

---

---

# Mathematical Excalibur

Volume 1, Number 4

September-October, 1995

---

---

## Olympiad Corner

The 36th International Mathematical Olympiad was held in Toronto, Canada on July, 1995. The following six problems were given to the contestants. (The country inside the parantheses are the problem proposers.) -Editors

### First Day

#### Question 1. (Bulgaria)

Let  $A, B, C$  and  $D$  be four distinct points on a line, in that order. The circles with diameters  $AC$  and  $BD$  intersect at the points  $X$  and  $Y$ . The line  $XY$  meets  $BC$  at the point  $Z$ . Let  $P$  be a point on the line  $XY$  different from  $Z$ . The line  $CP$  intersects the circle with diameter  $AC$  at the points  $C$  and  $M$ , and the line  $BP$  intersects the circle with diameter  $BD$  at the points  $B$  and  $N$ . Prove that the lines  $AM, DN$  and  $XY$  are concurrent.

#### Question 2. (Russia)

Let  $a, b$  and  $c$  be positive real numbers such that  $abc=1$ . Prove that

$$\frac{1}{a^3(b+c)} + \frac{1}{b^3(c+a)} + \frac{1}{c^3(a+b)} \geq \frac{3}{2}.$$

(continued on page 4)

**Editors:** Cheung, Pak-Hong, Curr. Studies, HKU  
Ko, Tsz-Mei, EEE Dept, HKUST  
Leung, Tat-Wing, Appl. Math Dept, HKPU  
Li, Kin-Yin, Math Dept, HKUST  
Ng, Keng Po Roger, ITC, HKPU

**Artist:** Yeung, Sau-Ying Camille, MFA, CU

**Acknowledgment:** Thanks to Debbie Leung for her help in typesetting.

The editors welcome contributions from all teachers and students. With your submission, please include your name, address, school, email, telephone and fax numbers (if available). Electronic submissions, especially in TeX, MS Word and WordPerfect, are encouraged. The deadline for receiving material for the next issue is October 15, 1995. Send all correspondence to:

Dr. Tsz-Mei Ko  
Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering  
Hong Kong University of Science and Technology  
Clear Water Bay, Kowloon, Hong Kong

Fax: 2358-1485

Email: eetszmei@uxmail.ust.hk

## Descartes' Rule of Signs

Andy Liu

University of Alberta, Canada

Let  $P(x)$  be a polynomial of degree  $n$  with complex coefficients. The Fundamental Theorem of Algebra tells us that it has exactly  $n$  complex roots. We are interested in the number of real roots in the case where the coefficients are real. We may assume that the leading coefficient is 1 and the constant term is non-zero.

As an example, consider

$$p(x) = x^6 - 6x^5 + 10x^4 - 2x^3 - 3x^2 + 4x - 12.$$

As it turns out, it has four real roots  $-1, 2$  (with multiplicity 2) and 3, and two non-real roots  $i$  and  $-i$ .

In general, we may not be able to find the roots of  $P(x)$ . However, we can obtain some information about the number of positive roots from the number of sign-switches of  $P(x)$ . If we consider the sequence of the signs of the non-zero coefficients of  $P(x)$  in order, a sign-switch is said to occur if a  $+$  is followed immediately by a  $-$  or vice versa.

For  $p(x)$  above, the sequence is  $+-+---$ . Hence the number of sign switches is 5.

The first part of Descartes' Rule of Signs states that the number of positive roots of  $P(x)$  has the same parity as the number of sign-switches of  $P(x)$ . Clearly, the latter is even if and only if the constant term of  $P(x)$  is positive (because the sign sequence begins and ends with  $+$ ). What we have to prove is that the same goes for the number of positive roots of  $P(x)$ .

From the Fundamental Theorem of Algebra,  $P(x)$  is a product of linear factors and irreducible quadratic factors. Now the constant term of a quadratic factor with a negative

discriminant must be positive. The constant term of a linear factor is positive if and only if it corresponds to a negative root. It follows that the sign of the constant term of  $P(x)$  is positive if and only if the number of positive roots of  $P(x)$  is even.

Since the number of sign-switches of  $p(x)$  is 5, we can tell that it has an odd number of positive roots without trying to find them.

The second part of Descartes' Rule of Signs states that the number of positive roots of  $P(x)$  is less than or equal to the number of sign-switches of  $P(x)$ . We shall build up  $P(x)$  as follows. Start with the product of all irreducible quadratic factors and all linear factors corresponding to negative roots. What we have to prove is that the number of sign-switches increases every time we introduce a linear factor corresponding to a positive root.

For any polynomial  $Q(x)$  with real coefficients, leading coefficient 1 and a non-zero constant term, we group consecutive terms of the same signs together to express  $Q(x)$  as an alternating sum of polynomials of positive coefficients. Then the sign-switches occur precisely between summands. We claim that when we multiply  $Q(x)$  by  $x-t$  for some positive number  $t$ , the original sign-switches are preserved, while at least one additional sign-switch occurs.

Consider each summand in turn. The leading coefficient is positive. This does not change after multiplication by  $x$ . However, we may have to combine it with  $-t$  times the last term of the preceding summand. Since there is a sign-switch

(continued on page 2)

### Descartes' Rule of Signs

(continued from page 1)

between the two summands, the term with which it is to be combined is also positive. This justifies the first claim. The second claim follows since the constant terms of  $Q(x)$  and  $(x-1)Q(x)$  have opposite signs. This completes the proof of Descartes' Rule of Signs.

Let us illustrate the proof of the second part with

$$p(x) = (x^2+1)(x+1)(x-2)^2(x-3).$$

We first let

$$q(x) = (x^2+1)(x+1) = x^3+x^2+x+1.$$

Since the number of sign-switches is 0, there is only one summand. We have

$$\begin{aligned} q_1(x) &= (x-2)q(x) \\ &= (x-2)(x^3+x^2+x+1) \\ &= x^4-x^3-x^2-x-2 \\ &= x^4-(x^3+x^2+x+2). \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} q_2(x) &= (x-2)q_1(x) \\ &= (x-2)x^4 - (x-2)(x^3+x^2+x+2) \\ &= (x^5-2x^4) - (x^4-x^3-x^2-4) \\ &= x^5-3x^4+x^3+x^2+4. \end{aligned}$$

Note that we have combined the terms  $-x^4$  and  $-2x^4$  which have the same sign. Finally,

$$\begin{aligned} p(x) &= (x-3)q_2(x) \\ &= (x-3)x^5 - (x-3)(3x^4+x^3+x^2+4) \\ &= (x^6-3x^5) - (3x^5-9x^4+x^4-2x^3-3x^2+4x-12) \\ &= x^6-6x^5+10x^4-2x^3-3x^2+4x-12. \end{aligned}$$

We point out that using the same argument, we can prove that the number of negative roots of  $P(x)$  is not greater than the number of sign-switches in  $P(-x)$ , and differs from it by an even number. For example, the number of sign-switches in  $p(-x) = x^6+6x^5+10x^4+2x^3-3x^2-4x-12$  is 1, and we can conclude that  $p(x)$  has exactly one negative root.

### 希臘幾何學的發展

林達威, 鄧智傑, 王俊威

Form 5, St. Paul's Co-ed College

「幾何」一詞，拉丁文是 *geometria*，其中 "geo-" 代表「地」（與 *geography*, *geology* 中 "geo-" 的意思一致），而 "metria" 則與今天英文的 "metric" 相關，代表「量度」。兩部份合起來，就是「量地的學問」——原來古埃及的尼羅河每年都泛濫一次，摧毀河畔的農地，洪水過後，政府為重新劃定的農地量度面積，以決定每戶所須繳付的賦稅；幾何學就在這情況下應運而生。後來，這些知識輾轉傳入希臘，逐漸發展成一整套完整的學說。

希臘數學史可分為三個時期：第一段從愛奧尼亞學派到柏拉圖學派為止；第二段是亞歷山大前期，從歐幾里得得到羅馬攻陷希臘為止；最後則是亞歷山大後期。

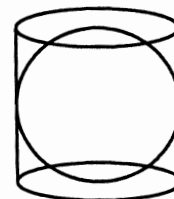
第一段時期的希臘共有六個主要學派，其中以奉行素食的畢達哥拉斯 (Pythagoras) 學派最負盛名，他們的「畢氏定理」(Pythagorean Theorem) 是理科必備的工具。這時期，很多數學家都有重要的發現，雖然沒有建立一套完整的學說，但為日後阿基米得等人的數學理論建立了一個良好的基礎。

第二段時期中最偉大的數學家可算是歐幾里得 (Euclid)。歐幾里得深諳柏拉圖幾何的精髓，經過嚴謹的演繹和推論，寫成了《原本》(Elements) 一書。《原本》為幾何建立了一套完整的理論，在 1637 年笛卡爾 (Descartes) 引入「坐標幾何」前，它佔幾何學的領導地位。它也是用公理法建立起演繹數學體系的最早典範——所謂「公理法」，就是從一些大家都公認可以接受，毋須加以證明的「公理」出發，通過合乎邏輯的推論而得出被驗證的結果。這可說是人類從直觀事物邁向抽象思維的重要一步！

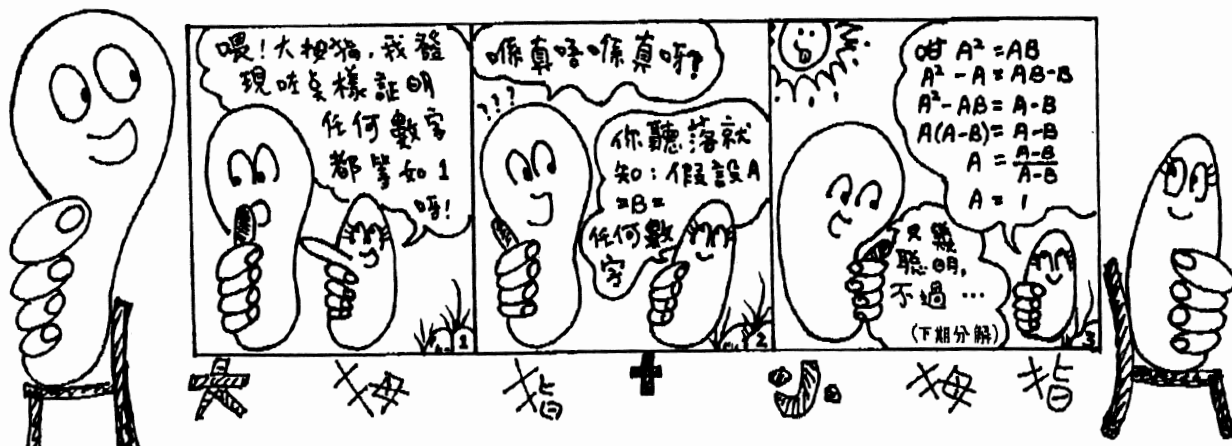
亞歷山大前期的另一位偉大的數學家是阿基米德。在他所著的《圓的度量》中，阿基米德利用外切與內接九十六邊形求得圓周率  $\pi$  的兩個近似值：

$$3\frac{10}{71} < \pi < 3\frac{1}{7}.$$

假設圓的半徑為 1，則圓周剛好為  $2\pi$ ，此數值必須大於內接六邊形的周界，而六邊形的周界為 6。故此求得  $\pi$  的下限為 3。同理，利用圓形的外切六邊形，可求得  $\pi$  的上限為 3.4641。假若我們把六邊形換作十二邊形、廿四邊形，...，則（內接或外切）多邊形的周界會越來越接近圓，而相應的上限及下限也會趨近  $\pi$  的真實數值。阿基米得利用圓形的外切與內接九十六邊形，求得  $3\frac{10}{71} < \pi < 3\frac{1}{7}$ 。阿基米得的另一項建樹是體積的計算，例如圓球體積是它的外接圓柱體積的三份二。阿基米德還發現圓球的表面積恰巧也是外接圓柱表面積的三份二，他非常欣賞這定理，吩咐親人把這個圖形刻在他的墓碑上（見圖）。



最後一段是亞歷山大後期。這個時期的數學家，以歐幾里得的《原本》為根據，作出了不少增潤修補的工作，而我們現在所學的平面幾何，亦在這時候逐漸形成。讀到這裏，同學們該明白到這門學問是眾多數學家集體智慧的結晶及長期辛勞的成果。



### Problem Corner

We welcome readers to submit solutions to the problems posed below for publication consideration. Solutions should be preceded by the solver's name, address and school affiliation. Please send submissions to *Dr. Tsz-Mei Ko, Dept of EEE, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Clear Water Bay, Kowloon*. The deadline for submitting solutions is October 15, 1995.

**Problem 16.** Let  $a, b, c, p$  be real numbers, with  $a, b, c$  not all equal, such that  $a + \frac{1}{b} = b + \frac{1}{c} = c + \frac{1}{a} = p$ .

Determine all possible values of  $p$  and prove that  $abc + p = 0$ . (Source: 1983 Dutch Mathematical Olympiad.)

**Problem 17.** Find all sets of positive integers  $x, y$  and  $z$  such that  $x \leq y \leq z$  and  $x^y + y^z = z^x$ .

**Problem 18.** For real numbers  $a, b, c$ , define

$f(a, b, c) = a + b - |a - b| - |a + b + |a - b| - 2c|$ . Show that  $f(a, b, c) > 0$  if and only if  $f(b, c, a) > 0$  if and only if  $f(c, a, b) > 0$ .

**Problem 19.** Suppose  $A$  is a point inside a given circle and is different from the center. Consider all chords (excluding the diameter) passing through  $A$ . What is the locus of the intersection of the tangent lines at the endpoints of these chords?

**Problem 20.** For  $n > 1$ , let  $2n$  chess pieces be placed on any  $2n$  squares of an  $n \times n$  chessboard. Show that there are 4 pieces among them that formed the vertices of a parallelogram. (Note that if  $2n - 1$  pieces are placed on the squares of the first column and the first row, then there is no parallelogram. So  $2n$  is the best possible.)

\*\*\*\*\*

### Solutions

\*\*\*\*\*

**Problem 11.** Simplify

$$\sum_{n=1}^{1995} \tan n \tan(n+1).$$

(There is an answer with two terms involving  $\tan 1, \tan 1996$  and integers.)

**Solution:** Independent solutions by Iris CHAN Chau Ping (St. Catherine's

School for Girls, Kwun Tong), CHAN Chi Kin (Pak Kau English School), CHAN Sze Tai, Angie (Ming Kei College), CHAN Wing Sum (HKUST), CHOW Chak On (HKUST), CHUI Yuk Man (Queen Elizabeth School), LEUNG Ka Fai (Ju Ching Chu Secondary School (Yuen Long)), LIU Wai Kwong (Pui Tak Canossian College), Alex MOK Chi Chiu (Homantin Government Secondary School), TAM Tak Wing (Delia Memorial School (Yuet Wah)) and WOO Chin Yeung (St. Peter's Secondary School).

From  $\tan 1 = \tan[(n+1) - n] = \frac{\tan(n+1) - \tan n}{1 + \tan n \tan(n+1)}$ , we get

$$\sum_{n=1}^{1995} \tan(n) \tan(n+1) = \sum_{n=1}^{1995} \left( \frac{\tan(n+1) - \tan(n)}{\tan 1} - 1 \right) = \frac{\tan 1996 - \tan 1}{\tan 1} - 1995 = \frac{\tan 1996}{\tan 1} - 1996.$$

*Comments:* This problem illustrates the telescoping method of summing a series, i.e., by some means, write  $a_n$  as  $b_{n+1} - b_n$ , then summing  $a_n$  will result in many cancellations yielding a simple answer.

**Problem 12.** Show that for any integer  $n > 12$ , there is a right triangle whose sides are integers and whose area is between  $n$  and  $2n$ . (Source: 1993 Korean Mathematical Olympiad.)

**Solution:** WONG Chun Keung, St. Paul's Co-ed College.

Consider triangle  $A$  with sides  $3d, 4d, 5d$ , which has area  $6d^2$ . So for  $n$  in the interval  $(3d^2 + 1, 6d^2 - 1)$ , triangle  $A$  has an area between  $n$  and  $2n$ . For  $d \geq 3, 6d^2 - 1 - [3(d+1)^2 + 1] = 3(d-1)^2 - 8 > 0$ . So the intervals  $(3d^2 + 1, 6d^2 - 1)$  with  $d = 3, 4, 5, \dots$  cover all positive integers  $n$  greater than or equal to 28. For  $d = 2$ , triangle  $A$  has area 24, which takes care of the cases  $n = 13, 14, \dots, 23$ . Finally, the cases  $n = 24, 25, 26, 27$  are taken care of by the triangle with sides 5, 12, 13, which has area 30.

*Other commended solvers:* CHAN Wing Sum (HKUST) and LIU Wai Kwong (Pui Tak Canossian College).

**Problem 13.** Suppose  $x_k, y_k$  ( $k = 1, 2, \dots, 1995$ ) are positive and  $x_1 + x_2 + \dots + x_{1995} = y_1 + y_2 + \dots + y_{1995} = 1$ .

Prove that

$$\sum_{k=1}^{1995} \frac{x_k y_k}{x_k + y_k} \leq \frac{1}{2}.$$

**Solution:** Independent solution by CHAN Chi Kin (Pak Kau English School), CHAN Wing Sum (HKUST), KWOK Wing Yin (St. Clare's Girls' School) and LEUNG Ka Fai (Ju Ching Chu Secondary School (Yuen Long)).

Since  $x_k y_k / (x_k + y_k) \leq (x_k + y_k) / 4$  (is equivalent to  $(x_k - y_k)^2 \geq 0$  by simple algebra), we get

$$\sum_{k=1}^{1995} \frac{x_k y_k}{x_k + y_k} \leq \sum_{k=1}^{1995} \frac{x_k + y_k}{4} = \frac{1}{2}.$$

*Other commended solvers:* Iris CHAN Chau Ping (St. Catherine's School for Girls, Kwun Tong), CHEUNG Lap Kin (Hon Wah Middle School), CHOW Chak On (HKUST), LIU Wai Kwong (Pui Tak Canossian College), Alex MOK Chi Chiu (Homantin Government Secondary School), TAM Tak Wing (Delia Memorial School (Yuet Wah)), WONG Chun Keung (St. Paul's Co-ed College) and WOO Chin Yeung (St. Peter's Secondary School).

**Problem 14.** If  $\triangle ABC, \triangle A'B'C'$  are (directly) similar to each other and  $\triangle AA'A'', \triangle BB'B'', \triangle CC'C''$  are also (directly) similar to each other, then show that  $\triangle A''B''C''$ ,  $\triangle ABC$  are (directly) similar to each other.

**Solution:** Independent solution by CHAN Wing Sum (HKUST) and LIU Wai Kwong (Pui Tak Canossian College).

We will use capital letters for points and small letters for the corresponding complex numbers. Since  $\triangle AA'A'', \triangle BB'B'', \triangle CC'C''$  are (directly) similar to each other,

$$\frac{a'' - a}{a' - a} = \frac{b'' - b}{b' - b} = \frac{c'' - c}{c' - c} = r.$$

Then  $a'' = ra' + (1-r)a, b'' = rb' + (1-r)b, c'' = rc' + (1-r)c$ . Since  $\triangle ABC, \triangle A'B'C'$  are (directly) similar to each other,

$$\frac{b - a}{c - a} = \frac{b' - a'}{c' - a'}.$$

Then

$$\frac{b'' - a''}{c'' - a''} = \frac{r(b' - a') + (1-r)(b - a)}{r(c' - a') + (1-r)(c - a)} = \frac{b - a}{c - a}.$$

(continued on page 4)

