The Egyptian Tangram

Properties of a new 5-piece tangram

mmaca

March 21, 2020

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A square dissection firstly proposed as a tangram in:

Luna-Mota, C. (2019) *"El tangram egipci: diari de disseny"* Nou Biaix, 44

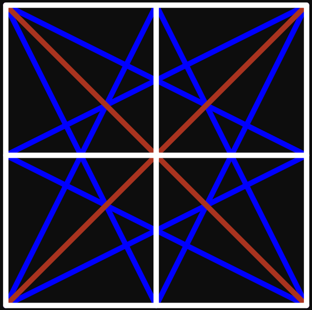
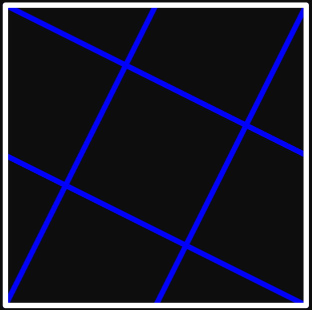
Origins

The Egyptian Tangram inspiration comes from the study of two other 5-piece tangrams...

The “Five Triangles” & “Greek-Cross” tangrams

Origins

...and their underlying grids

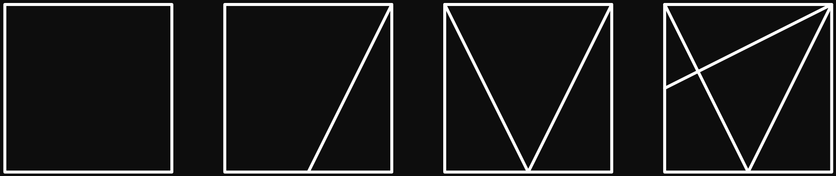
 

The “Five Triangles” & “Greek-Cross” underlying grids

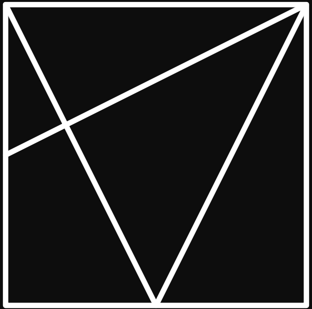
Design Process

The Egyptian Tangram was the result of an heuristic incremental design process:

Take a square and keep adding "the most interesting straight cut" until you have a dissection with 5 or more pieces.



Design Process



To make an Egyptian Tangram:

1. Connect the midpoint of the lower side with the upper corners.
2. Connect the midpoint of the left side with the top right corner.

Antecedents

It turns out that this figure is not new...

See problem 3 from:

Detemple, D. & Harold, S. (1996) *"A Round-Up of Square Problems"*

Mathematics Magazine, 69:1

...but, to the best of our knowledge,
nobody used it before **as a tangram**

Antecedents

The name is not new either...

This dissection is often called “Egyptian Puzzle” or “Egyptian Tangram”

...but there is a good reason to consider our dissection the real “Egyptian Tangram”

(even if it was designed in Barcelona)

Antecedents

The underlying grid is also a well known figure:

Brunés, T. (1967) *"The Secrets of Ancient Geometry – and Its Use"*

Bankoff, L. & W. Trigg, C. (1974) *"The Ubiquitous 3:4:5 Triangle"*, Mathematics Magazine, 47:2

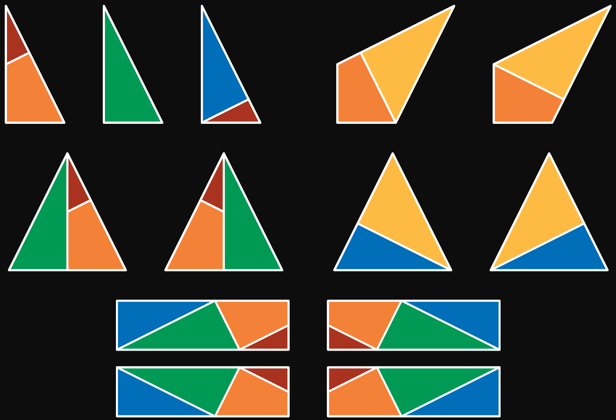
The pieces

- Just five pieces
- All pieces are different
- All pieces are asymmetric
- Areas are integer and not *too different*
- All sides are multiples of 1 or $\sqrt{5}$
- All angles are linear combinations of 90° and $\alpha = \arctan\left(\frac{1}{2}\right) \approx 26,565^\circ$

Name	**Area**	**Sides**	**Angles**
T1	1	$1,\ 2,\ \sqrt{5}$	$90,\ \alpha,\ 90-\alpha$
T4	4	$2,\ 4,\ 2\sqrt{5}$	$90,\ \alpha,\ 90-\alpha$
T5	5	$\sqrt{5},\ 2\sqrt{5},\ 5$	$90,\ \alpha,\ 90-\alpha$
T6	6	$3,\ 4,\ 5$	$90,\ 90-2\alpha,\ 2\alpha$
Q4	4	$1,\ 3,\ \sqrt{5},\ \sqrt{5}$	$90,\ 90-\alpha,\ 90,\ 90+\alpha$

The pieces

Although all pieces are asymmetric and different, they often combine to make symmetric shapes



The pieces

This means that it is very rare for an Egyptian Tangram figure to have a unique solution

There are three different solutions for the square and, in all three cases, two of the corners of the square are built as a sum of acute angles!

Why we called it the *Egyptian* Tangram?

The smallest pieces of the Xinese and Greek-Cross Tangrams can be used to build all the other pieces...

...but you cannot do the same with the Egyptian Tangram because of T6

Why we called it the *Egyptian* Tangram?

Initially, T6 was considered as the *leftover* piece that results from cutting all these 1:2:$\sqrt{5}$ triangles from the borders of the square.

But it turned out to be a very well known triangle...

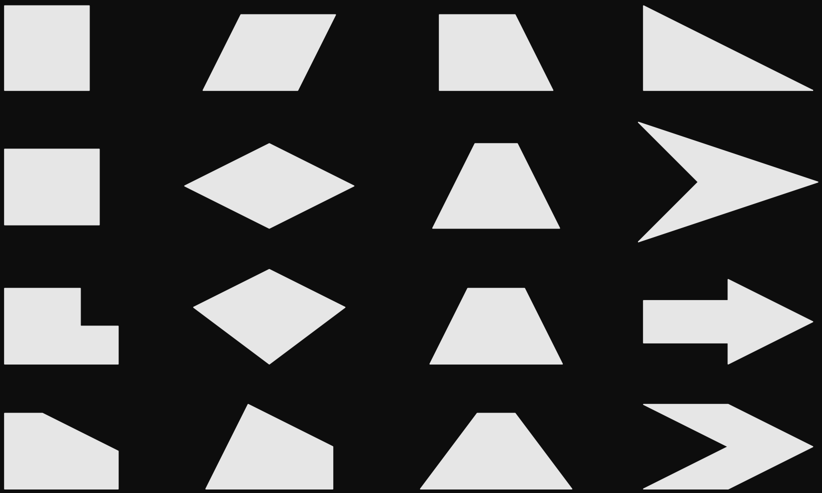
...the **Egyptian** Triangle (3:4:5)

and, hence, the name

Egyptian Tangram Puzzles

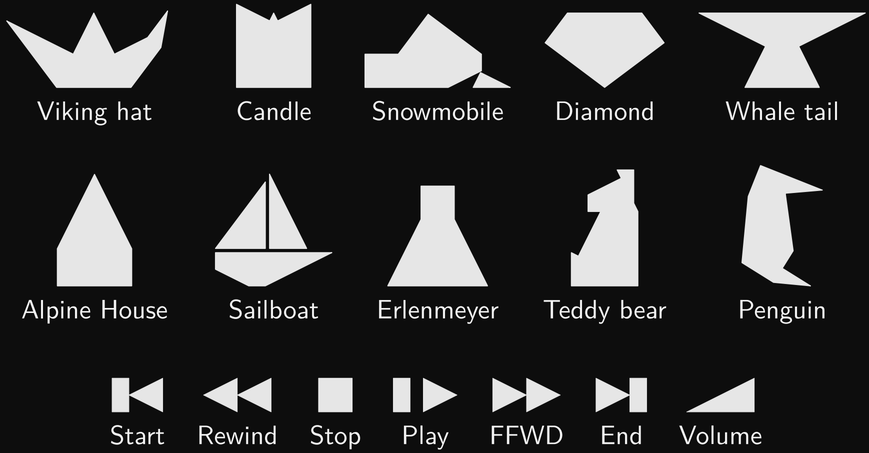
Geometric figures

Use all five pieces to build these figures:



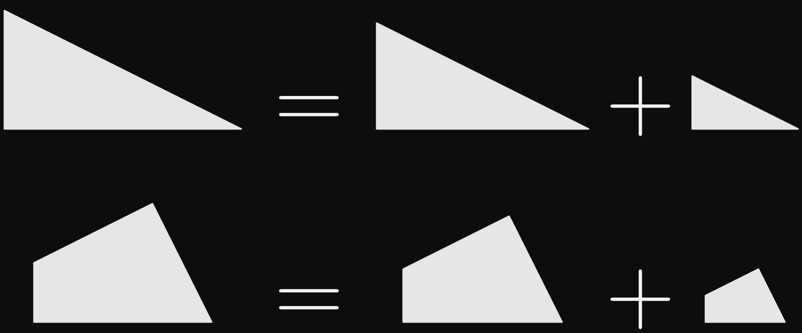
Realistic figures

Use all five pieces to build these figures:



Sum of similar figures

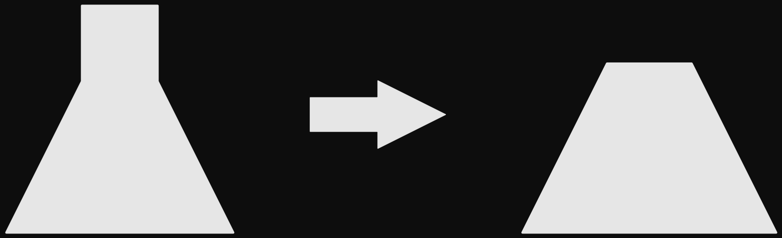
Use all 5 pieces to build the single figure in the LHS, then use them to build the two figures on the RHS



In both equations, the figures are similar and areas are in ratio 5 : 4 : 1

The Erlenmeyer paradox!

Both figures use all 5 pieces...



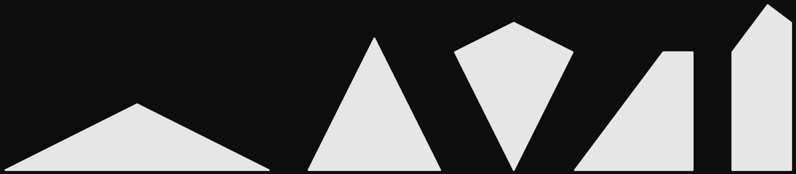
Where did the Erlenmeyer's neck go?

Geometric figures with T1, T4, T5 & T6

Build these nine figures using just
the four triangles of the Egyptian Tangram

11 convex figures with T1, T4 & T5

You can make 11 convex figures with T1, T4 & T5:



See: Brügner, G. (1984) *"Three-Triangle-Tangram"*, Bit, 24

The ten triangles

Could you prove that there are just 10 triangles you can make with one or more pieces of the Egyptian Tangram?

How many solutions could you find for each figure?

Top row areas: 20, 16, 9, 5, 4, 1   Bottom row areas: 15, 10, 10, 6

The three solutions of the square

Could you prove that there are just
three different solutions for the square?

What's the area of this square? What's its perimeter?

How many times do you find $\sqrt{5}$ in the Egyptian Triangle pieces?

Mathematical Properties

Golden Rectangle — I

The dashed rectangle proportions are 1:φ

where $\varphi = \frac{1+\sqrt{5}}{2}$ is the golden ratio

Golden Rectangle — II

The dashed rectangle proportions are 1:φ

where $\varphi = \frac{1+\sqrt{5}}{2}$ is the golden ratio

Golden Rectangle — III

The dashed rectangle proportions are 1:φ

where $\varphi = \frac{1+\sqrt{5}}{2}$ is the golden ratio

Golden Rectangle — IV

The dashed rectangles proportions are 1:φ

where $\varphi = \frac{1+\sqrt{5}}{2}$ is the golden ratio

φ and $\sqrt{5}$ are irrational

This is a golden rectangle, which means that $\frac{\text{base}}{\text{height}} = \varphi$, the golden ratio.

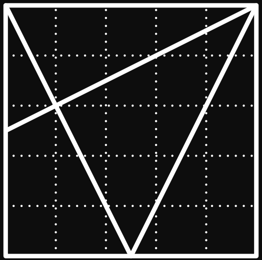
If we remove a square, what remains is also a golden rectangle: $\frac{\text{height}}{\text{base-height}} = \varphi$

If we assume that $\varphi = \frac{b}{h}$, with b and h coprime integers, then $\varphi = \frac{h}{b-h}$ is an equivalent fraction, with a smaller integer numerator and a smaller integer denominator, which is absurd. Therefore, our initial assumption must be false.

And, since $\varphi = \frac{1+\sqrt{5}}{2}$ is irrational, $2\varphi - 1 = \sqrt{5}$ must be irrational too.

The Egyptian Tangram and the 5×5 grid

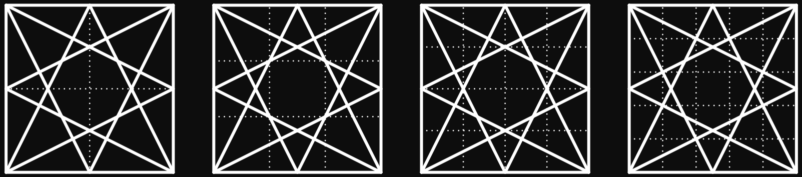
Using the intersection point of the Egyptian Tangram...



...you can divide the square into 5×5 smaller squares!

You can use the grid to build other grids

Using the intersection points of this figure...



...you can divide the square into:

2×2, 3×3, 4×4 or 5×5 smaller squares!

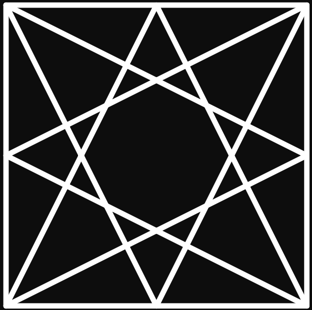
The areas of the grid

The relative sizes of these polygons are...

Small Triangles:	1	**Small Kites:**	3	**Whole Square:**	120
Big Triangles:	6	**Big Kites:**	8	**Octagon:**	20

Find the 24 egyptian triangles

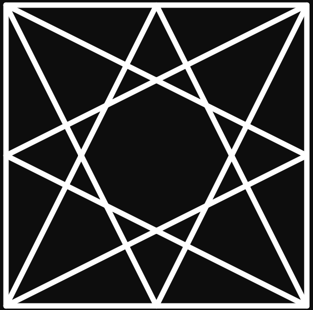
There are 24 egyptian triangles in this figure...



...they come in 3 sizes and there are 8 of each kind.

Find the 24 1:2:$\sqrt{5}$ triangles

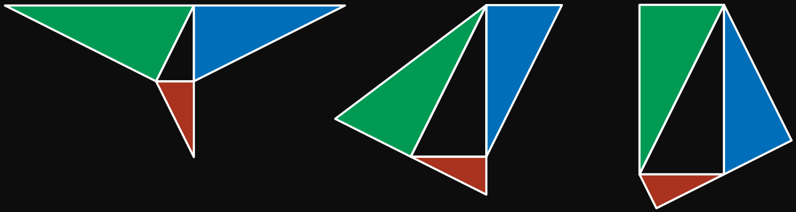
There are 24 1:2:$\sqrt{5}$ triangles in this figure...



...they come in 3 sizes and there are 8 of each kind.

Pythagoras with T1, T4 & T5

Since $\quad \text{area(T1)} + \text{area(T4)} = \text{area(T5)} \quad \ldots$

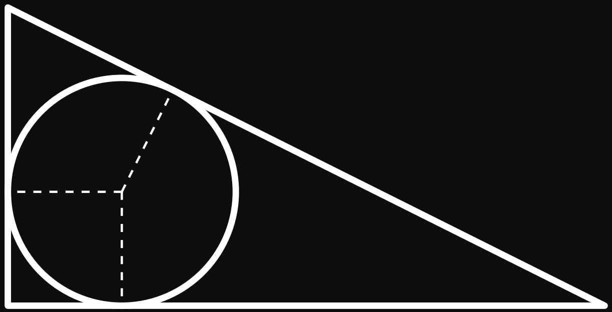


...you can verify three cases of Pythagoras' theorem

(and these particular cases turn out to be T1, T4 & T5 right triangles!)

$1{:}2{:}\sqrt{5}$ incenter and φ

Prove that if the inradius of a $1{:}2{:}\sqrt{5}$ triangle is 1...



...its shorter leg measures $\varphi + 1 = \varphi^2 = \frac{3+\sqrt{5}}{2}$

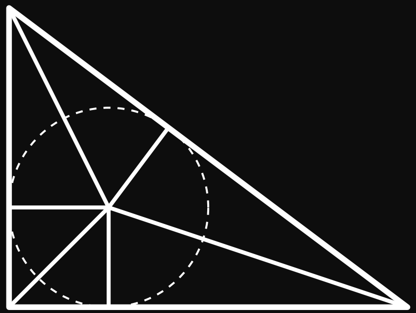
3:4:5 **incenter**

If we overlay T6 and T1 as shown in the figure...

...a T1 vertex lies on the incenter of T6

Dissecting 3:4:5 — I

You can use this dissection of T6 to prove that...

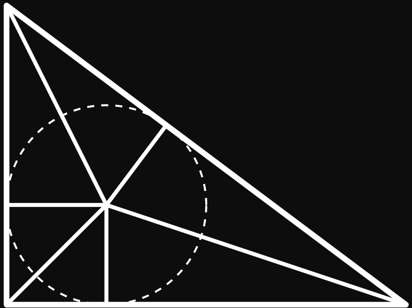


$$\frac{\pi}{2} = \arctan\left(\frac{1}{1}\right) + \arctan\left(\frac{1}{2}\right) + \arctan\left(\frac{1}{3}\right)$$

(consider the sum of the angles touching the vertices of T6 and divide by 2)

Dissecting 3:4:5 — II

You can use this dissection of T6 to prove that...

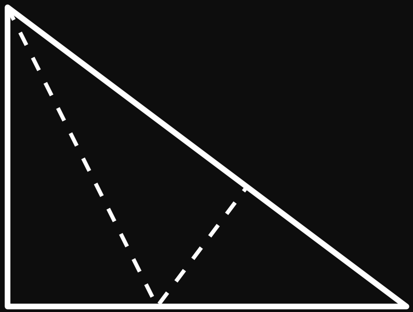


$$\pi = \arctan(1) + \arctan(2) + \arctan(3)$$

(consider the sum of the angles touching the incenter of T6 and divide by 2)

Dissecting 3:4:5 — **III**

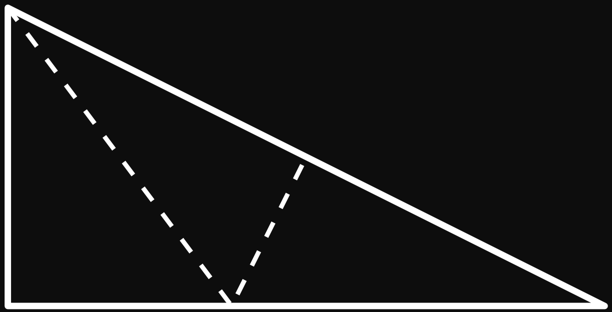
You can dissect a 3:4:5 triangle into...



...a smaller 3:4:5 triangle and
two congruent 1:2:$\sqrt{5}$ triangles

Dissecting $1{:}2{:}\sqrt{5}$ — I

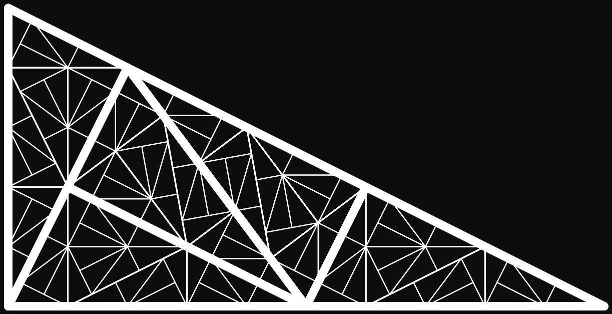
You can dissect a $1{:}2{:}\sqrt{5}$ triangle into...



...a 3:4:5 triangle and
two congruent $1{:}2{:}\sqrt{5}$ triangles

Dissecting $1{:}2{:}\sqrt{5}$ — II

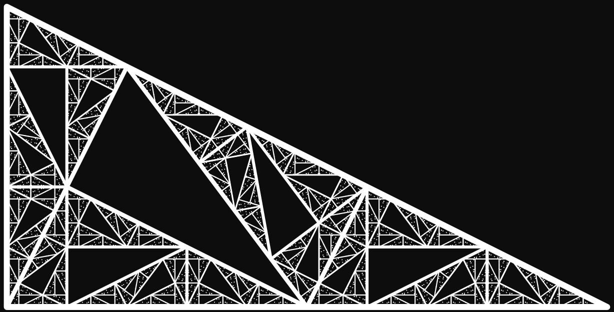
You can assemble a $1{:}2{:}\sqrt{5}$ triangle aggregating...



...five congruent $1{:}2{:}\sqrt{5}$ triangles
and iterate to get the **Pinwheel tiling** of the plane

Dissecting $1{:}2{:}\sqrt{5}$ — III

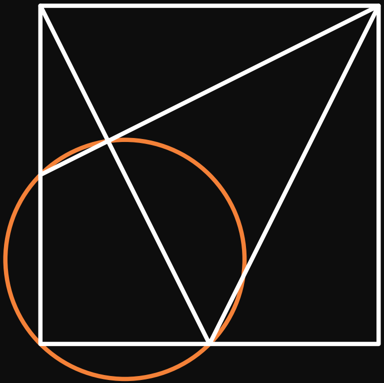
You can dissect a $1{:}2{:}\sqrt{5}$ triangle into...



...five congruent $1{:}2{:}\sqrt{5}$ triangles, remove the central one and iterate to get the **Pinwheel fractal**

Q4 is a cyclic quadrilateral

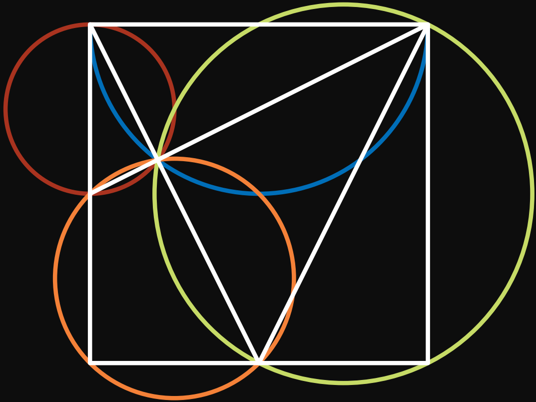
Since oposite angles add to π...



...Q4 is a cyclic quadrilateral

The circumcircles — I

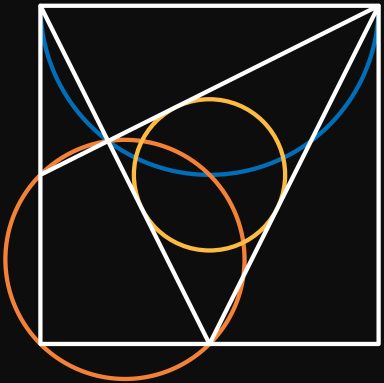
All circumcircles pass through a common point...



...and C(T6) = C(T5) passes through the center of C(Q4) & C(T4)

The circumcircles — II

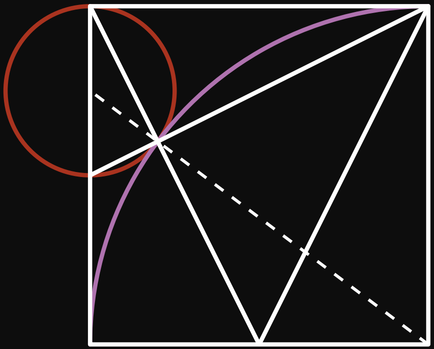
These cirmcumcircles intersect at the square's center...



...which happens to be T6's incenter

Tangent circles — I

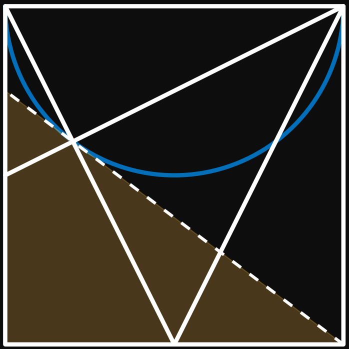
These three points are aligned...



...and these two circles are tangent

Tangent circles — II

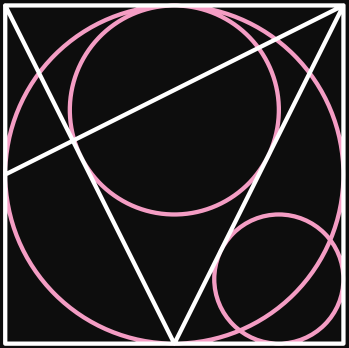
The line is tangent to this circle...



...and the right triangle below is an Egyptian Triangle

Tangent circles — III

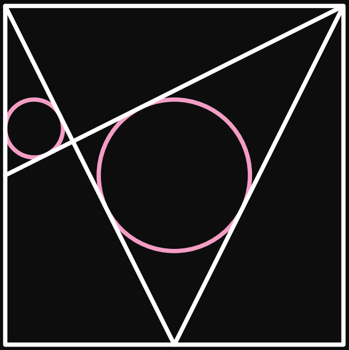
The radius of these three circles are in ratio $1{:}\varphi{:}\varphi^2$



where $\varphi = \frac{1+\sqrt{5}}{2}$ is the golden ratio

Tangent circles — IV

The radius of these two circles are in ratio $1{:}\varphi^2$

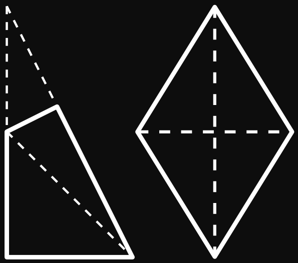


where $\varphi = \frac{1+\sqrt{5}}{2}$ is the golden ratio

Angles of Q4 in the Golden Rhombus

The angles $90-\alpha$ and $90+\alpha$ that appear in Q4 also appear in the Golden Rhombus

(a rhombus whose diagonals are in proportion $1:\varphi$, with $\varphi = \frac{1+\sqrt{5}}{2}$)



$$90+\alpha = 2\cdot\arctan(\varphi) = \arctan(1)+\arctan(3)$$

$$90-\alpha = 2 \cdot \arctan\left(\frac{1}{\varphi}\right) = \arctan(2)$$

The faces of the rhombic triacontahedron and

the rhombic hexecontahedron are Golden Rhombi

Angles of Q4 = Angles of T5 $\cup$ T6

Eventhough they are NOT similar figures...

...the same angles appear in Q4 and T5 $\cup$ T6

φ and the perimeters T1, Q4 & T5 ∪ T6

The perimeters of T1, Q4 & T5 ∪ T6
are in a geometric progression whose factor is φ

$$\frac{2\sqrt{5}+4}{\sqrt{5}+3} = \frac{3\sqrt{5}+7}{2\sqrt{5}+4} = \varphi = \frac{1+\sqrt{5}}{2}$$

References

- Brunés – *"The Secrets of Ancient Geometry"* (1967)
- Bankoff & Trigg – *"The Ubiquitous 3:4:5 Triangle"* (1974)
- Brügner – *"Three-Triangle-Tangram"* (1984)
- Detemple & Harold – *"A Round-Up of Square Problems"* (1996)
- Bogomolny – *"Cut The Knot"* (1996–2018)
- Luna-Mota – *"El tangram egipci: diari de disseny"* (2019)
- Rajput – *"A Classical Geometric Relationship That Reveals The Golden Link in Nature"* (2019)