CONTENTS

Preface xv

Chapter 1. Simplest Classical Variational Problems 1

§1 Equations of Extremals for Functionals 1

§2 Geometry of Extremals 5
2.1. The Zero-Dimensional and One-Dimensional Cases 5
2.2. Some Examples of the Simplest Multidimensional Functional. The Volume Functional 6
2.3. The Classical Plateau Problem in Dimension 2 12
2.4. The Second Fundamental Form on the Riemannian Submanifold 14
2.5. Local Minimality 16
2.6. First Examples of Globally Minimal Surfaces 18

Chapter 2. Multidimensional Variational Problems and Extraordinary (Co)Homology Theory 23

§3 The Multidimensional Plateau Problem and Its Solution in the Class of Mapping on Spectra of Manifolds with Fixed Boundary 23
3.1. The Classical Formulations (Finding the Absolute Minimum) 23
3.2. The Classical Formulations (Finding a Relative Minimum) 25
3.3. Difficulties Arising in the Minimization of the Volume Functional vol_k for $k > 2$. Appearance on Nonremovable Strata of Small Dimensions 26
3.4. Formulations of the Plateau Problem in the Language of the Usual Spectral Homology 29
3.5. The Classical Multidimensional Plateau Problem (the Absolute Minimum) and the Language of Bordism Theory 30
3.6. Spectral Bordism Theory as an Extraordinary Homology Theory 35
3.7. The Formulation of the Solution to the Plateau Problem (Existence of the Absolute Minimum in Spectral Bordism Classes) 38

§4 Extraordinary (Co)Homology Theories Determined for "Surfaces with Singularities" 41
4.1. The Characteristic Properties of (Co)Homology Theories 41

4.2. Extraordinary (Co)Homology Theories for Finite Cell Complexes 43
4.3. The Construction of Extraordinary (Co)Homology Theories for "Surfaces with Singularities" (on Compact Sets) 45
4.4. Verifying the Characteristic Properties of the Constructed Theories 46
4.5. Additional Properties of Extraordinary Spectral Theories 48
4.6. Reduced (Co)Homology Groups on "Surfaces with Singularities" 49
§5 The Coboundary and Boundary of a Pair of Spaces (X, A) 49
5.1. The Coboundary of a Pair (X, A) 50
5.2. The Boundary of a Pair (X, A) 50
§6 Determination of Classes of Admissible Variations of Surfaces in Terms of (Co)Boundary of the Pair(X, A) 51
6.1. Variational Classes $h(A, L, L')$ and $h(A, \tilde{L})$ 51
6.2. The Stability of Variational Classes 53
§7 Solution of the Plateau Problem (Finding Globally Minimal Surfaces (Absolute Minimum) in the Variational Classes $h(A, L, L')$ and $h(A, \tilde{L})$) 54
7.1. The Formulation of the Problem 54
7.2. The Basic Existence Theorem for Globally Minimal Surfaces. Solution of the Plateau Problem 56
7.3. A Rough Outline of the Existence Theorem 59
§8 Solution of the Problem of Finding Globally Minimal Surfaces in Each Homotopy Class of Multivarifolds 61

Chapter 3. Explicit Calculation of Least Volumes (Absolute Minimum) of Topologically Nontrivial Minimal Surfaces 62

§9 Exhaustion Functions and Minimal Surfaces 62
9.1. Certain Classical Problems 62
9.2. Bordisms and Exhaustion Functions 64
9.3. GM-Surfaces 65
9.4. Formulation of the Problem of a Lower Estimate of the Minimal Surface Volume Function 66
§10 Definition and Simplest Properties of the Deformation Coefficient of a Vector Field 67
§11 Formulation of the Basic Theorem for the Lower Estimate of the Minimal Surface Volume Function 68
11.1. Functions of the Interaction of a Globally Minimal Surface with a Wavefront 69
11.2. Formulation of the Basic Volume Estimation Theorem 69
§12 Proof of the Basic Volume Estimation Theorem 71
§13 Certain Geometric Consequences 77

13.1. On the Least Volume of Globally Minimal Surfaces Passing through the Centre of a Ball in Euclidean Space 77
13.2. On the Least Volume of Globally Minimal Surfaces Passing through a Fixed Point in a Manifold 79
13.3. On the Least Volume of Globally Minimal Surfaces Formed by the Integral Curves of a Field v 80

§14 Nullity of Riemannian, Compact, and Closed Manifolds. Geodesic Nullity and Least Volumes of Globally Minimal Surfaces of Realizing Type 81
14.1. The Definition of the Nullity of a Manifold 81
14.2. The Theorem on the Relation of Nullity with the Least Volumes of Surfaces of Realizing Type 83
14.3. The Proof of the Reifenberg Conjecture Regarding the Existence of a Universal Upper Estimate of the "Complexity" on the Singular Points of Minimal Surfaces of Realizing Type 86

§15 Certain Topological Corollaries. Concrete Series of Examples of Globally Minimal Surfaces of Nontrivial Topological Type 88
15.1. Globally Minimal Surfaces Realizing Nontrivial (Co)Cycles in Symmetric Spaces 88
15.2. Compact Symmetric Spaces and Explicit Form of a Geodesic Diffeomorphism 89
15.3. Explicit Computation of the Deformation Coefficient of a Radial Vector Field on a Symmetric Space 92
15.4. An Explicit Formula for the Symmetric Space Geodesic Nullity 99
15.5. Globally Minimal Surfaces of Least Volume ($\mathrm{vol}_k X_0 = \Omega_k^0$) in Symmetric Spaces are Symmetric Spaces of Rank 1 99
15.6. Proof of the Classification Theorem for Surfaces of Least Volume in Certain Classical Symmetric Spaces 102

Chapter 4. Locally Minimal Closed Surfaces Realizing Nontrivial (Co)Cycles and Elements of Symmetric Space Homotopy Groups 109

§16 Problem Formulation. Totally Geodesic Submanifolds in Lie Groups 109

§17 Necessary Results Concerning the Topological Structure of Compact Lie Groups and Symmetric Spaces 110
17.1. Cohomology Algebras of Compact Lie Groups 110
17.2. Subgroups Totally Nonhomologous to Zero 111
17.3. Pontryagin Cycles in Compact Lie Groups 114
17.4. Necessary Results Concerning Symmetric Spaces 115

§18 Lie Groups Containing a Totally Geodesic Submanifold Necessarily Contain Its Isometry Group 120

§19 Reduction of the Problem of the Description of (Co)Cycles Realizable by Totally Geodesic Submanifolds to the Problem of the Description of (Co)Homological Properties of Cartan Models 122

§20 Classification Theorem Describing Totally Geodesic Submanifolds Realizing Nontrivial (Co)Cycles in Compact Lie Group (Co)Homology 125
20.1. The Statement of the Classification Theorem 125
20.2. The Case of Spaces of Type II 126
20.3. The Case of Spaces of Type I (Co)Homologically Trivial Cartan Models. Properties of the Squaring Map of a Symmetric Space 127
20.4. The Case of Spaces of Type I. Spaces $SU(k)/SO(k)$ 130
20.5. The Case of Spaces of Type I. Spaces $SU(2m)/Sp(m)$ 135
20.6. The Case of Spaces of Type I. Spaces $S^{2l-1} = SO(2l)/SO(2l-1)$. Explicit Computation of Cocycles Realizable by Totally Geodesic Submanifolds of Type I 137
20.7. The Case of Spaces of Type I. Space E_6/F_4 139

§21 Classification Theorem Describing Cocycles in the Compact Lie Group Cohomology Realizable by Totally Geodesic Spheres 145
21.1. Classification Theorem Formulation 145
21.2. Totally Geodesic Spheres Realizing Bott Periodicity 146
21.3. Realization of Homotopy Group Elements of the Compact Lie Groups by Totally Geodesic Spheres 148
21.4. Necessary Results Concerning the Spinor and Semispinor Representations of an Orthogonal Group 150
21.5. Spinor Representation of the Orthogonal Group SO(8) and the Cayley Number Automorphism Group 152
21.6. Description of Totally Geodesic Spheres Realizing Nontrivial (Co)Cycles in Simple Lie Group Cohomology. The Case of the Group $SU(n)$ 155
21.7. The Case of the Groups $SO(n)$ and $Sp(2n)$ 156

§22 Classification Theorem Describing Elements of Homotopy Groups of Symmetric Spaces of Type I, Realizable by Totally Geodesic Spheres 160
22.1. Classification Theorem Statement 160
22.2. Proof of the Classification Theorem. Relation between the Number of Linearly Independent Fields on Spheres and that of the Elements of Homotopy Groups Realizable by Totally Geodesic Spheres 162

Chapter 5. Variational Methods for Certain Topological Problems 170

§23 Bott Periodicity from the Dirichlet Multidimensional Functional Standpoint 170

23.1. Explicit Description of the Bott Periodicity Isomorphism for the Unitary Group 170
23.2. Unitary Periodicity and One-Dimensional Functionals 172
23.3. The Periodicity Theorem for a Unitary Group is Based on the Dirichlet Functional Two-Dimensional Extremals 173
23.4. The Periodicity Theorem for an Orthogonal Group is Based on the 8-Dimensional Dirichlet Functional Extremals 178

§24 Three Geometric Problems of Variational Calculus 181
24.1. Minimal Cones and Singular Points of Minimal Surfaces 181
24.2. The Equivariant Plateau Problem 185
24.3. Representation of Equivariant Singularities as Singular Points of Closed Minimal Surfaces Embedded into Symmetric Spaces 199
24.4. On the Existence of Nonlinear Functions Whose Graphs in Euclidean Space Are Minimal Surfaces 203
24.5. Harmonic Mappings of Spheres in Nontrivial Homotopy Classes 205
24.6. A Rough Outline of Certain Recent Results on the Link of Harmonic Mapping Properties to the Topology of Manifolds 210
24.7. Properties of the Density of Smooth Mappings of Manifolds 221
24.8. The Behaviour of the Dirichlet Functional on the 2-Connected Manifold Diffeomorphism Group. Proof of Theorem 24.6.9 225
24.9. Necessary Topological Condition for the Existence of Nontrivial Globally Minimal Harmonic Mappings 232
24.10. The Minimization of Dirichlet-Type Functionals 239
24.11. Regularity of Harmonic Mappings 240

Chapter 6. Solution of the Plateau Problem in Classes of Mappings of Spectra of Manifolds with Fixed Boundary. Construction of Globally Minimal Surfaces in Variational Classes $h(A, L, L')$ and $h(A, \tilde{L})$ 243

§25 The Cohomology Case. Computation of the Coboundary of the Pair $(X, A) = \bigcup_r (X_r, A_r)$ in Terms of Those of (X_r, A_r) 243

§26 The Homology Case. Computation of the Boundary of the Pair $(X, A) = \bigcup_r (X_r, A_r)$ in Terms of the Boundaries of (X_r, A_r) 251

§27 Closedness, Invariance, and Stability of Variational Classes 257
27.1. S-Surgery of Surfaces in a Riemannian Manifold 257
27.2. The Closedness of Variational Classes Relative to the Passage to the Limit 258
27.3. The Invariance of Variational Classes Relative to S-Surgeries of Surfaces 261
27.4. The Stability of Variational Classes 264

§28 The General Isoperimetric Inequality 268

28.1. Choice of a Special Coordinate System 268
28.2. Simplicial Points of Surfaces 269
28.3. Isoperimetric Inequality 270

§29 The Minimizing Process in Variational Classes $h(A, L, L')$ and $h(A, \tilde{L})$ 277
29.1. The Minimizing Sequence of Surfaces. Density Functions Related to Surfaces 277
29.2. A Rough Outline of the Minimizing Process 278
29.3. The Constructive Method for the Minimizing Process and the Proof for Its Convergence. First Step 281
29.4. Second and Subsequent Steps in the Minimizing Process 290
29.5. The Theorem on the Coincidence of the Least Stratified Volume with Least λ-Vector in a Variational Class 294

§30 Properties of Density Functions. The Minimality of Each Stratum of the Surface Obtained in the Minimization Process 295
30.1. The Value of the Density Function is Always not Less Than Unity on Each Stratum, and Unity only at Regular Points 295
30.2. Each Stratum Is a Smooth Minimal Submanifold, Except Possibly a Set of Singular Points of Measure Zero 304

§31 Proof of Global Minimality for Constructed Stratified Surfaces 304
31.1. Proof of the Basic Existence Theorem for a Globally Minimal Surface 304
31.2. The Proof of the Theorem on the Coincidence of the Least Stratified Volume with the Least λ-Vector in a Variational Class 308

§32 The Fundamental (Co)Cycles of Globally Minimal Surfaces. Exact Realization and Exact Spanning 309
32.1. Fundamental (Co)Cycle Theorem 309
32.2. Exact Minimal Realization and Exact Minimal Spanning 312
32.3. Minimal Surfaces with Boundaries Homeomorphic to the Sphere 314

Appendix I. Minimality Test for Lagrangian Submanifolds in Kähler Manifolds. Submanifolds in Kähler Manifolds. Maslov Index in Minimal Surface Theory 319

§1 Definitions 319
§2 The Local Minimality Test for Φ-Langrangian Submanifolds L in the Hermitian Manifold M^{2n} 320
§3 Certain Corollaries. New Examples of Minimal Surfaces. The Maslov Index for Minimal Lagrangian Submanifolds 326
§4 The Integrability Condition for the Form ψ 332

Appendix II. Calibrations, Minimal Surface Indices, Minimal Cones of Large Codimensional and the One-Dimensional Plateau Problem 335

Bibliography 345

Index 371