

Contents

Preface	ix
Preface to the English Edition	xi
Objectives and Outline of these Books	xiii
Notation	xv
Chapter 0. Introduction	
— Fermat and Number Theory —	1
0.1. Before Fermat	1
0.2. Prime numbers and the sum of two squares	4
0.3. $p = x^2 + 2y^2$, $p = x^2 + 3y^2, \dots$	6
0.4. Pell's equations	7
0.5. Triangular numbers, quadrangular numbers, pentagonal numbers	8
0.6. Triangular numbers, squares, cubes	10
0.7. Right triangles and elliptic curves	11
0.8. Fermat's Last Theorem	12
Exercises	14
Chapter 1. Rational Points on Elliptic Curves	17
1.1. Fermat and elliptic curves	17
1.2. Group structure of an elliptic curve	25
1.3. Mordell's theorem	30
Summary	43
Exercises	43
Chapter 2. Conics and p -adic Numbers	45
2.1. Conics	45
2.2. Congruence	49
2.3. Conics and quadratic residue symbols	53
2.4. p -adic number fields	58

2.5. Multiplicative structure of the p -adic number field	69
2.6. Rational points on conics	74
Summary	78
Exercises	78
Chapter 3. ζ	81
3.1. Three wonders of the values of the ζ function	81
3.2. Values at positive integers	84
3.3. Values at negative integers	89
Summary	99
Exercises	100
Chapter 4. Algebraic Number Theory	103
4.1. Method of algebraic number theory	104
4.2. The heart of algebraic number theory	113
4.3. The class number formula for imaginary quadratic fields	124
4.4. Fermat's Last Theorem and Kummer	127
Summary	132
Exercises	132
Appendix A. Rudiments on Dedekind domains	135
A.1. Definition of a Dedekind domain	135
A.2. Fractional ideal	136
Answers to Questions	139
Answers to Exercises	145
Index	153

Preface

This book was written in 1996, two hundred years after 1796, which was a very fruitful year for the great Gauss, who made many fundamental contributions to modern number theory. Gauss was in his late teens at the time. On March 30 he discovered a method of construction of a regular 17-gon. On April 8 he proved the quadratic reciprocity law (see §2.2 in this volume), which he himself called a gem. On May 31 he conjectured what would later be called “the prime number theorem” concerning the distribution of prime numbers. On July 10 he proved that any natural number can be expressed as a sum of at most three triangular numbers (see §0.5). On October 1 he obtained a result on the number of solutions for an equation with coefficients in a finite field, which had a great impact on mathematics in later eras. All these contributions are discussed in these volumes, *Number Theory 1, 2, 3*.

One, two, three, four... as naive as it is, the world of numbers encompasses many wonders that fascinated young Gauss. A discovery in one epoch induces a more profound discovery by the following generation. A hundred years later, in 1896, the prime number theorem was proved. After some 120 years, the quadratic reciprocity law had grown into the class field theory. After 150 years, André Weil, who had examined Gauss’s result of October 1, proposed the so-called Weil conjectures. These conjectures influenced a great deal of algebraic geometry in the twentieth century. The brilliance of the gems polished by Gauss has increased through the efforts of the mathematicians of following generations. It is said that there is no unexplored place on the earth any longer, but the world of numbers is still full of mysteries. That makes us think of the profoundness and richness of nature.

Wandering naively in the wonderland of numbers, we would like to describe in this book the intricate world of numbers that modern

number theory has discovered. We will be very happy if the reader discovers the wonders of numbers and the grandeur of nature.

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Preface to the English Edition

The authors hope that the readers enjoy the wonderful world of modern number theory through the book.

Our special thanks are due to Dr. Masato Kuwata, who not only translated the Japanese edition into English but also suggested many improvements on the text so that the present English edition is more readable than the original Japanese edition.

Objectives and Outline of these Books

In these books, *Number Theory 1, 2, 3*, we introduce core theories in modern number theory, such as class field theory, Iwasawa theory, the theory of modular forms, etc. The structure of this book is as follows.

The starting point of number theory is astonishment at the wonders of numbers. The work of Fermat, who is considered to be a founding father of modern number theory, illustrates very well the wonder of numbers. We first discuss the work of Fermat on number theory in the introduction to *Number Theory 1*. The reader will learn how mathematicians of later eras little by little found a fascinating world behind each fact discovered by Fermat. In *Number Theory 1* we study some important topics in modern number theory, such as elliptic curves (Chapter 1), p -adic numbers (Chapter 2), the ζ -function (Chapter 3), and number fields (Chapter 4). These chapters are more or less independent; the material in the earlier chapters is not necessary to understand each succeeding chapter. Chapters 2 and 3 may be easier to read than Chapter 1. The reader should not hesitate to skip parts that are difficult to understand.

Number Theory 2 is devoted to class field theory. We also study the ζ -function once again. In *Number Theory 3* we explain Iwasawa theory and the theory of modular forms, before coming back to elliptic curves once again.

These books are part of the series *Fundamentals of Modern Mathematics*, but we were not satisfied with the introduction of fundamentals. We tried to include today's developments in number theory. For example, we included some important theories developed in recent years, such as the arithmetic theory of elliptic curves, which is part of arithmetic algebraic geometry, and Iwasawa theory, to which we did not find an introduction elsewhere. We hope that we convey the best of modern number theory.

We wanted to include more topics, but we had to omit many of them due to the limitation on the number of pages. We regret that we could not mention Diophantine approximations and transcendental number theory, both of which are seeing new developments in recent years.

Prerequisites to *Number Theory 1* are the fundamentals of groups, rings and fields. In *Number Theory 2* we recommend that the reader be familiar with Galois theory.

The reader is advised to write down simple and easy examples on scratch paper. Just as astronomical observations are indispensable to the study of astronomy, it is indispensable to observe the numbers in order to study number theory. The wonders are there to be discovered. Also, number theory has a long history, which teaches us interesting lessons. We advise you to take an interest in the history of mathematics.