

Zeitschrift: Commentarii Mathematici Helvetici
Herausgeber: Schweizerische Mathematische Gesellschaft
Band: 61 (1986)

Artikel: Symplectic bundles over affine surfaces.
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-46944>

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Symplectic bundles over affine surfaces

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Introduction

Let A be a real affine algebra of dimension 2 and $V = \operatorname{spec} A$. In [10], Pardon relates the structure of the Witt group $W^{-1}(A)$ of skew-symmetric forms over A to the group $A_0(V)$ of zero cycles of V modulo rational equivalence. He proves [10, Th. B, p 262] that if $\operatorname{Pic} V$ is trivial and V is smooth, $W^{-1}(A) \otimes \mathbb{Z}/2 \simeq A_0(V) \otimes \mathbb{Z}/2$. In this paper, by what we believe to be a more direct and elementary approach, we prove that for a real affine surface $V = \operatorname{spec} A$, not necessarily smooth, $W^{-1}(A) \otimes \mathbb{Z}/2 \simeq SK_0(A)/\operatorname{tr} \tilde{K}_0(A)$, $\operatorname{tr} \tilde{K}_0(A)$ denoting the subgroup of $SK_0(A)$ generated by all elements of the form $P \oplus P^*$. If $\operatorname{Pic} A$ is trivial, $\operatorname{tr} \tilde{K}_0(A) = 2SK_0(A)$ and our result extends Pardon's theorem. Our method of proof uses Vaserstein's symbol on unimodular rows of length three and a construction of certain generic rank 2 symplectic bundles which generalise the classical Hopf bundles over the real sphere.

The description of $W^{-1}(A)$ in terms of linear data raises the following natural question: for a projective module P over a ring A , on what conditions is the map $\det: \operatorname{Aut} P \rightarrow A^*$ surjective? This map, in general, is not surjective [8, §4 ex. 2]. We prove however, that the map \det is surjective if, for instance, P is a rank d projective A -module where A is an affine algebra of dimension d over an algebraically closed field of characteristic 0.

We thank Chandra for his delightful company during the 'development' of this work. One of the authors thanks the Tata Institute for its hospitality.

§1. Witt group of skew-symmetric forms

Let A be a commutative ring. A *skew-symmetric space* over A is a pair (P, s) where P is a finitely generated projective A -module and $s: P \times P \rightarrow A$ a skew-symmetric bilinear form which induces an isomorphism $s_*: P \simeq P^*$. An *isometry* of skew-symmetric spaces is an isomorphism of the underlying modules which preserves the forms. Any finitely generated projective module P gives rise to a skew-symmetric space, called the *hyperbolic space*, denoted by $H(P)$: its

underlying module is $P \oplus P^*$ and the form is given by $((x, f), (x', f')) \mapsto f(x') - f'(x)$. The *orthogonal sum* of two skew-symmetric spaces (P, s) and (P', s') , denoted by $(P, s) \perp (P', s')$, is the space $(P \oplus P', t)$ where $t((v, w), (v', w')) = s(v, v') + s'(w, w')$: $v, v' \in P, w, w' \in P'$. For any skew-symmetric space (P, s) , we have $(P, s) \perp (P, -s) \simeq H(P)$. We say that two spaces (P, s) and (P', s') are *equivalent* if $(P, s) \perp H(Q) \simeq (P', s') \perp H(Q')$ for some Q and Q' . The orthogonal sum induces a group structure on the set of equivalence classes of skew-symmetric spaces, the identity being the class of the hyperbolic spaces and the inverse of the class of (P, s) being the class of $(P, -s)$.

We denote by $K_0(A)$ the Grothendieck group of finitely generated projective A -modules, by $\text{Pic } A$ the group of isomorphism classes of invertible A -modules, by $\tilde{K}_0(A)$ the kernel of the rank homomorphism and by $SK_0(A)$ the kernel of the determinant map. We cite [1] and [2] as references for these and other unexplained terms.

There is an involution σ on $K_0(A)$ which maps the class of P to the class of P^* . For any $x \in \tilde{K}_0(A)$, we have, $x + \sigma(x) \in SK_0(A)$ and we denote by $\text{tr}(\tilde{K}_0(A))$ the subgroup of $SK_0(A)$ consisting of all elements of the form $x + \sigma(x)$, $x \in \tilde{K}_0(A)$.

We record here some stability results on skew-symmetric spaces which will be used in sequel.

THEOREM 1.1 ([2, 4.11.2]). *Let (P, s) be a skew symmetric space over A . If P has a unimodular element, then $(P, s) \simeq (P', s') \perp H(A)$. If A is a noetherian ring of dimension d , any skew symmetric space over A splits as $(P, s) \perp H(A^n)$ with $\text{rank } P \leq d$.*

THEOREM 1.2 ([2, 4.16]). *Let A be a noetherian ring of dimension ≤ 2 . If $(P, s) \perp (Q, t) \simeq (P', s') \perp (Q, t)$, then $(P, s) \simeq (P', s')$.*

(One should note that in the proof of (4.16) of [2], the reference should be to (4.14) instead of (4.15).)

COROLLARY 1.3. *Let A be a noetherian ring of dimension ≤ 2 . Then every class in $W^{-1}(A)$ has a representative (P, s) with $\text{rank } P = 2$.*

Let P be a projective module of rank 2. Any nonsingular skew symmetric form s on P induces an isomorphism $\Lambda^2 P \simeq A$. Conversely any isomorphism $\Lambda^2 P \simeq A$ gives rise to a skew symmetric structure on P . Thus, any rank 2 projective module with trivial determinant carries a skew symmetric structure which is unique up to units of A . If (P, s) is a rank 2 skew-symmetric space and u

a unit of A , then (P, s) and (P, us) are isometric if and only there exists an automorphism α of P with $\det \alpha = u$.

Let A be a noetherian ring of dimension 2 and (P, s) a skew-symmetric space over A . By (1.3),

$$(P, s) \perp H(Q) \simeq (P', s') \perp H(Q'),$$

where $\text{rank } P' = 2$ for suitable Q and Q' . Taking determinants, we get, $\det P \simeq \det P' \simeq A$. Thus associating to each skew-symmetric space its underlying module, we obtain a homomorphism

$$\Phi: W^{-1}(A) \rightarrow SK_0(A)/\text{tr } \tilde{K}_0(A).$$

The map Φ is surjective since every element of $SK_0(A)$ can be represented by a rank 2 projective module with trivial determinant, which as we saw above, carries a skew-symmetric structure. Since $2SK_0(A) \subset \text{tr } \tilde{K}_0(A)$, Φ induces a homomorphism

$$\varphi: W^{-1}(A)/2W^{-1}(A) \rightarrow SK_0(A)/\text{tr } \tilde{K}_0(A).$$

We shall show that this map φ is an isomorphism for a certain class of 2-dimensional affine algebras. To do this, we begin with some preliminary results.

Let $Um_3(A)$ denote the set of unimodular rows of length 3 over A . For $\alpha = (a, b, c) \in Um_3(A)$, let $\xi = (x, y, z) \in Um_3(A)$ be such that $ax + by + cz = 1$. Let

$$S(\alpha, \xi) = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & -x & -y & -z \\ x & 0 & -c & b \\ y & c & 0 & -a \\ z & -b & a & 0 \end{pmatrix}.$$

We note that $S(\alpha, \xi)$ is the most general skew-symmetric matrix with Pfaffian $Pf(S(\alpha, \xi)) = ax + by + cz = 1$. If $\xi' = (x', y', z')$ also satisfies $ax' + by' + cz' = 1$, then there exists $U \in GL_4(A)$ such that $S(\alpha, \xi') = US(\alpha, \xi)U'$ [12, (5.1)]. For $V \in SL_3(A)$, if $\alpha' = \alpha V$, and $\xi' = \xi(V')^{-1}$, then, there exists $U \in GL_4(A)$ such that $S(\alpha', \xi') = US(\alpha, \xi)U'$ [12, (5.2)]. Thus the isometry class of the skew symmetric space $(A^4, S(\alpha, \xi))$ is uniquely determined by the class of α in $Um_3(A)/SL_3(A)$. We denote this isometry class by $\Sigma(\alpha)$. We remark that any rank 4 skew-symmetric space whose underlying module is free is in $\Sigma(\alpha)$ for some $\alpha \in Um_3(A)$; in fact, for any $T \in GL_4(A)$ and any skew-symmetric matrix

$S \in GL_4(A)$, $Pf(TST') = Pf(S) \det T$. We have a map $w: Um_3(A)/SL_3(A) \rightarrow W^{-1}(A)$ which sends the class of α to the class of $\Sigma(\alpha)$.

PROPOSITION 1.4. *The image of w is the kernel of Φ . In particular, if $SL_3(A)$ acts transitively on unimodular rows, then Φ is an isomorphism.*

Proof. The underlying module of any skew-symmetric space (P, s) whose class is in $\ker \Phi$ is of the form $Q \oplus Q^*$ for some projective module Q . Let Q' be such that $Q \oplus Q'$ is free. Then $(P, s) \perp H(Q')$ is free. By (1.3), this space is isometric to $(P', s') \perp H(A^n)$ with $\text{rank } P' = 2$ and P' stably free. The class of (P, s) in $W^{-1}(A)$ is the class of $(P', s') \perp H(A)$. By a well-known cancellation theorem for projective modules, [1, p 172], $P' \oplus A^2$ is free so that by our earlier remarks, $(P', s') \perp H(A)$ is in $\Sigma(\alpha)$ for some $\alpha \in Um_3(A)$.

COROLLARY 1.5. *Let A be an affine algebra of dimension 2 over a field K . Suppose that one of the following conditions is satisfied:*

- 1) K is algebraically closed.
- 2) K is finite.
- 3) K is real closed and the set of K -rational points of $\text{spec } A$ lies in a closed subscheme of dimension ≤ 1 .

Then $\Phi: W^{-1}(A) \rightarrow SK_0(A)/\text{tr } \tilde{K}_0(A)$ is an isomorphism.

Proof. In each of these cases, $SL_3(A)$ acts transitively on $Um_3(A)$ (See [7, Theorem 1] and [12, Corollary 17.3])

COROLLARY 1.6. *If A is a regular affine algebra of dimension 2 over an algebraically closed field, then $W^{-1}(A) = 0$.*

Proof. In view of [7, Theorem 3], $SK_0(A) = 2SK_0(A) \subset \text{tr } \tilde{K}_0(A)$ and the result follows from (1.5).

§2. Real surfaces and generic Hopf bundles

Throughout this section, R denotes a real closed field and A denotes an affine algebra over R of dimension 2.

PROPOSITION 2.1. *Every element of $Um_3(A)/SL_3(A)$ can be represented by $\xi = (x, y, z) \in Um(A)$ such that $ax + y^2 + cz = 1$ for some $a, c \in A$.*

Proof. Let $\xi = (x, y, z) \in Um_3(A)$. Operating on ξ by elementary transformations, we may, in view of [3, §3, Lemma 2], assume that $I = Ax + Az$ has height 2. Let $a, b, c \in A$ be such that $ax + by + cz = 1$. The ring A/I , modulo its radical is a finite product of copies of R or C , C denoting the algebraic closure of R . Hence any square in A/I is a fourth power. Let $\bar{b}^2 = \bar{t}^4$ and let $t \in A$ be a lift of \bar{t} . Since $t^4 y^2 \equiv 1 \pmod{I}$, there exist $a', c' \in A$ such that $a'x + (t^2 y)^2 + c'z = 1$. To complete the proof of the proposition, it suffices to show that there exists an element of $SL_3(A)$ which maps (x, y, z) to $(x, t^2 y, z)$. This is achieved by the following

LEMMA 2.2. *Let A be any ring of dimension 2 and $x, y, z, t \in A$ such that $(x, t^2 y, z)$ is unimodular. Then there exists $\alpha \in SL_3(A)$ such that $(x, t^2 y, z)\alpha = (x, y, z)$.*

Proof. Since $\dim A = 2$, for $r \geq 4$, $E_r(A)$ acts transitively on the set $Um_r(A)$ of unimodular rows of length r . In view of [12, Theorem 5.2], $(x, t^2 y, z) \sim (x, y, z)$ under the action of $SL_3(A)$ if and only if

$$\Sigma(x, t^2 y, z) \perp H(A^r) \simeq \Sigma(x, y, z) \perp H(A^r)$$

for some r . Since $\dim A = 2$, by (1.3), this happens if and only if $\Sigma(x, t^2 y, z) \simeq \Sigma(x, y, z)$. By [12, Theorem 5.2], if $px + qy + rz = 1$, then

$$\Sigma(x, y, z) \perp \Sigma(x, t^2, z) \simeq \Sigma(x, t^2 y - rz, (t^2 + q)z) \perp H(A^2).$$

Denoting by \sim_E the equivalence under the action of $E_3(A)$, we have, (cf. [15, p 380])

$$\begin{aligned} (x, t^2 y - rz, (t^2 + q)z) &= (x, t^2 y - 1 + px + qy, (t^2 + q)z) \\ &\sim_E (x, (t^2 + q)y - 1, (t^2 + q)z) \\ &\sim_E (x, (t^2 + q)y - 1, (t^2 + q)^2 z) \\ &\sim_E (x, (t^2 + q)y - 1, z) \\ &\sim_E (x, t^2 y, z). \end{aligned}$$

Thus in view of [12, Theorem 5.2],

$$\Sigma(x, y, z) \perp \Sigma(x, t^2, z) \simeq \Sigma(x, t^2 y, z) \perp H(A^2).$$

Since (x, t^2, y) is completable in $SL_3(A)$ (see [14, Theorem 2.1]), $\Sigma(x, t^2, y) \simeq H(A^2)$ and by (1.3), $\Sigma(x, y, z) \simeq \Sigma(x, t^2y, z)$.

Let S, S' be two 4×4 skew symmetric matrices with S' nonsingular. Then $S'^{-1}S$ satisfies [9, Lemma 3.5] the quadratic equation $Pf(S - S't) = (Pf(S))t^2 - Pf(S, S')t + Pf(S') = 0$ where $Pf(S, S')$ is the bilinear form associated to the quadratic form $S \mapsto Pf(S)$. Let

$$S = S((a, y, c), (x, y, z)) = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & -x & -y & -z \\ x & 0 & -c & y \\ y & c & 0 & -a \\ z & -y & a & 0 \end{pmatrix}$$

be the generic skew symmetric matrix defined over the commutative R -algebra B generated by x, y, z, a, c with relation $ax + y^2 + cz = 1$. Choosing

$$S' = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 & -1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & -1 \\ 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix},$$

we see that $Pf(S, S') = 0$ and $Pf(S') = -1$ so that $U = S'^{-1}S$ has square 1. Let

$$E = \frac{1}{2}(1 + U) = \frac{1}{2} \begin{pmatrix} 1+y & c & 0 & -a \\ z & 1-y & a & 0 \\ 0 & x & 1+y & z \\ -x & 0 & c & 1-y \end{pmatrix}.$$

Then $E^2 = E$. Let \mathcal{H} be the projective module EB^4 . If we specialise $a = x, c = z$, we recover the Hopf bundle on the 2-sphere [5]. Let $\mathcal{H}' = (1 - E)B^4$. Computations reveal that $B^4 = \mathcal{H} \oplus \mathcal{H}'$ is an orthogonal decomposition for both the structures (B^4, S) and $(B^4, h) \simeq H(B^2)$, where

$$h = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \\ -1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & -1 & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}.$$

PROPOSITION 2.3. *The class of (B^4, S) in $W^{-1}(B)$ belongs to $2W^{-1}(B)$.*

Proof. Let s, s' be the restrictions of (B^4, S) to \mathcal{H} and \mathcal{H}' respectively. Since the only units B are non-zero elements of R , the restrictions of h to \mathcal{H} and \mathcal{H}' are respectively $\varepsilon s, \varepsilon' s'$ where $\varepsilon, \varepsilon'$ are ± 1 . We have isometries

$$\begin{aligned}(B^4, S) &\simeq (\mathcal{H}, s) \perp (\mathcal{H}', s') \\ (B^4, h) &\rightarrow (\mathcal{H}, \varepsilon s) \perp (\mathcal{H}', \varepsilon' s').\end{aligned}$$

Adding these equations in $W^{-1}(B)$, we see that the class of (B^4, S) in $W^{-1}(B)$ belongs to $2W^{-1}(B)$.

THEOREM 2.4. *Let R be a real closed field and A a 2-dimensional affine algebra over R . Then the map $\varphi: W^{-1}(A)/2W^{-1}(A) \rightarrow SK_0(A)/\text{tr } \tilde{K}_0(A)$ is an isomorphism.*

Proof. We have seen earlier that Φ is surjective and that its kernel is generated by the classes $\Sigma(\alpha)$, $\alpha \in Um_3(A)$. By (2.1), we may assume that $\alpha = (a, y, c)$ with $ax + y^2 + cz = 1$ for some $x, z \in A$. By (2.3), the class of $\Sigma(\alpha)$ in $W^{-1}(A)$ belongs to $2W^{-1}(A)$.

COROLLARY 2.5. *Let A be a regular affine algebra of dimension 2 over R . Suppose $\text{Pic } A$ is trivial. If $V = \text{spec } A$, we have an isomorphism $W^{-1}(A)/2W^{-1}(A) \simeq A_0(V)/2A_0(V)$, where $A_0(V)$ denotes the group of zero cycles of V modulo rational equivalence.*

Proof. For a smooth affine surface $V = \text{spec } A$, $SK_0(A) \simeq A_0(V)$ [6, p 298]. Since $\text{Pic } A = 0$, $\text{tr } \tilde{K}_0(A) = 2SK_0(A)$.

Remark. The group $A_0(V)/2A_0(V)$ can be computed using results of Colliot-Thélène and Ischebeck [4]. If V has no R -rational points at infinity, then, $A_0(V)/2A_0(V) \simeq (\mathbb{Z}/2)^s$ where s is the number of algebraic real components of V [10, 3.2].

Remark. Pardon, in [10], raises the question whether the condition $\text{Pic } A = 0$ is necessary to conclude that $W^{-1}(A)/2W^{-1}(A) \simeq A_0(V)/2A_0(V)$. The following example, suggested by Mohan Kumar, shows that this condition is indeed necessary.

EXAMPLE. Let $\text{Spec } A = \mathbb{P}_{\mathbb{R}}^2 - S$ where S is the curve $x^2 + y^2 + z^2 = 0$. Then $\text{Pic } A \simeq \mathbb{Z}/2$, generated by the restriction L of $\mathcal{O}(1)$ on $\mathbb{P}_{\mathbb{R}}^2$ to A and $SK_0(A) \simeq \mathbb{Z}/2$, generated by $L \oplus L^*$. Thus $SK_0(A) = \text{tr } \tilde{K}_0(A)$ and $2 SK_0(A) = 0$. Then we

have $W^{-1}(A)/2 \ W^{-1}(A) \simeq SK_0(A)/\text{tr } \tilde{K}_0(A) = 0$ (2.4) whereas $A_0(V)/2 \ A_0(V) \simeq SK_0(A)/2 \ SK_0(A) \simeq \mathbb{Z}/2$.

§3. Surjectivity of the determinant map

We prove in this section, the following

THEOREM 3.1. *Let A be an affine algebra of dimension d over a field K . Suppose one of the following two conditions holds.*

- 1) *K is algebraically closed of characteristic prime to d .*
- 2) *K is real closed and the set of K -rational points of A lies in a closed subscheme of dimension $\leq d - 1$.*

Then for any projective module P over A of rank $\geq d$, the map $\det: \text{Aut } P \rightarrow A^$ is surjective.*

For the proof of this theorem, we need the following result which is a minor variation of a theorem of Suslin [11].

THEOREM 3.2. *Let A and P be as in (3.1). Then $SL(A \oplus P)$ acts transitively on the set of unimodular elements of $A \oplus P$.*

Sketch of a proof. If $\text{rank } P > d$, by Serre's theorem, P contains a free direct summand and the theorem is immediate. We therefore assume that $\text{rank } P = d$. Let $(a, v) \in A \oplus P$ be a unimodular element. Let J be the intersection of all the maximal ideals \mathfrak{m} of A such that A/\mathfrak{m} is real. By our assumption, $\dim A/J \leq d - 1$. By a version of Bertini's theorem given in [13, Theorem 1.4], there exists a finite subset $T \subset P$ such that for a generic linear combination w of elements of T , $I = 0(v + aw)$, has the property that $\dim A/I = 0$. Since $\dim A/J \leq d - 1$, there exists a finite subset $S \subset \bar{P}$, bar denoting modulo J , such that for a generic linear combination \bar{w} of elements of S , $\bar{v} + \bar{a}\bar{w}$ is unimodular. By enlarging T if necessary, we assume that the image of T in A/J contains S so that, for a generic linear combination w of elements of T , $\dim A/I = 0$ and $I + J = A$. Since A/I , modulo its radical, is a product of algebraically closed fields, $\bar{a} = b'^d$ for some $b' \in A/I$, d being invertible in A/I , \sim denoting reduction modulo I . Let $b \in A$ be a lift of b' . Then there exists an elementary transformation of $A \oplus P$ which maps (a, v) to (b^d, v') for some $v' \in P$. A unimodular element of the form (b^d, v') can be mapped to $(1, 0)$ by an element of $SL(A \oplus P)$. This follows from steps 6 and 7 of the proof of [11, Theorem].

Remark. If A is reduced, the assumption on the characteristic of K in the above theorem can be dropped.

Proof of Theorem 3.1. Let u be a unit of A . By (3.2), there exists an automorphism

$$\begin{pmatrix} \theta & p \\ a & u^{-1} \end{pmatrix}$$

of $P \oplus A$ mapping $(0, u)$ to $(0, 1)$ with determinant 1. We have $p = 0$ and θ is an automorphism of P with $\det \theta = u$.

COROLLARY 3.3. *Let A be as in (3.1). If $\dim A = 2$, every rank 2 projective module P over A with trivial determinant carries a skew-symmetric structure s which is unique up to isometry. The map which sends the class of P in $SK_0(A)$ to the class of (P, s) in $W^{-1}(A)$ yields a homomorphism $SK_0(A) \rightarrow W^{-1}(A)$ which in turn induces a homomorphism $SK_0(A)/\text{tr } \tilde{K}_0(A) \rightarrow W^{-1}(A)$ which is inverse to Φ .*

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Received November 7, 1985