"Hasse principle" for symmetric and alternating groups

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(Communicated by Shokichi Iyanaga, M. J. A., April 12, 1999)

1. Notation and results. Extending the usage of language in Galois cohomology we can speak of the Hasse principle for any group G (cf. [1]). We know that the principle holds for $G =$ abelian, dihedral, quaternion, $PSL_2(\mathbf{Z})$, $PSL_2(\mathbf{F}_p)$ and free groups(cf. [1], [2]). The proof in [2] works as well for free groups generated by any set. In this paper, we prove the following

Theorem. *For any natural number n, the symmetric group S_n and the alternating group A_n enjoy the Hasse principle.*

We may assume that $n \geq 4$, since the case $n \leq 3$ are already settled. As is well known $G = S_n,\ A_n$ are generated by two elements: $G = \langle s, t\rangle$. To be more precise,

(1) for $G = S_n$, we have $s = (234\dots n),\ t = (12)$,

(2) for $G = A_n(n \text{ odd}),\ s = (345\dots n),\ t = (123)$,

(3) for $G = A_n(n \text{ even}),\ s = (234\dots n),\ t = (123)$.

Remark. In general, for any group G with two generators s, t let f be a cocycle on G which is normalized at s and locally trivial. The Hasse principle means that f is trivial. From the basic relation $f(st) = f(s)f(t)^s$ with $f(s) = 1$, $f(t) = a^{-1}a^t = a^{-1}tat^{-1}$, $f(st) = b^{-1}b^{st} = b^{-1}stbt^{-1}s^{-1}$, we infer that

(4) $$st \sim sa^{-1}ta, \text{ (conjugacy in } G).$$

Then the Hasse principle will be proved for G if we find c in the centralizer of s so that $a^{-1}ta = c^{-1}tc$ using (4).

2. Proof of the Theorem.

2.1. $G = S_n$. From (1), we have

$$st = (23\dots n)(12) = (13\dots n2)$$

an n-cycle. Hence by (4), $sa^{-1}ta$ is also an n-cycle. If we write

(5) $$a^{-1} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 2 & 3 & \dots & n \\ i_1 & i_2 & i_3 & \dots & i_n \end{pmatrix}$$

then $sa^{-1}ta = (23\dots n)(i_1i_2)$. Since this is an n-cycle we have $a^{-1}ta = (i_1i_2) = (1\ j),\ j \geq 2$. On the other hand, if we take c so that $c^{-1} = s^{j-2}$, then one verifies easily that $c^{-1}tc = (1\ j)$. In view of the remark, this complete the Proof of the Theorem for $G = S_n$.

2.2. $G = A_n$ (n odd). From (2), we have

$$st = (345\dots n)(123) = (124\dots n3)$$

an n-cycle. Hence, by (4), $sa^{-1}ta$ is also an n-cycle. Write a^{-1} as in (5). Then $sa^{-1}ta = (34\dots n)(i_1i_2i_3)$. Since this must be an n-cycle, we have $a^{-1}ta = (i_1i_2i_3) = (12j)$ or $= (1j2)$, $j \geq 3$. Here, however, the second 3-cycle $(1j2)$ is impossible. In fact, if we had

$$st = (124\dots n3)$$
$$\sim (34\dots n)(1j2) = (21\,j+1\,\dots n3\dots j)$$

then we would have $u(st)u^{-1} = (21\,j+1\,\dots n3\dots j)$ with

$$u = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & \dots & n \\ 2 & 1 & j & j+1 & \dots & \dots \end{pmatrix}$$
$$= (12)s^{j-3} \notin A_n.$$

If $u_1(st)u_1^{-1} = u(st)u^{-1}$, then $(u^{-1}u_1)st(u^{-1}u_1)^{-1} = st$. From this equation, we infer that $u^{-1}u_1$ is a power of st. So u_1 is not in A_n. Therefore st and $(34\dots n)(1j2)$ cannot be conjugate in A_n, a contradiction. On the other hand, if we take c so that $c^{-1} = s^{j-3}$, then one verifies that $c^{-1}tc = (12j)$. In view of the remark, this proves the Theorem for A_n (n odd).

2.3. $G = A_n$ (n even). From (3), we have

$$st = (234\dots n)(123) = (13)(245\dots n).$$

If we write a^{-1} as in (5), then $a^{-1}ta = (i_1i_2i_3)$ and, by (4), st is conjugate to $sa^{-1}ta = (234\dots n)(i_1i_2i_3)$. Since st has no fixed points, we may assume that $(i_1i_2i_3) = (1ij)$.

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