

# Linear Transformations on Matrices\*

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Let  $K$  be a field and let  $M_n(K)$  denote the vector space of all  $n \times n$  matrices over  $K$ . Suppose  $I(X)$  is an invariant defined on a subset  $\mathfrak{A}$  of  $M_n(K)$ . This paper surveys certain results concerning the following problem. Describe the set  $\mathcal{L}(I, \mathfrak{A})$  of all linear transformations  $T: \mathfrak{A} \rightarrow \mathfrak{A}$  that hold the invariant  $I$  fixed:

$$I(T(X)) = I(X), \quad X \in \mathfrak{A}.$$

Key words: Matrices; invariants; determinant; generalized matrix function; rank.

## 1. Introduction

Let  $K$  be a field and let  $M_n(K)$  denote the vector space of all  $n \times n$  matrices over  $K$ . Over the last 80 years, a great deal of effort has been devoted to the following question. Suppose  $I(X)$  is an invariant defined on a subset  $\mathfrak{A}$  of  $M_n(K)$ . Describe the set  $\mathcal{L}(I, \mathfrak{A})$  of all linear transformations  $T: \mathfrak{A} \rightarrow \mathfrak{A}$  that hold the invariant  $I$  fixed:

$$I(T(X)) = I(X), \quad X \in \mathfrak{A}. \quad (1)$$

Even in this generality, it is clear that  $\mathcal{L}(I, \mathfrak{A})$  is a multiplicative semigroup with an identity. The invariant  $I$  can be a scalar valued function, e.g.,  $I(X) = \det(X)$ ; or for that matter it can describe a property, e.g.,  $\mathfrak{A}$  can equal  $M_n(\mathbb{C})$  and  $I(X)$  can mean that  $X$  is unitary, so that we are simply asking for the structure of all linear transformations  $T$  that map the unitary group into itself.

Much of a beginning course in linear algebra is devoted to the study of one aspect of this question for certain choices of  $I$ ; for example, if  $I(X) = \rho(X)$ , the rank of  $X$ , then it is well known that the three standard linear operations on the rows and columns of a matrix leave  $\rho$  fixed and this fact permits us to compute  $\rho(X)$  by reducing  $X$  to some normal form. The similarity theory is another example of this problem. In this case take  $I(X)$  to be the set of all elementary divisors of the characteristic matrix of  $X$ , and then the linear operators  $T$  that we wish to study are precisely those for which  $I(X) = I(T(X))$ .

In the survey paper [18, 1962]<sup>1</sup> some of the aspects of this general problem are discussed. But since the time that paper was written there have been a number of developments. The purpose of this paper is to describe some of these.

## 2. Survey of Results

The scalar invariants are functions  $I$  for which  $I(X)$  is either an element of  $K$  (we will assume that  $\text{char } K = 0$ , so that integer-valued functions are included) or a  $p$ -tuple of elements of  $K$ . Prob-

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<sup>1</sup> Figures in brackets indicate the literature references at the end of this paper.

ably the first three problems of this kind were considered by Frobenius [11, 1897]:

$$(i) \mathfrak{A} = M_n(C), \quad I(X) = \det(X);$$

$$(ii) \mathfrak{A} \text{ is the space of real-symmetric (or odd order skew-symmetric) matrices and } I(X) = \det(X);$$

$$(iii) \mathfrak{A} = \{X \mid \operatorname{tr}(X) = 0\} \subset M_n(C) \text{ and } I(X) = \det(X).$$

Frobenius proved what one might expect, namely that  $\mathcal{L}(\det, M_n(C))$  consists of linear transformations of the form

$$T(X) = UXV, \quad X \in M_n(C), \quad (2)$$

or

$$T(X) = UX^TV, \quad X \in M_n(C). \quad (3)$$

In problem (i)  $\det(UV) = 1$ ; in problem (ii)  $U = \xi A$ ,  $V = A^T$  where  $\xi$  is an appropriately chosen constant and  $\det A = 1$ ; in (iii)  $U = \xi A$ ,  $V = A^{-1}$ . I. Schur [34, 1925] extended and improved the result (i) as follows: Take  $\delta(X)$  to be the  $\binom{n}{k}^2$ -tuple of  $k^{\text{th}}$  order subdeterminants of  $X$  in some order where  $k \geq 3$  is fixed; then Schur proved that if  $\delta(T(X)) = S(\delta(X))$  for  $S$  a fixed nonsingular matrix, then  $T$  has one of the two forms (2) or (3) (without the restriction  $\det(UV) = 1$ ). Dieudonné [8, 1949] showed that if  $T$  is a semi-linear transformation of  $M_n(K)$  onto itself which holds the cone  $\det(X) = 0$  invariant, then  $T$  is of the form

$$T(X) = U(\sigma(x_{ij}))V, \quad X \in M_n(K),$$

or

$$T(X) = U(\sigma(x_{ij}))^TV, \quad X \in M_n(K),$$

where  $\sigma$  is an automorphism of the field. In the paper [9, 1957] Dynkin states that the Frobenius theorems can be obtained using some results on the structure of maximal subgroups of the classical groups.

In an old result, Pólya [32] restricted  $T$  to be a linear transformation which affixes in a prescribed way + and - signs to the elements of  $X$ , and asked whether such a  $T$  exists which satisfies  $\det(T(X)) = \det(X)$  for  $n > 2$ . Pólya answered the question negatively and many years later in [23, 1961] the question was answered negatively for arbitrary linear transformations  $T$ . Along the lines of the Frobenius and Schur results, the structure of  $\mathcal{L}(E_r, M_n(C))$  is determined where  $E_r(X)$  is the  $r$ th elementary symmetric function of the eigenvalues of  $X$ , i.e., the sum of all  $r$ -square principle subdeterminants of  $X$ . It was proved in [28, 1959] that for  $4 \leq r < n$  any  $T \in \mathcal{L}(E_r, M_n(C))$  is of the form

$$T(X) = UXV, \quad X \in M_n(C),$$

or

$$T(X) = UX^TV, \quad X \in M_n(C),$$

where  $UV = e^{i\varphi}I_n$  and  $r\varphi \equiv 0(2\pi)$ . Just recently Beasley [1, 1970] completed the argument by showing that for  $r=3$ , precisely the same result holds. E. P. Botta, in several papers considers the choice  $I(X) = d(X)$  where  $d$  is a generalized matrix function in the sense of Schur, i.e.,

$$d(X) = \sum_{\sigma \in H} \lambda(\sigma) \prod_{i=1}^n x_{i, \sigma(i)},$$

where  $\lambda$  is a nonzero function defined on a subgroup  $H$  of  $S_n$ . In [3, 1967] Botta determined the structure of  $\mathcal{L}(d, M_n(K))$  when  $H$  is a transitive cyclic subgroup of  $S_n$ . In [4, 1968]  $H$  is taken to be a doubly transitive or regular proper subgroup of  $S_n$  and  $\lambda$  is a character of  $H$  of degree 1. In [5, 1967] Botta reproves an earlier result of Marcus and May [22, 1962] showing that  $\mathcal{L}(\text{per}, M_n(K))$  consists of precisely those  $T$  of the form

$$T(X) = DPXQL, \quad X \in M_n(K),$$

or

$$T(X) = DPX^tQL, \quad X \in M_n(K),$$

where  $P$  and  $Q$  are permutation matrices,  $D$  and  $L$  are diagonal matrices and  $\text{per}(DL) = 1$ .

Many of the results concerning the structure of  $\mathcal{L}(I, \mathfrak{A})$  can be reduced to the problem of determining linear maps on  $M_n(K)$  which map the set of rank 1 matrices into itself. W. L. Chow [6, 1949], L. K. Hua [12, 1951] and Jacobson and Rickart [13, 1950] considered 1-1 onto maps  $T$  of  $M_n(K)$  which have the property that both  $T$  and  $T^{-1}$  preserve coherence. In the present context, this amounts to assuming that  $T$  and  $T^{-1}$  both have the property that whenever  $X$  and  $Y$  differ by a matrix of rank 1, then  $T(X)$  and  $T(Y)$  differ by a matrix of rank 1. For linear maps this means  $\rho(T(X)) = \rho(X)$  for all  $X$ . In [26, 1959] Marcus and Moyls proved that if  $T: M_{m,n}(K) \rightarrow M_{m,n}(K)$  ( $M_{m,n}(K)$  is the space of all  $m \times n$  matrices over  $K$ ) is linear and  $\rho(T(X)) = 1$  whenever  $\rho(X) = 1$ , then  $T$  has the form

$$T(X) = UXV, \quad X \in M_{m,n}(C),$$

or

$$T(X) = UX^tV, \quad X \in M_{m,n}(C),$$

where  $U$  and  $V$  are fixed nonsingular matrices in  $M_m(K)$  and  $M_n(K)$  respectively. This result is fairly easy to apply because it does not require the a priori existence of  $T^{-1}$ . R. Westwick in [36, 1967] extended the result in [26, 1959] to linear maps on the space of  $n$ -contravariant tensors which hold the nonzero decomposable elements set-wise fixed. In another paper [35, 1964] Westwick, using techniques in [6, 1949] determined the structure of linear maps on the space  $\wedge^m V$  of skew-symmetric tensors into itself which hold the set of nonzero decomposable elements set-wise fixed. In a thesis at the University of British Columbia [7, 1967] L. Cummings proved that if  $T$  maps the symmetric power  $V^{(m)}$  into itself and holds the set of non-zero decomposable elements set-wise fixed then  $T$  is induced by a linear map of  $V$ . Cummings' result requires that the underlying field be algebraically closed of characteristic either 0 or exceeding  $m$ . In another thesis [14, 1971] M. H. Lim reconsiders this problem and relaxes the conditions on the field. Beasley [2, 1970] considered the problem of determining all linear transformations  $T: M_n(K) \rightarrow M_n(K)$ ,  $K$  algebraically closed, which hold the set of rank  $k$  matrices set-wise fixed. Beasley required additional hypotheses on  $T$  in order to prove that  $T$  has the form (2) or (3). Djoković [10, 1969] proved that if  $T$  maps the set of rank  $k$  matrices into itself and is nonsingular, then in fact  $T$  maps the set of rank 1 matrices into itself and the result in [26, 1959] applies. Much earlier [30, 1941] Morita proved that if  $T$  maps the set of rank 1 matrices into itself and maps the set of rank 2 matrices into the set of matrices of rank at least 2, then  $T$  has the form (2) or (3). He then used this to prove a result of Schur to the effect that if  $I(X) = \alpha_1(X)$  is the Hilbert norm of  $X$ , i.e., the square root of the largest eigenvalue of  $X^*X$ , and  $T \in \mathcal{L}(I, M_{m,n}(C))$ , then  $T$  has the form (2) or (3) in which  $U$  and  $V$  are unitary. In a later paper [31, 1944], Morita shows that if  $\mathfrak{A}$  is the set of  $n$ -square complex skew-symmetric matrices and  $I(X)$  is again the Hilbert norm of  $X$ , then for  $n \neq 4$  and  $T \in \mathcal{L}(I, \mathfrak{A})$ ,

$$T(X) = U^tXU, \quad X \in M_n(C),$$

where  $U$  is a fixed unitary matrix; or if  $n=4$ , then  $T(X)$  can also have the alternative form

$$T(X) = U^T X^+ U, \quad X \in M_n(C), \quad (4)$$

where  $X^+$  is the matrix obtained from  $X$  by interchanging the (1, 4) and the (2, 3) entry. A result similar to this was obtained by Westwick in his thesis [35, 1964]. In [29, 1960] Marcus and Westwick proved a theorem somewhat along the lines of the Morita theorem as follows. Let  $k$  be a fixed integer satisfying  $4 \leq 2k \leq n$ . Let  $\mathfrak{U}$  be the set of skew-symmetric matrices over the field  $R$  of real numbers and let  $T \in \mathcal{L}(E_{2k}, \mathfrak{U})$ . If  $n \geq 5$ , then there exists a real matrix  $P$  such that

$$T(X) = \alpha P X P^T, \quad X \in \mathfrak{U}, \quad (5)$$

where  $\alpha P P^T = I_n$  is  $2k < n$  and  $\alpha P P^T$  is unimodular if  $2k = n$ . If  $2k = n = 4$ , then either  $T$  has the form (5) or

$$T(X) = \alpha P \begin{bmatrix} 0 & x_{34} & x_{24} & x_{23} \\ -x_{12} & 0 & x_{23} & x_{24} \\ -x_{13} & -x_{23} & 0 & x_{34} \\ -x_{14} & -x_{24} & -x_{34} & 0 \end{bmatrix} P^T,$$

where

$$X = \begin{bmatrix} 0 & x_{12} & x_{13} & x_{14} \\ -x_{12} & 0 & x_{23} & x_{24} \\ -x_{13} & -x_{23} & 0 & x_{34} \\ -x_{14} & -x_{24} & -x_{34} & 0 \end{bmatrix},$$

and  $\alpha P P^T$  is unimodular. Later on Marcus and Minc [24, 1962] proved that if  $T \in \mathcal{L}(E'_r, M_{m,n}(C))$  where  $1 < r \leq n$  and  $E'_r(X)$  is the value of  $E_r$  at the squares of the singular values of  $X$ , i.e.,  $E'_r(X)$  is just the value of  $E_r$  at the eigenvalues of  $X^* X$ , then  $T$  has the form (2) if  $m \neq n$  and either (2) or (3) if  $m = n$ , where  $U \in M_n(C)$  and  $V \in M_n(C)$  are unitary.

In [17, 1959] it is proved that if  $T$  is a linear map of  $M_n(C)$  into itself such that  $T(X)$  is unitary whenever  $X$  is unitary, then  $T$  is of the form (2) or (3) where  $U$  and  $V$  are unitary. B. Russo [33, 1969] recently used this result to prove the following interesting theorem. If  $I(X)$  is the sum of the singular values of  $X$  and if  $T$  maps the identity matrix into itself, then  $T \in \mathcal{L}(I, M_n(C))$  has the form (2) or (3), where  $U$  and  $V$  are unitary. Marcus and Gordon [20, 1970] recently proved the following result. Let  $f(t) = f(t_1, \dots, t_n)$  be a continuous, real-valued function defined for all  $t_j \geq 0$ ,  $1 \leq j \leq n$ , and for  $X \in M_{m,n}(C)$ , let

$$I(X) = f(\alpha_1(X), \alpha_2(X), \dots, \alpha_n(X))$$

where  $\alpha_1(X) \geq \alpha_2(X) \geq \dots \geq \alpha_n(X)$  are the singular values of  $X$ . If  $f(t_1, \dots, t_n)$  is concave, symmetric, strictly increasing in each  $t_j$ , and  $f(0) = 0$ , then  $T \in \mathcal{L}(I, M_{m,n}(C))$  has the form (2) if  $m \neq n$  and either (2) or (3) if  $m = n$  where  $U \in M_m(C)$  and  $V \in M_n(C)$  are unitary. By specializing  $f$  to

$$f(t) = \sum_{j=1}^n t_j^\sigma$$

where  $0 < \sigma \leq 1$ , the above theorem reduces to the following result. If  $T: M_{m,n}(C) \rightarrow M_{m,n}(C)$  satisfies

$$\sum_{j=1}^n \alpha_j(T(X))^\sigma = \sum_{j=1}^n \alpha_j(X)^\sigma$$

for all  $X \in M_{m,n}(C)$ , then (2) or (3) holds with unitary  $U$  and  $V$ . In the paper [27, 1970] the following result is proven using representation theory techniques. Let  $f(t) = f(t_1, \dots, t_n)$  satisfy the conditions

- (i)  $f(t) = 0$  if and only if  $t = 0$ ;
- (ii)  $f$  is positively homogeneous of degree  $\rho \neq 0$ ; i.e.,  $f(ct) = c^\rho f(t)$ , all  $c \geq 0$ ,  $t \geq 0$  (i.e.,  $t_j \geq 0, j = 1, \dots, n$ ).

If  $I(X) = f(\alpha_1(X), \dots, \alpha_n(X))$  as before, then  $\mathcal{L}(I, M_{m,n}(C))$  is a subgroup of the group of  $mn \times mn$  unitary matrices  $U(mn, C)$  where we associate each  $T \in \mathcal{L}(I, M_{m,n}(C))$  with its matrix representation with respect to the lexicographically ordered basis  $\{E_{st} = (\delta_{is}\delta_{tj}), i, j = 1, \dots, n\}$ .

### 3. Current Work and Some Questions

M. J. S. Lim, in work closely related to that of Marcus and Westwick [29, 1960], has recently published [15, 1970] the following result. Let  $T$  map the space of skew-symmetric matrices over an algebraically closed field  $K$  into itself. Assume that  $T$  maps the set of rank 4 matrices into itself. Then for  $n \neq 4$ ,  $T$  is of the form

$$T(X) = \alpha PXP^T$$

or

$$T(X) = \alpha PX^T P^T.$$

In case  $n = 4$ ,  $T$  is one of the above forms, or else

$$T(X) = \alpha PX^+ P^T$$

where  $X^+$  is defined in (4).

Just recently Marcus and Holmes [21, 1971] have proved the following results. Let  $X \in M_n(C)$ . For any subgroup  $H$  of the symmetric group  $S_m$  of degree  $m$  and character  $\chi$  of degree 1 on  $H$ , let  $K(X): P \rightarrow P$  be the induced transformation [19, 1967] on the symmetry class of tensors  $(P, \nu)$  associated with  $H$  and  $\chi$ . Define  $I(X) = \text{tr } K(X)$ ,  $X \in M_n(C)$ .

- (i) Let  $m \leq n$  or  $\chi \equiv 1$ .  $\mathcal{L}(I, M_n(C))$  is a group if and only if  $H \neq \{e\}$ .
- (ii) Let  $H = S_m$ ,  $\chi \equiv 1$  and  $\mathfrak{A} \subset M_n(C)$  an algebra with the property that  $\mathfrak{A}^* = \{X^*: X \in \mathfrak{A}\} = \mathfrak{A}$ , when  $X^*$  denotes the conjugate transpose of  $X$ . Then  $\mathcal{L}(I, \mathfrak{A})$  is a group.
- (iii) In (i) take  $H = S_m$ ,  $m \geq 3$  and  $\chi \equiv 1$ . If  $\mathcal{L}_1(I, M_n(C))$  denotes the subgroup of  $\mathcal{L}(I, M_n(C))$  of those  $T: M_n(C) \rightarrow M_n(C)$  satisfying  $T(I_n) = \xi I_n$ , then for any  $T \in \mathcal{L}_1(I, M_n(C))$  there exists a fixed nonsingular matrix  $P \in M_n(C)$  such that

$$T(X) = \xi P^{-1}XP, \quad X \in M_n(C), \quad (6)$$

or

$$T(X) = \xi P^{-1}X^T P, \quad X \in M_n(C). \quad (7)$$

In this case  $\text{tr } K(X)$  is the completely symmetric function of the eigenvalues of  $X$ , denoted here by  $h_m(X)$ . Thus this result states that if  $T(I_n) = \xi I_n$  and  $h_m(T(X)) = h_m(X)$  for all  $X \in M_n(C)$  then  $T$  has the form (6) or (7).

- (iv) In (i) take  $A_m \subset S_m$  to be the alternating group,  $m \geq 3$  and  $\chi \equiv 1$ . Then the group  $\mathcal{L}_1(I, M_n(C))$  consists precisely of those linear transformations  $T$  of the form (6) or (7).

There are a number of questions which remain unanswered. For example, a more direct proof of the result in [27, 1970] might be based on the following.

CONJECTURE 1: Let  $T$  be an  $mn$ -square complex matrix, and assume that for arbitrary unitary matrices  $U \in M_n(C)$ ,  $V \in M_m(C)$  the matrix  $(U \otimes V)T$  has eigenvalues of modulus 1. (The matrix  $U \otimes V$  is the usual Kronecker product of  $U$  and  $V$ .) Then  $T$  is unitary.

CONJECTURE 2: If  $T: M_n(C) \rightarrow M_n(C)$  is a linear map and if  $h_m(T(X)) = h_m(X)$ ,  $X \in M_n(C)$  (recall that  $h_m(X)$  is the completely symmetric function of the eigenvalues of  $X$ ), then in fact  $T(I_n) = \xi I_n$  and hence from [21, 1971]  $T$  has the form (6) or (7).

CONJECTURE 3: Let  $P_m(X)$  denote the  $m$ th induced power matrix of  $X$  [25] and suppose that  $T: M_n(C) \rightarrow M_n(C)$  satisfies  $P_m(T(X)) = S(P_m(X))$ ,  $X \in M_n(C)$  where  $S: M_N(C) \rightarrow M_N(C)$  is a fixed non-singular linear map,  $N = \binom{m+m-1}{m}$ . Then  $T$  has the form (2) or (3).

CONJECTURE 4: Suppose  $K(X)$  is an invariant matrix [16, Chapter X] defined by means of a Young tableau. If  $T: M_n(C) \rightarrow M_n(C)$  and  $\text{tr } K(T(X)) = \text{tr } K(X)$  for all  $X \in M_n(C)$ , then  $T$  must have the form (2) or (3) with some appropriate conditions on the  $U$  and  $V$ . Of course, the result in [28, 1959] and [21, 1971] are special cases of this.

As a possible extension of Schur's theorem [30, 1941] consider

CONJECTURE 5: Let  $T: M_n(C) \rightarrow M_n(C)$  and  $h_m(T(X)^*T(X)) = h_m(X^*X)$  (see Conjecture 2 in which  $h_m$  is defined), then  $T$  has the form (2) or (3).

As a variant of the result in [17, 1959], let  $G$  be any of the following classical groups: the real orthogonal group, the rotation group, the symplectic group.

CONJECTURE 6: Let  $T: M_n(R) \rightarrow M_n(R)$  map  $G$  into itself. Then  $T$  must have the form (2) or (3) in which  $U$  and  $V$  belong to  $G$ . (In the case of the rotation group,  $U$  and  $V$  could be simply real orthogonal with  $\det(UV) = 1$ .)

CONJECTURE 7: Suppose  $T$  is a mapping of the space of 2-contravariant tensors into itself; and suppose moreover that for each decomposable element  $x \otimes y$  we have  $\|T(x \otimes y)\| = \|x \otimes y\|$  (Euclidean norm). Then  $T$  is unitary. This can be restated in terms of linear maps  $T: M_n(C) \rightarrow M_n(C)$ . Thus suppose for  $\rho(X) = 1$ ,  $\|T(X)\| = \|X\|$  where  $\|X\|$  is just the Euclidean norm. Show that  $T$  is unitary.

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