A characteristic property of a developable surface

by

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A characteristic property of a developable surface*

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The pitch of a closed developable surface is equal to the arclength of its edge of regression. The aim of this paper is to show that this is characteristic property of a closed developable, viz. that if the pitch of a closed ruled surface is equal to the arc-length of its line of striction then the surface is developable.

1. The Pitch [1] of a closed [2] ruled surface R (i.e. a ruled surface whose directrix curve D and spherical indicatrix of the generators J are both simply connected closed curves) is defined as the line integral

\[ P = \int_D \mathbf{g} \cdot d\mathbf{\delta} \]  

(1.1)

where \( \mathbf{\delta} \) is the vector describing D and \( \mathbf{g} \) is the unit vector on the generator of the surface. \( P \) is an integral invariant of R [3]

If \( \mathcal{L} \) denotes the line of striction of R, described by the vector function \( \mathbf{T} \) and if \( L \) is the length of \( \mathcal{L} \) (1.1) can be rewritten in the form

\[ P = \int_{\mathcal{L}} \mathbf{g} \cdot d\mathbf{l} \]  

(1.2)

and \( P \) satisfies the limitation (1)

\[ P \leq L. \]  

(1.3)

* This Note contains the answer to a question put to the Author during his stay at the Middle East Technical University in Ankara in June 1967.
If $R$ is a closed developable, its line of striction reduces to the edge of regression and if $\lambda$ is to indicate the arc-length of $\mathcal{L}$

$$
\mathbf{g} = \frac{\mathbf{d}l}{d\lambda}
$$

then

$$
P = \int_{\mathcal{L}} \frac{\mathbf{d}l}{d\lambda} \cdot d\mathbf{i} = \int_{\mathcal{L}} \frac{(\mathbf{d}l)^2}{d\lambda} = \int_{\mathcal{L}} d\lambda = L.
$$

The object of this short note is to show that the converse of the statement implied by (1.4). *viz. the pitch of a closed developable equals the length of its edge of regression*, is equally true and that therefore the property mentioned above characterizes developables.

2. Suppose that the pitch of a closed ruled surface $R$ is equal to the length of its line of striction.

$$
\mathbf{t} = \mathbf{t}(\lambda) \text{ being the vector function which describes the generic point } \Lambda \text{ of } \mathcal{L}
$$

$$
\int_{\mathcal{L}} \mathbf{g} \cdot \frac{\mathbf{d}l}{d\lambda} = L
$$

or

$$
\int_{\mathcal{L}} \mathbf{g} \cdot \frac{\mathbf{d}l}{d\lambda} d\lambda = \int_{\mathcal{L}} \frac{\mathbf{d}l}{d\lambda} \cdot \frac{\mathbf{d}l}{d\lambda} d\lambda
$$

or again

$$
\int_{\mathcal{L}} (\mathbf{g} - \frac{\mathbf{d}l}{d\lambda}) \cdot \frac{\mathbf{d}l}{d\lambda} d\lambda = 0.
$$

But $\frac{\mathbf{d}l}{d\lambda}$ is a unit vector in the tangent plane of $R$ at the point $\Lambda$: if $\mathbf{t}$ denotes the unit vector of the tangent to $R$
orthogonal to the generator

\[ (2.4) \quad \frac{\vec{dl}}{d\lambda} = \vec{g} \cos \varphi + \vec{t} \sin \varphi \]

where \( \varphi = \varphi(\lambda) \) is a periodic function of \( \lambda \) of period \( L \).

Then

\[ (2.5) \quad (g - \frac{dl}{d\lambda}) \cdot \frac{dl}{d\lambda} = (\cos \varphi - 1) \ d\lambda \]

so that the condition (2.3) reduces to

\[ (2.6) \quad \int_{\mathcal{L}} (\cos \varphi - 1) \ d\lambda = 0. \]

3. Whatever the nature of the function \( \varphi = \varphi(\lambda) \),

\[ | \cos \varphi | \leq 1 \] hence

\[ (3.1) \quad -2 \leq \cos \varphi - 1 \leq 0 \]

whereas \( \lambda \) is a monotonic increasing point function of the point \( \Lambda \) on \( \mathcal{L} \). Therefore the integrand in the condition (2.6) does not change sign along \( \mathcal{L} \): for the condition (2.6) to hold the integrand must therefore be identically nil along \( \mathcal{L} \). This implies

\[ (3.2) \quad \cos \varphi = 1 \]

along \( \mathcal{L} \) or else

\[ (3.3) \quad d\lambda = 0. \]

The first case obviously leads to \( R \) being developable whereas the second implies that \( \mathcal{L} \) reduces to a point and therefore that the surface \( R \) reduces to a conc, as a particular case of a developable.

Thus

\[ (3.4) \quad \int_{\mathcal{L}} (g - \frac{dl}{d\lambda} - 1) \ d\lambda = 0 \]

characterizes closed developables.
REFERENCES


ÖZET

Kapalı ve açıklabilir bir regle yüzeyin adını (the pitch) onun dayanak eğrisinin uzunluğuna eşittir. Bu yazının amacı, açıklabilir yüzeyler için bu özelliğin karakteristik olduğu yani kapalı bir regle yüzeyin adını onun doğaz çizgisinin uzunluğuna eşit ise yüzeyin açıklabilir olduğunu göstermekten ibaretir.
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