatment of isospin suppression for alpha-capture reactions on $N = Z$ nuclei such as ⁴⁴Ti [8]. In Figure 2 we show a comparison between the SMOKER and NON-SMOKER rates for the $^{44}Ti(\alpha,p)^{47}V$ and $^{44}Ti(\alpha,\gamma)^{48}Cr$ reactions. For the former reaction, the discrepancy between data and model remains, but is slightly reduced. For the latter reaction, the revised calculation suggests a significant decrease in rate (a factor of about 20). This is potentially significant, as it makes it even less likely that the (α, γ) rate can ever dominate over the (α, p) rate, reinforcing the latter as key to the overall production of 44 Ti. As lower energies are probed, the agreement between data and any statistical model may well worsen as the role of individual resonances in the compound could become quite strong; the density of states is not so high, especially given the limitations imposed by the spin-parity of the entrance channel.

2.1 Other reactions

Although identified as of somewhat less importance, and not the focus of this proposal, it is worth presenting the status of several other reactions whose uncertainties were found to contribute to the overall uncertainty in production of ⁴⁴Ti. The ⁴⁰Ca(α , γ)⁴⁴Ti reaction was recently successfully studied using the DRAGON spectrometer at TRIUMF [9]. The ⁴⁴Ti(α , γ)⁴⁸Cr and $^{44}Ti(p,\gamma)^{45}V$ reactions are at present completely unmeasured, but a proposal has been submitted to TRIUMF [10] in which it is hoped that with sufficient beam development, possibly including the use of ERAWAST-obtained ⁴⁴Ti, experiments may be performed with the

Figure 2: Comparison between SMOKER and NON-SMOKER statistical model calculations of reaction rate for the $^{44}Ti(\alpha,p)^{47}V$ and $^{44}Ti(\alpha,\gamma)^{48}Cr$ reaction rates.

DRAGON recoil spectrometer on the timescale of a few years. Somewhat unexpectedly, the $^{45}V(p,\gamma)^{46}Cr$ reaction has also been identified as being of high importance, its rate determining when the quasi-statistical equilibrium is broken among the $N=22$ isotones. The refractory nature of the beam required for a direct measurement makes such measurements very challenging. Furthermore, in [11] it was shown that an elastic scattering measurement, to identify the spectroscopic properties of states in the resonant nucleus through which capture occurs, would also be very challenging. Measurement of this reaction remains an aspiration, but is not proposed. The remaining reactions that are of highest importance are those of wider impact to the onset of the explosion itself, namely the triple-alpha and ¹²C(α , γ)¹⁶O reactions. These are of course the focus of ongoing extensive experimental effort.

3 Beam Development and the ERAWAST project

A key difficulty is the provision of an intense, low energy radioactive nuclear beam of the isotope ⁴⁴Ti. One exciting option has been made possible through the Exotic Radionuclides from Accelerator Waste (ERAWAST) project [12]. Here, an attempt is being made to see what use there is for the radioactivity that has built up over the years in highly irradiated accelerator parts. The first phase of this involved a used copper beam dump from the 590 MeV ring cyclotron at PSI. This has had an average exposure of 1.5 mA protons over 12 years. Extraction of 44 Ti from this beam dump delivered around 10^{16} atoms of 44 Ti, in a solution of 20 ml 1M nitric acid. Subsequently, further much greater extractions have been performed on highly irradiated steel components, leading to samples now amounting to around 10^{18} atoms being available. Additionally, the extractions from steel have been made with significantly less ⁶⁰Co contaminant included.

The previous measurement of this reaction was based on a beam intensity of $\sim 5 \times 10^5$ pps:

extrapolating their level of statistics and measured cross section to lower energies suggests that a time-integrated total of a few $\times 10^{12}$ ions delivered on to a helium gas cell would allow a meaningful measurement at an energy significantly lower than the lowest energy previous data point. Discussion with the Beam Development Group, based on earlier beam tests with stable Ti, suggest that with the quantity of isotope now available, and the likely beam production efficiency, a beam intensity of $10⁷$ pps, delivered to the experimental target should be achievable. This will be sufficient for measurements at even lower energies. The suggestion is that a tantalum foil with a surface deposit of the 44 Ti be placed within an (upgraded) Mk-5 Febiad, and a CF_4 leak be used to initiate a molecular beam of TiF^+ . The only expected contaminant is ²²Ne from the buffer gas; the use of a ²⁰Ne enriched gas would reduce this contamination by a further two orders of magnitude. Such a measure will be necessary as elastically scattered protons (from the Mylar entrance window, or from hydrocarbon buildup) will have similar energies to those emitted from the $^{44}Ti(\alpha,p)$ reaction. Given the strongly negative Q-value of the ²²Ne(α ,p) reaction, reaction protons are, however, unlikely to be an issue. An initial estimate of the acceptable level of contamination is that ²²Ne should ideally contribute less than 1% of the beam, and at most a few percent.

The proposed method of depositing the radioactive ⁴⁴Ti on a tantalum foil at PSI has the advantage that this can be performed at PSI, from which the foil can then be transported to CERN and inserted into the ion source with minimal handling exposure. Additionally, most $(\sim 90\%)$ of the ⁴⁴Ti emitted from the ion source will end up in the pumps on the low energy section of the accelerator, and most of the remainder will be in pumps after the low energy section. Given the enduring value of this 44 Ti radioisotope, following the suggestions of the relevant personnel at PSI and CERN, we plan to install filters and/or absorbers on the pumps to facilitate this. These will be transported back to PSI after the experiment for recovery to be performed.

4 Experimental set up.

Figure 3: The Edinburgh gas cell, proposed for use in this experiment.

Proposed Set-up for $44Ti(\alpha, p)$ Experiment at ISOLDE

Figure 4: Schematic diagram of the proposed experimental set up.

The custom built Edinburgh helium gas cell will be used, pictured in Figure 3, with which we have now developed significant experience. This consists of a stainless steel housing for a 2 cm long helium filled gas volume, at a pressure of typically 200 Torr (*i.e.* an areal target thickness of $1.4x10^{19}$ helium atoms per cm²). We typically use a 5 μ m Mylar entrance window over a small aperture, and a 15 *µ*m aluminium foil for the larger rear aperture. A thin gold foil precedes the front window to allow absolute beam intensity monitoring via Rutherford scattering into upstream silicon diodes. Un-reacted 44 Ti beam particles, 44 Ti ions elastically scattering from either the entrance window material or 4 He target atoms, and ${}^{47}V$ recoil ions from (α, p) reactions are all stopped in the exit window. Protons and alpha particles are detected downstream in S2-type silicon detector telescopes. With only these light ions escaping the gas cell, the detector event rates are low, minimising dead-time and potential radiation damage of the detectors. The use of $E-\Delta E$ detector telescopes will allow protons and alpha particles to be clearly identified. The entire set-up will be housed within a cylindrical vacuum chamber provided by Edinburgh. This will be installed on the stub beam line near MINIBALL.

The use of inverse kinematics enhances the efficiency of this geometry for the light ions, but to quantify this, and to provide an expectation of the likely energies of protons and alpha particles being detected, a Monte Carlo simulation of the set up has been performed. Of particular interest is the ability to separate, on the basis of the energy-angle systematics, those protons originating from the reaction of interest from those originating from elastic scattering of the beam with protons in the material of the cell windows (or from deposits on the cell windows due to water condensation or hydrocarbon buildup). The simulation includes energy losses based on SRIM and energy stragglings approximated by the Bohr formula. Reactions are simulated at random depths within the gas cell, and the angular distribution of emitted particles is assumed to be isotropic in the center of mass. Detector dead-layers and intrinsic energy resolutions are included, and 'good events' include only those depositing energy in both the ΔE and the E detectors above a minimum threshold of 300 keV. Some results are shown in Figures 5 and 6 below.

Figure 5: Monte Carlo simulation of energy-angle kinematics of events from $^{44}Ti(\alpha, p)^{47}V$ (black data points), ⁴⁴Ti (α,α) ⁴⁴Ti (green), and ⁴⁴Ti(p,p)⁴⁴Ti (red), at centre of mass energies of 3 (left panel), 4 (middle) and 5 MeV (right) (at the entrance to the gas cell). Here it is assumed that only the ground state of the recoiling heavy ion (undetected) is populated.

Figure 6: Monte Carlo simulation of energy-angle kinematics of events from $^{44}Ti(\alpha, p)^{47}V$ (black data points), ⁴⁴Ti (α,α) ⁴⁴Ti (green), and ⁴⁴Ti(p,p)⁴⁴Ti (red), at centre of mass energies of 3 (left panel), 4 (middle) and 5 MeV (right) (at the entrance to the gas cell). Here it is assumed that all accessible excited states of the recoiling heavy ion (undetected) are populated with equal probability.

In Figure 5, the energy-angle systematics for the three reactions are shown, for three proposed beam energy settings, corresponding to centre of mass energies (for 44 Ti+ 4 He) of 3, 4 and 5 MeV. At the lowest energy, alpha particles from $^{44}Ti(\alpha,\alpha)^{44}Ti$ are of too low energy to pass through the delta-E detector, and thus cannot contaminate the spectra. Protons from elastic scattering of the beam with the entrance window only contributes occasionally, and at the lowest energy, leaving the protons of interest from $^{44}Ti(\alpha,p)^{47}V$ well separated. At the higher energy settings, the alpha particles from elastic scattering are now able to penetrate through to the thicker detector, but still do not contaminate the proton loci, and the protons from elastic scattering from the front window and from the reaction of interest remain well separated. Despite energy and angular straggling being included in the Monte Carlo, this is of course still something of an idealised situation. The rate of protons from the Mylar is likely to be hugely larger than from the reaction of interest. We are therefore exploring replacement of the entrance Mylar foil with one of no hydrogen content. Even so, protons from water hydrocarbon deposits on the window remain an issue, so the separation shown here is highly useful.

A second issue that is likely to arise is that it is not only the ground state of the recoiling heavy ion which is likely to be populated. In Figure 6, the simulations are shown in which any of the available excited states of the recoil ions have been populated with equal probability. In such cases, the light ion ejectiles are emitted with lower energy, such that some overlap of the two proton loci begins to occur. Fortunately, the locus of protons from $^{44}Ti(p,p)$ scattering remains tight, due to the lower centre of mass energy and the consequent lack of available states in ⁴⁴Ti. If the energy resolution achieved in the experiment is as suggested by the Monte Carlo, then the possibility of measuring individual cross sections to the lowest few excited states in ⁴⁷V is a possibility.

The simulations above have been performed assuming the use of two S2-type detector telescopes, one located 50 mm downstream of the exit window of the gas cell, and another 170 mm downstream. This is as close a geometry as reasonably achievable, thus attaining the highest efficiency. Based on isotropic scattering in the centre of mass, the efficiency estimated from the Monte Carlo is slightly less than 20% , changing only slightly for the different beam energy settings. Some events at the lowest energy setting are lost due to the assumed detector threshold of 300 keV ; if this can be reduced, a small improvement in the efficiency is achievable. The energies of the protons requires *E*-detectors to 1 mm thickness, preventing punch-through which could otherwise result in the two proton loci overlapping, especially at the higher energy settings.

Summary of requested shifts: Based on the above discussion, we propose to perform measurements at three energy settings, summarised in table 1. Firstly, a measurement with a beam energy such that 44 Ti+ α reactions at the start of the gas cell have a centre of mass energy of 5 MeV (the delivered beam energy has to be increased to allow for energy losses incurred by the foils at the entrance to the gas cell). The rate at this energy, even given the uncertainty in extrapolation of cross section from the lowest data point of Sonzogni *et al.*, should allow a single shift (of 12 hours) with the expected beam intensity of $10⁷$ pps to allow measurement of accuracy limited by systematics, not statistics. A second measurement at 4 MeV*cm* can be achieved in two further shifts. The third, most difficult but most scientifically rewarding measurement at just 3 MeV_{cm} will require around a week of running to achieve a 10% statistical uncertainty. A total of 6 additional shifts are required for 'gas-out' runs, to allow adequate evaluation of any backgrounds due to scattering from the gas cell itself, and together with pilot beam runs of 1 shift prior to each energy, a total request of 28 shifts is made.

| Beam energy ^{I} | CM Energy ² | Efficiency | Cross section ³ | Rate | Rate | Rate |
|--|--------------------------|------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Mev/u | Mev | $\%$. | (mb | min^{-1} | $^{\prime}$ hour ⁻¹) | day^{-1} |
| 1.41 | $3.0\,$ | 19.2 | $0.004\,$ | 0.005 | 0.29 | |
| 1.67 | $4.0\,$ | 18.9 | 0.1 | 0.16 | 9.5 | 229 |
| 1.93 | 5.0 | 18.6 | $2.0\,$ | 3.1 | 187 | 4500 |

Table 1: Summary of expected rates of events.

¹Beam energy to be supplied by ISOLDE.

²Centre of mass energy for ⁴⁴Ti(α ,p) reactions at the start of the gas cell.

³Estimated by extrapolation of Sonzogni *et al.*.

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Appendix

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED EXPERIMENT

The experimental setup comprises: (*name the fixed-ISOLDE installations, as well as flexible elements of the experiment*)

HAZARDS GENERATED BY THE EXPERIMENT (if using fixed installation:) Hazards named in the document relevant for the fixed [COLLAPS, CRIS, ISOLTRAP, MINIBALL + only CD, MINIBALL + T-REX, NICOLE, SSP-GLM chamber, SSP-GHM chamber, or WITCH] installation.

Additional hazards:

Hazard identification:

Average electrical power requirements (excluding fixed ISOLDE-installation mentioned above): [make a rough estimate of the total power consumption of the additional equipment used in the experiment]