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With Father, 1917



At Nankai Institute of Mathematics, 1986

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On the Curvatures of a Piece of Hypersurface in Euclidean Space

By SHIUNG-SHEN CHERN¹⁾

Dedicated to Professor EMANUEL SPERNER on His Sixtieth Birthday

Let $z = z(x, y)$ be a C^2 -surface in euclidean three-space, defined over the disk $x^2 + y^2 < R^2$ in the (x, y) -plane. Let H and K denote respectively its mean and Gaussian curvatures. In 1955 HEINZ ([3], cf. Bibliography at the end) proved the following theorem:

If $|H| \geq c > 0$, then $R \leq \frac{1}{c}$. If $K \geq c > 0$, then $R \leq \frac{1}{\sqrt{c}}$. If $K \leq -c < 0$, then $R \leq e \left(\frac{3}{c} \right)^{\frac{1}{2}}$, ($c = \text{const. in all cases}$).

The purpose of this paper is to extend this theorem to a hypersurface in an euclidean space of dimension $m + 1$. (Cf. Theorems 1, 2, 4 below). Having the global problems in mind, we will consider an immersed hypersurface and establish, in so far as possible, the intermediary results in this general setting. In this sense some of our formulations are more general even in the classical case $m = 2$.

1. Algebraic Preliminaries

Let $x: M \rightarrow E$ be an immersion of an oriented manifold M of class two and dimension m into an euclidean space E of dimension $m + 1$. We will consider x as a vector-valued function on M . For $x, y \in E$ we denote by (x, y) their scalar product. Let xe_1, \dots, e_{m+1} be orthonormal frames, such that $x = x(p)$, $p \in M$, and e_{m+1} is the unit normal vector at $x(p)$. Then we have

$$\begin{aligned} dx &= \sum_A \omega_A e_A, \\ (1) \quad de_A &= \sum_B \omega_{AB} e_B, \end{aligned}$$

where

$$(2) \quad \omega_{AB} + \omega_{BA} = 0, \quad \omega_{m+1} = 0,$$

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and the ω structure equations

$$(3) \quad \begin{aligned} d\omega_A &= \sum_B \omega_B \wedge \omega_{BA}, \\ d\omega_{AB} &= \sum_C \omega_{AC} \wedge \omega_{CB}. \end{aligned}$$

(Throughout this paper we will agree on the following ranges of indices:

$$(4) \quad \begin{aligned} 1 &\leq A, B, C \leq m+1 \\ 1 &\leq i, j, k, h \leq m. \end{aligned}$$

As is well-known, we have

$$(5) \quad \omega_{i, m+1} = \sum_k h_{ik} \omega_k, \quad h_{ik} = h_{ki}.$$

Let

$$(6) \quad \det(\lambda \delta_{ik} + h_{ik}) = \sum_{0 \leq s \leq m} \binom{m}{s} \sigma_s \lambda^{m-s}.$$

Then σ_s is called the s th curvature of $x(M)$. In particular,

$$(7) \quad \sigma_1 = \frac{1}{m} \sum_i h_{ii}$$

is called the mean curvature and

$$(8) \quad \sigma_m = \det(h_{ik})$$

is the GAUSS-KRONECKER curvature. For $m=2$ they were denoted above by H and K respectively.

Let a_A be a fixed orthonormal frame in E . Then (a_A, x) is a scalar function on M , and is in fact the height function in the direction a_A . We put

$$(9) \quad \begin{aligned} A_{m-h} &= \sum \varepsilon_{i_1, \dots, i_m} d(a_{i_1}, x) \wedge \dots \wedge d(a_{i_h}, x) \wedge d(a_{i_{h+1}}, e_{m+1}) \\ &\quad \wedge \dots \wedge d(a_{i_m}, e_{m+1}), \end{aligned}$$

where $\varepsilon_{i_1, \dots, i_m}$ is the KRONECKER symbol which is $+1$ or -1 , according as i_1, \dots, i_m form an even or odd permutation of $1, \dots, m$, and is otherwise zero, and where the summation is over all the indices i_1, \dots, i_m . Then A_h is a multiple of σ_h according to the following formula:

$$(10) \quad A_h = (-1)^h m! t_{\sigma_h} \Phi,$$

where

$$(11) \quad t = (a_{m+1}, e_{m+1})$$