THE RELATIONS OF PLÜCKER COORDINATES TO SCHUBERT CALCULUS

ERSAN AKYILDIZ & YILMAZ AKYILDIZ

To the memory of our mother Nahide Çalĭşkan

Abstract

We study the relation between the nilpotent and classical descriptions of the cohomology ring of the Grassmann manifold $G_{k,n}$. Our main result is that the Plücker coordinates form a basis for the nilpotent description of the cohomology ring of $G_{k,n}$, which are dual to the Schubert cycles. We also prove that the cohomology ring of any Schubert subvariety of $G_{k,n}$ admits a nilpotent description.

0. Introduction

Let X be a nonsingular complex projective variety having an SL₂ action with the property that any maximal unipotent subgroup of SL₂ has only isolated fixed points. The cohomology ring $H^*(X, \mathbb{C})$ of such an X has been studied in [3], where the authors proved that $H^*(X, \mathbb{C})$ admits the so-called nilpotent and semi-simple descriptions. We start with summarizing these results. Let **B** denote the group of upper triangular matrices in SL₂, and suppose V and V_s are respectively the holomorphic vector fields generated by the maximal unipotent subgroup and maximal torus in **B**. The nilpotent description of $H^*(X, \mathbb{C})$ says that the coordinate ring A(Z) of the zero scheme Z of V has a canonical grading making it isomorphic in the sense of graded rings with $H^*(X, \mathbb{C})$. In the semi-simple case, however, even though the variety Z_s of the zeros of V_s contains only isolated points, the coordinate ring $A(Z_s)$ of Z_s is not graded. But, $A(Z_s)$ admits a filtration $F_0 \subset F_1 \subset \cdots$ such that $F_pF_q \subseteq F_{p+q}$ and

$$\operatorname{Gr}(A(Z_s)) = \bigoplus F_p/F_{p-1} \xrightarrow{\sim} \bigoplus H^{2p}(X, \mathbb{C}) = H^*(X, \mathbb{C}).$$

For any parabolic subgroup P of a complex reductive linear algebraic group G, the space G/P admits such an SL₂ action [3]. Thus, the cohomology ring of

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G/P has the semi-simple and nilpotent descriptions. On the other hand, there is the classical description of $H^*(G/P, \mathbb{C})$, which goes back to Schubert. It is based on the calculation of the homology with the aid of the partition of G/Pinto the so-called Schubert cells. The relation between the semi-simple and the classical descriptions of the cohomology ring of G/P has been studied by Gel'fand et al. in [5], where the authors constructed a basis in the semi-simple description dual to the Schubert cycles. In this paper, we study the similar problem for the nilpotent and classical descriptions of the cohomology ring of the Grassmann manifold $G_{k,n}$. In Theorem 3.1 we prove that the Plücker coordinates form a basis for the nilpotent description A(Z) of $H^*(G_{k,n}; \mathbb{C})$, which are dual to the Schubert cycles. We also prove in Theorem 3.2 that for any Schubert subvariety Y of $G_{k,n}$ the coordinate ring $A(Y \cap Z)$ of the scheme theoretic intersection $Y \cap Z$ of Y and Z is isomorphic to the cohomology ring $H^*(Y, \mathbb{C})$ of Y. This gives an affirmative answer to the conjecture in [3] for the Grassmann manifolds.

The paper is organized as follows. In §1 we state the known results on the cohomology ring of a complex projective variety X with an SL_2 action. In §2, we compute the ideal I(Z) defining the closed subscheme Z in the full flag manifold. In §3, we prove our main results.

1. Preliminaries and the nilpotent description A(Z)

In this section we explain the grading of the nilpotent description A(Z) of $H^*(X, \mathbb{C})$ and review the generalizations of the nilpotent and semi-simple description of $H^*(X, \mathbb{C})$ to the singular subvarieties of X.

We start with the grading of A(Z). We will assume that V has only one zero x_0 . The general case is similar. Since the point x_0 is also fixed by the maximal torus $H \cong \mathbb{C}^*$ in \mathbb{B} , \mathbb{C}^* acts on the tangent space $T_{x_0}X$ of X at x_0 [3]. Thus \mathbb{C}^* acts on the symmetric algebra $A = \text{Sym}(T_{x_0}^*X)$ of the cotangent space of X at x_0 . The weight decomposition of this action makes A into a graded algebra. In the following theorem, A will be a regarded as a graded algebra with this gradation.

Theorem 1.1 ([3], the nilpotent description). There exists a \mathbb{C}^* -invariant open affine neighborhood U of x_0 such that U is \mathbb{C}^* -equivariantly isomorphic to $\operatorname{Spec}(A)$, and consequently, the ring of regular functions A(U) on U admits a graded algebra structure. The ideal I(Z) of the zero scheme Z of V is homogeneous in A(U), and moreover A(Z) = A(U)/I(Z) is isomorphic to $H^*(X, \mathbb{C})$.

The generalizations of the semi-simple and nilpotent descriptions of $H^*(X, \mathbb{C})$ to the singular subvarieties of X have been studied in [4], where

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the following results were obtained as particular cases: Let Y be a **B**-invariant subvariety of X such that $H^*(X, \mathbb{C})$ surjects into $H^*(Y, \mathbb{C})$. In the semi-simple case, the coordinate ring $A(Y \cap Z_s)$ of the intersection $Y \cap Z_s$ of Y and Z_s has a filtration such that the associated graded algebra $Gr(A(Y \cap Z_s))$ admits a homomorphism into $H^*(Y, \mathbb{C})$ making the following commutative diagram:

In this case the main result is that the map

$$\phi: \operatorname{Gr}(A(Y \cap Z_s)) \to H^*(Y, \mathbb{C})$$

is an isomorphism, i.e., $H^*(Y, \mathbb{C})$ admits a semi-simple description. On the other hand, in the nilpotent case A(Z), there is a canonical grading of the coordinate ring $A(Y \cap Z)$ of the scheme theoretic intersection $Y \cap Z$ of Y and Z such that the natural map $A(Z) \to A(Y \cap Z)$ is a graded algebra homomorphism. The main theorem is that $A(Y \cap Z)$ admits a homomorphism into $H^*(Y, \mathbb{C})$, which is compatible with the isomorphism $\psi: A(Z) \xrightarrow{\sim} H^*(X, \mathbb{C})$ (cf. [3], [4]). Thus, the map ψ induces a surjective graded algebra homomorphism

$$\overline{\psi}: A(Y \cap Z) \to H^*(Y, \mathbb{C}).$$

While $\overline{\phi}$ is an isomorphism in the semi-simple case, it is not known whether this is true for $\overline{\psi}$ in the nilpotent case. But, when X is the algebraic homogeneous space G/P and Y is a Schubert subvariety of G/P, it has been conjectured in [3] that $\overline{\psi}$ is an isomorphism. This would imply that the cohomology ring of a Schubert variety Y in G/P admits a nilpotent description.

2. Graded algebra A(Z) when $X = GL_n/B$

In this section we give the complete description of A(Z) when $X = \operatorname{GL}_n/B$ is the full flag manifold or the Grassmann manifold $G_{k,n}$ of k-planes in \mathbb{C}^n .

Let $G = \operatorname{GL}_n$, and let B be the group of upper triangular matrices in G, P the parabolic subgroup of all matrices in G of the form $\begin{pmatrix} A & * \\ 0 & C \end{pmatrix}$, where 0 is the $(n-k) \times k$ zero matrix, $\pi: G/B \to B/P$ the natural projection map, e_{ij} the $n \times n$ matrix having 1 in the (i, j)th entry and zero everywhere else, $n = \sum_{i=1}^{n-1} e_{i,i+1}$, and x_0 (resp. $\pi(x_0)$) the element B (resp. P) in G/B (resp. G/P). By the Jacobson-Morosov Lemma, associated with n there exists an SL₂ action on G/B (resp. G/P) such that the vector field \tilde{V} (resp. V) generated by the maximal unipotent subgroup in \mathbb{B} is induced from the one

parameter subgroup $\exp(tn)$ of G, and has exactly one zero x_0 (resp. $\pi(x_0)$). The algebraic homogeneous space G/B is the full flag manifold, and $G/P = G_{k,n}$ is the Grassmann manifold of k-planes in \mathbb{C}^n . Let z_{ij} be the functions on G defined by $z_{ij}(x) = x_{ij}$, where $x = (x_{ij}) \in G$. It follows from [3] that A(U) for G/B (resp. $G_{k,n}$) is isomorphic to the graded algebra

$$\tilde{R} = \mathbb{C}[z_{ij}: 1 \le j < i \le n] \quad (\text{resp. } R = \mathbb{C}[z_{k+ij}: 1 \le i \le n-k, \ 1 \le j \le k]),$$

where the grading is determined by taking degree $(z_{pq}) = p - q$. In the rest of the paper \tilde{Z} (resp. Z) denotes, as before, the zero scheme of \tilde{V} (resp. V), and we take $z_{ij} = 0$ if either i > n or j < 1, or j > i, and $z_{ii} = 1$ for $1 \le i \le n$. The following is the key proposition for the rest of the paper.

Proposition 2.1. (i) The graded algebra $A(\tilde{Z})$ is isomorphic to $\tilde{R}/I(\tilde{Z})$, where $I(\tilde{Z})$ is the homogeneous ideal generated by

$$a_{ij}(z) = z_{i+1j} - z_{ij-1} + z_{ij}(z_{jj-1} - z_{j+1j}).$$

(ii) Let $x_1 = z_{21}, x_2 = z_{32} - z_{21}, \dots, x_j = z_{j+1,j} - z_{j,j-1}, \dots, x_n = -z_{n,n-1}$, and let $h_m(y_1, \dots, y_s)$ be the mth complete symmetric homogeneous function in y_1, \dots, y_s . For any i, j the following identity holds in $\tilde{R}/I(\tilde{Z})$:

$$z_{ij}=h_{i-j}(x_1,x_2,\cdots,x_j).$$

(iii) Under the isomorphism $\tilde{\psi}: \tilde{R}/I(\tilde{Z}) \cong A(\tilde{Z}) \xrightarrow{\sim} H^*(G/B, \mathbb{C}),$ $\tilde{\psi}(z_{ij} \mod I(\tilde{Z})) = c_{i-j}(Q_j), (i-j)$ th Chern class of the universal quotient bundle Q_j of rank n-j on G/B.

Proof. To prove (i) we need to compute the local expression of \tilde{V} in the local coordinates z_{ij} , $1 \leq j < i \leq n$. Let $M = (z_{ij})$ be the $n \times n$ lower triangular unipotent matrix having z_{ij} as its entries. The change of the local coordinates z_{ij} by the action of $\exp(tn)$ around x_0 is given by the functions $z_{ij}(t)$, $1 \leq j < i \leq n$, which satisfy the following matrix identity for some $n \times n$ upper triangular matrix B(t):

$$\exp(tn)MB(t) = (z_{ij}(t)).$$

Here $(z_{ij}(t))$ represents the $n \times n$ lower triangular unipotent matrix. The point is that one can compute these $z_{ij}(t)$ explicitly. Once this is done it is not hard to see that

$$\tilde{V}(z_{ij}) = \frac{d}{dt}(z_{ij}(t))\big|_{t=0} = z_{i+1j} - z_{ij-1} + z_{ij}(z_{jj-1} - z_{j+1j}).$$

We leave these calculations to the reader.

Part (ii) follows from the defining relations $a_{ij}(z) = 0$ in $\tilde{R}/I(\tilde{Z})$. Part (iii) follows from [3], part (ii) and the well-known formula for $c_k(Q_j)$ in $H^*(G/B, \mathbb{C})$.

For the Grassmann manifold $G_{k,n}$ similar results can be found in [6]. In this case the homogeneous ideal I(Z) of Z in R is generated by

$$z_{k+1+ij} - z_{k+ij-1} - z_{k+ik} z_{k+1j}, \quad 1 \le j \le k, \ 1 \le i \le n-k.$$

In the rest of the paper we shall take $A(\tilde{Z}) = \tilde{R}/I(\tilde{Z}), A(Z) = R/I(Z),$ and keep the notations as before.

3. Cohomology of Schubert varieties in $G_{k,n}$

In this section, we first give the explicit description of the isomorphism $\psi: A(Z) \xrightarrow{\sim} H^*(G_{k,n}, \mathbb{C})$ by providing the representatives of Schubert cycles in A(Z), and then prove that $\overline{\psi}: A(Y \cap Z) \xrightarrow{\sim} H^*(Y, \mathbb{C})$ is an isomorphism for any Schubert variety Y in $G_{k,n}$.

Let W be the symmetric group in $1, 2, \dots, n$. For any permutation $\tau = (a_1, \dots, a_n)$ in W, let $\tau(e)$ be the $n \times n$ permutation matrix obtained from the identity matrix e by permuting the rows relative to (a_1, \dots, a_n) . Let $S = \{(i) = (i_1, \dots, i_k): 1 \leq i_1 < i_2 < \dots < i_k \leq n\}$. For any (i) in S there exists a unique permutation $(i_1, \dots, i_k, i_{k+1}, \dots, i_n)$ in W with the property $i_{k+1} < \dots < i_n$. We denote this permutation by $\sigma(i) = (i_1, \dots, i_n)$. For $(i) = (i_1, \dots, i_k)$ in S, let $Y_{(i)} = B\sigma(i)(e)\pi(x_0)$ be the Schubert subvariety of $G_{k,n}$ associated with $1 \leq i_1 < \dots < i_k \leq n$, and let $\Omega(i_1, \dots, i_k)$ be the Poincaré dual of the cycle class of the Schubert variety $Y_{(n-i_k+1,\dots,n-i_1+1)}$ in $H^*(G_{k,n}, \mathbb{C})$. Let $\tilde{U} = B^-$ denote the affine space of all $n \times n$ lower triangular unipotent matrices, and let $U = \pi(\tilde{U})$. \tilde{U} is naturally biholomorphic to the open big cell in the Bruhat decomposition of $G/B = \bigcup B\tau(e)x_0, \tau \in W$. Thus \tilde{U} (resp. U) is an open affine neighborhood of x_0 (resp. $\pi(x_0)$) in G/B (resp. $G_{k,n}$).

Theorem 3.1. For any $1 \le i_1 < i_2 < \cdots < i_k \le n$, we have

 $\psi(P_{(i_1,\cdots,i_k)} \mod I(Z)) = \Omega(i_1,\cdots,i_k),$

where $P_{(i_1,\dots,i_k)}$ is the Plücker coordinate of $G_{k,n}$ associated with $1 \leq i_1 < i_2 < \dots < i_k \leq n$.

Proof. Let $j: A(Z) \to A(\overline{Z})$ be the natural map induced from the C-equivariant map $\pi: G/B \to G_{k,n}$. It follows from [1] that j is a graded algebra homomorphism and the following diagram is commutative:

$$\begin{split} \vec{\psi} : A(\vec{Z}) & \xrightarrow{\sim} & H^*(G/B, \mathbb{C}) \\ j & \uparrow & \uparrow \pi^* \\ \psi : A(Z) & \xrightarrow{\sim} & H^*(G_{k,n}, \mathbb{C}) \end{split}$$

where π^* is the cohomology map of π . Since π^* is injective, j is also an injective map [1], [2]. Thus, to prove the theorem, it is enough to show that $\tilde{\psi}(j(P_{(i_1,\cdots,i_k)})) = \pi^*(\Omega_{(i_1,\cdots,i_k)})$. For any $x = (x_{ij})$ in \tilde{U} , since

$$j(P_{(i_1,\dots,i_k)})(x) = \det \begin{bmatrix} x_{i_11} & \dots & x_{i_1k} \\ \vdots & & \vdots \\ x_{i_k1} & \dots & x_{i_kk} \end{bmatrix}$$
$$= \begin{vmatrix} x_{i_11} & \dots & x_{i_1k} \\ \vdots & & \vdots \\ x_{i_k1} & \dots & x_{i_kk} \end{vmatrix} = \begin{vmatrix} z_{i_11}(x) & \dots & z_{i_1k}(x) \\ \vdots & & \vdots \\ z_{i_k1}(x) & \dots & z_{i_kk}(x) \end{vmatrix},$$

we get

$$j(P_{(i_1,\cdots,i_k)}) = \begin{vmatrix} z_{i_11} & \cdots & z_{i_1k} \\ \vdots & \vdots \\ z_{i_k1} & \cdots & z_{i_kk} \end{vmatrix} \quad \text{on } \tilde{U}.$$

Thus, by Proposition 2.1, in $A(\tilde{Z})$ we have the identity

$$j(P_{(i_1,\dots,i_k)}) = \begin{vmatrix} h_{i_1-1}(x_1) & \dots & h_{i_1-k}(x_1,\dots,x_k) \\ \vdots & & \vdots \\ h_{i_k-1}(x_1) & \dots & h_{i_k-k}(x_1,\dots,x_k) \end{vmatrix}.$$

In this determinant, by replacing the 1st column by the 1st column $+x_2$ (the 2nd column), we obtain

$$j(P_{(i_1,\cdots,i_k)}) = \begin{vmatrix} h_{i_1-1}(x_1,x_2) & h_{i_1-2}(x_1,x_2) & \dots & h_{i_1-k}(x_1,\cdots,x_k) \\ \vdots & \vdots & & \vdots \\ h_{i_k-1}(x_1,x_2) & h_{i_k-2}(x_1,x_2) & \dots & h_{i_k-k}(x_1,\cdots,x_k) \end{vmatrix},$$

just because $h_l(x_1, x_2) = h_l(x_1) + x_2 h_{l-1}(x_1, x_2)$. Now, by replacing the 2nd column by the 2nd column $+x_3$ (the 3rd column) one gets

$$j(P_{(i_1,\cdots,i_k)}) = \begin{vmatrix} h_{i_1-1}(x_1,x_2) & h_{i_1-2}(x_1,x_2,x_3) & \dots & h_{i_1-k}(x_1,\cdots,x_k) \\ \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ h_{i_k-1}(x_1,x_2) & h_{i_k-2}(x_1,x_2,x_3) & \dots & h_{i_k-k}(x_1,\cdots,x_k) \end{vmatrix}.$$

This time, replace the 1st column by 1st column $+x_3$ (2nd column) to obtain

$$j(P_{(i_1,\cdots,i_k)}) = \begin{vmatrix} h_{i_1-1}(x_1,x_2,x_3) & h_{i_1-2}(x_1,x_2,x_3) & \dots & h_{i_1-k}(x_1,\cdots,x_k) \\ \vdots & \vdots & \vdots \\ h_{i_k-1}(x_1,x_2,x_3) & h_{i_k-2}(x_1,x_2,x_3) & \dots & h_{i_k-k}(x_1,\cdots,x_k) \end{vmatrix}.$$

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By using similar column operations and the (obvious) identity $h_l(x_1, \dots, x_s) = h_l(x_1, \dots, x_{s-1}) + x_s h_{l-1}(x_1, \dots, x_s)$ one obtains in $A(\tilde{Z})$,

$$j(P_{(i_1,\dots,i_k)}) = \begin{vmatrix} h_{i_1-1}(x_1,\dots,x_k) & \dots & h_{i_1-k}(x_1,\dots,x_k) \\ \vdots & & \vdots \\ h_{i_k-1}(x_1,\dots,x_k) & \dots & h_{i_k-k}(x_1,\dots,x_k) \end{vmatrix}.$$

Since $z_{i+k,k} = h_i(x_1, \dots, x_k)$ in $A(\tilde{Z})$ and $\tilde{\psi}(z_{i+k,k}) = c_i(Q_k)$, by Proposition 2.1 we get

$$\tilde{\psi}(j(P_{(i_1,\dots,i_k)})) = \begin{vmatrix} c_{i_1-1}(Q_k) & \dots & c_{i_1-k}(Q_k) \\ \vdots & & \vdots \\ c_{i_k-1}(Q_k) & \dots & c_{i_k-k}(Q_k) \end{vmatrix}$$

Since the pull back $\pi^*(Q_{k,n})$ of the universal quotient bundle $Q_{k,n}$ on $G_{k,n}$ is isomorphic to Q_k on G/B, we obtain

$$\tilde{\psi}(j(P_{(i_1,\dots,i_k)})) = \pi^* \left(\begin{vmatrix} c_{i_1-1}(Q_{k,n}) & \dots & c_{i_1-k}(Q_{k,n}) \\ \vdots & & \vdots \\ c_{i_k-1}(Q_{k,n}) & \dots & c_{i_k-k}(Q_{k,n}) \end{vmatrix} \right).$$

Since

$$\Omega(i_1, \cdots, i_k) = \begin{vmatrix} c_{i_1-1}(Q_{k,n}) & \dots & c_{i_1-k}(Q_{k,n}) \\ \vdots & & \vdots \\ c_{i_k-1}(Q_{k,n}) & \dots & c_{i_k-k}(Q_{k,n}) \end{vmatrix},$$

by the determinantal formula in Schubert calculus [2], we get $\tilde{\psi}(j(P_{(i_1,\cdots,i_k)})) = \pi^*(\Omega_{(i_1,\cdots,i_k)})$, and the proof is complete.

We consider the natural partial order on $S = \{(i) = (i_1, \dots, i_k): 1 \le i_1 < \dots < i_k \le n\}$ defined by: for (i) and (j) in S, (i) \le (j) if $i_1 \le j_1, \dots, i_k \le j_k$. It is well known that this partial order on S is compatible with the Bruhat ordering on $G_{k,n} = \bigcup B\sigma(i)(e)\pi(x_0), (i) \in S$. That is, for (i) and (j) in S, $(i) \le (j)$ if and only if $Y_{(i)} \subseteq Y_{(j)}$ [7].

Lemma. For any (j) in S, we have:

(i) the ideal $I(Y_{(j)})$ of the Schubert variety $Y_{(j)}$ in the neighborhood U of $\pi(x_0)$ is generated by the Plücker coordinates $P_{(l)}$, $(l) \notin (j)$,

(ii) the Euler-Poincaré characteristic $\chi(Y_{(j)})$ of $Y_{(j)}$ is equal to the cardinality of the set $\{(l) \in S: (l) \leq (j)\}$.

Proof. This lemma is not new. In fact, part (i) can be found in [7], and part (ii) follows from the cellular decomposition $Y_{(j)} = \bigcup B\sigma(l)(e)\pi(x_0), (l) \leq (j)$, of $Y_{(j)}$ [4].

Theorem 3.2. Let $Y = Y_{(i)}$, $(i) \in S$, be a Schubert subvariety of $G_{k,n}$. The graded algebra isomorphism $\psi: A(Z) \xrightarrow{\sim} H^*(G_{k,n}, \mathbb{C})$ induces an isomorphism $\overline{\psi}: A(Y \cap Z) \xrightarrow{\sim} H^*(Y, \mathbb{C})$ which commutes with the natural maps $\alpha: A(Z) \rightarrow A(Y \cap Z)$ and $i^*: H^*(G_{k,n}, \mathbb{C}) \rightarrow H^*(Y, \mathbb{C})$.

Proof. By [4], we know that ψ induces a graded algebra homomorphism $\overline{\psi}: A(Y \cap Z) \to H^*(Y, \mathbb{C})$ which commutes with α and i^* . Since $\overline{\psi}$ is a surjective map, we only need to show that dim_C $A(Y \cap Z) \leq \dim_{\mathbb{C}} H^*(Y, \mathbb{C})$. By the basis theorem of Schubert calculus and Theorem 3.1, we know that the Plücker coordinates $P_{(j)}, (j) \in S$, form a basis of A(Z). Thus $\{\alpha(P_{(l)}): (l) \in S\}$ spans the vector space $A(Y \cap Z)$. By the lemma, $P_{(j)}$ is in $I(Y_{(i)})$ when $(j) \notin (i)$, so $\alpha(P_{(j)}) = 0$ in $A(Y \cap Z)$ for $(j) \notin (i)$. This implies $I = \{\alpha(P_{(l)}): (l) \leq (i)\}$ spans $A(Y \cap Z)$. By the same Lemma, since $\chi(Y) = \dim_{\mathbb{C}} H^*(Y, \mathbb{C}) = \#\{(l) \in S: (l) \leq (i)\}$, we get dim_C $A(Y \cap Z) \leq \dim_{\mathbb{C}} H^*(Y, \mathbb{C})$, and the proof is complete.

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KING FAHD UNIVERSITY OF PETROLEUM & MINERALS DHAHRAN, SAUDI ARABIA