COHOMOLOGY OF NILPOTENT SUBALGEBRAS OF AFFINE LIE ALGEBRAS

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ABSTRACT. We compute the cohomology of the maximal nilpotent Lie algebra of an affine Lie algebra $\hat{\mathfrak{g}}$ with coefficients in modules of functions on the circle with values in a representation space of $\mathfrak{g}$. These modules are not highest weight modules and are somewhat similar to the adjoint representation.

INTRODUCTION

Let $\mathfrak{g}$ be a finite-dimensional semisimple Lie algebra, $\mathfrak{b}$ a Borel subalgebra of $\mathfrak{g}$, and $\mathfrak{n}_+ \subset \mathfrak{b}$ the maximal nilpotent ideal of $\mathfrak{b}$. The Bott-Kostant Theorem for Lie algebra cohomology is the following.

Theorem [K]. *Let V be an irreducible representation of $\mathfrak{g}$ with dominant highest weight and $\mathfrak{n}$ a maximal nilpotent subalgebra of $\mathfrak{g}$. Then $\dim H^i(\mathfrak{n}; V)$ is equal to the number of elements of length i in the Weyl group of $\mathfrak{g}$.*

Consider the affine infinite-dimensional graded Lie algebra $\hat{\mathfrak{g}} = \mathfrak{g} \otimes \mathbb{C}[t, t^{-1}]$ corresponding to $\mathfrak{g}$, with $\hat{\mathfrak{g}}_i = \mathfrak{g} \otimes t^i$. There are at least two analogues of the above Theorem for affine algebras. The most direct analogue is the following: if V is an irreducible representation of the current algebra $\hat{\mathfrak{g}}$ with dominant highest weight and $\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+$ is a maximal nilpotent subalgebra of $\hat{\mathfrak{g}}$, that is,

$$\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+ = (\mathfrak{n}_+ \otimes 1) \oplus (\mathfrak{g} \otimes t) \oplus (\mathfrak{g} \otimes t^2) \oplus \cdots,$$

then $\dim H^i(\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+; V)$ is equal to the number of elements of length i in the Weyl group. This Theorem was proved by Garland in 1975 [G] and Garland and Lepowsky in 1976 (see [GL]). The proof is similar to that of the finite-dimensional case.

In this paper we present the proof of a different analogue of the Bott-Kostant Theorem obtained jointly with Feigin and announced in [FF]. Namely, we compute the cohomology of $\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+$ with coefficients in modules of functions on the

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circle S^1 with values in a representation space of $\mathfrak{g}$. These modules are *not* highest weight modules and are somewhat similar to the adjoint representation.

RESULTS

Let V be a representation of $\mathfrak{g}$, A a $\mathbb{C}$ -algebra, and $\varphi: \mathbb{C}[t, t^{-1}] \rightarrow A$ a homomorphism. Let us define a representation of $\hat{\mathfrak{g}}$ on $V \otimes A$ by

$$(x \otimes f)(v \otimes a) = x(v) \otimes \varphi(f)a,$$

where $x \in \mathfrak{g}$, $v \in V$, $f \in \mathbb{C}[t, t^{-1}]$, and $a \in A$.

Consider two special cases for A and φ :

- (a) $A = \mathbb{C}[t, t^{-1}]$ and $\varphi = \text{id}$. In this case denote the module $V \otimes A$ by $\hat{V}$. It consists of rational functions $\mathbb{C} \rightarrow V$ that are regular outside the origin.
- (b) $A = \mathbb{C}$ and $\varphi(f) = f(1)$. In this case denote the module $V \otimes A$ by V_1 .

Note that the map assigning to a function $\mathbb{C} \rightarrow V$ its value at 1 defines a homomorphism $\hat{V} \rightarrow V_1$. The space $\hat{V}$ is endowed with an obvious module structure over the algebra $\mathbb{C}[t, t^{-1}]$, and it is easy to see that multiplication by an element of $\mathbb{C}[t, t^{-1}]$ is a $\mathfrak{g}$ -endomorphism of the $\hat{\mathfrak{g}}$ -module $\hat{V}$. Finally, note that $\hat{V}$ is a graded $\hat{\mathfrak{g}}$ -module, that is, $\hat{V} = \bigoplus_{i \in \mathbb{Z}} \hat{V}_i$, with $\hat{V}_i = V \otimes t^i$.

First we will compute the cohomology of $\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+$ with coefficients in $\hat{V}$. The Lie algebra $\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+$ is a graded subalgebra of $\hat{\mathfrak{g}}$, and $\hat{V}$ is a graded $\hat{\mathfrak{g}}$ -module and $\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+$ -module. Denote by $C^*(\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+; \hat{V})$ the cochain complex of $\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+$ with coefficients in the $\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+$ -module $\hat{V}$. The complex $C^*(\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+; \hat{V})$ and the cohomology $H^*(\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+; \hat{V})$ are graded by weights. To state this, we introduce the notation

$$C_{(m)}^*(\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+; \hat{V}) = \bigoplus_{r \in \mathbb{Z}} \text{Hom}((\wedge^q \hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+)_r, \hat{V}_{r+m}),$$

where

$$(\wedge^q \hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+)_r = \wedge^q \hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+ \cap \left(\bigotimes^q \hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+ \right)_r$$

and

$$\left(\bigotimes^q \hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+ \right)_r = \bigoplus_{r_1 + \dots + r_q = r} ((\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+)_{r_1} \otimes \dots \otimes (\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+)_{r_q}).$$

In this notation the grading is

$$C^*(\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+; \hat{V}) = \bigoplus_{m \in \mathbb{Z}} C_{(m)}^*(\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+; \hat{V})$$

and, similarly,

$$H^*(\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+; \hat{V}) = \bigoplus_{m \in \mathbb{Z}} H_{(m)}^*(\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+; \hat{V}).$$

Lemma 1. $H_{(m)}^*(\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+; \hat{V}) \cong H^*(\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+; V_1)$ for all $m \in \mathbb{Z}$.

Proof. The composition of mappings

$$C_{(m)}^*(\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+; \hat{V}) \xrightarrow{i} C^*(\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+; \hat{V}) \xrightarrow{s} C^*(\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+; V_1),$$

where i is the embedding and s is induced by the homomorphism $\hat{V} \rightarrow V_1$, is obviously a complex isomorphism.

Moreover, the isomorphisms

$$\hat{V}_i = V \otimes t^i \longrightarrow V \otimes t^{i+1} = \hat{V}_{i+1}$$

define a $\hat{\mathfrak{g}}$ -isomorphism $t : \hat{V} \rightarrow \hat{V}$ of degree 1, which generates an action of $\mathbb{C}[t, t^{-1}]$ in $\hat{V}$ and in $H^*(\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+; \hat{V})$. Evidently, t maps $H_{(m)}^*(\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+; \hat{V})$ isomorphically onto $H_{(m+1)}^*(\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+; \hat{V})$. Hence we have

Lemma 1'. $H^*(\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+; \hat{V}) \cong \mathbb{C}[t, t^{-1}] \otimes_{\mathbb{C}} H^*(\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+; V_1)$.

Now let us compute the cohomology $H^*(\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+; V_1)$. Introduce the subalgebra $\mathfrak{g}[t] = \mathfrak{g} \otimes \mathbb{C}[t]$ of $\hat{\mathfrak{g}}$. In the following we will identify $\mathfrak{g}$ with $\mathfrak{g} \otimes 1 \subset \mathfrak{g}[t]$. The Lie algebra $\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+$ is embedded into $\mathfrak{g}[t]$, and V_1 is naturally endowed with a $\mathfrak{g}[t]$ -module structure.

Theorem 1. *We have the following isomorphism of cohomology spaces:*

$$H^i(\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+; V_1) \xrightarrow{\cong} \bigoplus_{p+q=i} H^p(\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+; \mathbb{C}) \otimes H^q(\mathfrak{g}[t], \mathfrak{g}; V_1).$$

Proof. We begin the proof, which will take most of this paper, by introducing two subalgebras of $\hat{\mathfrak{g}}$. The first is

$$\bar{\mathfrak{g}} = (t-1)\mathfrak{g} \oplus (t-1)^2\mathfrak{g} \oplus \dots$$

consisting of loops $\varphi(t)$ which vanish at 1, and the second is

$$\bar{\mathfrak{n}} = \hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+ \cap \bar{\mathfrak{g}}.$$

Note that $\mathfrak{g}[t] = \hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+ + \bar{\mathfrak{g}}$. Let G be the compact connected, simply connected Lie group, corresponding to the compact real form of $\mathfrak{g}$. Next we need the following theorem.

Theorem 2. *We have*

$$H^*(\bar{\mathfrak{n}}) \cong H^*(\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+) \otimes H^*(\bar{\mathfrak{g}}) \otimes H^*(\Omega G),$$

where ΩG is the loop space of G .

Proof. Since we have the embeddings

with $\bar{\mathfrak{g}} \mapsto \mathfrak{g}[t] \mapsto \mathfrak{g}$, we also have the diagram:

$$\begin{array}{ccc}
 & C^*(\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+) & \\
 \swarrow & & \searrow \\
 C^*(\bar{\mathfrak{n}}) & & C^*(\mathfrak{g}[t]) \\
 \swarrow & & \searrow \\
 & C^*(\bar{\mathfrak{g}}) &
 \end{array}$$

Consequently,

$$C^*(\bar{\mathfrak{n}}) = C^*(\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+) \otimes_{C^*(\mathfrak{g}[t])} C^*(\bar{\mathfrak{g}}),$$

where the tensor product is taken in the category of differential algebras. In such a situation there exists an Eilenberg-Moore spectral sequence, connecting these four differential algebras. Its second term is

$$E_2 = \text{Tor}_{H^*(\mathfrak{g}[t])}(H^*(\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+), H^*(\bar{\mathfrak{g}})),$$

and its limit term is $H^*(\bar{\mathfrak{n}})$. We know that $H^*(\mathfrak{g}[t]) \cong H^*(\mathfrak{g})$ (see, for example, [F]). On the other hand, since $H^*(\mathfrak{g})$ acts trivially on $H^*(\bar{\mathfrak{g}})$ and also on $H^*(\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+)$, we conclude that the composition $H^*(\mathfrak{g}) \rightarrow H^*(\mathfrak{n}_+) \rightarrow H^*(\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+)$ is trivial. So we have

$$E_2 = \text{Tor}_{H^*(\mathfrak{g})}(H^*(\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+), H^*(\bar{\mathfrak{g}})) \cong H^*(\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+) \otimes H^*(\bar{\mathfrak{g}}) \otimes \text{Tor}_{H^*(\mathfrak{g})}(\mathbb{C}, \mathbb{C}).$$

On the other hand,

$$\text{Tor}_{H^*(\mathfrak{g})}(\mathbb{C}, \mathbb{C}) \cong H^*(\Omega G).$$

Indeed, the cohomology algebra of $\mathfrak{g}$ with trivial coefficients coincides with the cohomology algebra of G , and by the Hopf Theorem it is commutative and free (see [S]). Using the computation of $\text{Tor}_A(\mathbb{C}, \mathbb{C})$ for the free commutative algebra A ([M, Proposition 7.3] and see also [A]) and the connection between the cohomology of G and ΩG , we get the isomorphism $\text{Tor}_A(\mathbb{C}, \mathbb{C}) \cong H^*(\Omega G)$:

$$H^*(\mathfrak{g}) = \bigwedge^* (e_{\alpha_1}, \dots, e_{\alpha_k}),$$

where $e_{\alpha_i} \in H^{\alpha_i}$. So with the mapping $G \rightarrow \Omega G$ we have

$$\text{Tor} \bigwedge^{*(e_{\alpha_1}, \dots, e_{\alpha_k})}(\mathbb{C}, \mathbb{C}) = S^*(c_{\alpha_1-1}, \dots, c_{\alpha_k-1}),$$

where $\deg c_{\alpha_i-1} = \alpha_i - 1$. The generators of the cohomology are the homotopy groups. To complete the proof of Theorem 2 we will need the next proposition.

Proposition 1. *The spectral sequence degenerates, namely, its second term E_2 coincides with the limit term E_∞ .*

Proof. We shall indicate explicit cocycles of $C^*(\bar{\mathfrak{n}})$ which represent the generators of E_2 . For this we apply the continuous cohomology theory. Let $\mathfrak{n}(0, 1)$ be the Lie algebra of infinitely differentiable functions $f: [0, 1] \rightarrow \mathfrak{g}$ such that $f(0) \in \mathfrak{n}$ and $f(1) = 0$. Denote by $C_c^*(0, 1)$ the complex of cochains of $\mathfrak{n}(0, 1)$, continuous in the C^∞ -topology. Let α be a generator of $H^*(\mathfrak{g})$ and

$\bar{\alpha}$ a cochain representing α . For $p \in [0, 1]$ denote by φ_p the homomorphism $\bar{n} \rightarrow \mathfrak{g}$, “the value at p ”:

$$\varphi_p((t-1)g_1, (t-1)^2g_2, \dots) = \sum_m (p-1)^m g_m.$$

Let $\alpha_p = \varphi_p^* \bar{\alpha}$, $\alpha_p \in C_c^*(0, 1)$. Choose $\bar{\alpha}$ in such a way that $\alpha_0 = \alpha_1 = 0$. Let $p \neq 0, 1$; then we can define the cochain $\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial x}(p)$, where x is the coordinate on $[0, 1]$. It is shown in [F] that $\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial x}(p)$ is a coboundary: $\frac{\partial \alpha}{\partial x}(p) = \delta \omega(p)$, where δ is the differential in $C_c^*(0, 1)$. Indeed, let K_p ($p \neq 0$) be the cochain complex of $\bar{n}$ with support at p . It is proved in the same paper that the cohomology of K_p is isomorphic to $H^*(\mathfrak{g})$. The complex K_p is a W_1 -module, where W_1 is the Lie algebra of formal vector fields at the point p . But $H^*(\mathfrak{g})$ is finite dimensional and W_1 has no nontrivial finite-dimensional representations. We conclude that if $\nu \in K_p$ and $\delta \nu = 0$ then $\frac{\partial \nu}{\partial x}$ is the differential of some other cocycle $\bar{\nu} \in K_p$.

This means that

$$\alpha_p - \alpha_q = \delta \int_q^p \omega(x) dx.$$

In particular, $\delta \int_0^1 \omega(x) dx = 0$. Suppose that $\alpha' = \int_0^1 \omega(x) dx$. The cochain α' represents a nontrivial cohomology class of $\bar{n}$.

The Lie algebras $\hat{n}_+$ and $\bar{g} = (t-1)\mathfrak{g} \oplus (t-1)^2\mathfrak{g} \oplus \dots$ are graded. Similarly, the cochain complexes are also graded. Note that the cochain complex K_0 of $\bar{n}(0, 1)$ with support in 0 is isomorphic to $\bigoplus_i C_i^*(\hat{n}_+)$ and the cochain complex K_1 with support in 1 is isomorphic to $\bigoplus_i C_i^*(\bar{g})$. It follows from this that the cohomologies of K_0 and K_1 are isomorphic to $H^*(\hat{n}_+)$ and $H^*(\bar{g})$, respectively.

Recall that $H^*(\mathfrak{g})$ is isomorphic to the free graded commutative algebra with generators $\xi_1, \xi_2, \dots$, with $\deg \xi_k = 2k+1$. Using the above construction, let us assign to each ξ_i a representative cocycle ξ'_i .

Lemma 2. *The space $H^*(\bar{n})$ is generated by the cohomology classes of cochains of the form $u \wedge v \wedge P(\xi'_1, \xi'_2, \dots)$, where $u \in K_0$ and $v \in K_1$ are cocycles corresponding to the elements of $H^*(\hat{n}_+)$ and $H^*(\bar{g})$, respectively, and P is an arbitrary polynomial with generators $\xi'_1, \xi'_2, \dots$.*

The proof of Lemma 2 follows from the construction above for continuous cohomology (a similar argument in a more difficult situation was used in [FR]). In particular, we have an explicit construction of cochains, representing the generators of E_2 in the proof of Theorem 2, surviving until E_∞ . Thus, Theorem 2 is proved.

We now return to complete the proof of Theorem 1. We want to prove the isomorphism

$$H^*(\mathfrak{g}[t], \mathfrak{g}; V_1) \otimes H^*(\hat{n}_+; \mathbb{C}) \xrightarrow{\sim} H^*(\hat{n}_+; V_1).$$

Consider the Serre-Hochschild spectral sequence associated with the algebra $\hat{n}_+$, its ideal $\bar{n}$, and the module V_1 . The Lie algebra $\bar{n}$ acts on V_1 trivially. The second term of this spectral sequence is

$$E_2^{ij} = H^i(\hat{n}_+/\bar{n}; H^j(\bar{n}; V_1)) = H^i(\hat{n}_+/\bar{n}; H^j(\bar{n}; \mathbb{C}) \otimes V_1).$$

But by Theorem 2, this is the same as

$$H^i \left(\hat{n}_+ / \bar{n}, \bigoplus_{p+q+r=j} H^p(\hat{n}_+) \otimes H^q(\bar{g}) \otimes H^r(\Omega G) \otimes V_1 \right).$$

Since $\hat{n}_+ / \bar{n} \cong \mathfrak{g}$, we get that E_2 is then isomorphic to

$$H^*(\mathfrak{g}, \mathbb{C}) \otimes [H^*(\hat{n}_+) \otimes H^*(\bar{g}) \otimes H^*(\Omega G) \otimes V_1]^{\mathfrak{g}},$$

where $[]^{\mathfrak{g}}$ denotes the invariant space.

Let us note the following facts:

(a) $\mathfrak{g}$ acts on $H^*(\hat{n}_+)$ trivially (this action is extended by the projection $\hat{n}_+ \rightarrow \mathfrak{g}$ to the canonical action of $\hat{n}_+$, and a Lie algebra acts trivially on the cohomology of itself).

(b) $\mathfrak{g}$ acts trivially on $H^*(\Omega G) = \text{Tor}_{H^*(\mathfrak{g})}(\mathbb{C}, \mathbb{C})$.

These imply that

$$E_2^{ij} = H^i(\mathfrak{g}) \otimes \left(\bigoplus_{p+q+r=j} (H^p(\hat{n}_+) \otimes H^q(\Omega G) \otimes [H^r(\bar{g}) \otimes V_1]^{\mathfrak{g}}) \right)$$

and

$$[H^*(\bar{g}) \otimes V_1]^{\mathfrak{g}} = H^*(\mathfrak{g}[t], \mathfrak{g}; V_1).$$

The differentials act in the following way.

(i) Differentials on $H^*(\hat{n}_+) \otimes H^*(\mathfrak{g}[t], \mathfrak{g}; V_1)$ are zero. We have the map

$$H^*(\hat{n}_+) \otimes H^*(\mathfrak{g}[t], \mathfrak{g}; V_1) \longrightarrow H^*(\hat{n}_+; V_1).$$

Thus, elements of the left side survive in E_{∞} .

(ii) Differentials on

$$H^*(\mathfrak{g}) \otimes H^*(\Omega G) = \bigwedge^* \{e_{\alpha_i}\} \otimes S^* \{c_{\alpha_{i-1}}\}$$

map the generators of the algebra $H^*(\Omega G)$ into the generators of $H^*(\mathfrak{g})$ (the differential maps $c_{\alpha_{i-1}} \mapsto e_{\alpha_i}$).

Consider the Serre path fibration $EG \rightarrow G$. Since the paths are contractible, $H^0(EG) = \mathbb{C}$ and $H^i(EG) = 0$ for $i > 0$. In addition, we have $H^*(\mathfrak{g}) = H^*(G)$, so

$$H^*(G) \otimes H^*(\Omega G) \text{ converges to } H^*(EG) \cong \mathbb{C}.$$

Then it follows that the spectral sequence converges to $H^*(\hat{n}_+) \otimes H^*(\mathfrak{g}[t], \mathfrak{g}; V_1)$. Thus our spectral sequence is the product of $H^*(\hat{n}_+) \otimes H^*(\mathfrak{g}[t], \mathfrak{g}; V_1)$ with the spectral sequence of the Serre path fibration $EG \rightarrow G$. This completes the proof of Theorem 1.

Theorem 3. $H^i(\hat{n}_+; \hat{g}) \cong \mathbb{C}[t, t^{-1}] \otimes_{\mathbb{C}} H^{i-1}(\hat{n}_+)$ for any nonnegative integer i .

Proof. Let $V = \mathfrak{g}$ as in Lemma 1'. Then Lemma 1' implies that $H^i(\hat{n}_+; \hat{g})$ is a free $\mathbb{C}[t, t^{-1}]$ -module of rank equal to $\dim H^i(\hat{n}_+; V_1)$.

The cohomology of $\hat{n}_+$ with trivial coefficients is known (see [GL]). Using this result, it is not difficult to find the cohomology $H^*(t\mathfrak{g}[t])$ of the algebra $t\mathfrak{g}[t] = (\mathfrak{g} \otimes t) \oplus (\mathfrak{g} \otimes t^2) \oplus \dots$ (see also [G] and [GL]; the proof in [GL] is basically the same as the proof of the cohomology result of $\hat{n}_+$ with trivial coefficients). We need only the following fact. The space $H^*(t\mathfrak{g}[t])$ is a $\mathfrak{g}$ -module

and $\text{Hom}_{\mathfrak{g}}(\mathfrak{g}; H^i(t\mathfrak{g}[t])) = 0$ if $i \neq 1$ and is equal to $\mathbb{C}$ if $i = 1$ (see [L]). Since $H^i(\mathfrak{g}[t], \mathfrak{g}; V) \cong \text{Hom}_{\mathfrak{g}}(V; H^i(t\mathfrak{g}[t]))$, this gives us that $H^i(\mathfrak{g}[t], \mathfrak{g}; \mathfrak{g}) = 0$ for $i \neq 1$ and is equal to $\mathbb{C}$ for $i = 1$. After this, it is enough to apply Theorem 1 to find that $H^i(\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+; V_1) = H^{i-1}(\hat{\mathfrak{n}}_+)$.

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