

Number Theory

Means of algebraic numbers in the unit disk

Igor E. Pritsker¹

Department of Mathematics, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078, USA

Received 19 November 2008; accepted after revision 9 January 2009

Available online 6 February 2009

Presented by Jean-Pierre Serre

Abstract

Schur studied limits of the arithmetic means s_n of zeros for polynomials of degree n with integer coefficients and simple zeros in the closed unit disk. If the leading coefficients are bounded, Schur proved that $\limsup_{n \rightarrow \infty} |s_n| \leq 1 - \sqrt{e}/2$. We show that $s_n \rightarrow 0$, and estimate the rate of convergence by generalizing the Erdős–Turán theorem on the distribution of zeros. **To cite this article:** I.E. Pritsker, *C. R. Acad. Sci. Paris, Ser. I 347 (2009)*.

© 2009 Académie des sciences. Published by Elsevier Masson SAS. All rights reserved.

Résumé

Moyennes de nombres algébriques dans le disque unité. Schur a étudié les limites des moyennes arithmétiques s_n des zéros pour les polynômes à coefficients entiers de degré n ayant des zéros simples dans le disque unité fermé. Lorsque les coefficients dominants restent bornés, Schur a démontré que $\limsup_{n \rightarrow \infty} |s_n| \leq 1 - \sqrt{e}/2$. Nous prouvons que $s_n \rightarrow 0$. Nous donnons une estimation du taux de convergence, grâce à une généralisation d'un théorème de Erdős–Turán sur la distribution des zéros. **Pour citer cet article :** I.E. Pritsker, *C. R. Acad. Sci. Paris, Ser. I 347 (2009)*.

© 2009 Académie des sciences. Published by Elsevier Masson SAS. All rights reserved.

1. Schur's problem and equidistribution of zeros

Let $\mathbb{Z}_n(D)$ be the set of polynomials of degree n with integer coefficients and all zeros in the closed unit disk D . We denote the subset of $\mathbb{Z}_n(D)$ with simple zeros by $\mathbb{Z}_n^1(D)$. Given $M > 0$, we write $P_n = a_n z^n + \dots \in \mathbb{Z}_n^1(D, M)$ if $|a_n| \leq M$ and $P_n \in \mathbb{Z}_n^1(D)$ (respectively $P_n \in \mathbb{Z}_n(D, M)$ if $|a_n| \leq M$ and $P_n \in \mathbb{Z}_n(D)$). Schur [9, §8] studied the limiting behavior of the arithmetic means s_n of zeros for polynomials from $\mathbb{Z}_n^1(D, M)$ as $n \rightarrow \infty$, where $M > 0$ is an arbitrary fixed number. He showed that $\limsup_{n \rightarrow \infty} |s_n| \leq 1 - \sqrt{e}/2$, and remarked that this lim sup is equal to 0 for *monic* polynomials from $\mathbb{Z}_n(D)$ by Kronecker's theorem [6]. We prove that $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} s_n = 0$ for any sequence of polynomials from Schur's class $\mathbb{Z}_n^1(D, M)$, $n \in \mathbb{N}$. This result is obtained as a consequence of the asymptotic equidistribution of zeros near the unit circle. Namely, if $\{\alpha_k\}_{k=1}^n$ are the zeros of P_n , we define the counting measure $\tau_n := \frac{1}{n} \sum_{k=1}^n \delta_{\alpha_k}$, where δ_{α_k} is the unit point mass at α_k . Consider the normalized arclength measure μ on the unit

E-mail address: igor@math.okstate.edu.

URL: <http://www.math.okstate.edu/~igor/>.

¹ Research was partially supported by NSA, and by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation.

circumference \mathbb{T} , with $d\mu(e^{it}) := \frac{1}{2\pi} dt$. If the τ_n converge weakly to μ as $n \rightarrow \infty$ ($\tau_n \xrightarrow{*} \mu$) then $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} s_n = \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \int z d\tau_n(z) = \int z d\mu(z) = 0$. Thus Schur's problem is solved by the following result.

Theorem 1.1. *If $P_n(z) = a_n z^n + \dots \in \mathbb{Z}_n^1(D)$, $n \in \mathbb{N}$, satisfy $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} |a_n|^{1/n} = 1$, then $\tau_n \xrightarrow{*} \mu$ as $n \rightarrow \infty$.*

Ideas on the equidistribution of zeros date back to Jentzsch and Szegő, cf. [1, Ch. 2]. They were developed further by Erdős and Turán [4], and many others; see [1] for history and additional references. More recently, this topic received renewed attention in number theory, e.g. in the work of Bilu [2]. If the leading coefficients of polynomials are bounded, then we can allow even certain multiple zeros. Define the multiplicity of an irreducible factor Q of P_n as the integer $m_n \geq 0$ such that Q^{m_n} divides P_n , but Q^{m_n+1} does not divide P_n . If a factor Q occurs infinitely often in a sequence P_n , $n \in \mathbb{N}$, then $m_n = o(n)$ means $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} m_n/n = 0$. If Q is present only in finitely many P_n , then $m_n = o(n)$ by definition.

Theorem 1.2. *Assume that $P_n \in \mathbb{Z}_n(D, M)$, $n \in \mathbb{N}$. If every irreducible factor in the sequence of polynomials P_n has multiplicity $o(n)$, then $\tau_n \xrightarrow{*} \mu$ as $n \rightarrow \infty$.*

Corollary 1.3. *If $P_n(z) = a_n \prod_{k=1}^n (z - \alpha_k)$, $n \in \mathbb{N}$, satisfy the assumptions of Theorem 1.1 or 1.2, then*

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{1}{n} \sum_{k=1}^n \alpha_k^m = 0, \quad m \in \mathbb{N}.$$

We also show that the norms $\|P_n\|_\infty := \max_{|z|=1} |P_n(z)|$ have at most subexponential growth.

Corollary 1.4. *If P_n , $n \in \mathbb{N}$, satisfy the assumptions of Theorem 1.1 or Theorem 1.2, then*

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \|P_n\|_\infty^{1/n} = 1.$$

This result is somewhat unexpected, as we have no direct control of the norm or coefficients (except for the leading one). For example, $P_n(z) = (z - 1)^n$ has norm $\|P_n\|_\infty = 2^n$.

We now consider quantitative aspects of the convergence $\tau_n \xrightarrow{*} \mu$. As an application, we obtain estimates of the convergence rate of s_n to 0 in Schur's problem. A classical result on the distribution of zeros is due to Erdős and Turán [4]. For $P_n(z) = \sum_{k=0}^n a_k z^k$ with $a_k \in \mathbb{C}$, let $N(\phi_1, \phi_2)$ be the number of zeros in the sector $\{z \in \mathbb{C}: 0 \leq \phi_1 \leq \arg(z) \leq \phi_2 < 2\pi\}$, where $\phi_1 < \phi_2$. Erdős and Turán [4] proved that

$$\left| \frac{N(\phi_1, \phi_2)}{n} - \frac{\phi_2 - \phi_1}{2\pi} \right| \leq 16 \sqrt{\frac{1}{n} \log \frac{\|P_n\|_\infty}{\sqrt{|a_0 a_n|}}}. \quad (1)$$

The constant 16 was improved by Ganelius, and $\|P_n\|_\infty$ was replaced by weaker integral norms by Amoroso and Mignotte; see [1] for more history and references. Our main difficulty in applying (1) to Schur's problem is the absence of an effective estimate for $\|P_n\|_\infty$, $P_n \in \mathbb{Z}_n^1(D, M)$. We prove a new "discrepancy" estimate via energy considerations from potential theory. These ideas originated in part in the work of Kleiner, and were developed by Sjögren and Hüsing, see [1, Ch. 5]. We also use the Mahler measure of a polynomial $P_n(z) = a_n \prod_{k=1}^n (z - \alpha_k)$, defined by $M(P_n) := \exp(\frac{1}{2\pi} \int_0^{2\pi} \log |P_n(e^{it})| dt)$. Note that $M(P_n) = \lim_{p \rightarrow 0} \|P_n\|_p$, where $\|P_n\|_p := (\frac{1}{2\pi} \int_0^{2\pi} |P_n(e^{it})|^p dt)^{1/p}$, $p > 0$. Jensen's formula readily gives $M(P_n) = |a_n| \prod_{k=1}^n \max(1, |\alpha_k|)$ [3, p. 3]. Hence $M(P_n) = |a_n| \leq M$ for any $P_n \in \mathbb{Z}_n(D, M)$.

Theorem 1.5. *Let $\phi: \mathbb{C} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ satisfy $|\phi(z) - \phi(t)| \leq A|z - t|$, $z, t \in \mathbb{C}$, and $\text{supp}(\phi) \subset \{z: |z| \leq R\}$. If $P_n(z) = a_n \prod_{k=1}^n (z - \alpha_k)$ is a polynomial with integer coefficients and simple zeros, then*

$$\left| \frac{1}{n} \sum_{k=1}^n \phi(\alpha_k) - \int \phi d\mu \right| \leq A(2R + 1) \sqrt{\frac{\log \max(n, M(P_n))}{n}}, \quad n \geq 55. \quad (2)$$

This theorem is related to recent results of Favre and Rivera-Letelier [5], obtained in a different setting. Choosing ϕ appropriately, we obtain an estimate of the means s_n in Schur’s problem.

Corollary 1.6. *If $P_n \in \mathbb{Z}_n^1(D, M)$ then*

$$\left| \frac{1}{n} \sum_{k=1}^n \alpha_k \right| \leq 8 \sqrt{\frac{\log n}{n}}, \quad n \geq \max(M, 55).$$

We also have an improvement of Corollary 1.4 for Schur’s class $\mathbb{Z}_n^1(D, M)$.

Corollary 1.7. *If $\{P_n\}_{n=1}^\infty \in \mathbb{Z}_n^1(D, M)$ then there is some $c > 0$ such that $\|P_n\|_\infty \leq e^{c\sqrt{n}\log n}$ as $n \rightarrow \infty$.*

The proof of Theorem 1.5 gives a result for arbitrary polynomials with simple zeros, and for any continuous ϕ with finite Dirichlet integral $D[\phi] = \iint (\phi_x^2 + \phi_y^2) dA$. Moreover, all arguments may be extended to general sets of logarithmic capacity 1, e.g. to $[-2, 2]$. Using the characteristic function $\phi = \chi_E$, we can prove general discrepancy estimates on arbitrary sets, and obtain an Erdős–Turán-type theorem. Our results have a number of applications to the problems on integer polynomials considered in [3].

2. Proofs

Proof of Theorem 1.1. Observe that the discriminant $\Delta(P_n) := a_n^{2n-2} \prod_{1 \leq j < k \leq n} (\alpha_j - \alpha_k)^2$ is an integer, as a symmetric form in the zeros of P_n . Since P_n has simple roots, we have $\Delta(P_n) \neq 0$ and $|\Delta(P_n)| \geq 1$. Using weak compactness, we assume that $\tau_n \xrightarrow{*} \tau$, where τ is a probability measure on D . Let $K_M(x, t) := \min(-\log|x - t|, M)$. Since $\tau_n \times \tau_n \xrightarrow{*} \tau \times \tau$, we obtain for the energy of τ that

$$\begin{aligned} I[\tau] &:= - \iint \log|x - t| d\tau(x) d\tau(t) = \lim_{M \rightarrow \infty} \left(\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \iint K_M(x, t) d\tau_n(x) d\tau_n(t) \right) \\ &= \lim_{M \rightarrow \infty} \left(\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \left(\frac{1}{n^2} \sum_{j \neq k} K_M(\alpha_j, \alpha_k) + \frac{M}{n} \right) \right) \leq \lim_{M \rightarrow \infty} \left(\liminf_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{1}{n^2} \sum_{j \neq k} \log \frac{1}{|\alpha_j - \alpha_k|} \right) \\ &= \liminf_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{1}{n^2} \log \frac{|a_n|^{2n-2}}{\Delta(P_n)} \leq \liminf_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{1}{n^2} \log |a_n|^{2n-2} = 0. \end{aligned}$$

Thus $I[\tau] \leq 0$. But $I[\nu] > 0$ for any probability measure ν on D , except for μ [7]. Hence $\tau = \mu$. \square

Proof of Theorem 1.2. Let $\phi \in C(\mathbb{C})$. Note that for any $\epsilon > 0$ there are finitely many irreducible factors Q in the sequence P_n such that $|\int \phi d\tau(Q) - \int \phi d\mu| \geq \epsilon$, where $\tau(Q)$ is the zero counting measure for Q . Indeed, if we have an infinite sequence of such Q_m , then $\deg(Q_m) \rightarrow \infty$, as there are only finitely many $Q_m \in \mathbb{Z}_n(D, M)$ of bounded degree. Hence $\int \phi d\tau(Q_m) \rightarrow \int \phi d\mu$ by Theorem 1.1. Let the number of such exceptional factors Q_m be N . Then we have $|n \int \phi d\tau_n - n \int \phi d\mu| \leq N o(n) \max_D |\phi - \int \phi d\mu| + (n - N)\epsilon$, $n \in \mathbb{N}$. Hence $\limsup_{n \rightarrow \infty} |\int \phi d\tau_n - \int \phi d\mu| \leq \epsilon$, and $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \int \phi d\tau_n = \int \phi d\mu$ after letting $\epsilon \rightarrow 0$. \square

Proof of Corollary 1.3. Let $\phi(z) = z^m$ and write $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \int z^m d\tau_n(z) = \int z^m d\mu(z) = 0$. \square

Proof of Corollary 1.4. Let $\|P_n\|_\infty = |P_n(z_n)|$, $z_n \in D$, and assume $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} z_n = z_0 \in D$ by compactness. Then $\|P_n\|_\infty = \exp(\log|P_n(z_n)|) = |a_n| \exp(n \int \log|z_n - t| d\tau_n(t))$. Since $\tau_n \xrightarrow{*} \mu$, Theorem 1.6.8 of [8] gives $\limsup_{n \rightarrow \infty} \|P_n\|_\infty^{1/n} \leq \exp(\int \log|z_0 - t| d\mu(t)) = 1$ [8, p. 22]. But $\|P_n\|_\infty \geq |a_n| \geq 1$, see [1, p. 16]. \square

Proof of Theorem 1.5. Given $r > 0$, define the measures ν_k^r with $d\nu_k^r(\alpha_k + re^{it}) = dt/(2\pi)$, $t \in [0, 2\pi)$. Let $\tau_n^r := \frac{1}{n} \sum_{k=1}^n \nu_k^r$, and estimate $|\int \phi d\tau_n - \int \phi d\tau_n^r| \leq \frac{1}{n} \sum_{k=1}^n \frac{1}{2\pi} \int_0^{2\pi} |\phi(\alpha_k) - \phi(\alpha_k + re^{it})| dt \leq \omega_\phi(r)$, where $\omega_\phi(r) := \sup_{|z-\zeta| \leq r} |\phi(z) - \phi(\zeta)|$ is the modulus of continuity of ϕ .

Let $p_\nu(z) := -\int \log|z - t| d\nu(t)$ be the potential of a measure ν . A direct evaluation gives that $p_{\nu_k^r}(z) = -\log \max(r, |z - \alpha_k|)$ and $p_\mu(z) = -\log \max(1, |z|)$ [8, p. 22]. Consider $\sigma := \tau_n^r - \mu$, $\sigma(\mathbb{C}) = 0$. One computes (or see [8, p. 92]) that $d\sigma = -\frac{1}{2\pi}(\partial p_\sigma/\partial n_+ + \partial p_\sigma/\partial n_-) ds$, where ds is the arclength on $\text{supp}(\sigma) = \{|z| = 1\} \cup (\bigcup_{k=1}^n \{|z - \alpha_k| = r\})$, and n_\pm are the inner and the outer normals. We now use Green's identity $\iint_G u \Delta v dA = \int_{\partial G} u \frac{\partial v}{\partial n} ds - \iint_G \nabla u \cdot \nabla v dA$ with $u = \phi$ and $v = p_\sigma$ in each component G of $\{|z| < R\} \setminus \text{supp}(\sigma)$. Since $\Delta p_\sigma = 0$ in G , adding the identities for all G , we obtain that

$$\left| \int \phi d\sigma \right| = \frac{1}{2\pi} \left| \iint_{|z| \leq R} \nabla \phi \cdot \nabla p_\sigma dA \right| \leq \frac{1}{2\pi} \sqrt{D[\phi]} \sqrt{D[p_\sigma]},$$

where $D[\phi] = \iint (\phi_x^2 + \phi_y^2) dA$ is the Dirichlet integral of ϕ . It is known that $D[p_\sigma] = 2\pi I[\sigma]$ [7, Thm 1.20], where $I[\sigma] = -\iint \log|z - t| d\sigma(z) d\sigma(t) = \int p_\sigma d\sigma$. Since $p_\mu(z) = -\log \max(1, |z|)$, we observe that $\int p_\mu d\mu = 0$, so that $I[\sigma] = \int p_{\tau_n^r} d\tau_n^r - 2 \int p_\mu d\tau_n^r$. Further, $-\int p_\mu d\tau_n^r = \int \log \max(1, |z|) d\tau_n^r(z) \leq (\sum_{|\alpha_k| \leq 1+r} \log(1 + 2r) + \sum_{|\alpha_k| > 1+r} \log|\alpha_k|)/n \leq \log(1 + 2r) + \frac{1}{n} \log M(P_n) - \frac{1}{n} \log|a_n|$. We also have that $\int p_{\tau_n^r} d\tau_n^r \leq (-\sum_{j \neq k} \log|\alpha_j - \alpha_k| - n \log r)/n^2$. We next combine the energy estimates to obtain

$$I[\sigma] \leq \frac{2}{n} \log M(P_n) - \frac{1}{n^2} \log|a_n^2 \Delta(P_n)| - \frac{1}{n} \log r + 4r.$$

Collecting all estimates, we proceed with $|\int \phi d\tau_n - \int \phi d\mu| \leq |\int \phi d\tau_n - \int \phi d\tau_n^r| + |\int \phi d\tau_n^r - \int \phi d\mu| \leq \omega_\phi(r) + \sqrt{D[\phi]} \sqrt{D[p_\sigma]}/(2\pi) = \omega_\phi(r) + \sqrt{D[\phi]} \sqrt{I[\sigma]}/(2\pi)$. Thus we arrive at the main inequality:

$$\left| \int \phi d\tau_n - \int \phi d\mu \right| \leq \omega_\phi(r) + \sqrt{\frac{D[\phi]}{2\pi}} \left(\frac{2}{n} \log M(P_n) - \frac{1}{n^2} \log|a_n^2 \Delta(P_n)| - \frac{1}{n} \log r + 4r \right)^{1/2}. \tag{3}$$

Note that $D[\phi] \leq 2\pi R^2 A^2$, as $|\phi_x| \leq A$ and $|\phi_y| \leq A$ a.e. in \mathbb{C} . Also, $\omega_\phi(r) \leq Ar$. Since $|\Delta(P_n)| \geq 1$ and $|a_n| \geq 1$, we have $|a_n^2 \Delta(P_n)| \geq 1$. Hence (2) follows from (3) by letting $r = 1/\max(n, M(P_n))$. \square

Proof of Corollary 1.6. Since P_n has real coefficients, we have that $s_n = \int z d\tau_n(z) = \int \Re(z) d\tau_n(z)$. We let $\phi(z) = \Re(z)$, $|z| \leq 1$; $\phi(z) = \Re(z)(1 - \log|z|)$, $1 \leq |z| \leq e$; and $\phi(z) = 0$, $|z| \geq e$. An elementary computation shows that $|\phi_x(z)| \leq 1$ and $|\phi_y(z)| \leq 1/2$ for all $z = x + iy \in \mathbb{C}$. The Mean Value Theorem gives $|\phi(z) - \phi(t)| \leq |z - t| \max_{\mathbb{C}} \sqrt{\phi_x^2 + \phi_y^2}$. Hence we can use Theorem 1.5 with $A = \sqrt{5}/2$ and $R = e$. \square

Proof of Corollary 1.7. Note that $\log|P_n(z)| = n \int \log|z - w| d\tau_n(w)$. For $|z| = 1 + 1/n$, we let $\phi(w) = \log|z - w|$, $|w| \leq 1$; $\phi(w) = (1 - \log|w|) \log|1 - \bar{z}w|$, $1 \leq |w| \leq e$; and $\phi(w) = 0$, $|w| \geq e$. Then $|\phi_x(w)| = O(|z - w|^{-1})$, $|w| \leq 1$; $|\phi_x(w)| = O(|1 - \bar{z}w|^{-1})$, $1 \leq |w| \leq e$; and the same estimates hold for $|\phi_y|$. Hence $D[\phi] = O(\iint_{|w| \leq 1} |z - w|^{-2} dA(w)) = O(\int_{1/n}^1 r^{-1} dr) = O(\log n)$, and $\omega_\phi(r) \leq r \max_{\mathbb{C}} \sqrt{\phi_x^2 + \phi_y^2} = rO(n)$. Let $r = 1/n^2$ and use (3) to obtain $|\log|P_n(z)|| - n \log|z|| = O(\sqrt{n} \log n)$. \square

References

[1] V.V. Andrievskii, H.-P. Blatt, *Discrepancy of Signed Measures and Polynomial Approximation*, Springer-Verlag, New York, 2002.
 [2] Y. Bilu, Limit distribution of small points on algebraic tori, *Duke Math. J.* 89 (1997) 465–476.
 [3] P. Borwein, *Computational Excursions in Analysis and Number Theory*, Springer-Verlag, New York, 2002.
 [4] P. Erdős, P. Turán, On the distribution of roots of polynomials, *Ann. Math.* 51 (1950) 105–119.
 [5] C. Favre, J. Rivera-Letelier, Equidistribution quantitative des points de petite hauteur sur la droite projective, *Math. Ann.* 335 (2006) 311–361; Corrigendum in *Math. Ann.* 339 (2007) 799–801.
 [6] L. Kronecker, Zwei Sätze über Gleichungen mit ganzzahligen Coëfficienten, *J. Reine Angew. Math.* 53 (1857) 173–175.
 [7] N.S. Landkof, *Foundations of Modern Potential Theory*, Springer-Verlag, New York, 1972.
 [8] E.B. Saff, V. Totik, *Logarithmic Potentials with External Fields*, Springer-Verlag, Berlin, 1997.
 [9] I. Schur, Über die Verteilung der Wurzeln bei gewissen algebraischen Gleichungen mit ganzzahligen Koeffizienten, *Math. Z.* 1 (1918) 377–402.