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Bronze Age Hoard of Axes Found in Oficjałów, Opatów Commune, Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship

ABSTRACT

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In 2011, a hoard consisting of 3 bronze flanged axes (with a funnel-shaped face), so called Bohemian type was found in the village Oficjałów, Opatów commune, Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship. The hoard can be dated to the middle period of the Bronze Age (HA1 phase). Regarding Polish territories, similar axes, mainly discovered in hoards, rarely individually, occasionally in burial complexes, are known mostly from Silesia, and also from western Lesser Poland, rarely from other regions. This is the third hoard of bronze items discovered on the Sandomierz Uplands and the first one containing axes. It may be the evidence of influence of the Western Lesser Poland group of the Lusatian culture (possibly even in the form of infiltration of small groups of people) on “Lusatian settlement” appearing on the Sandomierz Uplands. What is more, we cannot exclude the possibility that, together with other hoards and individual bronze artefacts from this area, it is the evidence of contacts of the local group of the Trzciniec culture with the “Lusatian” environment in the Sandomierz Upland.

Keywords: Bronze axes, Sandomierz Uplands, Lusatian culture

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In September 2011, 3 bronze axes were found accidentally in Oficjałów, near Opatów (Fig. 1)¹. According to the finder, the axes were lying on a freshly ploughed field at a distance of 1–2m from each other. Since there were suspicions that axes could come from a larger bronze hoard, trial excavations were conducted in the beginning of October 2011 at the site where they had been found, while the surrounding area was researched with detailed system walking on the surface, including electronic equipment (metal detectors)². They delivered a negative result – no other metal objects or other archaeological finds were found, moreover, no traces of possible features (a pit, a cut, etc.) where

¹ Axes were handed over by Mr. Dawid Stec from Lipnik, Opatów district.

² The research was conducted by the author, co-operating with Monika Bajka from the District Museum in Sandomierz. Students from the Institute of Archaeology of UMCS were involved there participating in training research.

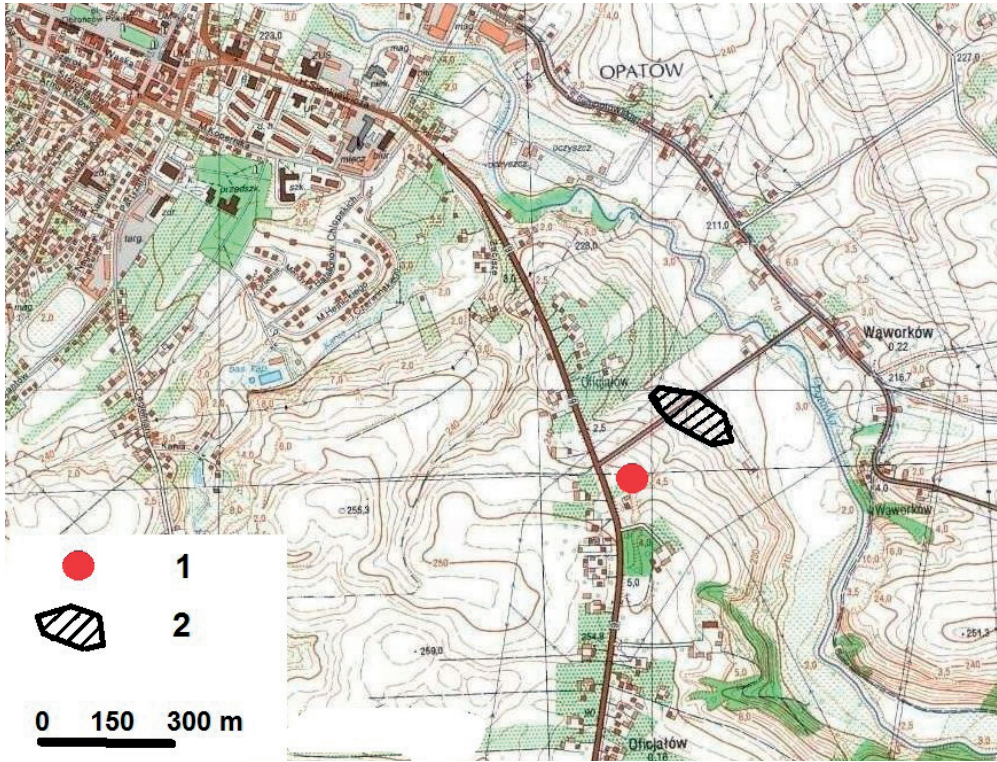


Fig. 1. Location of the discovery of the hoard in Oficjałów, Opatów district, Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship. Symbols: 1 – the place where the hoard was found; Oficjałów, site 6 (AZP 87–70 / 153) – a settlement of the Lusatian culture. *Researched by M. Florek*

Ryc. 1. Lokalizacja miejsca odkrycia skarbu w Oficjałowie, pow. Opatów, woj. świętokrzyskie. Oznaczenia: 1 – miejsce znalezienia skarbu; 2 – stanowisko Oficjałów 6 (AZP 87–70/153) – osada kultury łużyckiej. *Opr. M. Florek*

the axes could be deposited were uncovered. The latter finding may indicate that the axes were buried relatively shallow, not deeper than 30 cm, because it is the depth of ploughing, which probably destroyed the traces of the cut and uncovered the artefacts on the surface.

The two axes, apart from the slight signs of deterioration on the edges, were preserved completely, while the third item had a broken upper part – the butt. All three artefacts represent the type of flanged axes (with a funnel-shaped face), so called Bohemian type, with only slightly different dimensions. The dimensions of the first axe (Fig. 2: 1; 3: 1) are: length – 160mm; maximum blade width – 48mm; minimum width at the passage of the blade to the back – 13mm; maximum width

of the back – 28mm; width of the butt – 21mm; maximum width of the back in the cross-section – 35mm; butt thickness – 6–9mm; weight – 270g. The second axe (Fig. 2: 2; 3: 2) has the following dimensions: length – 159mm; maximum blade width – 46mm; minimum width at the passage of the blade to the back – 14mm; maximum width of the back – 29mm; width of the butt – 23mm; maximum width of the back in the cross-section – 34mm; butt thickness – 7–10mm; weight – 270g. The third axe, preserved only in part (Fig. 2.3; 3: 3) has the following dimensions: preserved length – 110mm; reconstructed maximum blade width – 56mm; minimum width at the passage of the blade to the back – 17mm; maximum width of the back – 28mm; maximum width of the back in the cross-section – 32mm; weight – 270g. All these specimens have the traces of molding flash on their side walls, while as for the copy preserved fragmentary, it was clearly hammered and polished.

Flanged axes (with a funnel-shaped face), named “the Bohemian type” (Kostrzewski 1964, 11), occurs in several variants, defined by A. Szpunar as variants of “Racibórz”, “Czubin” and “Rawicz” (see Blajer 1999, 24, and others). They are known mainly from hoards, rarely from individual finds, and uncovered occasionally in burial complexes (Blajer 1999, 24; Blajer *et al.* 1994, 147–152).

The artefacts from Oficjałów are most similar to the “Rawicz” variant. Its shape is unique, considering a clear narrowing of the blade at the passage of the blade to the back, which gives it a slightly fan shape, and slightly lesser width of the butt in relation to the maximum width of the back.

Flanged axes were used on the Polish territory in the HA1-HA2 phases of the Bronze Age, although in the case of the “Racibórz” variant, we cannot reject the possibility that the oldest ones came from the BD phase and the youngest ones were in use until the end of the HB1 phase. In the case of the “Rawicz” variant, to which the axes from Oficjałów are most similar, its chronology can be closed within the HA1 phase, *i.e.* between 1200 and 1100 BC. (Blajer 1999, 19, 24, Blajer 2013, 28; see also Górski, Kadrow 1996, 23–15). It is also possible to date the described hoard in the same way.

Oficjałów, where the hoard of flanged axes was found, is located upon the Opatówka, in the central part of the Sandomierz Uplands. It is generally assumed that in the HA1 phase, which corresponds

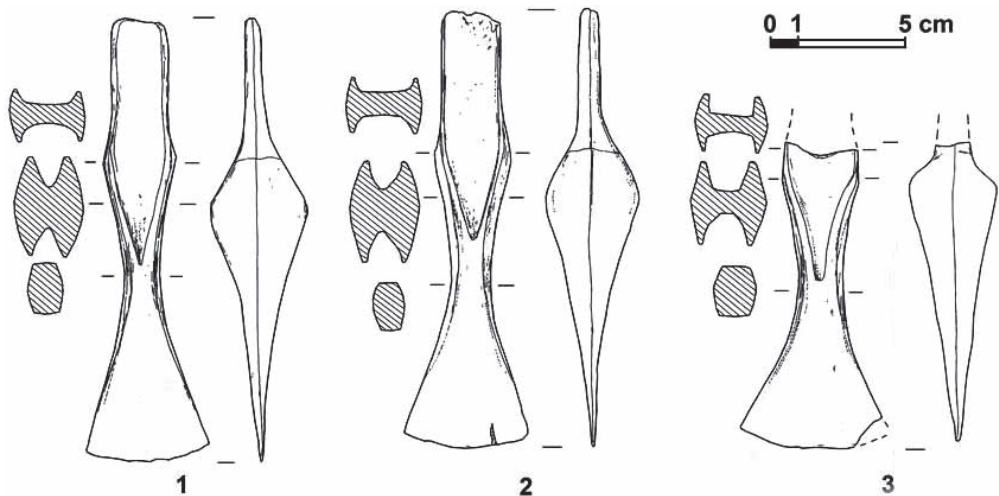


Fig. 2. Hoard of bronze axes from Oficjałów, Opatów district, Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship. Fig. M. Florek

Ryc. 2. Skarb siekier brązowych z Oficjałowa, pow. Opatów, woj. świętokrzyskie. Rys. M. Florek

to the older part of III EB period, which is supposed to date the hoard, the Sandomierz Uplands were occupied by local communities of the Lusatian cultural. According to older studies, it was a border zone between the Central-Polish and the Western-Lesser Poland groups³ of the Lusatian culture (see Gardawski 1979, fig. 16). At present, most of the scholars accept that the settlement of the Lusatian culture on the Sandomierz Uplands, at least in its eastern part, is associated from the beginning with the Tarnobrzeg group (Tarnobrzeg Lusatian culture), with the extent of the latter unit being difficult to define (see Gedl 1989, Maps 29, 30, 31; Czopek 2009, 20).

Only two hoards of bronze items, dated to the HA1-HA2 phase, both of which belonged to the complex Sieniawa type, linked with the Tarnobrzeg group (see Blajer 1999, 124–125), were known from the Sandomierz Uplands. The first one, from Janik, Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski district, contained an open decorated necklace, 3 decorated bracelets with narrowed terminals, a twisted ring and a spiral tube-shaped bead (Blajer 1999, 166–167). The second hoard came from Międzygórze,

³ Otherwise, the Cracow subgroup of the Upper Silesian-Lesser Poland group of the Lusatian culture according to M. Gedl (see: Gedl 1982).



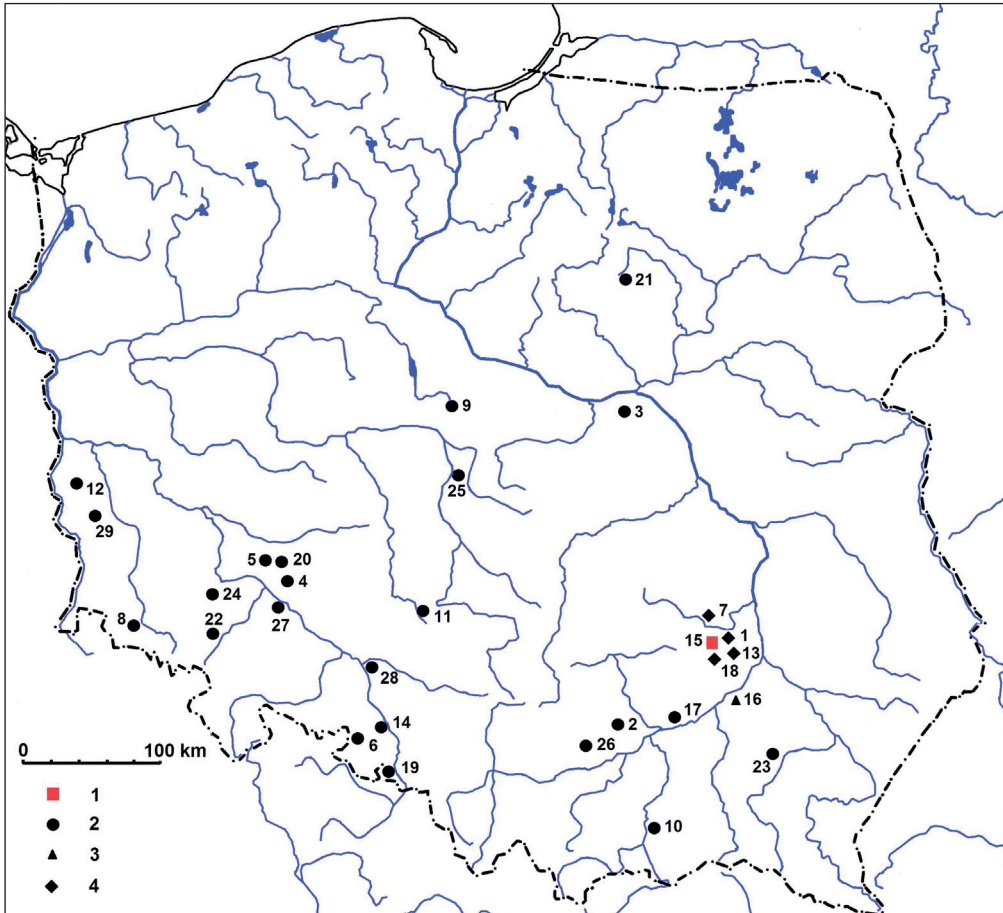
Fig. 3. Hoard of bronze axes from Oficjałów, Opatów district, Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship. Photo M. Florek

Ryc. 3. Skarb siekier brązowych z Oficjałowa, pow. Opatów, woj. świętokrzyskie. Fot. M. Florek

Opatów district, located about 10 km southeast of Oficjałów, included the Sieniawa type bracelet (ring) and the bronze rod (Blajer 1999, 185, further reading). These two hoards are not only the evidence of early (the beginning of the middle period of the Bronze Age) appearance of the Lusatian culture on the Sandomierz Upland, but also its links with the Tarnobrzeg group (Tarnobrzeg Lusatian culture) (see Czopek, Walanus 2003, 187–188)⁴.

The hoard of flanged axes (with a funnel-shaped face), of “the Bohemian type” from Oficjałów indicates quite different directions of influences on the area of the Sandomierz Uplands in the HA1 phase. The axes of this type are frequent in the area from Bohemia and Saxony to Moravia and western Lesser Poland. There are about 150 known items from Poland, discovered mainly in the hoards, but also as individual finds (Blajer 2013, 28). They occur mainly in Silesia, less numerous in the western Lesser Poland, including the areas neighbouring to the southwest with the Sandomierz Uplands (Chruszczyna Mała, Kazimierza

⁴ However, Janik is located on the north-western periphery of the Sandomierz Uplands (actually outside of it), on the left bank of the Kamienna river, while the hoard from Międzygórze “was taken from the ruins of the castle foundation” (see Lubomirski 1873, 34–35), which requires great caution when the conclusions have been drawn on such bases.



Wielka district, Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship; Pietrzec, Busko district, Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship; Witów, Proszowice district, Małopolskie Voivodeship – see Blajer 1999, map 1). On the other hand, as for the interfluvium between the San and Vistula rivers, occupied by the Tarnobrzeg group, we know only one hoard containing such artefacts, from Trzciana, Rzeszów district, Podkarpackie Voivodeship (Blajer 1999, 207–208; 2001, 335) and one individual find, from the area near Padew Narodowa, Tarnobrzeg district, Podkarpackie Voivodeship⁵ (Fig. 4).

This seems to confirm that in the formation of the settlement of Lusatian culture on the Sandomierz Uplands, not only the Tarnobrzeg

⁵ An unpublished artefact, in the collection of the Historical Museum in Tarnobrzeg.

Fig. 4. Hoards with flanged axes (with a funnel-shaped face) and some other hoards and individual finds contemporary with the discussed artefacts discovered in Polish territories. Symbols: 1 – hoard of axes from Oficjałów; 2 – other hoards of flanged axes (with a funnel-shaped face); 3 – individual finds of axes; 4 – other bronze hoards from the Sandomierz Uplands (according to Blajer 1999 with adjunct studies by M. Florek). 1 – Jasice, Opatów district, Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship; 2 – Chruszczyna Mała, Kazimierza Wielka district, Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship; 3 – Czubin, Pruszków district, Mazowieckie Voivodeship; 4 – Dobroszów Oleśnicki, Wrocław district, Śląskie Voivodeship; 5 – Górkowice, Trzebnica district, Dolnośląskie Voivodeship; 6 – Grudynia Wielka, Kędzierzyn-Koźle district, Opolskie Voivodeship; 7 – Janik, Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski district, Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship; 8 – Jelenia Góra – Garbary, Jelenia Góra district, Dolnośląskie Voivodeship; 9 – Korzecznik, Koło district, Wielkopolskie Voivodeship; 10 – Korzenna, Tarnów district, Małopolskie Voivodeship; 11 – Kowale Kolonia, Częstochowa district, Śląskie Voivodeship; 12 – Lubsko, Żary district, Lubuskie Voivodeship; 13 – Międzygórz, Opatów district, Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship; 14 – Naczysławki, Kędzierzyn-Koźle district, Opolskie Voivodeship; 15 – Oficjałów, Opatów district, Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship; 16 – Padew Narodowa, Tarnobrzeg district, Podkarpackie Voivodeship; 17 – Piestrzec, Busko district, Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship; 18 – Przybysławice, Sandomierz district, Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship; 19 – Racibórz, Racibórz district, Śląskie Voivodeship; 20 – Sucha Wielka, Trzebnica district, Dolnośląskie Voivodeship; 21 – Szydłówek, Mława district, Mazowieckie Voivodeship; 22 – Świdnica, Świdnica district, Dolnośląskie Voivodeship; 23 – Trzciana, Rzeszów district, Podkarpackie Voivodeship; 24 – Tyniec Legnicki, Legnica district, Dolnośląskie Voivodeship; 25 – Ułany, Poddębice, Łódzkie Voivodeship; 26 – Witów, Proszowice district, Małopolskie Voivodeship; 27 – Wrocław, Wrocław district, Dolnośląskie Voivodeship; 28 – Zawada, Opole district, Opolskie Voivodeship; 29 – Żary, Żary district, Lubuskie Voivodeship.

Ryc. 4. Skarby z siekierami z piętą lejkowatą i niektóre inne współczesne im skarby i znaleziska pojedyncze na ziemiach polskich. Oznaczenia: 1 skarb siekier z Oficjałowa; 2 – inne skarby siekier z piętą lejkowatą; 3 – znaleziska pojedyncze siekier; 4 – inne skarby z epoki brązu z Wyżyny Sandomierskiej. Wg Blajer 1999 z uzupełnieniami opr. M. Florek. 1 – Jasice, pow. Opatów, woj. świętokrzyskie; 2 – Chruszczyna Mała, pow. Kazimierza Wielka, woj. świętokrzyskie; 3 – Czubin, pow. Pruszków, woj. mazowieckie; 4 – Dobroszów Oleśnicki, pow. Wrocław, woj. dolnośląskie; 5 – Górkowice, pow. Trzebnica, woj. dolnośląskie; 6 – Grudynia Wielka, pow. Kędzierzyn-Koźle, woj. opolskie; 7 – Janik, pow. Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski, woj. świętokrzyskie; 8 – Jelenia Góra – Garbary, pow. Jelenia Góra, woj. dolnośląskie; 9 – Korzecznik, pow. Koło, woj. wielkopolskie; 10 – Korzenna, pow. Tarnów, woj. małopolskie; 11 – Kowale Kolonia, pow. Częstochowa, woj. śląskie; 12 – Lubsko, pow. Żary, woj. lubuskie; 13 – Międzygórz, pow. Opatów, woj. świętokrzyskie; 14 – Naczysławki, pow. Kędzierzyn-Koźle, woj. opolskie; 15 – Oficjałów, pow. Opatów, woj. świętokrzyskie; 16 – Padew Narodowa, pow. tarnobrzeg, woj. podkarpackie; 17 – Piestrzec, pow. Busko, woj. świętokrzyskie; 18 – Przybysławice, pow. Sandomierz, woj. świętokrzyskie; 19 – Racibórz, pow. Racibórz, woj. śląskie; 20 – Sucha Wielka, pow. Trzebnica, woj. dolnośląskie; 21 – Szydłówek, pow. Mława, woj. mazowieckie; 22 – Świdnica, pow. Świdnica, woj. dolnośląskie; 23 – Trzciana, pow. Rzeszów, woj. podkarpackie; 24 – Tyniec Legnicki, pow. Legnica, woj. dolnośląskie; 25 – Ułany, pow. Poddębice, woj. łódzkie; 26 – Witów, pow. Proszowice, woj. małopolskie; 27 – Wrocław, pow. Wrocław, woj. dolnośląskie; 28 – Zawada, pow. Opole, woj. opolskie; 29 – Żary, pow. Żary, woj. lubuskie.

group (Tarnobrzeg Lusatian culture) was involved, but also other local groups, especially the Western-Lesser Poland group, as well as the influence or even the influx of people from other directions were noticed (the subject of the interactions of the area of the Lublin Land see Kłosińska 2005, 284).

In the traditional point of view considering the axe hoard from Oficjałów, it should have been associated with the Lusatian culture from the middle period of the Bronze Age. Such a cultural affiliation can be justified on grounds of the fact that at a distance of about 200m to the north-east from where it was found, a settlement of the Lusatian culture – Oficjałów site 6 (AZP 87–70/153) was identified, although it was dated – purely on the basis of ceramics found on the surface – at the beginning of the Iron Age (HB-C phase), and therefore younger than the hoard⁶.

It should be noted, however, that the possibility of longer, compared to neighbouring areas, occupation of the Trzciniec culture on the Sandomierz Uplands, even until the beginning of the HB2 phase, *i.e.* the 5th period of the Bronze Age (see Florek 2009, 215–219; Makarowicz 2010, Tab. 1.6, 1.7, fig. 1.10, 1.13, 1, 14, 1.16; see also Blajer 2013, 24). Similarly, even until the end of the third period of the Bronze Age, the local group of the Trzciniec culture stayed in the “Lusatian” surroundings near Kraków (Górski 2006, 292–293). Therefore, we cannot exclude the fact that the hoard from Oficjałów, together with the hoard from Międzygórze, and also with similarly dated individual loose finds of bronze ornaments (the armband with spirals of the Błogocice type from Jasice, Opatów district – Florek 1998, 20 and Table III: a; the solid bracelet with slightly expanded terminals from Przybysławice, Sandomierz district, Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship – Florek 2016) can be combined with the population of the Trzciniec culture, whose local grouping (the Opatów group according to W. Blajer terminology, see *idem* 1987, 29–31) could have survived longer on the Sandomierz Uplands. Similarly, as the mentioned artefacts, this would prove its contacts with the “Lusatian environment.”

Finally, it is necessary to devote a few words to the character of the find. We are certainly dealing here with a hoard (deposit), so the objects

⁶ The site 6 in Oficjałów (AZP 87–70 / 153) was discovered in 1989 during AZP research (ARPP – Archaeological Record of Poland Project) conducted by the Institute of Archaeology UMCS in Lublin. Documentation of the study is in the archive of Sandomierz Delegation WUOZ in Kielce.

deliberately hidden (buried). As the trial excavation showed, it was buried outside the settlement, the cemetery or the land somehow used, and relatively shallow. The items belonging to the hoard are axes of only one type, almost identical, although they certainly did not come from one casting mould, as evidenced by small differences in their dimensions. It is extremely puzzling that the weight of both fully preserved axes is the same as well as the weight of the axe that is preserved in about its half – all items weigh 270 grams. This can confirm the assumption that some of the objects coming from the bronze hoards (especially axes and sickles) were used in two ways: as tools and as standard units of metal (see Blajer 1999, 141, further literature).

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