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EXPERIMENTAL DETERMINATIONS OF STOPPING POWERS USING ALPHA PARTICLES OF 15 to 37 MEV

E. L. Kelly

November 10, 1948

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Naval Radiological Defense Laboratory	48
NEPA Project	49
New York Operations Office	50-51
North American Aviation, Inc.	52
Oak Ridge National Laboratory	53-60
Patent Advisor, Washington	61
Sandia Base	62-63
Technical Information Division, ORCO	64-78
UCLA Medical Research Laboratory (Warren)	79
University of California Radiation Laboratory	80-84
University of Rochester	85-86
Declassification Procedure	
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Publication Officer	91
Patent Department	92-93
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Experimental Determinations of Stopping Powers Using Alpha Particles of 15 to 37 Mev

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November 10, 1948

For the excitation function work described in the preceding article it was necessary to know the stopping power of bismuth for alpha particles having energies between 20 and 40 Mev. Since the existing data were not sufficiently accurate for this work an experimental determination of the relative stopping power of various elements from thorium to aluminum was undertaken, using the alpha particle beam of the Crocker 60" cyclotron. For reasons of convenience only metallic elements were investigated using aluminum as a standard of comparison. Beryllium, copper, silver, tantalum, bismuth, and thorium were originally chosen for investigation; unfortunately suitable beryllium foil was unobtainable and this element had to be omitted.

The stopping power was determined in the following way. The range of the alpha beam in aluminum was first determined. Next an absorber of the element to be investigated was placed in the path of the alpha beam, reducing the energy of the emergent alpha particles. Then the range in aluminum of the reduced energy alphas was determined. The difference in the two measured ranges in aluminum represents the thickness of aluminum absorber which would produce the same energy loss (at the alpha particle energy used) as would the absorber under investigation. This procedure was carried out at two alpha particle energies, approximately 28 Mev and 37 Mev. The results are summarized in Table I.

Experimental Details

The set of absorbers first used in the experiment consisted of elements that were readily available in the form of thin foil, i.e., aluminum, copper, silver, tantalum

and thorium. The Th absorber was a single foil accurately ground to size. The Al, Cu, Ag, and Ta absorbers were cut to size on a die and consisted of 3 or more foils each, so that any slight thickness variation in the individual foils would tend to average out. In the second run of this experiment two bismuth absorbers of 3 foils each were added to the set. Also thinner thorium foil was secured and two thorium absorbers of 3 foils each were also added to the set.

The apparatus used was a modification of that described in the preceding article and is shown schematically in Fig. 1. The wheel A contained the absorbers of the various elements to be studied together with suitable aluminum absorbers. Wheel B contained only aluminum absorbers differing by 1.0 mg cm^{-2}. The various alpha ranges in aluminum were determined in a manner similar to that described in the preceding article. With wheel A in position 1 (112.5 mg cm^{-2} Al in the beam) readings were taken of the current stopped by wheels A and B and of the current to the Faraday cup; this was repeated for several positions of wheel B. In this way the mean beam range in Al was determined. Then wheel A was turned to position 2 (62.7 mg cm^{-2} Cu + 60.5 mg cm^{-2} Al) and the currents again read for suitable positions of wheel B. This procedure was followed for a cycle in the order 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 3, 1, 3, ... where the numbers refer to the position of wheel A. Thus the full alpha-energy beam range was determined immediately before and after each reduced alpha-energy beam range determination.

To determine the stopping power for alpha particles of 27 Mev energy the stack of foils in each position of wheel A was turned over (i.e., position 2 was changed from 62.7 mg cm^{-2} Cu + 60.5 mg cm^{-2} Al to 60.5 mg cm^{-2} Al + 62.7 mg cm^{-2} Cu). In this way the energy of the alpha beam was lowered before the beam entered the various absorbers being investigated.

The α-beam was found to be remarkably constant in energy, the mean range remaining within $\pm$ 1/2 mg cm^{-2} Al for each cycle of data taken and within $\pm$ 1 mg cm^{-2} Al for the entire run. The 3 mg cm^{-2} difference in the range of the alpha beam used in the two runs can be traced to changes made on the cyclotron. The resultant change in the relative

stopping power, however, is too small to be observed, being about 1 part in 500.

Results

The results of the two runs are summarized in Tables I and II. Each sandwich in Table I represents the average of 8 or more determinations. If the relative mass stopping power data of Table II is reduced to stopping power per electron as a function of log Z the results fall very nearly on a straight line for each energy range. This is shown in Fig. 2. The deviation of thorium although small is felt to represent a real effect since the overall error of this data is estimated to be less than one percent.

This work was carried out under the auspices of the Atomic Energy Commission.

Table I

Summary of Absorbers of Equivalent Stopping Power

Each absorber "sandwich" reduced the alpha beam to half-intensity - the alpha beam traversing all "sandwiches" from left to right. "Sandwiches" of equivalent stopping power are indicated by equal signs.

62.7 Cu + 60.5 Al + 33.3 Al	= 60.5 Al + 62.7 Cu + 34.5 Al = 144.0 Al
91.2 Ag + 54.1 Al + 28.7 Al	= 54.1 Al + 91.2 Ag + 30.6 Al = 144.0 Al
90.9 Ta + 65.1 Al + 29.1 Al	= 65.1 Al + 90.9 Ta + 32.0 Al = 144.0 Al
112.0 Th + 60.8 Al + 31.5 Al	= 60.8 Al + 112.0 Th + 29.8 Al = 144.0 Al
62.7 Cu + 60.5 Al + 36.5 Al	= 60.5 Al + 62.7 Cu + 37.4 Al = 147.0 Al
91.2 Ag + 54.1 Al + 31.6 Al	= 54.1 Al + 91.2 Ag + 33.4 Al = 147.0 Al
90.9 Ta + 65.1 Al + 32.4 Al	= 65.1 Al + 90.9 Ta + 34.8 Al = 147.0 Al
99.0 Bi + 60.8 Al + 34.5 Al	= 60.8 Al + 99.0 Bi + 37.2 Al = 147.0 Al
99.1 Bi + 59.1 Al + 36.5 Al	= 59.1 Al + 99.1 Bi + 39.1 Al = 147.0 Al
90.9 Th + 67.4 Al + 33.9 Al	= 67.4 Al + 90.9 Th + 36.4 Al = 147.0 Al
90.9 Th + 66.6 Al + 35.0 Al	= 66.6 Al + 90.9 Th + 37.5 Al = 147.0 Al

Table II

Values of the stopping power relative to aluminun

computed from the data of Table I

		Cu	Ag	Ta	Bi	Th
37 Mev Alpha Beam	1st Run	0.801	0.671	0.548		0.505
	2nd Run	0.797	0.672	0.545	0.520	0.501
	Mean	0.799_0	0.671_5	0.546_5	0.520	0.503
Reduced Energy Beam (~28 Mev)	1st Run	0.781	0.650	0.516		0.477
	2nd Run	0.783	0.652	0.518	0.494	0.474
	Mean	0.782	0.651	0.517	0.494	0.475_5

Figure Captions

Fig. 1. Schematic diagram of the collimating tube, foil holders, and current amplifiers.

Fig. 2. Relative stopping power per electron as a function of log Z.

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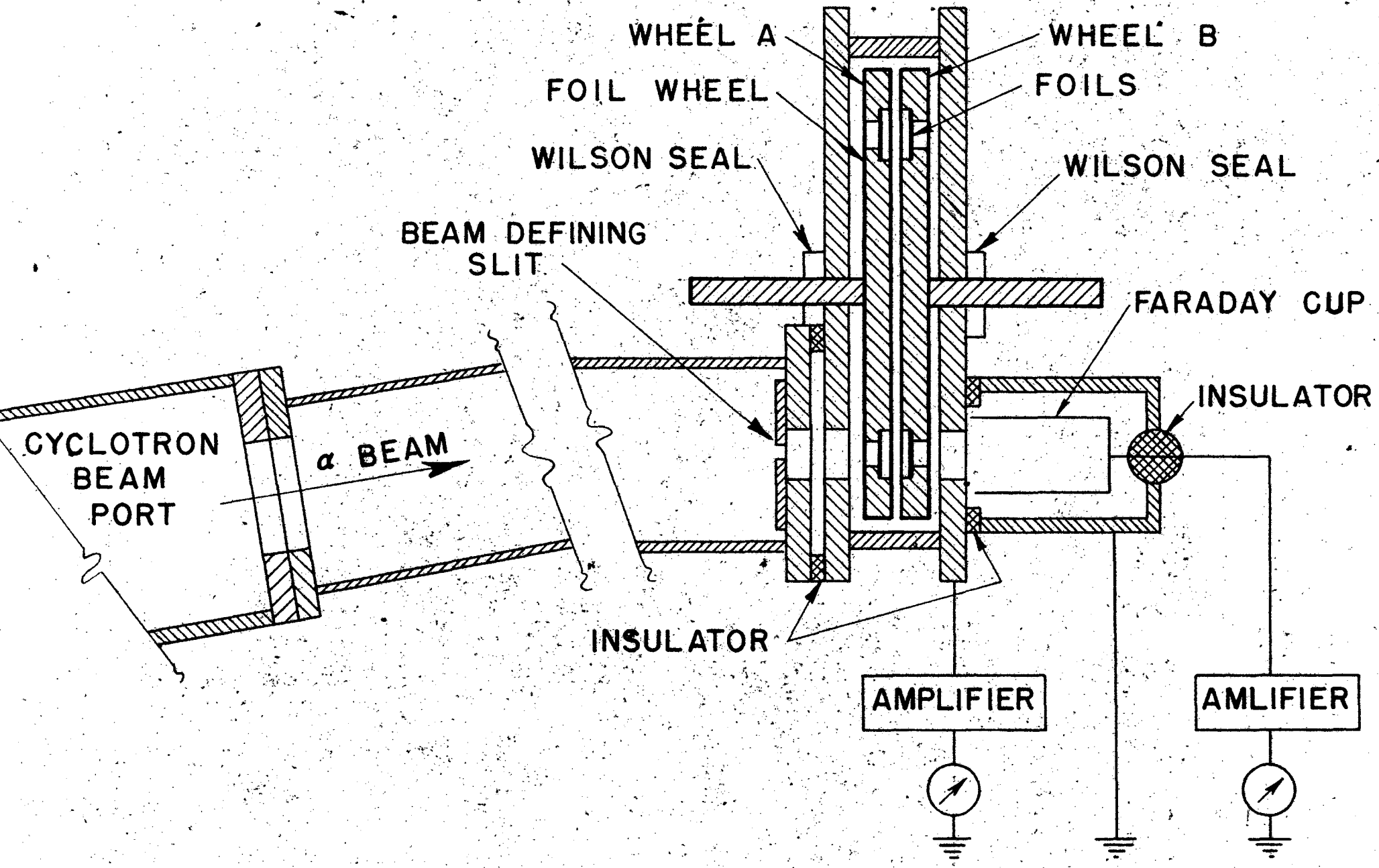

WHEEL A
WHEEL B
FOIL WHEEL
FOILS
WILSON SEAL
WILSON SEAL
BEAM DEFINING SLIT
FARADAY CUP
INSULATOR
CYCLOTRON BEAM PORT
α BEAM
INSULATOR
AMPLIFIER
AMLIFIER

FIG. 1

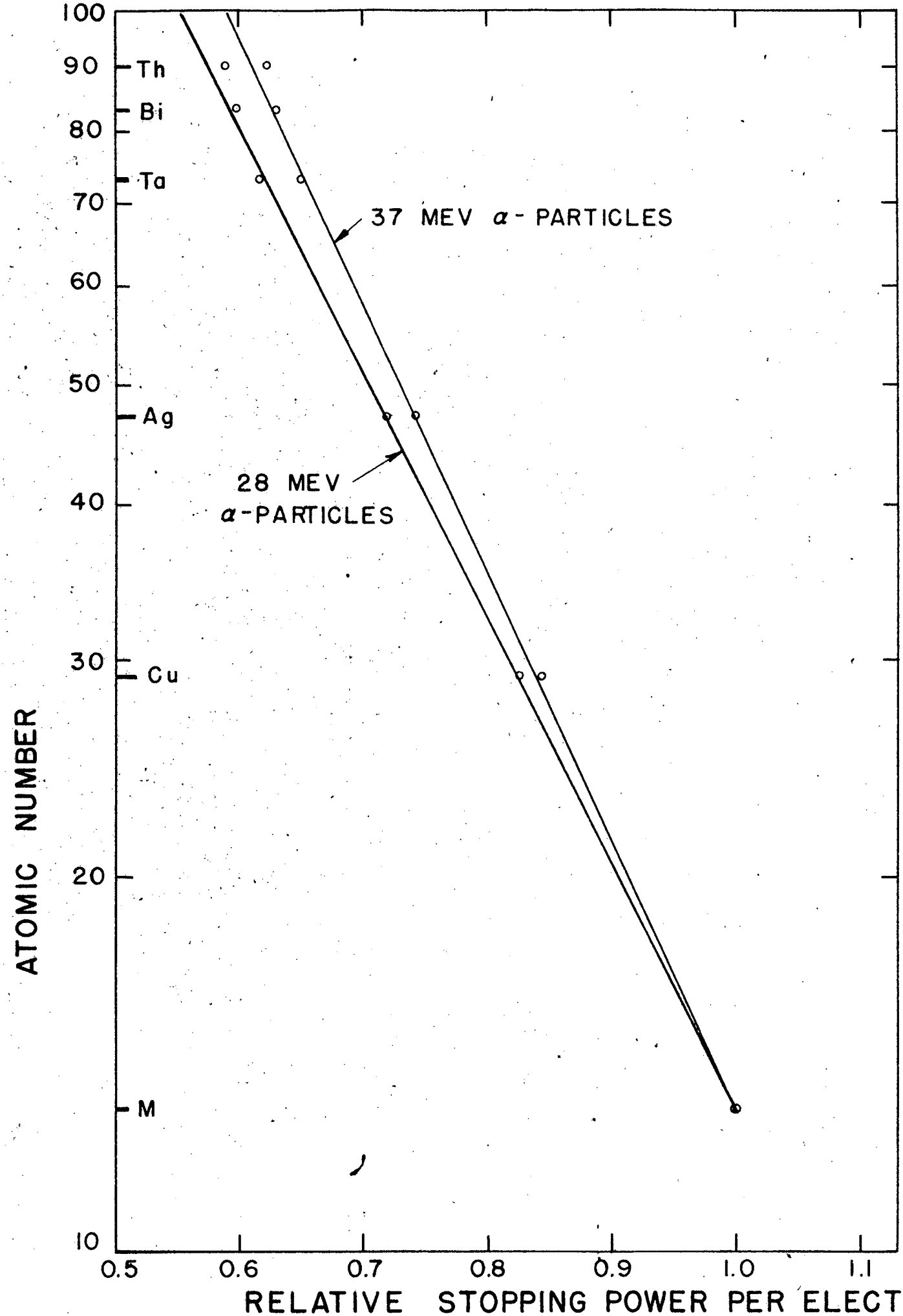

100
90
Th
Bi
80
Ta
70
60
50
Ag
40
30
Cu
20
M
10
ATOMIC NUMBER
37 MEV α - PARTICLES
28 MEV
α-PARTICLES
0.5
0.6
0.7
0.8
0.9
1.0
1.1
RELATIVE STOPPING POWER PER ELECTRON

FIG. 2