

Introduction

Quadratics (Babylonians):

$$\begin{aligned} X^2 + bX + c &= (X + \frac{1}{2}b)^2 + c - \frac{b^2}{4} \\ &= (X - x_1)(X - x_2) \implies x_1x_2 = c, x_1 + x_2 = -b \\ x_1 &= \frac{1}{2} [(x_1 + x_2) + (x_1 - x_2)] = \frac{1}{2} [-b + \sqrt{b^2 - 4c}] \end{aligned}$$

Cubics (Italy, 16th Century):

$$\begin{aligned} X^3 + aX^2 + bX + c &= (X - x_1)(X - x_2)(X - x_3) \\ \implies x_1 + x_2 + x_3 &= -a, x_1x_2 + x_1x_3 + x_2x_3 = b, x_1x_2x_3 = -c \end{aligned}$$

WLOG $X \rightarrow X - a/3$ and $a = 0$

$$x_1 = \frac{1}{3} \left[(x_1 + x_2 + x_3) + \underbrace{(x_1 + \omega x_2 + \omega^2 x_3)}_{=u} + \underbrace{(x_1 + \omega^2 x_2 + \omega x_3)}_{=v} \right]$$

where $\omega = e^{2\pi i/3}$ so $\omega^2 + \omega + 1 = 0$. Cyclic permutation of x_1, x_2, x_3 gives $u \rightarrow \omega u \rightarrow \omega^2 u$ and $v \rightarrow \omega v \rightarrow \omega^2 v$ which implies u^3 and v^3 are invariant under cyclic permutations of the roots.

Also $u \leftrightarrow v$ under $x_2 \leftrightarrow x_3$. So $u^3 + v^3, u^3v^3$ are invariant under permutations of roots.

In fact,

$$\begin{aligned} u^3 + v^3 &= 27x_1x_2x_3 = -27c \\ u^3v^3 &= -27b^2 \end{aligned}$$

So u^3, v^3 are roots of $Y^2 + 27cY - 27b^2$. This gives a formula for x_1 (Cardano's formula).

Can follow a similar method for quartics - auxilliary cubic equation. Unfortunately it doesn't work for quintics - the reason being group theory.

1 Polynomials

In this course, all rings are commutative and non-zero. Let R be a ring, then $R[X]$ denotes the ring of polynomials $\sum_{i=0}^n a_i X^i$, $a_i \in R$. A polynomial $f \in R[X]$ determines a function $R \rightarrow R$, $r \mapsto f(r)$.

The polynomial is not in general determined by this function, e.g let $R = \mathbb{Z}/p\mathbb{Z}$ (p prime). Then for all $a \in R$, $a^p = a$ so the polynomials X^p and X represent the same function.

In the case when $R = K$ (a field), $K[X]$ is a Euclidean domain. The “division algorithm” says that if $f, g \in K[X]$, $g \neq 0$ then there exists unique $q, r \in K[X]$ such that $f = gq + r$ and $\deg r < \deg g$ (define $\deg(0) = -\infty$).

In particular, if $g = X - a$ is linear then $f = (X - a)q + f(a)$ (“remainder theorem”). So $K[X]$ is also a PID and a UFD - every polynomial is a product of irreducible polynomials, and there are GCD’s, computable via Euclid’s algorithm in the usual way.

Proposition 1.1. *If K is a field, $0 \neq f \in K[X]$, then f has at most $\deg f$ roots in K .*

Proof. If f has no roots then we are done. Otherwise, suppose $f(a) = 0$ for $a \in K$. Then

$$f = (X - a)g$$

for some $g \in K[X]$ and $\deg g = \deg f - 1$. If $b \in K$ is a root of f then either $b = a$ or $g(b) = 0$ so the number of roots of f is at most one more than the number of roots of g . Now done by induction. \square

2 Symmetric polynomials

Let R be a ring, consider $R[X_1, \dots, X_n]$ for $n \geq 1$.

Definition. A polynomial $f \in R[X_1, \dots, X_n]$ is *symmetric* if for every $\sigma \in S_n$, $f(X_{\sigma(1)}, \dots, X_{\sigma(n)}) = f$.

The set of symmetric polynomials is a subring of $R[X_1, \dots, X_n]$.

Example. $X_1 + \dots + X_n$, or more generally, $p_k = X_1^k + \dots + X_n^k = \sum_{i=1}^n X_i^k$.

Alternative definition: if $f \in R[X_1, \dots, X_n]$, define $f\sigma = f(X_{\sigma(1)}, \dots, X_{\sigma(n)})$. This is an action (on the right) of S_n on $R[X_1, \dots, X_n]$. A polynomial f is symmetric if and only if it is fixed by this action.

Definition. The *elementary symmetric polynomials* are

$$s_r(X_1, \dots, X_n) = \sum_{1 \leq i_1 < \dots < i_r \leq n} X_{i_1} X_{i_2} \dots X_{i_r}$$

Example. When $n = 3$ we have

$$s_1 = X_1 + X_2 + X_3$$

$$s_2 = X_1 X_2 + X_1 X_3 + X_2 X_3$$

$$s_3 = X_1 X_2 X_3$$

Theorem 2.1.

- (i) *Every symmetric polynomial over R can be expressed as a polynomial in $\{s_r : 1 \leq r \leq n\}$, with coefficients in R .*
- (ii) *There are no non-trivial relations between s_1, \dots, s_n .*

Remark:

(a) Consider the ring homomorphism

$$\theta : R[Y_1, \dots, Y_n] \rightarrow R[X_1, \dots, X_n], \quad Y_r \mapsto s_r$$

then (i) says the image of θ is the set of symmetric polynomials. (ii) says that θ is injective.

(b) Equivalent definition of the s_r 's is

$$\prod_{i=1}^n (T + X_i) = T^n + s_1 T^{n-1} + \dots + s_{n-1} T + s_n$$

If we need to specify the number of variables, write $s_{r,n}$ instead of s_r .

Proof. Terminology:

- A *monomial* is some $X_I = X_1^{i_1} \dots X_n^{i_n}$ for $I \in \mathbb{N}^n = \{0, 1, 2, \dots\}^n$. Its (total) degree is $\sum_{\alpha} i_{\alpha}$.
- A *term* is some cX_I , for $0 \neq c \in R$. So a polynomial is uniquely a sum of terms.
- *Total degree* of f is the maximum degree over its terms

Lexicographical ordering on monomials X_I : write $X_I > X_J$ if either $i_1 > j_1$ or, for some $1 \leq r < n$, $i_1 = j_1, \dots, i_r = j_r$ and $i_{r+1} > j_{r+1}$.

This is a total ordering: for each pair $I \neq J$, exactly one of $X_I > X_J$ or $X_J > X_I$ holds.

First we prove (ii):

Let d be the total degree of some symmetric polynomial f , and let X_I be the largest (in lexicographical order) monomial which occurs in f , with coefficient $c \in R$. As f is symmetric, we must have $i_1 \geq i_2 \geq \dots \geq i_n$ (otherwise we could exchange variables to get a larger monomial).

So

$$X_I = X_1^{i_1-i_2} (X_1 X_2)^{i_2-i_3} \dots (X_1, \dots, X_n)^{i_n}$$

consider

$$g = s_1^{i_1-i_2} s_2^{i_2-i_3} \dots s_{n-1}^{i_{n-1}-i_n} s_n^{i_n}$$

the leading monomial (i.e largest in lexicographical order) of g is X_I , and g is symmetric. So $f - cg$ is symmetric of total degree $\leq d$, and its leading monomial term is smaller (lexicographical) than X_I . As the set of monomials of degree at most d is finite, this process terminates.

To prove (ii): induct on n . Suppose we have $G \in R[Y_1, \dots, Y_n]$ with $G(s_{n,1}, \dots, s_{n,n}) = 0$. We want to show $G = 0$. If $n = 1$, this is trivial ($s_{1,1} = X_1$). If $G = Y_n^k H$, with $Y_n \nmid H$, then $s_{n,n}^k H(s_{n,1}, \dots, s_{n,n}) = 0$. As $s_{n,n} = X_1 \dots X_n$, $s_{n,n}$ is not a zero divisor in $R[X_1, \dots, X_n]$ so $H(s_{n,1}, \dots, s_{n,n}) = 0$.

So we may assume G is not divisible by Y_n . Replace X_n by 0. Then

$$s_{n,r}(X_1, \dots, X_{n-1}, 0) = \begin{cases} s_{n-1,r}(X_1, \dots, X_{n-1}) & \text{if } r < n \\ 0 & \text{if } r = n \end{cases}$$

and so $G(s_{n-1,1}, \dots, s_{n-1,n-1}, 0) = 0$. So by induction, $G(Y_1, \dots, Y_{n-1}, 0) = 0$, i.e. $Y_n \mid G$, a contradiction. \square

Example. $f = \sum_{i \neq j} X_i^2 X_j$ for $n \geq 3$. The leading term is $X_1^2 X_2 = X_1(X_1 X_2)$. Then compute

$$s_1 s_2 = \sum_i \sum_{j < k} X_i X_j X_k = \sum_{i \neq j} X_i^2 X_j + 3 \sum_{i < j < k} X_i X_j X_k$$

so $f = s_1 s_2 - 3 s_3$.

Computing say $\sum X_i^5$ by hand is tedious. But there are alternative formulae.

Recall $p_k = \sum_{i=1}^n X_i^k$ for $k \geq 1$.

Theorem 2.2 (Newton's formulae). *Let $n \geq 1$. Then for all $k \geq 1$*

$$p_k - s_1 p_{k-1} + \dots + (-1)^{k-1} s_{k-1} p_1 + (-1)^k k s_k = 0$$

by convention, $s_0 = 1$, and $s_r = 0$ if $r > n$.

Proof. We may assume $R = \mathbb{Z}$ (or \mathbb{R}). Generating function

$$F(T) = \prod_{i=1}^n (1 - X_i T) = \sum_{r=0}^n (-1)^r s_r T^r$$

Take logarithmic derivative with respect to T :

$$\frac{F'(T)}{F(T)} = \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{-X_i}{1 - X_i T} = -\frac{1}{T} \sum_{i=1}^n \sum_{r=1}^{\infty} X_i^r T^r = -\frac{1}{T} \sum_{r=1}^{\infty} p_r T^r$$

So

$$\begin{aligned} -TF'(T) &= s_1 T - 2s_2 T^2 + \dots + (-1)^{n-1} n s_n T^n \\ &= F(T) \sum_{r=1}^{\infty} p_r T^r = (s_0 - s_1 T + \dots + (-1)^n s_n T^n) (p_1 T + p_2 T^2 + \dots) \end{aligned}$$

comparing coefficients of T^k gives the result. \square

Definition. The *discriminant polynomial* is

$$D(X_1, \dots, X_n) = \Delta(X_1, \dots, X_n)^2$$

where $\Delta = \prod_{i < j} (X_i - X_j)$. (Recall from IA Groups that applying $\sigma \in S_n$ to Δ multiplies Δ by $\text{sgn}(\sigma)$, so D is symmetric.)

So $D(X_1, \dots, X_n) = d(s_1, \dots, s_n)$ for some polynomial d (\mathbb{Z} -coefficients). For example, when $n = 2$, $D = (X_1 - X_2)^2 = s_1^2 - 4s_2$.

Definition. Let $f = T^n + \sum_{i=0}^{n-1} a_{n-i} T^i \in R[T]$. Its *discriminant* is $\text{Disc}(f) = d(-a_1, a_2, -a_3, \dots, (-1)^n a_n) \in R$.

Observe that if $f = \prod_{i=1}^n (T - x_i)$, $x_i \in R$, then $a_r = (-1)^r s_r(x_1, \dots, x_n)$, so

$$\text{Disc}(f) = \prod_{i < j} (x_i - x_j)^2 = D(x_1, \dots, x_n)$$

If moreover $R = K$ is a field, then $\text{Disc}(f) = 0$ iff f has a repeated root (i.e. $x_i = x_j$ for some $i \neq j$). E.g. when $n = 2$, $\text{Disc}(T^2 + bT + c) = b^2 - 4c$.

3 Fields

Recall:

Definition. A *field* is a ring K (commutative with a 1) in which every non-zero element has a multiplicative inverse. The set of non-zero elements of K is a group under multiplication, written K^\times or K^* , called the *multiplicative group* of K .

Definition. The *characteristic* of a field K is the least positive integer p (if it exists) such that $p \cdot 1_K = 0_K$, or is said to be 0 if no such p exists.

Example. \mathbb{Q} has characteristic 0 and $\mathbb{F}_p = \mathbb{Z}/p\mathbb{Z}$ has characteristic p (p prime).

The characteristic $\text{char}(K)$ of K is either 0 or a prime. Inside K , there is a smaller subfield, called the *prime subfield* of K . It is either isomorphic to \mathbb{Q} (if characteristic is 0), or to \mathbb{F}_p (if $\text{char}(K) = p$).

Proposition 3.1. Let $\varphi : K \rightarrow L$ be a homomorphism of fields. Then φ is an injection.

Proof. $\varphi(1_K) = 1_L \neq 0$, so $\text{Ker}(\varphi) \subsetneq K$ is a proper ideal of K , so $\text{Ker}(\varphi) = (0)$ \square

Definition. Let $K \subseteq L$ be fields (where the field operations on K are the same as those on L). We say K is a *subfield* of L , and L is an *extension* of K , denoted L/K .

Remarks:

- (i) The notation L/K has nothing to do with the quotient (some write $L | K$)
- (ii) It is useful to be more general - if $i : K \rightarrow L$ is a homomorphism of fields, then Proposition 3.1 says that K is isomorphic to its image $i(K) \subseteq L$. In this situation, also say L is an extension of K .

Example. Some extensions include

- \mathbb{C}/\mathbb{R}
- \mathbb{R}/\mathbb{Q}
- $\mathbb{Q}(i) = \{a + bi : a, b \in \mathbb{Q}\}/\mathbb{Q}$

Definition. $K \subseteq L$, $x \in L$. Define $K[x] = \{p(x) : p \in K[T]\}$ (a subring of L). Define $K(x) = \{\frac{p(x)}{q(x)} : p, q \in K[T], q(x) \neq 0\}$ (a subfield of L) “ K adjoin x ”. For $x_1, \dots, x_n \in L$, define

$$K(x_1, \dots, x_n) = \left\{ \frac{p(x_1, \dots, x_n)}{q(x_1, \dots, x_n)} : p, q \in K[T_1, \dots, T_n], q(x_1, \dots, x_n) \neq 0 \right\}$$

(Easy to check $K(x_1, \dots, x_{n-1})(x_n) = K(x_1, \dots, x_n)$). Likewise $K[x_1, \dots, x_n]$ is defined analogously.

Definition. Suppose L/K is a field extension. Then L is naturally a vector space over its subfield K (forget multiplication by elements of L). We can ask if it is a finite-dimensional vector space, if so we say that L/K is a *finite extension* and write $[L : K] = \dim_K(L)$ for the dimension. The dimension is called the *degree of the extension L over K* . If the dimension is infinite write $[L : K] = \infty$.

\dim_K denotes the dimension as a K -vector space. Of course L has dimension 1 over itself. As a K -vector space, $L \cong K^{[L:K]}$.

Example.

- (i) \mathbb{C}/\mathbb{R} , $[\mathbb{C} : \mathbb{R}] = 2$
- (ii) For any field K , $K(X)$ = field of rational functions in X = field of fractions of polynomial ring $K[X] = \{\frac{p}{q} : p, q \in K[X], q \neq 0\}$. Then $[K(X) : K] = \infty$ since $1, X, X^2, \dots$ are linearly independent.
- (iii) \mathbb{R}/\mathbb{Q} , $[\mathbb{R} : \mathbb{Q}] = \infty$. This follows from countability - every finite dimensional vector space over \mathbb{Q} is countable.

This course is largely about properties (and symmetries) of finite extensions of fields.

Definition. We say an extension L/K is *quadratic* (*cubic*, ...) if $[L : K] = 2$ (3 , ...)

Proposition 3.2. Suppose K is a finite field (necessarily of characteristic $p > 0$). Then $|K|$ is a power of p .

Proof. Certainly K/\mathbb{F}_p is finite, so $K \cong (\mathbb{F}_p)^n$ (as a vector space), where $n = [K : \mathbb{F}_p]$, so $|K| = p^n$. \square

Later on we will see that every prime power $q = p^n$ admits a field \mathbb{F}_q with q elements.

Here is a simple but powerful fact:

Theorem 3.3 (“Tower Law”). Suppose M/L and L/K are field extensions. Then M/K is a finite extension if and only if both M/L and L/K are finite. If so, then $[M : K] = [M : L][L : K]$.

In fact, a slightly more general statement holds:

Theorem 3.4. Let L/K be an extension, V an L -vector space. Then $\dim_K(V) = [L : K] \dim_L(V)$ (and obvious conclusions if any quantities are infinite).

Example. If $V = \mathbb{C}^n$ then $V \cong \mathbb{R}^{2n}$.

Proof. Let $\dim_L(V) = d < \infty$. Then $V \cong L \oplus \dots \oplus L = L^d$ as an L -vector space, so also as a K -vector space. If $[L : K] = n < \infty$, then $L \cong K^n$ as a K -vector space, so

$$V \cong \underbrace{K^n \oplus \dots \oplus K^n}_{d \text{ times}} = K^{nd}$$

so $\dim_K(V) = [L : K] \dim_L(V)$. If V is finite-dimensional over K , then a K -basis for V certainly spans V over L . So if $\dim_L(V) = \infty$ then $\dim_K(V) = \infty$. Likewise, if $[L : K] = \infty$ and $V \neq \{0\}$, then V has an infinite linearly independent subset, so $\dim_K(V) = \infty$. \square

Another important fact:

Proposition 3.5.

- (i) Let K be a field, $G \subseteq K^\times$ a finite subgroup. Then G is cyclic
- (ii) If K is finite, then K^\times is cyclic

Proof. We prove (i) ((ii) follows immediately): (recall from IB GRM) we can write

$$G \cong \frac{\mathbb{Z}}{m_1\mathbb{Z}} \oplus \dots \oplus \frac{\mathbb{Z}}{m_k\mathbb{Z}}$$

where $1 < m_1 \mid m_2 \mid \dots \mid m_k = m$. So for all $x \in G$, $x^m = 1$. As K is a field, the polynomial $T^m - 1$ has at most m roots. So $|G| < m$. Hence $k = 1$ and G is cyclic. \square

Remark: Let $K = F = \mathbb{Z}/p\mathbb{Z}$. The above says there exists $a \in \{1, \dots, p-1\}$ such that $\mathbb{Z}/p\mathbb{Z} = \{0\} \cup \{a, a^2, \dots, a^{p-1}\}$. a is called a primitive root modulo p .

Proposition 3.6. *Let R be a ring, p a prime such that $p \cdot 1_R = 0_R$ (e.g. R a field of characteristic p). Then the map*

$$\varphi_p : R \rightarrow R, \varphi_p(x) = x^p$$

is a homomorphism from R to itself (called the Frobenius endomorphism of R).

Proof. Have to show:

- $\varphi_p(1) = 1$
- $\varphi_p(xy) = \varphi_p(x)\varphi_p(y)$
- $\varphi_p(x + y) = \varphi_p(x) + \varphi_p(y)$

The first two are obvious. For the last one,

$$\begin{aligned} \varphi_p(x + y) &= x^p + \sum_{i=1}^{p-1} \underbrace{\binom{p}{i}}_{\equiv 0 \pmod{p}} x^i y^{p-i} + y^p \\ &= \varphi_p(x) + \varphi_p(y) \end{aligned}$$

□

Example. This gives another proof of Fermat's Little Theorem: $x^p \equiv x \pmod{p}$ (induction on x : $(x + 1)^p = x^p + 1$).

4 Algebraic elements and extensions

Definition. Have L/K an extension, $x \in L$. We say x is *algebraic over K* if there exists a non-zero polynomial $f \in K[T]$ such that $f(x) = 0$. Otherwise we say x is *transcendental over K* .

Suppose $f \in K[T]$; evaluation $f(x) \in L$. This gives a map $\text{ev}_x : K[T] \rightarrow L$, $f \mapsto f(x)$. This is obviously a homomorphism of rings.

$I = \text{Ker}(\text{ev}_x) \subseteq K[T]$ is an ideal (the set of polynomials which vanish at x). As $\text{Im}(\text{ev}_x)$ is a subring of L , it is an integral domain. So I is a prime ideal. Two possibilities:

- (i) $I = \{0\}$. Then the only f with $f(x) = 0$ is $f = 0$. Hence x is transcendental over K .
- (ii) $I \neq \{0\}$. As $K[T]$ is a PID, there exists a unique monic irreducible $g \in K[T]$ such that $I = (g)$. So $f(x) = 0$ if and only if f is a multiple of g . So x is algebraic over K ; we call g the *minimal polynomial* of x over K . It is the unique monic irreducible polynomial such that x is a root (and the monic polynomial of least degree with this property). [Depends on K as well as x]

Example.

- $x \in K$, $m_{x,K} = T - x$
- p prime, $d \geq 1$. Then $T^d - p \in \mathbb{Q}[T]$ is irreducible (Eisenstein's criterion) so it is the minimal polynomial of $\sqrt[d]{p} = x \in \mathbb{R}$ over \mathbb{Q} .
- $z = e^{2\pi i/p}$ (p prime) is a root of $T^p - 1$ and of $\frac{T^p - 1}{T - 1} = g(T) = T^{p-1} + \dots + T + 1 \in \mathbb{Q}[T]$. As

$$g(T+1) = \frac{(T+1)^p - 1}{T} = T^{p-1} + \binom{p}{1}T^{p-2} + \dots + \binom{p}{2}T + \binom{p}{1}$$

which is irreducible by Eisenstein, so g is irreducible and g is the minimal polynomial of z over \mathbb{Q} .

Definition. The *degree of x over K* (x algebraic over K) is the degree of $m_{x,K}$, written $\deg_K(x)$ or $\deg(x/K)$.

Ring/field characterisation of algebraicity:

Proposition 4.1. *Let L/K be a field extension, $x \in L$. The following are equivalent*

- (i) x is algebraic over K
- (ii) $[K(x) : K] < \infty$
- (iii) $\dim_K K[x] < \infty$
- (iv) $K[x] = K(x)$
- (v) $K[x]$ is a field

If these hold, then $\deg_K(x) = [K(x) : K]$.

Note: recall $K[x] = \{p(x)\}$, $K(x) = \left\{ \frac{p(x)}{q(x)} \mid q(x) \neq 0, p, q \in K[T] \right\}$.

Proof. (ii) \iff (iii), (iv) \iff (v) are obvious.

Show (iii) \Rightarrow (v), (iv) and (ii): let $0 \neq y = g(x) \in K[x]$. Consider $K[x] \rightarrow K[x]$, $z \mapsto yz$. It is a K -linear transformation, injective as $y \neq 0$, and since $\dim_K K[x] < \infty$, it is a bijection. So there exists z such that $yz = 1$. So $K[x]$ is a field, equal to $K(x)$ and $[K(x) : K] < \infty$.

Show (v) \Rightarrow (i): wlog $x \neq 0$, then $x^{-1} = a_0 + a_1x + \dots + a_nx^n \in K[x]$. Then $a_nx^{n-1} + \dots + a_0x - 1 = 0$, so x is algebraic over K .

Show (i) \Rightarrow (iii) and degree formula: The image of $\text{ev}_x : K[T] \rightarrow L$ is $K[x] \subseteq L$. x is algebraic over K so the kernel of this map is $(m_{x,K})$, which is a maximal ideal ($m_{x,K}$ is irreducible). Applying the first isomorphism theorem gives

$\underbrace{K[T]/(m_{x,K})}_{\text{field}} \cong K[x]$. $m_{x,K}$ is monic of degree $d = \deg_K(x)$. So $K[T]/(m_{x,K})$ has basis $1, T, \dots, T^{d-1}$. So $\dim_K K[x] = d < \infty$. Furthermore $\deg_K(x) = [K(x) : K] = d$. \square

Corollary 4.2.

- (i) x_1, \dots, x_n are algebraic over K if and only if $L = K(x_1, \dots, x_n)$ is a finite extension over K . If so, every element of L is algebraic in K
- (ii) If x, y are algebraic over K , then so are $x \pm y, xy$ and $1/x$ (if $x \neq 0$).
- (iii) Let L/K any extension. Then $\{x \in L : x \text{ algebraic over } K\}$ is a subfield of L

Proof.

- (i) If x_n is algebraic over K , it's certainly algebraic over $K(x_1, \dots, x_{n-1})$, so $[L : K(x_1, \dots, x_{n-1})] < \infty$. So by induction on n and the Tower Law, $[L : K] < \infty$. Conversely, if $[L : K] < \infty$, then the subfield $K(y)$ is finite over K for all $y \in L$, so y is algebraic over K by Proposition 4.1.
- (ii) $x + y, xy, \frac{1}{x} \in K(x, y)$. So algebraic by (i).
- (iii) Trivial from (ii).

\square

Example. $z = e^{2\pi i/p}$, p prime. z has degree $p - 1$. Let $x = 2 \cos 2\pi/p = z + z^{-1} \in \mathbb{Q}(z)$. So x is algebraic over \mathbb{Q} . Note $\mathbb{Q}(z) \supseteq \mathbb{Q}(x) \supseteq \mathbb{Q}$, $z^2 - xz + 1 = 0$. Hence the degree of z over $\mathbb{Q}(x)$ is at most 2. We have $[\mathbb{Q}(z) : \mathbb{Q}] = p - 1$ so $[\mathbb{Q}(z) : \mathbb{Q}(x)] = 2$ or 1. But $z \notin \mathbb{Q}(x) \subseteq \mathbb{R}$. So $[\mathbb{Q}(z) : \mathbb{Q}(x)] = 2$ and by the tower law $\deg_{\mathbb{Q}}(x) = \frac{p-1}{2}$.

We have

$$z^{\frac{p-1}{2}} + z^{\frac{p-3}{2}} + \dots + z^{-\frac{p-1}{2}} = 0$$

$z + z^{-1} = x$. So can express this polynomial as a polynomial in $z + z^{-1} = x$ of degree $\frac{p-1}{2}$.

Example. Let $x = \sqrt{m} + \sqrt{n}$, $m, n \in \mathbb{Z}$ such that m, n, mn are not squares. We have

$$(x - \sqrt{m})^2 = n = x^2 - 2\sqrt{m}x + m$$

So $[\mathbb{Q}(x) : \mathbb{Q}(\sqrt{m})] \leq 2$, since the above is a quadratic with coefficients in $\mathbb{Q}(\sqrt{m})$. In the exact same way we have $[\mathbb{Q}(x) : \mathbb{Q}(\sqrt{n})] \leq 2$. The quadratic also implies $\sqrt{m} \in \mathbb{Q}(x)$. So by the tower law either $[\mathbb{Q}(x) : \mathbb{Q}] = 4$ or $[\mathbb{Q}(x) : \mathbb{Q}] = 2$ and $\mathbb{Q}(x) = \mathbb{Q}(\sqrt{m}) = \mathbb{Q}(\sqrt{n})$ (since m, n not squares, $[\mathbb{Q}(\sqrt{m}) : \mathbb{Q}] = 2$).

$\mathbb{Q}(\sqrt{m}) = \mathbb{Q}(\sqrt{n})$ implies $\sqrt{m} = a + b\sqrt{n}$, $a, b \in \mathbb{Q}$. This implies $m = a^2 + b^2n + 2ab\sqrt{n}$. $b = 0$ implies $m = a^2$ and $a = 0$ implies $mn = b^2n^2$, a contradiction. So $\deg_{\mathbb{Q}}(x) = 4$.

Definition. An extension L/K is *algebraic* if every $x \in L$ is algebraic over K .

Proposition 4.3.

- (i) *Finite extensions are algebraic*
- (ii) *$K(x)$ is algebraic over K if and only if x is algebraic over K*
- (iii) *Let $M/L/K$ be a series of extensions. Then M/K is algebraic if and only if both M/L and L/K are algebraic*

Proof.

- (i) If $[L : K] < \infty$ then $\forall x \in L$, $[K(x) : K] < \infty$, so x is algebraic over K .
- (ii) (\Rightarrow) is by definition, (\Leftarrow) follows from (i).
- (iii) Assume M/K is algebraic. Then for all $x \in M$, x is algebraic over K , so certainly x is algebraic over L . So M/L is algebraic. Since $L \subseteq M$, L/K must be algebraic as M/K is.

The other direction follows from the below Lemma.

□

Lemma 4.4. *Let $M/L/K$ be a series of extensions, where L/K is algebraic. Let $x \in M$. Suppose x is algebraic over L . Then x is algebraic over K .*

Proof. There exists $f = T^n + a_{n-1}T^{n-1} + \dots + a_0 \in L[T]$ with $f \neq 0$ and $f(x) = 0$. Let $L_0 = K(a_0, \dots, a_{n-1})$, then as each $a_i \in L$ is algebraic over K , by Corollary 4.2, $[L_0 : K]$ is finite. As $f \in L_0[T]$, x is algebraic over L_0 . So $[L_0(x) : L_0] < \infty$, so $[L_0(x) : K] < \infty$ by the tower law, and so $[K(x) : K] < \infty$ and x is algebraic over K . \square

Example. Let $K = \mathbb{Q}$, $L = \{x \in \mathbb{C} : x \text{ is algebraic over } \mathbb{Q}\} = \overline{\mathbb{Q}}$. This is a field by Corollary 4.2. Obviously L/\mathbb{Q} is algebraic, but the extension is not finite. Indeed, for all $n \geq 1$, $\sqrt[n]{2} \in L$ and $[\mathbb{Q}(\sqrt[n]{2}) : \mathbb{Q}] = n$ (as $T^n - 2$ is irreducible over \mathbb{Q}). So as this holds for any n , L can't be finite. We'll see other fields like $\overline{\mathbb{Q}}$ later on (algebraically closed fields).

5 Algebraic numbers in \mathbb{R} and \mathbb{C}

Traditionally, $x \in \mathbb{C}$ is said to be *algebraic* if it's algebraic over \mathbb{Q} , and otherwise said to be *transcendental*. $\overline{\mathbb{Q}}$ is a subfield of \mathbb{C} . It is a proper subfield since $\mathbb{Q}[T]$ is countable, and each polynomial has countably (finitely) many roots, so there are countably many elements of $\overline{\mathbb{Q}}$.

However \mathbb{C} is uncountable. So there are “lots” of transcendental numbers. This argument is non-constructive - it is harder to write a transcendental number explicitly, or to show some given number is transcendental.

Liouville showed that $\sum_{n \geq 1} \frac{1}{10^{n!}}$ is transcendental (“algebraic numbers can't be very well approximated by rationals”).

Hermite, Lindermann showed that e and π are transcendental.

In the 20th Century: Gelfond-Schneider Theorem: if x, y are algebraic ($x \neq 1$), then x^y is algebraic if and only if y is rational. For example, this implies $\sqrt{2}^{\sqrt{3}}$ is transcendental. Also $e^\pi = (-1)^{-i/2}$ is transcendental.