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Shape coexistence in neutron-deficient mercury isotopes studied through β decay

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The neutron-deficient mercury isotopes ($Z = 80$) around $N = 104$ represent one of the most prominent examples of shape coexistence [1]. This region has been extensively studied using various experimental techniques, such as laser spectroscopy [2,3], decay spectroscopy studies [4-6] and Coulomb excitation [7,8]. These studies point to the coexistence of two classes of states with strong mixing between the low-lying members in $^{182,184}\text{Hg}$ [1,6-8]. In particular, the presence of $E0$ components in the $I^\pi \rightarrow I^\pi$ ($I \neq 0$) transitions has been interpreted as a fingerprint for mixing [1].

In order to study the properties of the low-lying states in mercury isotopes around $N = 104$, the β decay of $^{182,184,186}\text{Tl}$ to excited states in $^{182,184,186}\text{Hg}$ has been measured at the ISOLDE Decay Station (IDS) at ISOLDE. The conversion electrons have been measured for the first time at IDS by employing the newly developed SPEDE spectrometer [9], which provided an energy resolution of 7 keV for an electron energy around 250 keV.

Compared to the previous study [6], an order of magnitude higher statistics was collected, which resulted in an expansion of the decay schemes. In particular, six transitions with strong $E0$ components and the third 0^+ state have been identified in ^{184}Hg . Improved statistics gives more precise values for branching ratios and conversion coefficients, which are relevant for the Coulomb excitation experiments [10]. The experimental results will be discussed in the framework of shape coexistence in the mid-shell region.

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