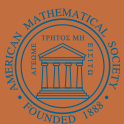


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Volume 197

The Octagonal PETs

Richard Evan Schwartz



American Mathematical Society

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Contents

Preface	ix
Chapter 1. Introduction	1
1.1. What is a PET?	1
1.2. Some Examples	1
1.3. Goals of the Monograph	2
1.4. The Octagonal PETs	3
1.5. The Main Theorem: Renormalization	4
1.6. Corollaries of The Main Theorem	6
1.7. Polygonal Outer Billiards	10
1.8. The Alternating Grid System	11
1.9. Computer Assists	13
1.10. Organization	13
Part 1. Friends of the Octagonal PETs	15
Chapter 2. Background	17
2.1. Lattices and Fundamental Domains	17
2.2. Hyperplanes	17
2.3. The PET Category	18
2.4. Periodic Tiles for PETs	19
2.5. The Limit Set	20
2.6. Some Hyperbolic Geometry	21
2.7. Continued Fractions	23
2.8. Some Analysis	24
Chapter 3. Multigraph PETs	27
3.1. The Abstract Construction	27
3.2. The Reflection Lemma	28
3.3. Constructing Multigraph PETs	29
3.4. Planar Examples	30
3.5. Three Dimensional Examples	30
3.6. Higher Dimensional Generalizations	31
Chapter 4. The Alternating Grid System	33
4.1. Basic Definitions	33
4.2. Compactifying the Generators	34
4.3. The PET Structure	36
4.4. Characterizing the PET	37
4.5. A More Symmetric Picture	38

4.6. Unbounded Orbits	40
4.7. The Complex Octagonal PETs	40
Chapter 5. Outer Billiards on Semiregular Octagons	43
5.1. The Basic Sets	43
5.2. The Far Partition	44
5.3. The First Return Map	45
5.4. The Necklace Orbits	47
5.5. Parallelograms, Halfbones, and Dogbones	47
5.6. The Dogbone Map	49
5.7. The First Conjugacy	50
5.8. The Second Conjugacy	54
Chapter 6. Quarter Turn Compositions	55
6.1. Basic Definitions	55
6.2. The Polytope Graph	55
6.3. QTCs and Polygon Graphs	57
6.4. QTCs and Outer Billiards	58
6.5. QTCs and Double Lattice PETs	60
Part 2. Renormalization and Symmetry	63
Chapter 7. Elementary Properties	65
7.1. Intersection of the Parallelograms	66
7.2. Intersection of the Lattices	66
7.3. Rotational Symmetry	66
7.4. Central Tiles	66
7.5. Inversion Symmetry	67
7.6. Insertion Symmetry	67
7.7. The Tiling in Trivial Cases	68
Chapter 8. Orbit Stability and Combinatorics	71
8.1. A Bound on Coefficients	71
8.2. Sharpness	71
8.3. The Arithmetic Graph	72
8.4. Orbit Stability	73
8.5. Uniqueness and Convergence	74
8.6. Ruling out Thin Regions	74
8.7. Joint Convergence	75
Chapter 9. Bilateral Symmetry	77
9.1. Pictures	77
9.2. Definitions and Formulas	78
Chapter 10. Proof of the Main Theorem	81
10.1. Discussion and Overview	81
10.2. Proof of Induction Lemma I	82
10.3. Proof of Induction Lemma II	84
Chapter 11. The Renormalization Map	87
11.1. Elementary Properties	87

11.2.	The Even Expansion	87
11.3.	Oddly Even Numbers	88
11.4.	The Even Expansion and Continued Fractions	89
11.5.	Diophantine Approximation	89
11.6.	Dense Orbits	90
11.7.	Proof of the Triangle Lemma	91
Chapter 12.	Properties of the Tiling	93
12.1.	Tedious Special Cases	93
12.2.	Classification of Tile Shapes	93
12.3.	Classification of Stable Orbits	95
12.4.	Existence of Square Tiles	96
12.5.	The Oddly Even Case	97
12.6.	Density of Shapes	97
Part 3.	Metric Properties	99
Chapter 13.	The Filling Lemma	101
13.1.	The Layering Constant	101
13.2.	The Filling Lemma, Part 1	101
13.3.	The Filling Lemma, Part 2	104
Chapter 14.	The Covering Lemma	105
14.1.	The Main Result	105
14.2.	Some Additional Pictures	110
Chapter 15.	Further Geometric Results	111
15.1.	The Area Lemma	111
15.2.	Tiles in Symmetric Pieces	112
15.3.	Pyramids	113
Chapter 16.	Properties of the Limit Set	115
16.1.	Elementary Topological Properties	115
16.2.	Zero Area	116
16.3.	Projections of the Limit Set	116
16.4.	Finite Unions of Lines	118
16.5.	Existence of Aperiodic Points	119
16.6.	Hyperbolic Symmetry	119
Chapter 17.	Hausdorff Convergence	121
17.1.	Results about Patches	121
17.2.	Convergence	121
17.3.	Covering	123
Chapter 18.	Recurrence Relations	127
Chapter 19.	Hausdorff Dimension Bounds	131
19.1.	The Upper Bound Formula	131
19.2.	A Formula in the Oddly Even Case	131
19.3.	One Dimensional Examples	132
19.4.	A Warm-Up Case	133

19.5.	Most of The General Bound	133
19.6.	Dealing with the Exceptions	136
Part 4.	Topological Properties	139
Chapter 20.	Controlling the Limit Set	141
20.1.	The Shield Lemma	141
20.2.	Another Version of the Shield Lemma	143
20.3.	The Pinching Lemma	145
20.4.	Rational Oddly Even Parameters	147
Chapter 21.	The Arc Case	149
21.1.	The Easy Direction	149
21.2.	A Criterion for Arcs	150
21.3.	Elementary Properties of the Limit Set	153
21.4.	Verifying the Arc Criterion	153
Chapter 22.	Further Symmetries of the Tiling	157
22.1.	Zones	157
22.2.	Symmetry of Zones	158
22.3.	Intersections with Zones	158
22.4.	Folding	160
Chapter 23.	The Forest Case	163
23.1.	Reduction to the Loops Theorem	163
23.2.	Proof of the Loops Theorem	163
23.3.	An Example	164
Chapter 24.	The Cantor Set Case	167
24.1.	Unlikely Sets	167
24.2.	Tails and Anchored Paths	167
24.3.	Acute Crosscuts	168
24.4.	The Main Argument	172
24.5.	Pictorial Explanation	173
Chapter 25.	Dynamics in the Arc Case	175
25.1.	The Main Result	175
25.2.	Intersection with the Partitions	176
25.3.	The Rational Case	178
25.4.	Measures of Symmetric Pieces	179
25.5.	Controlling the Measures	180
25.6.	The End of the Proof	181
Part 5.	Computational Details	183
Chapter 26.	Computational Methods	185
26.1.	The Fiber Bundle Picture	185
26.2.	Avoiding Computational Error	186
26.3.	Dealing with Polyhedra	187
26.4.	Verifying the Partition	188
26.5.	Verifying Outer Billiards Orbits	189

26.6. A Planar Approach	190
26.7. Generating the Partitions	191
Chapter 27. The Calculations	193
27.1. Calculation 1	193
27.2. Calculation 2	194
27.3. Calculation 3	194
27.4. Calculation 4	196
27.5. Calculation 5	196
27.6. Calculation 6	197
27.7. Calculation 7	198
27.8. Calculation 8	198
27.9. Calculation 9	198
27.10. Calculation 10	198
27.11. Calculation 11	199
27.12. Calculation 12	200
Chapter 28. The Raw Data	203
28.1. A Guide to the Files	203
28.2. The Main Domain	203
28.3. The Symmetric Pieces	203
28.4. Period Two Tiles	204
28.5. The Domains from the Main Theorem	204
28.6. The Polyhedra in the Partition	204
28.7. The Action of the Map	206
28.8. The Partition for Calculation 11	207
28.9. The First Partition for Calculation 12	208
28.10. The Second Partition for Calculation 12	209
Bibliography	211

Preface

Polytope exchange transformations are higher dimensional generalizations of interval exchange transformations, one dimensional maps which have been extensively and very fruitfully studied for the past 40 years or so. Polytope exchange transformations have the added appeal that they produce intricate fractal-like tilings. At this point, the higher dimensional versions are not nearly as well understood as their 1-dimensional counterparts, and it seems natural to focus on such questions as finding a robust renormalization theory for a large class of examples.

In this monograph, we introduce a general method of constructing polytope exchange transformations (PETs) in all dimensions. Our construction is functorial in nature. One starts with a multigraph such that the vertices are labeled by convex polytopes and the edges are labeled by Euclidean lattices in such a way that each vertex label is a fundamental domain for all the lattices labeling incident edges. There is a functor from the fundamental groupoid of this multigraph into the category of PETs, and the image of this functor contains many interesting examples. For instance, one can produce huge multi-parameter families based on finite reflection groups.

Most of this monograph is devoted to the study of the simplest examples of our construction. These examples are based on the order 8 dihedral reflection group D_4 . The corresponding multigraph is a digon (two vertices connected by two edges) decorated by 2-dimensional parallelograms and lattices. This input produces a 1-parameter family of polygon exchange transformations which we call the Octagonal PETs. One particular parameter is closely related to a system studied by Adler-Kitchens-Tresser.

We show that the family of octagonal PETs has a renormalization scheme in which the $(2, 4, \infty)$ hyperbolic reflection triangle group acts on the parameter space (by linear fractional transformations) as a renormalization symmetry group. The underlying hyperbolic geometry symmetry of the system allows for a complete classification of the shapes of the periodic tiles and also a complete classification of the topology of the limit sets.

We also establish a local equivalence between outer billiards on semi-regular octagons and the octagonal PETs, and this gives a similarly complete description of outer billiards on semi-regular octagons. Finally, we show how the octagonal PETs arise naturally as invariant slices of certain 4-dimensional PETs based on deformations of the E_4 lattice.

I discovered almost all the material in this monograph by computer experimentation, and then later on found rigorous proofs. Most of the proofs here are traditional, but they do rely on 12 computer calculations. These calculations are described in detail in the last part of the monograph.

I wrote two interactive Java programs, OctaPET and BonePET, which illustrate essentially all the mathematics in this monograph. The reader can download these programs from my website (as explained at the end of the introduction) and can use them while reading the manuscript. I wrote the monograph with the intention that a serious reader would also use the programs.

I would like to thank Nicolas Bedaride, Pat Hooper, Injee Jeong, John Smillie, and Sergei Tabachnikov for interesting conversations about topics related to this work. Some of this work was carried out at ICERM in Summer 2012, and most of it was carried out during my sabbatical at Oxford in 2012–2013. I would especially like to thank All Souls College, Oxford, for providing a wonderful research environment.

My sabbatical was funded from many sources. I would like to thank the National Science Foundation, All Souls College, the Oxford Maths Institute, the Simons Foundation, the Leverhulme Trust, the Chancellor’s Professorship, and Brown University for their support during this time period.

Oxford, November 2012

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A polytope exchange transformation is a (discontinuous) map from a polytope to itself that is a translation wherever it is defined. The 1-dimensional examples, interval exchange transformations, have been studied fruitfully for many years and have deep connections to other areas of mathematics, such as Teichmüller theory. This book introduces a general method for constructing polytope exchange transformations in higher dimensions and then studies the simplest example of the construction in detail. The simplest case is a 1-parameter family of polygon exchange transformations that turns out to be closely related to outer billiards on semi-regular octagons. The 1-parameter family admits a complete renormalization scheme, and this structure allows for a fairly complete analysis both of the system and of outer billiards on semi-regular octagons. The material in this book was discovered through computer experimentation. On the other hand, the proofs are traditional, except for a few rigorous computer-assisted calculations.



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