Stewart's Theorem revisited: suppressing the norm ± 1 hypothesis

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Abstract

Let γ be an algebraic number of degree 2 and not a root of unity. In this note we show that there exists a prime ideal \mathfrak{p} of $\mathbb{Q}(\gamma)$ satisfying $\nu_{\mathfrak{p}}(\gamma^n - 1) \geq 1$, such that the rational prime p underlying \mathfrak{p} grows quicker than n.

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1 Introduction

Let P(m) denote the largest prime factor of integer m, with the convention $P(0) = P(\pm 1) = 1$. For any integer n, we denote the *n*-th cyclotomic polynomial in x by $\Phi_n(x)$ as usual.

Schinzel [8] asked if there exists any integers a, b with $ab \neq \pm 2c^2, \pm c^h (h \ge 2)$ such that $P(a^n - b^n) > 2n$ for all sufficiently large n. Erdős [4] conjectured that $P(2^n - 1)$ grows quicker than n.

Let u_n be the *n*th term of a Lucas sequence. In 2013, Stewart [10] gave a lower bound of the largest prime factor of u_n , which is of the form

 $n \exp(\log n/104 \log \log n).$ What Stewart actually proved is the following, see [1, Theorem 1.1].

Theorem 1.1. Let γ be a non-zero algebraic number, not a root of unity. Denote $\omega(\gamma)$ the number of primes \mathfrak{p} of the field $K = \mathbb{Q}(\gamma)$ with the property $\nu_{\mathfrak{p}}(\gamma) \neq 0$. Let P be the biggest element of the set

{p: p is a rational prime lying below a prime \mathfrak{p} of K, with $\nu_{\mathfrak{p}}(\Phi_n(\gamma)) \geq 1$ }.

If γ satisfies one of the following conditions:

- $\bullet \ \gamma \in \mathbb{Q},$
- $[\mathbb{Q}(\gamma) : \mathbb{Q}] = 2$ and $\mathcal{N}\gamma = \pm 1$.

There exists a n_0 , which is effectively computable in terms of $\omega(\gamma)$ and the discriminant of K, such that, for all $n > n_0$,

 $P > n \exp\left(\log n / 104 \log \log n\right).$

Using this result, Stewart answered questions of Schinzel and Erdős in a wider context, see [10] for more historical details.

A totally explicit expression of n_0 in the above theorem was given in [1], which also showd that n_0 depends only on the field $K = \mathbb{Q}(\gamma)$ but not on $\omega(\gamma)$.

Let q and a be integers such that $q \ge 2$ and $|a| < 2\sqrt{q}$. Assume α and $\bar{\alpha}$ are the roots of $x^2 - ax + q$. In [2], the authors concentrate on big prime factors of $\#E(\mathbb{F}_q) = q - a + 1 = (\alpha - 1)(\bar{\alpha} - 1)$, the order of group of \mathbb{F}_q -points on a certain elliptic curve E. A Stewart-type result was proved for recurrent sequences of order 4 rather than Lucas sequence.

This article is motivated by [1] and [2], we prove the following theorem.

Theorem 1.2. Suppose γ is an algebraic number of degree 2 and not a root of unity. Set $n_0 = \exp\exp(\max\{10^{10}, 3|D_K|\})$. Let n be a positive integer satisfying $n \ge n_0$. There exists a prime ideal \mathfrak{p} of $K = \mathbb{Q}(\gamma)$ such that $\nu_{\mathfrak{p}}(\gamma^n - 1) \ge 1$ and the underlying rational prime p of \mathfrak{p} satisfies

$$p \ge n \exp\left(0.0001 \frac{\log n}{\log \log n}\right).$$

Note that this theorem suppresses the assumption $\mathcal{N}\gamma = \pm 1$ when $[\mathbb{Q}(\gamma) : \mathbb{Q}] = 2$ in Theorem 1.1, and it can also be seen as a generalization of Schinzel's question and Erdős' conjecture. The proof uses ingredients from [1] and [2], all of which rely heavily on lower bound for *p*-adic logarithmic form.

2 Preliminary results

2.1 Notation

Denote by $\log^+ = \max\{\log, 0\}, \log^- = \min\{\log, 0\}, \log^* = \max\{\log, 1\}.$

Let K be a number field of degree d. We denote by D_K the discriminant of K.

Suppose $\gamma \in K$, $h(\gamma)$ denotes the usual absolute logarithmic height of γ :

$$\mathbf{h}(\gamma) = [K:\mathbb{Q}]^{-1} \sum_{v \in M_K} d_v \log^+ |\gamma|_v,$$

where d_v denotes the local degree. The places $v \in M_K$ are normalized to extend standard places of \mathbb{Q} . Let $\sigma : K \hookrightarrow \mathbb{C}$ be an arbitrary complex embedding of K, \mathfrak{p} be a prime ideal of the ring of integers \mathcal{O}_K . The following formulas are immediate consequences of the above definition:

$$h(\gamma) = \frac{1}{d} \left(\sum_{\sigma: K \hookrightarrow \mathbb{C}} \log^+ |\gamma^{\sigma}| + \sum_{\mathfrak{p}} \max\{0, -\nu_{\mathfrak{p}}(\gamma)\} \log \mathcal{N}\mathfrak{p} \right).$$
(2.1)

$$h(\gamma) = \frac{1}{d} \left(\sum_{\sigma: K \hookrightarrow \mathbb{C}} -\log^{-} |\gamma^{\sigma}| + \sum_{\mathfrak{p}} \max\{0, \nu_{\mathfrak{p}}(\gamma)\} \log \mathcal{N}\mathfrak{p} \right).$$
(2.2)

2.2 Uniform explicit version of Stewart's theorem

The following two theorems go back to Stewart, see [10, Lemma 4.3], but in present form they are Theorem 1.4 and Theorem 1.5 of [1].

Theorem 2.1. Let γ be a non-zero algebraic number of degree d, not a root of unity. Set $p_0 = \exp(80000d(\log^* d)^2)$. Then for every prime \mathfrak{p} of the field $K = \mathbb{Q}(\gamma)$ whose absolute norm $\mathcal{N}\mathfrak{p}$ satisfies $\mathcal{N}\mathfrak{p} \ge p_0$, and every positive integer n we have

$$\nu_{\mathfrak{p}}(\gamma^{n}-1) \leq \mathcal{N}\mathfrak{p} \exp\left(-0.002d^{-1}\frac{\log \mathcal{N}\mathfrak{p}}{\log\log \mathcal{N}\mathfrak{p}}\right) h(\gamma) \log^{*} n.$$

Theorem 2.2. Let γ be a non-zero algebraic number of degree 2, not a root of unity. Assume that $\mathcal{N}\gamma = \pm 1$. Set $p_0 = \exp\exp(\max\{10^8, 2|D_K|\})$, where D_K is the discriminant of the quadratic field $K = \mathbb{Q}(\gamma)$. Then for every prime \mathfrak{p} of K with underlying rational prime $p \ge p_0$, and every positive integer n we have

$$\nu_{\mathfrak{p}}(\gamma^n - 1) \le p \exp\left(-0.001 \frac{\log p}{\log \log p}\right) h(\gamma) \log^* n.$$
(2.3)

2.3 Cyclotomic polynomials and primitive divisors

The following proposition, which is about eatimates of cyclotomic polynomials, goes back to Schinzel [9], but in the present form, item 1 is [3, Theorem 3.1] and item 2 is proved in [1, Proposition 8.1].

Proposition 2.3. 1. Let γ be an algebraic number. Then

$$h(\Phi_n(\gamma)) = \varphi(n)h(\gamma) + O_1(2^{\omega(n)}\log(\pi n)),$$

where $A = O_1(B)$ means $|A| \leq B$.

2. Let γ be a complex algebraic number of degree d, non-zero and not a root of unity. Then

$$\log |\Phi_n(\gamma)| \ge -10^{14} d^5 \mathbf{h}(\gamma) \cdot 2^{\omega(n)} \log^* n.$$

$$(2.4)$$

Let K be a number field of degree d and $\gamma \in K^{\times}$ not a root of unity. We consider the sequence $u_n = \gamma^n - 1$. Let \mathfrak{p} be a prime ideal of \mathcal{O}_K , We call \mathfrak{p} primitive divisor of u_n if

$$\nu_{\mathfrak{p}}(u_n) \ge 1, \qquad \nu_{\mathfrak{p}}(u_k) = 0 \quad (k = 1, \dots n - 1).$$

Let us recall some basic properties of primitive divisors. Items 1 of the following proposition are well-known and easy, and item 2 is Lemma 4 of Schinzel [9]; see also [3, Lemma 4.5].

- **Proposition 2.4.** 1. Let \mathfrak{p} be a primitive divisor of u_n . Then $\nu_{\mathfrak{p}}(\Phi_n(\gamma)) \ge 1$ and $\mathcal{N}\mathfrak{p} \equiv 1 \mod n$; in particular, $\mathcal{N}\mathfrak{p} \ge n+1$.
 - 2. Assume that $n \ge 2^{d+1}$. Let \mathfrak{p} be not a primitive divisor of u_n . Then $\nu_{\mathfrak{p}}(\Phi_n(\gamma)) \le \nu_{\mathfrak{p}}(n)$.

2.4 Estimates for the arimetical functions

Denote by $\varphi(n)$, $\omega(n)$, $\tau(n)$ the Euler's totient function, the number of distinct prime factors of n, the number of divisors of n, respectively.

We will use the following bounds for these arithmetic functions:

$$\varphi(n) \ge 0.5 \frac{n}{\log \log n} \qquad (n \ge 10^{20}), \tag{2.5}$$

$$\omega(n) \le 1.4 \frac{\log n}{\log \log n} \qquad (n \ge 3), \tag{2.6}$$

$$\tau(n) \le \exp\left(1.1\frac{\log n}{\log\log n}\right) \qquad (n\ge 3).$$
(2.7)

See [7, Theorem 15], [6, Théorème 11], [5, Theorem 1].

3 Proof of Theorem 1.2

Let P be the biggest element of the set

{p: p is a rational prime lying below a prime \mathfrak{p} of K, with $\nu_{\mathfrak{p}}(\Phi_n(\gamma)) \ge 1$ }.

It is sufficient to show that

$$P > n \exp\left(0.0001 \frac{\log n}{\log \log n}\right) \tag{3.1}$$

One may assume $P \leq n^2$, since otherwise there is nothing to prove. By (2.2),

$$2h(\Phi_n(\gamma)) = -\log^{-} |\Phi_n(\gamma)| - \log^{-} |\Phi_n(\gamma^{\sigma})| + \sum_{\mathfrak{p}} \max\{0, \nu_{\mathfrak{p}}(\Phi_n(\gamma))\} \log \mathcal{N}\mathfrak{p},$$
(3.2)

where σ is the generator of $\operatorname{Gal}(K/\mathbb{Q})$.

We use item 2 of Proposition 2.3,

$$-\log^{-}|\Phi_{n}(\gamma)| - \log^{-}|\Phi_{n}(\gamma^{\sigma})| \le 2^{6} \cdot 10^{14} h(\gamma) \cdot 2^{\omega(n)} \log n.$$
(3.3)

We split the sum in (3.2):

$$\sum_{\mathfrak{p}} \max\{0, \nu_{\mathfrak{p}}(\Phi_n(\gamma))\} \log \mathcal{N}\mathfrak{p} = \sum_{\mathfrak{p} \text{ primi-} \atop \text{tive}} + \sum_{\mathfrak{p} \text{ non-} \atop \text{primitive}} = \Sigma_{p} + \Sigma_{np},$$

where \mathfrak{p} primitive, \mathfrak{p} non-primitive means those prime ideals \mathfrak{p} which are primitive, non-primitive divisors of $\gamma^n - 1$, respectively. By item 2 of Proposition 2.4,

$$\Sigma_{\rm np} \le \sum_{\mathfrak{p}} \nu_{\mathfrak{p}}(n) \log \mathcal{N}\mathfrak{p} \le 2\log n.$$
(3.4)

Thus

$$h(\Phi_n(\gamma)) \le 10^{16} h(\gamma) \cdot 2^{\omega(n)} \log n + \Sigma_p/2 + \log n.$$
 (3.5)

On the other hand, by item 1 of Proposition 2.3,

$$h(\Phi_n(\gamma)) \ge \varphi(n)h(\gamma) - 2^{\omega(n)}\log(\pi n).$$
(3.6)

Combining (3.5) and (3.6), we have

$$\Sigma_{\rm p}/2 \ge \varphi(n) h(\gamma) - 2^{\omega(n)} \log(\pi n) - 10^{16} h(\gamma) 2^{\omega(n)} \log n - \log n.$$
(3.7)

Inequalities (2.5), (2.6) and our assumption $n \ge n_0 \ge 10^{10}$ imply that the right-hand side of (3.7) is bounded from below by $0.4\varphi(n)h(\gamma)$. Thus we get the lower bound of Σ_p

$$\Sigma_{\rm p} \ge 0.8\varphi(n)h(\gamma). \tag{3.8}$$

Now primes may have residue degree 1 or 2. Denote by

$$\Sigma_{p1} := \sum_{\substack{\mathfrak{p} \text{ primitive} \\ f_{\mathfrak{p}}=1}} \max\{0, \nu_{\mathfrak{p}}(\Phi_n(\gamma))\} \log \mathcal{N}\mathfrak{p}$$

and

 $\Sigma_{\mathbf{p}2} := \sum_{\substack{\mathfrak{p} \text{ primitive} \\ f_{\mathfrak{p}}=2}} \max\{0, \nu_{\mathfrak{p}}(\Phi_n(\gamma))\} \log \mathcal{N}\mathfrak{p}.$

We have either

$$\Sigma_{\rm p1} \ge 0.4\varphi(n)\mathbf{h}(\gamma),\tag{3.9}$$

or

$$\Sigma_{p2} \ge 0.4\varphi(n)h(\gamma). \tag{3.10}$$

3.1 Case (3.9)

By item 1 of Proposition 2.4, we have $\mathcal{N}\mathfrak{p} = p \equiv 1 \mod n$. Since $n \geq n_0$ and $n_0 = \exp\exp(\max\{10^{10}, 3|D_K|\})$ is bigger than p_0 in Theorem 2.1, the underlying prime p is bigger than p_0 . So Theorem 2.1 applies,

$$\nu_{\mathfrak{p}}(\Phi_n(\gamma)) = \nu_{\mathfrak{p}}(\gamma^n - 1) \le p \exp\left(-0.001 \frac{\log p}{\log \log p}\right) h(\gamma) \log n.$$

We obtain

$$\Sigma_{p1} \leq \sum_{\substack{p \equiv 1 \mod n \\ p \leq P}} \max\{0, \nu_{\mathfrak{p}}(\Phi_n(\gamma))\} \log p$$

$$\leq \pi(P; n, 1) P \exp\left(-0.001 \frac{\log n}{\log \log n}\right) h(\gamma) \log n \log P,$$
(3.11)

where $\pi(P; m, a)$ counts primes $p \leq x$ satisfying $p \equiv a \mod m$. We estimate trivially $\pi(P; n, 1) \leq P/n$. Thus

$$\Sigma_{\rm p1} \le 2P^2 \exp\left(-0.001 \frac{\log n}{\log \log n}\right) h(\gamma) \frac{(\log n)^2}{n}.$$
(3.12)

Combining this with (3.9) and use (2.5), we have

$$P^2 \ge 0.1 \frac{n^2}{(\log n)^2 \log \log n} \exp(0.001 \frac{\log n}{\log \log n}).$$

This implies (3.1) for $n \ge n_0$.

3.2 Case (3.10)

In this case, since $f_{\mathfrak{p}} = 2$, we write p instead of \mathfrak{p} . Suppose σ is the generator of $\operatorname{Gal}(K/\mathbb{Q})$. For such p we have $\nu_p(\gamma^n - 1) = \nu_p((\gamma^\sigma)^n - 1)$. Let $\beta = \gamma^{\sigma}/\gamma$, we obtain the following inequalities:

$$\nu_p(\beta^n - 1) \ge \nu_p((\gamma^\sigma)^n - 1 - (\gamma^n - 1)) \ge \nu_p(\gamma^n - 1) \ge \nu_p(\Phi_n(\gamma))$$

Hence (3.10) implies

$$\sum_{p \in \mathcal{P}} \nu_p(\beta^n - 1) \log p \ge 0.2\varphi(n)\mathbf{h}(\gamma).$$
(3.13)

where

$$\mathcal{P} = \{ p : p \text{ is inert in } K \text{ and } \nu_p(\gamma^n - 1) > 0 \}$$

Denote $v_n = \beta^n - 1$. If $\nu_p(v_n) > 0$ then there exists a unique divisor d of n such that p is primitive for $v_{n/d}$. We denote it by d_p . Since $\beta^n - 1 = \prod_{d|n} \Phi_d(\beta)$,

$$\nu_p(v_n) \le \nu_p(v_{n/d_p}) + \sum_{\substack{m|n\\m \ne n/d_p}} \nu_p(\Phi_m(\beta)).$$

By item 2 of Proposition 2.4,

$$\sum_{\substack{m|n\\m\neq n/d_p}} \nu_p(\Phi_m(\beta)) \le \sum_{m|n} \nu_p(m) + \sum_{m=1}^7 \nu_p(\Phi_m(\beta)).$$

It follows that

$$\sum_{p \in \mathcal{P}} \nu_p(\beta^n - 1) \log p \le \nu_p(v_{n/d_p}) \log p + \sum_{m|n} \log m + \sum_{m=1}^7 \sum_{p \in \mathcal{P}} \nu_p(\Phi_m(\beta)) \log p.$$
(3.14)

Trivially

$$\sum_{m|n} \log m \le \tau(n) \log n.$$
(3.15)

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Notice that

$$\nu_p(\Phi_m(\beta)) \le \nu_p(v_m) \le \frac{1}{2}\nu_p((\gamma^m - (\gamma^\sigma)^m)^2)$$

and $(\gamma^m - (\gamma^\sigma)^m)^2$ is a rational integer of absolute value not exceeding $4(\max\{|\gamma|, |\gamma^\sigma|\})^{2m}$, we have

$$\sum_{p} \nu_{p}(v_{m}) \log p \le \log 2 + m \log^{+}(\max\{|\gamma|, |\gamma^{\sigma}|\}) \le \log 2 + 2mh(\gamma).$$
(3.16)

Hence

$$\sum_{m=1}^{7} \sum_{p \in \mathcal{P}} \nu_p(\Phi_m(\beta)) \log p \le 7 \log 2 + 56h(\gamma).$$
(3.17)

Combining (3.13)(3.14)(3.15)(3.17), we obtain

$$\sum_{p \in \mathcal{P}} \nu_p(v_{n/d_p}) \log p \ge 0.2\varphi(n)\mathbf{h}(\gamma) - \tau(n) \log n - 56\mathbf{h}(\gamma) - 7\log 2.$$

3.2.1 Big d_p

Using (3.16),

$$\sum_{d_p \ge \tau(n) \log n} \sum_{p \in \mathcal{P}} \nu_p(v_{n/d_p}) \log p \le 2nh(\gamma) \sum_{\substack{d \mid n \\ d \ge \tau(n) \log n}} \frac{1}{d} + \tau(n) \log 2.$$

The sum on the right is trivially bounded by

$$\frac{\tau(n)}{\tau(n)\log n} = \frac{1}{\log n}.$$

Hence

$$\sum_{d_p \ge \tau(n) \log n} \nu_p(v_{n/d_p}) \log p \le \frac{2nh(\gamma)}{\log n} + \tau(n) \log 2.$$

Denote by \mathcal{P}' the subset of \mathcal{P} consisting of p with $d_p < \tau(n) \log n$:

$$\mathcal{P}' = \{ p \in \mathcal{P} : d_p < \tau(n) \log n \}.$$

So we have

$$\begin{split} \sum_{p \in \mathcal{P}'} \nu_p(v_{n/d_p}) \log p \geq & 0.2\varphi(n) h(\gamma) - \tau(n) \log n - 56h(\gamma) - 7 \log 2 \\ & - \frac{2nh(\gamma)}{\log n} - \tau(n) \log 2. \end{split}$$

Using (2.5)(2.7), since $n \ge \exp \exp(10^{10})$, we obtain

$$\sum_{p \in \mathcal{P}'} \nu_p(v_{n/d_p}) \log p \ge 0.1 \varphi(n) h(\gamma).$$
(3.18)

3.2.2 Small $d_p : d_p < \tau(n) \log n$

In subsections 3.2.2 and 3.2.3 of [2], the authors use estimates of counting function for S-units to bound $\#\{d \mid n : d < \tau(n) \log n\}$ and then give a upper bound for $\#\mathcal{P}'$. One can verify that these bounds are still effective in our case, as following:

$$#\{d \mid n: d < \tau(n)\log n\} \le \exp\left(70\frac{\log n \log \log \log n}{(\log \log n)^2}\right).$$
(3.19)

$$\#\mathcal{P}' \le \left(\frac{P}{n} + 1\right) \exp\left(80 \frac{\log \log \log \log \log n}{(\log \log n)^2}\right).$$
(3.20)

3.2.3 Using Theorem 2.2

By item 1 of Proposition 2.4, for $p \in \mathcal{P}'$, we have $n \mid p^2 - 1$. Hence $p > n^{1/2} \ge n_0^{1/2}$. Since $n_0^{1/2} \ge p_0 = \exp\exp(\max\{10^8, 2\mid D_K\mid\})$, Theorem 2.2 applies:

$$\nu_{p}(\beta^{n}-1) \leq p \exp\left(-0.001 \frac{\log p}{\log \log p}\right) h(\beta) \log n$$

$$\leq 2P \exp\left(-0.0005 \frac{\log n}{\log \log n}\right) h(\gamma) \log n.$$
(3.21)

The last inequality holds because

$$p \le P$$
, $\frac{\log p}{\log \log p} \ge \frac{1}{2} \frac{\log n}{\log \log n}$, $h(\beta) \le 2h(\gamma)$.

Since $\nu_p(v_{n/d_p}) \leq \nu_p(\beta^n - 1)$, we obtain,

$$\sum_{p \in \mathcal{P}'} \nu_p(v_{n/d_p}) \log p \le 2P \exp\left(-0.0005 \frac{\log n}{\log \log n}\right) h(\gamma) \log P \log n \# \mathcal{P}'. \quad (3.22)$$

Combining (3.18)(3.22),

$$0.1\varphi(n)\mathbf{h}(\gamma) \le 2P \exp\left(-0.0005 \frac{\log n}{\log\log n}\right)\mathbf{h}(\gamma)\log P \log n \# \mathcal{P}'.$$

Using (3.20) and (2.5), we obtain, for $n \ge \exp \exp(10^{10})$,

$$40P(P+n)\log P \ge \frac{n^2}{\log n \log \log n} \exp\left(\frac{\log n (\log \log n - 160000 \log \log \log n)}{2000(\log \log n)^2}\right)$$
$$\ge n^2 \exp\left(0.0004 \frac{\log n}{\log \log n}\right).$$

Obviously $P \ge n$, so we have

$$80P^2\log P \ge n^2\exp\left(0.0004\frac{\log n}{\log\log n}\right),$$

which implies (3.1) and we are done.

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