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# UNRAMIFIED COHOMOLOGY OF FINITE GROUPS OF LIE TYPE

*by*

Fedor Bogomolov, Tihomir Petrov and Yuri Tschinkel

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ABSTRACT. — We prove vanishing results for unramified stable cohomology of finite groups of Lie type.

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## 1. Introduction

Let  $k$  be an algebraically closed field,  $G$  a finite group and  $V$  a faithful representation of  $G$  over  $k$ . In this note we compute cohomological obstructions to stable rationality of quotients of  $V$  by  $G$  introduced by Saltman [13] and [4] and studied in [8], [11], [5].

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KEY WORDS AND PHRASES. — Rationality, finite simple groups, unramified cohomology.

Let  $K = k(V)^G$  be the function field of the quotient variety and

$$s : \mathcal{G}_K \rightarrow G$$

the natural homomorphism from the absolute Galois group of  $K$  to  $G$ . We have an induced map on cohomology with coefficients in the torsion group  $\mathbb{Z}/\ell$ , with trivial  $G$ -action,

$$s_i^* : H^i(G, \mathbb{Z}/\ell) \rightarrow H^i(\mathcal{G}_K, \mathbb{Z}/\ell).$$

Note that  $s_i^*$  depends on the ground field  $k$ , but not on the choice of the faithful representation  $V$  over that field. The groups

$$H_{k,s}^i(G, \mathbb{Z}/\ell) := H^i(G, \mathbb{Z}/\ell) / \text{Ker}(s_i^*),$$

are called *stable cohomology groups* over  $k$ . They form a finite ring. We may consider them as subgroups of  $H^i(\mathcal{G}_K, \mathbb{Z}/\ell)$ . Every divisorial valuation  $\nu \in \text{Val}_K$  of  $K$  defines a residue map

$$\partial_\nu : H^i(\mathcal{G}_K, \mathbb{Z}/\ell) \rightarrow H^{i-1}(\mathcal{G}_{\mathbf{K}_\nu}, \mathbb{Z}/\ell),$$

where  $\mathbf{K}_\nu$  is the residue field of  $\nu$ . The groups

$$H_{k,un}^i(G, \mathbb{Z}/\ell) := \bigcap_{\nu \in \text{Val}_K} \text{Ker}(\partial_\nu \circ s_i^*) \subset H_{k,s}^i(G, \mathbb{Z}/\ell)$$

form a subring of  $H_{k,s}^*(G, \mathbb{Z}/\ell)$ . A basic fact is that if there exists a faithful representation  $V$  of  $G$  over  $k$  and a unirational parametrization of the quotient  $V/G$  whose degree is prime to  $\ell$ , then

$$H_{k,un}^i(G, \mathbb{Z}/\ell) = 0, \quad \text{for all } i > 0.$$

In particular, these cohomology groups vanish if this quotient is stably rational.

For example, the rings of invariants of finite groups generated by pseudo-reflections are polynomial, the corresponding quotient varieties rational, and the cohomological invariants trivial. In particular, all Weyl groups  $\mathcal{W}$  of semi-simple Lie groups have

$$H_{k,un}^i(\mathcal{W}, \mathbb{Z}/\ell) = 0, \quad \text{for all } i > 0, \quad \text{and all } k.$$

CONJECTURE 1.1. — Let  $G$  be a finite simple group. Then

$$H_{k,un}^i(G, \mathbb{Z}/\ell) = 0, \quad \text{for all } i > 0, \quad \text{all } k \text{ and all } \ell.$$

The  $i = 2$  case of this conjecture was proved for  $G = \mathrm{PSL}_n(\mathbb{F}_q)$  and  $k = \mathbb{C}$  in [5] and for simple and quasi-simple groups of Lie type in [10]. Examples of function fields with vanishing second and nonvanishing third unramified cohomology were given in [12]. Here we prove that many of these cohomology groups vanish for finite groups of Lie type, for  $k = \bar{\mathbb{F}}_q$ . In fact, we prove the stable rationality of many associated quotient spaces. Our main theorem is:

**THEOREM 1.2.** — *Let  $G$  be one of the following groups*

$$\mathrm{SL}_n(\mathbb{F}_q), \quad \mathrm{Sp}_{2n}(\mathbb{F}_q),$$

*or their twisted forms*

$${}^2\mathrm{SL}_n(\mathbb{F}_q), \quad {}^2\mathrm{Sp}_{2n}(\mathbb{F}_q).$$

*Let  $V$  be a faithful representation of  $G$  over  $k = \bar{\mathbb{F}}_q$ . Then the quotient of  $V$  by  $G$  is stably rational over  $k$ .*

In particular, Conjecture 1.1 holds in these cases for  $\ell \nmid q$  and  $k = \bar{\mathbb{F}}_p$ . Our main tool is a theorem of Lang which proves the rationality of certain quotient spaces over  $\bar{\mathbb{F}}_p$ .

**THEOREM 1.3.** — *Let  $G$  be a semi-simple simply-connected Lie group defined over a finite field  $\mathbb{F}_q$ . Then the image*

$$H^i(\mathbf{G}(\mathbb{F}_q), \mathbb{Z}/\ell) \rightarrow H_{k,s}^i(\mathbf{G}/\mathbf{G}(\mathbb{F}_q), \mathbb{Z}/\ell)$$

*is zero, for  $k = \bar{\mathbb{F}}_q$ , all  $i > 0$  and  $\ell \nmid q$ .*

Combining this with results of Tits [15] we obtain the following:

**THEOREM 1.4.** — *Let  $G$  be a finite quasi-simple group of Lie type over a finite field of characteristic  $p$ . Put*

$$d(G) := \begin{cases} \{p\} & \text{if } G \text{ is of type } A_n, B_n, C_n, D_n \text{ or } G_2; \\ \{2, 3, p\} & \text{if } G \text{ is of type } F_4, E_6, E_7; \\ \{2, 3, 5, p\} & \text{if } G \text{ is of type } E_8. \end{cases}$$

*Then for all algebraically closed fields  $k$  one has*

$$H_{k,un}^i(G, \mathbb{Z}/\ell) = 0, \quad \text{for all } i > 0, \quad \text{and all } \ell \notin d(G).$$

*For  $k = \bar{\mathbb{F}}_p$  the vanishing also holds for  $\ell = p$ .*

Here is the roadmap of the paper. In Section 2 we study the birational type of quotients  $G \backslash \mathbf{G}/H$ , where  $\mathbf{G}$  is an algebraic group over an algebraically closed field  $k$  and  $G, H \subset \mathbf{G}(k)$  are finite subgroups, acting on  $\mathbf{G}$  by translations on the left, resp. on the right. In Section 3 we study the classical groups. In Section 4 we introduce stable and unramified cohomology over arbitrary algebraically closed fields and prove their basic properties. In Section 7 we establish general vanishing results, applying theorems of Lang and Tits. In Section 8 we sketch another approach which is using the structure of Sylow subgroups of quasi-simple groups of Lie type. As an example we prove the triviality of unramified cohomology over  $\mathbb{C}$  for all groups  $GL_n(\mathbb{F}_q)$  and  $\ell$  coprime to  $q$ .

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## 2. Equivariant birational geometry

We work over an algebraically closed field  $k$ . We say that  $k$ -varieties  $X$  and  $Y$  are stably birational, and write  $X \sim Y$ , if  $X \times \mathbb{A}^n$  is birational to  $Y \times \mathbb{A}^m$ , for some  $n, m \in \mathbb{N}$ .

Let  $G$  be an algebraic group and  $X$  an algebraic variety over  $k$ , with a  $G$ -action

$$\lambda : G \times X \rightarrow X.$$

We will sometimes consider different actions of the same group. To emphasize the action we will write  $\lambda(G) \backslash X$  for the quotient of  $X$  by the  $\lambda$ -action of  $G$ ; we write  $G \backslash X$ , when the action is clear from the context.

We say that the action of  $G$  is *almost free* if there exists a Zariski open subset  $X^\circ \subset X$  on which the action is free. In particular, the quotient map  $X \rightarrow G \backslash X$  is separable.

**EXAMPLE 2.1.** — Let  $V$  be a faithful complex representation of  $G$ . Then  $G$  acts almost freely on  $V$ .

**LEMMA 2.2.** — *Let  $G$  be a finite group and  $V$  a faithful representation of  $G$  over an algebraically closed field  $k$ . Let  $Y$  be an affine variety over  $k$ , with a free  $G$ -action, and  $y \in Y(k)$  a point.*

For every Zariski open  $U \subset V$  there exist a  $G$ -equivariant  $k$ -morphism  $\phi_U : Y \rightarrow V$  and a Zariski open  $G$ -invariant subset  $Y^\circ \subset Y$  such that

- $y \in Y^\circ(k)$ ;
- $\phi_U(Y^\circ) \subset U$ .

*Proof.* — It suffices to consider  $V := \mathbb{A}_k^{|G|}$ , the affine  $k$ -space, with the induced faithful  $G$ -action. For any divisor  $D \subset V$  there exists a Zariski open subset  $U \subset V$  such that for every point  $v \in U(k)$  its  $G$ -orbit  $G \cdot v \not\subset D$ . For every Zariski open  $U \subset V$  there exists a  $G$ -equivariant  $k$ -morphism  $\phi_U : Y \rightarrow V$  such that  $\phi_U(y) \in U(k)$  (functions separate points). This implies the existence of a Zariski open  $G$ -invariant subset  $Y^\circ \subset Y$  with the claimed properties.  $\square$

A  $G$ -variety  $X$  is called  *$G$ -affine*, and the corresponding action *affine*, if there exists a  $G$ -equivariant birational isomorphism between  $X$  and a faithful representation of  $G$ . Let  $\mathcal{V}$  and  $X$  be affine  $G$ -varieties. A  $G$ -morphism  $\pi : \mathcal{V} \rightarrow X$  is called an *affine  $G$ -bundle* if it is an affine bundle over some open subset  $X^\circ \subset X$  and the  $G$ -action is compatible with this structure of an affine bundle.

By Hilbert 90, an affine  $G$ -bundle  $\mathcal{V} \rightarrow X$  is  $G$ -birational to a finite dimensional  $G$ -representation over the function field of  $K = k(X)$ , compatible with the given  $G$ -action on  $K$ . A morphism  $\rho : X \rightarrow B$  of  $G$ -varieties will be called a  *$G$ -ruling* (and  $X$  -  $G$ -ruled) over  $B$  if there exists a finite set of affine  $G$ -varieties

$$X_n = X, B_{n-1}, X_{n-1}, B_{n-2}, X_{n-2}, \dots, X_1, B_0 = B$$

such that  $X_i \rightarrow B_{i-1}$  is an affine  $G$ -bundle and  $B_i \subset X_i$  a  $G$ -stable Zariski open subset, for  $i = 1, \dots, n$ .

LEMMA 2.3. — *Assume that  $\rho : X \rightarrow B$  is a  $G$ -ruling over  $B$  and that the action of  $G$  on  $X$  is almost free. Then  $X$  is  $G$ -affine.*

*Proof.* — Follows from Hilbert 90.  $\square$

Let  $X, Y$  be smooth varieties with an almost free action of  $G$ . We write  $X \overset{G}{\rightsquigarrow} Y$  if there exist a  $G$ -representation  $V$ , a Zariski open  $G$ -stable subset  $X^\circ \subset X$  and a  $G$ -morphism (not necessarily dominant)  $\beta : X^\circ \times V \rightarrow Y$ . We write  $X \overset{G}{\rightsquigarrow} Y$ , and say that the  $G$ -actions are equivalent, if  $X \overset{G}{\rightsquigarrow} Y$  and  $Y \overset{G}{\rightsquigarrow} X$ .

LEMMA 2.4. — *If  $X \xrightarrow{G} Y$ , then the morphism*

$$\beta : G \backslash (X \times Y) \rightarrow G \backslash X$$

*has a rational section.*

*Proof.* — Consider the morphism

$$\beta' : G \backslash (X \times V \times Y) \rightarrow G \backslash X,$$

where  $G$  acts diagonally. The graph of the map  $X \rightarrow (Y \times V)$  is  $G$ -stable and gives a section of  $\beta'$ . The projection of this section to  $G \backslash (X \times Y)$  is a section of  $\beta$ .  $\square$

LEMMA 2.5. — *Let  $\mathbf{G}$  be a Lie group over an algebraically closed field  $k$ . Let  $G \subset \mathbf{G}(k)$  be a finite subgroup. Let  $X$  be an algebraic variety over  $k$  with an almost free action of  $G$ . Assume that  $X \xrightarrow{G} \mathbf{G}$ , where  $\mathbf{G}$  is considered as a  $G$ -variety, with a left action. Then*

$$G \backslash (X \times \mathbf{G}) \sim G \backslash X.$$

*Proof.* — By Lemma 2.4, there is a Zariski open  $G$ -stable subset  $X^\circ \subset X$  so that the  $G$ -morphism (projection to the first factor)

$$\beta : G \backslash (X \times \mathbf{G}) \rightarrow (G \backslash X)$$

has a section. We also have a *right* action of  $\mathbf{G}$ , which preserves the fibration structure given by  $\beta$ . Thus it is a principal homogeneous space over  $G \backslash X^\circ$ , for some  $G$ -stable Zariski open  $X^\circ \subset X$ , with a section. Hence it is birational to  $(G \backslash X) \times \mathbf{G}$ . It suffices to recall that  $\mathbf{G}$  is rational over  $k$ .  $\square$

Let  $\mathbf{G}$  be a connected algebraic group and  $F \in \text{Aut}_k(\mathbf{G})$  a  $k$ -automorphism of  $\mathbf{G}$ . Let  $G \subset \mathbf{G}(k)$  be a finite subgroup, with a natural left action

$$\begin{aligned} \lambda : G \times \mathbf{G} &\rightarrow \mathbf{G} \\ (\gamma, g) &\mapsto \gamma \cdot g \end{aligned}$$

We also have an  $F$ -twisted right action

$$\begin{aligned} \rho^F : G \times \mathbf{G} &\rightarrow \mathbf{G} \\ (\gamma, g) &\mapsto g \cdot F(\gamma^{-1}) \end{aligned}$$

and an  $F$ -conjugation

$$\begin{aligned} \kappa^F : G \times \mathbf{G} &\rightarrow \mathbf{G} \\ (\gamma, g) &\mapsto \gamma \cdot g \cdot F(\gamma^{-1}). \end{aligned}$$

LEMMA 2.6. — Assume that  $G \subset \mathbf{G}(k)$  has the following properties:

- (1) there exists a faithful  $G$ -representation  $V$  such that  $V \xrightarrow{G} \mathbf{G}$ , where  $G$  acts on  $\mathbf{G}$  via  $\lambda$ ;
- (2) the twisted action  $\rho^F$  on  $\mathbf{G}$  is almost free.

Then the quotient of  $\mathbf{G}$  by the  $F$ -twisted conjugation  $\kappa^F$  of  $G$  is stably birational to the quotient of  $\mathbf{G}$  by  $\lambda$ .

*Proof.* — Consider the diagonal action of  $G$  on  $\mathbf{G} \times \mathbf{G}$ :

$$\begin{array}{ccc} G \times \mathbf{G} \times \mathbf{G} & \xrightarrow{(\lambda, \rho^F)} & \mathbf{G} \times \mathbf{G} \\ (\gamma, g, g') & \mapsto & (\gamma \cdot g, g' \cdot F(\gamma^{-1})). \end{array}$$

Let  $\Delta^F := \{(g, F^{-1}(g))\} \subset \mathbf{G} \times \mathbf{G}$  be the  $F$ -twisted (anti)diagonal. Then  $\Delta^F$  is preserved under the  $(\lambda, \rho^F)$ -action of  $G$  and descends to a section of the principal (right)  $\mathbf{G}$ -fibration

$$(\lambda, \rho^F)(G) \backslash (\mathbf{G} \times \mathbf{G}) \rightarrow \rho^F(G) \backslash \mathbf{G},$$

projection to the second factor. It follows that

$$\rho^F(G) \backslash \mathbf{G} \sim (\lambda, \rho^F)(G) \backslash (\mathbf{G} \times \mathbf{G}).$$

Observe that

$$\rho^F(G) \backslash \mathbf{G} \sim \lambda(G) \backslash \mathbf{G}.$$

Now we show that

$$(2.1) \quad \kappa^F(G) \backslash \mathbf{G} \sim (\lambda, \rho^F)(G) \backslash (\mathbf{G} \times \mathbf{G}).$$

Let  $V$  be a faithful representation of  $G$  as in (1) and  $V^\circ \subset V$  a  $G$ -stable Zariski subset admitting a  $G$ -map into  $\mathbf{G}$ , considered with the  $\lambda$ -action of  $G$ . We know that there exists a  $G$ -morphism  $\xi : \mathbf{G} \rightarrow V$ , where  $\mathbf{G}$  is considered with the  $\kappa^F$ -action of  $G$ , such that  $\xi(\mathbf{G}) \cap V^\circ \neq \emptyset$  (see Lemma 2.2). It follows that  $\mathbf{G} \xrightarrow{G} \mathbf{G}$ , where the source carries the  $\kappa^F$ -action of  $G$  and the image the  $\lambda$ -action of  $G$ . Equation (2.1) now follows from Lemma 2.4.  $\square$

COROLLARY 2.7. — Let  $G \subset \mathbf{G}(k)$  be a finite subgroup satisfying Assumption (1) of Lemma 2.6. Let  $V$  be a faithful representation of  $G$  over  $k$ . Then

$$G \backslash \mathbf{G} \sim G \backslash V.$$

More generally, for any  $X$  with an almost free action of  $G$  we have

$$G \backslash (X \times V) \sim G \backslash X.$$

*Proof.* — Note that  $G \backslash (G \times V)$  is a vector bundle over  $G \backslash G$ , and hence stably birational to it. On the other hand, it is a right  $G$ -fibration over  $G \backslash V$  with section defined by the  $G$ -equivariant map  $V \rightarrow G$ .

To prove the statement for  $X$  it suffices to notice that a dense Zariski open  $G$ -stable subset  $X^\circ \subset X$  admits a nontrivial  $G$ -morphism to  $V$ .  $\square$

### 3. Equivariant birational geometry of classical groups

In this section,  $k$  is an algebraically closed field, of any characteristic.

LEMMA 3.1. — *The conjugation action  $\kappa : \mathrm{SL}_2 \rightarrow \mathrm{SL}_2$  is equivalent to a linear action.*

*Proof.* — Realize  $\mathrm{SL}_2$  as a nonsingular quadric in  $\mathbb{A}^4 = \mathrm{M}_2$ . The conjugation action is linear on  $\mathrm{M}_2$  and has a fixed point corresponding to the identity. The projection of  $\mathrm{SL}_2$  from the identity to the locus of trace zero matrices is equivariant and has degree 1. Hence the conjugation action is rationally equivalent to the action on trace zero matrices.  $\square$

LEMMA 3.2. — *Let  $G = (\mathbb{Z}/2)^n$  and  $X$  be a  $G$ -affine variety over  $k$ . Then  $G \backslash X$  is rational.*

LEMMA 3.3. — *Let  $G \subset \mathrm{PGL}_2(k) \simeq \mathrm{SO}_3(k) \subset \mathrm{M}_2(k)$  be a finite subgroup. Then the action of  $G$  on  $\mathrm{PGL}_2$  by conjugation is equivalent to the left (linear) action of  $G$  on trace zero matrices  $\mathrm{M}_2^0 \subset \mathrm{M}_2$ . In particular,  $G \backslash \mathrm{PGL}_2$  is stably rational.*

LEMMA 3.4. — *The left action of  $(\mathbb{Z}/2)^2 \subset \mathrm{SO}_3 \hookrightarrow \mathrm{SO}_4$  is linear.*

*Proof.* — Consider the subgroup  $(\mathbb{Z}/2)^3 \subset \mathrm{SO}_4$ . It contains a central subgroup  $\mathbb{Z}/2$  and a complementary subgroup  $H_2 = (\mathbb{Z}/2)^2 \subset \mathrm{SO}_3 = \mathrm{PGL}_2$ . By Lemma 3.1, the conjugation action  $H_2 \subset \mathrm{PGL}_2$  is linear.

This is a subgroup of the diagonal subgroup  $\mathrm{SO}_3 = \mathrm{PGL}_2 \subset \mathrm{SL}_2 \times \mathrm{SL}_2 / (\mathbb{Z}/2)$ . Note that  $\mathrm{SO}_4$  is a product of  $\mathrm{SO}_3 = (h, h)$  and  $\mathrm{Spin}_3 = (g, 1)$ , and that conjugation by elements in  $(\mathbb{Z}/2)^2$  respects this decomposition. Thus the action is a vector bundle over  $\mathrm{SL}_2 / (\mathbb{Q}_8)_{\mathrm{conj}} = \mathrm{SL}_2 / (\mathbb{Z}/2)^2$  (where  $\mathbb{Q}_8$  are the quaternions).

Hence the action on  $\mathrm{SO}_4$  is linear and the automorphism  $F$  is the identity on the diagonal  $\mathrm{SO}_3$ . The same holds for the twisted  $F$ -action.  $\square$

LEMMA 3.5. — *Let  $\mathbf{G}$  be an algebraic group over  $k$ . Assume that  $\mathbf{G}$  admits an affine action on itself, e.g.,  $\mathbf{G} = \mathrm{GL}_n, \mathrm{SL}_n, \mathrm{Sp}_n$ . Let  $G \subset \mathbf{G}(k)$  be a finite subgroup which has trivial intersection with the center of  $\mathbf{G}$ .*

*Then the conjugation action of  $G$  on  $\mathbf{G}$  is stably birationally equivalent to a linear action.*

*Proof.* — By Corollary 2.7, the diagonal left translation action of  $G$  on  $\mathbf{G} \times \mathbf{G}$  is equivalent to the action on a principal  $\mathbf{G}$ -bundle over  $\mathbf{G}$ , with  $G$  acting on the base by conjugation. This proves the equivalence.  $\square$

COROLLARY 3.6. — *Let  $G \subset \mathbf{G}(k)$  be a finite subgroup as in Lemma 3.5. Assume that the action of  $G$  on  $\mathbf{G}$  by left translations is affine. Then both the left and the conjugation action of  $G$  on  $\mathbf{G}$  are stably birational to a linear action.*

PROPOSITION 3.7. — *Let  $\mathbf{G}$  be a classical simply-connected Lie group of type  $A$  or  $C$ , i.e.,  $\mathbf{G} = \mathrm{SL}_n$  or  $\mathbf{G} = \mathrm{Sp}_{2n}$  over  $k$ . Let  $G \subset \mathbf{G}(k)$  be a finite subgroup. Then  $\mathbf{G}$  is a  $G$ -affine variety, for the standard left action of  $G$ .*

*Proof.* — Note first that any finite subgroup  $G \subset \mathrm{GL}_n(k)$  induces a  $G$ -affine structure on  $\mathrm{GL}_n$ . Indeed,  $\mathrm{GL}_n \subset \mathbf{M}_{n \times n} = \bigoplus_{i=1}^n V^{(i)}$ , a direct sum of  $n$  copies of the standard representation  $V$  of  $\mathrm{GL}_n$ . Put  $B_0 = 0$ , a point, and  $X_1 := V^{(1)} = V$ . We have a canonical projection  $X_1 \rightarrow B_0$ . Define  $X_j \subset \bigoplus_{i=1}^j V^{(i)}$  as the set of those vectors, whose projections to  $\bigoplus_{i=1}^{j-1} V^{(i)}$  are linearly independent, and  $B_j \subset X_j$  as the subset of vectors in  $X_j$ , which are linearly independent in  $\bigoplus_{i=1}^j V^{(i)}$ , under the standard identification  $V = V^{(i)}$ . For any  $G \subset \mathrm{GL}_n$  this defines the structure of a  $G$ -ruling on  $\mathrm{GL}_n$  over a point.

For  $\mathbf{G} = \mathrm{SL}_n$ , and  $G \subset \mathbf{G}$  we have a similar  $G$ -ruling: For  $j = 1, \dots, n-1$  it is the same as above. For  $j = n$ , put  $X_n := \mathrm{SL}_n$ . The map  $X_n \rightarrow B_{n-1}$  is the restriction of the map above. Explicitly, it is the projection to the first  $(n-1)$ -vectors  $(v_1, \dots, v_{n-1})$ , with fiber an affine subspace  $F_{(v_1, \dots, v_{n-1})} \subset V^{(n)} = V$ , given by the affine equation in the coordinates of the last vector  $\det(v_1, \dots, v_n) = 1$ . Now we can apply Lemma 2.3 to conclude that  $\mathrm{SL}_n$  is  $G$ -affine.

Note that by Tsen's theorem, the morphism  $\mathrm{GL}_n \rightarrow \mathrm{GL}_n/\mathrm{SL}_n$  has a section. This gives a  $G$ -equivariant birational isomorphism  $\mathrm{SL}_n \times \mathbb{G}_m \rightarrow \mathrm{GL}_n$ .

The group  $G = \mathrm{Sp}_{2n}$  has a canonical embedding into  $M_{2n \times 2n}$ , defined by the equations

$$(3.1) \quad \omega(v_i, v_{i'}) = \delta_{i', n+i}, \quad \text{for } i < i',$$

( $\omega$  is the standard bilinear form and  $\delta$  is the delta function). The system of projections is induced from the one above:

$$X_j = \{(v_1, \dots, v_j)\} \subset \bigoplus_{i=1}^j V^{(i)},$$

satisfying equations (3.1), for indices  $1 \leq i < i' \leq j$ , and the property that the vectors  $v_1, \dots, v_{j-1}$  are linearly independent in  $V$ , under the identifications  $V^{(i)} = V$ . The subvariety  $B_j \subset X_j$  is given as the locus where  $v_1, \dots, v_j$  are linearly independent. Each map  $X_j \rightarrow B_{j-1}$  is an affine  $G$ -bundle, for any finite subgroup  $G \subset G(k)$  - its fibers are given by a system of *linear* equations on the coordinates of  $v_j$ .  $\square$

**PROPOSITION 3.8.** — *Let  $G = \mathrm{SO}_n$  and  $G \subset G(k)$  be a finite subgroup. Then there exist a  $G$ -ruling  $X$ , a variety  $Y$  with trivial  $G$ -action and a  $G$ -equivariant finite morphism*

$$\pi : G \times Y \rightarrow X.$$

Moreover,  $\deg(\pi) \mid 2^{n-1}$ .

*Proof.* — Keep the notations in the proof of Proposition 3.7:  $G \subset M_n$ .

Assume that  $\mathrm{char}(k) \neq 2$ . Every quadratic form can be diagonalized over  $k$ . Let  $X_n \subset M_n$  be the subvariety given by:

$$(3.2) \quad (v_i, v_{i'}) = \delta_{i', n+i}, \quad \text{for } i < i'.$$

The system of projections is the same as above:  $X_j \subset \bigoplus_{i=1}^j V^{(i)}$  is the subset of vectors satisfying equations (3.2), for indices  $1 \leq i < i' \leq j$ , and the condition that  $v_1, \dots, v_{j-1}$  are linearly independent. The subvariety  $B_j \subset X_j$  corresponds to  $j$ -tuples  $(v_1, \dots, v_j)$  which are linearly independent (as vectors in  $V = V^{(i)}$ ). Each map  $X_j \rightarrow B_{j-1}$  is a  $G$ -equivariant vector bundle, for any finite subgroup  $G \subset G(k)$ . Each  $X_j$  carries the action of a  $j$ -dimensional torus  $\mathbb{G}_m^j$ , over  $k$ , commuting with the action of  $G$ . The action of  $G \times \mathbb{G}_m^n$  on  $X_n$  is transitive, and the stabilizer of a general  $k$ -point has order  $2^{n-1}$ . The claim follows, for  $Y := \mathbb{G}_m^n$ .

Assume that  $\mathrm{char}(k) = 2$ . In this case,  $\mathrm{SO}_{2n+1} \simeq \mathrm{Sp}_{2n}$  and we can apply Proposition 3.7. We also have  $\mathrm{SO}_{2n} \subset \mathrm{Sp}_{2n}$ , where  $\mathrm{Sp}_{2n}(k)$  is the set of elements of  $\mathrm{GL}_{2n}(k)$  which preserve a symplectic bilinear form  $\omega$ , and  $\mathrm{SO}_{2n}(k)$  the set

of those elements which in addition preserve a quadratic form  $f$ . The forms are related by the condition

$$f(x + y) = f(x) + f(y) + \omega(x, y).$$

We may identify a general element  $\gamma \in \mathbf{Sp}_{2n}(k)$  with a choice of an orthogonal basis  $\{v_1, \dots, v_{2n}\}$ . Observe that the map

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{Sp}_{2n} &\rightarrow \mathbf{Sp}_{2n}/\mathbf{SO}_{2n} \sim \mathbb{A}^{2n} \\ \{v_1, \dots, v_{2n}\} &\mapsto (f(v_1), \dots, f(v_{2n})). \end{aligned}$$

Indeed,  $\gamma \in \mathbf{SO}_{2n}(k)$  if and only if  $f(\gamma x) = f(x)$ , for all  $x \in V$ . We have

$$\begin{aligned} f\left(\sum_{i=1}^{2n} a_i v_i\right) &= \sum_{i=1}^{2n} a_i^2 f(v_i) + \sum_{i \neq j} a_i a_j \omega(v_i, v_j) \\ &= \sum_{i=1}^{2n} a_i^2 f(\gamma v_i) + \sum_{i \neq j} a_i a_j \omega(\gamma v_i, \gamma v_j) \\ &= f\left(\gamma \left(\sum_{i=1}^{2n} a_i v_i\right)\right), \end{aligned}$$

since  $f(\gamma v_i) = f(v_i)$  and  $\gamma$  preserves  $\omega$ .

We claim that the bundle  $\mathbf{Sp}_{2n} \rightarrow \mathbf{Sp}_{2n}/\mathbf{SO}_{2n} \sim \mathbb{A}^{2n}$  admits a multisection of degree  $2^{2n}$ . Explicitly, it can be constructed as follows: fix an orthogonal basis  $\{v_1, \dots, v_{2n}\}$  such that  $f(v_i) \neq 0$ , for  $i = 1, \dots, 2n$ . We have an action of the affine group  $\mathbf{B} = \mathbb{G}_m \rtimes \mathbb{G}_a \subset \mathbf{SL}_2$  given by

$$(x_i, x_{n+i}) \mapsto (\lambda x_i, \mu x_i + \lambda^{-1} x_{n+i}), \quad \text{for } i = 1, \dots, n.$$

We claim that this gives a generically surjective map:

$$\mathbf{SO}_{2n} \times \mathbf{B}^n \rightarrow \mathbf{Sp}_{2n}$$

of degree  $2^{2n}$ . The image of  $\mathbf{B}^n \cdot \{f(v_1), \dots, f(v_{2n})\}$  is dense in  $\mathbb{A}^{2n}$ . Consider the intersection  $\mathbf{B}^n \cap \mathbf{SO}_{2n}$ :

$$f(v_i) = \lambda^2 f(v_i), \quad \text{and} \quad f(v_{i+n}) = \mu^2 f(v_i) + \lambda \mu \omega(v_i, v_{i+n}) + \lambda^{-2} f(v_{i+n}).$$

These equations can be solved in  $k$ , for each  $i = 1, \dots, n$ , and we have a dominant map  $\mathbf{SO}_{2n} \times \mathbf{B} \rightarrow \mathbb{A}_i^2$  of degree 4, for each  $i$ . This concludes the proof.  $\square$

#### 4. Stable cohomology

In this section we collect background material on the stable cohomology of finite groups, developing the theory over arbitrary algebraically closed fields  $k$ . We will omit  $k$  from the notation when the field is clear from the context.

For every finite group  $G$  and a  $G$ -module  $M$  we have the notion of *group cohomology*, as the derived functor  $M \mapsto M^G$ , the  $G$ -invariants, or, topologically, as the cohomology of the classifying space  $BG = X/G$ , where  $X$  is a contractible space with a fixed point free action of  $G$ .

Passing to algebraic geometry, let  $X$  be an algebraic variety over  $k$ , with an almost free action of a  $G$ . Let  $X^\circ \subset X$  be the locus where the action is free. Let  $M$  be a finite  $G$ -module. It defines a sheaf on  $\tilde{X} := X^\circ/G$ . This gives a homomorphism from group cohomology of  $G$  to étale cohomology of  $\tilde{X}$ :

$$H^i(G, M) \rightarrow H_{\text{ét}}^i(\tilde{X}, M).$$

Composing with restriction to the generic point we get a homomorphism

$$\sigma_i^* : H^i(G, M) \rightarrow H^i(\mathcal{G}_K, M),$$

where  $\mathcal{G}_K$  is the absolute Galois group of the function field  $K = k(\tilde{X})$ . There are canonical isomorphisms

$$H^i(\mathcal{G}_K, M) = \varinjlim_D H^i(X \setminus D, M),$$

where the limit is taken over divisors of  $D$ . We can interpret elements in the kernel of  $\sigma^*$  as classes vanishing on some Zariski open subvariety  $\tilde{U} \subset \tilde{X}$ .

REMARK 4.1. — Note that for fixed  $G$  and  $M$ , the groups  $\sigma_i^*(H^i(G, M)) = 0$ , for all  $i > \dim(X)$ , while the usual group cohomology need not vanish.

PROPOSITION 4.2. — *There exist a finite group  $\tilde{G}$  and a sequence*

$$\mathcal{G}_K \xrightarrow{\tilde{\sigma}} \tilde{G} \xrightarrow{\rho} G$$

*of homomorphisms  $\tilde{\sigma}$  and  $\rho$  such that for all  $0 \leq i \leq \dim(X)$  one has*

$$\text{Ker}(\sigma_i^*) \subset \text{Ker}(\rho_i^*),$$

*where  $\rho_i^* : H^i(\tilde{G}, M) \rightarrow H^i(G, M)$  is the induced map on group cohomology.*

*Proof.* — The cohomology classes in  $H^i(\mathcal{G}_K, \mathbb{Z}/\ell)$  are represented by continuous cocycles (in the natural topology on  $\mathcal{G}_K$ ). Any element is induced from a finite group  $H$ . If it vanishes it also vanishes on a finite quotient  $\tilde{G}$  of  $\mathcal{G}_K$  and the maps  $\mathcal{G}_K \rightarrow \tilde{G} \rightarrow G$  are continuous. Since the initial group  $H^i(G, \mathbb{Z}/\ell)$  is finite there exists a  $\tilde{G}$  where all elements from  $H^i(G, \mathbb{Z}/\ell)$ , which vanish on  $\mathcal{G}_K$  are killed.  $\square$

A special case of the above construction arises as follows: let  $\varrho : G \rightarrow V$  be a faithful representation over an algebraically closed field  $k$  and let  $K = k(V)^G$  be the function field of the quotient. We have induced maps

$$s_i^* : H^i(G, M) \rightarrow H^i(\mathcal{G}_K, M)$$

and we can define the *stable cohomology groups* over  $k$ :

$$H_{k,s}^i(G, M) := H^i(G, M) / \text{Ker}(s_i^*),$$

which we will often identify with their image in  $H^i(\mathcal{G}_K, M)$ .

PROPOSITION 4.3. — *The cohomology groups  $H_{k,s}^i(G, M)$*

- (1) *do not depend on the representation;*
- (2) *are functorial in  $G$ ;*
- (3) *are universal for  $G$ -actions: for any  $G$ -variety  $X$  over  $k$  the homomorphism  $H^i(G, M) \rightarrow H^i(\mathcal{G}_k(X), M)$  factors through  $H_{k,s}^i(G, M)$ ;*
- (4) *if  $M$  is an  $\ell$ -torsion module, then*

$$H_{k,s}^i(G, M) = H_{k,s}^i(\text{Syl}_\ell, M)^{\mathfrak{N}_\ell}$$

*where  $\text{Syl}_\ell = \text{Syl}_\ell(G)$  is an  $\ell$ -Sylow subgroup of  $G$  and  $\mathfrak{N}_\ell = \mathfrak{N}_\ell(G)$  its normalizer in  $G$ .*

*Proof.* — We apply Lemma 2.2. Choosing an appropriate Zariski open  $G$ -invariant subvariety  $X^\circ \subset X$  we can reduce to the affine case, with free  $G$ -action. Let  $V^\circ \subset V$  be a Zariski open subset where the action of  $G$  is free. Put  $\tilde{X} := G \backslash X^\circ$  and  $\tilde{V} := G \backslash V^\circ$ . We need to show that a class  $\alpha \in H^i(G, M)$  whose image in  $H^i(\mathcal{G}_k(\tilde{V}), M)$  is zero also vanishes in  $H^i(\mathcal{G}_k(\tilde{X}), M)$ . Such a class vanishes in  $H_{et}^i(\tilde{U}, M)$ , where  $\tilde{U} \subset \tilde{V}$  is an affine Zariski open subset. The preimage  $U$  of  $\tilde{U}$  in  $V$  is a nonempty  $G$ -invariant affine Zariski open subset. Thus there exist an affine nonempty  $G$ -invariant Zariski open subset  $U_X \subset X^\circ$  and a  $G$ -morphism  $\phi_U : X^\circ \rightarrow V$  such that  $\phi_U(U_X) \subset U$ . This

descends to a morphism  $\tilde{X} \supset \tilde{U}_X \rightarrow \tilde{U} \subset \tilde{V}$ . The image of  $\alpha$  under the composition

$$H^i(G, M) \rightarrow H_{et}^i(\tilde{U}, M) \rightarrow H_{et}^i(\tilde{U}_X, M) \rightarrow H_{et}^i(\mathcal{G}_{k(\tilde{X})}, M)$$

is zero. This proves (3). Applying this to  $X = V'$ , for another faithful representation, we get (1).

Property (2) is proved as follows: First, let  $H \subset G$  be a subgroup and  $V$  a faithful  $G$ -representation. Consider the morphism  $H \setminus V \rightarrow G \setminus V$ . A class vanishing on a Zariski open subset of  $G \setminus V$  also vanishes on a Zariski open subset of  $H \setminus V$ . Next, let  $G \rightarrow H$  be a surjective homomorphism and  $V_G$ , resp.  $V_H$ , a faithful representation of  $G$ , resp.  $H$ . Then  $W_G := V_H \oplus V_G$  is a faithful representation of  $G$  and we have a commutative diagram

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \mathcal{G}_{k(G \setminus W_G)} & \rightarrow & \mathcal{G}_{k(H \setminus V_H)} \\ \downarrow & & \downarrow \\ G & \rightarrow & H, \end{array}$$

giving natural maps on cohomology.

We proceed with the proof of Property (4). Since  $\ell$  and the cardinality of  $G/\text{Syl}_\ell$  are coprime, the map  $\text{Syl}_\ell \setminus V \rightarrow G \setminus V$  induces an invertible map on the cohomology of the open subvarieties of  $G \setminus V$ . The group  $\mathfrak{N}_\ell(G)/\text{Syl}_\ell(G)$  has order prime to  $\ell$ . The action of  $\mathfrak{N}_\ell(G)/\text{Syl}_\ell(G)$  on  $M$  decomposes the module into a direct sum; so that

$$H^i(\text{Syl}_\ell(G), M) = H^i(\text{Syl}_\ell(G), M)^{\mathfrak{N}_\ell(G)} \oplus R,$$

so that the restriction of the trace map is zero on the module  $R$ .

We have

$$H^i(G, M) \xrightarrow{\sim} H^i(\text{Syl}_\ell(G), M) \subset H^i(\text{Syl}_\ell(G), M)^{\mathfrak{N}(\text{Syl}_\ell(G))}.$$

Consider the image of  $r \in R$  in  $H_{k,s}^*(\text{Syl}_\ell(G), M)$ . We get a direct decomposition  $H_s^i(\text{Syl}_\ell(G), M)^{\mathfrak{N}(\text{Syl}_\ell(G))} \oplus R_s$ , with  $\text{Tr}(r) = 0$ . Thus  $H_{k,s}^i(G, M)$  surjects onto  $H^i(\text{Syl}_\ell(G), M)^{\mathfrak{N}(\text{Syl}_\ell(G))}$ , and the map is an isomorphism.  $\square$

**LEMMA 4.4.** — *Let  $V$  be a representation space for a faithful representation of group  $G$  over an algebraically closed field  $k$ . Assume that  $G \setminus V$  is isomorphic to affine space. Then any nontrivial element  $\alpha \in H_{k,s}(G, \mathbb{Z}/\ell)$  has nontrivial restriction to the stable cohomology of a centralizer of a quasi-reflection in  $G$ .*

*Proof.* — If  $\alpha \in H_{k,s}^*(k(\mathbb{A}^n), \mathbb{Z}/\ell)$  is nontrivial, then the residue of  $\alpha$  is nontrivial on some irreducible divisor  $D \subset \mathbb{A}^n = G \backslash V$  (see [6]). The preimage of  $D$  in  $V$  is a union of irreducible divisors  $D_1, \dots, D_r$ . For each  $i$ , there exists a nontrivial  $\gamma_i \in G$  acting trivially on all points of  $D_i$ . Thus each  $D_i$  is a hyperplane in  $V$ . Hence  $\gamma_i$  is a quasi-reflection.  $\square$

COROLLARY 4.5. — *Let  $\mathcal{W}$  be a Weyl group. Then*

$$H_{k,s}^i(\mathcal{W}, \mathbb{Z}/\ell) = 0, \quad \text{for all } i > 0 \text{ and all } \ell \neq 2.$$

*We have*

$$H_{k,s}^i(\mathcal{W}, \mathbb{Z}/2) \hookrightarrow \bigoplus_{\tau} H_{k,s}^i(\tau, (\mathbb{Z}/2)^{r_{\tau}}),$$

*where  $\tau$  runs over the set of 2-elementary abelian subgroups of  $\mathcal{W}$ , modulo conjugation, and  $r_{\tau} \in \mathbb{N}$ .*

*Proof.* — The quasi-reflections in the standard faithful representation of  $\mathcal{W}$  have order 2. Their centralizers are products of powers of  $\mathbb{Z}/2$  with smaller Weyl groups. It suffices to apply induction.  $\square$

REMARK 4.6. — It is possible to obtain a more precise vanishing result following the approach for  $\mathcal{W} = \mathfrak{S}_n$  in [9].

## 5. Comparison with Serre's negligible classes

Stable cohomology was defined by the first author in [2] and [3]. J.P. Serre, defined a related but somewhat different notion [14, p. 170].

In his terminology, *negligible* elements  $\alpha \in H^*(G, M)$  are those which are killed under every surjective homomorphism  $\mathcal{G}_K \rightarrow G$ , where  $K = k(\tilde{X})$  is the function field of a quotient  $\tilde{X} = G \backslash X^\circ$ . Negligible elements form an ideal in the total ring  $H^*(G, M)$ .

We are considering a smaller set of homomorphisms  $\mathcal{G}_K \rightarrow G$ , namely from Galois groups of fields of type  $K = k(V)^G$ , and the ideal of negligible classes defined by Serre is smaller. The resulting groups are different (for example, for  $\mathbb{Z}/2$ -coefficients). The quotient ring obtained by Serre's construction surjects onto the ring  $H_{k,s}^*(G, M)$ , for any algebraically closed  $k$ .

## 6. Unramified cohomology

Here we study unramified cohomology, which was introduced in [4] and [6] (see also [7]). Let  $K = k(X)$  be a function field over an algebraically closed field  $k$ , and  $M$  an étale sheaf on  $X$ . For every divisorial valuation  $\nu \in \text{Val}_K$  of  $K$  we have a split exact sequence

$$1 \rightarrow \mathcal{I}_\nu \rightarrow \mathcal{G}_{K_\nu} \rightarrow \mathcal{G}_{\mathbf{K}_\nu} \rightarrow 1$$

where  $K_\nu$  is the completion of  $K$  with respect to  $\nu$ ,  $\mathbf{K}_\nu$  the residue field and  $\mathcal{I}_\nu$  is the inertia group. This gives an exact sequence in Galois cohomology

$$H^i(\mathcal{G}_{K_\nu}, M^{\mathcal{I}_\nu}) \rightarrow H^i(\mathcal{G}_{K_\nu}, M) \xrightarrow{\delta_\nu} H^{i-1}(\mathcal{G}_{\mathbf{K}_\nu}, \mathcal{I}_\nu M)$$

where  $M^{\mathcal{I}_\nu}$ , resp.  $\mathcal{I}_\nu M$ , are the sheaves of invariants, resp. coinvariants. Unramified cohomology is defined by

$$H_{k,un}^i(\mathcal{G}_K, M) := \bigcap_{\nu \in \text{Val}_K} \text{Ker}(\delta_\nu) \subset H^i(\mathcal{G}_K, M).$$

LEMMA 6.1. — *Let  $\pi : X \rightarrow Y$  be a surjective morphism of algebraic varieties over  $k$ , and  $M$  an étale sheaf on  $Y$ . Then there is a natural homomorphism:*

$$\pi^* : H_{k,un}^i(Y, M) \rightarrow H_{k,un}^i(X, \pi^*(M)).$$

Moreover, if  $\pi$  is finite, then there is a natural homomorphism

$$\pi_* : H_{k,un}^i(X, \pi^*(M)) \rightarrow H_{k,un}^i(Y, M)$$

and the composition  $\pi_* \circ \pi^*$  is multiplication by the degree of  $\pi$ .

*Proof.* — We have an embedding  $\pi^* : k(X) \hookrightarrow k(Y)$  of function fields and a the corresponding map  $\pi_* : \mathcal{G}_{k(Y)} \rightarrow \mathcal{G}_{k(X)}$  of Galois groups. A divisorial valuation  $\nu$  of  $k(Y)$  is either trivial on  $\pi^*(k(X))$  or defines a divisorial valuation  $\nu^*$  on  $k(X)$ . If  $\nu$  is trivial on  $\pi^*(k(X))$ , then  $\pi_*(\mathcal{I}_\nu)$  for the inertia subgroup  $\mathcal{I}_\nu \subset \mathcal{G}_{k(Y)_\nu}$  and hence  $\delta_\nu$  is zero on  $\pi^* H^*(\mathcal{G}_{k(X)}, M)$ . If  $\nu$  on  $\pi^*(k(X))$  coincides with  $\nu^*$  then under the induced map  $\pi_* : \mathcal{G}_{k(Y)_\nu} \rightarrow \mathcal{G}_{k(X)_{\nu^*}}$  we have  $\pi_*(\mathcal{I}_\nu) \subset \mathcal{I}_{\nu^*}$ . Thus  $\delta_{\nu^*}(\alpha) = 0$  implies that  $\delta_\nu \pi^*(\alpha) = 0$  for all  $\alpha \in H_{k,un}^*(\mathcal{G}_{k(X)}, M)$ .  $\square$

Let  $G$  be a finite group and  $V$  a faithful  $G$ -representation as above. Let  $K = k(V)^G$  be the function field of the quotient. We can consider its stable cohomology groups  $H_{k,s}^i(G, M)$  as subgroups of  $H^i(\mathcal{G}_K, M)$ . Define *unramified cohomology groups*

$$H_{k,un}(G, M) := H_{k,s}^i(G, M) \cap H_{k,un}^i(\mathcal{G}_K, M).$$

PROPOSITION 6.2. — *Assume that  $\text{char}(k) \nmid |M|$ . Then the unramified cohomology groups  $H_{k,un}^i(G, M)$*

- *do not depend on the representation  $V$ ;*
- *are functorial in  $G$ .*

*Proof.* — Let  $V, V'$  be two faithful representations of  $G$  and consider the diagram:

$$\begin{array}{ccc} G \backslash (V \times V') & \rightarrow & G \backslash V' \\ \downarrow & & \\ G \backslash V & & \end{array}$$

The case of constant coefficients follows from [8] and the observation that both arrows in the above diagram are natural vector bundles on the quotients. A small modification of the argument proves the claim for a general  $G$ -module  $M$ .  $\square$

## 7. General vanishing results

In this section, we work over  $k = \bar{\mathbb{F}}_p$ . Here we collect general arguments proving the triviality of stable and unramified cohomology groups.

THEOREM 7.1. — *Let  $G$  be a finite group and  $M$  a finite  $p$ -torsion  $G$ -module. Then,  $H_{k,s}^i(G, M) = 0$ , for all  $i > 0$ .*

*Proof.* — See [14, Chapter 2, Proposition 3].  $\square$

The main reason for introducing the unramified cohomology group is:

THEOREM 7.2. — *Let  $V$  be a faithful representation of  $G$ . If  $K = k(V)^G$  is a purely transcendental extension of  $k$ , then, for all  $i > 0$ , we have*

$$H_{k,un}^i(G, \mathbb{Z}/\ell) = 0.$$

*Proof.* — Immediate from [6, Corollary 1.2.1].  $\square$

THEOREM 7.3 (Lang). — *Let  $\mathbf{G}$  be an algebraic group over  $k$ . Let  $F$  be an automorphism of  $\mathbf{G}(k)$  which is a composition of an element in  $\text{Aut}(\mathbf{G})(k)$  and a Frobenius of  $k = \bar{\mathbb{F}}_p$ . Let  $G = G^F \subset \mathbf{G}(k)$  be the finite subgroup fixed by  $F$ . Then  $G \backslash \mathbf{G} \simeq G$ , hence is a rational variety.*

*Proof.* — Consider the map

$$\begin{aligned} \tau : \mathbf{G} &\rightarrow \mathbf{G} \\ x &\rightarrow F(x)^{-1}x. \end{aligned}$$

The action of  $\tau$  on the Lie algebra of  $\mathbf{G}$  is surjective with kernel a finite subgroup  $G = G^F$ . Note that  $\tau$  coincides with the composition

$$\tau : \mathbf{G} \rightarrow G \backslash \mathbf{G} \rightarrow \mathbf{G}.$$

Indeed, if  $\tau(x) = \tau(y)$ , then  $F(x)^{-1}x = F(y)^{-1}y$ , or  $F(xy^{-1})^{-1}xy^{-1} = 1$ , or  $xy^{-1} \in G$ . It follows that  $x = gy, g \in G$ . The converse is clear. Thus  $G \backslash \mathbf{G}$  is rational.  $\square$

LEMMA 7.4. — *Let  $\ell$  be a prime and  $\pi : X \rightarrow Y$  a separable morphism  $k$ -varieties of finite degree prime to  $\ell$ . Assume that  $H_{k,un}^i(X, \mathbb{Z}/\ell) = 0$ . Then  $H_{k,un}^i(Y, \mathbb{Z}/\ell) = 0$ .*

*Proof.* — Immediate from Lemma 6.1: the degree  $\deg(\pi)$  is prime to  $\ell$  and multiplication by  $\deg(\pi)$  is invertible on  $H_{k,un}^i(Y, \mathbb{Z}/\ell)$ .  $\square$

This lemma will be applied to  $Y = G \backslash V$ . The goal will be to construct  $X$  with vanishing unramified cohomology.

COROLLARY 7.5. — *Let  $G = G^F \subset \mathbf{G}(k)$  be as above. Let  $X$  be a  $G$ -linear variety over  $k$ . Assume that there exist a variety  $Y$  over  $k$ , with trivial  $G$ -action, and a  $G$ -equivariant finite morphism*

$$\pi : \mathbf{G} \times Y \rightarrow X.$$

*Let  $S$  be the set of all primes dividing the degree of  $\pi$ . Then*

$$H_{k,un}^i(G, \mathbb{Z}/\ell) = 0, \text{ for all } i > 0 \text{ and } \ell \notin S \cup \{p\}.$$

*Proof.* — Any affine connected algebraic group over  $k = \bar{\mathbb{F}}_p$  is rational. By Lang's theorem, the quotient  $G \backslash \mathbf{G}$  is isomorphic to  $\mathbf{G}$ , and thus rational. For primes  $\ell \notin S \cup \{p\}$  not dividing the degree of  $\pi$ , the induced map on cohomology is injective. This concludes the proof.  $\square$

THEOREM 7.6. — *Let  $\mathbf{G}$  be a Lie group over  $k$ . Let  $G = G^F \subset \mathbf{G}(k)$  be a finite subgroup. Put*

$$s(G) := \begin{cases} \{p, 2\} & \text{for } G \text{ of type } C \text{ or } D_n, n \geq 5; \\ \{p, 2, 3\} & \text{for } G \text{ of type } D_4, F_4, E_6, E_7; \\ \{p\} & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

Then

$$H_{k,un}^i(G, \mathbb{Z}/\ell) = 0$$

for all  $\ell \notin s(G)$ .

We have a natural homomorphism

$$H^i(G, \mathbb{Z}/\ell) \rightarrow H^i(G \backslash \mathbf{G}, \mathbb{Z}/\ell).$$

By Lang's theorem 7.3,  $G \backslash \mathbf{G} \simeq \mathbf{G}$ , as algebraic varieties. Thus we get a homomorphism

$$\rho : H^i(G, \mathbb{Z}/\ell) \rightarrow H_{et}^i(\mathbf{G}, \mathbb{Z}/\ell).$$

Assume that  $\mathbf{G}$  is semi-simple. Then  $\text{Pic}(\mathbf{G}) \simeq \pi_1(\mathbf{G})$  is a finite group and  $\mathbf{G} = \tilde{\mathbf{G}}/\text{Pic}(\mathbf{G})$ , where  $\tilde{\mathbf{G}}$  is the universal cover of  $\mathbf{G}$ . We obtain a natural homomorphism

$$\eta : H_{et}^i(\text{Pic}(\mathbf{G}), \mathbb{Z}/\ell) \rightarrow H_{et}^i(\mathbf{G}, \mathbb{Z}/\ell).$$

**THEOREM 7.7.** — *Let  $\mathbf{G}$  be a semi-simple Lie group over  $k$ . Let  $G = G^F \subset \mathbf{G}(k)$  be a finite subgroup. Consider the diagram*

$$\begin{array}{ccc} & H_{et}^i(\text{Pic}(\mathbf{G}), \mathbb{Z}/\ell) & \\ & \uparrow \sigma_*^i \circ \eta & \\ H^i(G, \mathbb{Z}/\ell) & \xrightarrow{\sigma_*^i \circ \rho} & H_{k,s}^i(\mathbf{G}, \mathbb{Z}/\ell). \end{array}$$

*Then the image of  $\rho$  is contained in the image of  $\eta$ .*

*Proof.* — Standard computation using restriction of the fibration  $\mathbf{G} \rightarrow \mathbf{G}/\mathbf{T}$  to  $\mathbf{G}^\circ = \mathbf{T} \times \mathbb{A}^N$  and the transgression homomorphism. Geometrically, the map  $\sigma^* \circ \nu$  in the diagram corresponds to the embedding of the maximal Bruhat cell  $U^+ \mathbf{T} U^-$  into the  $G \backslash \mathbf{G} = \mathbf{G}$ , where  $\mathbf{T}$  is the maximal torus. We have

$$H_{k,s}^*(\mathbf{T}, \mathbb{Z}/\ell) = H^*(\mathbf{T}, \mathbb{Z}/\ell),$$

for  $\ell \neq p$ , and these coincide with  $H^*(\text{Pic}(\mathbf{T}) \otimes \mathbb{Z}/\ell, \mathbb{Z}/\ell)$ . □

**COROLLARY 7.8.** — *Assume that  $\mathbf{G}$  is simply-connected and that the natural translation action of  $\mathbf{G}$  on itself is affine. Then*

$$H_{k,s}^i(\mathbf{G}, \mathbb{Z}/\ell) = 0,$$

for all  $i > 0$  and  $\ell \nmid q$ .

*Proof.* — For simply-connected  $\mathbf{G}$  the image of  $H^*(\mathbf{G}, \mathbb{Z}/\ell)$  in  $H_{k,s}^*(\mathbb{T}, \mathbb{Z}/\ell)$  is trivial. This follows from the computation of the transgression homomorphism for  $\mathbf{G}/\mathbb{T}$ , since  $\mathbf{G}$  is a  $\mathbb{T}$ -torsor over  $\mathbf{G}/\mathbb{T}$ , with  $\text{Pic}(\mathbf{G}/\mathbb{T})$  isomorphic to the character group of the maximal torus  $\mathbb{T}$ . Geometrically, this corresponds to the fact that  $\mathbb{T}$  is contractible in  $\mathbf{G}$ , provided  $\mathbf{G}$  is simply-connected.  $\square$

**COROLLARY 7.9.** — *Let  $\mathbf{G}$  be a semi-simple Lie group over  $k$  and  $G \subset \mathbf{G}(k)$ . Then the image of  $H_{k,un}^i(G)$  in  $H_{k,s}^i(G \backslash \mathbf{G}(k)/G, \mathbb{Z}/\ell)$  is trivial.*

*Proof.* — The group  $G$  is contained in a subgroup  $G^F$  of  $\mathbf{G}(k)$ , for some  $F$ , and  $G = [G(k)^F, G(k)^F]$  in this case, with  $G^F/G$  a group of order coprime to  $p$ . As before  $G^F \backslash \mathbf{G} = \mathbf{G}$  as an algebraic variety, which contains the cell  $\mathbf{U}^- \mathbb{T} \mathbf{U}^+$ . Thus  $G \backslash \mathbf{G}$  contains a finite abelian unramified covering of  $\mathbf{U}^- \mathbb{T} \mathbf{U}^+$  which is also a product  $\mathbf{U}^- \tilde{\mathbb{T}} \mathbf{U}^+$ , where  $\tilde{\mathbb{T}}$  is a torus. The cohomology  $H_{k,s}^i(G \backslash \mathbf{G}, \mathbb{Z}/\ell)$  embeds into the cohomology of  $\tilde{\mathbb{T}}$ . Hence  $H_{k,un}^i(G, \mathbb{Z}/\ell)$  map to zero.  $\square$

## 8. Reduction to Sylow subgroups

Let  $G$  be a finite group. For  $H \subset G$  let  $\mathfrak{N}_G(H)$  denote the normalizer of  $H$ . Let  $\text{Syl}_\ell(G)$  be an  $\ell$ -Sylow subgroup of  $G$ . Recall the following classical result (see, e.g., [1, Section III.5]):

$$H^i(G, \mathbb{Z}/\ell) = H^i(\text{Syl}_\ell(G), \mathbb{Z}/\ell)^{\mathfrak{N}_G(\text{Syl}_\ell(G))}.$$

**THEOREM 8.1.** — *Let  $G$  be a finite group. Let  $\ell$  be a prime distinct from the characteristic of  $k$ . Then there is an isomorphism*

$$H_{k,s}^i(G, \mathbb{Z}/\ell) \xrightarrow{\sim} H_{k,s}^i(\text{Syl}_\ell(G), \mathbb{Z}/\ell)^{\mathfrak{N}_G(\text{Syl}_\ell(G))}.$$

*Similarly,*

$$H_{k,un}^i(G, \mathbb{Z}/\ell) \xrightarrow{\sim} H_{k,un}^i(\text{Syl}_\ell(G), \mathbb{Z}/\ell)^{\mathfrak{N}_G(\text{Syl}_\ell(G))}.$$

*Proof.* — Let  $V$  be a faithful representation of  $G$  over  $k$ . Then the map

$$\pi : \text{Syl}_\ell(G) \backslash V \rightarrow G \backslash V$$

is a finite, separable and surjective map of degree prime to  $\ell$ . Hence  $\pi_* \circ \pi^*$  is invertible in cohomology. This implies the first claim.

The fact that the local ramification indices of  $\pi$  are coprime to  $\ell$  implies the second claim.  $\square$

LEMMA 8.2. — *Let  $G \subset \mathbf{G}(k)$  be a finite subgroup of a Lie group  $\mathbf{G}$  over  $k$  which has a trivial intersection with the center of  $\mathbf{G}(k)$ . Let  $G^{int} \backslash \mathbf{G}$  be the quotient of  $\mathbf{G}$  by the conjugation action of  $G$ . Then the homomorphisms*

$$h^{int} : H_{k,s}^i(G, \mathbb{Z}/\ell) \rightarrow H_{k,s}^i(G^{int} \backslash \mathbf{G}, \mathbb{Z}/\ell)$$

and

$$h_{un}^{int} : H_{k,un}^i(G, \mathbb{Z}/\ell) \rightarrow H_{k,un}^i(G^{int} \backslash \mathbf{G}, \mathbb{Z}/\ell)$$

are injective.

*Proof.* — The conjugation action of  $G$  on  $\mathbf{G}$  is almost free, and the maps  $h^{int}, h_{un}^{int}$  are well-defined. The identity  $e \in G(k)$  is a smooth invariant point for the conjugation action. In particular, the local (conjugation) action of any  $\ell$ -Sylow subgroup of  $G$  lifts to characteristic 0 with the same invariant point. The action of  $\text{Syl}_\ell(G)$ ,  $\ell \neq p$ , in a formal neighborhood of  $e$  is equivalent to the linear action on the tangent space  $T\mathbf{G}|_e$  at  $e$  and lifts to a linear representation of  $\text{Syl}_\ell(G)$  in characteristic 0. Since the linear action of  $G$  on the linear space  $T\mathbf{G}|_e$  over  $k$  is equivariant with respect to the locally free action of  $\text{Syl}_\ell(G)$  on  $T\mathbf{G}|_e$ , any element of  $H^i(\text{Syl}_\ell(G), \mathbb{Z}/\ell)$  which is trivial in the quotient of the formal neighborhood of  $0 \in \hat{H}_{k,s}^i(T\mathbf{G}|_e/\text{Syl}_\ell(G), \mathbb{Z}/\ell)$  will also be trivial in  $H_{k,s}^i(T\mathbf{G}|_e/\text{Syl}_\ell(G), \mathbb{Z}/\ell) = H_{k,s}^i(G, \mathbb{Z}/\ell)$ .

This proves the injectivity of  $h^{int}$ . The same argument works for  $h_{un}^{int}$ .  $\square$

LEMMA 8.3. — *Let  $G, H$  be finite groups. Let  $\rho : H \rightarrow W$  be a faithful  $k$ -representation of  $H$ . Assume that  $H \backslash W$  is stably rational. Let  $U$  be a faithful representation of  $\tilde{G} := H \wr_S G$ , where  $S$  is a finite  $G$ -set. Then  $\tilde{G} \backslash U$  is stably birationally equivalent to  $G \backslash V$ , where  $V$  is a faithful representation of  $G$ .*

*Proof.* — Put

$$\rho_S = \bigoplus_{s \in S} \rho_s : H_S := \prod_{s \in S} H_s \rightarrow \text{Aut}(W_S), \quad W_S = \bigoplus_{s \in S} W_s,$$

where  $H_s = H$ ,  $W_s = W$ , for all  $s \in S$ , and  $\rho_s = \rho$  on the factor  $H_s$  and trivial on  $H_{s'}$ , for  $s' \neq s$ . We construct  $U := V' \oplus W_S$ , where  $V'$  is a faithful representation of  $G$  and extend the action of  $G$  to  $V_S$  via the  $G$ -action on  $S$ . This gives a representation of  $\tilde{G} = H \wr_S G$  in  $\text{Aut}(U)$ . The quotient space is a fibration over  $G \backslash V'$  with fibers  $(H \backslash W)^{|S|}$ . We can assume that  $H \backslash W$  is rational. The action of  $G$  on  $(H \backslash W)^{|S|}$  permutes the coordinates. It follows that  $\tilde{G} \backslash U$  is birationally equivalent to a vector bundle over  $G \backslash V'$ .  $\square$

COROLLARY 8.4. — *Let  $G = \text{Syl}_\ell(\mathfrak{S}_n)$  and let  $V$  be a faithful representation of  $G$ . Then  $G \backslash V$  is stably rational.*

*Proof.* — The  $\ell$ -Sylow subgroups of  $\mathfrak{S}_n$  are products of wreath products of groups  $\mathbb{Z}/\ell \wr \cdots \wr \mathbb{Z}/\ell$  (see [1, VI.1]). The quotient  $H \backslash W$  is rational, for a faithful representation  $W$  of  $H = \mathbb{Z}/\ell$ . We apply induction to conclude that the quotient  $G \backslash V$  is stably rational.  $\square$

COROLLARY 8.5. — *Let  $G = \text{Syl}_\ell(\text{GL}_n(\mathbb{F}_q))$ , with  $\ell \nmid q$ , and let  $V$  be a faithful representation of  $G$ . Then  $G \backslash V$  is stably rational.*

*Proof.* — The structure of  $\ell$ -Sylow subgroups of  $\text{GL}_n(\mathbb{F}_q)$  is known (see [1, VII.4]: it is also a product of iterated wreath products of cyclic  $\ell$ -groups. Thus we can apply Lemma 8.3.  $\square$

COROLLARY 8.6. — *Let  $k$  be an algebraically closed field of characteristic zero. Then*

$$H_{k,un}^i(\text{GL}_n(\mathbb{F}_q), \mathbb{Z}/\ell) = 0 \quad \text{for all } i > 0, \text{ and } \ell \nmid q.$$

REMARK 8.7. — Similar computations can be performed for some other finite groups of Lie type, e.g., for  $\text{O}_{2m}^\pm(\mathbb{F}_q)$  and  $\text{Sp}_n(\mathbb{F}_q)$ .

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