A new limit of T-violating transverse muon polarization in the $K^+ \to \pi^0 \mu^+\nu$ decay

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(Dated: November 9, 2018)

A search for T-violating transverse muon polarization ($P_T$) in the $K^+ \to \pi^0 \mu^+\nu$ decay was performed using kaon decays at rest. A new improved value, $P_T = -0.0017 \pm 0.0023$ (stat) $\pm 0.0011$ (syst), was obtained giving an upper limit, $|P_T| < 0.0050$. The T-violation parameter was determined to be $\text{Im}\xi = -0.0053 \pm 0.0071$ (stat) $\pm 0.0036$ (syst) giving an upper limit, $|\text{Im}\xi| < 0.016$.

PACS numbers: 11.30.Er, 12.60.Fr, 13.20.Eb

The transverse muon polarization, $P_T$, in the $K^+ \to \pi^0 \mu^+\nu$ ($K^{\prime\mu\nu}_3$) decay is one of the observables of CP violation beyond the standard model (SM). CP violation in general is a subject of continuing interest in $K$ and $B$ meson decays. $P_T$, defined as the polarization component perpendicular to the decay plane, is an obvious signature of a violation of time reversal (T) invariance, since the spurious effect from final state interactions is very small ($\approx 10^{-5}$) [1]. $P_T$ is almost vanishing ($\approx 10^{-7}$) in the SM with the Kobayashi-Maskawa scheme [2] it is therefore a very sensitive probe of CP violation mechanisms beyond the SM and new physics along with $B$ physics such as $b \to s\gamma$ and some other decays [3]. Models [4] such as those with multi-Higgs doublet or leptoquarks, or some SUSY may to give rise to $P_T$ as large as $10^{-5}$.

At the High Energy Accelerator Research Organization (KEK) the E246 collaboration has been performing a search for $P_T$ in $K^{\prime\mu\nu}_3$. In 1999, the first result was published [5] based on $\sim 3.9 \times 10^6$ good $K^{\prime\mu\nu}_3$ events from the data taken during 1996 and 1997, indicating no evidence for T violation. Further runs provided a cumulative data sample with three times more events. This Letter constitutes our final result from all the data with an improved analysis. The present result supersedes all our earlier reports.

The principle of the experiment was the same as described before [5]. A kaon beam with an average intensity of $1.0 \times 10^{10}$/s was produced at the 12 GeV proton synchrotron from $3 \times 10^{12}$ protons per spill of 0.7 s duration with a 2.7 s repetition time. The detector setup (Fig.1) using stopped kaons at a 12-sector magnet is described in detail in [5]. The muon polarization consists of three components a) longitudinal, $P_{L} = \hat{s}_{\mu} \cdot \hat{p}_{\mu}/|\hat{p}_{\mu}|$ parallel to the muon momentum $\hat{p}_{\mu}$, b) normal, $P_{N} = \hat{s}_{\mu} \cdot (\hat{p}_{\mu} \times (\hat{s}_{\nu} \times \hat{p}_{\nu}))/|\hat{p}_{\mu} \times (\hat{s}_{\nu} \times \hat{p}_{\nu})|$ normal to $\hat{p}_{\mu}$ in the decay plane, and c) transverse,
The transverse polarization $P_T$ was estimated to be negligible. This azimuthal polarization was measured as an asymmetry between clockwise ($cw$) and counter-clockwise ($ccw$) emitted Michel $e^+$, $N_{cw}$ and $N_{ccw}$. Summation over the twelve sectors with 12-fold azimuthal symmetry played an important role in reducing systematic errors. Events from $fwd$ and $bwd$ $\pi^0$s have opposite asymmetries. We exploit this feature to double the signal and also as a powerful means to cancel the systematic errors.

The statistical data were grouped into three periods of (I) 1996-1997, (II) 1998, and (III) 1999-2000, each having nearly the same beam conditions and amount of data. As was described in [5], two completely independent analyses, A1 and A2, pursued their own best off-line event selections with their own analysis policies. This approach provided a cross-check of the quality of selected events and also an estimate of the systematic errors in the analysis. Basic event selection criteria were same in both analyses. The $\pi^0$s were identified not only as two photons ($2\gamma$) but also as one photon ($1\gamma$) with energy $E_\gamma > 70$ MeV. The maximum sensitivity to $P_T$ is provided by the $fwd$ and $bwd$ regions of $\pi^0$ ($2\gamma$) or photons ($1\gamma$) with $|\cos \theta_{\pi^0(\gamma)}| > 0.342$, where $\theta_{\pi^0(\gamma)}$ is the polar angle corrected for muon direction. Slight differences between the two analyses led to a non-negligible amount of uncommon good events in each analysis. All the selected events were categorized into the common ($A1 \cdot A2$) events and two sets of uncommon events ($A1 \cdot A2$) and ($A1 \cdot A2$) separately for $2\gamma$ and $1\gamma$. In total 6.3 million and 5.5 million good events were obtained for $2\gamma$ and $1\gamma$, respectively. The fraction of $2\gamma$ and $1\gamma$ mismatch events between A1 and A2 was only 1.5% and these were rejected. The positron yield was extracted from the time spectra by integrating from 20 ns to 6.0 $\mu$s after subtraction of the constant background deduced from fitting between 6.0 $\mu$s to 19.5 $\mu$s. The only significant background to muon stopping and its decay was due to $\pi^0$ decay in flight from $K^+ \rightarrow \pi^+ \pi^0$; its contamination effect was estimated and included in the systematic errors.

In [6] the T-violating asymmetry $A_T$ was calculated as $A_T = (R_f/R_b - 1)/4$, where $R_f(b) = (N_{cw}/N_{ccw})_f(b)$ for the $\pi^0$-$fwd$ ($bwd$) region, using the total positron $cw$ and $ccw$ counts. Then, $P_T$ was calculated as $P_T = A_T/(\alpha_{int} < \cos \theta_T >)$ using an average analyzing power $\alpha_{int}$ and the angular attenuation factor $< \cos \theta_T >$ with $\theta_T$ being the angle of decay plane normal vector relative to the $y$ axis. However, this method is prone to a systematic error due to potentially different muon stopping distributions of $fwd$ and $bwd$ events. To obtain a finite stopping efficiency, muon stoppers with finite size in the $y$ and $r$ directions were employed. A geometrical asymmetry appears for muons at $(y, r)$ off center which, in turn, can induce a fake $A_T$ if the muon stopping distribution is different between $fwd$ and $bwd$ events, in particular in the $y$ direction. In the current analysis an exact treatment, in which we use the $y$ muon stopping point from the C4 tracking chamber located just in front of the stopper, was employed. For the $r$ direction an integration was used because the change of geometrical asymmetry is much smaller (about 1/10 of $y$-dependence), and because its determination from tracking was poor. The transverse polarization $P_T$ for each data set was evaluated as the average of contribution $P_T(y)$ from each part of the stopper using the C4 $y$ coordinate as:

$$P_T = \int P_T(y)w(y)dy$$

where $w(y)$ is the weight function proportional to $1/\sigma^2_{P_T}(y)$ (here, $\sigma_{P_T}(y)$ is the error distribution) and nor-
with the $y$-dependent asymmetry $A_T(y)$ and analyzing power $\alpha(y)$. The definition of $A_T(y) = [(A_f(y) - A_b(y))/2$ assures that it was free from the geometrical asymmetry and from muon stopping densities, and canceled the systematic errors common for $fwd/bwd$. Here, $A_f(y)$ and $A_b(y)$ were calculated as $A_f(bwd) = ((N_{cw}(y)/N_{ccw}(y) - 1)/2)/fwd(bwd)$. The $y$ dependence of analyzing power could be calibrated using the positron asymmetry $A_N(y)$ associated with the normal polarization $P_N$ as $A_N(y)$ is proportional to $\alpha(y)$. $A_N$ was measured by rearranging the $fwd$ and $bwd$ events into left and right categories of $\pi^0$ directions, and calculating $A_N = (A_{left} - A_{right})/2$. This has a maximum at the center of the stopper (Fig.2). The absolute value of $\alpha$ was calibrated by a Monte Carlo simulation as $\alpha = A_N^{WC}/P_N^{MC}$. The coefficient $\alpha(y)$ included the effects of intrinsic muon decay asymmetry, muon spin precession around the field, positron interactions, and the finite counter solid angle. The obtained $\alpha(y)$ function corresponded to $\alpha_{int} = 0.271 \pm 0.027$, which is significantly higher than our previous estimate of $\alpha_{int} = 0.197 \pm 0.005$ deduced as $\alpha = A_N^{CP}/P_N^{MC}$ and thus less reliable. $P_T$ thus obtained in Eq.(1) is regarded as the average of $P_T$ distribution in the finite kinematical acceptance of $K_{\mu 3}$ in the stopper. The validity of applying the proportionality relation $P_T(y) \sim A_T(y)/A_N(y)$ in Eq.(2) was carefully checked under the actual trigger condition. In order to increase the statistical accuracy of $\alpha(y)$, $A_N$ of all the data sets was summed since $\alpha(y)$ is only dependent on $y$ and should not depend significantly on the data set. In the actual analysis, the averaging of $+i$ and $-i$ bins was used because the shape of $\alpha(y)$ should be symmetric in the first order approximation also in the presence of the magnetic field. Fig.2 shows $P_T(y)$ thus calculated which is nearly constant with slight but opposite-sign gradients for $2\gamma$ and $1\gamma$. This is due to different muon stopping distributions along the $r$ direction for $fwd$ and $bwd$ events with an opposite tendency of $\delta < r > = < r >_{fwd} - < r >_{bwd}$ for $2\gamma$ and $1\gamma$ due to kinematics. $P_T$ was calculated, for the integration Eq.(1), by summation over the 36 bins from $y = -9.0$ cm to +9.0 cm. The effect of the $r$-origin $P_T(y)$ gradients is eliminated since the effect cancels between $+y$ and $-y$, and the $y$ distribution is symmetric. The average values of $y$, weighted by the statistical significance of respective $P_T(y)$, were $< y > = 0.007$ mm and 0.020 mm for $2\gamma$ and $1\gamma$, respectively. These small $< y >$’s confirm an excellent $C4$/stopper alignment and justify this analysis. The factor $< \cos \theta_T >$ was evaluated for each data set by using a Monte Carlo calculation taking into account realistic background conditions, to be typically 0.7 and 0.6 for $2\gamma$ and $1\gamma$, respectively. Data quality checks were performed for the 18 data sets of the 3 groups with 6 data categories each. First the null asymmetry was calculated as the asymmetry of all the $fwd$ and $bwd$ events added, using the total $cw$ and $ccw$ counts integrated over $y$ and it was confirmed that there was no significant bias. Next, $A_N$ were compared. Although there was a slight difference among the $1\gamma$ data sets due to different cut criteria of the event selection we decided to use all the $1\gamma$ data. Then the distribution of decay plane normal ($\vec{n}_x \times \vec{n}_y$) with its $\theta_r$ and $\theta_z$ components was studied to check for any possible kinematical phase space distortions, and no significant offsets were found. Finally, the 18 $P_T$ values (Table I) which are consistent with each other (a fit to a constant gives $\chi^2/\nu = 0.78$, where $\nu$ is the degree of freedom), yielded the average of $P_T = -0.0017 \pm 0.0023$ being consistent with zero. The sector dependence of $P_T$ is plotted in Fig.3 with $\chi^2/\nu = 0.69$ for $2\gamma$ data and $\chi^2/\nu = 1.97$ for $1\gamma$ data showing that the latter is slightly inferior. The $P_T$’s were converted to the $T$-violating physics parameter $\Im \xi$ with the conversion coefficients $\Phi = 0.327$ and 0.287 for $2\gamma$ and $1\gamma$, respectively, deduced from a Monte Carlo simulation. The ideogram of $\Im \xi$ (Fig.4) shows that there is significant overlap among the different data sets. The average is found to be $\Im \xi = -0.0053 \pm 0.0071$. It is noteworthy that the analysis by the previous method gives consistent central values of $P_T = -0.0018$ and $\Im \xi = -0.0063$. Although almost all the systematics were canceled due to the summation of the 12 sectors and the double ratio between $fwd$ and $bwd$ events, a few errors remain giving rise to spurious $A_T$ or a small admixture of $P_N$ resulting in a spurious $P_T$ effect (Table II). The contribution of misalignments of detector elements and the muon spin rotation field remained as in $\|$. The small mean values
TABLE I: T-violating polarization $P_T$ of the 18 data sets of $2\gamma$ and $1\gamma$ events from the two analyses of A1 and A2 for three experimental periods of I, II and III. The errors are only statistical. For the definitions of event categories, see the text.

| Data category | I(1996-1997) | II(1998) | III(1999-2000) |
|---------------|-------------|----------|----------------|
| $2\gamma$ [A1 - A2] | $0.00112 \pm 0.00067$ | $-0.00317 \pm 0.00079$ | $-0.00696 \pm 0.00711$ |
| $2\gamma$ [A1 - A2] | $-0.00735 \pm 0.01022$ | $0.01225 \pm 0.00858$ | $-0.00037 \pm 0.00754$ |
| $2\gamma$ [A1 - A2] | $-0.00385 \pm 0.00899$ | $0.00640 \pm 0.01268$ | $-0.00473 \pm 0.01201$ |
| $1\gamma$ [A1 - A2] | $-0.01303 \pm 0.00956$ | $-0.01366 \pm 0.01042$ | $0.01113 \pm 0.01035$ |
| $1\gamma$ [A1 - A2] | $0.01014 \pm 0.01069$ | $-0.01114 \pm 0.01280$ | $-0.01088 \pm 0.01022$ |
| $1\gamma$ [A1 - A2] | $0.00228 \pm 0.01134$ | $-0.01660 \pm 0.01531$ | $0.00951 \pm 0.01195$ |

![Fig. 3](image1.png)

FIG. 3: Dependence of $P_T$ on the sector number. Black dots (•) are $2\gamma$ events and open circles (○) are $1\gamma$ events.

![Fig. 4](image2.png)

FIG. 4: Ideogram of $\text{Im}(\xi)$. Black dots (•) are data sets I, open circles (○) are II, and stars (*) are III. $\chi^2/\nu = 0.78$.

of $\theta_1$ and $\theta_2$ were treated as an error. The effect of muon multiple scattering through the Cu degrader may cause a difference in the actual muon stopping distribution of $fud$ and $bdw$, in particular in the $y$ distribution even for a measured $y$ at C4, producing a spurious $A_T$ through the geometrical asymmetry along $y$. This effect, inadvertently omitted in our previous analysis, was carefully estimated in the present analysis to be $\delta P_T = 7.1 \times 10^{-4}$. The small effect due to $P_T(y)$ gradients and finite $< y >$ values was treated as a systematic error ($\delta P_T = 2 \times 10^{-5}$) and included in the item “Analysis” together with other analysis uncertainties. The total systematic error was calculated as the quadratic sum of all the contributions resulting in $\Delta P_T = 1.1 \times 10^{-3}$ which is much smaller than the statistical error.

In conclusion, we obtained the values of $P_T = -0.0017 \pm 0.0023(stat) \pm 0.0011(syst)$ and $\text{Im}\xi = -0.0053 \pm 0.0071(stat) \pm 0.0036(syst)$ with no indication of T violation. The 90% confidence limits are given as $|P_T| < 0.0050$ and $|\text{Im}\xi| < 0.016$ by adding statistical and systematic errors quadratically. This result is a factor 3 improvement over the last BNL-AGS experiment and it may constrain the lightest Higgs mass and/or other parameters in the framework of non-SM models. Better than or complementary to the neutron electric dipole moment $d_n$ and B meson decays. For example, our result gives a stronger constraint to the three Higgs doublet model than the similar semileptonic decay $B \rightarrow X\tau\nu$, and implies in one of the multi-Higgs models (Garisto and Kane) that the down quark contribution to $d_n$ should be more than a factor 10 less than the current experimental limit of $d_n^{exp} < 6.3 \times 10^{-26}e\text{cm}$; our $|\text{Im}\xi|$ 90% limit corresponds to $0.5 \times 10^{-26}e\text{cm}$.

This work was supported in Japan by a Grant-in-Aid from the Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture, and by JSPS; in Russia by the Ministry of Science and Technology, and by the Russian Foundation for Basic Research; in Canada by NSERC and IPP, and by infrastructure of TRIUMF provided under its NRC contribution; in Korea by BSRI-MOE and KOSEF; and in the U.S.A. by NSF and DOE. The authors thank K. Nakai, K. Nakamura, S. Iwata, S. Yamada, M. Kobayashi, U.S.A. by NSF and DOE. The authors thank K. Nakai, K. Nakamura, S. Iwata, S. Yamada, M. Kobayashi, H. Sugawara, V.A. Matveev and V.M. Lobashev for encouragement in executing the present work. They also gratefully acknowledge the excellent support received from the KEK staff.

TABLE II: Summary of systematic errors.

| Source | $\delta P_T \times 10^4$ |
|--------|----------------------|
| $e^+\tau$ counter misalignment | 2.9 |
| Misalignments of other counters | 2.6 |
| Misalignment of $\vec{B}$ field on the stopper | 6.1 |
| $K^+$ stopping distribution | $< 3.0$ |
| Decay plane rotations ($\theta_1$ and $\theta_2$) | 1.4 |
| $e^+$ multiple scattering | 7.1 |
| Backgrounds (including $\pi^+$ decay from $K^{\pm}_{u2}$) | $< 2.0$ |
| Analysis (including $P_T$ gradients) | 4.0 |
| Total | $< 11.4$ |
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