

Cluster radioactivity: exotic process or dominant nuclear decay

Michał Warda

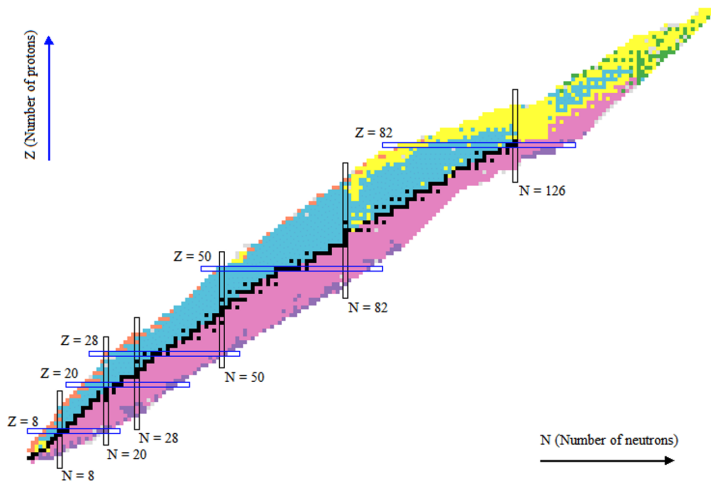
Uniwersytet Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej
w Lublinie

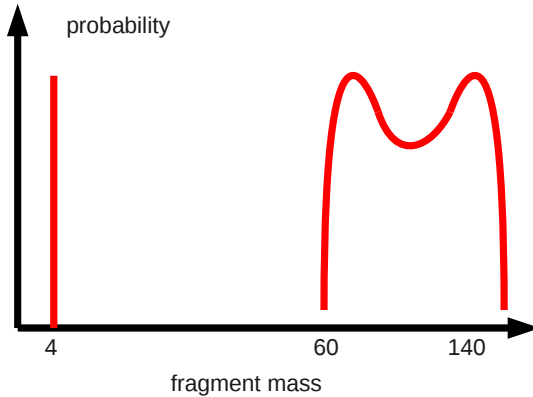
Warszawa, 21.05.2026

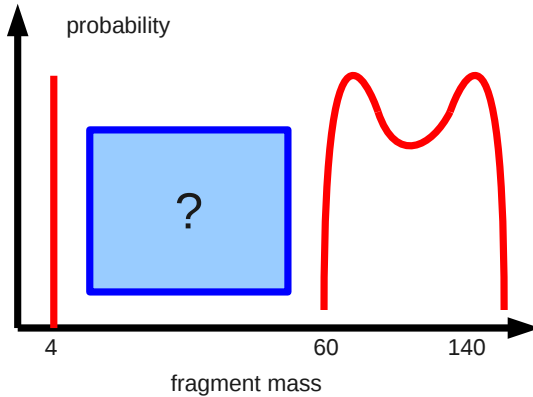


- Krzysztof Pomorski, UMCS, Lublin
- Luis M. Robledo, UAM, Madrid
- Rayner Rodriguez-Guzman, Nazarbayev University, Astana
- Anna Zdeb, UMCS, Lublin









Discovery of cluster radioactivity

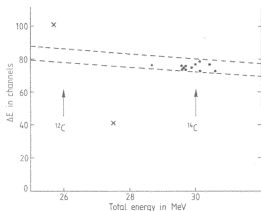
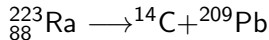


Fig. 1 Contents of the two-dimensional array ΔE versus E_{total} after a run of 189 days. The dotted line indicates the allowed region for carbon ions and the arrows indicate the total energies expected for ^{12}C and ^{14}C emissions in the decay of ^{223}Ra . The lower of the two crosses represents a quadruple pile-up. Below the total energy displayed, large numbers of triple and double α -pile-ups were recorded. Single α -events (and, in part, even double α -pile-ups) were biased out on the analogue side to avoid deadtime problems on the digital side. The upper cross is an event which was recorded during a thunderstorm which affected the mains badly. A run of 194 days was made before this one, yielding 8 events and, in addition, a run of approximately half a year was performed to investigate possible cosmic ray-induced events. Channel 77 in $\Delta E = 6.7$ MeV, which is exactly as expected for 30 MeV ^{14}C . Detector characteristics: The dead layer of the ΔE detector (200 mm² active area, 8.2 μm sensitive thickness) was determined to lie between 0.3 and 0.8 μm . In addition a protective layer of gold of thickness 20 $\mu\text{g cm}^{-2}$ was evaporated on the source and 15 $\mu\text{g cm}^{-2}$ carbon film inserted between the source and the ΔE detector. An extra 30–40 $\mu\text{g cm}^{-2}$ of gold is present on the E -detector (300 mm² active area). This gives a total of 150–250 $\mu\text{g cm}^{-2}$ of effective dead layer (Si equivalent) and an energy loss of ^{14}C ions of 0.5–0.8 MeV. The source of strength 3.3 μCi gave a counting rate of $\approx 4,000 \text{ s}^{-1}$, corresponding to an effective solid angle of detection of $\approx 1/3 \text{ sr}$.



H.J. Rose and G.A. Jones, *Nature* **307**, 245 (1984)
 Sandulescu, Poenaru and Greiner, *Sov. J. Part Nucl.* **11**, 528 (1980)



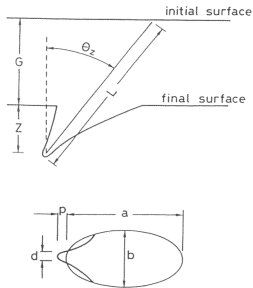


Fig. 1. Geometry of a track etched until the end of the particle range, L. G is the thickness of the material etched away, d the tip diameter, a and b the major and minor axes, p the overhang, θ_z the zenith angle, z the track depth.

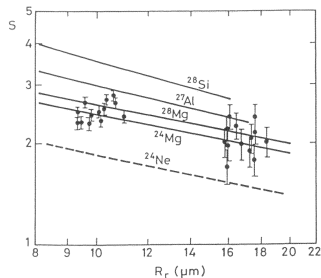


Fig. 6. Comparison of the sensitivity S measured at two stages of the etching process for the 15 events from the decay of ^{236}Pu with accelerator calibrations. Reprinted with permission from M. Hussonnois et al., "Cluster decay of ^{236}Pu and correlations of the probabilities of α decay, cluster decay and spontaneous fission of heavy nuclei" JETP Letters 62 (1995) p 701. Copyright 1995 American Institute of Physics.

R. Bonetti, A. Guglielmetti, in *Heavy Elements and Related New Phenomena Vol II*, ed. W. Greiner and R.K. Gupta, p.634, Word Scientific, 1999



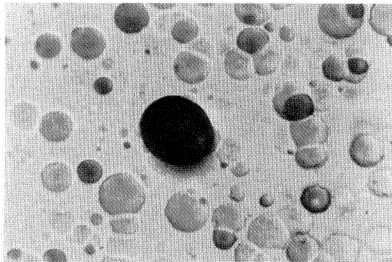


FIG. 1. Photomicrograph showing one etch pit due to a 56 MeV ^{24}Ne ion striking a Cronar detector nearly head on. About 3×10^6 alpha particles passed through this field of view.

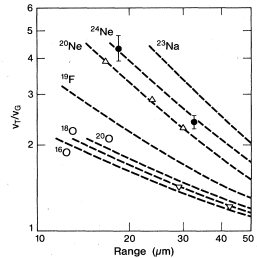


FIG. 2. Comparison of average signal of ^{24}Ne nuclei (\bullet) emitted from ^{232}U with calibrations (dashed lines) obtained with ^{18}O (∇) and ^{20}Ne (Δ) ions at Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory accelerators. Ratio of etching rate along track to general etching rate v_T/v_G , is plotted as a function of residual range.

Barwick et al., PRC 31, 1984 (1985)



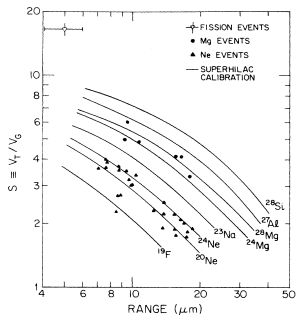


FIG. 1. Identification of ions emitted from ^{234}U as Ne and Mg. The curves are based on calibrations obtained with ^{28}Si , ^{24}Mg , and ^{20}Ne ions at Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory SuperHilac.

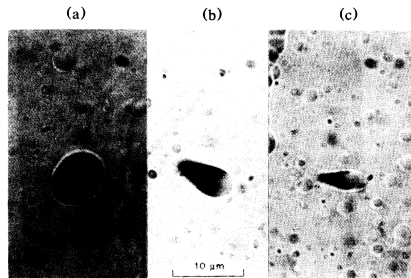


FIG. 2. Photomicrographs showing etch pits due to (a) spontaneous fission, (b) Mg emission, and (c) Ne emission from ^{234}U source.

Wang et al., PRC 36, 2717 (1987)



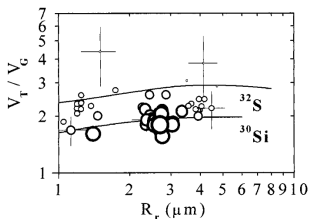


FIG. 2. Ratio of etching rates $S = V_T / V_G$ versus the residual range for tracks registered after exposition of the detectors to ^{242}Cm . The diameters of the circles are inversely related with the error values of S . The solid lines are the results of calibration with ^{30}Si and ^{32}S ions. The smallest and largest errors are shown as examples.

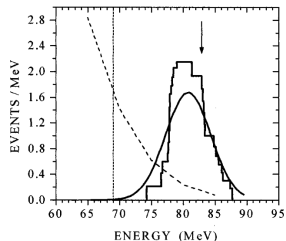


FIG. 4. Energy spectrum of the Si particles emitted from ^{242}Cm sources. The dashed line shows the possible effect due to ternary fission. The dotted line shows the registration threshold due to the combined effect of absorbers and the range deficit in the glass detector ($3.24 \pm 0.6 \mu\text{m}$ see text). The arrow shows the ^{34}Si cluster kinetic energy following from the decay Q value.

A.A. Ogloblin et al., PRC **61**, 034301 (2000)



Cluster radioactivity: key facts

- Emitters: ${}_{87}^{221}\text{Fr}$ — ${}_{96}^{242}\text{Cm}$
experimental evidence in 12 even-even, 9 odd nuclei
- Clusters: ${}^{14}\text{C}$ — ${}^{34}\text{Si}$
- Heavy mass residue: doubly magic ${}^{208}\text{Pb} \pm 4$ nucleons
"Lead radioactivity"
- Half lives: 10^{11} s — 10^{26} s
- α branching ratio: 10^{-9} — 10^{-16}



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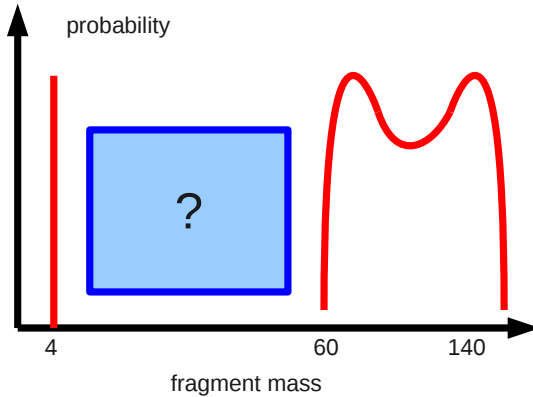
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Theoretical description

- Extrapolation of Gamov model of alpha emission
Modified Geiger-Nuttall formula for half-lives



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$$\log_{10} T_{1/2}^{AZ} = \frac{aA_2\eta + bZ_2\eta_z}{\sqrt{Q}} + c.$$

$a = 10.603$, $b = 78.027$, and $c = -80.66$

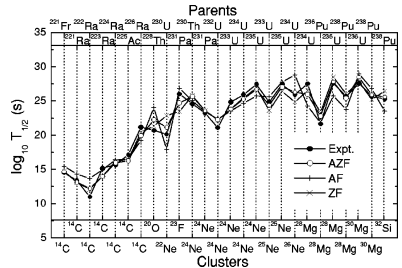


FIG. 1. $\log_{10} T_{1/2}$ (s) for different clusters emitted from various radioactive parents, calculated by using the AZ formula (AZF) and compared with experimental data. Also, the results of calculations for AF ($b=0$) and ZF ($a=0$) truncations of AZF are shown for comparisons.

Balsubramaniam et al., PRC **70**, 017301 (2004)



$$\log_{10} T_{1/2} = a\sqrt{\mu}Z_cZ_dQ^{-1/2} + b\sqrt{\mu}(Z_cZ_d)^{1/2} + c$$

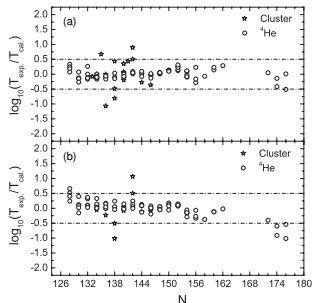


FIG. 4. Deviations between the logarithms of the experimental data and of the calculated values for even-even nuclei (a) when we use two sets of parameters to describe α decay and cluster radioactivity respectively and (b) when we use one set of parameters to describe both α decay and cluster radioactivity at the same time.

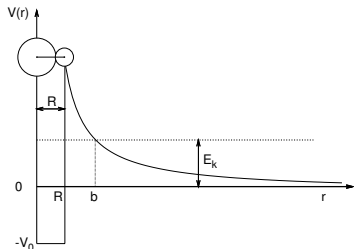
Ni et al., PRC **78**, 044310 (2008)



$$V(r) = \begin{cases} -V_0 & 0 \leq r \leq R \\ \frac{Z_1 Z_2 e^2}{r} & r > R \end{cases}$$

$$R = r_0(A_1^{1/3} + A_2^{1/3})$$

$$b = \frac{Z_1 Z_2 e^2}{E_k}$$

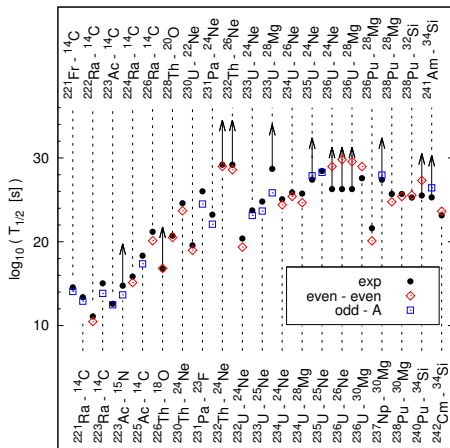


$$P = \exp \left[-\frac{2}{\hbar} \int_R^b \sqrt{2\mu(V(x) - E_k)} dx \right]$$

$$P = \exp \left\{ -\frac{2}{\hbar} \sqrt{2\mu Z_1 Z_2 e^2 b} \left[\arccos \sqrt{\frac{R}{b}} - \sqrt{\frac{R}{b} - \left(\frac{R}{b}\right)^2} \right] \right\}$$

A. Zdeb, M. Warda, K. Pomorski, Phys. Rev. C87 024308 (2013)





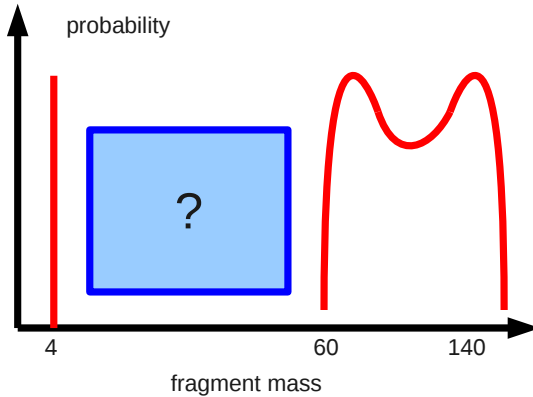
$$T_{1/2} = \frac{\ln 2}{P\nu} \cdot 10^h$$

$$\nu = \frac{\pi \hbar}{2\mu R^2}$$

$$r_0 = 1.21 \text{ fm}$$

$$h = 1.973$$





Theoretical description

- **Super-asymmetric** fission
- Potential energy surfaces are determined in the self-consistent procedure in HFB theory with Gogny D1S force



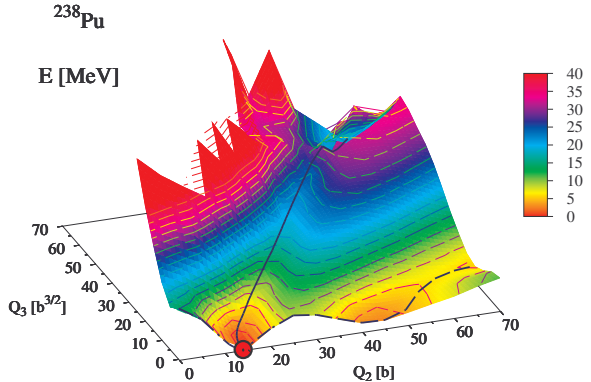
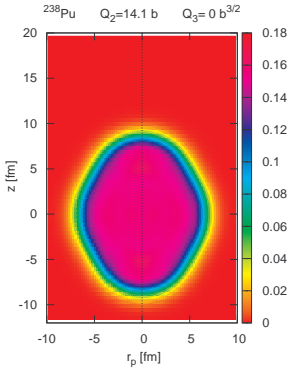
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Shape evolution: ^{238}Pu

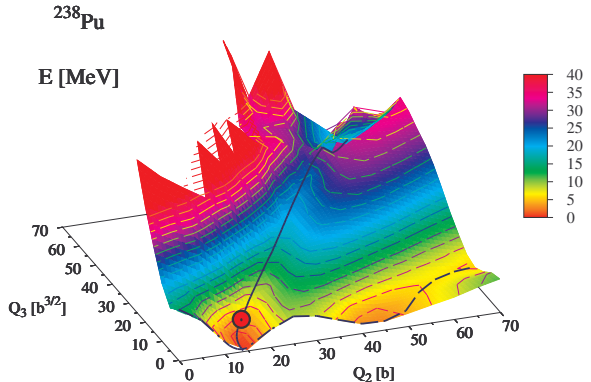
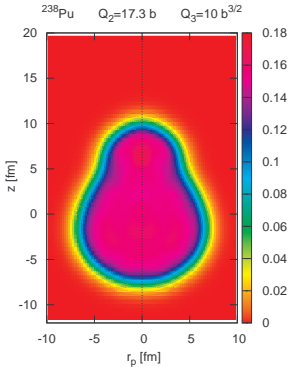


M. Warda and L. M. Robledo, Phys. Rev. C 84, 044608 (2011).

www.umcs.lublin.pl



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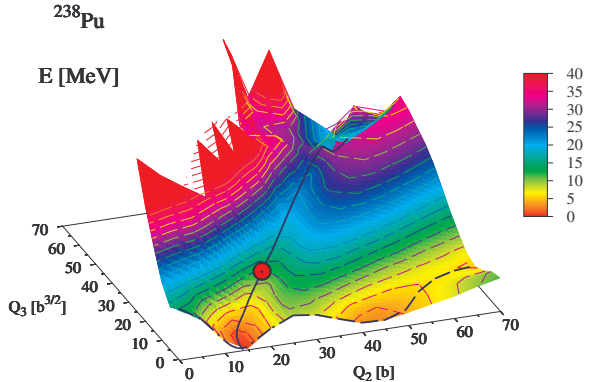
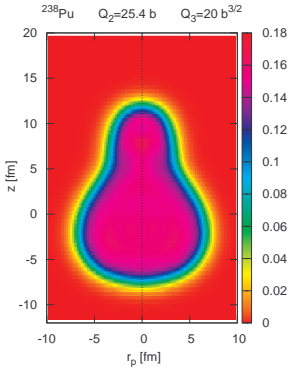


M. Warda and L. M. Robledo, Phys. Rev. C 84, 044608 (2011).

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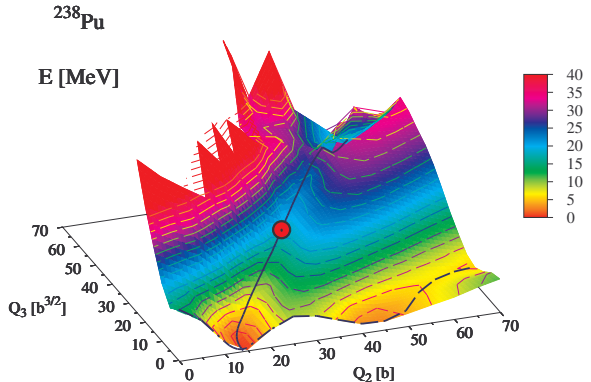
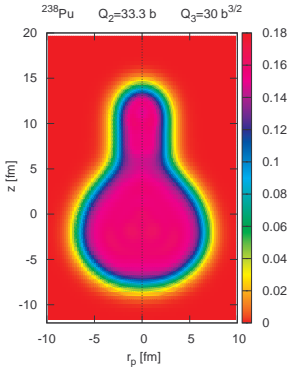


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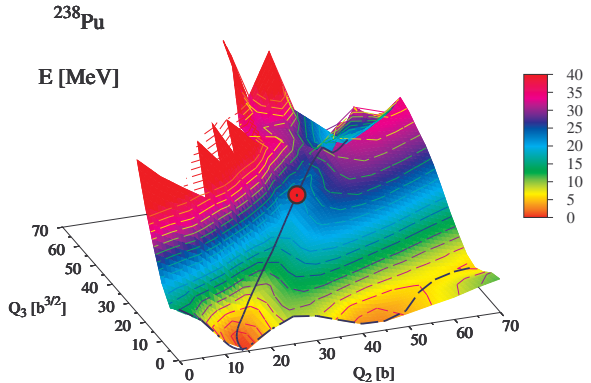
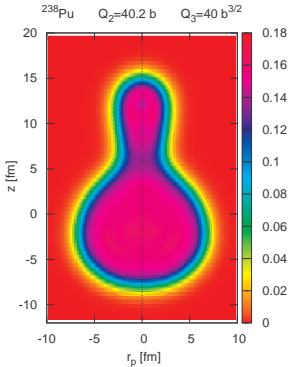


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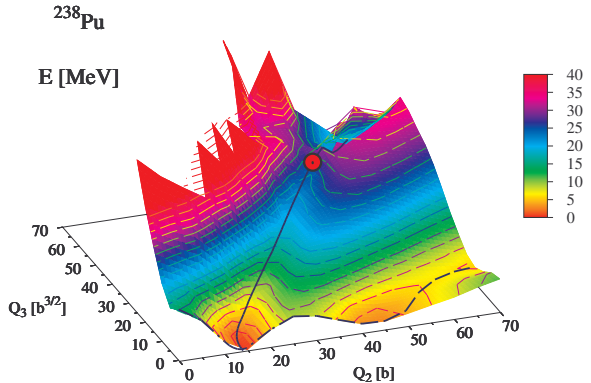
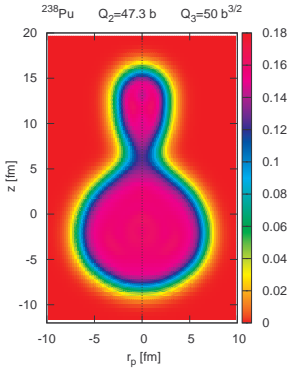


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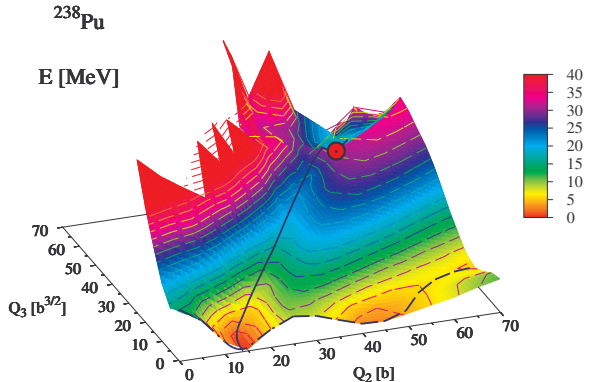
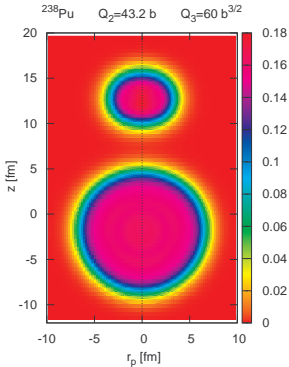


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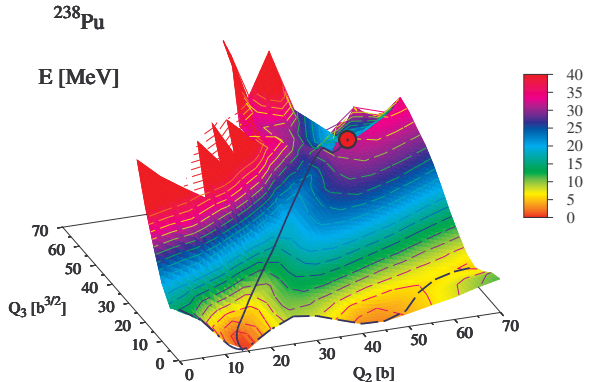
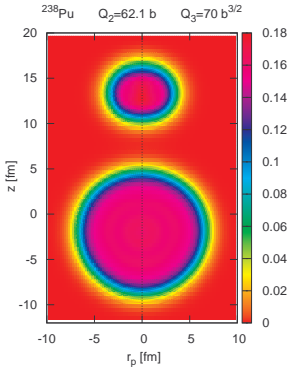


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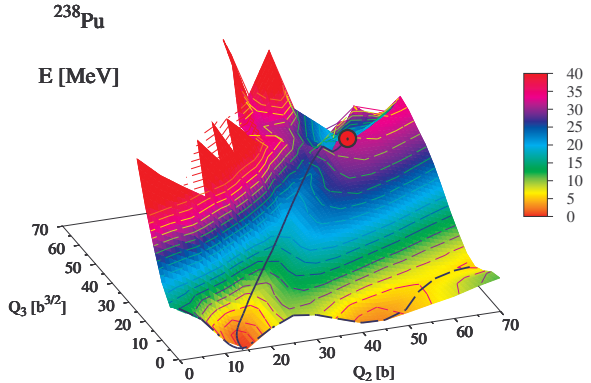
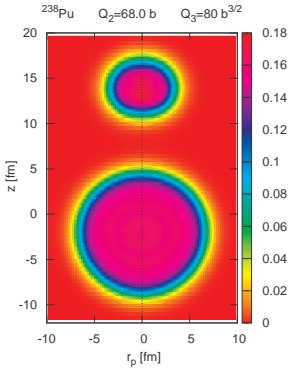


M. Warda and L. M. Robledo, Phys. Rev. C 84, 044608 (2011).

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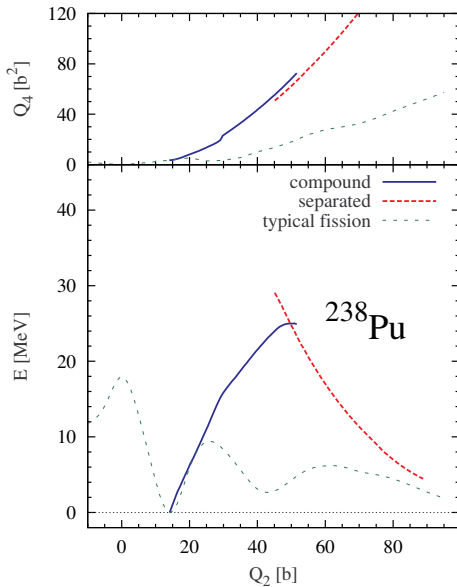
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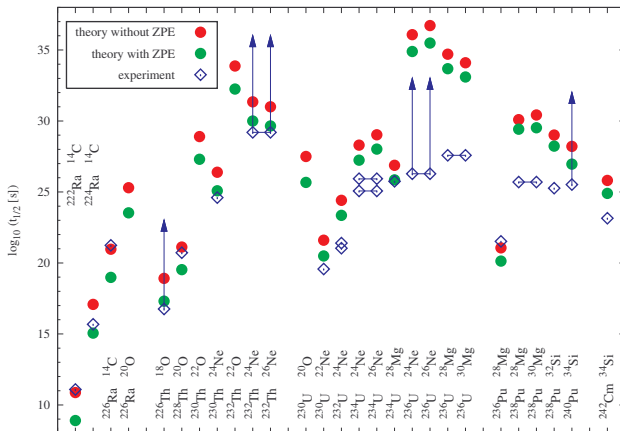


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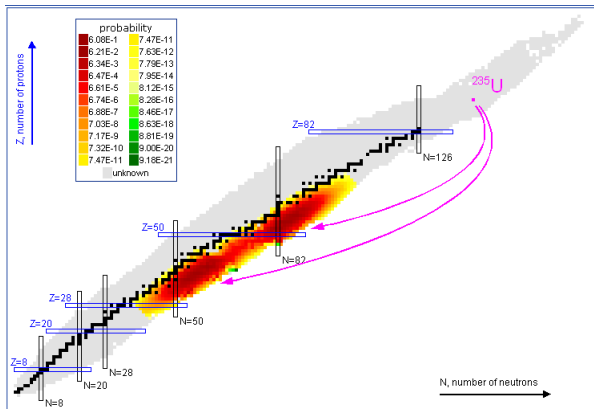
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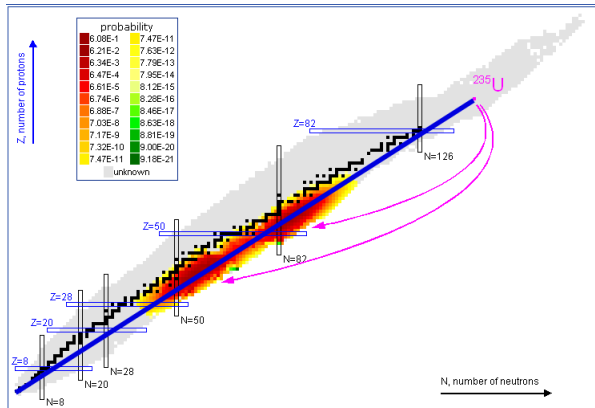


Fission fragments - N/Z ratio



<http://lablemmlounge.blogspot.com/2011/03/why-fuel-rods-are-radioactive.html>

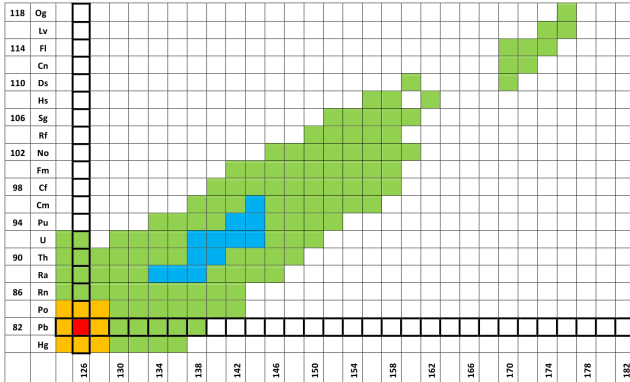
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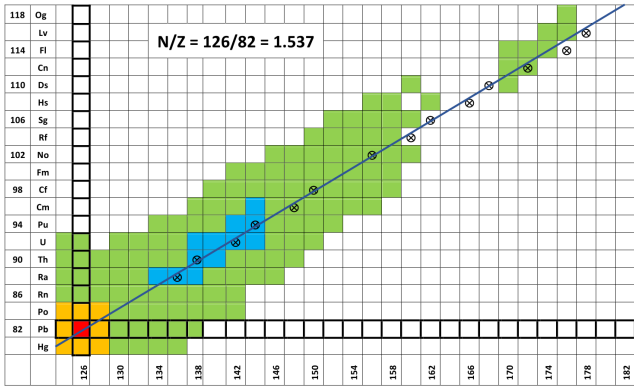


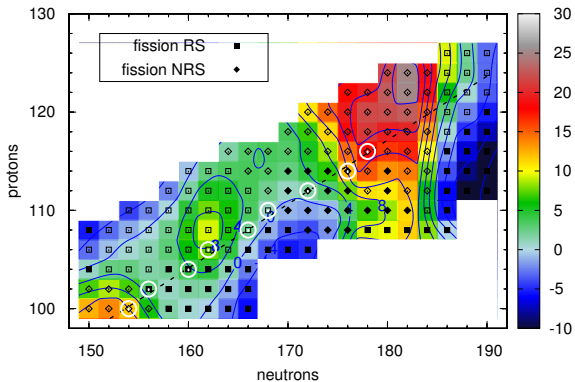
Cluster radioactivity - chart of nuclides





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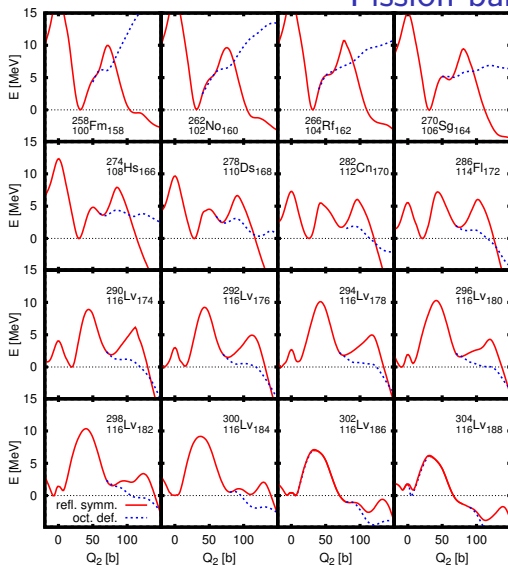


M. Warda, J.L. Egido, Phys. Rev. C 86 (2012) 014322

A. Baran, M. Kowal, P.G. Reinhard, L.M. Robledo, A. Staszczak, M. Warda, Nucl. Phys. A 944 (2015) 442



Fission barriers



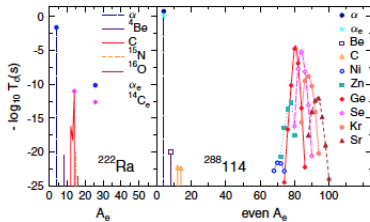


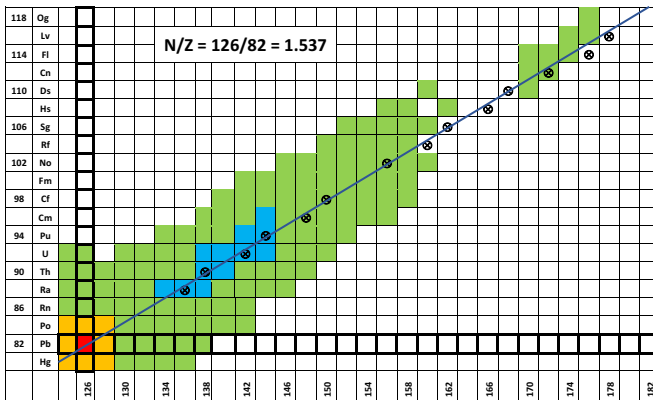
FIG. 1 (color online). Time spectra of different cluster emissions from ^{222}Ra (left panel) and from the superheavy nucleus $^{288}114$ (right panel). The most probable emitted clusters from ^{222}Ra and $^{288}114$ are ^{14}C and ^{80}Ge , respectively, both leading to ^{208}Pb daughter nucleus.

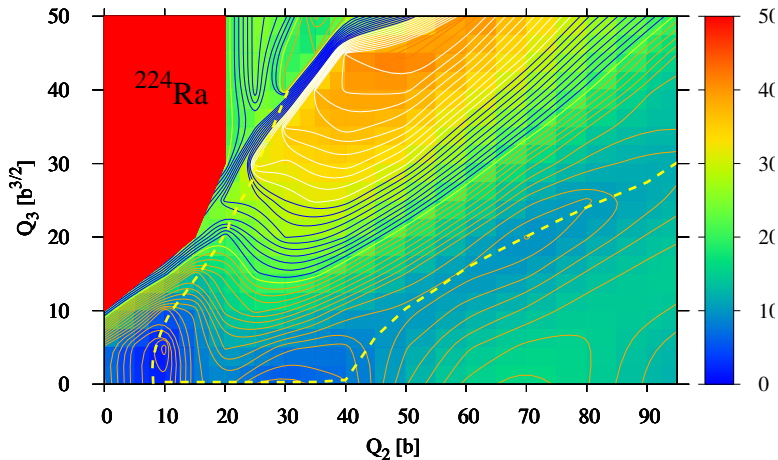
D. N. Poenaru, R. A. Gherghescu, and W. Greiner
 Phys. Rev. Lett. 107, 062503 (2011); Phys. Rev. C 85, 034615 (2012)

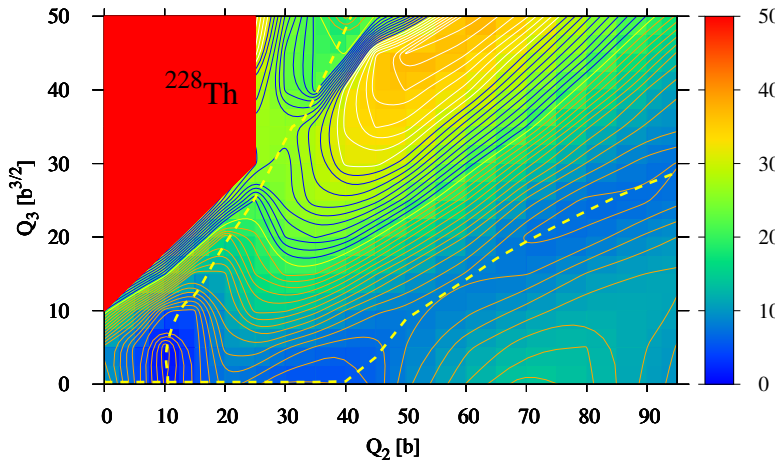


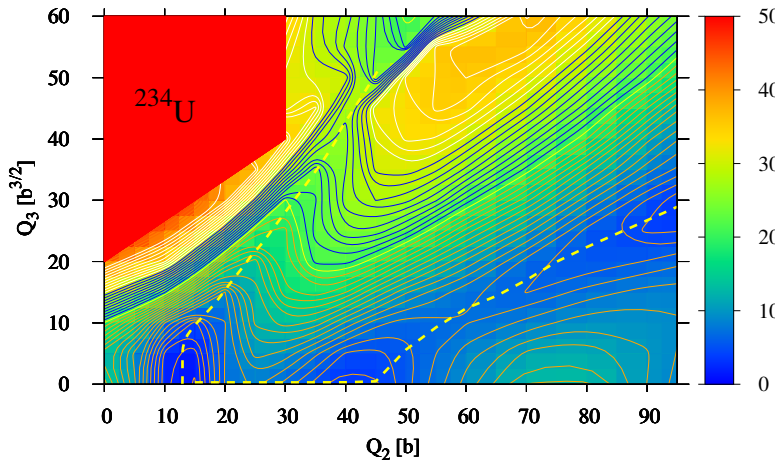


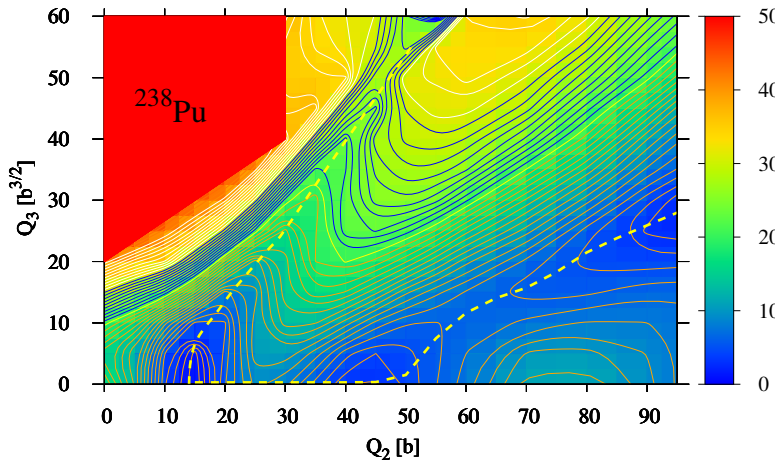
Cluster radioactivity - chart of nuclides

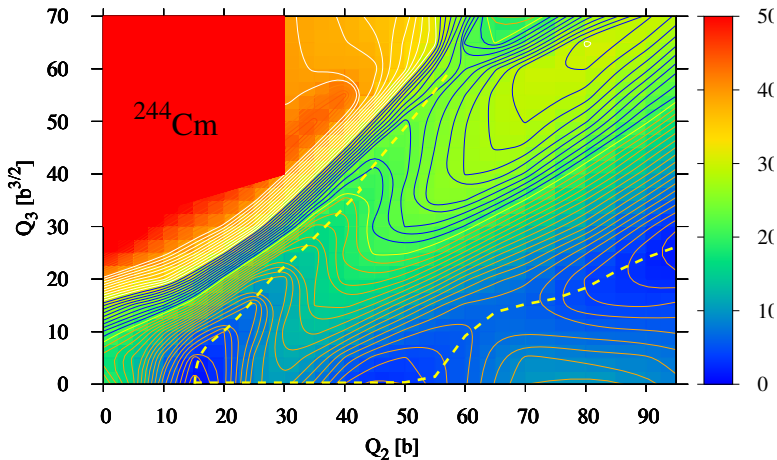


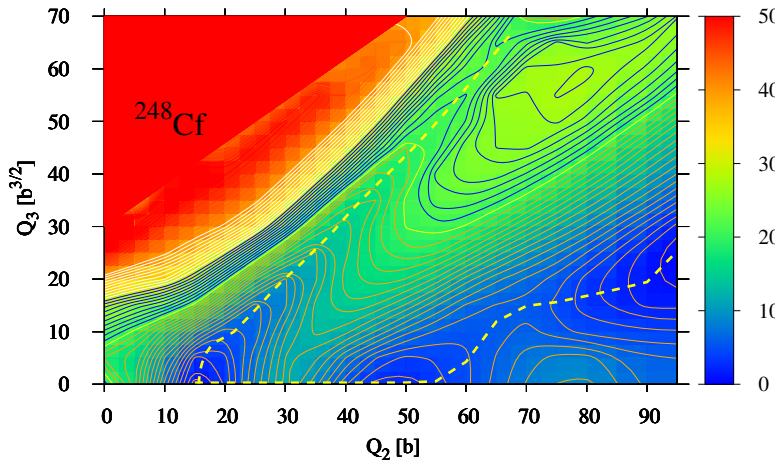


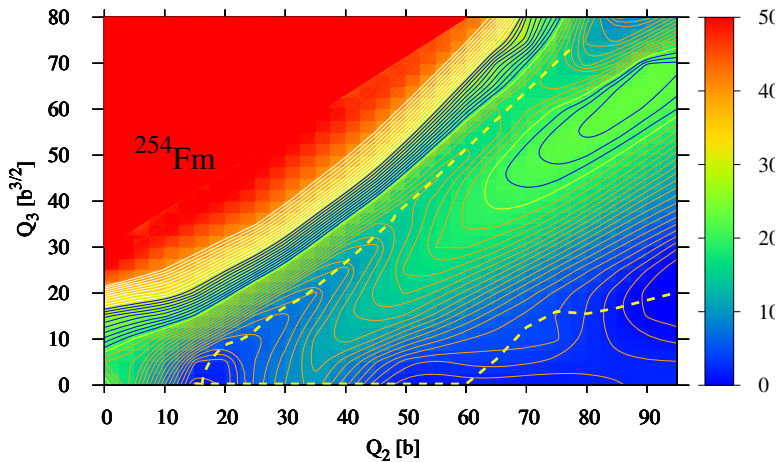


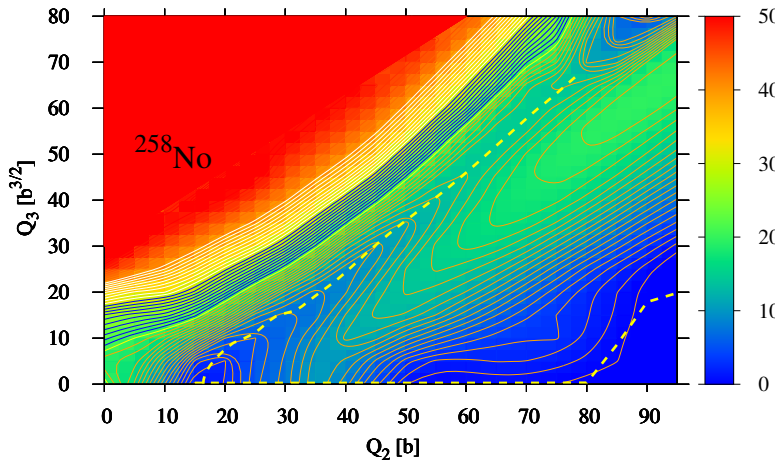


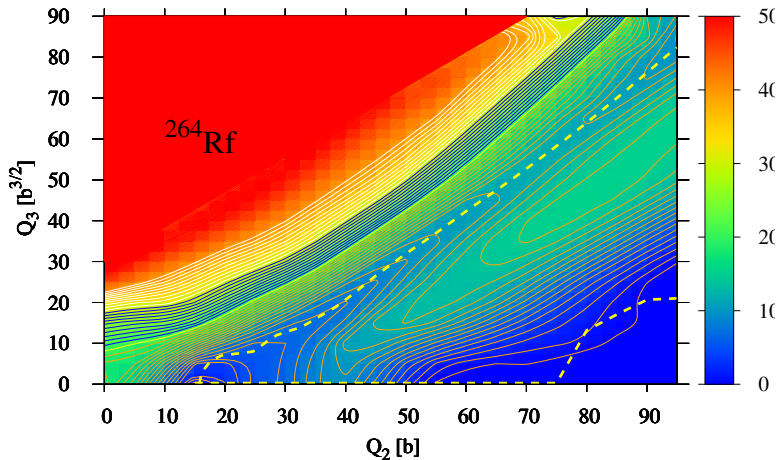


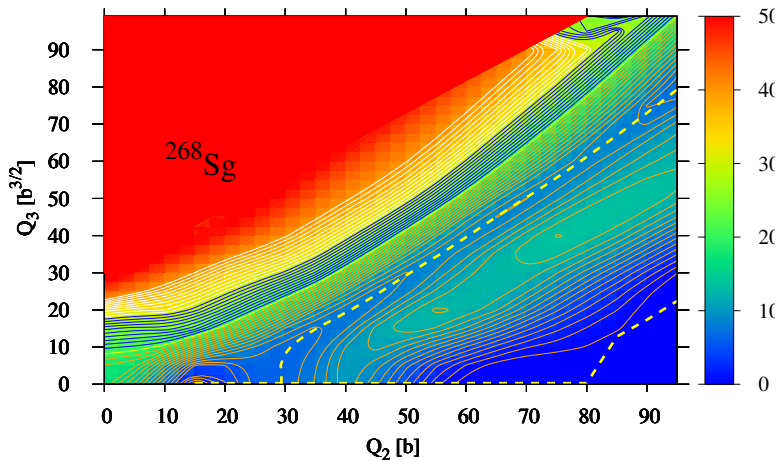


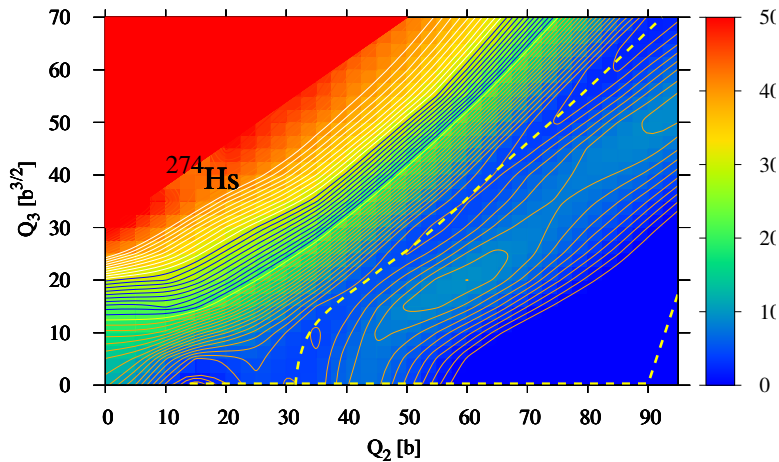


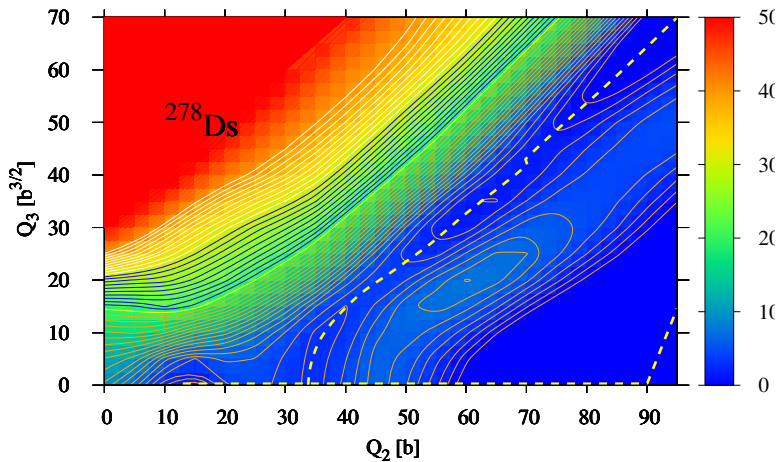


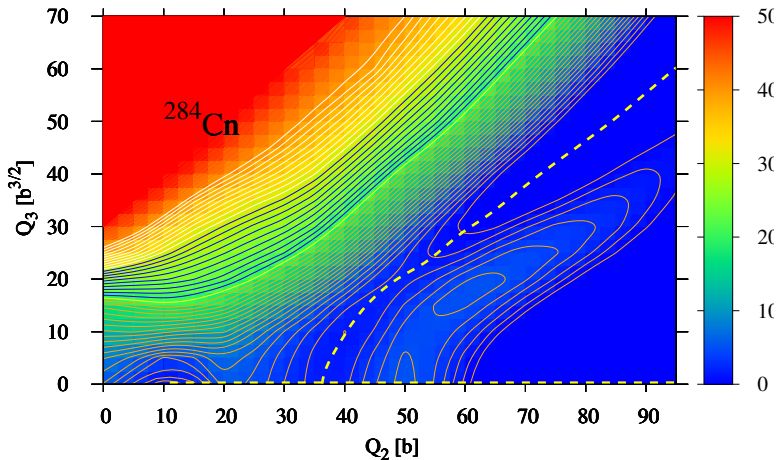


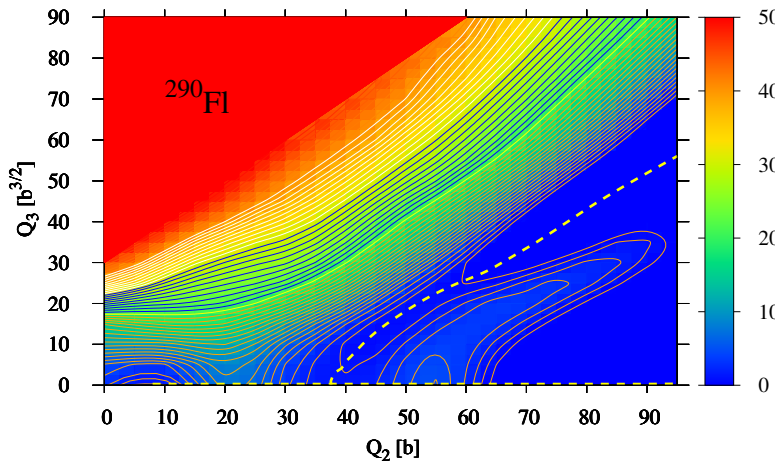


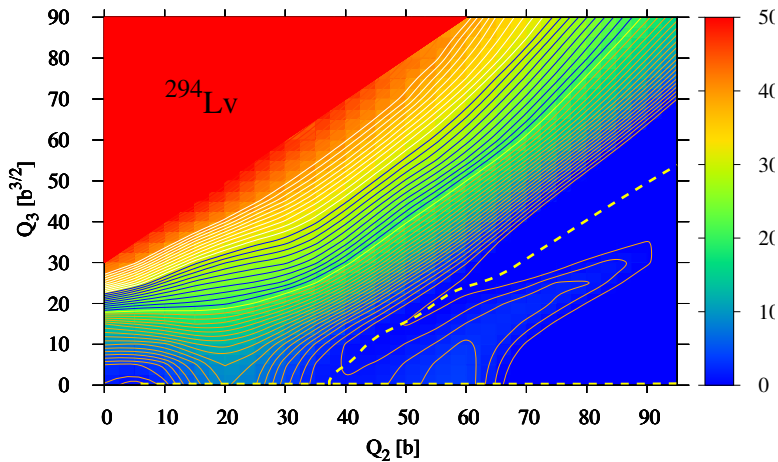


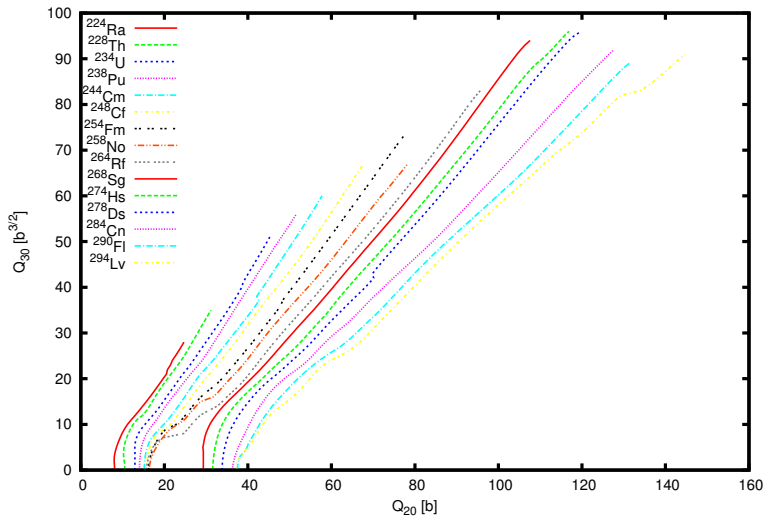


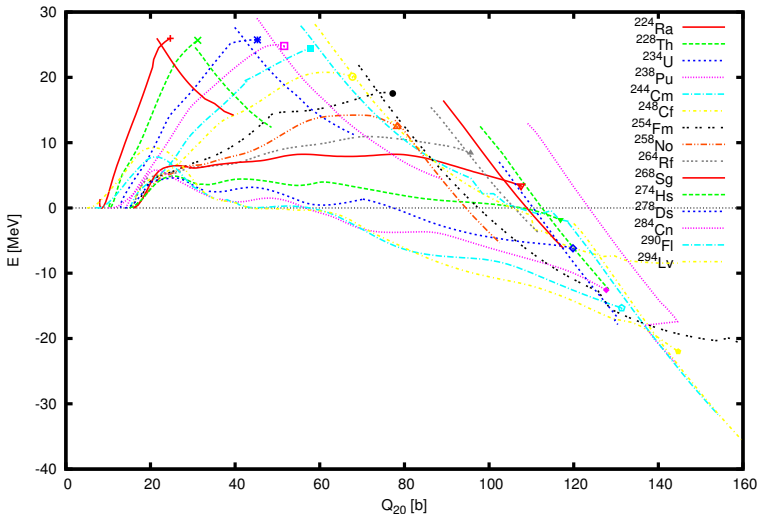


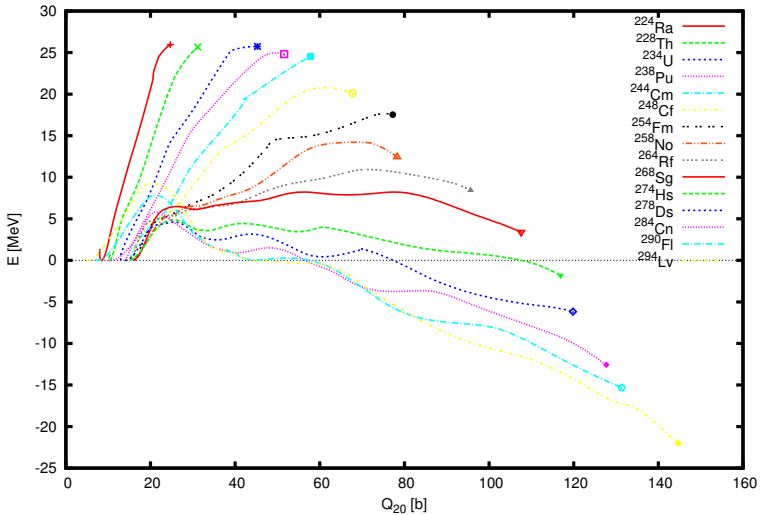




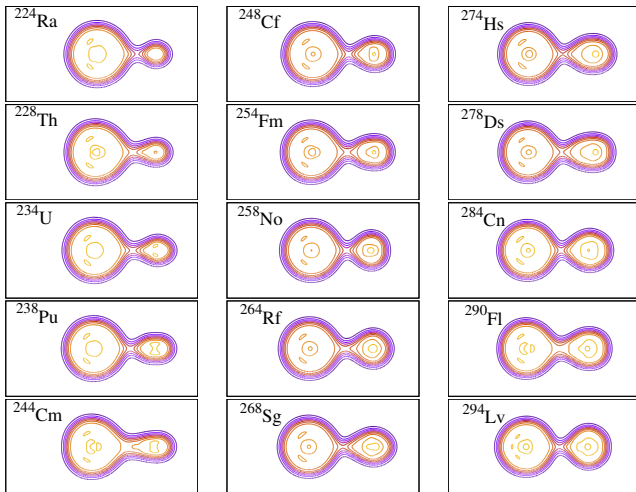




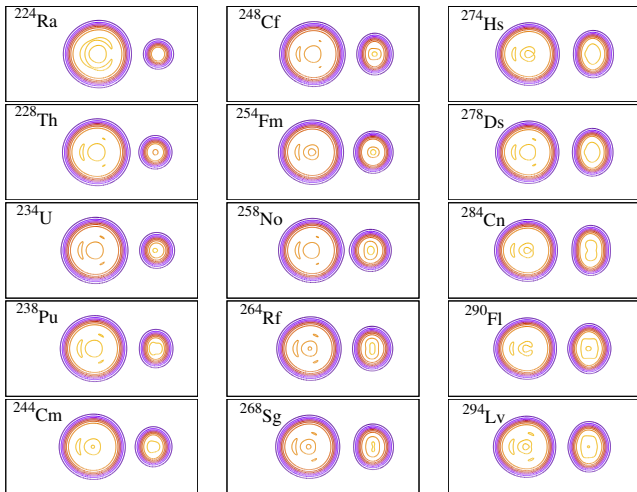


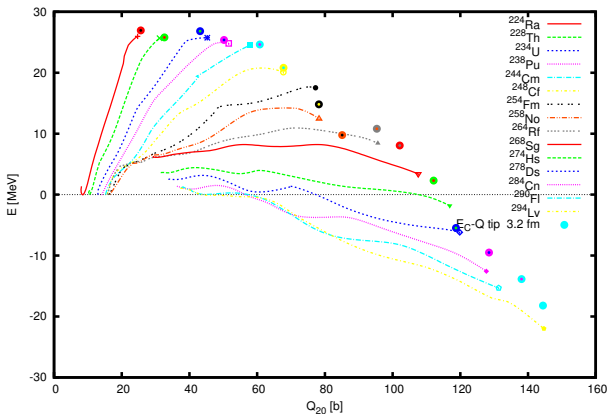


Pre-scission shapes

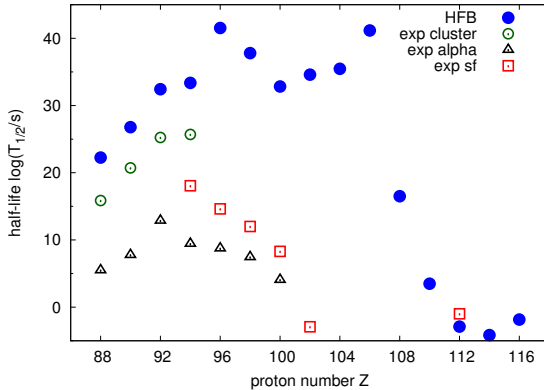


Post-scission shapes





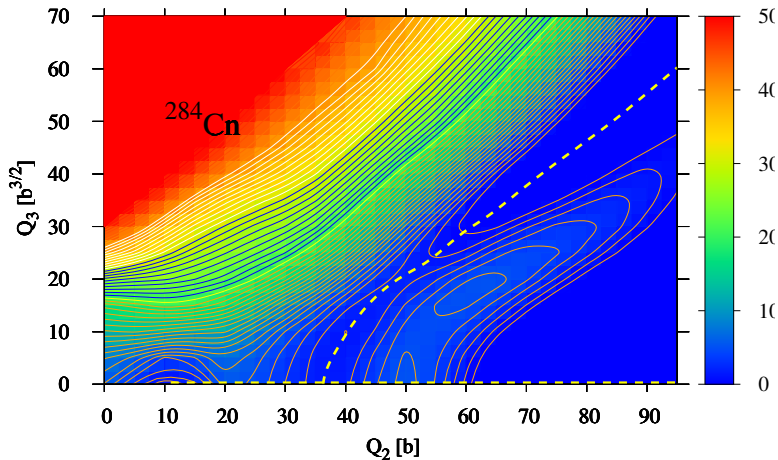
$$E = k \frac{82(Z - 82)e^2}{r_{208} + r_{A-208} + d} - Q$$

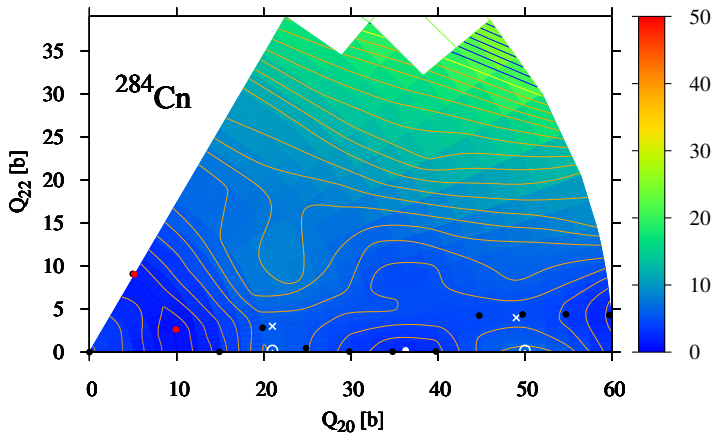


Experimental evidence in ^{284}Cn :

- GSI: 9 events
Ch. Düllmann, et al., Phys.Rev.Lett. 104, 252701 (2010)
- Dubna: 19 events
Yu. Oganessian, Radiochim.Acta 99, 429 (2011)
- lifetimes: 30 ms - 400 ms







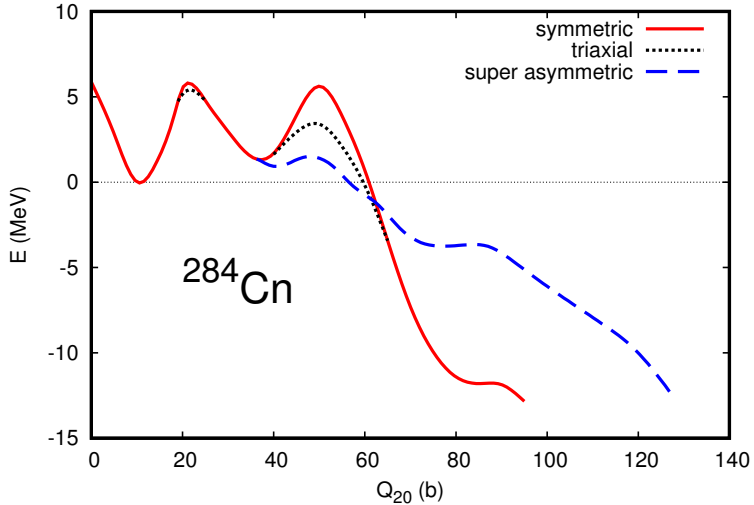
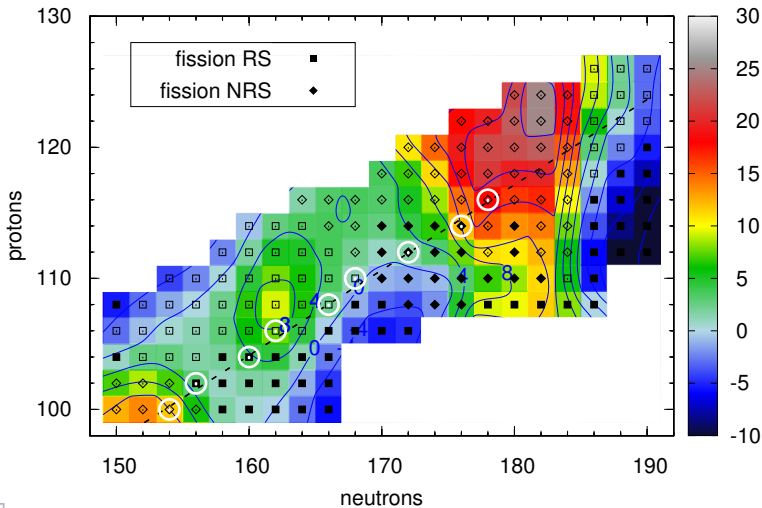
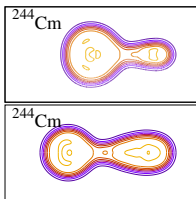
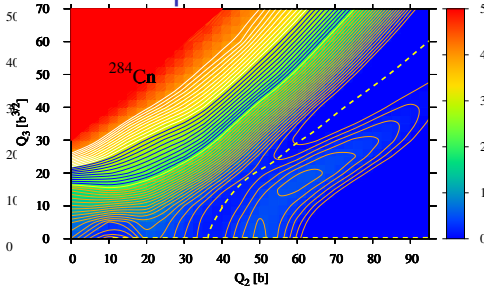
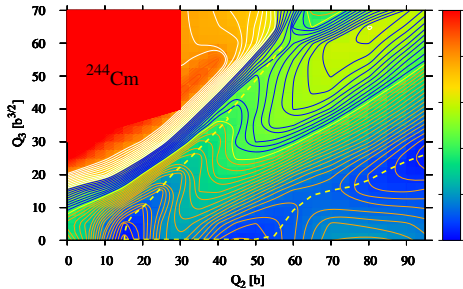


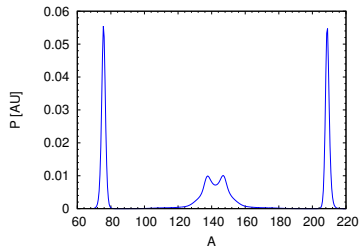
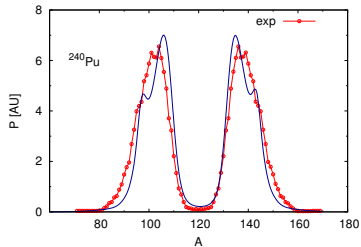
Chart of SH nuclides



Actinides and superheavies



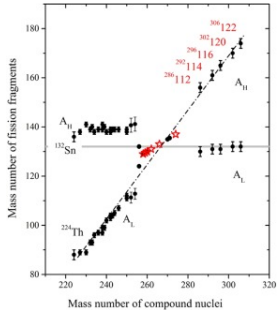
Actinides and superheavies



A. Zdeb, A. Dobrowolski, and M. Warda, Phys. Rev. C 95, 054608 (2017)



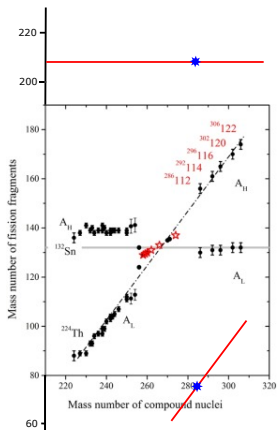
Mean fission fragment mass



M.G.Itkis, E.Vardaci, I.M.Itkis, G.N.Knyazheva, E.M.Kozulin, Nuclear Physics A944 (2015) 204



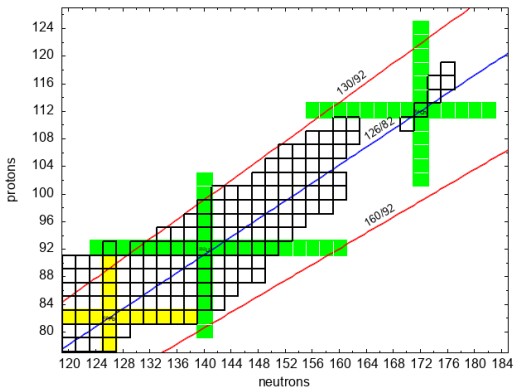
Mean fission fragment mass



M.G.Itkis, E.Vardaci, I.M.Itkis, G.N.Knyazheva, E.M.Kozulin, Nuclear Physics A944 (2015) 204

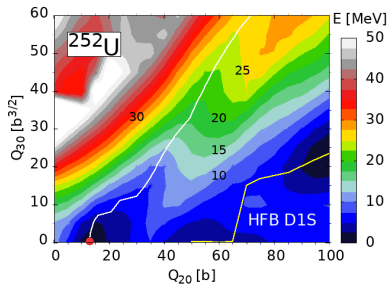
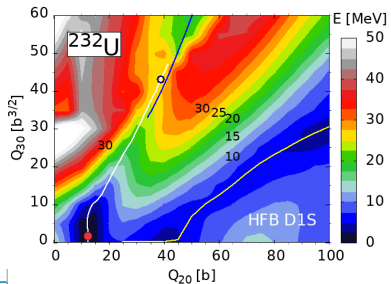
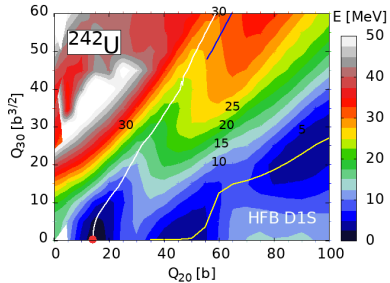
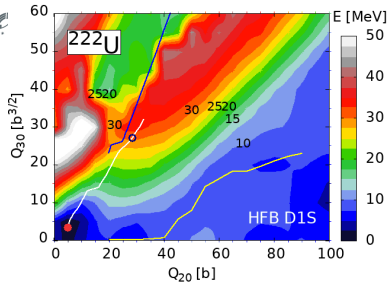


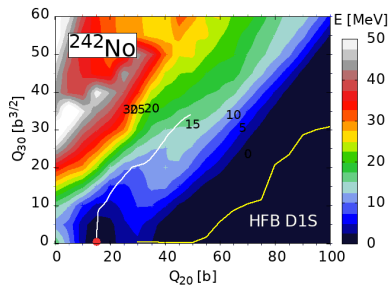
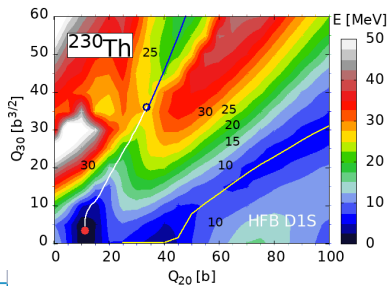
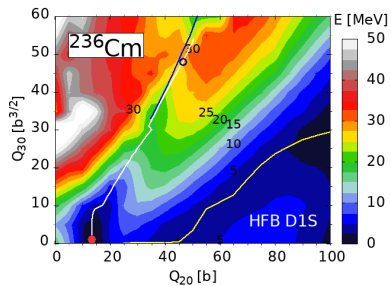
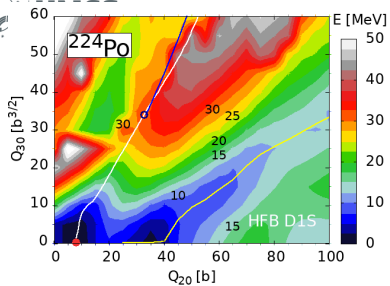
Isotopes and isobars



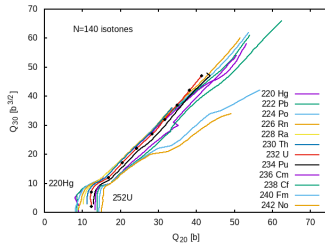
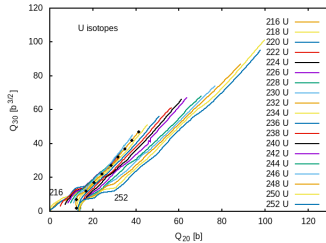
M. Warda, A. Zdeb, and R. Rodriguez-Guzmn, Phys. Rev. C 113, 034619 (2026)



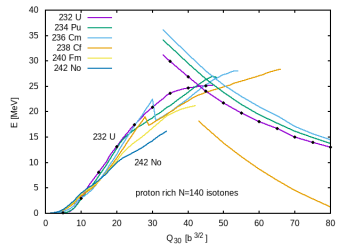
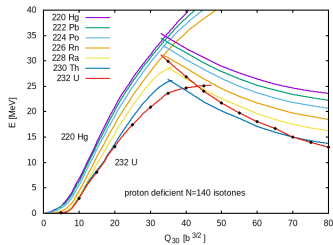
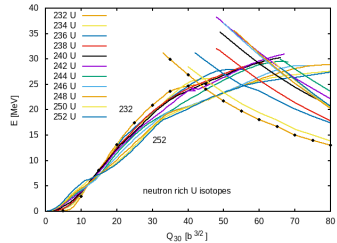
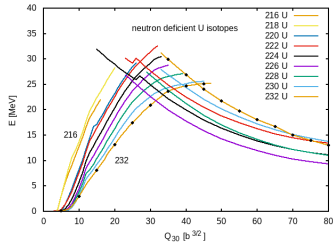




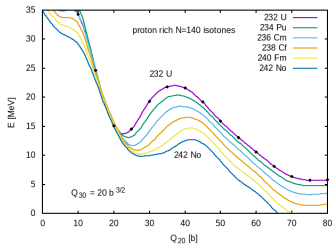
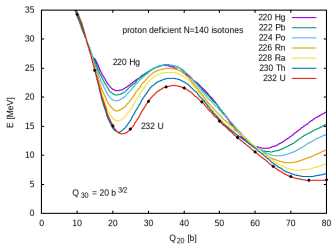
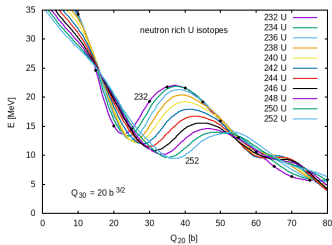
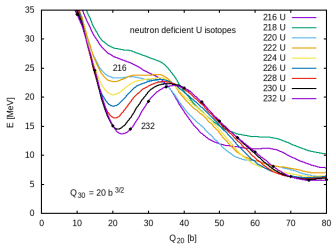
Fission paths around ^{232}U

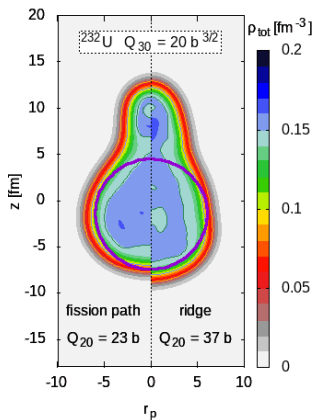


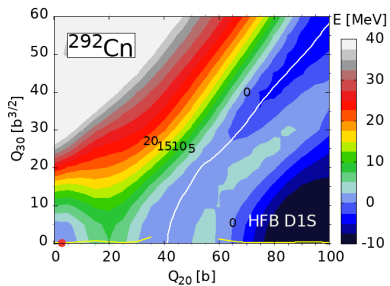
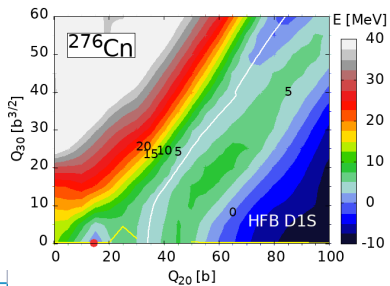
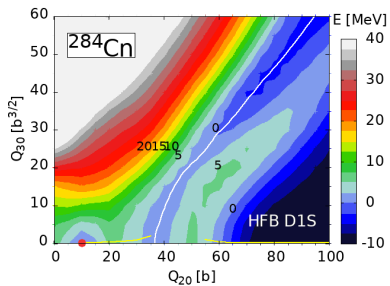
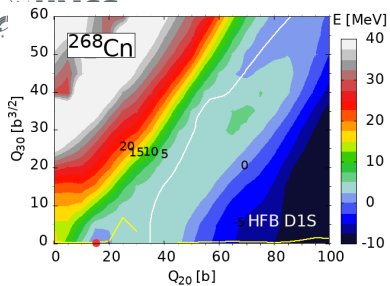
Fission paths around ^{232}U

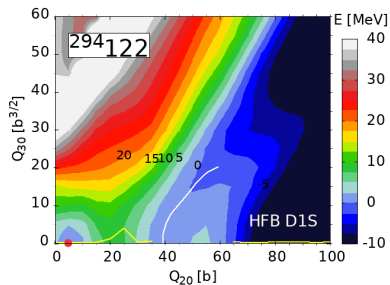
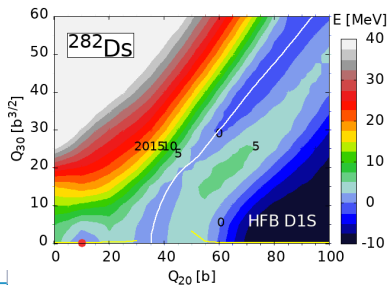
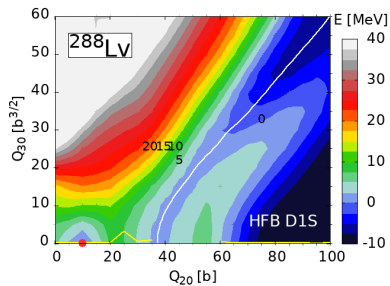
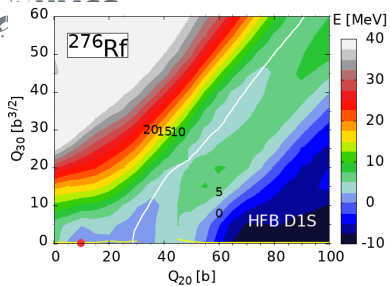


Fission paths around ^{232}U

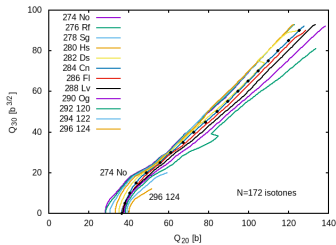
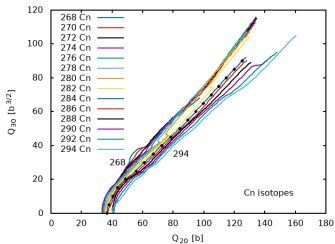




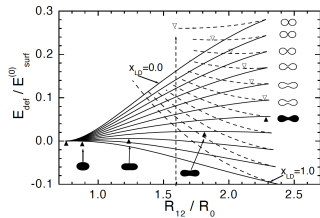
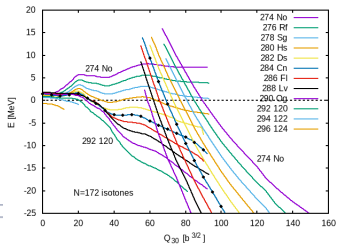
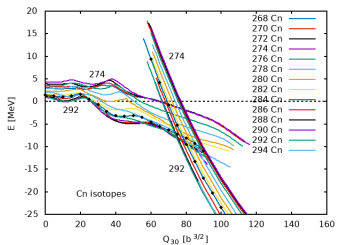




Fission paths around ^{284}Cn

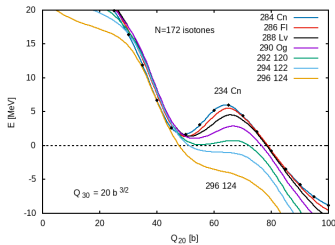
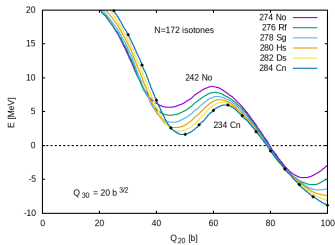
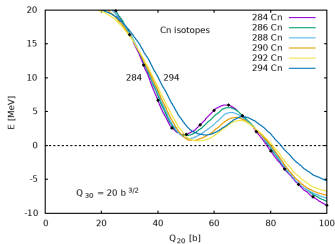
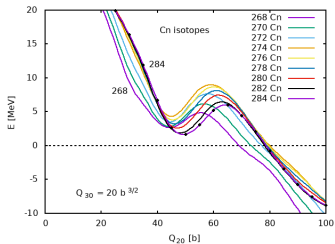


Fission paths around ^{284}Cn

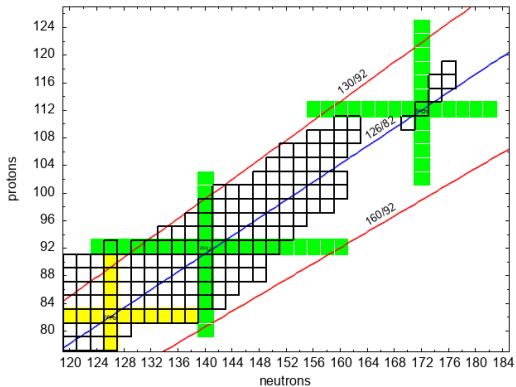


F. Ivanyuk, K. Pomorski, Phys. Rev. C 79, 054327 (2009).
 F. Ivanyuk, K. Pomorski, Int. J. Mod. Phys E 19, 514 (2010).

Fission paths around ^{284}Cn



Isotopes and isobars



- Cluster radioactivity described as super-asymmetric fission in actinides and super-heavy nuclei
- This decay may be dominant decay channel in some super-heavy nuclei
- Shell correction of doubly-magic ^{208}Pb and symmetry energy plays the crucial role in the enhancement of this decay channel
- super-asymmetric fission valley is observed in quite wide range of heavy and super-heavy nuclei

Further investigations

- Shapes and sizes of pre-fragments
- Influence on magic numbers on mass asymmetry





32nd Nuclear Physics Workshop

28-30 September 2026
Lublin, Poland

Nuclear physics: structure, excitations, decays

TOPICS

- Nuclear fission and other decay reactions
- Heavy ion collisions
- Effective nuclear interactions
- Symmetries and symmetry breaking in nuclear physics
- Nuclear structure:
 - collective modes in nuclei
 - isomeric states
 - nuclei far from stability

ORGANIZERS

- Department of Theoretical Physics
- Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin
- National Centre for Nuclear Research in Swierk/Warsaw

IN COOPERATION WITH

- Lublin Branch of the Polish Physical Society
- Nuclear Physics Section of the Polish Physical Society.

<https://indico.umcs.pl/event/3/>





