
PREFACE

The idea of writing this book has probably its root in the enjoyable discussions we had in the Spring of 1994 during a sabbatical visit in Liège. Two years later, a couple of common papers and the encouragement of Prof. Pai provided the motivation for embarking on this adventure.

We undertook it courageously, in the middle of other obligations and with the help of Internet to bridge the 2500 km that separate our cities. It has been a year-long, difficult but enriching journey and for us it will remain memorable.

And so it will for our families ! Our very first thanks go to them: Marie-Paule, François, Nicolas, and Olivier on the one part, Malvina on the other. Their patience in coping with us and our absences during this period is heartily recognized.

We are grateful to Prof. Pai, the series editor, not only for his kind encouragement, but also for helping us in reviewing the text and doing his best to improve our English.

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