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# History of Mathematics

Math 395 Spring 2010  
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Fowler 310 MWF 10:30am - 11:25am  
<http://faculty.oxy.edu/ron/math/395/10/>

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## *Class 9: Monday February 8*

**TITLE** Archimedes

**CURRENT READING:** Katz, §4.1-4.3

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### **Homework for Friday February 12**

**Katz, p. 91. #8, #19, #26 and #35. EXTRA CREDIT: #20.**

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### **SUMMARY**

Archimedes (c. 287 BCE-212 BCE) is considered by many the most accomplished ancient mathematician (along with Euclid) but his contributions were not just limited to mathematics.

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### **Archimedes of Syracuse**

#### *How do we know what we know?*

No surviving originals of the work of Archimedes exist. Most of the information we know about Archimedes life (and death) comes from a biography of the Roman soldier Marcellus written by Plutarch.

Many of Archimedes' results were communicated in letters to people like Eratosthenes, who was chief librarian at Alexandria.

Archimedes wrote several books, which like many Greek works were copied and translated into the Arabic world.

The Archimedes *palimpsest* was discovered in Istanbul in 1899 and in 1906 translated by the great mathematical historian Heiberg. A palimpsest is a parchment in which the original text is washed off (but usually still partially visible) and a new text is overlaid on top the first. The reasons for this practice were 1) parchment was expensive and rare 2) it was considered virtuous by some religions to over-write "pagan" texts by religious texts.

### **Archimedes Anecdotes**

"Eureka, Eureka!"

"Give me a place to stand on, and I can move the earth."

The Death of Archimedes

The Grave of Archimedes

**EXAMPLE**

**Proposition 3 of Archimedes' Measurement of the Circle** is: *The ratio of the circumference of any circle to its diameter is less than  $3\frac{1}{7}$  but greater than  $3\frac{10}{71}$ .*

How did Archimedes produce this accurate approximation of  $\pi$ ?

He used Eudoxus' Method of Exhaustion along with a circumscribed polygon and an inscribed polygon to obtain ratios of the lengths of the sides of each (approximating the circle as the number of sides of the polygon increased) to the ratio of the radius of the circle.

He ended up with a recursive process which can work with a polygon of up to  $n$  sides which he pursued to  $n=96$  to obtain his famous estimate.

**The Sphere Inscribed By A Cylinder**

The achievement Archimedes was most proud of was the result that the volume of a sphere is two-thirds of the volume of a circumscribed cylinder.

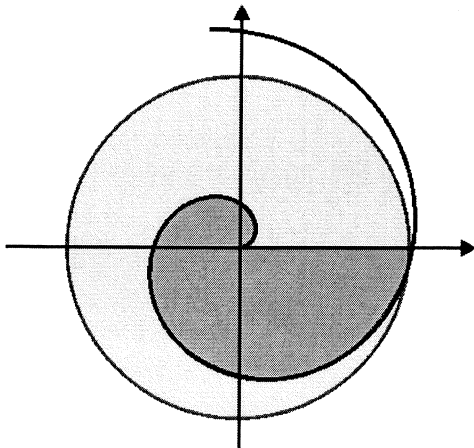
He also proved the result that the sphere also has two-thirds the surface area of the circumscribed cylinder.

**Exercise**

Confirm these result using the known formulas for the volume(surface area) of a cylinder and the volume(surface area) of a sphere. (Draw a picture representing the problem.)

**GroupWork**

The Archimedes spiral is the curve given by  $r = a\theta$  (in polar co-ordinates). Archimedes showed that the area enclosed by one full revolution of the spiral is  $1/3$  of the area of the circle with center at the origin and radius equal to the spiral arc's distance from the origin after one full revolution.

**Quadrature of the Parabola**

Using the Method of Exhaustion, Archimedes showed that the area of a parabolic segment is  $4/3$  the area of a triangular segment having the same base and height. (Note: the slope of the parabola where the apex of the triangle touches the curve is parallel to the other side.)

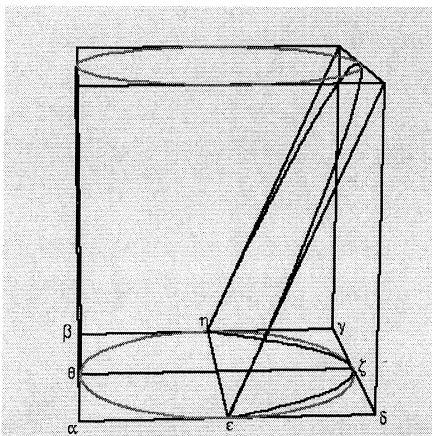
Let's show this result for various different triangles and parabolas, especially the generic  $y = a - bx^2$

**Solid Geometry**

**Proposition 14 in *The Method*:** *If a cylinder is inscribed in a rectangular parallelepiped with square base, and if a plane is drawn through the center of the circle at the base of the cylinder and through one side of the square forming the top of the parallelepiped, then the segment of the cylinder cut off by this plane has a volume equal to one sixth of the entire parallelepiped.*

**Exercise**

Confirm that the volume of the parallelepiped is given by  $2 \int_0^r \int_0^{\sqrt{r^2-x^2}} z dx dy$  where  $z = \frac{h}{r} x$  and  $h$  is the height of the parallelepiped and  $r$  is the radius of the cylinder.



**Proposition 21 in *Of Conoids and Spheroids*:** *Any segment of a paraboloid of revolution is half as large again as the cone or segment of a cone which has the same base and the same axes.*

Let's use Calculus to confirm this result while acknowledging how difficult it was for Archimedes to do it using the Method of Exhaustion.

