

# On the units of cyclotomic fields

by

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§ 1. Let  $f > 1$  be a natural number with  $\varphi(f) > 2$ ,  $\varphi$  being the Euler totient function. Let  $\alpha$  be a primitive  $f$ th root of unity and  $Q(\alpha)$  the cyclotomic field generated by  $\alpha$  over the rational number field  $Q$ . It is clear that for  $(s, f) = 1$ ,  $1 < s < f/2$ , the numbers

$$(1) \quad u_s = \frac{\alpha^s - 1}{\alpha - 1}$$

are units of  $Q(\alpha)$ . Some time back Professor J. Milnor<sup>(1)</sup> asked the following question: Do the units  $u_s$  together with  $\pm \alpha$  form a basis for the units of  $Q(\alpha)$ ?

In this note we prove the following two theorems.

THEOREM 1. Let  $f = \prod_{i=1}^k p_i^{a_i}$  be the prime factor decomposition of  $f$  and for  $1 < s < f/2$ ,  $(s, f) = 1$  let

$$v_s = \prod_{e_i} \left( \frac{1 - \alpha^{p_1^{a_1} \dots p_k^{a_k} s}}{1 - \alpha^{p_1^{a_1} \dots p_k^{a_k}}} \right)$$

where the product is extended over all  $e_i = 0$  or  $1$ ,  $i = 1, 2, \dots, k$ , except  $e_1 = e_2 = \dots = e_k = 1$ . Then the  $\frac{1}{2}\varphi(f) - 1$  units  $v_s$  of  $Q(\alpha)$  generate a subgroup of finite index in the group of units of  $Q(\alpha)$ .

THEOREM 2. Let  $p$  and  $q$  be two odd primes dividing  $f$ ,  $q$  having the property that the residue class group mod  $q$  has a nonprincipal character  $\chi$  with  $\chi(-1) = 1$ , and  $p \equiv 1 \pmod{q}$ . Then the units  $u_s$  defined in (1) are multiplicatively dependent.

Theorem 1 shows that if, in particular,  $f$  is a power of a prime, then the units  $u_s$  in (1) are multiplicatively independent, and hence generate

<sup>(1)</sup> In a letter to Professor K. G. Ramanathan dated 6th February 1964.

a subgroup of finite index in the unit group of  $Q(\alpha)$ . Theorem 2, in addition shows that if  $f$  is composite and divisible by at least two distinct odd primes the units  $u_s$  need not be independent. In the case of the units  $v_s$  of Theorem 1, the index of the subgroup generated by  $v_s$  in the group of all units of  $Q(\alpha)$ , is intimately connected with the class number of the cyclotomic field  $Q(\alpha)$ . These results in a more general setting will appear elsewhere.

After this paper was written we came to know from Professor Hyman Bass that he had proved some theorems which gave a system of units generating a subgroup of finite index in the group of all units of  $Q(\alpha)$ , this system being in general bigger than the maximal set. He has also a fairly simple proof of Theorem 2. However, our point of view is different and Theorem 1 appears to be new.

We should also mention that in the case where  $f = p$  is an odd prime greater than 3, Theorem 1 is proved in Siegel's [7] lectures.

**§ 2.** In this section we set our notations and terminology and prove three lemmas which lead to the theorems stated in § 1. We denote by  $\mathcal{R}_f$  the multiplicative group of residue classes prime to  $f$  modulo the subgroup generated by the classes 1 and  $-1$ . Let  $\chi$  be a nonprincipal character of  $\mathcal{R}_f$ . Now if  $f_1 > 1$  is a divisor of  $f$  then we have a map from  $\mathcal{R}_f$  to  $\mathcal{R}_{f_1}$  which takes a class  $R$  of  $\mathcal{R}_f$  to the class of  $\mathcal{R}_{f_1}$  represented by a representative of  $R$ . This map is well defined and onto. It may happen that for some divisor  $f_1$  of  $f$ ,  $\chi$  may pass to a character of  $\mathcal{R}_{f_1}$ . If it passes to a character of  $\mathcal{R}_{f_1}$  and also to a character of  $\mathcal{R}_{f_2}$ , it also passes to a character of  $\mathcal{R}_{f_3}$  where  $f_3 = (f_1, f_2)$  is the g.c.d. of  $f_1$  and  $f_2$ . In this way we arrive at the least divisor  $f_x$  of  $f$  such that  $\chi$  will not pass to a character of  $\mathcal{R}_{f_x}$  for a divisor  $f_4$  of  $f_x$ ,  $f_4 \neq f_x$ . The character of  $\mathcal{R}_{f_x}$  derived from  $\chi$  will be denoted by  $\chi_0$ .

Let  $g$  be a divisor of  $f$ ,  $1 \leq g < f$ , and write

$$(3) \quad \varphi_{f,g}(R) = \log |1 - e^{2\pi i g R / f}|$$

where  $r$  is a representative of the class  $R$  of  $\mathcal{R}_f$ .

LEMMA 1.

$$(4) \quad V_{f,g} = \sum_{R \in \mathcal{R}_f} \bar{\chi}(R) \varphi_{f,g}(R) \\ = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if } g \nmid f/f_x, \\ -\frac{1}{2} T(f_x) L(1, \chi_0) g \prod_{p \nmid f_x} (1 - |\chi_0(p)| p^{-1}) \prod_{p \mid f/g} (1 - \bar{\chi}_0(p)) & \text{if } g \mid f/f_x \end{cases}$$

where  $T(f_x)$  is a certain gaussian sum of absolute value  $\sqrt{f_x}$  and  $\bar{\chi}$  is the complex conjugate character of  $\chi$ .

Proof. If  $r$  is a representative of  $R$  we write  $\chi(R) = \chi(r)$  and  $\chi(r) = 0$  if  $(r, f) > 1$ . Now

$$\begin{aligned} V_{f,g} &= \frac{1}{2} \sum_{R \in \mathcal{R}_f} \bar{\chi}(R) \{ \log(1 - e^{2\pi i g R / f}) + \log(1 - e^{-2\pi i g R / f}) \} \\ &= \frac{1}{2} \sum_{r \bmod f} \bar{\chi}(r) \log(1 - e^{2\pi i g r / f}) \\ (5) \quad &= -\frac{1}{2} \sum_{r \bmod f} \bar{\chi}(r) \left\{ \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{e^{2\pi i n g r / f}}{n} \right\} \\ (6) \quad &= -\frac{1}{2} \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n} \left\{ \sum_{r \bmod f} \bar{\chi}(r) e^{2\pi i n g r / f} \right\}, \end{aligned}$$

such rearrangements being permissible since we could have started with the series in (5) with  $n^{-\sigma} e^{2\pi i n g r / f}$  ( $\sigma > 1$ ) in place of  $n^{-1} e^{2\pi i n g r / f}$  and then passed to the limit  $\sigma \rightarrow 1$ .

Let

$$(7) \quad \begin{cases} f = \prod_{j=1}^k p_j^{a_j} & (k \geq 1, a_j > 0, j = 1, \dots, k), \\ f_x = \prod_{j=1}^l p_j^{r_j} & (1 \leq l \leq k, 0 < r_j \leq a_j; j = 1, \dots, l), \\ h = h_x = \prod_{j=1}^l p_j^{a_j}. \end{cases}$$

Now as  $\alpha$  runs through a complete system of coprime residues mod  $f/h$  and  $\beta$  through a complete system of coprime residues mod  $h$ , the numbers  $r = h\alpha + \frac{f}{h}\beta$  run through a complete system of coprime residues mod  $f$  each only once. Thus we have

$$\begin{aligned} T_{f,g}(\chi) &= \sum_{r \bmod f} \bar{\chi}(r) e^{2\pi i n g r / f} = \sum_{\xi_0 \bmod f_x} \bar{\chi}(\xi_0) \sum_{\substack{\xi = \xi_0 \bmod f_x \\ (\xi, f) = 1, \xi \bmod h}} e^{2\pi i n g \xi / f} \\ &= \sum_{\beta_0 \bmod f_x} \bar{\chi}_0\left(\frac{f}{h} \beta_0\right) \sum_{\substack{\beta = \beta_0 \bmod f_x \\ \beta \bmod h}} \sum_{\substack{a \bmod f/h \\ (a, f/h) = 1}} e^{2\pi i n g / f (h a + \beta / h)} \\ &= \bar{\chi}_0\left(\frac{f}{h}\right) \left\{ \sum_{\beta_0 \bmod f_x} \bar{\chi}_0(\beta_0) \sum_{\substack{\beta = \beta_0 \bmod f_x \\ \beta \bmod h}} e^{2\pi i n g \beta / h} \right\} \left\{ \sum_{\substack{a \bmod f/h \\ (a, f/h) = 1}} e^{2\pi i n g a h / f} \right\} \\ &= \bar{\chi}_0\left(\frac{f}{h}\right) \left\{ \sum_{\beta_0 \bmod f_x} \bar{\chi}_0(\beta_0) e^{2\pi i n g \beta_0 / h} \right\} \left\{ \sum_{\substack{\beta = 0 \bmod f_x \\ \beta \bmod h}} e^{2\pi i n g \beta / h} \right\} \left\{ \sum_{\substack{a \bmod f/h \\ (a, f/h) = 1}} e^{2\pi i n g a h / f} \right\}. \end{aligned}$$

The sum in the second bracket vanishes unless  $hf_x^{-1}|ng$ . In this case the sum is  $h/f_x$ , and further since  $ng/h$  will have an exact denominator which divides  $f_x$ , the sum in the first bracket will vanish unless  $ng/h$  will have exact denominator  $f_x$ . The sum in the third bracket is the Ramanujan sum  $C_{f|h}(ng)$  (properties necessary will be stated below and are not hard to prove). Thus

$$T_{f,g}(\chi) = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if } (h, ng) \neq h/f_x, \\ \bar{\chi}_0\left(\frac{f}{h}\right) \frac{h}{f_x} C_{f|h}(ng) \sum_{\beta_0 \bmod f_x} \bar{\chi}_0(\beta_0) e^{2\pi i n g \beta_0 / h} & \text{if } (h, ng) = \frac{h}{f_x}. \end{cases}$$

It is a standard result that the sum

$$\sum_{\beta_0 \bmod f_x} \bar{\chi}_0\left(\frac{\beta_0 n g f_x}{h}\right) e^{2\pi i n g \beta_0 / h} = T(f_x)$$

is independent of  $n$  and is of absolute value  $\sqrt{f_x}$ . Hence

$$(8) \quad T_{f,g}(\chi) = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if } (h, ng) \neq h/f_x, \\ \bar{\chi}_0\left(\frac{f}{h}\right) \frac{h}{f_x} C_{f|h}(ng) \chi_0\left(\frac{n g f_x}{h}\right) T(f_x) & \text{if } (h, ng) = \frac{h}{f_x}. \end{cases}$$

Also

$$(9) \quad C_{f|h}(ng) = \prod_{j=l+1}^k C_{p_j^{e_j}}(ng)$$

by the multiplicative property of the Ramanujan sum and

$$(10) \quad C_{p_j^{e_j}}(ng) = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if } (ng, p_j^{e_j}) | p_j^{e_j-2}, \\ -p_j^{e_j-1} & \text{if } (ng, p_j^{e_j}) = p_j^{e_j-1}, \\ \varphi(p_j^{e_j}) & \text{if } (ng, p_j^{e_j}) = p_j^{e_j}. \end{cases}$$

We now go back to the series (5) for  $V_{f,g}$ . If  $f_x \nmid f/g$ , i.e.  $g \nmid f/f_x$ , then (5) vanishes identically by (8) or directly from the definition of  $f_x$ , since the series in the curly brackets in (5) is an invariant of the classes of the quotient of  $\mathcal{R}_f$  modulo the kernel of the map from  $\mathcal{R}_f$  to  $\mathcal{R}_{f|g}$ . As for the series (6), we write

$$(11) \quad \begin{aligned} g &= \prod_{j=1}^l p_j^{t_j} \quad (0 \leq t_j \leq a_j - r_j; j = 1, \dots, l, \\ &\quad 0 \leq t_j \leq a_j; \quad j = l+1, \dots, k), \\ g_1 &= \prod_{j=1}^l p_j^{t_j}, \quad g_2 = \prod_{\substack{j \geq l+1 \\ t_j = a_j}} p_j^{a_j}, \quad g_3 = \prod_{\substack{j \geq l+1 \\ t_j < a_j}} p_j^{t_j}, \\ h_1 &= \prod_{\substack{j \geq l+1 \\ t_j < a_j}} p_j^{a_j} = \frac{f}{h g_2}. \end{aligned}$$

The condition  $(ng, h) = h/f_x$  for  $n$  now reads

$$\left( \prod_{j=1}^l p_j^{a_j - t_j}, n \right) = \prod_{j=1}^l p_j^{a_j - t_j - r_j},$$

and so all such  $n$  are given by

$$(12) \quad n = \left( \prod_{j=1}^l p_j^{a_j - t_j - r_j} \right) m_1 = \frac{h m_1}{f_x g_1}$$

where  $m_1$  runs through integers prime to  $h$ , i.e. to  $f_x$ . Inserting (12) into (6) and using (8) we get

$$(13) \quad V_{f,g} = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if } g \nmid \frac{f}{f_x} \\ -\frac{1}{2} \cdot \frac{h}{f_x} T(f_x) \sum_{n=1}^{\infty'} \frac{1}{n} \left\{ C_{f|h}(ng) \chi_0\left(\frac{n g f_x}{f}\right) \right\} & \text{if } g \mid \frac{f}{f_x}, \end{cases}$$

where  $\sum_{n=1}^{\infty'}$  denotes the sum over integers given by (12). We have

$$\chi_0\left(\frac{n g f_x}{f}\right) = \chi_0(m_1) \chi_0\left(\frac{h g}{g_1 f}\right).$$

By (9) and (10) we may restrict the sum only to those  $n$  for which

$$(14) \quad \left( ng, \frac{f}{h} \right) = \prod_{j=l+1}^k p_j^{a_j - e_j} \quad (e_j = 0 \text{ or } 1, j = l+1, \dots, k).$$

Observing further that for those  $j$  for which  $p_j | g_2$ ,  $e_j$  has necessarily to be zero, the summation may further be restricted only to those  $n$  for which

$$(15) \quad n = \left( \prod_{p_j | h_1} p_j^{a_j - t_j - e_j} \right) \frac{m h}{f_x g_1}$$

where  $m$  is coprime to  $f_x \prod_{p_j | h_1} p_j^{e_j} = f_{a,e}$ , say. Hence the summation may be split up into  $2^{k-l-\mu}$  parts (where  $\mu$  is the total number of prime factors of  $g_2$ ) each with a different choice of the numbers  $e_j$  ( $j \geq l+1, t_j < a_j$ ). With a particular choice of the numbers  $e_j$  we have in case  $g | f/f_x$  the contribution

$$(16) \quad \sum_{n=1}^{\infty'} \chi_0\left(\frac{n g f_x}{f}\right) C_{f|h}(ng) n^{-1}$$

to the sum over  $n$  in (13); here the sum is over all numbers  $n$  of the form (15). We have

$$\begin{aligned}
 \chi_0\left(\frac{ngf_z}{f}\right) &= \chi_0(m)\chi_0\left(\frac{gh}{fg_1}\right)\chi_0\left(\frac{h_1}{g_3}\right)\prod_{p_j|h_1}\chi_0(p_j^{-e_j}), \\
 (17) \quad n^{-1} &= m^{-1}\left(\frac{g_1g_3f_z}{hh_1}\right)\prod_{p_j|h_1}p_j^{e_j}, \\
 C_{f,h}(ng) &= \left\{\prod_{p_j|p_2}\varphi(p_j^{e_j})\right\}\prod_{p_j|h_1}[\{\varphi(p_j^{e_j})\}^{1-e_j}(-p_j^{e_j-1})^{e_j}] = \varphi\left(\frac{f}{h}\right)\prod_{p_j|h_1}(1-p_j)^{-e_j}. \\
 \text{Hence if } g|f|f_z, \text{ we have, for } V_{f,g} \text{ from (13), the expression} \\
 -\frac{1}{2}\chi_0\left(\frac{gh}{fg_1}\right)\frac{h}{f_z}T(f_z)\varphi\left(\frac{f}{h}\right)\left(\frac{g_1g_3f_z}{hh_1}\right)\chi_0\left(\frac{h_1}{g_3}\right) \times \\
 \times \sum_{e's=0,1}\left[\prod_{p_j|h_1}\{-\bar{\chi}_0(p_j)p_j(p_j-1)^{-1}\}^{e_j}\sum_{(m,f,g,e)=1}\frac{\chi_0(m)}{m}\right] \\
 = -\frac{1}{2}L(1,\chi_0)\chi_0\left(\frac{ghh_1}{fg_1g_3}\right)T(f_z)\varphi\left(\frac{f}{h}\right)\left(\frac{g_1g_3}{h_1}\right) \times \\
 \times \sum_{e's=0,1}\prod_{p_j|h_1}\{(-\bar{\chi}_0(p_j))p_j(p_j-1)^{-1}(1-\chi_0(p_j)p_j^{-1})\}^{e_j} \\
 = -\frac{1}{2}L(1,\chi_0)\chi_0\left(\frac{ghh_1}{fg_1g_3}\right)T(f_z)g_1g_3\varphi(g_2) \times \\
 \times \sum_{e's=0,1}\prod_{p_j|h_1}\{(-\bar{\chi}_0(p_j)(1-\chi_0(p_j)p_j^{-1}))\}^{e_j}(1-p_j^{-1})^{1-e_j} \\
 = -\frac{1}{2}L(1,\chi_0)T(f_z)g\prod_{p_j|f,p_j\not|g}\left(1-\frac{|\chi_0(p)|}{p}\right)\prod_{p_j|h_1}(1-\bar{\chi}_0(p_j))
 \end{aligned}$$

since

$$ghh_1 = fg_1g_3, \quad \sum_{e's=0,1}\prod_{r=1}^n a_r^{e_r} b_r^{1-e_r} = \prod_{r=1}^n (a_r + b_r),$$

and

$$g_1g_3\varphi(g_2) = g\prod_{p_j|f,p_j\not|g}\left(1-\frac{|\chi_0(p)|}{p}\right).$$

Lemma 1 is completely proved.

We now define the function (constructed from (3))

$$(18) \quad \Psi(R) = \Psi_a(R) = \sum_{e's=0,1} a^{e_1+\dots+e_k} \varphi_{f,p_1^{e_1}\dots p_k^{e_k}}(R)$$

the sum extended over all  $(e_1, e_2, \dots, e_k) \neq (1, 1, \dots, 1)$ . We then have

LEMMA 2.

$$(19) \quad U = \sum_{R \in \mathcal{R}_f} \bar{\chi}(R) \Psi(R) = -\frac{1}{2}T(f_z)L(1,\chi_0)\prod_{p_j|f|h}\{1+a\varphi(p_j^{e_j})-\bar{\chi}_0(p_j)\}.$$

Proof. Since we have to consider only those  $g$  for which  $g|f|f_z$ , we have

$$\begin{aligned}
 U &= -\frac{1}{2}T(f_z)L(1,\chi_0)\sum_{e's=0,1}'\left[a^{e_1+\dots+e_k}p_{1+1}^{e_1+1}\dots p_k^{e_k} \times \right. \\
 &\quad \times \prod_{i=1+1}^k(1-|\chi_0(p_i)|p_i^{-1})^{e_i}\prod_{i=1+1}^k(1-\bar{\chi}_0(p_i))^{1-e_i}\left] \\
 &= -\frac{1}{2}T(f_z)L(1,\chi_0)\sum_{e's=0,1}'\left[\prod_{p_j|f|h}\{(a\varphi(p_j^{e_j}))(1-\bar{\chi}_0(p_j))^{1-e_j}\}\right] \\
 &= -\frac{1}{2}T(f_z)L(1,\chi_0)\prod_{p_j|f|h}\{1+a\varphi(p_j^{e_j})-\bar{\chi}_0(p_j)\},
 \end{aligned}$$

because all our calculations fail when all the  $e$ 's are equal to 1 (and to avoid this trouble) we could have taken continuous invariants

$$\varphi_{f,g}(R, \sigma) = -\frac{1}{2}\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} e^{2\pi i n g f / h} n^{-\sigma} \quad (\sigma > 1)$$

and come to the conclusion that the term for which  $f = g$  is zero.

Next we prove

LEMMA 3. Let  $a$  be a primitive  $f$ -th root of unity and  $u_s$  as defined in (1). Then for a nonprincipal character  $\chi$  of  $\mathcal{R}_f$

$$(20) \quad \sum_{(s,f)=1, s < f/2} \bar{\chi}(s) \log |u_s| = -\frac{1}{2}T(f_z)L(1,\chi_0)\prod_{p_j|f}(1-\chi_0(p))\varrho_a$$

where  $\varrho_a$  is a certain root of unity depending on  $a$  and  $\chi$ .

Proof. Let  $\sigma = e^{2\pi i b/f}$ ,  $(b, f) = 1$ . Then  $\log |1 - e^{2\pi i b \sigma / f}| = \varphi_{f,1}(R_b)$  where  $R_b$  is the class of  $b$ . Hence

$$\sum_{(s,f)=1, s < f/2} \bar{\chi}(s) \log |u_s| = \sum_{R \in \mathcal{R}_f} \bar{\chi}(R) \varphi_{f,1}(RR_b) = \chi(R_b) V_{f,1}$$

and this proves Lemma 3.

§ 3. We now prove Theorems 1 and 2 stated in § 1.

Proof of Theorem 2. Let  $\chi_0$  be the real nonprincipal character mod  $q$  for which  $\chi_0(-1) = 1$ . We extend it to a character  $\chi$  of  $\mathcal{R}_f$  in a natural way (since  $\mathcal{R}_q$  is a quotient of  $\mathcal{R}_f$ ). For this character  $\chi$ , Lemma 3 at once gives

$$\left| \prod_{\substack{(s,f)=1 \\ 1 \leq s < f/2}} \chi_s^{z(s)} \right| = 1$$

whatever be the primitive root  $a$  with which we start. Hence the unit

$$(21) \quad \prod_{(s,f)=1, 1 \leq s < f/2} \chi_s^{z(s)-1}$$

is a root of unity.

Proof of Theorem 1. Denote the elements of  $\mathcal{R}_f$  by  $R_0, R_1, R_2, \dots$ ,  $R_0$  being the unit element. Let  $\theta(R) = \prod'_{e^r s=0,1} (1 - a^{x_1^{e_1} \dots x_k^{e_k} e^r})$ , the product being extended over all  $k$ -tuples except  $(1, 1, \dots, 1)$ , and  $r$  being a representative of  $R$ . Now we have  $v_s = \theta(R_s)/\theta(R_0)$  and if the units  $v_s$  are dependent, say  $\prod_{(s,f)=1, s < f/2} v_s^{b_s} = 1$ , on applying the isomorphisms  $\sigma(R_j^{-1})$  we have

$$\prod_{(s,f)=1, s < f/2} v_s^{b_s \sigma(R_j^{-1})} = 1 \quad (j = 0, 1, 2, \dots),$$

i.e.

$$\sum_{i \neq 0} b_i \log \left| \frac{\theta(R_i R_j^{-1})}{\theta(R_j^{-1})} \right| = 0 \quad (j = 0, 1, 2, \dots),$$

where we have changed  $s$  to  $i$  and replaced the expression for  $v_i$  in terms of  $\theta(R_i)$ . Since  $b_i$  are not all zero, we have

$$(22) \quad \text{determinant} \left| \log \left| \frac{\theta(R_i R_j^{-1})}{\theta(R_j^{-1})} \right| \right|_{i,j \neq 0} = 0.$$

But by Dedekind-Frobenius group determinant formula the determinant on the left is nothing but  $\prod' \sum_R \chi(R) \log |\theta(R)| = \prod' \sum_R \chi(R) \Psi(R)$  by (19) and this contradicts (22). Hence Theorem 1 is proved.

#### References

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