

3. A COMBINATORIAL INTERLUDE

Objektyp: **Chapter**

Zeitschrift: **L'Enseignement Mathématique**

Band (Jahr): **36 (1990)**

Heft 1-2: **L'ENSEIGNEMENT MATHÉMATIQUE**

PDF erstellt am: **09.08.2024**

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COROLLARY 2.9. *As representations of Y , we have*

$$W_m(a)^* \cong W_m(-a).$$

Proof. On $W_m(a)$, $J(x)$ acts as ax . Therefore, on $W_m(a)^*$, $J(x)$ acts as $-ax$.

The following is a related result.

PROPOSITION 2.10. *Every evaluation representation $W_m(a)$ has a non-degenerate invariant symmetric bilinear form.*

This means that there is a non-degenerate symmetric bilinear form $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle$ on $W_m(a)$ such that

$$(2.11) \quad \langle y \cdot v_1, v_2 \rangle = \langle v_1, \omega(y) \cdot v_2 \rangle$$

for all $y \in Y$, $v_1, v_2 \in W_m(a)$.

Proof. It is well-known that the representation W_m of \mathfrak{sl}_2 carries a form $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle$ which satisfies (2.11) for all $y \in \mathfrak{sl}_2$. Moreover, the form is unique up to a scalar multiple because W_m is irreducible. To prove (2.11) in general, it suffices to check the case $y = x_k^+$, since the case $y = x_k^-$ then follows because $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle$ is symmetric, and $\omega(x_k^+) = x_k^-$. Since vectors of different weights are orthogonal, it is therefore enough to prove.

$$(2.12) \quad \langle x_k^+ \cdot e_i, e_{i+k} \rangle = \langle e_i, x_k^- \cdot e_{i+k} \rangle$$

(with the understanding that $e_i = 0$ unless $0 \leq i \leq n$). This follows easily from Proposition 2.6 and the invariance of $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle$ under \mathfrak{sl}_2 .

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The form of the polynomial P associated to the representation $W_m(a)$ in Corollary 2.7(b) suggests the following definition.

Definition 3.1. A non-empty finite set of complex numbers is said to be a *string* if it is of the form $\{a, a+1, \dots, a+n\}$ for some $a \in \mathbf{C}$ and some $n \in \mathbf{N}$.

The centre of the string is $a + \frac{n}{2}$ and its length is $n+1$.

We shall also need:

Definition 3.2. Two strings S_1 and S_2 are said to be *non-interacting* if either

- (1) $S_1 \cup S_2$ is not a string, or
- (2) $S_1 \subseteq S_2$ or $S_2 \subseteq S_1$.

Remark. We shall discuss the “interactions” of strings in section 4.

We should like to assert that the set of roots of an arbitrary polynomial is a union of non-interacting strings. To make this precise, we need one last definition.

Definition 3.3. A set with multiplicities is a map $f : \Sigma \rightarrow \mathbf{N}$, where Σ is a set. If Σ is a finite set, the cardinality of f is

$$|f| = \sum_{x \in \Sigma} f(x).$$

The union of two sets with multiplicities is the sum of the corresponding maps. Note that any set is a set with multiplicities, all values of the map being equal to one. Also, the roots of a polynomial $P \in \mathbf{C}[u]$ form a set with multiplicities in a natural way. In particular, the roots of the polynomial associated to $W_m(a)$ in Corollary 2.7(b) form a single string

$$S_m(a) = \left\{ a - \frac{1}{2}m + \frac{1}{2}, \dots, a + \frac{1}{2}m - \frac{1}{2} \right\}$$

with centre a and length m .

We shall need the following simple result whose verification we leave to the reader.

LEMMA 3.4. Two strings $S_m(a)$ and $S_n(b)$ are non-interacting if and only if it is not true that

$$|a - b| = \frac{1}{2}(m + n), \frac{1}{2}(m + n) - 1, \dots, \text{ or } \frac{1}{2}|m - n| + 1.$$

The result we want is:

PROPOSITION 3.5. Any finite set of complex numbers with multiplicities can be written uniquely as a union of strings, any two of which are non-interacting.

Proof. Let $f : \Sigma \rightarrow \mathbf{N}$ be a finite set of complex numbers with multiplicities. The proof is by induction on $|f|$. If $|f| = 0$ or 1 there is nothing to prove.

Choose $s \in \Sigma$, let S be the maximal string of numbers in Σ which contains s , and let g be the characteristic function of S . By induction, $f - g$ is a union of non-interacting strings. If T is any such string, then S and T are non-interacting, since if $T \not\subseteq S$ then $S \cup T$ cannot be a string, by maximality of S . Thus, adjoining S to the string decomposition of $f - g$ gives the desired decomposition of f .

As for uniqueness, we first show that the string S above must occur in any decomposition of f as a union of non-interacting strings. For, otherwise, let T be a maximal string in such a decomposition which contains s . Then T is properly contained in S , so there exists $u \in S - T$ such that $T \cup \{u\}$ is a string. Let U be a string in the given decomposition of f which contains u . Then, by its maximality, T cannot be contained in U , so T and U are interacting, a contradiction.

Thus, S must occur in any two decompositions of f as a union of non-interacting strings. Deleting S from both decompositions and using the induction hypothesis, one deduces that the two decompositions are the same.

We conclude this section with the computation of a determinant which plays the same role for Yangians as the Vandermonde determinant plays in the classification of integrable representations of affine Lie algebras [1].

Let r be a positive integer and let $b_j, m_j, 1 \leq j \leq r$, be complex numbers. Quantities $d_{k,j}, A_{k,j}$ for $1 \leq j \leq r, 0 \leq k \leq r - 1$, are defined inductively by the following formulas:

$$(3.6) \quad \begin{aligned} A_{k,j} &= b_j^k + b_j^{k-1} d_{0,j} + \cdots + d_{k-1,j} \\ d_{k,j} &= m_{j+1} A_{k,j+1} + d_{k,j+1}, \quad d_{k,r} = 0 \end{aligned}$$

(we set $d_{k,r+1} = 0$). Let A be the matrix $(A_{k,j})$ with $1 \leq j \leq r, 0 \leq k \leq r - 1$.

PROPOSITION 3.7. $\det A = \prod_{1 \leq k < j \leq r} (b_j - b_k - m_j)$.

Remark. One can think of $\det A$ as a ‘‘quantum Vandermonde determinant’’. Indeed, recall that Y is obtained from a deformation of $U(\mathfrak{sl}_2[t])$ by setting the deformation parameter h equal to one. If we had not set $h = 1$, then in equation (3.6) $d_{k,j}$ would be replaced by $hd_{k,j}$ and in equation (3.7) m_j would be replaced by hm_j . Thus, in the ‘‘classical limit’’ $h \rightarrow 0$, $\det A$ becomes the usual Vandermonde determinant and (3.7) its well-known factorization.

Our proof of (3.7) is rather indirect and will be given in the next section.