

# BESSEL MODELS FOR $\mathrm{GSp}(4)$ : BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

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*To Steve Gelbart*

ABSTRACT. This is an informal companion to our paper *Bessel models for  $\mathrm{GSp}(4)$*  written for people new to the subject.

## CONTENTS

1. Introduction	1
1.1. Saito-Tunnell	1
1.2. Orthogonal groups	2
1.3. Gross-Prasad Conjecture	4
1.4. Symplectic groups and orthogonal groups	6
References	8

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. **Saito-Tunnell.** A well-known theorem of Tunnell and Saito [T, S] asserts that if  $\pi$  is an irreducible non-one-dimensional admissible representation of  $\mathrm{GL}_2$  over a local field  $k$ , and  $\chi$  a quasi-character of a two-dimensional torus  $T/k$  with  $\omega_\pi = \chi|_{k^\times}$ , then

$$\dim_{\mathbb{C}} \mathrm{Hom}_{T(k)}(\pi, \chi) + \dim_{\mathbb{C}} \mathrm{Hom}_{T(k)}(\pi^{JL}, \chi) = 1.$$

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In this formula,  $\pi^{JL}$  is the Jacquet-Langlands transfer of  $\pi$  to  $D^\times$ , the unique quaternion algebra over  $k$ , and it is defined to be zero if the  $\pi$  is not discrete series. Also we define the second term above to be zero if  $T$  does not embed in  $D^\times$ , e.g. when  $T$  is a split torus. The Saito-Tunnell theorem also give necessary and sufficient conditions involving root numbers to determine which of the above terms contribute a non-zero functional. An interesting feature of this formula is that it relates the branching laws of representations of  $\mathrm{GL}_2(k)$  to similar branching laws for an inner form  $D^\times(k)$ . The conjectures of Gross and Prasad [G-P1, G-P2] give conjectural generalizations of the Saito-Tunnell theorem to the context of arbitrary orthogonal groups and their orthogonal subgroups. In the Gross-Prasad conjecture it is assumed that the orthogonal group  $\mathrm{SO}(V)$  and the orthogonal subgroup  $\mathrm{SO}(W)$  form a relevant pair, i.e.  $W^\perp$ , the orthogonal complement of  $W$  in  $V$ , is a split orthogonal space. Also the two term identity above is replaced by a sum over  $L$ -packets of *pure inner forms* of the pair  $(V, W)$ . This is a generalization of the Saito-Tunnell theorem as  $\mathrm{PGL}_2(k)$  is a  $\mathrm{SO}(2, 1)(k)$  and  $D^\times(k)/k^\times$  is  $\mathrm{SO}(3)(k)$ . In the Gross-Prasad conjecture there is a contrast between the situations where  $\dim W = \dim V - 1$  and  $\dim W < \dim V - 1$ . In the situation where  $\dim W = \dim V - 1$ , the subgroup  $\mathrm{SO}(W)$  will be a spherical subgroup of  $\mathrm{SO}(V)$ , and the general belief is that in this situation the branching laws should be more manageable. In contrast, when  $\dim W < \dim V - 1$ , the subgroup  $\mathrm{SO}(W)$  is no longer a spherical subgroup of  $\mathrm{SO}(V)$ , and it will be too small to afford a multiplicity one statement of the type considered in the Saito-Tunnell theorem. Gross and Prasad's idea in this case is to "fatten up" the subgroup  $\mathrm{SO}(W)$  by adding a unipotent subgroup  $U$  given by the splitting of  $W^\perp$  to make the resulting subgroup  $\mathrm{SO}(W) \rtimes U$  a spherical subgroup of  $\mathrm{SO}(V)$ . The smallest orthogonal group  $\mathrm{SO}(V)$  with a non-trivial subgroup  $\mathrm{SO}(W)$  with  $\dim W < \dim V - 1$  will be a four dimensional space  $V$ . In this case, however,  $\mathrm{SO}(V)$  can be easily described in terms of groups related to  $\mathrm{GL}_2$ , and for that reason establishing branching laws will be trivial. The first non-trivial situation happens when  $\dim V = 5$  and  $\dim W = 2$ . This is the situation which we consider in this paper.

**1.2. Orthogonal groups.** Let  $V$  be a finite dimensional vector space over  $k$ , and let  $\mathrm{O}(V)$  be the orthogonal group of  $V$ , and  $\mathrm{SO}(V)$  those orthogonal transformations  $T$  for which  $\det T = 1$ . The group  $\mathrm{SO}(V)$  is split if and only if  $V$  is split. Similarly, if  $\dim V$  is even, then  $\mathrm{SO}(V)$  is quasi-split if and only if  $V$  is quasi-split.

Let  $\bar{k}$  be a separable closure of  $k$ , and put  $\Gamma = \mathrm{Gal}(\bar{k}/k)$ . If  $\underline{G}$  is an algebraic group, we denote the set  $H^1(\Gamma, \underline{G}(\bar{k}))$  in non-abelian Galois cohomology by  $H^1(k, \underline{G})$ . Then the classes in  $H^1(k, \mathrm{O}(V))$  (resp.  $H^1(k, \mathrm{SO}(V))$ ) correspond bijectively to the isomorphism classes of quadratic spaces  $V'$  over  $k$  with  $\dim V' = \dim V$  (resp.  $\dim V' = \dim V$  and  $d(V') = d(V)$ ) (cf. [G-P2], proposition 2.1).

Let  $V$  be a quadratic space over  $k$  and let  $W$  be a quadratic space which embeds as a subspace of  $V$ . Fix an embedding and define

$$W^\perp = \{v \in V \mid \langle v, w \rangle = 0 \text{ for all } w \in W\}.$$

This is a quadratic space, whose isomorphism class depends only on the pair  $(V, W)$  and not on the chosen embedding. We have

$$V \simeq W \oplus W^\perp.$$

We say that the pair  $(V, W)$  is *relevant* if  $W$  embeds in  $V$  and  $W^\perp$  is a split quadratic space of odd dimension over  $k$ . Let  $\dim V = 2n + 1$  and  $\dim W = 2m$ , and let  $d_1, d_2 \in k^*/k^{*2}$ . Then there is exactly one relevant pair of quasi-split spaces  $(V, W)$  with  $d(V) \equiv d_1$  and  $d(W) \equiv d_2$ . In fact, a construction is this:

$$\begin{cases} V = (X_1 + X'_1) \oplus \langle d_1 \rangle \\ W = (X_2 + X'_2) \oplus d_1 E, \end{cases}$$

where  $X_1$  and  $X'_1$  are dual isotropic subspaces of dimension  $n$ ,  $X_2$  and  $X'_2$  are dual isotropic subspaces of dimension  $m - 1$ , and  $E = k[x]/(x^2 - d_2)$ . Also it is not hard to see that in the same situation the pairs  $(U_1, 0)$  and  $(U_2, \langle d_1 \rangle)$  are also relevant.

Let  $(V, W)$  be a relevant pair of quadratic spaces over  $k$ , and let  $\mathbb{G}$  be the algebraic group  $\mathrm{SO}(V) \times \mathrm{SO}(W)$ . We start by defining a connected algebraic subgroup  $\mathbb{H}$  of  $\mathbb{G}$ , and a homomorphism of algebraic groups  $\ell : \mathbb{H} \rightarrow \mathbb{G}_a$ . Write  $V = W \oplus W^\perp$ ,  $W^\perp$  split of dimension  $2r + 1$ . We may write  $W^\perp = (X + X') \oplus \langle a \rangle$  with  $X$  and  $X'$  dual isotropic spaces of dimension  $r$ . Let  $P$  be the parabolic subgroup of  $\mathrm{SO}(V)$  which fixes the isotropic subspace  $X$ , and let  $M$  be the Levi subgroup of  $P$  which fixes both  $X$  and  $X'$ . Then  $M$  acts on the quadratic space  $Y = X + X'$ . We have  $P = M \ltimes N_P$ , where  $N_P$  is the unipotent radical of  $P$ . The group  $M$  is isomorphic to  $\mathrm{GL}(X) \times \mathrm{SO}(Y^\perp)$ , and  $N_P$  sits in an exact sequence of  $M$ -modules

$$0 \longrightarrow \wedge^2 X \longrightarrow N_P \longrightarrow X \otimes Y^\perp \longrightarrow 0.$$

The subspace  $W$  has codimension one in  $Y^\perp$ .

If  $r = 0$ , we put  $\mathbb{H} = \mathrm{SO}(W)$  embedded diagonally in  $\mathbb{G}$  and  $\ell = 0$ . If  $r \geq 1$ , let  $X_1 \subset X$  be a hyperplane, and  $\ell_1 : X \rightarrow \mathbb{G}_a$  a non-zero

homomorphism which vanishes on  $X_1$ . Let  $\ell_W : Y^\perp \rightarrow \mathbb{G}_a$  be a non-zero homomorphism which is zero on the hyperplane  $W$ . Consider the composite map

$$m : N_P \longrightarrow N_P^{ab} = X \otimes Y^\perp \longrightarrow_{\ell_1 \otimes \ell_W} \mathbb{G}_a.$$

The subgroup of  $M$  which fixes the map  $m$  is  $\mathrm{GL}(X)_{\ell_1} \times \mathrm{SO}(W)$ , where  $\mathrm{GL}(X)_{\ell_1}$  is subgroup of  $\mathrm{GL}(X) \simeq \mathrm{GL}_r$  contains a maximal unipotent subgroup  $N_r$ . We define the subgroup  $\mathbb{H}$  of  $P$  by

$$\mathbb{H} = (N_r \times \mathrm{SO}(W)) \ltimes N_P.$$

Then  $\mathbb{H}$  embeds in  $\mathbb{G} = \mathrm{SO}(V) \times \mathrm{SO}(W)$ , using the obvious projection from  $\mathbb{H}$  onto the second factor  $\mathrm{SO}(W)$ . Let  $\ell_r : N_r \rightarrow \mathbb{G}_a$  be a homomorphism which is non-trivial when restricted to each simple root space for  $\mathrm{GL}_r$  in  $N_r$ . There is then a unique homomorphism

$$\ell : \mathbb{H} \longrightarrow \mathbb{G}_a$$

which is equal to  $\ell_r$  on the subgroup  $N_r$ , equal to zero on the subgroup  $\mathrm{SO}(W)$ , and equal to  $m$  on the subgroup  $N_P$ . The pair  $(\mathbb{H}, \ell)$  is uniquely determined up to conjugation in the group  $\mathbb{G}$  by the pair  $(V, W)$ . Also if  $\mathbb{G}$  is quasi-split, the group  $\mathbb{H}$  is a spherical subgroup in the sense of Brion, i.e. it has an open orbit on the flag variety  $F = \mathbb{G}/B$  of Borel subgroups of  $\mathbb{G}$ , with trivial stability subgroup.

**1.3. Gross-Prasad Conjecture.** Let  $G$  be a general reductive group. Let  $\bar{k}$  be a separable algebraic closure of  $k$ , and  $\Gamma = \mathrm{Gal}(\bar{k}/k)$ . Let  ${}^L G$  be the Langlands dual of  $G$ . Let  $W(k)'$  be the Weil-Deligne group of  $k$ . Vogan has refined the Langlands parametrization as follows. Assume  $G$  is quasi-split over  $k$ , and fix a generic character  $\Theta_0$  of the unipotent radical of a Borel subgroup. We say a group  $G'$  over  $k$  is a *pure inner form* of  $G$  if it is an inner form and the associated cohomology class in  $H^1(k, G/Z)$  lifts to  $H^1(k, G)$ . To specify  $G'$  one must specify the lifted class in  $H^1(k, G)$ . The Langlands parameter  $\varphi : W(k)' \rightarrow {}^L G$  may also be a parameter for  $G'$ . If so, we let  $\Pi_\varphi(G')$  be the Langlands  $L$ -packet; if not, we let  $\Pi_\varphi(G')$  be the empty set. The Vogan  $L$ -packet  $\Pi_\varphi$  of  $\varphi$  is the disjoint union of representations of distinct groups:

$$\Pi_\varphi = \bigcup_{H^1(k, G)} \Pi_\varphi(G').$$

For the remainder of this paragraph we assume that  $k$  is a local field with  $\mathrm{char} k \neq 2$ . Let  $(V, W)$  be a relevant pair of orthogonal spaces over  $k$ . There is no loss of generality in assuming that the spaces  $V$  and  $W$  are both quasi-split, as we will consider all pure inner forms of the group  $\mathrm{SO}(V) \times \mathrm{SO}(W)$ . We denote by  $G$  and  $H$  the group of  $k$ -rational

points of the groups  $\mathbb{G}$  and  $\mathbb{H}$ . Also we think of the homomorphism  $\ell$  as a homomorphism  $H \rightarrow k$  on  $k$ -rational points. Let  $\psi : k \rightarrow S^1$  be a non-trivial additive character, and let

$$\Theta = \psi \circ \ell : H \rightarrow S^1$$

the corresponding homomorphism of  $H$ . The pair  $(H, \Theta)$  is well-defined up to conjugacy. We will think of  $\Theta$  as a one-dimensional representation of the locally compact group  $H$ . Let  $\pi : G \rightarrow \mathrm{GL}(E)$  be an admissible representation of  $G$ . We define

$$\mathrm{Hom}_H(\pi, \Theta)$$

to be the vector space of all  $H$ -invariant continuous linear maps from  $E$  to  $\Theta$ . Equivalently,  $\mathrm{Hom}_H(\pi, \Theta)$  is the subspace of all continuous linear forms on  $E$  on which  $H$  acts by  $\Theta^{-1}$ . The integer  $\dim \mathrm{Hom}_H(\pi, \Theta)$  is an invariant of the isomorphism class of  $\pi$ . It does, however, depend on the particular quasi-split relevant pair  $(V, W)$  used to define  $H$ . Indeed the isomorphism class of  $G = \mathrm{SO}(V) \times \mathrm{SO}(W)$  determines the invariants  $2n + 1$ ,  $2m$ , and  $d_2$ , but the choice of  $d_1$  is arbitrary. If  $(V', W')$  is a quasi-split relevant pair with  $G' \simeq G$  but  $d'_1 \neq d_1$ , the subgroup  $H'$  in  $G'$  will usually not be conjugate to  $H$ .

If  $G_\alpha = \mathrm{SO}(V_\alpha) \times \mathrm{SO}(W_\alpha)$  is a pure inner form of  $G$ , then have

$$\begin{cases} \dim V_\alpha = \dim V & d(V_\alpha) \equiv d(V) \\ \dim W_\alpha = \dim W & d(W_\alpha) \equiv d(W). \end{cases}$$

If the pair  $(V_\alpha, W_\alpha)$  is relevant, we may define the spherical subgroup  $H_\alpha$  of  $G_\alpha$ , and a character  $\Theta_\alpha$  of  $H_\alpha$  as above. Hence we have a well-defined vector space  $\mathrm{Hom}_{H_\alpha}(\pi_\alpha, \Theta_\alpha)$  for any irreducible representation  $\pi_\alpha$  of  $G_\alpha$  which occurs in  $\Pi_\varphi$ . If  $G_\alpha$  does not come from a relevant pair, we adopt the convention that  $\mathrm{Hom}_{H_\alpha}(\pi_\alpha, \Theta_\alpha) = 0$  for all  $\pi_\alpha$ , as  $H_\alpha$  and  $\Theta_\alpha$  are not defined.

**Conjecture 1** (Conjecture 6.9 of [G-P2]). *Let  $\varphi$  be a Langlands parameter for  $G = \mathrm{SO}(V) \times \mathrm{SO}(W)$  and let  $\Pi_\varphi$  be its Vogan  $L$ -packet.*

- (1) *The complex vector space  $L_\varphi = \bigoplus_{\pi_\alpha \in \Pi_\varphi} \mathrm{Hom}_{H_\alpha}(\pi_\alpha, \Theta_\alpha)$  has dimension  $\leq 1$ .*
- (2) *If  $\varphi$  is generic, then  $\dim L_\varphi = 1$ .*

In fact, the second part of Conjecture 6.9 of [G-P2] states exactly which representation contributes to the one-dimensional vector space, but the statement requires more notation.

**1.4. Symplectic groups and orthogonal groups.** Let  $k$  be a field of characteristic not equal to two. The space

$$V = \{T \in M_4(k) \mid TJ_2 \text{ is skew-symmetric and } \operatorname{tr} T = 0\}$$

is a five dimensional vector space over  $k$ . Here  $J_n = \begin{pmatrix} & I_n \\ -I_n & \end{pmatrix}$ . The group  $\operatorname{GSp}(4, k)$  acts on  $V$  by

$$g : T \mapsto g^{-1}Tg.$$

A symmetric non-degenerate form on  $V$  is given by

$$(T_1, T_2) = \frac{1}{4} \operatorname{tr} T_1 T_2.$$

If we set  $Q(T) = (T, T)$ , then we have  $Q(g.T) = Q(T)$  for all  $g \in \operatorname{GSp}(4)$  and  $T \in V$ . In fact, we have an isomorphism  $\operatorname{PGSp}(4) \simeq \operatorname{SO}(5)$ .

More explicitly, the vector space  $V$  can be given in the following way:

$$V = \left\{ \begin{pmatrix} M & xJ_1 \\ yJ_1 & {}^T M \end{pmatrix} \mid M \in M_2(k), \operatorname{tr} M = 0, x, y \in k \right\}.$$

Also, the quadratic form  $Q$  is given by

$$Q(T) = -\det M - xy,$$

for  $T = \begin{pmatrix} M & xJ_1 \\ yJ_1 & {}^T M \end{pmatrix}$ . We will denote the element  $T$  by  $[M, x, y]$ . The action of the group  $\operatorname{GSp}(4)$  on the space  $V$  is explicitly given by the following relations:

$$\begin{pmatrix} A & \\ & \lambda {}^T A^{-1} \end{pmatrix} . T = [A^{-1}MA, x\lambda(\det A)^{-1}, y\lambda^{-1} \det A],$$

$$\begin{pmatrix} I_2 & S \\ & I_2 \end{pmatrix} . T = [M - ySJ_1, (x - y \det S)J_1 + MS - {}^T(MS), y]$$

where  $S = {}^T S$ , and

$$\begin{pmatrix} & -I_2 \\ I_2 & \end{pmatrix} . T = [{}^T M, -y, -x].$$

We will also need the following even more explicit realization. The space is given by

$$V = \left\{ T = \begin{pmatrix} t & v+w & 0 & x \\ v-w & -t & -x & 0 \\ 0 & y & t & v-w \\ -y & 0 & v+w & -t \end{pmatrix} \right\}$$

equipped with the quadratic form

$$Q(T) = t^2 + v^2 - w^2 - xy.$$

Then  $V$  has a two dimensional quadratic subspace

$$W = \left\{ T' = \begin{pmatrix} t & v & & \\ v & -t & & \\ & & t & v \\ & & v & -t \end{pmatrix} \right\}$$

equipped with

$$Q'(T') = t^2 + v^2.$$

The pair  $(V, W)$  is relevant, as  $\dim V - \dim W = 3$  is odd, and

$$W^\perp = \left\{ T'' = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & w & 0 & x \\ -w & 0 & -x & 0 \\ 0 & y & 0 & -w \\ -y & 0 & w & 0 \end{pmatrix} \right\}$$

equipped with  $Q''(T'') = -w^2 - xy$  is split. We set

$$\begin{aligned} X &= \{[0_2, x, 0], x \in k\}, \\ X' &= \{[0_2, 0, y], y \in k\}. \end{aligned}$$

Then  $X$  and  $X'$  are isotropic dual spaces. The stabilizer of  $X$  is the Siegel parabolic subgroup given by

$$P = \left\{ \begin{pmatrix} A & \\ & \lambda^T A^{-1} \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} I_2 & S \\ & I_2 \end{pmatrix} \right\}$$

The group  $\mathrm{SO}(W)$  has the following realization

$$\left\{ \begin{pmatrix} A & \\ & {}^t A^{-1} \end{pmatrix}, A = \begin{pmatrix} a & b \\ -b & a \end{pmatrix} \text{ with } a^2 + b^2 = 1 \right\}.$$

We note that  $\mathrm{SO}(W) \subset P$ . Then we consider a character of the unipotent radical  $N$  of the parabolic subgroup  $P$ . The subgroup  $N$  is abelian. The stabilizer of this character will just be a subgroup isomorphic to  $\mathrm{SO}(W)$  in  $M$ . So in this case, the spherical subgroup is simply  $\mathrm{SO}(W) \rtimes N_P$ . We know from the discussion following corollary 8.10 of [G-P2] that the only relevant inner form of the above  $G = \mathrm{SO}(V) \times \mathrm{SO}(W)$ , which is  $\mathrm{SO}(3, 2) \times \mathrm{SO}(2, 0)$ , is  $G' = \mathrm{SO}(1, 4) \times \mathrm{SO}(0, 2)$ . We will later give a realization of this as a unitary group over a division algebra.

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