# Rational Invariants of Meta-abelian Groups of Linear Automorphisms* 

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## Introduction

Let $k$ be an algebraically closed field of characteristic zero, $G$ a finite group and $V$ a finite-dimensional $k G$-module. Then $G$ acts as a group of $k$ automorphisms on $k(V)$, the field of fractions of the symmetric $k$-algebra of $V$. Is the subfield $k(V)^{G}$ of $k(V)$ fixed by $G$ rational (=purely transcendental) over $k$ ?

The case when $G$ is abelian was completely settled by Fischer [3,4] in 1916, and it is natural to consider next the "two-step abelian" (i.e., metaabelian) case. We thus assume that $G$ has a normal abelian subgroup $N$ for which $H=G / N$ is abelian. For a cyclic $H$ (of order $n$, say), Haeuslein [5] showed that $k(V)^{G}$ is indeed rational if $n$ is prime and if the $n$th cyclotomic field has class number 1 . This is the case precisely when $n$ is a prime $<23$.

In Section 1 of this paper, we prove Haeuslein's result with the assumption that $n$ is a prime relaxed. Thus $k(V)^{G}$ is rational if $n$ is any of the 44 numbers listed in [8]. The difficulties arising from dropping the assumption that $n$ is prime are discussed at the end of Section 1 . For other values of $n$, the problem remains open. We note, however, the role played by $\operatorname{dim}_{k}(V)$ and we prove that $k(V)^{G}$ is rational whenever $\operatorname{dim}_{k}(V)<23$, regardless of $n$.

The proof goes as follows. By [1, pp. 75-79], a meta-abelian group is an $M$-group. Actually, $k(V)$ has a base over $k$ (i.e., a transcendence basis $B$ for which $k(B)=k\left(V^{\circ}\right)$ on which $G$ acts monomially and on which $N$ acts diagonally (i.e., $G$ acts on the subgroup of $k(V)^{*}$ generated by $k^{*}$ and $B$, and $g(b) / b$ belongs to $k^{*}$ for all $b$ in $B$ and all $g$ in $N$ ). Using Fischer's method, one constructs a base of $L=k(V)^{N}$ on which $H$ acts monomially. Thus our problem reduces to whether the abelian group $H$ of monomial automorphisms has a rational fixed field. If the action of $H$ could be linearized (i.e., if $L$ has a base $B$ over $k$ for which $H$ acts on the $k$-module generated by $B$ ), then Fischer's result would settle our problem. This can

[^0]actually be done if $H$ is cyclic (say $H=(h)$ ) of a prime order <23 [6]. If $\operatorname{order}(h)$ is not prime, the problem gets much harder, and it is in fact still unknown whether that can be done. Nor is it known whether all monomial automorphisms of order $<23$ have rational fixed fields. We were able, however, to linearize $h$ using the fairly special form its characteristic polynomial turns to have (namely, $\Pi\left(T^{s(i)}-1\right)$ ), and imposing some restrictions on the sizes of the $s(i)$ 's. These restrictions follow from either the hypothesis that order $(h)<23$ or that $\operatorname{dim}_{k}(V)<23$.

In Section 2, we drop the assumption that (the abelian) $H$ is cyclic and we establish the rationality of $k(V)^{G}$ for $\operatorname{dim}_{k}(V)<5$. In this case too, we do not know whether the action of $H$ can be linearized.

The arithmetic version of this problem is often referred to as "Noether's Conjecture." It was first formulated by Noether in 1916 as a question of the rationality of $Q(V)^{C(r)}$ for the regular representation $V$ of a cyclic group $C(r)$ of order $r$ over the rational number field $Q$. The rationality was established by her [11] for $r=3$, by Seidelmann [12] for $r=4$, by Masuda [9] for $r<8$ and later [10] for $r=11$. In 1969, Swan [13] proved the surprising result that even in this simple case of a cyclic $C(r), Q(V)^{C(r)}$ need not be rational, giving as an example the value $r=47$. Further investigation of the problem was made by Endo and Miyata [2] and by Lenstra [7].

## 1. The Cyclic Case

Throughout this paper, $k$ is an algebraically closed field of characteristic zero, $G$ a finite group having a normal abelian subgroup $N$ for which $H=G / N$ is abelian, $V$ a finite-dimensional $k G$-module and $k(V)$ the field of fractions of the symmetric algebra of $V$ over $k$. Let $G$ act naturally as a group of $k$-automorphisms on $k(V)$. Our objective is to establish, under certain conditions, that $k(V)^{G}$ is rational (over $k$ ).

We adhere to the definitions made in the Introduction (noting especially the rather unstandard usage of the term "base"). If $U$ is a group containing $k^{*}$ as a subgroup such that $U / k^{*}$ is $\mathbb{Z}$-free of finite rank and if $f$ is an automorphism on $U$ fixing $k^{*}$, then $\bar{U}$ denotes $U / k^{*}, \bar{f}$ the action on $\bar{U}$ induced by $f$, and $\chi(f, U)$ the characteristic polynomial of $\bar{f}$. The value of $\chi(f, U)$ at (an indeterminate) $T$ is denoted by $\chi(f, U, T)$. The $r$ th cyclotomic polynomial is denoted by $\phi_{r}$.

Theorem 1 reduces our problem to one of the more classical type already encountered in the treatment of the Arithmetic Noether's Conjecture stated in the Introduction.

Theorem 1. Let $H=G / N$ be cyclic and let $h$ be a generator of $H$. Then there exists a $Z H$-module $E$ containing $k^{*}$ as an $H$-fixed submodule such that (i) $\bar{E}$ is $\mathbb{Z}$-free of a rank equal to $\operatorname{dim}_{k}(V)$.
(ii) $k(V)^{N}=k(E)$ (and hence $k(V)^{G}=k(E)^{H}$ ), where $k(E)$ is the canonically constructed field extension of $k$ having as a base a set in $E$ representing $a \mathbb{Z}$-basis of $\bar{E}$.
(iii) $\chi(h, E, T)$ is of the form $\prod_{i=1}^{r}\left(T^{s(i)}-1\right)$.

Proof: Let $g$ be a pre-image of $h$ in $G \rightarrow G / N=H$. Following Fischer's method of finding invariants of $N$, we form the $N$-eigen space decomposition ( $) V_{i}$ of $V$ having the minimal number of summands and we use the normality of $N$ in $G$ to prove that the action of each element of $G$ on the set $\left\{V_{i}\right\}$ is a permutation. We then construct an $N$-eigen basis of $V$ on which $g$ acts as a permutation (up to multiplying by elements of $k^{*}$ ). This is done as follows. Let $\left(U_{1}, \ldots, U_{t}\right)$, where each $U_{i}$ is some $V_{j}$, be a cycle in the decomposition into disjoint cycles of the permutational action of $g$ on the set $\left\{V_{i}\right\}$. Since $g^{t}$ acts on $U_{1}$, one can construct a $g^{t}$-eigen basis of $U_{1}$. Such a basis, combined with its images under powers of $g$, yields a basis of $\prod_{i=1}^{t} U_{i}$ on which the action of $g$ is as desired. Doing the same on each cycle and combining the resulting bases, onc gets the desired basis of $V$. Thus we have constructed a base $B$ of $k(V)$ and a permutation $p$ on the set $B$ such that $g(b) / p(b)$ and $g^{\prime}(b) / b$ belong to $k^{*}$ for all $b$ in $B$ and all $g^{\prime}$ in $N$. Letting $A$ be the subgroup of $k(V)^{*}$ generated by $k^{*}$ and $B$, and letting $E$ be the subgroup of $A$ fixed by $N$, one easily sees (and it is the classical argument of Fischer) that $k(V)^{N}$ is rational and equals $k(E)$. Clearly, $h$ acts on $E$ making it a $\not Z H$-module. Finally, the statement on $\chi(h, E)$ follows from observing the permutational action of $\bar{g}$ (and hence of $\bar{h}$ ) on $A$ and noting that $\chi(g, A)=$ $\chi(g, E), A / E$ being all torsion.

Theorem 2. Let $H$ be cyclic and let $n=\operatorname{order}(H)$. If the class number of the $n$th cyclotomic field is 1 , then $k(V)^{G}$ is rational over $k$.

The idea of the proof is to subject the $\mathbb{Z} H$-module $E$ obtained in Theorem 1 to a sequence of modifications within $k(E)^{*}$ that result in another $\mathbb{Z} H$-module $F$ having all the properties of $E$ and for which $\bar{F}$ is a permutation module. This will be accomplished after few preparatory lemmas have been proved.

Let $E$ be as in Theorem 1, let $H=(h)$ and let $L=k(E)$. For a $\mathbb{Z} H$ submodule $F$ of $L^{*}$ containing $k^{*}$, let $\bar{F}$ denote $F / k^{*}$ and let $\bar{h}$ (resp. $\bar{H}$ ) denote the action induced by $h$ (resp. $H$ ) on $\bar{L}^{*}$. We refer to both $\mathbb{Z} H$ - and $\mathbb{Z} \bar{H}$-modules simply as modules, the context making it clear which of the two rings is meant. A submodule $F$ of $L^{*}$ containing $k^{*}$ and for which $\bar{F}$ is $\mathbb{Z}$ free of finite rank is called a monomial module. In all that follows, $F$ and $F_{i}$ 's stand for such modules. An element $u$ of $L^{*}$ (resp. of $L^{*} / k^{*}$ ) is said to be annihilated by a polynomail $P$ if $P(h) u$ belongs to $k^{*}$ (resp. if $P(\bar{h})=1$ ). We say that $F_{1} \sim F_{2}$ if $k\left(F_{1}\right)=k\left(F_{2}\right)$ and $\operatorname{rank}\left(\bar{F}_{1}\right)=\operatorname{rank}\left(\bar{F}_{2}\right)$. One should
note, however, that for each pair $F_{1}$ and $F_{2}$ of equivalent modules encountered below, $\chi\left(h, F_{1}\right)=\chi\left(h, F_{2}\right)$. The pushout of the diagram

which contains both $F_{1}$ and $F_{2}$ is denoted by $F_{1} * F_{2}$. Thus $k\left(F_{1} * F_{2}\right)$ is the composite field $k\left(F_{1}\right) k\left(F_{2}\right)$. Finally we define the subset $S(T)$ of $\mathbb{Z}[T] \times$ $\mathbb{Z}[T]$ to be the set of all pairs $(P(T), Q(T))$ such that for some positive integers $p$ and $q, P(T)$ divides $\left(T^{p}-1\right), Q(T)$ divides ( $T^{q}-1$ ) and the $\operatorname{gcd}\left(T^{p}-1, Q(T)\right)=1$.

Proposition 3. Let $(P(T), Q(T)$ ) be in $S(T)$. If an element $u$ of $F$ is annihilated by $Q$, then there exists an $f$ in $k(F)^{*}$ such that $(P(h) f) / u$ belongs to $k^{*}$.

Proof (Due to the referee). Let $p$ and $q$ be as in the definition of $S(T)$, let $n=\operatorname{order}(H)$ and let $Q_{1}(T)=\left(T^{p q n}-1\right) /\left(T^{p}-1\right)$. Let $H_{1}$ be the subgroup of $H$ generated by $h_{i}=h^{p}$ and let $s$ be the sum of its elements. Then $Q_{1}(h) u=(s(u))^{m}$, where $m=n q / \operatorname{order}\left(H_{1}\right)$. Since $Q$ divides $Q_{1}$, then $(s(u))^{m}$ is in $k^{*}$. Since $k$ is algebraically closed, then $s(u)$ is in $k^{*}$. Let $a$ be the element of $k^{*}$ for which $s(a u)=1$. Then by Hilbert's Theorem 90, there exists an $f_{1}$ in $k(F)^{*}$ such that $a u=\left(h_{1}-1\right) f_{1}=\left(h^{p}-1\right) f_{1}$. It is now clear that $\left(\left(h^{p}-1\right) / P(h)\right) f_{i}$ has the properties required of $f$.

Lemma 4. Let $(P(T), Q(T))$ be in $S(T)$, and let $F_{2}$ be a submodule of $F_{1}$. If $F_{1} / F_{2}$ is the direct sum of cyclic modules annihilated by $P$, and if $Q$ annihilates $F_{2}$, then $F_{1} \sim F_{2} * F$, where $\bar{F}$ is isomorphic to $F_{1} / F_{2}$.

Proof. Let $x_{1}, \ldots, x_{s}$ be elements of $F_{1}$ representing generators of the cyclic summands of $F_{1} / F_{2}$ (one $x_{i}$ for each summand), and set $u_{i}=P_{i}(h) x_{i}$ where $P_{i}$ is the annihilator of $x_{i}$. Then $Q(h) u_{i}$ is in $k^{*}$ and Proposition 3 guarantees the existence of an $f_{i}$ in $k\left(F_{2}\right)^{*}$ such that $\left(P_{i}(h) f_{i}\right) / u_{i}$ is in $k^{*}$. It is now easy to see that the module generated by $\left\{x_{i} f_{i}: i=1, \ldots, s\right\}$ has the properties required of $F$.

Corollary 5. Let $E$ be as in Theorem 1, and let $n=\operatorname{order}(H)$. If the $n$th cyclotomic field has class number 1 , then $E \sim F_{1} * F_{2} * \cdots * F_{s}$, where each $F_{i}$ is annihilated by a cyclotomic polynomial and where the sum of the $\bar{F}_{i}$ 's is a direct sum.

Proof. Let $\left(P_{i}\right)_{i-1}^{m}$ be the subsequence of $\left(\phi_{i}\right)_{i=1}^{\infty}$ consisting of the (cyclotomic) factors of $\chi(h, E)$, and set $Q_{i}=\prod_{i=i}^{m} P_{j}$. Let $E_{i}$ be the
submodule of $E$ annihilated by $Q_{i}$. Clearly, $E_{i} / E_{i+1}$ is annihilated by $Q_{i} / Q_{i+1}=P_{i}$. Since $P_{i}$ is a factor of $T^{n}-1$ and since the class number of the $n$th cyclotomic field (and hence that of the $d$ th cyclotomic field for every factor $d$ of $n[8])$ is assumed to be 1 , then $\mathbb{Z}[T] / P_{i}(T)$ is a P.I.D. and hence $E_{i} / E_{i+1}$ (being a ( $\mathbb{Z}[T] / P_{i}(T)$ )-module) is the direct sum of cyclic modules. Thus, Lemma 4 applies to each pair $\left(E_{i}, E_{i+1}\right)$. We apply Lemma $4 m$ times, letting the role of $\left(F_{1}, F_{2}\right)$ in that lemma be played by $\left(E_{1}, E_{2}\right),\left(E_{2}, E_{3}\right), \ldots$, $\left(E_{m}, E_{m \mid 1}\right)$ in this order and denoting by $F_{1}, F_{2}, \ldots ., F_{m}$ the modifications thus obtained.

Lemma 6. Let $(P(T), Q(T))$ be in $S(T)$. If $\bar{F}=\bar{F}_{1} \oplus \bar{F}_{2}$ and if $\bar{F}_{1}$ and $\bar{F}_{2}$ are cyclic modules annihilated by $P$ and $Q$ (resp.), then $F \sim F^{\prime}$ for some cyclic $\bar{F}^{\prime}$.

Proof. Let $x$ and $u$ be elements of $F$ representing generators of $\bar{F}_{1}$ and $\bar{F}_{2}$ (resp.), and let $P_{1}$ be the annihilator of $F_{1}$. Then by Proposition 3 there exists an $f$ in $k\left(F_{2}\right)^{*}$ such that $\left(P_{1}(h) f\right) / u$ is in $k^{*}$. Now take $F^{\prime}$ to be the cyclic module generated by $x f$.

Corollary 7. If $\bar{F}$ is the direct sum of cyclic modules annihilated by distinct cyclotomic polynomials, then $F \sim F^{\prime}$ for some cyclic $\bar{F}^{\prime}$.

Proof. Ler $\bar{F}_{i}(i=1, \ldots, r)$ be the cyclic summands of $\bar{F}$, and let $P_{i}$ be the cyclotomic polynomial annihilating $F_{i}$. Set $Q_{i}=\prod_{j=i+1}^{r} P_{j}$. Let $W_{r}=F_{r}$ and define $W_{r-i}(i=1,2, \ldots, r-1)$ to be the module equivalent to $W_{r-i+1} * F_{r-i}$ obtained by applying Lemma 6 to $\bar{W}_{r-i+1} \oplus \bar{F}_{r-i}$. Then $W_{1}$ has the properties required of $F^{\prime}$.

Proof of Theorem 2. In virtue of Corollary 5, one can assume that the module $\bar{E}$ obtained in Theorem 1 is the direct sum of modules annihilated by cyclotomic factors of $\chi(h, E)$. Each of these summands is in turn the direct sum of cyclic modules. (This is because the $n$th cyclotomic field has class number 1 , and therefore $\mathbb{Z}[T] / f(T)$ is a P.I.D. for every cyclotomic factor $f$ of $T^{n}-1$.) We index these cyclic summands of $\bar{E}$ by the set $D=\{(i, j)$ : $i$ divides $s(j) ; j=1, \ldots, r\}$ and we set $D(j)=\{(a, b) \in D: b=j\}$. Then $\bar{E}=\oplus_{t \in D} \bar{E}_{t}=\oplus_{j=1}^{r} \oplus_{t \in D(j)} \bar{E}_{t}$, where for $t=(a, b), \bar{E}_{t}$ is cyclic annihilated by $\phi_{a}$. We now apply Corollary 7 to $\oplus_{i \in D(j)} \bar{E}_{t}$ (for each $j$ ) to obtain $F_{j}$ with $\bar{F}_{j}$ cyclic annihilated by $T^{s(j)}-1$. Thus $E \sim F_{1} * F_{2} * \cdots * F_{r}$ and it is obvious that $F_{1} * F_{2} * \cdots * F_{r}$ is a permutation module. Therefore, $k(E)^{H}$, $=k(V)^{G}$, is rational.

Theorem 8. Let $H$ be cyclic. If $\operatorname{dim}_{k}(V)<23$, then $k(V)^{G}$ is rational over $k$.

Proof. Follows from the fact that $\operatorname{dim}_{k}(V)$ is the sum of the $s(i)$ 's
(appearing in Theorem 1) and therefore the class number of the $s(i)$ th cyclotomic field is 1 for all $i$.

Note. With the added hypothesis that $n$ is prime, Theorem 2 was proved by Haeuslein [5]. The main ingredients in that proof are two statements (A) and (B) that are known to be true only if $n$ is prime:
(A) $\mathbb{Z}[T] /\left(T^{n}-1\right)$ is a semi-P.I.R. (For definition and reference, see [6, Theorem 0.4].)
(B) If $f(T)$ is a prime factor of $\left(T^{n}-1\right)$ and if $E$ is a cyclic module over $\mathbb{Z} \mid t]=\mathbb{Z}[T] / f(T)$, then $k(E)=k(F)$ for some permutation (actually trivial) $t$-module $\bar{\Gamma}[6$, Theorem 1.1(iii) $]$.

When $n$ is not prime, (A) is false and (B) is still an open statement. This twofold difficulty is removed by Corollaries 5 and 7 above.

We finally remark that knowledge of both $\operatorname{order}(H)$ and $\operatorname{dim}_{k}(V)$ may yield the rationality of $k(V)^{G}$ when Theorems 2 and 8 fail to. As an example, $k(V)^{G}$ is rational when $\operatorname{order}(H)=39>\operatorname{dim}_{k}(V)$.

## 2. The Klein Case

In this section, we drop the assumption that (the abelian) $H$ is cyclic and we prove the rationality of $k(V)^{G}$ for $\operatorname{dim}_{k} V<5$.

We first prove the following simple lemma. The facts that $\mathbb{Z}[T] /\left(T^{2}-1\right)$ is a semi-P.I.R. and that a monomial automorphism of order 2 has a rational fixed field $[6]$ are freely used.

Lemma 9. Let $E_{1}, E_{2}$ be the endomorphisms on $\mathbb{Z}^{4}$ defined by

$$
\begin{aligned}
& E_{1}\left(\left(a_{1}, a_{2}, a_{3}, a_{4}\right)\right)=\left(a_{2}, a_{1}, a_{3}, a_{4}\right) . \\
& E_{2}\left(\left(a_{1}, a_{2}, a_{3}, a_{4}\right)\right)=\left(a_{1}, a_{2}, a_{4}, a_{3}\right) .
\end{aligned}
$$

Let $U$ be a rank 4 subgroup of $\mathbb{Z}^{4}$ invariant under both $E_{1}$ and $E_{2}$. Then $U$ has a system $\left\{u_{1}, u_{2}, u_{3}, u_{4}\right\}$ of generators such that both $u_{1}$ and $u_{2}$ are fixed by $E_{1}$ and by $E_{2}$ and such that either
(1) $E_{1}: u_{3} \rightarrow u_{4} \rightarrow u_{3}$,

$$
E_{2}:\left\{\begin{array}{l}
u_{3} \rightarrow-u_{4}+\alpha u_{1}+\beta u_{2} \\
\left\{u_{4} \rightarrow-u_{3}+\alpha u_{1}+\beta u_{2}\right.
\end{array}\right.
$$

or
(2) $E_{1}: u_{3} \rightarrow u_{3}: u_{4} \rightarrow-u_{4}+\alpha u_{1}+\beta u_{2}$, $E_{2}: u_{4} \rightarrow u_{4} ; u_{3} \rightarrow-u_{3}+\mu u_{1}+v u_{2}$.
where $\alpha, \beta, \mu, v$ are integers which are significant only up to their values $\bmod 2$.

Proof. Let $u_{1}, u_{2}$ be generators of the subgroup $W$ of $U$ consisting of the elements fixed by $E_{1}$ and $E_{2}$, and let $e_{1}$ be the endomorphism induced on $U / W$ by $E_{1}$. It is easy to see that the minimal polynomial of $e_{1}$ is $T^{2}-1$; and thus the group-ring $R=\mathbb{Z}\left[e_{1}\right]$, being $\cong \mathbb{Z}[T] /\left(T^{2}-1\right)$, is a semi-P.I.R. Hence, the torsion-free $R$-module $U / W$ decomposes into the direct sum of cyclic $R$-modules. Since $\operatorname{rank}(U / W)=2$, and since $T^{2}-1$ is the smallest polynomiai that annihilates $e_{1}$, it follows immediately that there are only the following two possibilities:
(i) $U / W=R \bar{v}$, where $v \in U, \bar{v}=v+W$ and $\operatorname{Ann}_{R}(\bar{v})=e_{1}^{2}-1$.
(ii) $U / W=R \bar{v}_{1} \oplus R \bar{v}_{2}$, where $v_{j} \in U, \bar{v}_{j}=v_{j}+W$, and $\operatorname{Ann}_{R}\left(\bar{v}_{j}\right)=$ $e_{1}-(-\mathrm{I})^{\prime}$.

To obtain (1) from (i), set $u_{3}=v$ and observe that

$$
\left(E_{2} E_{1}+i d\right) v=\left(E_{1}+E_{2}\right) v \in W
$$

To obtain (2) from (ii), set $u_{3}=v_{1}$ and $u_{4}=v_{2}$.
The last statement follows from observing the effect the change of the basis $\left\{u_{1}, u_{2}, u_{3}, u_{4}\right\}$ into $\left\{u_{1}, u_{2}, u_{3}^{\prime}, u_{4}^{\prime}\right\}$ has on the equations in (1) and (2), where $u_{3}^{\prime}-u_{3}$ and $u_{4}^{\prime}-u_{4}$ are in $W$.

We now return to our problem. We form the irredundant decomposition $\oplus_{i=1}^{m} V_{i}$ of $V$ into $N$-eigen spaces and we use the normality of $N$ in $G$ to prove that each $g$ in $G$ acts as a permutation on the set $\left\{V_{1}, \ldots, V_{m}\right\}$. Assuming that $N$ is its own centralizer, one sees that the elements of $N$ are the only elements of $G$ that act as the identity permutation. Thus $H=G / N$ is isomorphic to a subgroup of the symmetric group $S_{m}$. The only abelian noncyclic subgroups of $S_{m}\left(m \leqslant \operatorname{dim}_{k}(V)<5\right)$ are the Klein subgroups of $S_{4}$. Thus we assume that $\operatorname{dim}_{k}(V)=m=4$, that $\operatorname{dim}_{k}\left(V_{i}\right)=1$ and that $H$ is a Klein group. Let $g_{1}$ and $g_{2}$ be elements of $G$ representing generators of $H$, and let $p_{1}$ and $p_{2}$ be the elements of $S_{4}$ corresponding to $g_{1}$ and $g_{2}$. Let $y_{i}$ be a basis of (the one-dimensional) $V_{i}$, let $P$ be the subgroup of $k(V)^{*}$ generated by $k^{*}$ and $\left\{y_{1}, \ldots, y_{4}\right\}$, and let $A$ be the subgroup of $P$ fixed by $N$. By Fischer's argument, $A$ is a rank 4 subgroup of $P$ with $k(A)=k(V)^{N}$. If $p_{1}$ and $p_{2}$ are the transposition (12) and (34), then by Lemma 9 one constructs a base $\{x, y, z, w\}$ of $k(V)^{N}$ (over $k$ ) on which the action of $g_{1}$ and $g_{2}$ is either of the actions described in (V) and (VI) of Table I. If $p_{1}$ and $p_{2}$ are $(12)\left(\begin{array}{ll}3 & 4\end{array}\right)$ and $(13)(24)$, then by a lemma parallel to Lemma 9 , one constructs a base $\{x, y, z, w\}$ on which the action of $g_{1}$ and $g_{2}$ is one of the actions described in (I), (II), (III) and (IV) of Table I. We let $K=k(x, y$, $\left.z, w^{\prime}\right)=k(V)^{N}, K_{1}=K^{g_{1}}$ and $K_{12}=K_{1}^{g_{2}}$. We now establish the rationality of
TABLE I

|  | $g_{1}(x)$ | $g_{1}(y)$ | $g_{1}(z)$ | $g_{1}\left(w^{\prime}\right)$ | $g_{2}(x)$ | $g_{2}(y)$ | $g_{2}(z)$ | $g_{2}(w)$ | Where $r_{t}^{2}=s_{i}^{2}=1$, where $\alpha, \beta, \mu, v$ are integers significant only up to their values $\bmod 2$ and where |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| (1) | $x^{-1}$ | $y^{-1}$ | $s_{,} z x^{a} y^{\text {b }}$ | $s_{4} w x^{\mu} y^{\prime \prime}$ | $y$ | $x$ | $w$ | $z$ | $\begin{aligned} & \mu=\beta \\ & v=\alpha \\ & s_{3}=s_{4} \end{aligned}$ |
| (II) | $x^{-1}$ | $y^{-1}$ | $s_{3} z x^{a} y^{3}$ | $s_{4} w^{\prime \prime} x^{4} y^{\prime \prime}$ | ${ }^{\prime}$ | $x$ | $r_{3} 2$ | $w^{-1}$ | $\begin{aligned} & \alpha=\beta \\ & v=-\mu \end{aligned}$ |
| (III) | $x^{-1}$ | $y^{-1}$ | $s_{3} z x^{\alpha} y^{\beta}$ | $s_{4} w x^{\prime \prime} y^{\prime \prime}$ | $r_{1} x$ | $r_{2} y^{-1}$ | $w$ | $z$ | $\begin{aligned} & s_{1} r_{1}^{a} r_{2}^{3}=s_{4} \\ & \mu=\alpha \\ & v=-\beta \end{aligned}$ |
| (IV) | $x^{-1}$ | $y^{-1}$ | $s_{3} z x^{\alpha} y^{\beta}$ | $s_{4} w x^{\prime \prime} y^{\prime \prime}$ | $r, x$ | $r_{2} y^{-1}$ | $r z y^{3}$ | $w^{-1} x^{-\mu}$ | $\begin{aligned} & r_{1}^{\mu}=r_{2}^{\prime}=1 \\ & r_{2}^{\beta} r^{2}=r_{2}^{3} r_{1}^{a}=1 \end{aligned}$ |
| (V) | $s_{1} x$ | $s_{2} \cdot \underline{ }$ | $w$ | $z$ | $r_{1} x$ | $r_{2}, y$ | $w^{-1} x^{n} y^{\beta}$ | $d z^{\prime} \cdot x^{a} y^{\beta}$ | $d=r_{1}^{a} r_{2}^{\beta}=s_{1}^{a} s_{\underline{1}}^{\text {s }}$ |
| (VI) | $s_{1} x$ | $s_{2}$. | $s_{3} z$ | $w^{-1} x^{\alpha} y^{, 3}$ | $r, x$ | $r_{2} y$ | $z^{-1} x^{\mu} y^{\prime \prime}$ | $r_{4} w$ | $\begin{aligned} & r_{1}^{a} r_{2}^{3}=r_{1}^{4} r_{2}^{\prime \prime}=1 \\ & s_{1}^{s} s_{2}^{\beta}=s_{1}^{4} s_{2}^{\prime}=1 \end{aligned}$ |

TABLE II

| (C1) | (I), (III), (II,,$\mu=0)$ |
| :--- | :--- |
| (C2) | (II, $\mu=1)$ |
| (C3) | $(\mathrm{IV}, \mu=0)$ |
| (C4) | $(\mathrm{IV}, \mu=1, v=0)$ |
| (C5) | $\left(\right.$ IV, $\left.\mu=1, v=1, s_{4}=1\right)$ |
| (C6) | (IV, $\left.\mu=1, v=1, s_{4}=-1\right)$ |
| (C7) | (V) |
| (C8) | (VI, $\|\alpha v-\beta \mu\|=1)$ |
| (C9) | (VI. $\alpha=\beta=0)$ |
| (C10) | (VI, $\alpha=\mu=1, \beta=v=0)$ |

$k(V)^{G}$ by establishing the rationality of $K_{12}$ for each of the actions of $g_{1}$ and $g_{2}$ of Table I.

Theorem 10. If $G$ is meta-abelian and if $\operatorname{dim}_{k}(V)<5$, then $k(V)^{G}$ is rational over $k$.

Proof. We rearrange the six cases (I)-(VI) of Table I to form the ten cases (C1)-(C10) of Table II. Note that to obtain (VI) from (C8)-(C10), one might need to interchange the roles of $g_{1}$ and $g_{2}, x$ and $y$, or $x$ and $x y$.

Set: $\xi=(1-x) /(1+x), \eta=(1-y) /(1+y), \delta=(x-y) /(x+y)$,

$$
\begin{aligned}
\zeta & =z+g_{1}(z) & & \text { if } z+g_{1}(z) \neq 0 \\
& -z & & \text { otherwise, } \\
\omega & =w+g_{1}(w) & & \text { if } w+g_{1}(w) \neq 0 \\
& -w & & \text { otherwise }
\end{aligned}
$$

(C1) Here, $K=k(\xi, \eta, \zeta, \omega)$, and $g_{1}$ is homothetic, $g_{2}$ monomial.
(C2) Herc, $\quad K_{1}=k(A, B, C, D), \quad$ wherc $\quad A=1-\delta^{2}, \quad B=$ $(1+\delta \xi) /\left(\mathrm{I}-\delta^{2}\right), C=\zeta \delta^{t}, t=0$ or 1 , and $D=\omega$. If $s_{4}=1$, then the action of $g_{2}$ on $A, B, C, D$ is monomial. If $s_{4}=-1$, then by examining the action of $g_{2}$ on $A, B, C, D$, one easily sees that $K_{12}$ is generated by the five elements $D+g_{2}(D), \quad B+g_{2}(B), \quad\left(D-g_{2}(D)\right) /\left(B-g_{2}(B)\right), \quad\left(B-g_{2}(B)\right)^{2}$, $C\left(B-g_{2}(B)\right)^{e}$; where $e=0$ or 1 , and that in the algebraic dependence among the first four, the fourth is linear.
(C3) If $\mu=v=\alpha=0$, then the proof of ( C 1 ) goes through. Otherwise, interchanging the roles of $g_{1}$ and $g_{2}$ reduces this case to a previous one.
(C4) Set

$$
\begin{aligned}
\bar{\zeta} & =\zeta+g_{2}(\zeta) & & \text { if } \quad \zeta+g_{2}(\zeta) \neq 0 \\
& =\zeta & & \text { otherwise. }
\end{aligned}
$$

Then $K_{1}=k\left(s_{4}+\left(1+\xi^{2}\right) /\left(1-\xi^{2}\right), \eta / \xi, \bar{\zeta} \xi^{t}, \omega\right), t=0$ or 1 . If $r_{2}=1$, then $g_{2}$ acts monomially. Otherwise, using $g_{1} g_{2}$ for $g_{2}$ and interchanging $x$ and $y$ reduces this case to (C3).
(C5) Define $\bar{\zeta}$ as in (C4). Then $K_{1}$ is generated by $\left(1-\xi^{2}\right)\left(1-\eta^{2}\right)$, $\eta / \xi, \omega\left(1-\xi^{2}\right) /(1-\xi \eta)$ and $\bar{\zeta} \xi^{t}, t=0$ or 1 ; and $g_{2}$ is monomial.
(C6) Define $\bar{\zeta}$ as in (C4). $K_{1}$ is generated by $A=\xi^{2}, B=\eta / \xi, C=\bar{\zeta} \xi^{t}$ (where $t=0,1$ ) and $D=\omega \xi\left(1-\eta^{2}\right) /(\xi-\eta) . K_{12}$ is then generated by the five elements: $A, B^{2}, D+g_{2}(D),\left(D-g_{2}(D)\right) / B, C B^{t}$; and the algebraic dependence among the first four is linear in the second.
(C7) If $d=1$, take $\alpha$ and $\beta$ so that $\alpha \beta \leqslant 0$, and choose $t_{1}$ and $t_{2}$ in $\{0,1\}$ so that $\alpha t_{1}+\beta t_{2}=0$. Then $K_{1}$ is generated by $z+w, z w, x(z-w)^{t_{1}}$, $y(z-w)^{t_{2}}$; and $g_{2}$ acts monomially.

If $d=-1$, interchange $x$ and $y$, or replace $x$ by $x / y$ if necessary, so that $s_{1}=1$. Since $d=s_{1}^{\alpha} s_{2}^{\beta}$, then $s_{2}=-1$ and $\beta=-1$. Then $K_{1}$ is generated by $x$, $(z-w)^{2},(z+w)$ and $y(z-w) z w x^{-\alpha}$; and $g_{2}$ acts monomially.
(C8) Here, both $g_{1}$ and $g_{2}$ are homothetic relative to the base: $z+g_{2}(z), z-g_{2}(z), w+g_{1}(w), w-g_{1}(w)$.
(C9) Relative to the base $\{x, y, z,(1-w) /(1+w)\}, g_{1}$ is homothetic, and $g_{2}$ is monomial.
(C10) Let $t_{i}=1$ (resp. 0) if $s_{i}=-1$ (resp. 1) and let $w_{1}=w+g_{1}(w)$, $w_{2}=w-g_{1}(w), \quad A=x / w_{1}, \quad B=y\left(w_{2}\right)^{t_{2}} \quad$ and $\quad C=z\left(w_{2}\right)^{t_{3}} / w_{1} . \quad$ Since $\left(A^{-1} C g_{2}(C)+4 t_{3} A\right)\left(w_{1}^{\prime}\right)^{s_{3}}$ is in $k^{*}$, then $\left\{A, B, C+g_{2}(C), C-g_{2}(C)\right\}$ is a base of $K_{1}$ on which $g_{2}$ acts monomially.

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