

ON THE VALUE DISTRIBUTION OF DIFFERENCE POLYNOMIALS

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We investigate the value distribution of difference polynomials

$$f^n - \sum_{\lambda \in I} a_\lambda(z) \prod_{\nu=1}^m f(z + c_\nu)^{l_{\lambda,\nu}} - s(z)$$

and

$$f^n - \sum_{\lambda \in I} a_\lambda(z) \prod_{\nu=1}^m (\Delta^\nu f)^{l_{\lambda,\nu}} - s(z),$$

where $s(z)$ and the coefficients $a_\lambda(z)$ ($\lambda \in I$) are small functions relative of f , $I = \{\lambda : \lambda = (l_{\lambda,1}, \dots, l_{\lambda,m}) | l_{\lambda,\nu} \in \mathbb{N}\}$ is a finite index set, $c_\nu, \nu = 1, \dots, m$ are distinct complex numbers, and Δ is a difference operator.

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1. INTRODUCTION

We use standard notations from Nevanlinna theory. We denote by $\sigma(f)$ the order of growth of the meromorphic function f on the complex plane \mathbb{C} , and also use the notation $\varsigma(f)$ to denote the hyper-order of f ,

$$\sigma(f) = \limsup_{r \rightarrow \infty} \frac{\log T(r, f)}{\log r}, \quad \varsigma(f) = \limsup_{r \rightarrow \infty} \frac{\log \log T(r, f)}{\log r},$$

where $T(r, f)$ is the characteristic function of f .

A well known result of Hayman [2] is stated that:

THEOREM A. *Let f be a transcendental meromorphic function and $a \neq 0, b$ be finite complex constants. Then $f^n + af' - b$ has infinitely many zeros for $n \geq 5$. If f is transcendental entire, this holds for $n \geq 3$, resp. $n \geq 2$, if $b = 0$.*

Recently, Halburd-Korhonen [3, 4], and Chiang-Feng [1] have established the Nevanlinna theory for difference operators. As an application of this theory, Liu and Lain [6, 7] gave the following difference counterpart of Theorem A.

THEOREM B. *Let f be a transcendental meromorphic function of finite order $\rho(f) = \rho$, not of period c , a be a non-zero complex constant. Then the difference polynomial $f^n(z) + a(f(z+c) - f(z)) - s(z)$ has infinitely many zeros in the complex plane, provided $n \geq 8$, where $s(z)$ is small function respective of f . If f is transcendental entire function with finite order and $s(z)$ is entire function which is small function of f , then statement holds with $n \geq 3$.*

A number of results on the value distribution of some difference polynomials were given by Qi-Ding-Yuan [10], Zheng-Chen [11], Liu-Yi [8]. However, these results have been still restricted to the case of meromorphic functions f having finite order, and hence, hyper-order $\varsigma(f) = 0$. The purpose of this paper is to examine this problem in the case where meromorphic function f having hyper-order $\varsigma(f) < 1$, and in the general case of difference polynomials.

For each meromorphic function f on complex plane, by a difference product, we mean a difference monomial and its shifts, that is, an expression of type

$$\prod_{\nu=1}^m f(z + c_\nu)^{l_\nu},$$

where c_1, \dots, c_m are distinct complex numbers and l_1, \dots, l_m are natural numbers. The difference polynomial of f is given by

$$P(z, f) = \sum_{\lambda \in I} a_\lambda(z) \prod_{\nu=1}^m f(z + c_\nu)^{l_{\lambda, \nu}},$$

where the coefficients $a_\lambda(z)$ ($\lambda \in I$) are small functions with respect to f and $I = \{\lambda : \lambda = (l_{\lambda, 1}, \dots, l_{\lambda, m}) | l_{\lambda, \nu} \in \mathbb{N}\}$ is a finite index set and $c_\nu, \nu = 1, \dots, m$ are distinct complex numbers. We denote $\ell_\nu = \max_{\lambda \in I} l_{\lambda, \nu}$ and $\ell = \sum_{\nu=1}^m \ell_\nu$.

Our results are stated as follows:

THEOREM 1. *Let f be a transcendental meromorphic function with hyper-order $\varsigma := \varsigma(f) < 1$ and $s(z)$ be a small function with respect to f . Assume that $n \geq \ell + m + 3$ and $P(z, f) + s(z) \not\equiv 0$. Then the polynomial difference $f^n(z) - P(z, f) - s(z)$ has infinitely many zeros.*

If in Theorem 1 we take $\ell = m$ and $P(z, f) = \sum_{j=1}^m a_j(z)f(z + c_j)$, then we obtain the following corollary.

COROLLARY 1. *Let f be a transcendental meromorphic function with hyper-order $\varsigma(f) = \varsigma < 1$, $s(z)$, $a_j(z)$, $j = 1, \dots, m$ be small functions with respect to f , and c_j , $j = 1, \dots, m$ be complex distinct constants. Assume that $n \geq 2m + 3$ and $\sum_{j=1}^m a_j(z)f(z + c_j) + s(z) \not\equiv 0$. Then the polynomial difference $f^n(z) - \sum_{j=1}^m a_j(z)f(z + c_j) - s(z)$ has infinitely many zeros.*

If in Corollary 1 we take $m = 1$, $a_1(z) = \frac{1}{a}$, $a \neq 0$, $s(z) = -\frac{b}{a}$, $a, b \in \mathbb{C}$, we get the following corollary.

COROLLARY 2. *Let f be a transcendental meromorphic function with hyper-order $\varsigma(f) = \varsigma < 1$, and a, c be non-zero complex constants. Then for any integer $n \geq 5$,*

$$\Psi_1(z) = f(z + c) - af^n(z)$$

assume all finite $b \in \mathbb{C}$ infinitely often.

For each meromorphic function f , then $\Delta(f) = f(z+c) - f(z)$ ($c \in \mathbb{C} \setminus \{0\}$) is called a difference of $f(z)$. Set $\Delta^m f = \Delta(\Delta^{m-1} f)$, for each integer $m \geq 2$. By an easy computation, we have

$$\Delta^m f(z) = \sum_{i=0}^m (-1)^i \binom{m}{i} f(z + (m-i)c).$$

Now we consider the difference polynomial

$$Q(z, f) = \sum_{\lambda \in I} a_\lambda(z) \prod_{\nu=1}^m (\Delta^\nu f)^{l_{\lambda,\nu}},$$

where the coefficients $a_\lambda(z)$ ($\lambda \in I$) are small functions with respect to f and $I = \{\lambda : \lambda = (l_{\lambda,1}, \dots, l_{\lambda,m}) | l_{\lambda,\nu} \in \mathbb{N}\}$ is a finite index set. We also denote $\ell_\nu = \max_{\lambda \in I} l_{\lambda,\nu}$ and $\ell = \sum_{\nu=1}^m \ell_\nu$.

THEOREM 2. *Let f be a transcendental meromorphic function with hyper-order $\varsigma(f) = \varsigma < 1$ and $s(z)$ be a small function with respect to f . Assume that $n \geq \sum_{\nu=1}^m \ell_\nu(\nu+1) + m + 4$ and $Q(z, f) + s(z) \not\equiv 0$. Then the polynomial difference $f^n(z) - Q(z, f) - s(z)$ has infinitely many zeros.*

2. SOME LEMMAS

In order to prove the two theorems, we need the following lemmas, due to Halburd-Korhonen-Tohge [4].

LEMMA 2.1. *Let $T : [0, +\infty) \rightarrow [0, +\infty)$ be a non-decreasing continuous function, and let $s \in (0, +\infty)$. If the hyper-order of T is strictly less than one, i.e.,*

$$\limsup_{r \rightarrow \infty} \frac{\log \log T(r)}{\log r} = \varsigma < 1,$$

then

$$T(r+s) = T(r) + o\left(\frac{T(r)}{r^{1-\varsigma-\varepsilon}}\right),$$

where $\varepsilon > 0$ and $r \rightarrow \infty$ outside of a set of finite logarithmic measure.

LEMMA 2.2. *Let f be a non-constant meromorphic function, $\varepsilon > 0$ and $c \in \mathbb{C}$.*

If f is of finite order, then there exists a set $E = E(f, \varepsilon)$ satisfying

$$\limsup_{r \rightarrow \infty} \frac{\int_{E \cap [1, r)} dt/t}{\log r} \leq \varepsilon$$

(i.e. of logarithmic density at most ε), such that

$$m\left(r, \frac{f(z+c)}{f(z)}\right) = O\left(\frac{\log r}{r} T(r, f)\right)$$

for all r outside the set E .

If $\varsigma(f) = \varsigma < 1$ and $\varepsilon > 0$, then

$$m\left(r, \frac{f(z+c)}{f(z)}\right) = o\left(\frac{T(r, f)}{r^{1-\varsigma-\varepsilon}}\right)$$

for all r outside of a set of finite logarithmic measure.

LEMMA 2.3. *Let f be a non-constant meromorphic function with $\varsigma(f) = \varsigma < 1$, and $c \in \mathbb{C} \setminus \{0\}$. Then*

$$N(r, f(z+c)) \leq N(r, f) + S(r, f),$$

$$T(r, f(z+c)) \leq T(r, f) + S(r, f).$$

Proof. We have

$$\delta := \limsup_{r \rightarrow \infty} \frac{\log \log N(r, f)}{\log r} \leq \limsup_{r \rightarrow \infty} \frac{\log \log T(r, f)}{\log r} = \varsigma(f) < 1.$$

Hence, by Lemma 2.1, we get

$$\begin{aligned} N(r + |c|, f) &= N(r, f) + o\left(\frac{N(r, f)}{r^{1-\delta-\varepsilon}}\right) \\ &\leq N(r, f) + o\left(\frac{T(r, f)}{r^{1-\varsigma-\varepsilon}}\right) \\ &= N(r, f) + S(r, f). \end{aligned}$$

Therefore, by Lemma 2.2, we have

$$\begin{aligned} T(r, f(z+c)) &= m(r, f(z+c)) + N(r, f(z+c)) \\ &= m\left(r, \frac{f(z+c)}{f(z)} \cdot f(z)\right) + N(r, f(z+c)) \\ &\leq m\left(r, \frac{f(z+c)}{f(z)}\right) + m(r, f) + N(r + |c|, f) \\ &\leq m\left(r, \frac{f(z+c)}{f(z)}\right) + m(r, f) + N(r, f) + S(r, f) \end{aligned}$$

$$= T(r, f) + S(r, f).$$

We have completed the proof of Lemma 2.3. \square

From the basic properties of characteristic function, we get easily that:

LEMMA 2.4. *Let f_1, \dots, f_n be distinct meromorphic functions. Then*

$$T(r, \sum_{\lambda \in I} a_{\lambda} f_1^{l_{\lambda,1}} \dots f_n^{l_{\lambda,n}}) \leq \sum_{j=1}^n \ell_j T(r, f_j) + \sum_{\lambda \in I} O(T(r, a_{\lambda})),$$

where $I = \{\lambda : \lambda = (l_{\lambda,1}, \dots, l_{\lambda,n}) | l_{\lambda,j} \in \mathbb{N}, j = 1, \dots, n\}$ is a finite index, $\ell_j = \max_{\lambda \in I} l_{\lambda,j}$, $j = 1, \dots, n$ and $a_{\lambda} (\lambda \in I)$ are meromorphic functions.

3. PROOF OF THEOREMS

Proof of Theorem 1. Take $\phi(z) = f^n(z) - P(z, f) - s(z)$.

If $\phi(z) \equiv c$, where c is a constant, then $f^n(z) = P(z, f) + s(z) + c$. Then by Lemma 2.3 and Lemma 2.4, we have

$$nT(r, f) \leq \ell T(r, f) + S(r, f).$$

This is in contradiction with $n \geq \ell + m + 3$. Hence, $\phi(z)$ is nonconstant.

It is easy to see that

$$\frac{(f^n(z))'}{f^n(z)} - \frac{\phi'(z)}{\phi(z)} \not\equiv 0.$$

Indeed, otherwise,

$$\frac{(f^n(z))'}{f^n(z)} - \frac{\phi'(z)}{\phi(z)} \equiv 0,$$

then $\phi(z) = b f^n(z)$. This implies that $(b-1)f^n(z) = P(z, f) + s(z)$.

– If $b = 1$, then $P(z, f) + s(z) \equiv 0$. This is in contradiction with hypothesis.

– If $b \neq 1$, then $nT(r, f) \leq \ell T(r, f) + S(r, f)$. This is in contradiction with $n \geq \ell + m + 3$.

We have

$$-f^n(z) = \frac{\frac{\phi'(z)}{\phi(z)} [P(z, f) + s(z)] - [P(z, f) + s(z)]'}{\frac{(f^n(z))'}{f^n(z)} - \frac{\phi'(z)}{\phi(z)}}.$$

Then

$$(3.1) \quad nT(r, f) = T(r, \frac{\phi'(z)}{\phi(z)} [P(z, f) + s(z)] - [P(z, f) + s(z)]') \cdot \frac{1}{\frac{(f^n(z))'}{f^n(z)} - \frac{\phi'(z)}{\phi(z)}}$$

$$\begin{aligned}
&\leq m(r, P(z, f) + s(z)) \\
&+ N(r, \frac{\phi'(z)}{\phi(z)} [P(z, f) + s(z)] - [P(z, f) + s(z)]') \\
&+ m(r, \frac{\phi'}{\phi} - \frac{(P(z, f) + s(z))'}{P(z, f) + s(z)}) + m(r, \frac{(f^n(z))'}{f^n(z)} - \frac{\phi'(z)}{\phi(z)}) \\
&+ N(r, \frac{(f^n(z))'}{f^n(z)} - \frac{\phi'(z)}{\phi(z)}) + S(r, f).
\end{aligned}$$

$$\text{Set } \varphi_1 = \frac{\phi'(z)}{\phi(z)} [P(z, f) + s(z)] - [P(z, f) + s(z)]'.$$

It is clear that

$$(3.2) \quad N(r, \varphi_1) \leq \overline{N}(r, \frac{1}{\phi}) + \overline{N}(r, f) + N(r, P(z, f) + s(z)) + S(r, f).$$

(note that $Pole(\phi) \subset Pole(f)$).

Next, we prove that:

$$\begin{aligned}
(3.3) \quad &N(r, \frac{(f^n(z))'}{f^n(z)} - \frac{\phi'(z)}{\phi(z)}) \\
&\leq \overline{N}(r, \frac{1}{\phi}) + \overline{N}(r, \frac{1}{f}) + \overline{N}(r, P(z, f) + s(z)) + S(r, f).
\end{aligned}$$

It is clear that all pole of $\frac{(f^n)'}{f^n} - \frac{\phi'}{\phi}$ are simple and $Pole(\frac{(f^n)'}{f^n} - \frac{\phi'}{\phi}) \subset Zero(f) \cup Pole(f) \cup Zero(\phi)$. From this fact, for (3.3), it suffices to prove that: If z_0 is a pole of f but it is not a pole of $P(z, f) + s(z)$, then $\frac{(f^n)'}{f^n} - \frac{\phi'}{\phi}$ is holomorphic at z_0 .

Indeed, we write $f(z) = \frac{\varphi(z)}{(z - z_0)^k}$ in a neighborhood of z_0 , where $\varphi(z)$ is a holomorphic function and $\varphi(z_0) \neq 0$ and $k \geq 1$.

We get easily that

$$\frac{f^n(z)'}{f^n(z)} = \frac{(z - z_0)(\varphi^n)' - nk\varphi^n}{(z - z_0)\varphi^n}$$

and

$$\phi = \frac{\varphi^n - (P(z, f) + s(z))(z - z_0)^{nk}}{(z - z_0)^{nk}}.$$

Hence

$$\frac{\phi'}{\phi} = \frac{(z - z_0)[\varphi^n - g(z)(z - z_0)^{nk}]' - nk[\varphi^n - g(z)(z - z_0)^{nk}]}{(z - z_0)[\varphi^n - g(z)(z - z_0)^{nk}]}.$$

This implies that

$$\frac{(f^n(z))'}{f^n(z)} - \frac{\phi'(z)}{\phi(z)} = \frac{(z - z_0)(\varphi^n)' - nk\varphi^n}{(z - z_0)\varphi^n}$$

$$\begin{aligned}
& - \frac{(z - z_0)[\varphi^n - g(z)(z - z_0)^{nk}]' - nk[\varphi^n - g(z)(z - z_0)^{nk}]}{(z - z_0)[\varphi^n - g(z)(z - z_0)^{nk}]} \\
& = \frac{1}{z - z_0} \cdot \frac{\theta(z)}{\varphi^n(\varphi^n - g(z)(z - z_0)^{nk})},
\end{aligned}$$

where

$$\begin{aligned}
\theta(z) &= [(z - z_0)(\varphi^n)' - nk\varphi^n][\varphi^n - g(z)(z - z_0)^{nk}] \\
&\quad - [(z - z_0)[\varphi^n - g(z)(z - z_0)^{nk}]' - nk[\varphi^n - g(z)(z - z_0)^{nk}]]\varphi^n.
\end{aligned}$$

On the other hand,

$$\left. \frac{\theta(z)}{\varphi^n(\varphi^n - g(z)(z - z_0)^{nk})} \right|_{z=z_0} = \frac{-nk\varphi^{2n}(z_0) + nk\varphi^{2n}(z_0)}{\varphi^{2n}(z_0)} = 0.$$

Therefore, z_0 is not a pole of $\frac{(f^n(z))'}{f^n(z)} - \frac{\phi'(z)}{\phi(z)}$.

Combining (3.1), (3.2) and (3.3), we have

$$\begin{aligned}
nT(r, f) &\leq m(r, P(z, f) + s(z)) + N(r, P(z, f) + s(z)) \\
&\quad + 2\overline{N}(r, \frac{1}{\phi}) + \overline{N}(r, f) + \overline{N}(r, \frac{1}{f}) + \overline{N}(r, P(z, f) + s(z)) + S(r, f) \\
&= T(r, P(z, f)) + 2\overline{N}(r, \frac{1}{\phi}) + \overline{N}(r, f) + \overline{N}(r, \frac{1}{f}) \\
(3.4) \quad &\quad + \overline{N}(r, P(z, f) + s(z)) + S(r, f).
\end{aligned}$$

From the definition of $P(z, f)$ and Lemma 2.3, we have

$$\begin{aligned}
\overline{N}(r, P(z, f) + s(z)) &\leq \sum_{\nu=1}^m \overline{N}(r, f(z + c_\nu)) \\
&\leq \sum_{\nu=1}^m T(r +, f(z + c_\nu)) + S(r, f) \\
(3.5) \quad &\leq mT(r, f) + S(r, f).
\end{aligned}$$

By Lemma 2.3 and Lemma 2.4, we have

$$(3.6) \quad T(r, P(z, f)) \leq \ell T(r, f) + S(r, f).$$

From (3.4), (3.5), and (3.6), we have

$$nT(r, f) \leq (\ell + m + 2)T(r, f) + 2\overline{N}(r, \frac{1}{\phi}) + S(r, f).$$

On the other hand $n \geq \ell + m + 3$. Hence, ϕ has infinitely many zeros. This completes the proof of Theorem 1. \square

Proof of Theorem 2. By an argument similar to the proof of Theorem 1, we obtain that

$$\begin{aligned}
 nT(r, f) &\leq m(r, Q(z, f) + s(z)) + N(r, Q(z, f) + s(z)) \\
 &\quad + 2\overline{N}(r, \frac{1}{\phi}) + \overline{N}(r, f) + \overline{N}(r, \frac{1}{f}) + \overline{N}(r, Q(z, f) + s(z)) + S(r, f) \\
 &= T(r, Q(z, f)) + 2\overline{N}(r, \frac{1}{\phi}) + \overline{N}(r, f) + \overline{N}(r, \frac{1}{f}) \\
 (3.7) \quad &\quad + \overline{N}(r, Q(z, f) + s(z)) + S(r, f).
 \end{aligned}$$

Note that

$$\Delta^\nu f(z) = \sum_{i=0}^{\nu} (-1)^i C_\nu^i f(z + (\nu - i)c),$$

for all $\nu = 0, \dots, m$.

By Lemma 2.3, we have

$$\begin{aligned}
 T(r, \Delta^\nu f(z)) &= T(r, \sum_{i=0}^{\nu} (-1)^i C_\nu^i f(z + (\nu - i)c)) \\
 &= m(r, \sum_{i=0}^{\nu} (-1)^i C_\nu^i f(z + (\nu - i)c)) \\
 &\quad + N(r, \sum_{i=0}^{\nu} (-1)^i C_\nu^i f(z + (\nu - i)c)) \\
 &= m(r, \frac{\sum_{i=0}^{\nu} (-1)^i C_\nu^i f(z + (\nu - i)c)}{f} \cdot f) \\
 &\quad + N(r, \sum_{i=0}^{\nu} (-1)^i C_\nu^i f(z + (\nu - i)c)) \\
 &\leq \sum_{i=0}^{\nu} m(r, \frac{f(z + (\nu - i)c)}{f}) + m(r, f) \\
 &\quad + N(r, \sum_{i=0}^{\nu} (-1)^i C_\nu^i f(z + (\nu - i)c)) \\
 (3.8) \quad &\leq (\nu + 1)T(r, f) + S(r, f).
 \end{aligned}$$

From the definition of $Q(z, f)$ and by Lemma 2.3, we have

$$\begin{aligned}
 \overline{N}(r, Q(z, f) + s(z)) &\leq \sum_{i=0}^m \overline{N}(r, f(z + (m - i)c)) \\
 (3.9) \quad &\leq (m + 1)T(r, f) + S(r, f).
 \end{aligned}$$

By (3.8) and Lemma 2.3 and Lemma 2.4, we have

$$\begin{aligned}
 T(r, Q(z, f)) &\leq \sum_{\nu=1}^m \ell_{\nu} T(r, \Delta^{\nu} f) + S(r, f) \\
 (3.10) \qquad &\leq \sum_{\nu=1}^m \ell_{\nu} (\nu + 1) T(r, f) + S(r, f).
 \end{aligned}$$

By (3.7) and (3.10), we have

$$nT(r, f) \leq \left[\sum_{\nu=1}^m \ell_{\nu} (\nu + 1) + m + 3 \right] T(r, f) + 2\overline{N}\left(r, \frac{1}{\phi}\right) + S(r, f).$$

On the other hand, $n \geq \sum_{\nu=1}^m \ell_{\nu} (\nu + 1) + m + 4$. Hence, $f^n - Q(z, f) - s(z)$ has infinitely zeros. We have completed the proof of Theorem 2. \square

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