


Observation of the Singly Cabibbo Suppressed Decay $D^0 \rightarrow b_1(1235)^- e^+ \nu_e$ and Evidence for $D^+ \rightarrow b_1(1235)^0 e^+ \nu_e$

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By analyzing a data sample of e^+e^- collisions with center-of-mass energy $\sqrt{s} = 3.773$ GeV, corresponding to an integrated luminosity of 7.9 fb^{-1} collected with the BESIII detector operating at the BEPCII collider, we study semileptonic decays of the $D^{0(+)}$ mesons into the axial-vector meson $b_1(1235)$ via the decay $b_1(1235) \rightarrow \omega\pi$. The decay $D^0 \rightarrow b_1(1235)^- e^+ \nu_e$ is observed with a significance of 5.2σ after considering systematic uncertainty, while evidence for the decay $D^+ \rightarrow b_1(1235)^0 e^+ \nu_e$ is obtained with a 3.1σ significance. The product branching fractions are determined to be $\mathcal{B}[D^0 \rightarrow b_1(1235)^- e^+ \nu_e] \times \mathcal{B}[b_1(1235)^- \rightarrow \omega\pi^-] = (0.72 \pm 0.18^{+0.06}_{-0.08}) \times 10^{-4}$ and $\mathcal{B}[D^+ \rightarrow b_1(1235)^0 e^+ \nu_e] \times \mathcal{B}[b_1(1235)^0 \rightarrow \omega\pi^0] = (1.16 \pm 0.44 \pm 0.16) \times 10^{-4}$, where the first uncertainties are statistical and the second systematic. The ratio of their partial decay widths is determined to be $\{\Gamma[D^0 \rightarrow b_1(1235)^- e^+ \nu_e]/2\Gamma[D^+ \rightarrow b_1(1235)^0 e^+ \nu_e]\} = 0.78 \pm 0.19^{+0.04}_{-0.05}$, which is consistent with unity, predicted by isospin invariance, within uncertainties.

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Experimental investigations of light hadron spectroscopy in semileptonic decays of the D mesons (D denotes D^0 or D^+) can be used to shed light on the role of nonperturbative strong interactions in weak decays, thereby aiding in uncovering the internal structure of the hadrons involved. The first quantitative predictions for the partial widths of various semileptonic D decays into S - or P -wave light meson states came from the quark model developed by Isgur *et al.* (namely, ISGW) [1]. This model was later updated to include constraints from heavy quark symmetry, hyperfine distortions of wave functions, and form factors with more realistic behavior at high recoil masses (ISGW2) [2]. To date, studies of Cabibbo suppressed semileptonic D decays are not as advanced as their Cabibbo favored counterparts, which have been extensively studied both theoretically and experimentally [3–5]. In general, these decays, which are mediated by the quark level process $c \rightarrow de^+ \nu_e$, are expected to be dominated by the ground-state pseudoscalar and vector mesons. Because of limited phase space, heavier mesons, such as P -wave states or the first radial excitations of the $d\bar{u}$ and $d\bar{d}$ mesons, are less likely to be produced. Among the heavier mesons, the most promising to be produced is the P -wave b_1 meson, which is accessible via $D \rightarrow b_1 e^+ \nu_e$. Throughout this Letter, b_1

denotes $b_1(1235)$. The ISGW2 model predicts the branching fractions of $D^0 \rightarrow b_1^- e^+ \nu_e$ and $D^+ \rightarrow b_1^0 e^+ \nu_e$ to be 1.08×10^{-4} and 1.32×10^{-4} [2], respectively. The covariant light-front quark model predicts the branching fraction of $D^+ \rightarrow b_1^0 e^+ \nu_e$ to be $(7.4 \pm 0.7) \times 10^{-5}$ [6]. The first measurements of the branching fractions of the $D^{0(+) \rightarrow b_1^{-(0)} e^+ \nu_e$ decays help to validate these quark model predictions.

The axial-vector meson b_1 , which is identified as a 1P_1 state in the quark model, was first observed by the HBC Collaboration in 1963 [7]. Before 1994, it was usually studied in $p\bar{p}$ [8,9], γp [10], and $p\pi$ [11–19] reactions, focusing on mass and width measurements. Later, it was widely observed in hadronic decays of D , B , and charmonium states [3]. In addition to the $q\bar{q}$ configuration, there are many different theoretical models for the nature of the b_1 , such as a mixture of an ordinary $q\bar{q}$ meson and a hybrid $q\bar{q}g$ meson [20], a molecular state which is dynamically generated by the pseudoscalar-vector meson interaction [21–25], especially with strong couplings to the $K\bar{K}^*$ channel, etc. Historically, theorists and experimentalists usually considered the $\omega\pi$ decay mode to be dominant for the axial-vector b_1 meson. However, the next-to-leading order (NLO) chiral perturbation calculations [23] predict that the $\phi\pi$ channel becomes the dominant contribution under specific molecular-state assumptions. The b_1 mesons produced in semileptonic D decays offer an ideal opportunity to validate these predictions, thereby gaining insight into their nature [26]. Furthermore, compared to high backgrounds and complex interference patterns found in hadronic processes [3], the semileptonic D meson decays

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are theoretically cleaner because leptons are not involved in strong interaction [27]. The verification of theoretical calculations of semileptonic D decays into the b_1 help to constrain the theoretical calculations in the decays of the τ [28,29], B [30–32], D [33,34], and charmonium states with b_1 involved in the final states [35–37].

To date, there is limited experimental information available on $D \rightarrow b_1 e^+ \nu_e$ decays. Only BESIII has previously searched for $D \rightarrow b_1 \ell^+ \nu_\ell$, using a portion of the same data used in this analysis, but no significant signal was obtained [38]. This Letter reports the first observation of $D^0 \rightarrow b_1^- e^+ \nu_e$ and the first evidence for $D^+ \rightarrow b_1^0 e^+ \nu_e$ with $b_1^{-(0)} \rightarrow \omega \pi^{-(0)}$, by analyzing 7.9 fb^{-1} of $e^+ e^-$ collision data taken at $\sqrt{s} = 3.773 \text{ GeV}$ [39]. Throughout this Letter, charge conjugate channels are always implied.

Details about the design and performance of the BESIII detector are given in Ref. [40]. The end-cap time-of-flight (TOF) system was upgraded in 2015 using multigap resistive plate chamber technology, providing a time resolution of 60 ps [41]. Approximately 63% of the data used here was collected after this upgrade. Simulated samples produced with the Geant4-based [42] Monte Carlo (MC) package which includes the geometric description of the BESIII detector and the detector response, are used to determine the detection efficiency and to estimate the backgrounds. The simulation includes the beam energy spread and initial state radiation (ISR) in the $e^+ e^-$ annihilations modeled with the generator KKMC [43]. The inclusive MC samples consist of the production of $D\bar{D}$ pairs with consideration of quantum coherence for all neutral D modes, the non- $D\bar{D}$ decays of the $\psi(3770)$, the ISR production of the J/ψ and $\psi(3686)$ states, and the continuum processes. The known decay modes are modeled with EvtGen [44] using branching fractions taken from the Particle Data Group [3], and the remaining unknown charmonium decays are estimated with Lundcharm [45]. Final state radiation from charged final state particles is incorporated using the Photos package [46]. The $D \rightarrow b_1 e^+ \nu_e$ signal MC events are simulated using the ISGW2 model [2], where the b_1 is parametrized by a relativistic Breit-Wigner function with mass and width fixed to the world-average values of $1229.5 \pm 3.2 \text{ MeV}/c^2$ and $142 \pm 9 \text{ MeV}$, respectively [3].

At $\sqrt{s} = 3.773 \text{ GeV}$, the D and \bar{D} mesons are produced in pairs without accompanying particles in the final state. Because of this, one can study semileptonic D decays with the double-tag (DT) method. Single-tag (ST) \bar{D}^0 mesons are first reconstructed using the hadronic decay modes $\bar{D}^0 \rightarrow K^+ \pi^-$, $K^+ \pi^- \pi^0$, $K^+ \pi^- \pi^- \pi^+$, $K_S^0 \pi^+ \pi^-$, $K^+ \pi^- \pi^0 \pi^0$, and $K^+ \pi^+ \pi^- \pi^- \pi^0$; while ST D^- mesons are reconstructed via the decay modes $D^- \rightarrow K^+ \pi^- \pi^-$, $K_S^0 \pi^-$, $K^+ \pi^- \pi^- \pi^0$, $K_S^0 \pi^- \pi^0$, $K_S^0 \pi^+ \pi^- \pi^-$, and $K^+ K^- \pi^-$. Semileptonic D candidates are then reconstructed from the residual tracks and showers not used in the tag selection. Candidate events in which the D decays into $b_1 e^+ \nu_e$ and the \bar{D} decays into a tag mode are called DT events.

Because the branching fraction of the $b_1 \rightarrow \omega \pi$ decay is unknown, the product branching fractions of the decay $D \rightarrow b_1 e^+ \nu_e$ (\mathcal{B}_{SL}) and its subsequent decay $b_1 \rightarrow \omega \pi$ (\mathcal{B}_{b_1}) are determined from

$$\mathcal{B}_{\text{SL}} \cdot \mathcal{B}_{b_1} = \frac{N_{\text{DT}}}{N_{\text{ST}}^{\text{tot}} \cdot \bar{\epsilon}_{\text{SL}} \cdot \mathcal{B}_{\text{sub}}}, \quad (1)$$

where $N_{\text{ST}}^{\text{tot}} = \sum_i N_{\text{ST}}^i$ and N_{DT} are the total ST and DT yields after summing over all tag modes i ; $\mathcal{B}_{\text{sub}} = \mathcal{B}_\omega \cdot \mathcal{B}_{\pi^0}$ for $D^0 \rightarrow b_1^- e^+ \nu_e$ and $\mathcal{B}_{\text{sub}} = \mathcal{B}_\omega \cdot \mathcal{B}_{\pi^+}^2$ for $D^+ \rightarrow b_1^0 e^+ \nu_e$, in which \mathcal{B}_ω and \mathcal{B}_{π^0} are the branching fractions of $\omega \rightarrow \pi^+ \pi^- \pi^0$ and $\pi^0 \rightarrow \gamma\gamma$, respectively; and $\bar{\epsilon}_{\text{SL}} = \sum_i (N_{\text{ST}}^i / N_{\text{ST}}^{\text{tot}}) (\epsilon_{\text{DT}}^i / \epsilon_{\text{ST}}^i)$ is the average signal efficiency of reconstructing $D \rightarrow b_1 e^+ \nu_e$ in the presence of an ST D , where ϵ_{ST}^i and ϵ_{DT}^i are the ST and DT efficiencies for the i th tag mode, respectively.

All charged tracks detected in the multilayer drift chamber (MDC) must be within a polar angle (θ) range of $|\cos \theta| < 0.93$, where θ is defined with respect to the z axis, which is the symmetry axis of the MDC. Except for charged tracks from K_S^0 decays, they must originate from an interaction region defined by $|V_{xy}| < 1$ and $|V_z| < 10 \text{ cm}$. Here, $|V_{xy}|$ and $|V_z|$ denote the distances of closest approach of the reconstructed track to the interaction point (IP) in the x - y plane and the z direction (along the beam), respectively. Particle identification (PID) for charged tracks combines measurements of the specific ionization energy loss in the MDC (dE/dx) and the flight time in the TOF to form confidence levels for pion and kaon hypotheses (CL_π and CL_K). Charged tracks with $\text{CL}_K > \text{CL}_\pi$ and $\text{CL}_\pi > \text{CL}_K$ are assigned as kaons and pions, respectively.

Each K_S^0 candidate is reconstructed from two oppositely charged tracks satisfying $|V_z| < 20 \text{ cm}$. The two charged tracks are assigned as $\pi^+ \pi^-$ without imposing further PID criteria. They are constrained to originate from a common vertex and required to have an invariant mass within $(0.487, 0.511) \text{ GeV}/c^2$. The decay length of the K_S^0 candidate is required to be greater than twice the vertex resolution away from the IP. The quality of the vertex fits (primary-vertex fit and secondary-vertex fit) is ensured by a requirement of $\chi^2 < 100$.

Photon candidates are selected using showers in the electromagnetic calorimeter (EMC). The deposited energy of each shower must be more than 25 MeV in the barrel region ($|\cos \theta| < 0.80$) and more than 50 MeV in the end-cap region ($0.86 < |\cos \theta| < 0.92$). To exclude showers associated with charged tracks, the angle subtended by the EMC shower and the position of the closest charged track at the EMC must be greater than 10° as measured from the IP. To suppress electronic noise and showers unrelated to the event, the difference between the EMC time and the event start time is required to be within $[0, 700] \text{ ns}$. For π^0 candidates, the invariant mass of the photon pair is required to be within $(0.115, 0.150) \text{ GeV}/c^2$. To improve the

TABLE I. The ΔE requirements, the measured ST \bar{D} yields, and the ST efficiencies (ϵ_{ST}^i) for different tag modes. The uncertainties are statistical only.

Tag mode	ΔE (GeV)	$N_{\text{ST}}^i (\times 10^3)$	$\epsilon_{\text{ST}}^i (\%)$
$\bar{D}^0 \rightarrow K^+ \pi^-$	(-0.027, 0.027)	1449.3 ± 1.2	65.34 ± 0.01
$\bar{D}^0 \rightarrow K^+ \pi^- \pi^0$	(-0.062, 0.049)	2913.1 ± 2.0	35.59 ± 0.01
$\bar{D}^0 \rightarrow K^+ \pi^- \pi^- \pi^+$	(-0.026, 0.024)	1944.1 ± 1.5	40.83 ± 0.01
$\bar{D}^0 \rightarrow K_S^0 \pi^+ \pi^-$	(-0.024, 0.024)	447.6 ± 0.7	37.49 ± 0.01
$\bar{D}^0 \rightarrow K^+ \pi^- \pi^0 \pi^0$	(-0.068, 0.053)	690.6 ± 1.3	14.83 ± 0.01
$\bar{D}^0 \rightarrow K^+ \pi^+ \pi^- \pi^- \pi^0$	(-0.057, 0.051)	450.9 ± 1.1	16.17 ± 0.01
$D^- \rightarrow K^+ \pi^- \pi^-$	(-0.025, 0.024)	2164.0 ± 1.5	51.17 ± 0.01
$D^- \rightarrow K_S^0 \pi^-$	(-0.025, 0.026)	250.4 ± 0.5	50.74 ± 0.02
$D^- \rightarrow K^- \pi^- \pi^+ \pi^0$	(-0.057, 0.046)	689.0 ± 1.1	25.50 ± 0.01
$D^- \rightarrow K_S^0 \pi^- \pi^0$	(-0.062, 0.049)	558.4 ± 0.9	26.28 ± 0.01
$D^- \rightarrow K_S^0 \pi^- \pi^- \pi^+$	(-0.028, 0.027)	300.5 ± 0.6	29.01 ± 0.01
$D^- \rightarrow K^+ K^- \pi^-$	(-0.024, 0.023)	187.3 ± 0.5	41.06 ± 0.02

momentum resolution, a one-constraint (1C) kinematic fit to the known π^0 mass [3] is imposed on the photon pair. The four-momentum of the π^0 candidate updated by the 1C fit is kept for further analysis.

To separate the ST \bar{D} mesons from combinatorial backgrounds, we define the energy difference $\Delta E \equiv E_{\bar{D}} - E_{\text{beam}}$ and the beam-constrained mass $M_{\text{BC}} \equiv \sqrt{E_{\text{beam}}^2/c^4 - |\vec{p}_{\bar{D}}|^2/c^2}$, where E_{beam} is the beam energy, and $E_{\bar{D}}$ and $\vec{p}_{\bar{D}}$ are the total energy and momentum of the \bar{D} candidate in the e^+e^- center-of-mass frame, respectively. If there is more than one \bar{D} candidate in a given ST mode, the one with the minimal $|\Delta E|$ is kept for further analysis. The rates of multiple combinations for tag modes containing π^0 in the final state range between 8.7% and 29.0%, while those for other tag modes range between 0.1% and 7.3%. The ΔE requirements and ST efficiencies for the different tag modes are listed in Table I.

The ST yields are extracted by performing unbinned maximum likelihood fits to individual M_{BC} distributions. In the fit, the signal shape is derived from the MC-simulated signal shape convolved with a double Gaussian function to consider the resolution difference between data and MC simulation. The background shape is described by the ARGUS function [47], with the end point parameter fixed at $1.8865 \text{ GeV}/c^2$ corresponding to E_{beam} . Figure 1 shows the fits to the M_{BC} distributions of the accepted ST candidates in data for different tag modes. The candidates with M_{BC} within $(1.859, 1.873) \text{ GeV}/c^2$ for \bar{D}^0 tags and $(1.863, 1.877) \text{ GeV}/c^2$ for D^- tags are kept for further analysis. Summing over the tag modes gives the total yields of ST \bar{D}^0 and D^- mesons to be $(7896.0 \pm 3.4_{\text{stat}}) \times 10^3$ and $(4149.9 \pm 2.3_{\text{stat}}) \times 10^3$, respectively.

In the presence of the tagged \bar{D} candidates, $D^0 \rightarrow b_1^- e^+ \nu_e$ and $D^+ \rightarrow b_1^0 e^+ \nu_e$ candidates are selected from the residual tracks and photons not used in the tag reconstruction. The selection criteria of charged and neutral pions are the same as those used in the tag selection. For the

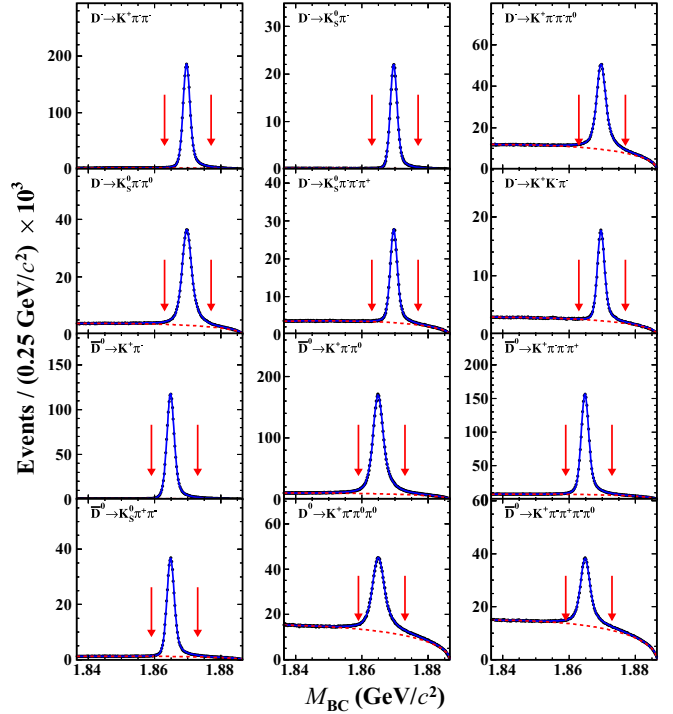


FIG. 1. Fits to the M_{BC} distributions of the ST \bar{D} candidates for different tag modes. The dots with error bars are data, the blue curves are the best fits, and the red dashed curves are the fitted combinatorial background shapes. The pair of red arrows are the M_{BC} signal windows.

selected candidates $D^0 \rightarrow \pi^+ \pi^- \pi^- \pi^0 e^+ \nu_e$ and $D^+ \rightarrow \pi^+ \pi^- \pi^0 \pi^0 e^+ \nu_e$, two possible $\pi^+ \pi^- \pi^0$ combinations can form the ω candidate. In order to veto backgrounds from $D \rightarrow a_0(980) e^+ \nu_e$, the invariant masses of both $\pi^+ \pi^- \pi^0$ combinations ($M_{\pi^+ \pi^- \pi^0}$) are required to be greater than $0.6 \text{ GeV}/c^2$. This rejects almost all of the $D \rightarrow a_0(980) e^+ \nu_e$ background events. One candidate is kept for further analysis if either of the $\pi^+ \pi^- \pi^0$ combinations falls in the ω mass signal region $M_{\pi^+ \pi^- \pi^0} \in (0.757, 0.807) \text{ GeV}/c^2$. Events in the ω sideband region, defined as $M_{\pi^+ \pi^- \pi^0} \in (0.697, 0.742)$ and $(0.822, 0.867) \text{ GeV}/c^2$, are used to study potential combinatorial background in the ω signal region. To reject background events from $D^{0(+)} \rightarrow \bar{K}_1(1270)[\rightarrow K_S^0 \pi^{+(0)} \pi^{-(0)}] e^+ \nu_e$, we require the invariant masses of all $\pi^+ \pi^-$ ($\pi^0 \pi^0$) combinations satisfy $|M_{\pi^+ \pi^-}(\pi^0 \pi^0) - M_{K_S^0}| > 0.008 \text{ GeV}/c^2$.

Identification of e^+ candidates is performed with combined dE/dx , TOF, and EMC information. Based on these, we calculate confidence levels for the positron, pion, and kaon hypotheses (CL_e , CL_π , and CL_K). Charged tracks satisfying $\text{CL}_e > 0.001$ and $\text{CL}_e / (\text{CL}_e + \text{CL}_\pi + \text{CL}_K) > 0.8$ are assigned as e^+ candidates. To further reject background events from misidentified hadrons and muons, the deposited energy of any e^+ candidate in the EMC must be

greater than 0.8 times its momentum reconstructed in the MDC.

The invariant mass of the $b_1 e^+$ system ($M_{b_1 e^+}$) is required to be less than $1.82 \text{ GeV}/c^2$ to suppress peaking background contributions from the decay $D \rightarrow b_1^{-(0)} \pi^+$. To suppress backgrounds with extra photons or π^0 's, the maximum energy of any extra photon that has not been used in the event selection ($E_{\text{extra}\gamma}^{\text{max}}$) must be less than 0.30 GeV , and there must be no additional π^0 candidates ($N_{\text{extra}\pi^0}$) in the candidate event. In addition, the opening angle between the missing momentum and the most energetic unused shower when found, $\theta_{\gamma, \text{miss}}$, is required to satisfy $\cos \theta_{\gamma, \text{miss}} < 0.3$ and $\cos \theta_{\gamma, \text{miss}} < 0.4$ for $D^0 \rightarrow b_1^- e^+ \nu_e$ and $D^+ \rightarrow b_1^0 e^+ \nu_e$, respectively. To suppress backgrounds due to final state radiation, the angle between the direction of the radiative photon and the e^+ momentum is required to be greater than 0.20 rad .

The presence of the missing neutrino is inferred using a kinematic variable defined as

$$U_{\text{miss}} \equiv E_{\text{miss}} - |\vec{p}_{\text{miss}}| \cdot c, \quad (2)$$

with

$$E_{\text{miss}} \equiv E_{\text{beam}} - E_{b_1} - E_{e^+}, \quad (3)$$

and

$$\vec{p}_{\text{miss}} \equiv \vec{p}_D - \vec{p}_{b_1} - \vec{p}_{e^+}, \quad (4)$$

where $E_{b_1(e^+)}$ and $\vec{p}_{b_1(e^+)}$ are the measured energy and momentum of the b_1 (e^+) candidate in the $e^+ e^-$ center-of-mass frame, respectively. We calculate $\vec{p}_D \equiv -\hat{p}_{\bar{D}} \sqrt{E_{\text{beam}}^2/c^2 - m_{\bar{D}}^2} \cdot c^2$, where $\hat{p}_{\bar{D}}$ is a unit vector in the momentum direction of the ST \bar{D} meson and $m_{\bar{D}}$ is the known \bar{D} mass [3]. The beam energy and the known D mass are used to determine the magnitude of the momentum of the ST D meson in order to improve the U_{miss} resolution. The signal candidates are expected to peak around zero in the U_{miss} distribution and near the invariant mass of the b_1 in the $\omega\pi$ mass spectrum ($M_{\omega\pi}$).

To obtain the signal yields, we perform two-dimensional (2D) unbinned maximum likelihood fits to the $M_{\omega\pi^{-(0)}}$ versus U_{miss} distributions. In the fits, the 2D signal and background shapes are modeled by the simulated shapes derived from the signal and inclusive MC samples, respectively, and the yields of the signal and background are left free. The projections of the 2D fit on the $M_{\omega\pi^{-(0)}}$ and U_{miss} distributions are shown in Fig. 2. From the fits, the signal yields are $N_{\text{DT}} = 35.6 \pm 8.9$ and $N_{\text{DT}} = 17.5 \pm 6.7$ for $D^0 \rightarrow b_1^- e^+ \nu_e$ and $D^+ \rightarrow b_1^0 e^+ \nu_e$, respectively, and the signal significances are estimated to be 5.2σ and 3.1σ , by comparing the likelihoods with or without the signal

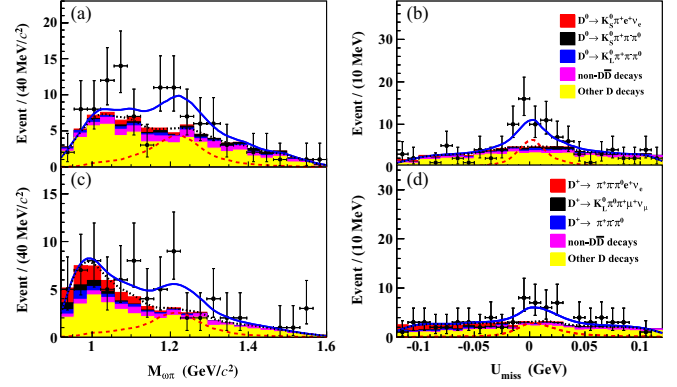


FIG. 2. The projections onto (a),(c) $M_{\omega\pi^{-(0)}}$ and (b),(d) U_{miss} for the decays (a),(b) $D^0 \rightarrow b_1^- e^+ \nu_e$ and (c),(d) $D^+ \rightarrow b_1^0 e^+ \nu_e$. The dots with error bars are data. The blue solid, red dashed, and black dashed curves are the fit results, the fitted signals, and the fitted backgrounds, respectively. The color-filled histograms are from different background sources, as labeled in the legend.

involved and taking into account the change of degrees of freedom. Because the nonresonant component is highly suppressed in semileptonic D decays and due to limited statistics, all $\omega\pi$ candidates are assumed to come from b_1 decays. The nonresonant component is considered as a source of systematic uncertainty. Based on MC simulations, the detection efficiencies $\bar{\epsilon}_{\text{SL}}$ are estimated to be 0.0715 ± 0.0005 and 0.0417 ± 0.0004 for $D^0 \rightarrow b_1^- e^+ \nu_e$ and $D^+ \rightarrow b_1^0 e^+ \nu_e$, respectively.

The systematic uncertainties in the branching fraction measurements are discussed below. The uncertainty associated with the ST yield $N_{\text{ST}}^{\text{tot}}$ is estimated to be 0.3% [48]. The uncertainty from the quoted branching fraction of $\omega \rightarrow \pi^+ \pi^- \pi^0$ is 0.8% [3]. The efficiencies of the e^+ tracking and PID are investigated using a control sample of $e^+ e^- \rightarrow \gamma e^+ e^-$ [48], and those of the π^\pm tracking and PID as well as for π^0 reconstruction are estimated with control samples of $D^0 \rightarrow K^- \pi^+$, $D^0 \rightarrow K^- \pi^+ \pi^0$, $D^0 \rightarrow K^- \pi^+ \pi^+ \pi^-$, and $D^+ \rightarrow K^- \pi^+ \pi^+$ with the same tags. The systematic uncertainties in the tracking (PID) are assigned as 1.0% (1.0%) per e^+ and 1.0% (1.0%) per π^\pm , respectively. The systematic uncertainty of the π^0 reconstruction, including photon finding, the π^0 mass window, and the 1C kinematic fit, is assigned as 2.0% per π^0 [49].

The systematic uncertainty associated with the ω mass window is assigned to be 1.9% using a control sample of $D^0 \rightarrow K_S^0 \omega$ reconstructed versus the same \bar{D}^0 tags as the nominal analysis. The systematic uncertainties arising from the $E_{\text{extra}\gamma}^{\text{max}}$ and $N_{\text{extra}\pi^0}$ requirements are estimated to be 1.8% and 2.0% for $D^0 \rightarrow b_1^- e^+ \nu_e$ and $D^+ \rightarrow b_1^0 e^+ \nu_e$, respectively, which are estimated using the DT samples of $D^0 \rightarrow K^- e^+ \nu_e$ and $D^+ \rightarrow K_S^0 e^+ \nu_e$ decays reconstructed versus the same tags as the nominal analysis. The systematic uncertainty related to the b_1 resonant parameters is estimated using alternative signal MC samples, which are

produced by varying the mass and width of the b_1 by $\pm 1\sigma$. The maximum changes of the signal efficiencies, 1.4% and 4.8%, are assigned as the systematic uncertainties for $D^0 \rightarrow b_1^- e^+ \nu_e$ and $D^+ \rightarrow b_1^0 e^+ \nu_e$, respectively. The uncertainty from limited MC statistics is estimated to be 0.3%. The systematic uncertainty due to the MC generator is assigned by examining the DT efficiency with the signal MC events produced with the phase space model. The maximum changes of the DT efficiencies, 1.4% and 0.5%, are assigned as the systematic uncertainties for $D^0 \rightarrow b_1^- e^+ \nu_e$ and $D^+ \rightarrow b_1^0 e^+ \nu_e$, respectively. The systematic uncertainty associated with the $\cos\theta_{\gamma,\text{miss}}$ requirement is estimated to be 1.0% by analyzing the DT sample of $D^0 \rightarrow K_S^0 \pi^- e^+ \nu_e$. The systematic uncertainty due to the sideband estimation of the ω background, which may be from $D^{0(+)} \rightarrow b_1^{-(0)} e^+ \nu_e$ with $b_1^{-(0)} \rightarrow \pi^+ \pi^- \pi^0 \pi^{0(-)}$, is estimated by examining the measured branching fractions after considering this contribution. The changes in the branching fractions, 0.5% and 4.6%, are taken as the corresponding systematic uncertainties.

To estimate the systematic uncertainties of the signal and background shapes in the U_{miss} fit, a simulated shape convolved with a double Gaussian function with floating parameters is chosen as the alternative signal shape, and the simulated background shape derived from the inclusive MC sample is replaced with a first-order Chebyshev polynomial function. The differences in the fitted signal yields are taken as individual systematic uncertainties. The uncertainty arising from the background shape is mainly due to unknown nonresonant decays and is assigned as the change of the fitted DT yield when they are fixed by referring to the well-known nonresonant fraction in $D^+ \rightarrow \bar{K}^*(892)^0 e^+ \nu_e$ [50]. The total systematic uncertainties are $^{+8.8\%}_{-10.7\%}$ and $^{+12.7\%}_{-13.9\%}$ by adding all the individual contributions in quadrature for $D^0 \rightarrow b_1^- e^+ \nu_e$ and $D^+ \rightarrow b_1^0 e^+ \nu_e$, respectively.

The product branching fractions are determined to be $\mathcal{B}(D^0 \rightarrow b_1^- e^+ \nu_e) \times \mathcal{B}(b_1^- \rightarrow \omega \pi^-) = (0.72 \pm 0.18^{+0.06}_{-0.08}) \times 10^{-4}$ and $\mathcal{B}(D^+ \rightarrow b_1^0 e^+ \nu_e) \times \mathcal{B}(b_1^0 \rightarrow \omega \pi^0) = (1.16 \pm 0.44 \pm 0.16) \times 10^{-4}$ for $D^0 \rightarrow b_1^- e^+ \nu_e$ and $D^+ \rightarrow b_1^0 e^+ \nu_e$, where the first and second uncertainties are statistical and systematic, respectively.

In summary, by analyzing 7.9 fb^{-1} of $e^+ e^-$ collision data taken at $\sqrt{s} = 3.773 \text{ GeV}$, we report the first observation of $D^0 \rightarrow b_1^- e^+ \nu_e$ with a significance of 5.2σ and find the first evidence for $D^+ \rightarrow b_1^0 e^+ \nu_e$ with a significance of 3.1σ after considering systematic uncertainty. Their product branching fractions are determined to be $\mathcal{B}(D^0 \rightarrow b_1^- e^+ \nu_e) \times \mathcal{B}(b_1^- \rightarrow \omega \pi^-) = (0.72 \pm 0.18^{+0.06}_{-0.08}) \times 10^{-4}$ and $\mathcal{B}(D^+ \rightarrow b_1^0 e^+ \nu_e) \times \mathcal{B}(b_1^0 \rightarrow \omega \pi^0) = (1.16 \pm 0.44 \pm 0.16) \times 10^{-4}$. Assuming $\mathcal{B}(b_1 \rightarrow \omega \pi) = 1$, these results are comparable with the theoretical predictions reported in Refs. [2,6], thereby implying that the $\omega \pi$ final state is currently the dominant decay mode of b_1 , which aligns

with the leading-order predictions of Refs. [23–25], but conflicts with the NLO calculations from Ref. [23]. Using the obtained branching fractions, the world-average lifetimes of the D^0 and D^+ mesons [3], and assuming that $\mathcal{B}(b_1^- \rightarrow \omega \pi^-) = \mathcal{B}(b_1^0 \rightarrow \omega \pi^0)$, we determine the partial decay width ratio $[\Gamma(D^0 \rightarrow b_1^- e^+ \nu_e)/2\Gamma(D^+ \rightarrow b_1^0 e^+ \nu_e)] = 0.78 \pm 0.19^{+0.04}_{-0.05}$, which is consistent with unity within uncertainties after considering the shared systematic terms and is thus consistent with isospin conservation. Observation of the b_1 in semileptonic D decays opens a new avenue for experimental investigation. Future analysis of their decay dynamics, which will be made possible with the larger data sample at BESIII [26] and a potential future STCF [51], will provide deep insights into the inner structure, production, mass, and width of the b_1 , as well as provide access to hadronic-transition form factors, and strong phase, which sheds light on the phase of elastic $\omega \pi$ scattering.

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