

C.4 Formulaic



Puzzle by: Ben Carr
Difficulty: Medium

cisra Puzzle Competition 2007
<http://puzzle.cisra.com.au>

You take a deep breath, and open the door. Rather than a busy administrative office (or a spiked pit of crocodiles and laser-mounted sharks), there is a spiral staircase leading down into darkness. Luckily, you've already borrowed a torch and a short sword from an adventurous schoolmate. You clasp both with clammy hands and descend, reaching a dark passageway with doors on both sides.

You hear voices approaching from around the corner, so you quickly duck into a door to your right and hide behind a desk. The voices grow louder as they approach, and you can feel your heart pounding in your chest. The door opens, and you try to shrink into an even smaller space behind your meagre cover.

You can now hear the murmuring voices clearly – but they are using a language you have never heard before. Before long, the voices are replaced by the scratching sound of chalk on a blackboard. Then silence. Finally the murmuring starts again, and with relief, you realise they are heading out the door. You peek over the desk, and see the backs of five robed and hooded figures as they leave the room.

As your body gradually relaxes, you take in your surrounds. The walls of the room are decorated with pictures of famous mathematicians, scientists, geometrical shapes, charts and tables. All the figures are unfamiliar to you, but you immediately notice that the scrawlings left by the robed figures use the same symbols as a large chart above the blackboard. What can it mean?

T	p	p/Đ	p\p	ĐXØ	p/ĐXØ	p/p\p	p\p/Đ	p\Đ\p	Đ/pXØ	Đ\pXØ	p/Đ/Đ\p	p/Đ\p/Đ
S	p	p/p	Đ/p	p/Đ\p	pXØXØ	p\Đ\p	ĐXØ/p	p/Đ/Đ/p	p/Đ\p\p	p/pXØXØ	pXØ/p\p	p\p/p/p
P	Đ	p/Đ	pXØ	p\Đ	Đ\p	p/Đ/Đ	p/Đ\Đ	p/p/p	pXØ/Đ	p\p/p	p\p\p	p\Đ\Đ
F	p	p	Đ	p/Đ	pXØ	Đ/Đ	p/Đ/Đ	p/p\p	p\Đ/p	Đ\pXØ	p/p/Đ/p	p\p/p/p

