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**MATHEMATICAL
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Volume 193

**Function Theory in
Several Complex Variables**

Toshio Nishino




American Mathematical Society

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Toshio Nishino

Translated by
Norman Levenberg
Hiroshi Yamaguchi



American Mathematical Society
Providence, Rhode Island

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多変数函数論

Tahensuu Kansuu Ron

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ABSTRACT. Kiyoshi Oka, at the beginning of his research, regarded the collection of problems which he encountered in the study of domains of holomorphy as large mountains which separate today and tomorrow. Thus, he believed that there could be no essential progress in analysis without climbing over these mountains. This book is an initial step for the reader to understand the mathematical world created by Oka.

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Contents

Preface	ix
Preface to the English Edition	xiii
Part 1. Fundamental Theory	1
Chapter 1. Holomorphic Functions and Domains of Holomorphy	3
1.1. Complex Euclidean Space	3
1.2. Analytic Functions	8
1.3. Holomorphic Functions	12
1.4. Separate Analyticity Theorem	23
1.5. Domains of Holomorphy	27
Chapter 2. Implicit Functions and Analytic Sets	37
2.1. Implicit Functions	37
2.2. Analytic Sets (Local)	44
2.3. Weierstrass Condition	56
2.4. Analytic Sets (Global)	60
2.5. Projections of Analytic Sets in Projective Space	64
Chapter 3. The Poincaré, Cousin, and Runge Problems	73
3.1. Meromorphic Functions	73
3.2. Cousin Problems in Polydisks	77
3.3. Cousin I Problem in Polynomially Convex Domains	80
3.4. Cousin I Problem in Domains of Holomorphy	85
3.5. Cousin II Problem	91
3.6. Runge Problem	98
Chapter 4. Pseudoconvex Domains and Pseudoconcave Sets	105
4.1. Pseudoconvex Domains	105
4.2. Pseudoconvex Domains with Smooth Boundary	116
4.3. Boundary Problem	124
4.4. Pseudoconcave Sets	131
4.5. Analytic Derived Sets	137
Chapter 5. Holomorphic Mappings	147
5.1. Holomorphic Mappings of Elementary Domains	147
5.2. Holomorphic Mappings of \mathbb{C}^n	152

Part 2. Theory of Analytic Spaces	165
Chapter 6. Ramified Domains	167
6.1. Ramified Domains	167
6.2. Fundamental Theorem for Locally Ramified Domains	179
6.3. Appendix 1	196
6.4. Appendix 2	200
Chapter 7. Analytic Sets and Holomorphic Functions	209
7.1. Holomorphic Functions on Analytic Sets	209
7.2. Universal Denominators	215
7.3. \mathcal{O} -Modules	220
7.4. Combination Theorems	231
7.5. Local Finiteness Theorem	251
Chapter 8. Analytic Spaces	267
8.1. Analytic Spaces	267
8.2. Analytic Polyhedra	270
8.3. Stein Spaces	280
8.4. Quantitative Estimates	291
8.5. Representation of a Stein space	301
8.6. Appendix	316
Chapter 9. Normal Pseudoconvex Spaces	321
9.1. Normal Pseudoconvex Spaces	321
9.2. Linking Problem	328
9.3. Principal Theorem	339
9.4. Unramified Domains Over \mathbf{C}^n	344
Bibliography	359
Index	363

Preface

*“When you ask around and persist fondly
in the Way, you can never find the Truth.
Maintain your belief. Devote yourself to
the Way. It will turn out to be the mighty
Truth.”*

from “the 42 teachings of Buddha”

One of the subjects in mathematical nature is created by unifying three notions: complex numbers, coordinate systems, and the related notions of differentiation and integration. The space \mathbf{C}^n of n -tuples of complex numbers is ruled by the coordinate system (z_1, \dots, z_n) . If a complex-valued function in a domain in \mathbf{C}^n is differentiable in each variable, it can be represented locally as a convergent power series. It has a natural domain of existence, in which it behaves in its own characteristic way, i.e., it creates its own mathematical world. We call such a function an analytic function.

In the case of one complex variable, an analytic function has a distinguishing property. In this case its real and imaginary parts are harmonic functions which are conjugate to each other. Namely, if one is considered as a potential, then the other is the flow which the potential induces. A harmonic function is uniquely determined by its boundary values; we can construct a harmonic function with prescribed boundary values and construct locally its conjugate harmonic function, which is unique up to an additive constant. This makes it easy to construct analytic functions of one complex variable. The main properties of analytic functions of one complex variable can be explained from this observation.

When we want to describe concepts in nature by using analytic functions, it is not enough to use only those of one complex variable. The theory of analytic functions of several complex variables is quite difficult to treat, compared to the theory in one complex variable. One reason for this is the freedom of the form of domains in \mathbf{C}^n due to the increase in the dimension. Another reason is that both the real and the imaginary parts of an analytic function are now pluriharmonic functions, which imposes a stronger restriction than being merely harmonic. For example, in some cases, a pluriharmonic function is uniquely determined by its boundary values on some proper subset of the boundary, and we cannot always construct a pluriharmonic function with prescribed boundary values on a given portion of the boundary. Therefore, it is difficult to construct analytic functions of several complex variables. Since function theory in one complex variable generally proceeds by constructing analytic functions, we cannot simply use the one-variable approach in the case of several complex variables.

The most particular phenomena in the study of analytic functions in several complex variables which does not appear in the case of one complex variable is the fact that the natural domain of an analytic function is not arbitrary, i.e., it is

not true that any domain in \mathbf{C}^n is a natural domain of existence of some analytic function. This fact is important. We call a domain in \mathbf{C}^n which is the natural domain of existence of some analytic function a *domain of holomorphy*. The principal problem in function theory in several complex variables is to study which domains are domains of holomorphy, and to determine which objects we can construct in a domain of holomorphy.

This book is an attempt to explain results in the theory of functions of several complex variables which were mostly established from the late 19th century through the middle of the 20th century. The focus is to introduce the mathematical world which was created by my advisor, Kiyoshi Oka (1901-1978). I have attempted to remain as close as possible to Oka's original work.

Kiyoshi Oka, at the beginning of his research, regarded the collection of problems which he encountered in the study of domains of holomorphy as large mountains which separate today and tomorrow. Thus, he believed that there could be no essential progress in analysis without climbing over these mountains.

The work of Oka can be divided into two parts. The first is the study of analytic functions in univalent domains in \mathbf{C}^n . Here he proved that three concepts: domains of holomorphy, holomorphically convex domains, and pseudoconvex domains, are equivalent; and, moreover, that the Poincaré problem, the Cousin problems, and the Runge problem – when stated properly – can be solved in domains of holomorphy satisfying the appropriate conditions. The second part was to establish a method by which we can study analytic functions defined in a ramified domain over \mathbf{C}^n in which the branch points are considered as interior points of the domain. He proceeded in this later work under the assumption that the results valid in univalent domains in \mathbf{C}^n should similarly hold in a ramified domain over \mathbf{C}^n . However, the true situation was contrary to his intuition, i.e., a ramified domain of holomorphy is not always a holomorphically convex domain.

Oka's establishment of his method to treat analytic functions in a ramified domain has proved to be indispensable not only in analysis but also in other fields of mathematics.

This book consists of parts I and II, according to Oka's earlier and later work mentioned above. In part I we treat analytic functions in a univalent domain in \mathbf{C}^n . In part II we treat analytic functions in an analytic space; this is a slight generalization of a ramified domain over \mathbf{C}^n . The one exception to our adherence to Oka's program is that the fact that a pseudoconvex univalent domain is a domain of holomorphy will be proved in part II in a more general setting by modifying Oka's original ideas.

A mathematical object is abstract and is described by use of words and notation. We should note that the words and the notation themselves are not really mathematics. Mathematics can be realized as a flow of the consciousness which is really creating mathematical nature. After such a process, mathematical nature lives individually in the mind of each person who has studied it. He seems to hear a voice coming from the bottom of his mind, or to feel the glow of a living object within his mind. This process is essential when we study the established works of the pioneers of a field. If mathematical nature lives correctly within a person's mind, then when he encounters a certain problem, he may not recall the knowledge to solve it immediately, but he will be able to understand the problem itself in order to solve it.

The difficulty in studying mathematics is the procedure for giving life and meaning to the mathematics. The first step is to organize and expand upon the material written by use of words and notation in a concrete form, so that we can proceed with further steps.

I hope that this book is a worthwhile initial step for the reader in order to understand the mathematical world which was created by Kiyoshi Oka.

Toshio Nishino
June 22, 1996 at Kyoto

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Preface to the English Edition

This book was written, after long consideration, with the intent to make Oka's original ideas easier to understand. One of the main reasons to pursue this project was the recommendation of Professor John Wermer. During the time while I was writing the original version of the book in Japanese, Professor Katsumi Nomizu had already started urging the AMS to publish an English translation.

Oka's original papers may appear to be difficult to read. However, when we truly understand his original thoughts, we gain much more than simply mathematical results. I hope that this book helps the reader to better comprehend Oka's work.

As for the English translation, Professors Norman Levenberg (Auckland University) and Hiroshi Yamaguchi (Nara Women's University) devoted much time and effort to translating the Japanese version; they had to overcome the difficulties caused by the many differences between Western and Japanese culture. I greatly appreciate their effort. Also, many thanks to the people at the AMS, particularly Ralph Sizer, for their patience and understanding.

Toshio Nishino
March 3, 2000 at Kyoto

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This page intentionally left blank

Index

- adjoint \mathcal{O} -ideal, 251
- algebraic exceptional set, 161
- algebraic extension, 180
- algebraic function, 41
- algebraic set in \mathbf{P}^n , 64
- analytic continuation of a holomorphic function, 27
- analytic continuation of an analytic set, 62
- analytic curve, 45
- analytic derived set, 138
- analytic equivalence of analytic spaces, 267
- analytic function, 8
- analytic hypersurface, 38
- analytic hypersurface in a ramified domain, 173
- analytic kernel of a pseudoconvex set, 141
- analytic mapping, 172
- analytic mapping between analytic spaces, 267
- analytic polyhedron in \mathbf{C}^n , 33, 87
- analytic polyhedron in an analytic space, 270
- analytic set, 44, 173
- analytic space, 267
- analytically equivalent, 172
- approximation condition, 281
- approximation theorem by algebraic functions, 101
- approximation theorem for a Stein space, 282
- associated function for a normal pseudoconvex domain, 323
- associated multiradius, 9
- associated set, 65
- attracting fixed point, 159
- automorphism, 112, 149
- automorphism group, 149

- Baire category theorem, 24
- bidisk, 5
- biholomorphic mapping, 18
- biholomorphically equivalent, 172
- Borel's theorem, 161
- boundary, 4
- boundary distance, 6, 345
- boundary distance function, 126
- boundary point of a ramified domain, 171

- boundary point of an unramified domain, 168
- bounded difference, 347
- branch point, 170
- branch set, 170, 171
- branched cover, 170

- canonical metric, 292
- canonical projection, 170
- canonical projection of unramified cover, 351
- Cartan-Thullen theorem, 33
- Cauchy estimates, 11
- Cauchy integral formula, 12
- Cauchy-Riemann equations, 13
- characteristic function, 179
- Chow's theorem, 64
- closure, 4
- codimension, 45
- complete algebraic analytic set, 49
- complete Hartogs domain, 21
- complete Reinhardt domain, 8
- complex hyperplane, 5
- complex line, 5
- complex manifold, 267
- complex tangent space, 118
- complex torus, 269
- continuity theorem of type A, 112
- continuity theorem of type B, 112
- continuity theorem of type C, 113
- continuous solution of Cousin II problems, 93
- countable ordinals, 139
- countable valency theorem, 27
- Cousin I data (or distribution), 74
- Cousin I problem, 74
- Cousin I problem in a Stein space, 285
- Cousin II data (or distribution), 74
- Cousin II problem, 74
- Cousin II problem in a Stein space, 285
- Cousin integral, 78
- cylindrical boundary distance, 345

- defining function, 116
- defining polynomial, 182
- degenerate entire mapping, 161
- derived set, 138
- dimension, 45

- discriminant, 41
 disk type, 147
 distance function in a domain in \mathbf{C}^n , 6
 distance function in an unramified domain over \mathbf{C}^n , 346
 distinguished analytic polyhedron, 301
 distinguished boundary, 5, 12
 distinguished pseudopolynomial, 41
 distinguished ramified domain, 304
 domain, 4, 267
 domain of convergence, 8, 20
 domain of holomorphy, 27, 35
 domain of meromorphy, 115
 domain of normality, 115
 domain without relative boundary, 168
 double point, 179
- entire mapping, 161
 equivalency of \mathcal{O} -modules, 220
 essential singular point of a holomorphic function, 145
 exceptional values, 161
 exhaustion function, 129, 323
 extension \mathcal{O} -module, 275
 extension theorem for a holomorphic function on an analytic set, 272
- Fabry's theorem, 10
 family of analytic hypersurfaces touching a boundary point, 125, 322
 fiber, 4
 finitely generated \mathcal{O} -module, 221
 fixed point, 159
 Fréchet space, 291
 fundamental neighborhood system, 168
 fundamental system for a ramified domain, 195
- generalized analytic polyhedron, 270
 generalized Cousin II distribution, 94
 generalized Cousin II problem, 94
 geometric ideal, 253
 G -ideal, 253
 graph of a function on a ramified domain, 179, 182
 graph of a locally algebraic analytic set, 52
- Hadamard's formula, 9
 Hartogs domain, 21
 Hartogs holomorphic extension theorem, 106
 Hartogs radius, 21, 127, 128
 Hartogs series, 20
 Hartogs' theorem on pseudoconcave sets, 133
 Hartogs-Laurent series, 22
 Hessian matrix, 19
 Hilbert-Rückert Nullstellensatz, 274, 316
 holomorphic convex, 35
 holomorphic extension, 273
 holomorphic function, 12
 holomorphic function on a ramified domain, 170, 172
 holomorphic function on an analytic set, 209
 holomorphic function on an analytic space, 267
 holomorphic hull, 32, 177
 holomorphic hull in an analytic space, 280
 holomorphic mapping, 17, 172
 holomorphic matrix, 236
 holomorphic vector-valued function, 273
 holomorphically complete domain, 280
 holomorphically convex, 33
 holomorphically convex domain in an analytic space, 280
 homogeneous domain, 152
 homogeneous coordinates, 7
 homothetic transformation, 147
 hyperplane at infinity, 7
 hypersurface of planar type, 121
- imbedding of a Stein manifold, 311
 imbedding of a Stein space, 306
 implicit function, 41
 inhomogeneous coordinates, 7
 interior extension theorem, 293
 intersection of ramified domains, 172
 intersection of unramified domains, 169
 invariance of analytic relations, 39
 irreducible analytic set, 45
 irreducible decompositions of an analytic set, 52
 irreducible pseudopolynomial, 42
- Jacobian matrix, 17
 Julia's theorem, 111
- \mathcal{K} -convex domain, 33
 \mathcal{K} -convex hull, 32
 kernel of a set, 140
- Levi flat, 120
 Levi form, 120
 Levi problem, 116
 Levi's conditions, 119
 Levi's theorem, 108
 l -dimensional box, 241
 l -ideal, 251
 lifting principle for analytic polyhedra in an analytic space, 273
 lifting principle for polynomial polyhedra, 80
 lifting problem, 80
 limit ordinals, 140
 linear coordinate transformation, 3
 linear relation (Ω), 222
 linking condition, 329
 linking theorem, 339
 Liouville's theorem, 15
 local pseudobase, 221

- locally algebraic analytic component, 52
- locally finite pseudobase at a point, 221
- locally finitely generated \mathcal{O} -module, 221
- locally holomorphically complete domain, 326
- locally ramified domain, 170
- locally vector-valued algebraic function, 52
- logarithmic boundary distance function, 345
- logarithmic capacity, 135
- logarithmically convex, 10
- loxodromic fixed point, 159

- maximum principle, 16
- meromorphic extension, 108
- meromorphic function, 73
- Mittag-Leffler theorem, 74
- model for an analytic polyhedron, 271
- monodromy theorem, 27
- Montel's theorem, 16

- nonsingular point of an analytic set, 55
- normal analytic set, 212
- normal class of functions, 98
- normal family of curves, 346
- normal family of holomorphic functions, 184
- normal model for a domain in an analytic space, 271
- normal point, 212
- normal pseudoconvex domain, 323
- normal pseudoconvex space, 321, 323
- normalization theorem, 271
- Nullstellensatz, 316
- number of sheets, 167, 170, 171

- \mathcal{O} -ideal, 220
- \mathcal{O} -ideal $\mathbf{Z}\{\Sigma, F\}$, 262, 271
- \mathcal{O} -ideal $\mathcal{P}\{\mathcal{I}\}$, 258, 263
- \mathcal{O} -ideal $G\{\Sigma\}$, 253, 265
- \mathcal{O} -ideal $I\{\Omega\}$, 251, 256, 261, 263
- \mathcal{O} -ideal $W\{\Sigma\}$, 264, 265
- Oka's condition, 85, 322
- Oka's condition on a continuous family of analytic hypersurfaces, 325
- Oka's counterexample for the Cousin II problem, 92
- Oka's counterexample on a pseudobase for Problem E , 287
- Oka's counterexample on rational convexity, 99
- Oka's lemma on polynomial hulls, 86
- Oka's principle, 94
- Oka-Weil theorem, 85
- \mathcal{O} -module, 220
- \mathcal{O} -module $\mathcal{L}\{\Omega\}$, 222, 277
- \mathcal{O} -module generated by finitely many holomorphic vector-valued functions, 221
- \mathcal{O} -module with respect to the linear relation, 222, 277
- open mapping theorem, 291
- open set in an analytic set, 209

- order of singularity, 198
- Osgood space, 7
- Osgood's theorem, 28
- \mathcal{O} -submodule, 220

- Picard's theorem, 16
- piecewise smooth strictly plurisubharmonic function, 129
- pluriharmonic function, 13
- plurisubharmonic function, 18
- plurisuperharmonic function, 18
- Poincaré problem, 73
- Poincaré's theorem on automorphisms, 148
- Poincaré–Picard entire mapping, 153, 160
- point of indeterminacy, 73, 176
- point of the second kind, 138
- point of the first kind, 137
- point of type (α) , 136
- point of type (β) , 136
- Poisson formula, 15
- Poisson kernel, 15
- polar set, 135
- pole, 73, 176
- polydisk, 5
- polynomial automorphism, 159
- polynomial hull, 32
- polynomial polyhedron, 80
- polynomially convex, 33
- polynomially convex compact set, 85, 87
- polyradius, 5
- Problem C_1 , 231
- Problem C_1 in a Stein space, 286
- Problem C_2 , 231
- Problem C_2 distribution, 231
- Problem C_2 in a Stein space, 287
- Problem E , 231
- Problem E in a Stein space, 287
- product domain, 5
- product set, 4
- projection, 3, 66
- projection of an analytic hypersurface, 171
- projection of an analytic set, 46
- projection of an \mathcal{O} -ideal, 258
- projective space, 7
- projective transformation, 8
- pseudobase for an \mathcal{O} -module, 221
- pseudoconcave set, 132
- pseudoconvex domain, 105, 115
- pseudoconvex domain in an analytic space, 321
- pseudoconvex domain of type A, 112
- pseudoconvex domain of type B, 112
- pseudoconvex domain of type C, 113
- pseudoconvex function, 321
- pseudopolynomial, 41
- pure dimension, 45

- quotient \mathcal{O} -ideal, 251

- Rado's theorem, 16
- ramification number, 170
- ramified domain, 169, 171
- ramified domain associated to an unramified domain, 170
- ramified pseudoconvex domain, 178
- rank of a holomorphic vector-valued function, 220
- rank of a polynomial polyhedron, 80
- rank of an \mathcal{O} -module, 220
- rational convex, 99
- reducible analytic set, 45
- regular branch point, 170
- regular class, 31
- regular part, 170, 171
- regular point, 170
- Reinhardt domain, 8
- relative boundary point, 168
- remainder theorem, 222
- removability theorem for analytic sets, 62
- repelling fixed point, 159
- resultant, 41
- Riemann domain of an algebraic function, 171
- Riemann sphere, 7
- Riemann's removable singularity theorem, 22
- Riemann-Roch theorem, 181
- Runge problem, 75
- Runge theorem, 75
- section, 4
- separate analyticity theorem, 23
- separation condition, 270
- Shilov boundary, 16
- simple function on a ramified domain, 179
- simple graph of a holomorphic function, 183
- simultaneous analytic continuation, 49
- singular point of an analytic set, 55, 62
- smooth function, 116
- Stein space, 280
- strictly plurisubharmonic function, 19
- strictly pseudoconcave boundary point, 132
- strictly pseudoconvex boundary point, 125
- strictly pseudoconvex domain, 125
- strictly pseudoconvex function on a ramified domain, 322
- subglobal finite pseudobase, 299
- subglobal normalization theorem, 298
- successor ordinals, 140
- three ring theorem, 90
- Thullen's theorem, 32
- Thullen's theorem on removability of an analytic set, 143
- transfinite diameter, 134
- transitivity, 152
- uniformizable branch point, 173
- uniqueness theorem for holomorphic mappings, 150
- unitary transformation, 147
- univalent domain, 167
- unramified cover, 351
- unramified domain over \mathbb{C}^n , 167, 345
- unramified pseudoconvex domain, 178
- vector-valued function, 49
- weakly bounded difference, 347
- weakly holomorphic function, 210
- Weierstrass condition, 37, 54, 56
- Weierstrass preparation theorem, 43
- Weierstrass theorem, 16
- W -ideal, 264
- zero set of an \mathcal{O} -ideal, 253
- Z -ideal, 262

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