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by G. Y. Li, S. Y. Wang, Y. Zheng, et al.

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# Chirality of $^{115}$ Sb: further evidence for a new chiral island in neutron-rich $A \approx 120$ mass region

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# Abstract

High-spin states in <sup>115</sup>Sb were populated using the reaction <sup>109</sup>Ag(<sup>12</sup>C, $\alpha$ 2n) at a beam energy of 54 MeV. A new  $\Delta I = 1$  negative parity rotational band with several transitions linking the existing negative band has been identified. Based on the experimental results and their comparison with the relativistic mean-field and multiparticle plus rotor model calculations, a chiral character of the two bands based on the  $\pi g_{9/2}^{-1} \otimes v h_{11/2} d_{3/2}$  configuration is proposed. This observation provides further evidence for a new chiral island in the neutron-rich  $A \approx 120$  mass region.

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#### INTRODUCTION

Chirality is an important concept in nature across various scientific fields such as chemistry, biology, and particle physics, in which the mirror image of the system does not coincide with the original. In nuclear physics, chirality was first predicted by Frauendorf and Meng [1], which is expected to manifest in rotating triaxial nuclei. They pointed out an initial consideration of chirality: the angular momentum vectors of a high-j valence particle, a high-j valance hole and the core are mutually perpendicular and align with the short, long and intermediate axes, respectively. Under the above conditions, a pair of nearly degenerate  $\Delta I = 1$  bands with the same parity is expected, i.e., chiral doublet bands. This type of chiral configuration was found in a number of odd-odd nuclei (see recent reviews [2–11] and references therein). Besides, chiral doublet bands have also been observed in the odd-A systems [12–26]. In odd-A nuclei, chiral doublet bands are based on three- or more quasiparticle configurations with a more complex angular momentum coupling, which is generated after the proton or neutron pairs break. Studies on chiral doublet bands in odd-A nuclei deepen the understanding of how multi-quasiparticles form chirality.

Searching for new chiral nuclear regions has been a research hotspot in the recent years. Presently, chiral nuclei have been observed in the  $A \approx 80$ , 100, 130 and 190 mass regions [2–11]. Very recently, chiral doublet bands based on  $\pi g_{9/2}^{-1} \otimes \nu(g_{7/2}/d_{5/2})h_{11/2}^2$  configuration were identified in <sup>116</sup>In (Z=49) [27], which indicates that a possible new region of chirality in the neutron-rich  $A \approx 120$  mass region. In this mass region, an obvious triaxial deformation for forming chirality based on more quasiparticle configurations would occur when the nuclei approach the Z=50 magic number and the number of neutrons crosses the N=64 subshell. Further experimental work is needed in order to find more evidence supporting the existence of chirality in this mass region. The odd-A nucleus <sup>115</sup>Sb (Z=51), is located near the <sup>116</sup>In in the nuclide chart, in which a  $\Delta I=1$  negative parity rotational band involving high-j  $g_{9/2}^{-1}$  and  $h_{11/2}$  intruder orbitals has been observed [28]. Therefore, the experiment research for chirality in the <sup>115</sup>Sb is expected. In the present work, we report a pair of candidate chiral doublet bands in the odd-A nucleus <sup>115</sup>Sb, which provides further evidence for a new chiral island in the neutron-rich  $A \approx 120$  mass region.

# 1996Ch36 Band 4

#### EXPERIMENTAL DETAILS

High spin states in  $^{115}$ Sb were populated by the reaction  $^{109}$ Ag( $^{12}$ C, $\alpha$ 2n) at a beam energy of 54 MeV. The beam was provided by the HI-13 Tandem Accelerator of the China Institute of Atomic Energy (CIAE). The target consisted of  $1.03~\mathrm{mg/cm^2}$   $^{109}\mathrm{Ag}$  evaporated on a 10.6 mg/cm<sup>2</sup> Pb backing. The deexciting  $\gamma$  rays were detected by twenty-three Compton-suppressed HPGe detectors, four Compton-suppressed clover detectors and one clover detector without Compton-suppression. The detectors were placed at 60° (seven H-PGe), 90° (three HPGe and four clover), 120° (seven HPGe and one clover) and 150° (six HPGe). A total of approximately  $2.3 \times 10^9$  two-fold coincidence events and  $2.2 \times 10^7$  threefold coincidence events were recorded with a general-purpose digital data acquisition system (GDDAQ) [29] based on Pixie-16 modules from XIA LLC [30]. The coincidence events were sorted into several symmetric and asymmetric matrices. The symmetric matrices were used to construct the level scheme and extract the relative intensities of the  $\gamma$  transitions. The asymmetric matrices were used to obtain angular distributions from the oriented states (ADO) ratios [31], which are determined by the ratio of  $I_{\gamma}(150^{\circ})$  to  $I_{\gamma}(90^{\circ})$ . In this experiment, an ADO ratio of  $\approx 1.6$  is expected for the stretched quadrupole or unstretched dipole M1 or E1,  $\Delta I=0$ E2,  $\Delta I = 2$ transitions and  $\approx 0.8$  for the pure stretched dipoles.

M1 or E1,  $\Delta I = 1$ 

#### EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS

Report: ratios between them

Prior to this work, high-spin states of <sup>115</sup>Sb have been studied in Refs. [28, 32–35]. In Ref. [32], a positive-parity rotational band built on  $9/2^+$  proton-hole states was observed for the first time. In Ref. [33], three isomeric states having  $I^{\pi} = 11/2^-$ ,  $19/2^-$  and  $25/2^+$  with half-lives of 6.7 ns, 156 ns and 4.0 ns respectively were identified. A  $\Delta I = 2$  negative-parity rotational band based on the  $\pi h_{11/2}$  orbital has been identified for the first time in Ref. [35]. Additionally, a more comprehensive level structure of <sup>115</sup>Sb was reported in Ref. [28], in which a  $\Delta I = 1$  negative parity coupled rotational band based on  $\pi g_{9/2}^{-1} \otimes v h_{11/2} d_{3/2}$  configuration was established for the first time. 1996Ch36 Band 4

Based on the present  $\gamma - \gamma$  coincidence relationships and intensity balances, the level structures of <sup>115</sup>Sb was constructed. The partial level scheme of <sup>115</sup>Sb resulting from the present work is illustrated in Fig. 1. As shown in Fig. 1, a new  $\Delta I = 1$  band (labelled as 2)

and several linking transitions were found. Fig. 2 shows spectrums gated by the 247.1 and 540.4 keV transitions, in which the newly identified transitions can be clearly seen.

The spin-parity assignments are deduced from the measured ADO ratios. In the present work, a difference exists in the spin assignment for the band-head of band 1 compared to the Ref. [28], where  $(21/2)^-$  was assigned to this level. However, in this work, the same level is assigned  $(19/2)^-$ . This contradiction is caused by the different multi-polarity for the 540.4 keV transition. Based on the present ADO measurement, the ADO ratio of 540.4 keV transition is 0.98(8), which indicates a  $\Delta I = -1$  or 1 M1/E2 character. We adopted the  $\Delta I = -1$  M1/E2 character for the 540.4 keV transition due to the new 905.3 keV transition linking the band-head of band 1 to the  $(15/2)^-$  state at 2637.6 keV, which is an E2 character. Therefore, we assigned  $(19/2)^-$  for the band-head of band 1. Band 2 feeds into the level state of band 1 through several linking transitions. The measured ADO ratios of the 159.6 keV and 428.2 keV transitions indicate a  $\Delta I = 0$  M1/E2 character and a  $\Delta I = 1$  M1/E2 character, respectively. We therefore assigned  $(19/2)^-$  for the lowest observed state of band 2. The spins and parities of the other levels were assigned based on the same method. The excitation energies, spin-parity assignments for the initial and final states, the transition energies, relative intensities, and ADO ratios of the  $\gamma$  rays in  $^{115}$ Sb are listed in Table. I.

#### **DISCUSSION**

Band 1 has been assigned the  $\pi g_{9/2}^{-1} \otimes vh_{11/2}d_{3/2}$  configuration in Ref. [28]. The newly established band 2 feeds into band 1 by several M1/E2 linking transitions, which should be strongly hindered unless the side-band is built on the same configuration, as discussed in Refs. [36–38]. To investigate the characteristics of bands 1 and 2, The excitation energies relative to a rigid-rotor reference  $E(I) = J \cdot I(I+1)$ , energy staggering parameters S(I) = [E(I) - E(I-1)]/2I and the B(M1)/B(E2) values of bands 1 and 2 were extracted and presented in Fig. 3 as functions of spin. As shown in Fig. 3, bands 1 and 2 are nearly degenerate, and the average energy difference is small ( $\approx 110 \text{ keV}$ ). The two bands have similar S(I) values with smooth variations versus spin. In addition, the reduced transition probability ratios are also an important criterion for the properties of rotational bands. The experimental B(M1)/B(E2) ratios of these two bands are close to each other and show the same odd-even staggering. Thus, we suggest that bands 1 and 2 are a pair of candidate

chiral doublet bands.

In order to further understand the chirality in <sup>115</sup>Sb, calculations based on the relativistic mean-field theory (RMF) [39] and the multiparticle plus rotor model (MPRM) [40, 41] have been performed. The RMF calculations with the PC-PK1 [42] parameter sets show that the triaxial deformation parameters are  $(\beta, \gamma) = (0.21, 15.6^{\circ})$  for the  $\pi g_{9/2}^{-1} \otimes v h_{11/2} d_{3/2}$  configuration. The deformation parameter  $\beta = 0.21$  was used as input to the MPRM calculations. While the triaxial deformation parameter  $\gamma$  was adjusted because the values of  $\gamma$  usually vary as rational frequently increasing [43–46]. The value of  $\gamma = 22^{\circ}$  was found to be the best agreement with the experiment data. Moreover, a Coriolis attenuation factor of  $\xi = 0.85$  was used because of the effect of the mixing between low-j neutrons. The other parameters in the MPRM were fixed following those in Refs. [40, 41, 47, 48].

The calculated  $E(I) - J \cdot I(I+1)$ , S(I) and B(M1)/B(E2) ratios as functions of spin are compared with the corresponding experimental data, as presented in Fig. 3. As illustrated in Fig. 3, the small energy differences between bands 1 and 2 are well reproduced. The calculated S(I) values are in good agreement with the experimental values. Though, the calculated staggering phase of the B(M1)/B(E2) ratios of bands 1 and 2 is not perceptible, it has similar amplitudes with the experimental values. The agreement between the experimental data and the calculations supports the present configuration assignment and chiral interpretations of the observed bands.

To study the chiral geometry of bands 1 and 2 in <sup>115</sup>Sb, the root-mean-square values of the squared angular momenta components for the core  $R_k$ , the valence proton  $J_{pk}$  and the valence neutron  $J_{nk}$  were calculated. The calculated results are presented in Fig. 4, in which k = i, l, s represent the intermediate, long, and short axes, respectively. As shown in Fig. 4, the angular momenta of the core lies along the intermediate axis, the  $g_{9/2}^{-1}$  valence proton lies along the long axis, the  $h_{11/2}$  valence neutron lies along the short axis, and the  $d_{3/2}$  valence neutron acts as a spectator. The present coupling pattern of angular momenta in <sup>115</sup>Sb forms the obvious chiral geometry of aplanar rotation, which supports the chiral interpretation for bands 1 and 2.

The energy difference of the doublet bands in  $^{115}$ Sb decreases with I, which indicates a transition from chiral vibration to stable chirality along the bands. In order to understand the development of chirality with increasing angular momentum for the candidate chiral doublet bands in  $^{115}$ Sb, we calculated the probability distributions for the projection of the

total angular momentum along the l, i, and s axes [40]. The calculated results are presented in Fig. 5. With  $\gamma=22.0^{\circ}$ , the l axis is used for quantization. The distributions with respect to the s and the i axes are obtained by replacing  $\gamma$  with  $142^{\circ}$  ( $\gamma+120^{\circ}$ ) and -98° ( $\gamma-120^{\circ}$ ) respectively. As shown in Fig. 5, for  $19/2\hbar \leqslant I \leqslant 23/2\hbar$ , the  $K_i$  of the two bands is different. For band 1, the maximum probability for the i axis appears at  $K_i=0$ . However, the probability for band 2 is zero at  $K_i=0$ . It indicates an oscillation through the s-l plane and reveals the structure of the chiral vibration. For  $I \geqslant 25/2\hbar$ , the probability distributions for bands 1 and 2 become similar, and the maximum K probabilities for the two bands along the three axes are comparable. These features imply the appearance of static chirality in  $^{115}$ Sb. Based on the present calculations, there might be a change from a chiral vibration to a static chirality.

From the above discussion, the negative parity doublet bands in  $^{115}$ Sb are proposed to be chiral bands. This work presents the first observation of chiral doublet bands in an odd-A nucleus in neutron-rich  $A \approx 120$  mass region, indicating that a triaxial deformation capable of forming chirality can also occur when the number of protons crosses the Z=50 closed shell in this mass region.

### CONCLUSION

In summary, high-spin states of <sup>115</sup>Sb were investigated by fusion-evaporation reaction. A new  $\Delta I=1$  negative parity rotational band with several transitions linking the existing negative band has been identified. The experimental properties and the theoretical calculations suggest that the doublet bands in <sup>115</sup>Sb are chiral doublet bands with the  $\pi g_{9/2}^{-1} \otimes v h_{11/2} d_{3/2}$  configuration. Further probability distribution calculations show that a change from a chiral vibration to a static chirality in <sup>115</sup>Sb. The present work provides further evidence for the existence of chirality in the neutron-rich  $A \approx 120$  mass region. Further experimental research is needed to explore the chirality of other Sb isotopes in this mass region.

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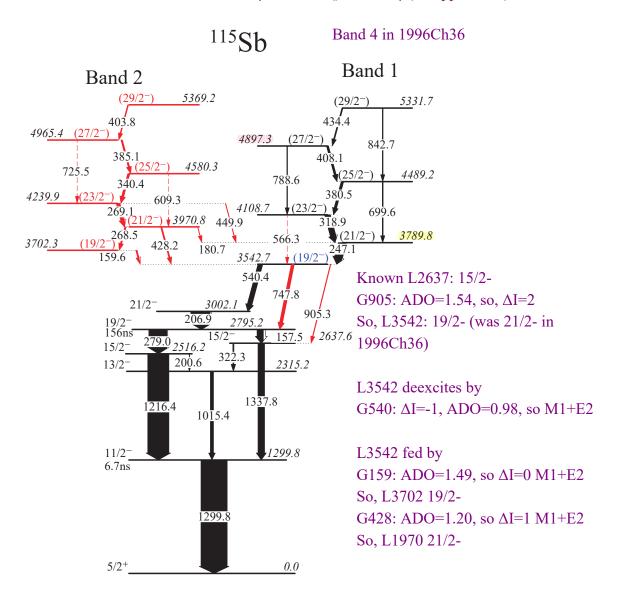


FIG. 1: Partial level scheme of  $^{115}$ Sb established in the present work. The energies of the  $\gamma$  transitions and levels are given in keV. The measured relative intensities of transitions are proportional to the widths of the arrows. New transitions and levels are marked in red, while adjustments to previous work in Ref. [28] were marked in blue.

The  $\gamma$ -ray intensity deexciting the 1299.8 level is 100(5), while the  $\gamma$ -ray intensity feeding the 1299.8 level is 81.1(41)+13.2(9)+26.2(13)=121(5), so we have a negative net feeding of -21(7).

# Checked: all $\gamma$ should indeed be in coincidence with 540 and 247

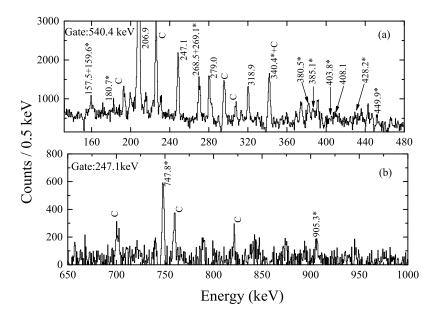


FIG. 2: Two spectrums of  $\gamma$ -rays gated on the 247.1 and 540.4 keV transitions. Peaks marked with asterisks are new in the present work. Contaminations are denoted with C.

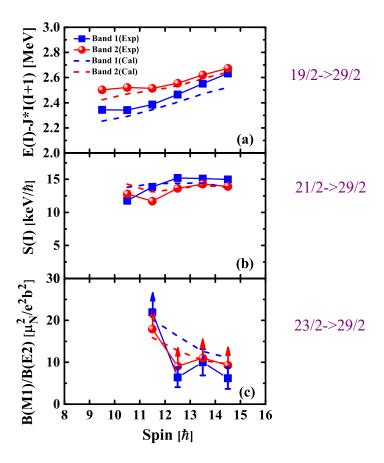


FIG. 3: Excitation energies relative to a rigid-rotor reference  $E(I) - J \cdot I(I+1)$  (a) (The  $J \approx 0.012$  parameters are evaluated from the relation  $J = 0.007 \times (\frac{158}{A})^{5/3} \text{MeV}$ ), energy staggering parameters S(I) = [E(I) - E(I-1)]/2I (b) and the reduced transition probability ratios B(M1)/B(E2) (c)for bands 1 and 2 in <sup>115</sup>Sb as functions of spin in comparison with the MPRM calculations.

# Report

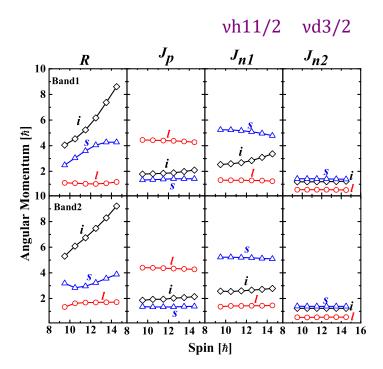


FIG. 4: The root-mean-square components along the intermediate (i-, squares), short (s-, triangles) and long (l-, circles) axes of the core, valence neutron, and valence proton angular momenta calculated as functions of spin I by means of the MPRM for bands 1 and 2 in  $^{115}$ Sb.

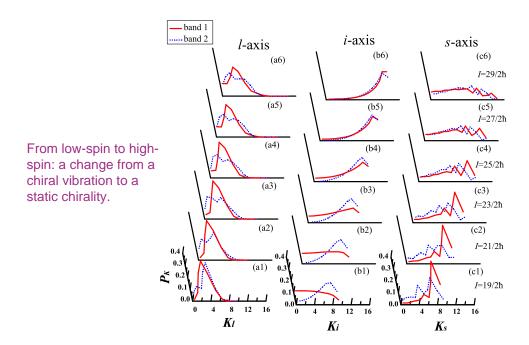


FIG. 5: The probability distributions for projection of total angular momentum on the long (l-), intermediate (i-) and short (s-) axes in MPRM for bands 1 and 2 in  $^{115}$ Sb.

TABLE I: The  $\gamma$ -ray energies, spin-parity assignments and excitation energies for the initial and final states, relative intensities and ADO ratios of the transitions in  $^{115}{\rm Sb}$ . The  $\gamma$ -ray energies are accurate to  $\pm$  0.5 keV.

$E_{\gamma} \text{ (keV)}$	$I_i^\pi  o I_f^\pi$	$E_i \; (\text{keV}) \to E_f \; (\text{keV})$	$I_{\gamma}$	$R_{ADO}$
157.5	$19/2^- \to 15/2^-$	$2795.2 \rightarrow 2637.6$	24.8(1.2)	2.06(0.11)
159.6	$(19/2^-) \to (19/2^-)$	$3702.3 \rightarrow 3542.7$	4.5(0.9)	1.49(0.20)
180.7	$(21/2^-) \to (21/2^-)$	$3970.8 \rightarrow 3789.8$	1.3(0.6)	
200.6	$15/2^- \to 13/2^-$	$2516.2 \rightarrow 2315.2$	2.0(0.2)	1.20(0.30)
206.9	$21/2^- \to 19/2^-$	$3002.1 \rightarrow 2795.2$	75.0(2.6)	0.80(0.06)
247.1	$(21/2^-) \to (19/2^-)$	$3789.8 \rightarrow 3542.7$	31.1(3.9)	1.24(0.06)
268.5	$(21/2^-) \to (19/2^-)$	$3970.8 \rightarrow 3702.3$	5.4(2.1)	
269.1	$(23/2^-) \to (21/2^-)$	$4239.9 {\rightarrow}\ 3970.8$	14.5(3.5)	1.19(0.16)
279.0	$19/2^- \to 15/2^-$	$2795.2 {\rightarrow}\ 2516.2$	70.3(3.6)	1.66(0.07)
318.9	$(23/2^-) \to (21/2^-)$	$4108.7 \to 3789.8$	22.8(3.0)	1.23(0.11)
322.3	$15/2^- \rightarrow 13/2^-$	$2637.6 \rightarrow 2315.2$	4.2(0.3)	0.95(0.17)
340.4	$(25/2^-) \to (23/2^-)$	$4580.3 \rightarrow 4239.9$	7.9(1.5)	1.16(0.19)
380.5	$(25/2^-) \to (23/2^-)$	$4489.2 \to 4108.7$	10.4(1.4)	1.12(0.13)
385.1	$(27/2^-) \to (25/2^-)$	$4965.4 \rightarrow 4580.3$	5.8(1.7)	1.12(0.23)
403.8	$(29/2^-) \to (27/2^-)$	$5369.2 \rightarrow 4965.4$	3.8(1.1)	1.19(0.28)
408.1	$(27/2^-) \to (25/2^-)$	$4897.3 \rightarrow 4489.2$	8.7(1.2)	1.24(0.19)
428.2	$(21/2^-) \to (19/2^-)$	$3970.8 \rightarrow 3542.7$	4.9(1.8)	1.20(0.23)
434.4	$(29/2^-) \to (27/2^-)$	5331.7  o 4897.3	5.1(1.0)	1.23(0.26)
449.9	$(23/2^-) \to (21/2^-)$	$4239.9 \rightarrow 3789.9$	1.8(0.8)	
540.4	$(19/2^-) \to 21/2^-$	$3542.7 \rightarrow 3002.1$	18.2(1.0)	0.98(0.08)
566.3	$(23/2^-) \to (19/2^-)$	$4108.7 \rightarrow 3542.7$	<1.3	
609.3	$(25/2^-) \to (21/2^-)$	$4580.3 \rightarrow 3970.8$	<1.3	
699.6	$(25/2^-) \to (21/2^-)$	$4489.2 \rightarrow 3789.8$	3.5(1.2)	1.51(0.30)
725.5	$(27/2^-) \to (23/2^-)$	$4965.4{\rightarrow}\ 4239.9$	<1.3	

TABLE I. (Continued)

747.8	$(19/2^-) \to 19/2^-$	$3542.7 \to 2795.2$	11.9(1.4)	1.53(0.17)
788.6	$(27/2^-) \to (23/2^-)$	$4897.2 \rightarrow 4108.7$	2.7(1.0)	1.42(0.33)
842.7	$(29/2^-) \to (25/2^-)$	$5331.7 \rightarrow 4489.2$	3.0(1.2)	1.47(0.34)
905.3	$(19/2^-) \to 15/2^-$	$3542.7 \rightarrow 2637.6$	2.3(0.3)	1.54(0.29)
1015.4	$13/2^- \to 11/2^-$	$2315.2 \rightarrow 1299.8$	13.2(0.9)	0.51(0.05)
1216.4	$15/2^- \to 11/2^-$	$2516.2 \rightarrow 1299.8$	81.1(4.1)	1.51(0.07)
1299.8	$11/2^- \to 5/2^+$	$1299.8 \rightarrow 0$	100(5.0)	1.57(0.07)
1337.8	$15/2^- \to 11/2^-$	$2637.6 \rightarrow 1299.8$	26.2(1.3)	1.45(0.08)

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