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Martin Orr

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Société Mathématique de France

Institut Henri Poincaré, 11, rue Pierre et Marie Curie
75231 Paris Cedex 05, France

Tél : (33) 01 44 27 67 99 • Fax : (33) 01 40 46 90 96

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LOWER BOUNDS FOR RANKS OF MUMFORD-TATE GROUPS

BY MARTIN ORR

ABSTRACT. — Let A be a complex abelian variety and G its Mumford-Tate group. Supposing that the simple abelian subvarieties of A are pairwise non-isogenous, we find a lower bound for the rank $\mathrm{rk} G$ of G , which is a little less than $\log_2 \dim A$. If we suppose furthermore that $\mathrm{End} A$ is commutative, then we can improve this lower bound to $\mathrm{rk} G \geq \log_2 \dim A + 2$ and prove that this is sharp. We also obtain the same results for the rank of the ℓ -adic monodromy group of an abelian variety defined over a number field.

RÉSUMÉ (*Minoration des rangs de groupes de Mumford-Tate*). — Soit A une variété abélienne complexe et G son groupe de Mumford-Tate. En supposant que les sous variétés abéliennes simples de A sont deux à deux non-isogènes, on trouve une minoration du rang $\mathrm{rk} G$ de G , légèrement inférieure à $\log_2 \dim A$. Si de plus on suppose que $\mathrm{End} A$ est commutatif, alors on peut améliorer cette borne en $\mathrm{rk} G \geq \log_2 \dim A + 2$, et montrer que cette borne-ci est optimale. On obtient les mêmes résultats pour le rang du groupe de monodromie ℓ -adique d'une variété abélienne définie sur un corps de nombres.

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MARTIN ORR, Université Paris-Sud, Bat. 425, 91400 Orsay, France •
E-mail : martin.orr@math.u-psud.fr

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1. Introduction

Let A be a complex abelian variety of dimension g , whose simple abelian subvarieties are pairwise non-isogenous. In this paper we will establish a lower bound for the rank of the Mumford-Tate group of A . The Mumford-Tate group is an algebraic group over $\mathbb{Q}$ defined via the Hodge theory of A (see Section 2 below for the definition). The same argument will also establish a lower bound for the rank of the ℓ -adic monodromy groups G_ℓ , in the case where A is defined over a number field. The ℓ -adic monodromy group is the Zariski closure of the image of the Galois representation on the ℓ -adic Tate module of A . Our main theorems are the following:

THEOREM 1.1. — *Let A be an abelian variety of dimension g such that $\text{End } A$ is commutative. Let G be the Mumford-Tate group or the ℓ -adic monodromy group of A . Then $\text{rk } G \geq \log_2 g + 2$.*

THEOREM 1.2. — *Let A be an abelian variety of dimension g whose simple abelian subvarieties are pairwise non-isogenous. Let G be the Mumford-Tate group or the ℓ -adic monodromy group of A . If $n = \text{rk } G$, then*

$$n + \alpha(n)\sqrt{n \log n} \geq \log_2 g + 2$$

for a function $\alpha : \mathbb{N}_{\geq 2} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ satisfying $\alpha(n) < 2$ for all n and $\alpha(n) \rightarrow 1/\log 2 = 1.44\dots$ as $n \rightarrow \infty$.

Each of these theorems is an instance of a more general bound for weak Mumford-Tate triples, which are defined in Section 2. These more general bounds are Theorems 4.1 and 4.4 respectively. These would apply also for example to the analogue of the Mumford-Tate group for a Hodge-Tate module of weights 0 and 1.

Theorem 1.1 was proved by Ribet in the case of an abelian variety with complex multiplication [13]. Our proof is a generalisation of his, relying on the fact that the defining representation of the Mumford-Tate group or ℓ -adic monodromy group has minuscule weights.

The condition on simple subvarieties in Theorem 1.2 is necessary: taking products of copies of the same simple abelian variety increases the dimension without changing the rank of the Mumford-Tate group. Indeed, if A is isogenous to $\prod_i A_i^{m_i}$ where the A_i are simple and pairwise non-isogenous, then according to [4] Lemme 2.2,

$$\text{MT}(A) \cong \text{MT}\left(\prod_i A_i\right).$$

Hence Theorem 1.2 implies that for a general abelian variety A , if n denotes the rank of either the Mumford-Tate group or the ℓ -adic monodromy group of A , then

$$n + \alpha(n)\sqrt{n \log n} \geq \log_2 \left(\sum_i \dim A_i \right) + 2$$

where the A_i are one representative of each isogeny class of simple abelian subvarieties of A .

The condition of having pairwise non-isogenous simple abelian subvarieties can be interpreted via the endomorphism algebra like the condition in Theorem 1.1: it is equivalent to $\text{End } A \otimes_{\mathbb{Z}} \mathbb{Q}$ being a product of division algebras. Note also that $\text{End } A$ being commutative implies the condition of Theorem 1.2. (Throughout this paper, $\text{End } A$ means the endomorphisms of A after extension of scalars to an algebraically closed field.)

Let G be either the Mumford-Tate group or the ℓ -adic monodromy group of A . It is well known that the rank of G is at most $g + 1$, and that this upper bound is achieved for a generic abelian variety. Indeed, if g is odd and $\text{End } A = \mathbb{Z}$, then $\text{rk } G$ is always $g + 1$ [16]. So in this case the bound in Theorem 1.1 is far from sharp.

On the other hand if g is a power of 2, then there are abelian varieties for which the bound in Theorem 1.1 is achieved (even with $\text{End } A = \mathbb{Z}$). We construct such examples in Section 5. The exact bound for a given g is very sensitive to the prime factors of g . Equality can happen only when g is a power of 2 (for the trivial reason that otherwise $\log_2 g \notin \mathbb{Z}$) but even near-equality can only occur when g has many small prime factors. This was made precise by Dodson in the complex multiplication case [2], and it is possible that something similar could be proved in general.

Theorem 1.2 is not sharp. The function $\alpha(n)$ is specified exactly in Section 4, but it is likely that this could be improved on, perhaps to something which goes to 0 as $n \rightarrow \infty$. In Section 5, we construct a family of examples showing that Theorem 1.2 cannot be improved to $n + k \geq \log_2 g$ for any constant k .

We can deduce a lower bound for the growth of the degrees of the division fields $K(A[\ell^n])$ (for ℓ a fixed prime number) as a straightforward consequence of Theorem 1.1.

COROLLARY 1.3. — *Let A be an abelian variety of dimension g over a number field K , and ℓ a prime number. If $\text{End } A$ is commutative, then there is a constant $C(A, K, \ell)$ such that*

$$[K(A[\ell^n]) : K] \geq C(A, K, \ell) \cdot \ell^{n(\log_2 g + 2)}.$$