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Alexander S. Merkurjev

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A lower bound on the essential dimension of simple algebras

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Let p be a prime integer and F a field of characteristic different from p. We prove that the essential p-dimension $\mathrm{ed}_p\big(\mathsf{CSA}(p^r)\big)$ of the class $\mathsf{CSA}(p^r)$ of central simple algebras of degree p^r is at least $(r-1)p^r+1$. The integer $\mathrm{ed}_p\big(\mathsf{CSA}(p^r)\big)$ measures complexity of the class of central simple algebras of degree p^r over field extensions of F.

1. Introduction

The essential dimension of an *algebraic structure* is a numerical invariant that measures its complexity. Informally, the essential dimension of an algebraic structure over a field F is the smallest number of algebraically independent parameters required to define the structure over a field extension of F [Berhuy and Favi 2003; Merkurjev 2009].

Let $\mathcal{F}: \mathit{Fields}/F \to \mathit{Sets}$ be a functor (an algebraic structure) from the category Fields/F of field extensions of F and field homomorphisms over F to the category of sets. Let $K \in \mathit{Fields}/F$, $\alpha \in \mathcal{F}(K)$, and K_0 be a subfield of K over F. We say that α is *defined over* K_0 (and K_0 is called a *field of definition of* α) if there exists an element $\alpha_0 \in \mathcal{F}(K_0)$ such that the image $(\alpha_0)_K$ of α_0 under the map $\mathcal{F}(K_0) \to \mathcal{F}(K)$ coincides with α. The *essential dimension of* α, denoted $\mathrm{ed}^{\mathcal{F}}(\alpha)$, is the least transcendence degree $\mathrm{tr.deg}_F(K_0)$ over all fields of definition K_0 of α. The *essential dimension of the functor* $\mathcal{F}$ is

$$\mathrm{ed}(\mathcal{F}) = \sup\{\mathrm{ed}^{\mathcal{F}}(\alpha)\},$$

where the supremum is taken over fields $K \in \mathit{Fields}/F$ and all $\alpha \in \mathcal{F}(K)$.

Let p be a prime integer and $\alpha \in \mathcal{F}(K)$. The *essential p-dimension* $\mathrm{ed}_p^{\mathcal{F}}(\alpha)$ *of* α is the minimum of $\mathrm{ed}^{\mathcal{F}}(\alpha_{K'})$ over all finite field extensions K'/K of degree prime to p. The *essential p-dimension* $\mathrm{ed}_p(\mathcal{F})$ *of* $\mathcal{F}$ is the supremum of $\mathrm{ed}_p^{\mathcal{F}}(\alpha)$ over all

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fields $K \in \mathit{Fields}/F$ and all $\alpha \in \mathcal{F}(K)$ [Reichstein and Youssin 2000, §6]. Clearly, $\mathrm{ed}^{\mathcal{F}}(\alpha) \geq \mathrm{ed}_p^{\mathcal{F}}(\alpha)$ and $\mathrm{ed}(\mathcal{F}) \geq \mathrm{ed}_p(\mathcal{F})$ for all p.

Let $\mathit{CSA}(n)$ be the functor taking a field extension K/F to the set of isomorphism classes $\mathit{CSA}_K(n)$ of central simple K-algebras of degree n. Let p be a prime integer and let p^r be the highest power of p dividing n. Then $\mathrm{ed}_p\big(\mathit{CSA}(n)\big) = \mathrm{ed}_p\big(\mathit{CSA}(p^r)\big)$ [Reichstein and Youssin 2000, Lemma 8.5.5]. Every central simple algebra of degree p is cyclic over a finite field extension of degree prime to p, and hence $\mathrm{ed}_p\big(\mathit{CSA}(p)\big) = 2$ [Reichstein and Youssin 2000, Lemma 8.5.7]. It was proven in [Merkurjev 2010] that $\mathrm{ed}_p\big(\mathit{CSA}(p^2)\big) = p^2 + 1$ and in general, $2p^{2r-2} - p^r + 1 \geq \mathrm{ed}_p\big(\mathit{CSA}(p^r)\big) \geq 2r$ for all $r \geq 2$ [Meyer and Reichstein 2009b, Theorem 1; Reichstein and Youssin 2000, Theorem 8.6].

We improve the lower bound for $\mathrm{ed}_p\big(\mathit{CSA}(p^r)\big)$ as follows:

Theorem 6.1. *Let F be a field and p a prime integer different from* $\mathrm{char}(F)$. *Then*

$$\mathrm{ed}_p\big(\mathit{CSA}(p^r)\big) \geq (r-1)p^r + 1.$$

Let G be an algebraic group over F. The *essential dimension* $\mathrm{ed}(G)$ (resp. *essential p-dimension* $\mathrm{ed}_p(G)$) of G is the essential dimension (resp. essential p-dimension) of the functor G-*torsors* taking a field K to the set of isomorphism classes of all G-torsors (principal homogeneous G-spaces) over K.

If $G = \mathbf{PGL}(n)$ is the projective linear group over F, the functor G-*torsors* is isomorphic to the functor $\mathit{CSA}(n)$. Therefore, the theorem yields the following lower bound for the essential dimension of $\mathbf{PGL}(p^r)$:

$$\mathrm{ed}\big(\mathbf{PGL}(p^r)\big) \geq \mathrm{ed}_p\big(\mathbf{PGL}(p^r)\big) \geq (r-1)p^r + 1.$$

2. Preliminaries

Characters. Let F be a field, let F_{sep} be a separable closure of F, and let

$$\Gamma = \mathrm{Gal}(F_{\mathrm{sep}}/F)$$

be the *absolute Galois group* of F. For a Γ-module M, we write $H^n(F, M)$ for the cohomology group $H^n(\Gamma, M)$.

The *character group* $\mathrm{Ch}(F)$ of F is defined as

$$\mathrm{Hom}_{\mathrm{cont}}(\Gamma, \mathbb{Q}/\mathbb{Z}) = H^1(F, \mathbb{Q}/\mathbb{Z}) \simeq H^2(F, \mathbb{Z}).$$

For a character $\chi \in \mathrm{Ch}(F)$, set $F(\chi) = (F_{\mathrm{sep}})^{\mathrm{Ker}(\chi)}$. Then $F(\chi)/F$ is a cyclic field extension of degree $\mathrm{ord}(\chi)$. If $\Phi \subset \mathrm{Ch}(F)$ is a finite subgroup, we set

$$F(\Phi) = (F_{\mathrm{sep}})^{\cap\,\mathrm{Ker}(\chi)},$$

where the intersection is taken over all $\chi \in \Phi$. The Galois group $G = \mathrm{Gal}(F(\Phi)/F)$ is abelian and Φ is canonically isomorphic to the character group $\mathrm{Hom}(G, \mathbb{Q}/\mathbb{Z})$ of G.

If $F' \subset F$ is a subfield and $\chi \in \mathrm{Ch}(F')$, we write χ_F for the image of χ under the natural map $\mathrm{Ch}(F') \to \mathrm{Ch}(F)$ and $F(\chi)$ for $F(\chi_F)$. If $\Phi \subset \mathrm{Ch}(F)$ is a finite subgroup, then the character $\chi_{F(\Phi)}$ is trivial if and only if $\chi \in \Phi$.

Lemma 2.1. *Let Φ, $\Phi' \subset \mathrm{Ch}(F)$ be two finite subgroups. Suppose that for a field extension K/F, we have $\Phi_K = \Phi'_K$ in $\mathrm{Ch}(K)$. Then there is a finite subextension K'/F in K/F such that $\Phi_{K'} = \Phi'_{K'}$ in $\mathrm{Ch}(K')$.*

Proof. Choose a set of characters $\{\chi_1, \dots, \chi_m\}$ generating Φ and a set of characters $\{\chi'_1, \dots, \chi'_m\}$ generating Φ' such that $(\chi_i)_K = (\chi'_i)_K$ for all i. Let $\eta_i = \chi_i - \chi'_i$. Since all η_i vanish over K, the finite field extension $K' := F(\eta_1, \dots, \eta_m)$ of F can be viewed as a subextension in K/F. Now $\Phi_{K'} = \Phi'_{K'}$ since $(\chi_i)_{K'} = (\chi'_i)_{K'}$. □

Brauer groups. We write $\mathrm{Br}(F)$ for the *Brauer group* $H^2(F, F^\times_{\mathrm{sep}})$ of a field F. If $a \in \mathrm{Br}(F)$ and K/F is a field extension, then we write a_K for the image of a under the natural homomorphism $\mathrm{Br}(F) \to \mathrm{Br}(K)$. We write $\mathrm{Br}(K/F)$ for the *relative Brauer group* $\mathrm{Ker}\big(\mathrm{Br}(F) \to \mathrm{Br}(K)\big)$. We say that K is a splitting field of a if $a_K = 0$, that is, $a \in \mathrm{Br}(K/F)$. The *index* $\mathrm{ind}(a)$ of a is the smallest degree of a splitting field of a.

The cup product

$$\mathrm{Ch}(F) \otimes F^\times = H^2(F, \mathbb{Z}) \otimes H^0(F, F^\times_{\mathrm{sep}}) \to H^2(F, F^\times_{\mathrm{sep}}) = \mathrm{Br}(F)$$

takes $\chi \otimes a$ to the class $\chi \cup (a)$ in $\mathrm{Br}(F)$ that is split by $F(\chi)$.

For a finite subgroup $\Phi \subset \mathrm{Ch}(F)$, write $\mathrm{Br}_{\mathrm{dec}}\big(F(\Phi)/F\big)$ for the *subgroup of decomposable elements* in $\mathrm{Br}\big(F(\Phi)/F\big)$ generated by the elements $\chi \cup (a)$ for all $\chi \in \Phi$ and $a \in F^\times$. The *indecomposable relative Brauer group* $\mathrm{Br}_{\mathrm{ind}}\big(F(\Phi)/F\big)$ is the factor group $\mathrm{Br}\big(F(\Phi)/F\big)/\,\mathrm{Br}_{\mathrm{dec}}\big(F(\Phi)/F\big)$.

Complete fields. Let E be a complete field with respect to a discrete valuation v, and let K be its residue field.

Let p be a prime integer different from $\mathrm{char}(K)$. There is a natural injective homomorphism $\mathrm{Ch}(K)\{p\} \to \mathrm{Ch}(E)\{p\}$ of the p-primary components of the character groups that identifies $\mathrm{Ch}(K)\{p\}$ with the character group of an unramified field extension of E. For a character $\chi \in \mathrm{Ch}(K)\{p\}$, we write $\hat{\chi}$ for the corresponding character in $\mathrm{Ch}(E)\{p\}$.

By [Garibaldi et al. 2003, §7.9], there is an exact sequence

$$0 \to \mathrm{Br}(K)\{p\} \xrightarrow{i} \mathrm{Br}(E)\{p\} \xrightarrow{\partial_v} \mathrm{Ch}(K)\{p\} \to 0. \tag{2-1}$$

If $a \in \mathrm{Br}(K)\{p\}$, we write $\hat{a}$ for the element $i(a)$ in $\mathrm{Br}(E)\{p\}$. For example, if $a = \chi \cup (\bar{u})$ for some $\chi \in \mathrm{Ch}(K)\{p\}$ and a unit $u \in E$, then $\hat{a} = \hat{\chi} \cup (u)$.

Proposition 2.2 [Tignol 1978, Proposition 2.4; Jacob and Wadsworth 1990, Theorem 5.15(a); Garibaldi et al. 2003, Proposition 8.2]. *Let E be a complete field with respect to a discrete valuation v, and let K be its residue field of characteristic different from p. Then*:

(i) $\mathrm{ind}(\hat{a}) = \mathrm{ind}(a)$ *for any* $a \in \mathrm{Br}(K)\{p\}$.

(ii) *Let* $b = \hat{a} + \big(\hat{\chi} \cup (x)\big)$ *for an element* $a \in \mathrm{Br}(K)\{p\}$, $\chi \in \mathrm{Ch}(K)\{p\}$ *and* $x \in E^{\times}$. *Then* $\partial_v(b) = v(x)\chi$. *Also, if $v(x)$ is not divisible by p, we have*

$$\mathrm{ind}(b) = \mathrm{ind}(a_{K(\chi)}) \cdot \mathrm{ord}(\chi).$$

(iii) *Let E'/E be a finite field extension and v' the discrete valuation on E' extending v with residue field K'. Then for any* $b \in \mathrm{Br}(E)\{p\}$, *we have*

$$\partial_{v'}(b_{E'}) = e \cdot \partial_v(b)_{K'},$$

where e is the ramification index of E'/E.

The choice of a prime element π in E provides us with a splitting of the sequence (2-1) by sending a character χ to the class $\hat{\chi} \cup (\pi)$ in $\mathrm{Br}(E)\{p\}$. Thus, any $b \in \mathrm{Br}(E)\{p\}$ can be written in the form

$$b = \hat{a} + \big(\hat{\chi} \cup (\pi)\big), \tag{2-2}$$

for $\chi = \partial_v(b)$ and a unique $a \in \mathrm{Br}(K)\{p\}$.

The homomorphism

$$s_\pi : \mathrm{Br}(E)\{p\} \to \mathrm{Br}(K)\{p\},$$

defined by $s_\pi(b) = a$, where a is given by (2-2), is called a *specialization* map. For example, $s_\pi(\hat{a}) = a$ for any $a \in \mathrm{Br}(K)\{p\}$ and $s_\pi\big(\hat{\chi} \cup (x)\big) = \chi \cup (\bar{u})$, where $\chi \in \mathrm{Ch}(K)\{p\}$, $x \in E^{\times}$ and u is the unit in E such that $x = u\pi^{v(x)}$.

If v is trivial on a subfield $F \subset E$ and $\Phi \subset \mathrm{Ch}(F)\{p\}$ a finite subgroup, then

$$s_\pi\big(\mathrm{Br}_{\mathrm{dec}}(E(\Phi)/E)\big) \subset \mathrm{Br}_{\mathrm{dec}}\big(K(\Phi)/K\big). \tag{2-3}$$

We shall need the following technical lemma. For an abelian group A we write ${}_pA$ for the subgroup of all elements in A of exponent dividing p.

Lemma 2.3. *Let (E, v) be a complete discrete valued field with the residue field K of characteristic different from p containing a primitive p^2-th root of unity. Let $\eta \in \mathrm{Ch}(E)$ be a character of order p^2 such that $p \cdot \eta$ is unramified, that is, $p \cdot \eta = \hat{\nu}$ for some $\nu \in \mathrm{Ch}(K)$ of order p. Let $\chi \in {}_p\mathrm{Ch}(K)$ be a character linearly independent from ν. Let $a \in \mathrm{Br}(K)$ and set $b = \hat{a} + \big(\hat{\chi} \cup (x)\big) \in \mathrm{Br}(E)$, where $x \in E^{\times}$ is an element such that $v(x)$ is not divisible by p. Then*:

(i) *If η is unramified, that is, $\eta = \hat{\mu}$ for some $\mu \in \mathrm{Ch}(K)$ of order p^2, then* $\mathrm{ind}(b_{E(\eta)}) = p \cdot \mathrm{ind}(a_{K(\mu,\chi)})$.

(ii) *If η is ramified, then there exists a unit $u \in E^\times$ such that $K(\nu) = K(\bar{u}^{1/p})$ and* $\mathrm{ind}(b_{E(\eta)}) = \mathrm{ind}\big(a - (\chi \cup (\bar{u}^{1/p}))\big)_{K(\nu)}$.

Proof. (i) If $\eta = \hat{\mu}$ for some $\mu \in \mathrm{Ch}(K)$, then $K(\mu)$ is the residue field of $E(\eta)$ and we have

$$b_{E(\eta)} = \hat{a}_{K(\mu)} + \big(\hat{\chi}_{K(\mu)} \cup (x)\big).$$

Since χ and ν are linearly independent, the character $\chi_{K(\mu)}$ is nontrivial. The first statement follows from Proposition 2.2(ii).

(ii) Since $p \cdot \eta$ is unramified, the ramification index of $E(\eta)/E$ is equal to p, and hence $E(\eta) = E\big((ux^p)^{1/p^2}\big)$ for some unit $u \in E$. Note that $K(\nu) = K(\bar{u}^{1/p})$ is the residue field of $E(\eta)$. Since $u^{1/p}x$ is a pth power in $E(\eta)$, the class

$$b_{E(\eta)} = \hat{a}_{K(\nu)} - \big(\hat{\chi}_{K(\nu)} \cup (u^{1/p})\big) = \hat{a}_{K(\nu)} - \big(\widehat{\chi_{K(\nu)} \cup (\bar{u}^{1/p})}\big)$$

is unramified. It follows from Proposition 2.2(i) that the elements $b_{E(\eta)}$ in $\mathrm{Br}\big(E(\eta)\big)$ and $a_{K(\nu)} - \big(\chi_{K(\nu)} \cup (\bar{u}^{1/p})\big)$ in $\mathrm{Br}\big(K(\nu)\big)$ have the same indices. □

3. Brauer group and algebraic tori

Torsors. Let G be an algebraic group over F and let K/F be a field extension. The set of isomorphism classes of G-torsors (principal homogeneous spaces) over K is bijective to $H^1(K, G)$ [Serre 1997].

Example 3.1. Let A be a central simple F-algebra of degree n and $G = \mathbf{Aut}(A)$. Then $H^1(K, G)$ is the set of isomorphism classes of central simple K-algebras of degree n, or equivalently, the set of elements in $\mathrm{Br}(K)$ of index dividing n. If $A = M_n(F)$ is the split algebra, then $G = \mathbf{PGL}(n)$.

Example 3.2. Let L be an étale F-algebra of dimension n. Consider the algebraic torus $U = R_{L/F}(\mathbb{G}_{m,L})/\,\mathbb{G}_m$ over F. The exact sequence

$$1 \to \mathbb{G}_m \to R_{L/F}(\mathbb{G}_{m,L}) \to U \to 1$$

and Hilbert Theorem 90 yield an isomorphism $\theta : H^1(F, U) \xrightarrow{\sim} \mathrm{Br}(L/F)$. Note that if L is a subalgebra of a central simple F-algebra A of degree n, then U is a maximal torus in the group $\mathbf{Aut}(A)$.

Let $\alpha : G \to \mathbf{GL}(W)$ be a finite dimensional representation over F. Suppose that α is *generically free*, that is, there is a nonempty open subset $W' \subset W$ and a G-torsor $\beta : W' \to X$ for a variety X over F. The torsor β is *versal*, that is, every G-torsor over a field extension K/F is the pull-back of β with respect to a K-point of X. The generic fiber of β is called a *generic* G-torsor. It is a torsor over the function field $F(X)$ [Garibaldi et al. 2003; Reichstein 2000].

Example 3.3. Let S be an algebraic torus over F. We embed S into the quasitrivial torus $P = R_{L/F}(\mathbb{G}_{m,L})$, where L is an étale F-algebra [Colliot-Thélène and Sansuc 1977]. Then S acts on the vector space L by multiplication, so that the action on the open subset P is regular. If T is the factor torus P/S, then the S-torsor $P \to T$ is versal.

The tori P^Φ, S^Φ, T^Φ, U^Φ and V^Φ. Let F be a field, Φ be a subgroup of ${}_p\operatorname{Ch}(F)$ of rank r, and $L = F(\Phi)$. Let $G = \operatorname{Gal}(L/F)$. Choose a basis $\chi_1, \chi_2, \dots, \chi_r$ for Φ. We can view each χ_i as a character of G, that is, as a homomorphism $\chi_i : G \to \mathbb{Q}/\mathbb{Z}$. Let $\sigma_1, \sigma_2, \dots, \sigma_r$ be the dual basis for G, that is,

$$\chi_i(\sigma_j) = \begin{cases} (1/p) + \mathbb{Z} & \text{if } i = j, \\ 0 & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

Let R be the group ring $\mathbb{Z}[G]$. Consider the surjective homomorphism of G-modules $k : R^r \to R$ taking the ith basis element e_i of R^r to $\sigma_i - 1$. The image of k is the *augmentation ideal* $I = \operatorname{Ker}(\varepsilon)$ in R, where $\varepsilon : R \to \mathbb{Z}$ is defined by $\varepsilon(\rho) = 1$ for all $\rho \in G$.

Write $N_i = 1 + \sigma_i + \sigma_i^2 + \cdots + \sigma_i^{p-1} \in R$.

Set $N := \operatorname{Ker}(k)$. Consider the following elements in N:

$$e_{ij} := (\sigma_i - 1)e_j - (\sigma_j - 1)e_i \quad \text{and} \quad f_i = N_i e_i, \quad i, j = 1, \dots r.$$

Lemma 3.4. *The G-module N is generated by e_{ij} and f_i.*

Proof. Let $\overline{R} = \mathbb{Z}[t_1, \dots, t_r]$ be the polynomial ring. Acyclicity of the Koszul complex for the homomorphism $\bar{k} : (\overline{R})^r \to \overline{R}$, taking the ith basis element $\bar{e}_i$ to $t_i - 1$ [Matsumura 1980, Theorem 43] implies that $\operatorname{Ker}(\bar{k})$ is generated by $\bar{e}_{ij} := (t_i - 1)\bar{e}_j - (t_j - 1)\bar{e}_i$.

The kernel J of the surjective homomorphism $\overline{R} \to R$, taking t_i to σ_i, is generated by $t_i^p - 1$.

Let $x := \sum x_i e_i \in \operatorname{Ker}(k)$. Lift every x_i to a polynomial $\bar{x}_i \in \overline{R}$ and consider $\bar{x} := \sum \bar{x}_i \bar{e}_i \in (\overline{R})^r$. We have $\bar{k}(\bar{x}) \in J$, and hence

$$\bar{k}(\bar{x}) = \sum (t_i - 1)\bar{x}_i = \sum (t_i^p - 1)h_i = \sum (t_i - 1)\overline{N}_i h_i,$$

for some polynomials $h_i \in \overline{R}$, where $\overline{N}_i = 1 + t_i + t_i^2 + \cdots + t_i^{p-1} \in R$. Hence the element $\sum (\bar{x}_i - h_i \overline{N}_i)\bar{e}_i$ belongs to the kernel of $\bar{k}$ and therefore is a linear combination of $\bar{e}_{ij}$. It follows that $\bar{x}$ is a linear combination of $\bar{e}_{ij}$ and $\overline{N}_i \bar{e}_i$, and hence x is a linear combination of e_{ij} and f_i. □

Let $\varepsilon_i : R^r \to \mathbb{Z}$ be the ith projection followed by the augmentation map ε. It follows from Lemma 3.4 that $\varepsilon_i(N) = p\mathbb{Z}$ for every i. Moreover, the G-homomorphism

$$l : N \to \mathbb{Z}^r, \quad m \mapsto \big(\varepsilon_1(m)/p, \dots, \varepsilon_r(m)/p\big)$$

is surjective. Set $M = \mathrm{Ker}(l)$ and $Q = R^r/M$.

Lemma 3.5. *The G-module M is generated by e_{ij}.*

Proof. Let M' be the submodule of N generated by e_{ij}. Clearly, $M' \subset M$. Note also that $(\sigma_j - 1) f_i = N_i e_{ij} \in M'$, and hence $I f_i \subset M'$.

Suppose that $m \in M$. By Lemma 3.4, modifying m by an element in M', we can assume that $m = \sum_{i=1}^r x_i f_i$ for some $x_i \in R$. Since $l(m) = 0$, we have $\varepsilon(x_i) = 0$, that is, $x_i \in I$ for all i, and hence $m \in \sum I f_i \subset M'$. □

Let P^Φ, S^Φ, T^Φ, U^Φ and V^Φ be the algebraic tori over F with the character G-modules R^r, Q, M, I and N, respectively. The diagram of homomorphisms of G-modules with exact columns and rows

$$\begin{array}{ccccc} M & = & M & & \\ \downarrow & & \downarrow & & \\ N & \hookrightarrow & R^r & \overset{k}{\twoheadrightarrow} & I \\ {\scriptstyle l}\downarrow & & \downarrow & & \| \\ \mathbb{Z}^r & \hookrightarrow & Q & \twoheadrightarrow & I \end{array} \tag{3-1}$$

yields the following diagram of homomorphisms of the tori:

$$\begin{array}{ccccc} U^\Phi & \hookrightarrow & S^\Phi & \twoheadrightarrow & \mathbb{G}_m^r \\ \| & & \downarrow & & \downarrow \\ U^\Phi & \hookrightarrow & P^\Phi & \twoheadrightarrow & V^\Phi \\ & & \downarrow & & \downarrow \\ & & T^\Phi & = & T^\Phi \end{array} \tag{3-2}$$

Let K/F be a field extension. Set $KL := K \otimes_F L$. The exact sequence of G-modules

$$0 \to I \to R \to \mathbb{Z} \to 0 \tag{3-3}$$

gives an exact sequence of the tori

$$1 \to \mathbb{G}_m \to R_{L/F}(\mathbb{G}_{m,L}) \to U \to 1,$$

and then an exact sequence

$$0 \to H^1(K, U^\Phi) \to H^2(K, \mathbb{G}_m) \to H^2(KL, \mathbb{G}_m).$$

Hence

$$H^1(K, U^\Phi) \simeq \mathrm{Br}(KL/K). \tag{3-4}$$

Lemma 3.6. *The homomorphism $(K^\times)^r \to H^1(K, U^\Phi) \simeq \mathrm{Br}(KL/K)$ induced by the first row of the diagram* (3-2) *takes $(x_1, \dots, x_r)$ to $\sum_{i=1}^r \big((\chi_i)_K \cup (x_i)\big)$.*

Proof. Consider the composition

$$h : \mathrm{Hom}_G(\mathbb{Z}^r, \mathbb{Z}) \to \mathrm{Ext}^1_G(I, \mathbb{Z}) \to \mathrm{Ext}^2_G(\mathbb{Z}, \mathbb{Z}) = H^2(G, \mathbb{Z}) = \mathrm{Ch}(G), \qquad (3\text{-}5)$$

where the first homomorphism is induced by the bottom row of the diagram (3-1), and the second one by the exact sequence (3-3).

We claim that for any k, the image of the kth projection $p_k : \mathbb{Z}^r \to \mathbb{Z}$ under the composition (3-5) coincides with χ_k. Consider the G-homomorphism $R^r \to \mathbb{Q}$, taking e_k to $1/p$ and e_i to 0 for all $i \neq k$. By Lemma 3.5, this homomorphism vanishes on M, and hence it factors through a map $Q \to \mathbb{Q}$. Thus, we have a commutative diagram

$$\begin{array}{ccccccccc} 0 & \longrightarrow & \mathbb{Z}^r & \longrightarrow & Q & \longrightarrow & I & \longrightarrow & 0 \\ & & \downarrow{\scriptstyle p_k} & & \downarrow & & \downarrow{\scriptstyle f_k} & & \\ 0 & \longrightarrow & \mathbb{Z} & \longrightarrow & \mathbb{Q} & \longrightarrow & \mathbb{Q}/\mathbb{Z} & \longrightarrow & 0 \end{array} \qquad (3\text{-}6)$$

for the map f_k defined by $f_k(\sigma_k - 1) = 1/p + \mathbb{Z}$ and $f_k(\sigma_i - 1) = 0$ for all $i \neq k$.

Let α be the image of the class of the top row of (3-6) under the map $p_k^* : \mathrm{Ext}^1_G(I, \mathbb{Z}^r) \to \mathrm{Ext}^1_G(I, \mathbb{Z})$. Then $h(p_k)$ is the image of α under the second map in the composition (3-5). Hence $h(p_k)$ is also the image of the class β of the sequence (3-3) under the connecting map

$$H^1(G, I) = \mathrm{Ext}^1_G(\mathbb{Z}, I) \to \mathrm{Ext}^2_G(\mathbb{Z}, \mathbb{Z}) = H^2(G, \mathbb{Z})$$

induced by the exact sequence representing the class α.

The diagram (3-6) yields a commutative diagram

$$\begin{array}{ccc} H^1(G, I) & \xrightarrow{\partial} & H^2(G, \mathbb{Z}^r) \\ \downarrow{\scriptstyle f_k^*} & & \downarrow{\scriptstyle p_k^*} \\ H^1(G, \mathbb{Q}/\mathbb{Z}) & = & H^2(G, \mathbb{Z}) \end{array}$$

As we have shown, $p_k^*\big(\partial(\beta)\big) = h(p_k)$. Therefore, it suffices to prove that $f_k^*(\beta) = \chi_k$. The cocycle β satisfies $\beta(\sigma_i) = \sigma_i - 1$. It follows that $f_k^*(\beta)(\sigma_k) = f_k(\sigma_k - 1) = 1/p + \mathbb{Z}$ and $f_k^*(\beta)(\sigma_i) = 0$ for all $i \neq k$. This proves the claim.

Consider the commutative diagram

$$\begin{array}{ccccc} (K^\times)^r = \mathrm{Hom}_G(\mathbb{Z}^r, \mathbb{Z}) \otimes K^\times & \longrightarrow & \mathrm{Ext}^1_G(I, \mathbb{Z}) \otimes K^\times & \longrightarrow & \mathrm{Ext}^2_G(\mathbb{Z}, \mathbb{Z}) \otimes K^\times \\ \| & & \downarrow & & \downarrow \\ (K^\times)^r = \mathrm{Hom}_G(\mathbb{Z}^r, KL^\times) & \longrightarrow & \mathrm{Ext}^1_G(I, KL^\times) & \longrightarrow & \mathrm{Ext}^2_G(\mathbb{Z}, KL^\times), \end{array}$$

where the vertical homomorphisms are given by the cup products. By the claim, the image of the tuple $(x_1, \dots, x_r)$ under the diagonal composition is equal to

$\sum_{i=1}^{r}\big((\chi_i)_K \cup (x_i)\big)$. On the other hand, the bottom composition coincides with

$$(K^\times)^r \to H^1(K, U^\Phi) \simeq \mathrm{Br}(KL/K). \qquad \square$$

Corollary 3.7. *The map $H^1(K, U^\Phi) \to H^1(K, S^\Phi)$ induces an isomorphism*

$$H^1(K, S^\Phi) \simeq \mathrm{Br}_{\mathrm{ind}}(KL/K).$$

It follows from Corollary 3.7 and the triviality of the group $H^1(K, P^\Phi)$ that we have a commutative diagram

$$\begin{array}{ccccc} V^\Phi(K) & \longrightarrow & H^1(K, U^\Phi) & = & \mathrm{Br}(KL/K) \\ \downarrow & & \downarrow & & \downarrow \\ T^\Phi(K) & \longrightarrow & H^1(K, S^\Phi) & = & \mathrm{Br}_{\mathrm{ind}}(KL/K) \end{array} \tag{3-7}$$

with surjective homomorphisms.

3.1. ***The element a.*** Let a' be the image of the generic point of V^Φ over $K = F(V^\Phi)$ in $\mathrm{Br}\big(L(V^\Phi)/F(V^\Phi)\big)$ in the diagram (3-7). Choose also an element $a \in \mathrm{Br}\big(L(T^\Phi)/F(T^\Phi)\big)$ corresponding to the generic point of T^Φ over $F(T^\Phi)$. The field $F(T^\Phi)$ is a subfield of $F(V^\Phi)$ and the classes $a_{F(V^\Phi)}$ and a' are equal in $\mathrm{Br}_{\mathrm{ind}}\big(L(V^\Phi)/F(V^\Phi)\big)$. It follows that $pa_{F(V^\Phi)} = pa'$ in $\mathrm{Br}\, F(V^\Phi)$.

The exact sequence of G-modules

$$0 \to L^\times \oplus N \to L(V^\Phi)^\times \to \mathrm{Div}(V_L^\Phi) \to 0$$

induces an exact sequence

$$H^1\big(G, \mathrm{Div}(V_L^\Phi)\big) \to H^2(G, L^\times) \oplus H^2(G, N) \to H^2\big(G, L(V^\Phi)^\times\big).$$

Since $\mathrm{Div}(V_L^\Phi)$ is a permutation G-module, the first term in the sequence is trivial. Therefore, we get an injective homomorphism

$$\varphi : H^2(G, N) \to \mathrm{Br}\, F(V^\Phi)/\,\mathrm{Br}(F).$$

Then (3-1) and (3-3) yield

$$H^2(G, N) \simeq H^1(G, I) \simeq \hat{H}^0(G, \mathbb{Z}) = \mathbb{Z}/p^r\mathbb{Z};$$

thus, $H^2(G, N)$ has a canonical generator ξ of order p^r.

Lemma 3.8 [Merkurjev 2010, Lemma 2.4]. *We have $\varphi(\xi) = -a' + \mathrm{Br}(F)$.*

Proof. Consider the diagram

$$
\begin{array}{ccccc}
 & & & & \mathrm{Hom}_G(\mathbb{Z},\mathbb{Z}) \\
 & & & & \downarrow \\
 & & \mathrm{Hom}_G(I,I) & \longrightarrow & \mathrm{Ext}^1_G(\mathbb{Z},I) \\
 & & \downarrow & & \downarrow \\
\mathrm{Hom}_G(N,N) & \longrightarrow & \mathrm{Ext}^1_G(I,N) & \longrightarrow & \mathrm{Ext}^2_G(\mathbb{Z},N) \\
\downarrow & & {\scriptstyle l}\downarrow & & \downarrow \\
\mathrm{Hom}_G\big(N, L(V^{\Phi})^{\times}\big) & \longrightarrow & \mathrm{Ext}^1_G\big(I, L(V^{\Phi})^{\times}\big) & \longrightarrow & \mathrm{Ext}^2_G\big(\mathbb{Z}, L(V^{\Phi})^{\times}\big)
\end{array}
$$

By [Cartan and Eilenberg 1999, Chapter XIV], the images of $1_{\mathbb{Z}}$ and -1_I agree in $\mathrm{Ext}^1_G(\mathbb{Z}, I)$, and the images of 1_N and -1_I agree in $\mathrm{Ext}^1_G(I, N)$. It follows from [Cartan and Eilenberg 1999, Chapter V, Proposition 4.1] that the upper square is anticommutative. The image of $1_{\mathbb{Z}}$ is equal to $\varphi(\xi)$, and the image of 1_N is equal to $a' + \mathrm{Br}(F)$ in the right bottom corner. □

Corollary 3.9. *If $r \geq 2$, then the class $p^{r-1}a$ in $\mathrm{Br}\, F(T^{\Phi})$ does not belong to the image of $\mathrm{Br}(F) \to \mathrm{Br}\, F(T^{\Phi})$.*

Proof. The image of $p^{r-1}a$ in $\mathrm{Br}\, F(V^{\Phi})$ coincides with $p^{r-1}a'$. Modulo the image of the map $\mathrm{Br}(F) \to \mathrm{Br}\, F(V^{\Phi})$, the class $p^{r-1}a'$ is equal to $-\varphi(p^{r-1}\xi)$ and is therefore nonzero, since φ is injective. □

4. Essential dimension of algebraic tori

Let S be an algebraic torus over F with the splitting group G. We assume that G is a p-group of order p^r. Let X be the G-module of characters of S. A *p-presentation* of X is a G-homomorphism $f : P \to X$ with P a permutation G-module and finite cokernel of order prime to p. A p-presentation with the smallest $\mathrm{rank}(P)$ is called *minimal*.

Essential p-dimension of algebraic tori was determined in [Lötscher et al. 2009, Theorem 1.4]:

Theorem 4.1. *Let S be an algebraic torus over F with the (finite) splitting group G, X the G-module of characters of S, and $f : P \to X$ a minimal p-presentation of X. Then $\mathrm{ed}_p(S) = \mathrm{rank}\big(\mathrm{Ker}(f)\big)$.*

Corollary 4.2. *Suppose that X admits a surjective minimal p-presentation $f : P \to X$. Then $\mathrm{ed}(S) = \mathrm{ed}_p(S) = \mathrm{rank}\big(\mathrm{Ker}(f)\big)$.*

Proof. As explained in Example 3.3, a surjective G-homomorphism f yields a generically free representation of S of dimension $\mathrm{rank}(P)$. In view of Section 3 of

[Reichstein 2000], we have

$$\mathrm{ed}_p(S) \le \mathrm{ed}(S) \le \mathrm{rank}(P) - \dim(S) = \mathrm{rank}\big(\mathrm{Ker}(f)\big). \qquad \square$$

In this section we derive from Theorem 4.1 an explicit formula for the essential p-dimension of algebraic tori.

Define the group $\overline{X} := X/(pX + IX)$, where I is the augmentation ideal in $R = \mathbb{Z}[G]$. For any subgroup $H \subset G$, consider the composition $X^H \hookrightarrow X \to \overline{X}$. For every k, let V_k denote the image of the homomorphism

$$\coprod_{H \subset G} X^H \to \overline{X},$$

where the coproduct is taken over all subgroups H with $[G : H] \le p^k$. We have the sequence of subgroups

$$0 = V_{-1} \subset V_0 \subset \cdots \subset V_r = \overline{X}. \tag{4-1}$$

Theorem 4.3. *The essential p-dimension of S is given by the explicit formula*

$$\mathrm{ed}_p(S) = \sum_{k=0}^{r} (\mathrm{rank}\ V_k - \mathrm{rank}\ V_{k-1}) p^k - \dim(S).$$

Proof. Set $b_k = \mathrm{rank}(V_k)$. By Theorem 4.1, it suffices to prove that the smallest rank of the G-module P in a p-presentation of X is equal to $\sum_{k=0}^{r}(b_k - b_{k-1})p^k$.

Let $f : P \to X$ be a p-presentation of X and A a G-invariant basis of P. The set A is the disjoint union of the G-orbits A_j, so that P is the direct sum of the permutation G-modules $\mathbb{Z}[A_j]$.

The composition $\bar{f} : P \to X \to \overline{X}$ is surjective. Since G acts trivially on $\overline{X}$, the rank of the group $\bar{f}(\mathbb{Z}[A_j])$ is at most 1 for all j and $\bar{f}(\mathbb{Z}[A_j]) \subset V_k$ if $|A_j| \le p^k$. It follows that the group $\overline{X}/V_k$ is generated by the images under the composition

$$P \xrightarrow{\bar{f}} \overline{X} \to \overline{X}/V_k$$

of all $\mathbb{Z}[A_j]$ with $|A_j| > p^k$. Denote by c_k the number of such orbits A_j, so that

$$c_k \ge \mathrm{rank}(\overline{X}/V_k) = b_r - b_k.$$

Set $c'_k = b_r - c_k$, so that $b_k \ge c'_k$ for all k and $b_r = c'_r$.

Since the number of orbits A_j with $|A_j| = p^k$ is equal to $c_{k-1} - c_k$, we have

$$\begin{aligned}\mathrm{rank}(P) &= \sum_{k=0}^{r}(c_{k-1} - c_k)p^k = \sum_{k=0}^{r}(c'_k - c'_{k-1})p^k = c'_r p^r + \sum_{k=0}^{r-1} c'_k (p^k - p^{k+1}) \\ &\ge b_r p^r + \sum_{k=0}^{r-1} b_k (p^k - p^{k+1}) = \sum_{k=0}^{r} (b_k - b_{k-1}) p^k.\end{aligned}$$

It remains to construct a p-presentation with P of rank $\sum_{k=0}^{r}(b_k-b_{k-1})p^k$. For every $k\geq 0$, choose a subset X_k in X of the preimage of V_k under the canonical map $X\to\overline{X}$, with the property that for any $x\in X_k$ there is a subgroup $H_x\subset G$ with $x\in X^{H_x}$, and $[G:H_x]=p^k$ such that the composition

$$X_k\to V_k\to V_k/V_{k-1}$$

yields a bijection between X_k and a basis of V_k/V_{k-1}. In particular, $|X_k|=b_k-b_{k-1}$. Consider the G-homomorphism

$$f:P:=\coprod_{k=0}^{r}\coprod_{x\in X_k}\mathbb{Z}[G/H_x]\to X,$$

taking 1 in $\mathbb{Z}[G/H_x]$ to x in X.

By construction, the composition of f with the canonical map $X\to\overline{X}$ is surjective. Since G is a p-group, the ideal $pR_{(p)}+I$ of $R_{(p)}$ is the Jacobson radical of the ring $R_{(p)}:=R\otimes\mathbb{Z}_{(p)}$. By the Nakayama Lemma, $f_{(p)}$ is surjective. Hence the cokernel of f is finite of order prime to p. The rank of the permutation G-module P is equal to

$$\sum_{k=0}^{r}\sum_{x\in X_k}p^k=\sum_{k=0}^{r}|X_k|p^k=\sum_{k=0}^{r}(b_k-b_{k-1})p^k. \qquad\square$$

Remark 4.4. In the context of finite p-groups, Theorem 4.3 was proved in [Meyer and Reichstein 2010, Theorem 1.2].

Example 4.5. Let F be a field and Φ be a subgroup of ${}_p\operatorname{Ch}(F)$ of rank r, and let $L=F(\Phi)$ and $G=\operatorname{Gal}(L/F)$. Consider the torus U^{Φ} with the character group the augmentation ideal I defined in Section 3.

The middle row of (3-1) yields an exact sequence

$$\overline{N}\to(\overline{R})^r\to\overline{I}\to 0.$$

It follows from Lemma 3.4 that $N\subset pR^r+I^r$, and hence the first homomorphism in the sequence is trivial. The middle group is isomorphic to $(\mathbb{Z}/p\mathbb{Z})^r$, and hence $\operatorname{rank}(\overline{I})=r$.

For any subgroup $H\subset G$, the Tate cohomology group $\hat{H}^0(H,I)\simeq\hat{H}^{-1}(H,\mathbb{Z})$ is trivial. It follows that the group I^H is generated by N_Hx for all $x\in I$, where $N_H=\sum_{h\in H}h\in R$. Since $\overline{I}$ is of period p with trivial G-action, the classes of the elements N_Hx in $\overline{I}$ are trivial if H is a nontrivial subgroup of G. It follows that the maps $I^H\to\overline{I}$ are trivial for all $H\neq 1$. In the notation of (4-1), $V_0=\cdots=V_{r-1}=0$ and $V_r=\overline{I}$. By Theorem 4.3,

$$\operatorname{ed}_p(U^{\Phi})=rp^r-\dim(U^{\Phi})=rp^r-p^r+1=(r-1)p^r+1$$

and the rank of the permutation module in a minimal p-presentation of I is equal to rp^r. Therefore, $k : R^r \to I$ is a minimal p-presentation of I that appears to be surjective. Therefore, by Corollary 4.2,

$$\operatorname{ed}(U^\Phi) = \operatorname{ed}_p(U^\Phi) = (r-1)p^r + 1. \tag{4-2}$$

Let S^Φ be the torus with the character group Q defined in Section 3. As in (3-1), the homomorphism k factors through a surjective map $R^r \to Q$ that is then necessarily a minimal p-presentation of Q. By Theorem 4.3 and Corollary 4.2,

$$\operatorname{ed}(S^\Phi) = \operatorname{ed}_p(S^\Phi) = rp^r - \dim(S^\Phi) = (r-1)p^r - r + 1. \tag{4-3}$$

5. Degeneration

In this section we study the behavior of the essential p-dimension under degeneration, that is, we compare the essential p-dimension of an object over a complete discrete valued field and its specialization over the residue field (Proposition 5.2). The iterated degeneration (Corollary 5.4) connects a class in the Brauer group degree p^r over some (large) field and the elements of the indecomposable relative Brauer group that are torsors for a certain torus.

A simple degeneration. Let F be a field, p a prime integer different from $\operatorname{char}(F)$, and $\Phi \subset {}_p\mathrm{Ch}(F)$ a finite subgroup. For an integer $k \geq 0$ and a field extension K/F, let

$$\mathcal{B}_k^\Phi(K) = \{a \in \operatorname{Br}(K)\{p\} \text{ such that } \operatorname{ind} a_{K(\Phi)} \leq p^k\}.$$

Two elements a and a' in $\mathcal{B}_k^\Phi(K)$ are *equivalent* if $a - a' \in \operatorname{Br}_{\mathrm{dec}}\big(K(\Phi)/K\big)$. Write $\mathcal{F}_k^\Phi(K)$ for the set of equivalence classes in $\mathcal{B}_k^\Phi(K)$. Abusing notation, we shall write a for the equivalence class of an element $a \in \mathcal{B}_k^\Phi(K)$ in $\mathcal{F}_k^\Phi(K)$.

We view $\mathcal{B}_k^\Phi$ and $\mathcal{F}_k^\Phi$ as functors from *Fields*/F to *Sets*.

Example 5.1. (i) If Φ is the zero subgroup, then $\mathcal{F}_r^\Phi = \mathcal{B}_r^\Phi \simeq \mathit{CSA}(p^r) \simeq$ $\mathbf{PGL}(p^r)$*- torsors*.

(ii) The set $\mathcal{B}_0^\Phi(K)$ is naturally bijective to $\operatorname{Br}\big(K(\Phi)/K\big)$ and

$$\mathcal{F}_0^\Phi(K) \simeq \operatorname{Br}_{\mathrm{ind}}\big(K(\Phi)/K\big).$$

By Corollary 3.7, the latter group is naturally isomorphic to $H^1(K, S^\Phi)$, where S^Φ is the torus defined in Section 3, and thus, $\mathcal{F}_0^\Phi \simeq S^\Phi$*- torsors*.

Let $\Phi' \subset \Phi$ be a subgroup of index p and $\eta \in \Phi \setminus \Phi'$; hence $\Phi = \langle \Phi', \eta \rangle$. Let E/F be a field extension such that $\eta_E \notin \Phi'_E$ in $\mathrm{Ch}(E)$. Choose an element $a \in \mathcal{B}_k^\Phi(E)$, that is, $a \in \operatorname{Br}(E)\{p\}$ and $\operatorname{ind}(a_{E(\Phi)}) \leq p^k$.

Let E' be a field extension of F that is complete with respect to a discrete valuation v' over F with residue field E, and set

$$a' = \hat{a} + \big(\hat{\eta}_E \cup (x)\big) \in \mathrm{Br}(E') \tag{5-1}$$

for some $x \in E'^{\times}$ such that $v'(x)$ is not divisible by p. By Proposition 2.2(ii), $\mathrm{ind}(a'_{E'(\Phi')}) = p \cdot \mathrm{ind}(a_{E(\Phi)}) \le p^{k+1}$, and hence $a' \in \mathcal{B}^{\Phi'}_{k+1}(E')$.

Proposition 5.2. *Suppose that for any finite field extension N/E of degree prime to p and any character $\rho \in \mathrm{Ch}(N)$ of order p^2 such that $p \cdot \rho \in \Phi_N \setminus \Phi'_N$, we have $\mathrm{ind}\, a_{N(\Phi',\rho)} > p^{k-1}$. Then*

$$\mathrm{ed}_p^{\mathcal{F}^{\Phi'}_{k+1}}(a') \ge \mathrm{ed}_p^{\mathcal{F}^{\Phi}_{k}}(a) + 1.$$

Proof. Let M/E' be a finite field extension of degree prime to p, let $M_0 \subset M$ be a subfield over F, and let $a'_0 \in \mathcal{B}^{\Phi'}_{k+1}(M_0)$ be such that $(a'_0)_M = a'_M$ in $\mathcal{F}^{\Phi'}_{k+1}$ and

$$\mathrm{tr.deg}_F(M_0) = \mathrm{ed}_p^{\mathcal{F}^{\Phi'}_{k+1}}(a').$$

We have

$$a'_M - (a'_0)_M \in \mathrm{Br}_{\mathrm{dec}}\big(M(\Phi')/M\big). \tag{5-2}$$

It follows from (5-1) that

$$a'_M = \hat{a}_N + \big(\hat{\eta}_N \cup (x)\big) \tag{5-3}$$

and $\partial_{v'}(a') = q \cdot \eta_E$, where $q = v'(x)$ is relatively prime to p. We extend the discrete valuation v' on E' to a (unique) discrete valuation v on M. The ramification index e' and inertia degree are both prime to p. Thus, the residue field N of v is a finite extension of E of degree prime to p. By Proposition 2.2(iii),

$$\partial_v(a'_M) = e' \cdot \partial_{v'}(a')_N = e'q \cdot \eta_N. \tag{5-4}$$

Let v_0 be the restriction of v to M_0 and N_0 its residue field. From (5-2), we have

$$\partial_v(a'_M) - \partial_v\big((a'_0)_M\big) \in \Phi'_N. \tag{5-5}$$

Recall that $\eta_E \notin \Phi'_E$. Since $[N : E]$ is not divisible by p, it follows that

$$\eta_N \notin \Phi'_N. \tag{5-6}$$

By (5-4), (5-5) and (5-6), $\partial_v\big((a'_0)_M\big) \ne 0$, that is, $(a'_0)_M$ is ramified and therefore v_0 is nontrivial, that is, v_0 is a discrete valuation on M_0.

Let $\eta_0 := \partial_{v_0}(a'_0) \in \mathrm{Ch}(N_0)\{p\}$. By Proposition 2.2(iii),

$$\partial_v\big((a'_0)_M\big) = e \cdot (\eta_0)_N, \tag{5-7}$$

where e is the ramification index of M/M_0, and hence $(\eta_0)_N \neq 0$. It follows from (5-4), (5-5) and (5-7) that

$$e'q \cdot \eta_N - e \cdot (\eta_0)_N \in \Phi'_N. \tag{5-8}$$

Since $e'q$ is relatively prime to p,

$$\eta_N \in \langle \Phi'_N, (\eta_0)_N \rangle \quad \text{in} \quad \mathrm{Ch}(N). \tag{5-9}$$

Let p^t ($t \geq 1$) be the order of $(\eta_0)_N$. It follows from (5-6) and (5-8) that $v_p(e) = t-1$ and

$$p^{t-1} \cdot (\eta_0)_N \in \Phi_N \setminus \Phi'_N. \tag{5-10}$$

Choose a prime element π_0 in M_0 and write

$$(a'_0)_{\widehat{M}_0} = \hat{a}_0 + \big(\hat{\eta}_0 \cup (\pi_0)\big) \tag{5-11}$$

in $\mathrm{Br}(\widehat{M}_0)$, where $a_0 \in \mathrm{Br}(N_0)\{p\}$.

Applying the specialization homomorphism $s_\pi : \mathrm{Br}(M)\{p\} \to \mathrm{Br}(N)\{p\}$ (for a prime element π in M) to (5-2), (5-3) and (5-11), using (2-3) and (5-9), we get

$$a_N - (a_0)_N \in \mathrm{Br}_{\mathrm{dec}}\big(N(\Phi', \eta_0)/N\big). \tag{5-12}$$

It follows from (5-12) that

$$a_{N(\Phi',\eta_0)} = (a_0)_{N(\Phi',\eta_0)} \tag{5-13}$$

in $\mathrm{Br}\big(N(\Phi', \eta_0)\big)$.

By (5-11),

$$(a'_0)_{\widehat{M}_0(\Phi')} = \widehat{(a_0)}_{N_0(\Phi')} + \big(\widehat{(\eta_0)}_{N_0(\Phi')} \cup (\pi_0)\big).$$

Since no nontrivial multiple of $(\eta_0)_N$ belongs to Φ'_N, by (5-10), the order of the character $(\eta_0)_{N_0(\Phi')}$ is at least p^t. It follows from Proposition 2.2(ii) that

$$\mathrm{ind}(a_0)_{N_0(\Phi',\eta_0)} = \mathrm{ind}(a'_0)_{\widehat{M}_0(\Phi')} / \operatorname{ord}(\eta_0)_{N_0(\Phi')} \leq p^{k+1}/p^t = p^{k-t+1}. \tag{5-14}$$

By (5-13) and (5-14),

$$\mathrm{ind}(a_{N(\Phi',\eta_0)}) \leq p^{k-t+1}. \tag{5-15}$$

Suppose that $t \geq 2$, and consider the character $\rho = p^{t-2} \cdot (\eta_0)_N$ of order p^2 in $\mathrm{Ch}(N)$. We have $p \cdot \rho = p^{t-1}(\eta_0)_N \in \Phi_N \setminus \Phi'_N$, by (5-10). Also, the degree of the field extension $N(\Phi', \eta_0)/N(\Phi', \rho)$ is equal to p^{t-2}. Hence, by (5-15),

$$\mathrm{ind}(a_{N(\Phi',\rho)}) \leq \mathrm{ind}(a_{N(\Phi',\eta_0)}) \cdot p^{t-2} \leq p^{k-t+1} \cdot p^{t-2} = p^{k-1}.$$

This contradicts the assumption. Therefore, $t = 1$, that is, $\operatorname{ord}(\eta_0)_N = p$. Then $(e, p) = 1$ and it follows from (5-8) that $(\eta_0)_N \in \langle \Phi'_N, \eta_N \rangle$. Moreover,

$$\langle \Phi', \eta_0 \rangle_N = \langle \Phi', \eta \rangle_N = \Phi_N. \tag{5-16}$$

There is a finite subextension N_1/N_0 of N/N_0 such that $\langle \Phi', \eta_0\rangle_{N_1} = \Phi_{N_1}$, by Lemma 2.1. Replacing N_0 by N_1 and a_0 by $(a_0)_{N_1}$, we may assume that $\langle \Phi', \eta_0\rangle_{N_0} = \Phi_{N_0}$. In particular, η_0 is of order p in $\mathrm{Ch}(N_0)$.

Since $\mathrm{ind}(a_0)_{N_0(\Phi)} = \mathrm{ind}(a_0)_{N_0(\Phi',\eta_0)} \le p^k$ by (5-14), we have $a_0 \in \mathcal{B}_k^{\Phi}(N_0)$.

It follows from (5-12) that

$$a_N - (a_0)_N \in \mathrm{Br}_{\mathrm{dec}}\big(N(\Phi)/N\big).$$

Hence the classes of a_N and $(a_0)_N$ are equal in $\mathcal{F}_k^{\Phi}(N)$. The class of a_N in $\mathcal{F}_k^{\Phi}(N)$ is then defined over N_0, and therefore

$$\mathrm{ed}_p^{\mathcal{F}_{k+1}^{\Phi'}}(a') = \mathrm{tr.deg}_F(M_0) \ge \mathrm{tr.deg}_F(N_0) + 1 \ge \mathrm{ed}_p^{\mathcal{F}_k^{\Phi}}(a) + 1. \qquad \square$$

5.1. ***Multiple degeneration.*** In this section we assume that the base field F contains a primitive p^2-th root of unity.

Let $\chi_1, \chi_2, \dots, \chi_r$ be linearly independent characters in ${}_p\mathrm{Ch}(F)$, and let $\Phi = \langle \chi_1, \chi_2, \dots, \chi_r\rangle$. Let E/F be a field extension such that $\mathrm{rank}(\Phi_E) = r$ and let $a \in \mathrm{Br}(E)\{p\}$ be an element that is split by $E(\Phi)$.

Let $E_0 = E, E_1, \dots, E_r$ be field extensions of F such that for any $k = 1, 2, \dots, r$, the field E_k is complete with respect to a discrete valuation v_k over F and E_{k-1} is its residue field. For any $k = 1, 2, \dots, r$, choose elements $x_k \in E_k^{\times}$ such that $v_k(x_k)$ is not divisible by p, and define the elements $a_k \in \mathrm{Br}(E_k)\{p\}$ inductively by $a_0 = a$ and

$$a_k = \widehat{a_{k-1}} + \big(\widehat{(\chi_k)}_{E_{k-1}} \cup (x_k)\big).$$

Let Φ_k be the subgroup of Φ generated by $\chi_{k+1}, \dots, \chi_r$. Thus, $\Phi_0 = \Phi$, $\Phi_r = 0$ and $\mathrm{rank}(\Phi_k) = r - k$. Note that the character $(\chi_k)_{E_{k-1}(\Phi_k)}$ is not trivial. It follows from Proposition 2.2(ii) that

$$\mathrm{ind}(a_k)_{E_k(\Phi_k)} = p \cdot \mathrm{ind}(a_{k-1})_{E_{k-1}(\Phi_{k-1})}$$

for any $k = 1, \dots, r$. Since $\mathrm{ind}\, a_{E(\Phi)} = 1$, we have $\mathrm{ind}(a_k)_{E_k(\Phi_k)} = p^k$ for all $k = 0, 1, \dots, r$. In particular, $a_k \in \mathcal{B}_k^{\Phi_k}(E_k)$.

The following lemma assures that under a certain restriction on the element a, the conditions of Proposition 5.2 are satisfied for the fields E_k, the groups of characters Φ_k, and the elements a_k.

Lemma 5.3. *Suppose that $a_{E(\Psi)} \notin \mathrm{Im}\big(\mathrm{Br}\, F(\Psi) \to \mathrm{Br}\, E(\Psi)\big)$ for any proper subgroup $\Psi \subset \Phi$. Then for every $k = 0, 1, \dots, r-1$, and any finite field extension N/E_k of degree prime to p and any character $\rho \in \mathrm{Ch}(N)$ of order p^2 such that $p \cdot \rho \in (\Phi_k)_N \setminus (\Phi_{k+1})_N$, we have*

$$\mathrm{ind}(a_k)_{N(\Phi_{k+1},\rho)} > p^{k-1}. \tag{5-17}$$

Proof. Let $k = 0, 1, \dots, r-1$ and N/E_k be a finite field extension of degree prime to p. We construct a new sequence of fields $\tilde{E}_0, \tilde{E}_1, \dots, \tilde{E}_r$ such that each $\tilde{E}_i$ is a finite extension of E_i of degree prime to p as follows. We set $\tilde{E}_j = N$. The fields $\tilde{E}_j$ with $j < k$ are constructed by descending induction on j. If we have constructed $\tilde{E}_j$ as a finite extension of E_j of degree prime to p, then we extend the valuation v_j to $\tilde{E}_j$ and let $\tilde{E}_{j-1}$ be its residue field. The fields $\tilde{E}_j$ with $j > k$ are constructed by induction on j. If we have constructed $\tilde{E}_j$ as a finite extension of E_j of degree prime to p, then let $\tilde{E}_{j+1}$ be an extension of E_{j+1} of degree $[\tilde{E}_j : E_j]$ with residue field $\tilde{E}_j$.

Replacing E_i by $\tilde{E}_i$ and a_i by $(a_i)_{\tilde{E}_i}$, we may assume that $N = E_k$. Let $\rho \in \operatorname{Ch}(E_k)$ be a character of order p^2. We prove the inequality (5-17) by induction on r. The case $r = 1$ is obvious. Suppose first that $k < r-1$. Consider the fields $F' = F(\chi_r)$, $E' = E(\chi_r)$, $E'_i = E_i(\chi_r)$, the sequence of characters $\chi'_i = (\chi_i)_{F'}$, and the sequence of elements $a'_i := (a_i)_{E'_i} \in \operatorname{Br}(E'_i)$ for $i = 0, 1, \dots, r-1$. Let $\Phi' = \langle \chi'_1, \chi'_2, \dots, \chi'_{r-1} \rangle$ and let Φ'_k be the subgroup of Φ' generated by $\chi'_{k+1}, \dots, \chi'_{r-1}$.

Let $\Psi' \subset \Phi'$ be a proper subgroup. Then $\Psi := \Psi' + \langle \chi_r \rangle$ is a proper subgroup of Φ. Since $F(\Psi) = F'(\Psi')$ and $E(\Psi) = E'(\Psi')$, we have

$$a_{E'(\Psi')} \notin \operatorname{Im}\big(\operatorname{Br} F'(\Psi') \to \operatorname{Br} E'(\Psi')\big).$$

By induction, the inequality (5-17) holds for the term a'_k of the new sequence. Since

$$(a'_k)_{E'_k(\Phi'_{k+1},\rho)} = (a_k)_{E_k(\Phi_{k+1},\rho)},$$

the inequality (5-17) holds for the term a_k.

Thus we can assume that $k = r-1$.

Case 1. The character ρ is unramified with respect to v_{r-1}, that is, $\rho = \hat{\mu}$ for a character $\mu \in \operatorname{Ch}(E_{r-2})$ of order p^2. By Lemma 2.3(i),

$$\operatorname{ind}(a_{r-2})_{E_{r-2}(\chi_{r-1},\mu)} = \operatorname{ind}(a_{r-1})_{E_{r-1}(\rho)}/p = \operatorname{ind}(a_{r-1})_{E_{r-1}(\Phi_r,\rho)}/p. \qquad (5\text{-}18)$$

Consider the fields $F' = F(\chi_{r-1})$, $E' = E(\chi_{r-1})$, $E'_i = E_i(\chi_{r-1})$, the new sequence of characters $\chi_1, \dots, \chi_{r-2}, \chi_r$ and the elements $a'_i \in \operatorname{Br}(E'_i)$ for $i = 0, 1, \dots, r-1$ defined by $a'_i = (a_i)_{E'_i}$ for $i \le r-2$ and $a'_{r-1} = \hat{a}_{r-2} + \big(\hat{\chi}_r \cup (x_{r-1})\big)$ over E'_{r-1}.

Let $\Phi' = \langle \chi_1, \dots, \chi_{r-2}, \chi_r \rangle$ and $\Psi' \subset \Phi'$ be a proper subgroup. Then $\Psi := \Psi' + \langle \chi_{r-1} \rangle$ is a proper subgroup of Φ. Since $F(\Psi) = F'(\Psi')$ and $E(\Psi) = E'(\Psi')$, we have $a_{E'(\Psi')} \notin \operatorname{Im}\big(\operatorname{Br} F'(\Psi') \to \operatorname{Br} E'(\Psi')\big)$. By induction, the inequality (5-17) holds for the term a'_{r-2} of the new sequence, the field $N = E'_{r-2}$, and the character μ_N. Since

$$(a'_{r-2})_{E'_{r-2}(\mu)} = (a_{r-2})_{E_{r-2}(\chi_{r-1},\mu)},$$

the equality (5-18) shows that (5-17) holds for a_{r-1}.

Case 2. The character ρ is ramified. Note that $p\cdot\rho$ is a nonzero multiple of $(\chi_r)_{E_{r-1}}$. Suppose the inequality (5-17) fails for a_{r-1}, that is, we have

$$\operatorname{ind}(a_{r-1})_{E_{r-1}(\rho)} \le p^{r-2}.$$

By Lemma 2.3(ii), there exists a unit $u\in E_{r-1}$ such that $E_{r-2}(\chi_r)=E_{r-2}(\bar u^{1/p})$ and

$$\operatorname{ind}\bigl(a_{r-2}-(\chi_{r-1}\cup(\bar u^{1/p}))\bigr)_{E_{r-2}(\chi_r)} = \operatorname{ind}(a_{r-1})_{E_{r-1}(\rho)} \le p^{r-2}.$$

By descending induction on $j=0,1,\dots,r-2$, we show that there exist a unit u_j in E_{j+1} and a subgroup $\Theta_j\subset\Phi$ of rank $r-j-1$ such that $\chi_r\in\Theta_j$, $\langle\chi_1,\dots,\chi_j,\chi_{r-1}\rangle\cap\Theta_j=0$, $E_j(\chi_r)=E_j(\bar u_j^{1/p})$, and

$$\operatorname{ind}\bigl(a_j-(\chi_{r-1}\cup(\bar u_j^{1/p}))\bigr)_{E_j(\Theta_j)} \le p^j. \tag{5-19}$$

If $j=r-2$, we set $u_j=u$ and $\Theta_j=\langle\chi_r\rangle$.

($j\Rightarrow j-1$): The field $E_j(\bar u_j^{1/p})=E_j(\chi_r)$ is unramified over E_j, and hence $v_j(\bar u_j)$ is divisible by p. Modifying u_j by a p^2-th power, we may assume that $\bar u_j=u_{j-1}x_j^{mp}$ for a unit $u_{j-1}\in E_j$ and an integer m. Then

$$\bigl(a_j-(\chi_{r-1}\cup(\bar u_j^{1/p}))\bigr)_{E_j(\Theta_j)} = \hat b + \bigl(\hat\eta\cup(x_j)\bigr)_{E_j(\Theta_j)},$$

where $\eta=\chi_j-m\chi_{r-1}$ and $b=\bigl(a_{j-1}-(\chi_{r-1}\cup(\bar u_{j-1}^{1/p}))\bigr)_{E_{j-1}(\Theta_j)}$. Since η is not contained in Θ_j, the character $\eta_{E_{j-1}(\Theta_j)}$ is not trivial. Set $\Theta_{j-1}=\langle\Theta_j,\eta\rangle$. It follows from Proposition 2.2(ii) that

$$\operatorname{ind}(b_{E_{j-1}(\Theta_{j-1})}) = \operatorname{ind}\bigl(a_j-(\chi_{r-1}\cup(\bar u_j^{1/p}))\bigr)_{E_j(\Theta_j)}/p \le p^{j-1}.$$

Applying the inequality (5-19) in the case $j=0$, we get

$$a_{E(\Theta_0)} = \bigl(\chi_{r-1}\cup(w^{1/p})\bigr)_{E(\Theta_0)}$$

for an element $w\in E^\times$ such that $E(w^{1/p})=E(\chi_r)$. Since the character χ_r is defined over F, we may assume that $w\in F^\times$, and therefore

$$a_{E(\Theta_0)} \in \operatorname{Im}\bigl(\operatorname{Br}F(\Theta_0)\to\operatorname{Br}E(\Theta_0)\bigr).$$

The degree of the extension $E(\Theta_0)/E$ is equal to p^{r-1}, and hence Θ_0 is a proper subgroup of Φ, a contradiction. Thus, we have shown that the inequality (5-17) holds. □

By Example 5.1(ii), we can view a as an S^Φ-torsor over E.

Corollary 5.4. *Suppose that $p^{r-1}a\notin\operatorname{Im}\bigl(\operatorname{Br}(F)\to\operatorname{Br}(E)\bigr)$. Then*

$$\operatorname{ed}_p^{\mathit{CSA}(p^r)}(a_r) \ge \operatorname{ed}_p^{S^\Phi\text{-}\mathit{torsors}}(a)+r.$$

Proof. By iterated application of Proposition 5.2 and Example 5.1,

$$\begin{aligned}\mathrm{ed}_p^{CSA(p^r)}(a_r) &= \mathrm{ed}_p^{\mathcal{F}_r^{\Phi_r}}(a_r) \geq \mathrm{ed}_p^{\mathcal{F}_{r-1}^{\Phi_{r-1}}}(a_{r-1}) + 1 \geq \dots \\ &\geq \mathrm{ed}_p^{\mathcal{F}_1^{\Phi_1}}(a_1) + (r-1) \geq \mathrm{ed}_p^{\mathcal{F}_0^{\Phi_0}}(a_0) + r = \mathrm{ed}_p^{S^\Phi\text{-}\mathit{torsors}}(a) + r. \quad \square\end{aligned}$$

6. Proof of the main theorem

Theorem 6.1. *Let F be a field and p a prime integer different from* $\mathrm{char}(F)$. *Then*

$$\mathrm{ed}_p\big(CSA(p^r)\big) \geq (r-1)p^r + 1.$$

Proof. Since $\mathrm{ed}_p\big(CSA(p^r)\big)$ can only go down if we replace the base field F by any field extension [Merkurjev 2009, Proposition 1.5], we can replace F by any field extension. In particular, we may assume that F contains a primitive p^2-th root of unity and that there is a subgroup Φ of ${}_p\mathrm{Ch}(F)$ of rank r (replacing F by the field of rational functions in r variables over F).

Let T^Φ be the algebraic torus constructed in Section 3 for the subgroup Φ. Set $E = F(T^\Phi)$, and let $a \in \mathrm{Br}(EL/E)$ be the element defined in Section 3.1. Let $a_r \in \mathrm{Br}(E_r)$ be the element of index p^r constructed in Section 5.1. By Corollary 3.9, the class $p^{r-1}a$ in $\mathrm{Br}(E)$ does not belong to the image of $\mathrm{Br}(F) \to \mathrm{Br}(E)$. It follows from Corollary 5.4 that

$$\mathrm{ed}_p^{CSA(p^r)}(a_r) \geq \mathrm{ed}_p^{S^\Phi\text{-}\mathit{torsors}}(a) + r. \tag{6-1}$$

The S^Φ-torsor a is the generic fiber of the versal S^Φ-torsor $P^\Phi \to T^\Phi$ (see Example 3.3), and hence a is a generic torsor. By [Reichstein and Youssin 2000, §6] or [Merkurjev 2009, Theorem 2.9],

$$\mathrm{ed}_p^{S^\Phi\text{-}\mathit{torsors}}(a) = \mathrm{ed}_p(S^\Phi). \tag{6-2}$$

The essential p-dimension of S^Φ was calculated in (4-3):

$$\mathrm{ed}_p(S^\Phi) = (r-1)p^r - r + 1. \tag{6-3}$$

Finally, it follows from (6-1), (6-2) and (6-3) that

$$\mathrm{ed}_p\big(CSA(p^r)\big) \geq \mathrm{ed}_p^{CSA(p^r)}(a_r) \geq \mathrm{ed}_p^{S^\Phi\text{-}\mathit{torsors}}(a) + r = (r-1)p^r + 1. \quad \square$$

7. Remarks

Let K/F be a field extension and G an elementary abelian group of order p^r. Consider the subset $CSA_K(G)$ of $CSA_K(p^r)$ consisting of all classes admitting a splitting Galois K-algebra E with $\mathrm{Gal}(E/K) \simeq G$. Equivalently, $CSA_K(G)$

consists of all classes represented by crossed product algebras with the group G [Herstein 1994, §4.4].

Write $\mathit{Pair}_K(G)$ for the set of isomorphism classes of pairs (a, E), where $a \in \mathit{CSA}_K(G)$ and E is a Galois G-algebra splitting a.

Finally, fix a Galois field extension L/F with $\mathrm{Gal}(L/F) \simeq G$ and consider the subset $\mathit{CSA}_K(L/F)$ of $\mathit{CSA}_K(G)$ consisting of all classes split by the extension KL/K. Thus, $\mathit{CSA}(L/F)$ is a subfunctor of $\mathit{CSA}(G)$ and there is the obvious surjective morphism of functors $\mathit{Pair}(G) \to \mathit{CSA}(G)$.

Theorem 7.1. *Let F be a field, p a prime integer different from* $\mathrm{char}(F)$, *G an elementary abelian group of order p^r, $r \geq 2$, and L/F a Galois field extension with* $\mathrm{Gal}(L/F) \simeq G$. *Let $\mathcal{F}$ be one of the three functors $\mathit{CSA}(L/F)$, $\mathit{CSA}(G)$, $\mathit{Pair}(G)$. Then*

$$\mathrm{ed}(\mathcal{F}) = \mathrm{ed}_p(\mathcal{F}) = (r-1)p^r + 1.$$

Proof. The functor $\mathit{CSA}(L/F)$ is isomorphic to $U^{\Phi}\text{-}\mathit{torsors}$ by (3-4), where Φ is a subgroup of $\mathrm{Ch}(F)$ such that $L = F(\Phi)$. It follows from (4-2) that

$$\mathrm{ed}\big(\mathit{CSA}(L/F)\big) = \mathrm{ed}_p\big(\mathit{CSA}(L/F)\big) = (r-1)p^r + 1.$$

Let a_r be the element in $\mathrm{Br}(E_r)$ in the proof of Theorem 6.1. It satisfies

$$\mathrm{ed}_p^{\mathit{CSA}(p^r)}(a_r) \geq (r-1)p^r + 1.$$

By construction, $a_r \in \mathit{CSA}_{E_r}(G)$. Since $\mathit{CSA}(G)$ is a subfunctor of $\mathit{CSA}(p^r)$, we have

$$\mathrm{ed}_p\big(\mathit{CSA}(G)\big) \geq \mathrm{ed}_p^{\mathit{CSA}(G)}(a_r) \geq \mathrm{ed}_p^{\mathit{CSA}(p^r)}(a_r) \geq (r-1)p^r + 1.$$

The upper bound $\mathrm{ed}\big(\mathit{CSA}(G)\big) \leq (r-1)p^r + 1$ was proven in [Lorenz et al. 2003, Corollary 3 10].

The split étale F-algebra $E := \mathrm{Map}(G, F)$ has the natural structure of a Galois G-algebra over F. The group G acts on the split torus $U := R_{E/F}(\mathbb{G}_{m,E})/\mathbb{G}_m$. Let A be the split F-algebra $\mathrm{End}_F(E)$. The semidirect product $H := U \rtimes G$ acts naturally on A by F-algebra automorphisms. Moreover, by the Skolem–Noether Theorem, H is precisely the automorphism group of the pair (A, E). It follows that the functor $\mathit{Pair}_K(G)$ is isomorphic to $H\text{-}\mathit{torsors}$.

The character group of U is G-isomorphic to the ideal I in $R = \mathbb{Z}[G]$. By [Meyer and Reichstein 2009a, §3], the G-homomorphism $k : R^r \to I$ constructed in Section 3 yields a representation W of the group H of dimension rp^r. Since $r \geq 2$, by Lemma 3.4, G acts faithfully on the kernel N of k. By [Meyer and Reichstein 2009a, Lemma 3.3], the action of H on W is generically free, and hence

$$\mathrm{ed}\big(\mathit{Pair}(G)\big) = \mathrm{ed}(H) \leq \dim(W) - \dim(H) = (r-1)p^r + 1.$$

Since $\mathit{Pair}(G)$ surjects onto $\mathit{CSA}(G)$, we have

$$\mathrm{ed}\big(\mathit{Pair}(G)\big) \geq \mathrm{ed}_p\big(\mathit{Pair}(G)\big) \geq \mathrm{ed}_p\big(\mathit{CSA}(G)\big) = (r-1)p^r + 1. \qquad \square$$

Remark 7.2. The generic G-crossed product algebra D constructed in [Amitsur and Saltman 1978] is a generic element for the functor $\mathit{CSA}(G)$ in the sense of [Merkurjev 2009, §2], and hence

$$\mathrm{ed}(D) = \mathrm{ed}_p(D) = (r-1)p^r + 1$$

for $r \geq 2$ by Theorem 7.1.

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merkurev@math.ucla.edu *Department of Mathematics, University of California, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1555, United States*

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