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Observation of Aharonov-Bohm Effect by Electron Holography

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In this experiment, an electron- and optical-holographic technique is employed with small toroidal ferromagnets each forming a magnetic-flux closure. The holographic interferometry proves that a phase difference between two electron beams having passed through the field-free regions agrees well with the fundamental relation known as the Aharonov-Bohm effect. It is also confirmed from the same hologram that flux leakage from the toroids does not affect the conclusion.

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The existence of the Aharonov-Bohm effect¹ (AB effect) has recently been questioned by Bocchieri *et al.*,² and Roy.³ The AB effect states that a phase difference between two electron beams is produced proportional to the enclosed magnetic flux, even if they never touch the magnetic field. Bocchieri *et al.* asserted that the AB effect is purely of mathematical origin. Experiments in the past⁴ were also questioned from the standpoint that electrons were affected by inevitable leakage magnetic fields from finite whiskers or solenoids used in these experiments.⁴ Although these assertions have since then been disputed theoretically by many authors,⁵ the controversy has still not fully abated.⁶

Our experiment employs electron holography.⁷ In order to avoid the questioned leakage effects,⁸ tiny toroidal magnets⁹ were used instead of whiskers or solenoids to make complete flux circuits. Furthermore, a new method of holographic interference microscopy¹⁰ was employed, both to obtain contour maps of the electron phase and to detect quantitatively the amount of leakage that might have, by some chance, come from the mag-

nets.

The toroidal magnets were prepared in the following way. Permalloy thin films (80% Ni and 20% Fe) were prepared by vacuum evaporation. The substrate was a glass plate covered with an evaporated thin film of NaCl. Permalloy toroids of various sizes were formed by means of electron-beam lithography. These toroids were floated off on a water surface, and applied to thin carbon films approximately 100 Å thick.

An electron-microscopic image and an under-focused Lorentz micrograph of such a toroidal magnet are shown in Figs. 1(a) and 1(b). The Lorentz micrograph shows that magnetization is closed within the magnet. This is the case with most toroids presumably as a result of the shape effect.

Off-axis electron holograms of the toroidal magnets were formed in a 100-kV field-emission electron microscope.¹¹ The schematic diagram for hologram formation is shown in Fig. 2. A toroidal magnet was illuminated with a collimated electron beam. Its demagnified image (magnification $\sim \frac{1}{2}$) was formed through both ob-

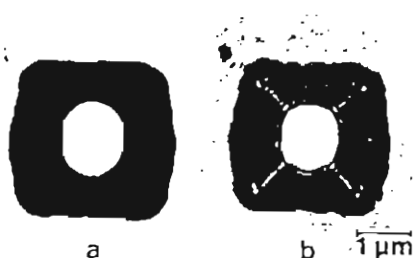


FIG. 1. Toroidal magnet. (a) Electron-microscopic image. (b) Lorentz micrograph.

jective and intermediate lenses. A reference beam was projected on the image plane by an electron biprism¹² to form the image hologram. Final magnification at the recorded hologram was 2000.

Reconstruction was performed in the optical system shown in Fig. 3. A collimated laser beam from a He-Ne laser was split into two beams by beam splitter A. One beam illuminated the electron hologram to reconstruct the image, which was focused again by lenses E and F on the observation plane. The other beam (comparison beam) from the splitter was superposed on the observation plane to form the interference image. The advantage of the holography technique is that it makes it possible to obtain phase-amplified interference images.¹³

Interference micrographs for the toroidal magnet (Fig. 1) are shown in Fig. 4. The phase contour map of an electron beam transmitted through a magnet, shown in Fig. 4(a), was obtained with the comparison beam parallel to the object beam. It cannot be determined from the contour map whether the wave front of the object beam is advanced or retarded. Therefore, interferogram (b) was taken with a tilted comparison beam to determine this. The wave front obtained is schematically shown in Fig. 4(c).

The photographs reveal that a phase difference really exists between two electron beams that have passed through the inner and outer spaces of a toroidal magnet, where there were no magnetic fields in those spaces. In addition, the phase difference of 5.5λ , measured from the interference micrograph, agrees with the theoretical value of 6.0λ to 20%. This is estimated from data where 4π times magnetization was 9500 ± 500 Oe, film thickness was 400 ± 30 Å, and toroid width was 6400 ± 500 Å. Phase shifts at the magnet edges are partly due to the refraction effect.¹³ However, this effect can be ignored in the present estimation, because the effect of

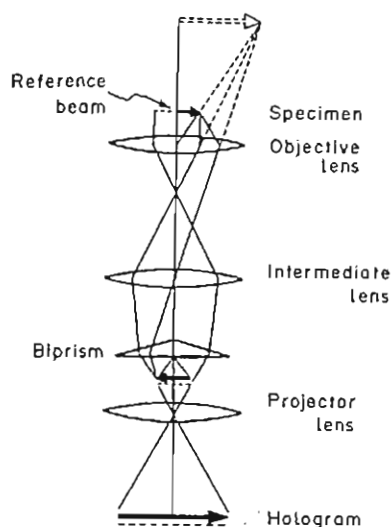


FIG. 2. Schematic arrangement for electron hologram formation.

the phase shift made at the outer edge is cancelled at the inner edge. In addition the shift value itself is smaller than one λ , as is also explained from the thickness and inner potential (~ 20 V) of the sample.

Another example with a slightly larger magnet on the same carbon film is shown in Fig. 5. In contrast to the previous example, the phase here is retarded in the inner space of the magnet. Correspondingly, the magnetization direction is counterclockwise. The number of contour lines, i.e., the phase difference, is increased compared with that in Fig. 4. This is in proportion to the magnet width since film thicknesses are the same. The deviation from the proportional relation was measured to be less than 10% for

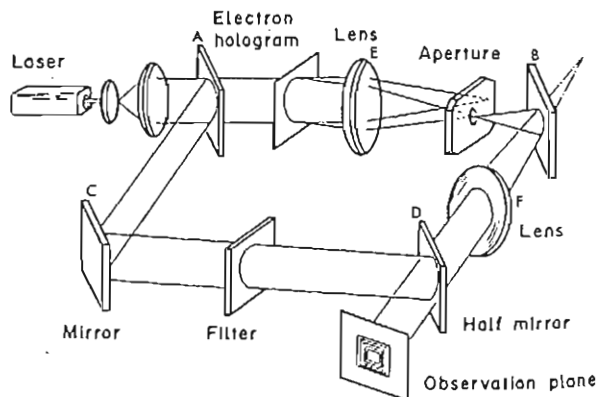


FIG. 3. Optical reconstruction system for interference microscopy.

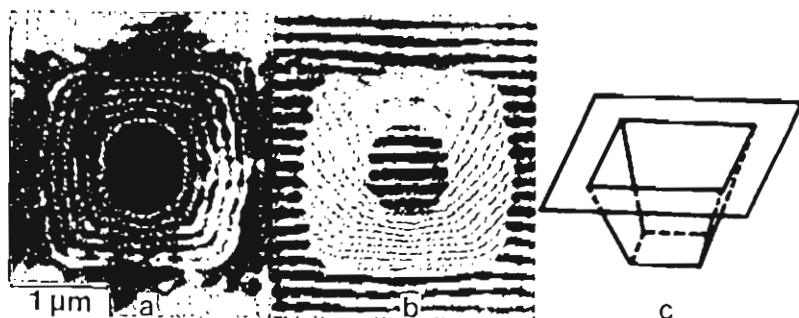


FIG. 4. Interference micrographs of the toroidal magnet shown in Fig. 1. (a) Contour map of electron phase. (b) Interferogram of electron phase. (c) Schematic form of the wave front.

various toroidal sizes.

These experimental results verify the existence of the AB effect. Quantitative agreement¹⁴ is achieved with the fundamental AB effect relation.

Leakage-field effects were confined to be sufficiently small in the cases of Figs. 4 and 5. Contour lines in interference micrographs were verified to follow magnetic lines of force as viewed along the direction of the electron beam.¹⁵ Therefore, contour lines must exit from the toroid if magnetic fields are leaking from the magnet. An example of field leakage is shown in Fig. 6. Leakage fields do not show up in the Lorentz micrograph, Fig. 6(a), but can be clearly observed in the interference micrograph, Fig. 6(b). The magnetic flux between two adjacent contour lines is equal to a constant, h/e , irrespective of electron energy. It can be concluded from the contour maps shown in Figs. 4(a) and 5(a) that the leakage flux was less than h/e and that the resultant phase change is too small to conceal the AB effect.

In this experimental arrangement, the electron beam partly touched and even penetrated the magnet. This point is open to criticisms, but our argument for this is as follows. In the present

experiment, the shape of a magnetic sample is reproduced as a clear image on the interferogram. Consequently, the part of the beam transmitted through the magnetic flux in the sample does not contribute to points outside the sample image. The beams reaching these points must have felt only the magnetic vector potential, if any.

It was for the measurement of the phase difference by tracing the interference fringes that the penetrable toroidal magnets were adopted in our experiment. This is an advantage of our experiment over former experiments.⁴ If the fringes on the images of the toroids are not observed, the phase difference is determined by only a fraction of a wavelength unit.¹⁶

The different electron energy causes an appreciable change in electron penetrability, but no change in phase difference. This fact was confirmed at 80, 100, and 125 kV. If there were an essential difference between an absolutely inaccessible field and a negligibly accessible field,⁶ then the AB effect could be neither confirmed nor denied experimentally.

Regardless of the strength of penetrability, our experimental results of the interference



FIG. 5. Interference micrographs of magnet having a magnetization direction opposite to that in Fig. 4. (a) Contour map. (b) Interferogram. (c) Schematic form of the wave front.

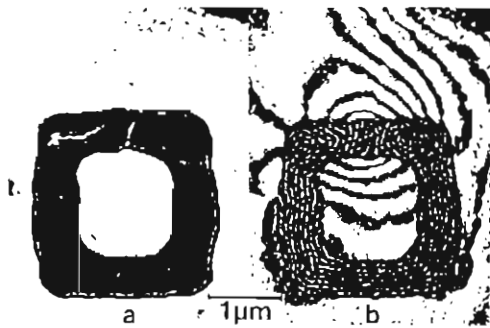


FIG. 6. Example of leakage magnetic fields. (a) Lorentz micrograph. (b) Interference micrograph. (Phase amplification by factor two.)

pattern, e.g., Fig. 4(b), can be fully explained with the Stokes vector potential. This cannot be expected if vector potential is zero everywhere outside the toroid, as Bocchieri *et al.* proposed in case of a solenoid.²

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