

# BACKGROUND FOR THE SPHEROIDAL NUCLEAR MODEL PROPOSAL

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The conceptual developments on which my award is based occurred to me about twenty-six years ago in late 1949. I shall attempt, as accurately as I can remember, to reconstruct how I viewed the situation of the nuclear shell model and non-spherical nuclear shape at that time.

In a sense the subject began in 1910 when Ernest Rutherford's  $\alpha$  particle scattering experiments (1) showed that the nuclear size is  $\leq 10^{-12}$  cm radius, although the atom size is  $\sim 10^8$  cm. This led to Niels Bohr's (2) 1913 theory of the hydrogen atom in terms of quantized electron orbits about the nucleus. This was extended by many workers, especially via the Wilson-Sommerfeld quantization rule that  $\int p_i dq_i = n_i h$  for each degree of freedom, where  $q_i$  and  $p_i$  are the generalized coordinates and momenta of an electron in its orbit about the nucleus. The proposal in 1925 by Goudsmit and Uhlenbeck (3) of the concept of spin 1/2 for the electron and the statement by Pauli (4) of the exclusion principle for electrons, later generalized to all spin 1/2 particles, led to an understanding of the Periodic Table of the Elements, using the old quantum theory, in terms of filling electron shells.

The development of quantum mechanics in 1926 placed the subject on a proper foundation and led to an explosion of the development of atomic physics as is evident from a perusal of the 1935 treatise by E. U. Condon and G. H. Shortley, *The Theory of Atomic Spectra*, Cambridge University Press (1935 and 1951). In the case of the electron orbits or shells about the nucleus, the potential is dominated by the central coulomb attraction of the nucleus, thus permitting treatment of angular momentum as a good quantum number to a good approximation. The coulomb force law was completely known. For the nucleus, early attempts to treat it as composed of protons and electrons were unsatisfactory. When the neutron was discovered by Chadwick in 1932, the picture shifted to a nucleus composed of neutrons and protons bound by strong short range forces. Measurements of nuclear spins soon established that the neutron and proton should probably be taken to have spin 1/2 and to obey Dirac Theory and the Pauli exclusion principle, thus providing a basis for a nuclear shell model. My own detailed introduction to the subject was mainly provided by Bethe's massive review of Nuclear Physics (5) in the 1936, 1937 issues of *Reviews of Modern Physics*.

The subject of attempts at a nuclear shell model are reviewed by Bethe and Bather. (5) I was particularly familiar with the 1937 article by Feenberg and Phillips, (6) "On the Structure of Light Nuclei", where the Hartree method was used with a simplified assumed potential to investigate possible spin orbit Russell Saunders coupling states in filling the first  $l = 1$  shell between

${}^4\text{He}$  and  ${}^{16}\text{O}$ , to explain the behavior of ground and excited nuclear states, etc. A model of particles in a spherical box has the first  $1s$  ( $l = 0$ ) state filled by 2 neutrons ( $N$ ) and 2 protons ( $Z$ ) at  ${}^4\text{He}$ . This nucleus is certainly exceptionally stable, having a binding energy of over 20 MeV for the last nucleon. The first  $p$  shell ( $l = 1$ ) then begins, which is closed at  ${}^{16}\text{O}$ . It is interesting that the mass  $A = 5$  system is unable to bind the last nucleon and appears as a resonance for neutron or proton scattering on helium. The third shell holds the second  $s$  and the first  $d$  ( $l = 2$ ) shell and is filled at  ${}^{40}\text{Ca}$  ( $Z = N = 20$ ) which is also unusually bound. It is the heaviest stable nucleus having  $N = Z$ . Beyond this the predicted shell closings disagreed with experiment. The basic force law between nucleons was poorly known.

Before 1940 it was known that the nuclear volume and total nuclear binding both increased roughly linearly with  $A$ , the number of nucleons. The range of the nuclear force between nucleons was known to be  $\approx 2 \times 10^{-13}$  cm and to be deep enough to give the single bound  $s$  ground state for the deuteron when  $n$  and  $p$  spins were parallel, but not when they are antiparallel. A major question involved the reason for "saturation of nuclear forces: i.e., why binding did not increase as  $A(A-1)$ , the number of possible pairings with a "collapsed" nucleus having radius  $\approx 10^{-13}$  cm. This was "answered" by Heisenberg, Wigner, Majorana and others in an ad-hoc fashion by assuming "exchange forces" which were attractive or repulsive depending on the wave function exchange properties. Only after 1950 did Jastrow introduce the concept of a short range repulsion which is now accepted as the reason.

In 1935, Weizsacker introduced his semi-empirical binding energy formula (7) including volume, surface, isotope, coulomb, and "odd-even" or pairing terms to explain the general trend of nuclear binding. The surface term noted that surface nucleons were less bound, giving a decrease in binding proportional to  $A^{2/3}$  for the radius proportional to  $A^{1/3}$ . This gives less binding for light nuclei and partially explains why maximum stability occurs near  ${}^{56}\text{Fe}$ . The isotope term is easily understood on a shell model basis or using a Fermi-Thomas statistical model. The number of filled space states increases as  $(Z/2)$  or  $(N/2)$  for protons and neutrons. For a given  $A$ , minimum kinetic energy occurs for  $N = Z$ . For  $N > Z$ , one must change  $(N-Z)/2$  protons to neutrons of higher kinetic energy, with the average kinetic energy change per transferred nucleon proportional to  $(N-Z)$  for a total kinetic energy increase proportional to  $(N-Z)^2$ . This favors  $N = Z$  for stability. This is balanced by the coulomb repulsion energy of the protons which is proportional to  $Z(Z-1)/R$ . This favors having only neutrons. The stability balance for stable nuclei has an increasingly large fraction of the nucleons as neutrons as  $A$  becomes large. This term also gives reduced binding per nucleon beyond  ${}^{56}\text{Fe}$  and leads to instability against a decay beyond  $A \approx 208$  with not too long lifetimes for the  ${}^4\text{He}$  fragment to penetrate the coulomb barrier. It was observed that even  $N$ , even  $Z$  (e,e) nuclei were unusually stable relative to odd, odd (0,0) nuclei, such that after  ${}^{14}\text{N}$  the stable nuclei for even  $A$  all were (e,e), often having two stable even  $Z$  values for each even  $A \geq 36$ . For odd  $A$ , there is almost always only one naturally occurring stable  $Z$  value,

with (e,o) and (o,e) equally favored. This extra binding,  $+\delta$  for ee, zero for  $A$  odd, and  $-\delta$  for (0,0) has  $\delta \sim 1$  to 3 MeV, decreasing as  $A$  increases approximately as  $12A^{-1/2}$  MeV. (See Bethe and Bacher (5), p. 104.) It is also observed that the ground states of even  $A$  nuclei have net spin zero, indicating a space pairing (potential energy) for strongest interaction to cancel the angular momentum contributions. Figure 1, from the Bohr-Mottelson text (8), plots the observed binding per nucleon for beta stable nuclei, vs  $A$ , with a best fit semi-empirical curve for comparison. The deviations of the experimental bindings from the smooth curve give hints of shell structure effects.

In the early 1930's, the energy dependence of the interaction cross section for reactions involving neutrons or protons incident on nuclei was treated by what is now referred to as an optical model approach. The incident nucleon-nucleus interaction was treated using a smoothed interaction potential for the

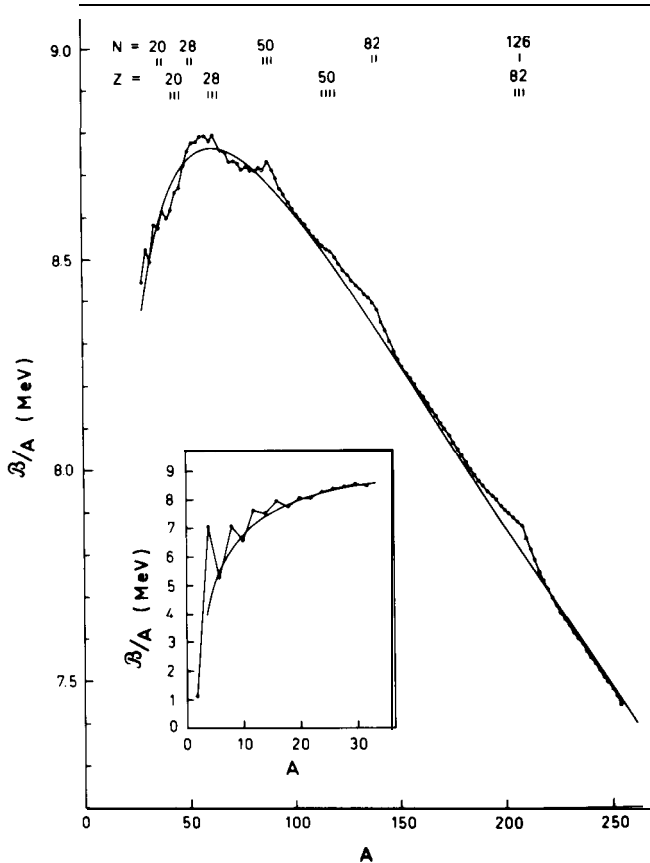


Fig. 1. The average binding energy per nucleon is plotted for nuclei stable against  $\beta$  decay. It is compared with the semi-empirical formula  $B/A = [15.56 - 17.23 A^{-1/3} - 23.28(N-Z)^2/A^2] \text{MeV} - 3Z^2e^2/5R_eA$ , with  $R_e = 1.24A^{1/3}$  fm. This figure is from Ref. 8, courtesy of W. A. Benjamin, Inc.

nucleon inside the nucleus. This model predicted “shape” resonances with huge resonance widths and spacings. Early experiments (5) using slow neutrons revealed cross section (compound nucleus) resonances for medium-heavy nuclei  $\sim 10$  to  $100$  eV apart, with  $< 1$  eV resonance widths. This led N. Bohr to suggest a liquid drop model (9) of the nucleus where the incoming nucleon, as for a molecule hitting a liquid drop, is absorbed near the surface and loses its identity. This is not necessarily incompatible with a shell model, since the shell model refers mainly to the lowest states of a set of fermions in the nuclear “container”. However, when combined with the discouragingly poor fits with experiment of detailed shell model predictions (6), the situation  $\sim 1948$  was one of great discouragement concerning a shell model approach.

In the first part of 1949, three groups presented different “explanations” of nuclear shell structure (10) in the same issue of *Physical Review*. Of these, that of Maria Mayer became the now accepted model. A similar proposal by J. H. D. Jensen and colleagues at the same time led to the Nobel Award in Physics to Mayer and Jensen in 1963. From 1948 to  $\sim 1962$ , I taught a course in “Advanced Nuclear Physics” for graduate students at Columbia. I was also, as an experimental physicist, working on the completion of the Columbia University Nevis Synchrocyclotron which first became operational in March, 1950. During the 1949-50 academic year, I shared an office, Room 910 Pupin, with Aage Bohr who was visiting Columbia that year. I was particularly excited about the Mayer shell model which suddenly made understandable a vast amount of experimental data on spins, magnetic moments, isomeric states,  $\beta$  decay systematics, and the “magic numbers” at  $Z, N = 2, 8, 20, 28, 50, 82, 126$ . I reviewed this material at a seminar at Columbia that year.

For over a year previously, I had felt that shell model aspects should have a large degree of validity for nuclei for the following reason. When one considers forming the nuclear wave functions, in  $3A$  dimensional coordinate space, for  $A$  nucleons in a spherical box the size of the nucleus, the shell model states result in lowest kinetic energy. The effective potential energy and the shell model kinetic energy (for  $r < R$ ) are both quite large compared with the net binding energy ( $\sim 8$  MeV) for the least bound nucleons. This is illustrated in Fig. 2 (from Ref. 8). The single particle state energies vs  $A$  have as the “valence” nucleon that with  $E_n$  about  $-8$  MeV. If one attempts to use  $\psi$  functions wherein the spatial behavior for each nucleon is very different from that predicted by the shell model, the effect is equivalent to mixing in large amounts of higher energy states having compatible symmetry properties. This mixture of high curvature  $\psi$  states would greatly increase the  $\langle T \rangle$  for the least bound nucleons. I pictured the net  $\psi$  function *not* as a pure Hartree product of single particle  $\psi$  functions, but as being nearly so for the long wave length Fourier aspects of the functions. The short range nucleon-nucleon attractive force would lead to local distortions and clusterings in  $3A$  dimensional space such as of deuterons and of  $\alpha$  particle structures, etc., but low energy studies would emphasize the long wavelength Fourier aspects which are suggested by the shell model. I was thus delighted by the success of the Mayer model. (I was



In later 1949, Professor C. H. Townes gave a colloquium presenting the results of a review by Townes, Foley, and Low (12) of the currently available experimental data on nuclear electrical quadrupole moments. The figure which they presented, is shown in Fig. 3. The measured quadrupole moments are presented in the form  $Q/(1.5 \times 10^{-13} A^{1/3} \text{ cm})^2$ . The trend shows a qualitative agreement with the Mayer-Jensen shell model, going to zero as one passes through closed neutron and proton shell numbers. For closed shell plus one extra high  $l$  proton, the value of  $Q$  is negative as expected for a proton in an equatorial orbit. As nucleons are removed from a high  $l$  closed shell, the value of  $Q$  becomes increasingly positive, reaching a maximum near where the  $l$  orbital is half filled, and subsequently decreasing. The problem expressed was that the value of  $Q/R^2$ , using  $R = 1.5 \times 10^{-13} A^{1/3} \text{ cm}$ , reaches 10 for  $^{176}\text{Lu}$  which is over 30 times what one might expect for spherical potential shell model wave functions coupled to give a 7 state ( $Z = 71$ ,  $N = 105$ ,  $\tau = 4 \times 10^{10} \text{ y}$ ). The rare earth nuclei particularly show much larger than expected  $Q$  values.

As Professor Townes was talking, what seemed like the obvious simple explanation suggested itself to me. Although the Mayer shell model used single particle wave functions based on a spherical potential, the Bohr-Wheeler fission paper showed that, if energetically favorable, the nucleus would distort to a spheroidal shape. For small values of the fractional difference  $\beta$  between the major and minor axes, for constant nuclear volume, the surface area term

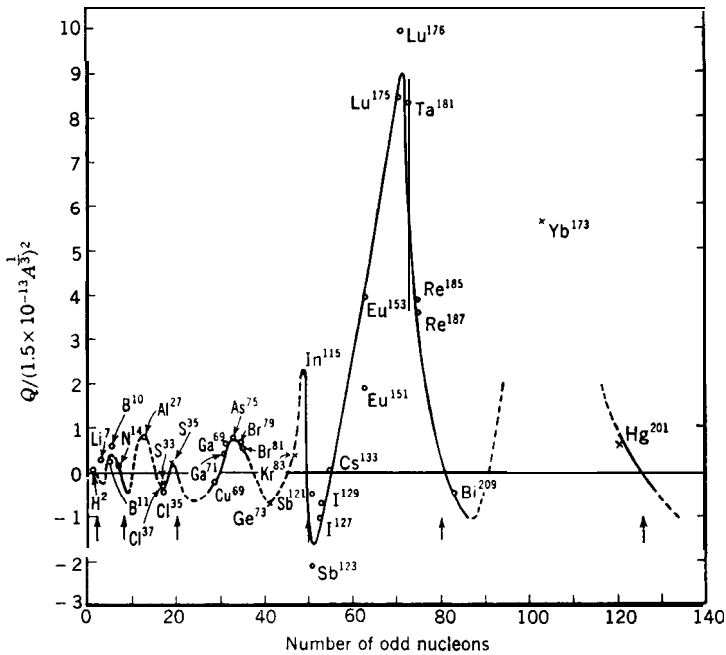


Fig. 3. The plot of  $Q/(1.5 \times 10^{-13} A^{1/3} \text{ cm})^2$  for known nuclear quadrupole moments as presented by Townes, Foley, and Low (1949, Ref. 12).

increases as  $\beta^2$ , with the decrease in coulomb energy compensating in part (for high  $Z$ ). My picture assumed constant well depth, but with a distortion where  $R$  increased to  $(1 + 2\beta/3)R_0$  in the  $z$  direction and decreased to  $(1 - \beta/3)R_0$  in the  $x$  and  $y$  directions (or to  $R_0 e^{2\beta/3}$  and  $R_0 e^{-\beta/3}$ ). If one uses trial  $\psi$  functions which are identically distorted, the potential energy  $\langle V \rangle$  is the same, but the kinetic energy  $\langle T_z \rangle = (1 + 2\beta/3)^{-2} \langle T_z \rangle_0$  and  $\langle T_x \rangle$  and  $\langle T_y \rangle$  become  $(1 - \beta/3)^{-2}$  as large as before. For high  $|m|$  states, the orbits are nearly equatorial and  $\langle T \rangle$  is nearly proportional to  $R_x^{-2}$  or  $R_y^{-2}$ , with  $\langle T_x \rangle_0 \approx \langle T_y \rangle_0 \gg \langle T_z \rangle_0$ . This clearly favors  $\beta$  negative, or a bulge at the equator to disk (oblate) shape. Each 1 % increase in equator radius ( $R_x$  and  $R_y$ ) gives about 2 % decrease in  $\langle T \rangle$ , or  $\delta T/T \approx +2\beta/3$ . For a closed shell,  $\langle T_x \rangle_0 = \langle T_y \rangle_0 = \langle T_z \rangle_0$  averaged over all  $l_z (= m)$  for high  $l$ , so there is zero net linear term in the change in total kinetic energy with the distortion parameter  $\beta$ . For a high  $l$  closed shell minus equatorial (high  $|m|$ ) orbitals, the net nuclear angular momentum is the negative of the contribution of the missing nucleons (holes) and the contribution to the kinetic energy term linear in  $\beta$  is equal and opposite to that of the missing equatorial orbit nucleons. The important point is that this yields a term linear in  $\beta$  favoring  $|\beta| \neq 0$ , while the restoring terms are quadratic in  $\beta$ . The expected equilibrium  $\beta$  is thus  $\neq 0$  and is proportional to the coefficient of the linear term for not too large deviations of  $\beta$  from unity. This gives a prolate (cigar) shaped distortion.

The next step was to attempt a more quantitative evaluation of the  $\beta^2$  restoring term. For this, I found the 1939 paper (13, 7) by E. Feenberg useful.

He noted that the surface energy increased as  $E_s = E_s^0 [1 + \frac{8}{45} \beta^2 \dots]$  and

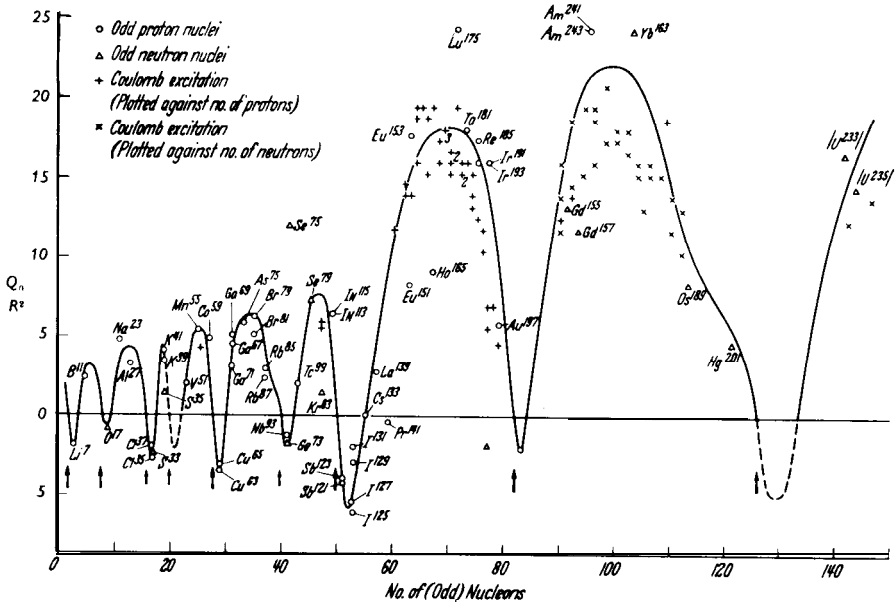
the coulomb energy decreased as  $E_c = E_c^0 [1 - \frac{4}{45} \beta^2 \dots]$  which requires

$F = 2E_{s0}/E_{c0} (\approx 42.6 A/Z^2) > 1$  for a net positive restoring  $\beta^2$  term. This predicted zero net  $\beta^2$  restoring term for  $Z \sim 125$  for beta stable nuclei (no resistance to fission). The net term was  $\beta^2 [2.74 A^{2/3} - 0.054 Z^2 A^{-1/3}]$  MeV. Using this value gave  ${}^{14}Q/R^2 = -11$  for a single high  $l$  nucleon above closed shell for a fictitious case of  $A \sim 176$ . The picture, if anything, seemed capable of giving even larger  $Q/R^2$  values than were observed experimentally.

For a prolate spheroidal potential, with the distortion axis in the  $z$  direction, the  $\psi$  dependence of the single particle  $\psi$  for  $l_z = m$  is still  $e^{im\varphi}$ . However 1, and  $l_y$  and  $l_z$  cannot be good quantum numbers. The core must somehow share the net angular momentum. This consideration helps when one considers the deviations of the observed magnetic moments from the Schmidt limits predicted by the simple shell model.

Aage Bohr pointed out to me at the time (14) that if the nucleus is a spheroid with an "intrinsic" quadrupole moment  $Q_0$  relative to its distortion axis, and total angular momentum is  $I$ , the maximum "observed"  $Q$  is reduced by a factor  $I(2I-1)/(I+1)(2I+3) = 1/10, 2/7, 5/12, \text{ and } 28/55$  for  $I = 1, 2, 3, 4$ . This emphasizes that  $Q = 0$  for  $I = 0$  or  $1/2$ , but  $Q_0$  may not be zero. Bohr,

Mottelson and colleagues (15) subsequently treated the situation for coulomb excitation cross sections for low lying rotational states. The excitation cross sections uniquely establish the intrinsic quadrupole moment  $Q_0$  for the ground states of distorted even-even nuclei as well as for odd  $A$  nuclei. Figure 4 was prepared by Professor Townes ~ 1957 for a review article on measured quadru-





$Z = 82$  vs the distortion. They have also made detailed comparisons, with experimental values of the predicted distortions, etc. with generally excellent results (8). It has also been established that some nuclei have appreciable octopole electric moments and distortions, a generalization of the concept.

One interesting feature of the distorted nucleus shell model is that as the distortion increases, the net energy may go through a minimum and then increase until the energy of an initially higher energy orbital, which decreases faster with deformation, crosses below the previous last filled orbital and subsequently becomes the defining least bound filled state. The net energy may then decrease and show a second minima, etc. vs distortion. This is shown in Fig. 7 which is Fig. 25 of Dr. S. A. Moszkowski's review article (18). This effect seems to be present in sub-threshold nuclear fission where the barrier shape has two minima as shown in Fig. 8 (from Ref. 8, Vol. II, p. 633). This was suggested by Dr. V. M. Strutinski (19) in 1967.

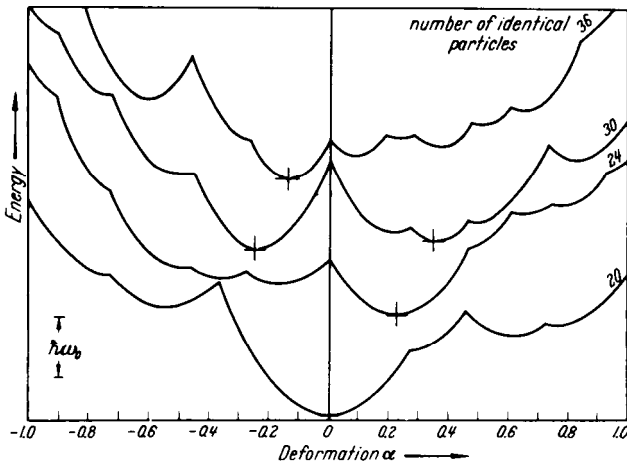


Fig. 7. Deformation potentials for various stages of shell filling-spheroidal harmonic oscillator binding potential. S. A. Moszkowski, Ref. 18, Fig. 25.

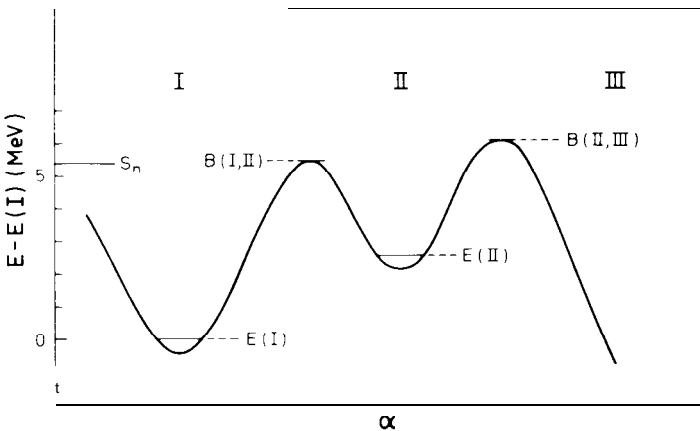


Fig. 8. Double hump energy vs distortion proposed by Strutinski to explain the observed features in sub-threshold nuclear fission. From Ref. 8, Vol. II.

There is one additional effect which I have not yet mentioned which favors spherical shape. If reference is made to the 1937 paper by Feenberg and Phillips (6) on the relative binding of different configurations having two or more  $l = 1$  nucleons beyond the  ${}^4\text{He}$  core which are combined to form various total  $L$  and  $S$  ( $L$ - $S$  coupling) states for a short range attractive only force, it is seen that the overlap is sensitive to how this is done. As an example, for  $A = 6$ , the two  $p$  nucleon wave functions take on the form  $(x+iy)f(r)/\sqrt{2}$ ,  $(x-iy)f(r)/\sqrt{2}$ , and  $z f(\mathbf{r})$ . The combination  $(x_1x_2+y_1y_2+z_1z_2)/\sqrt{3}$  for  $L = 0$  is more strongly bound than such choices as  $z_1z_2$ , or  $(x_1x_2+y_1y_2)/\sqrt{2}$  which are favored by a spheroidal potential but do not correspond to an eigenstate of  $\vec{L}^2$ . Such an effect may inhibit the distortion for small distortions until the gain from the distortion is more overwhelming relative to such symmetry effects on the interaction potential energy.

Since 1950, I have been mainly concerned with experimental physics research using the Nevis Synchrocyclotron. I have been an admiring spectator of the developments of the theory by the Copenhagen group. My main other (experimental) contribution was in the muonic atom x-ray studies started with Val Fitch (20) in 1953 where we first established the smaller charge radii for nuclei. When I made my proposal for use of a spheroidal nuclear model (14), it seemed to be an obvious answer which would immediately be simultaneously suggested by all theorists in the field. I do not understand why it was not. I was also surprised and dismayed to hear one or more respected theorists announce in every Nuclear Physics Conference which I attended through ~ 1955 some such comment as, "Although the Nuclear Shell Model seems empirically to work very well, there is at present no theoretical justification as to why it should apply." Fortunately, such opinions are no longer expressed.

Although my consideration of the "forcing term" for spheroidal nuclear distortion considered the dependence of the single particle kinetic energy on the distortion, I have never seen a description of my work elsewhere in those terms. A common equivalent phrasing is the "centrifugal force exerted on the barrier" by the orbit. Another method is to compute the increase in the potential energy interaction on distortion. This is equivalent, since for a single particle eigenstate, there is zero rate of change of energy with distortions of  $\psi$ . Thus  $\langle V \rangle$  and  $\langle T \rangle$  must give equal but opposite contributions to the term linear in  $\beta$ .

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