

# On the slope of fibred threefolds

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**Abstract.** We study from a geographical point of view fibrations of threefolds over smooth curves  $f : T \rightarrow B$  such that the general fibre is of general type. We prove the non-negativity of certain relative invariants under general hypotheses and give lower bounds for  $K_{T/B}^3$  depending on other relative invariants. We also study the influence of the relative irregularity  $q(T) - g(B)$  on these bounds. A more detailed study of the lowest cases of the bounds is given.

**Mathematics Subject Classification (1991):** 14J10, 14D25.

**Key words:** Fibred threefolds, slope, relative invariants.

## 0. Introduction

We consider fibrations  $f : T \rightarrow B$  from a complex projective threefold  $T$  onto a complex smooth curve  $B$ . We consider always that  $T$  is normal,  $\mathbb{Q}$ -factorial with at most canonical singularities and that  $f$  is relatively minimal, i.e. the restriction of  $K_T$  to any fibre  $F$  of  $f$  is nef. We are interested in the case where  $F$  is of general type. Given any fibration  $g : \tilde{T} \rightarrow B$  from a smooth threefold  $\tilde{T}$  and with fibres of general type we can always get its relatively minimal associated fibration by divisorial contractions and flips (cf. [14], [26]).

Our aim is to study  $f$  from a geographical point of view and hence to relate some numerical invariants of  $T, B$  and  $F$ . First of all note that under our assumptions  $K_T$  (and hence  $K_{T/B} = K_T - f^*K_B$ ) is a Weil,  $\mathbb{Q}$ -Cartier divisor. We can consider its associated divisorial sheaves  $\omega_T$  and  $\omega_{T/B}$ , the canonical sheaf of  $T$  and the relative canonical sheaf of  $f$  respectively. Then  $\mathcal{E} = f_*\omega_{T/B}$  is a locally free sheaf on  $B$  of rank  $p_g(F)$ . We have then the well defined numerical invariants (note that the first one may be a rational number):

$$K_{T/B}^3 = K_T^3 - 6K_F^2(b-1)$$

$$\Delta_f = \deg \mathcal{E}$$

$$\chi_f = \chi_{\mathcal{O}_F} \chi_{\mathcal{O}_B} - \chi_{\mathcal{O}_T}.$$

From [10] we know that  $\mathcal{E}$  is a nef vector bundle and hence that  $\Delta_f \geq 0$ . From the nefness of direct images of multiples of the relative dualizing sheaf it follows that  $K_{T/B}$  is also nef (see [28], Theorem 1.4) and so that  $K_{T/B}^3 \geq 0$ . Moreover,

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<sup>1</sup>Partially supported by CICYT PS93-0790 and HCM project n. ERBCHRXCT-940557

if  $K_{T/B}^3 = 0$  then  $f$  is isotrivial (cf. [28] Corollary 1.5). When  $\Delta_f = 0$  we can also deduce the isotriviality of  $f$  under some additional hypotheses (see Lemma 1.2). In general it is not known whether  $\chi_f \geq 0$  holds. In §1 we give examples for which  $\chi_f$  is negative (see Remark 1.7) and prove (see Theorem 1.6):

**THEOREM 0.1.** *Let  $\tilde{T}$  be a desingularization of  $T$ . If  $\dim \text{alb}_{\tilde{T}}(\tilde{T}) \neq 1$  and some extra mild hypotheses hold, then  $\chi_f \geq 0$ .*

Then we can define for a wide class of fibrations two different *slopes*,  $\lambda_1(f) = K_{T/B}^3 / \Delta_f$  (when  $\Delta_f \neq 0$ ) and  $\lambda_2(f) = K_{T/B}^3 / \chi_f$  (when  $\chi_f > 0$ ) and prove some natural invariance of them under certain operations.

With this notations we can state the only known general result on the geography of fibred threefolds over curves, due to Ohno. We state a simplified version of the theorem (see [28] for a complete reference).

**THEOREM 0.2.** ([28] Main Theorem 1, Main Theorem 2). *Let  $f : T \rightarrow B$  be a relatively minimal fibration of a threefold over a smooth curve of genus  $b$ . Assume that the general fibre  $F$  is of general type.*

(i) *Assume  $p_g(F) \geq 3$ . Then  $K_{T/B}^3 \geq (4 - \varepsilon(p_g(F))) (\chi_{\mathcal{O}_B} \chi_{\mathcal{O}_F} - \chi_{\mathcal{O}_T})$ , where  $\varepsilon(p_g(F)) = \frac{4}{p_g(F)}$  or  $\frac{8}{p_g(F)}$  depending on whether  $|K_F|$  is composed with a pencil or not.*

(ii) *If  $K_{T/B}^3 < 4(\chi_{\mathcal{O}_B} \chi_{\mathcal{O}_F} - \chi_{\mathcal{O}_T})$  then  $F$  falls in a list of 7 (possible) families.*

We observe that in [28] is not proved that  $\chi_f$  is non-negative. In fact, when  $\chi_f < 0$ , Theorem 0.2 gives no information since  $K_{T/B}^3 \geq 0$  holds.

In §2 we study general lower bounds for  $\lambda_1(f)$  and  $\lambda_2(f)$ . The main result (Theorem 2.4) reads

**THEOREM 0.3.** *With the same hypotheses of Theorem 0.1, if  $p_g(F) \geq 3$  and  $\chi_f > 0$  then  $\lambda_2(f) \geq (9 - \tilde{\varepsilon}(p_g(F)))$  except if  $F$  is fibred by hyperelliptic, trigonal or tetragonal curves, or  $|K_F|$  is composed, where  $\tilde{\varepsilon}(p_g(F)) \sim o(\frac{1}{p_g(F)})$ .*

In fact Theorem 2.4 is much more explicit and gives extra bounds for the exceptional cases.

Section §3 is devoted to the study of the influence of the irregularity of  $T$  on the slope. In the study of fibred surfaces we have the general inequality  $\lambda(f) \geq 4 - \varepsilon(F)$  and that  $\lambda(f) \geq 4$  when  $q(S) > g(B)$  (cf. [34]). Similarly we get for threefolds (cf. Theorem 3.3):

**THEOREM 0.4.** *If, moreover,  $q(T) > g(B)$  then  $\lambda_2(f) \geq 9$  except if  $F$  has an irrational pencil of hyperelliptic, trigonal or tetragonal curves.*

Theorem 3.3 gives also explicit bounds and a structure result in the exceptional cases. The key point here is to use the condition  $q(T) > g(B)$  to construct new fibrations with the same slope and with fibres of higher invariants. The result

follows then by a limit process in Theorem 0.3. Also we remark that, following [2], the hypothesis  $q(T) > g(B)$  can be weakened to say that  $\mathcal{E} = f_*\omega_{T/B}$  has a locally free, rank one, degree zero quotient.

Finally in §4 we study fibrations with very low slope ( $\lambda_2 < 4$ ). These are known to exist (cf. [28] p.664); in [28], Ohno gives a classification of them in seven possible families as announced in Theorem 0.2 (see Theorem 4.1 below for a complete description). We prove (see Theorem 4.2):

**THEOREM 0.5.** *Let  $f : T \rightarrow B$  be a relatively minimal fibration of a normal,  $\mathbb{Q}$ -factorial projective threefold  $T$  with only canonical singularities onto a smooth curve  $B$  of genus  $b$ . Assume that the general fibre  $F$  is of general type,  $p_g(F) \geq 3$  and  $\chi_f = \chi_{\mathcal{O}_F} \chi_{\mathcal{O}_B} - \chi_{\mathcal{O}_T} > 0$ .*

*Then if  $\lambda_2(f) < 4$  we have*

- (i)  $q(T) = b$
- (ii)  $\mathcal{E} = f_*\omega_{T/B}$  has no invertible rank zero quotient sheaf (in particular,  $\mathcal{E}$  is ample provided  $b \leq 1$ ).
- (iii) If  $p_g(F) \geq 15$  then  $F$  has a rational pencil of curves of genus 2.
- (iv) If  $p_g(F) \leq 14$  then one of the following holds
  - (a)  $F$  has a rational pencil of hyperelliptic curves
  - (b)  $F$  has a rational pencil of trigonal curves and  $q(F) = 0$
  - (c)  $F$  is canonical,  $p_g(F) = 4$ ,  $q(F) = 0$ ,  $K_F^2 = 5$ .

In fact we have a more concrete description of case (iv) (b). Case (iv) (c) is doubtful to exist (see Remark 4.3).

The author wants to thank very much professor Kazuhiro Konno who pointed out the problem to him during his visit to Barcelona and for his encouragement and advice. He also wants to thank his advisor, professor Juan Carlos Naranjo, for help and continuous support.

## Notations and conventions

We work over the field of complex numbers. Varieties are always assumed to be projective, reduced and irreducible. Symbols  $\sim$ ,  $\sim_{\mathbb{Q}}$  and  $\equiv$  stand for linear equivalence,  $\mathbb{Q}$ -linear equivalence and numerical equivalence respectively.

## 1. Slopes of fibred threefolds

**DEFINITION 1.1.** Let  $f : T \rightarrow B$  be a fibration of a normal,  $\mathbb{Q}$ -factorial, projective threefold with only canonical singularities onto a smooth curve. Let  $F$

be the general fibre of  $f$  and  $b = g(B)$ . We define

$$\begin{aligned}\Delta_f &= \deg f_*\omega_{T/B} \\ \chi_f &= \chi\mathcal{O}_B\chi\mathcal{O}_F - \chi\mathcal{O}_T\end{aligned}$$

LEMMA 1.2.

- (i)  $\Delta_f = \chi_f + \deg R^1 f_*\omega_{T/B} \geq \chi_f$
- (ii)  $\Delta_f \geq 0$ . If  $\Delta_f = 0$  and  $|K_F|$  is birational, then  $f$  is isotrivial.
- (iii) If  $\beta : \tilde{T} \rightarrow T$  is a nonsingular model of  $T$  and  $\tilde{f} = f \circ \beta$ , then  $\chi_f = \chi_{\tilde{f}}$ ,  $\Delta_f = \Delta_{\tilde{f}}$ .

*Proof.*

- (i) Follows from [28] Lemma 2.4 and 2.5.
- (ii)  $\Delta_f \geq 0$  follows from the nefness of  $\mathcal{E}$  ([10]). If  $\Delta_f = 0$  and  $|K_F|$  is birational we can apply [16] I (see also [25], 7.64).
- (iii) Canonical singularities are rational (cf. [8]) and hence  $R^i \beta_*\mathcal{O}_{\tilde{T}} = 0$  for  $i \geq 1$  (cf. [15], p.50). Hence  $\chi\mathcal{O}_{\tilde{T}} = \chi\mathcal{O}_T$ . The same holds for general fibres  $F$  and  $\tilde{F}$  of  $f$  and  $\tilde{f}$  respectively, so  $\chi_f = \chi_{\tilde{f}}$ .

By Grauert-Riemenschneider's vanishing we have  $R^i \beta_*\omega_{\tilde{T}} = 0$  for  $i \geq 1$ . Hence using the spectral sequence  $E_2^{p,q} = R^p f_*(R^q \beta_*\omega_{\tilde{T}}) \Rightarrow R^{p+q} \tilde{f}_*\omega_{\tilde{T}}$  we obtain that for every  $i \geq 0$   $R^i f_*\omega_T = R^i \tilde{f}_*\omega_{\tilde{T}}$  holds

□

DEFINITION 1.3. With the above notations if  $f$  is relatively minimal and the general fibre  $F$  of  $f$  is of general type we define

$$\begin{aligned}\lambda_1(f) &= \frac{K_{T/B}^3}{\Delta_f} \quad \text{if } \Delta_f \neq 0 \\ \lambda_2(f) &= \frac{K_{T/B}^3}{\chi_f} \quad \text{if } \chi_f > 0\end{aligned}$$

REMARK 1.4. In the case of fibrations of surfaces over curves we actually have  $\Delta_f = \chi\mathcal{O}_S - \chi\mathcal{O}_B\chi\mathcal{O}_F = -\chi_f \geq 0$  (the minus sign here is a matter of the dimension of the variety) and vanishing holds in the locally trivial case. Then when  $f$  is not locally trivial we define  $\lambda(f) = K_{S/B}^2 / \Delta_f$ .

Here we have two different possibilities for the slope of  $f : K_{T/B}^3/\Delta_f$  or  $K_{T/B}^3/\chi_f$ . As we will see in §2, the natural methods provide lower bounds for  $\lambda_1(f)$  (hence also for  $\lambda_2(f)$ : see Lemma 1.5 below). Note that from the *geographical* point of view the most interesting one is  $\lambda_2(f)$ . But for this election we do not know whether  $\chi_f \geq 0$ . The aim of this section is to show that this actually happens for general fibrations.

LEMMA 1.5. *Assume  $\chi_f > 0$ . Then*

- (i)  $\lambda_2(f) \geq \lambda_1(f)$
- (ii) *If  $\sigma : \tilde{B} \rightarrow B$  is a finite map whose branch locus does not contain the images of singular fibres of  $f$  and  $\tilde{f} : \tilde{T} = T \times_B \tilde{B} \rightarrow \tilde{B}$  is the induced fibration, then  $\lambda_i(f) = \lambda_i(\tilde{f})$ ,  $i = 1, 2$ .*
- (iii) *If  $\tilde{T} \xrightarrow{\alpha} T$  is an étale map such that  $\tilde{f} = f \circ \alpha$  has connected fibres, then  $\lambda_2(f) = \lambda_2(\tilde{f})$  (but in general  $\lambda_1(f) \neq \lambda_1(\tilde{f})$ ).*

*Proof.* (i) is obvious.

(ii) If  $\sigma$  does not ramify over the images of singular fibres of  $f$  then  $\tilde{T} = T \times_B \tilde{B}$  is again a normal,  $\mathbb{Q}$ -factorial relatively minimal threefold over  $\tilde{B}$  with only canonical singularities (cf. [25], 4.10). Clearly  $K_{\tilde{T}/\tilde{B}}^3 = (\deg \sigma) K_{T/B}^3$  and  $\deg R^i \tilde{f}_* \omega_{\tilde{T}/\tilde{B}} = (\deg \sigma) R^i f_* \omega_{T/B}$  by flat base change. Then  $n\Delta_f = \Delta_{\tilde{f}}$ ,  $n\chi_f = \chi_{\tilde{f}}$  and we are done.

(iii) From the standard theory of cyclic coverings (cf. [32]) we get that  $\alpha_* \omega_{\tilde{T}} = \bigoplus_{i=0}^{n-1} (\omega_T \otimes \mathcal{L}^{\otimes i})$ . Since  $\alpha$  is finite we have

$$R^j \tilde{f}_* \omega_{\tilde{T}/\tilde{B}} = \bigoplus_{i=0}^{n-1} R^j f_* (\omega_{T/B} \otimes \mathcal{L}^{\otimes i})$$

and

$$K_{\tilde{T}/\tilde{B}}^3 = n(K_{T/B} + (n-1)L)^3 = nK_{T/B}^3.$$

Hence

$$\begin{aligned} \chi_{\tilde{f}} &= \deg \tilde{f}_* \omega_{\tilde{T}/\tilde{B}} - \deg R^1 \tilde{f}_* \omega_{\tilde{T}/\tilde{B}} = \\ &= \sum_{i=0}^{n-1} (\deg f_* (\omega_{T/B} \otimes \mathcal{L}^{\otimes i}) - \deg R^1 f_* (\omega_{T/B} \otimes \mathcal{L}^{\otimes i})) = n\chi_f \end{aligned}$$

Indeed, for this observe that by relative duality  $\deg R^2 f_* \omega_{T/B} = \deg f_* \mathcal{O}_T = \deg \mathcal{O}_B$ . For  $1 \leq i \leq n-1$ ,  $h^2(F, \omega_F \otimes \mathcal{L}_F^{\otimes i}) = h^0(F, \mathcal{L}_F^{\otimes i}) = 0$  since  $\mathcal{L}_F^{\otimes i}$  is non trivial. Then  $\text{rank}(R^2 f_* (\omega_{T/B} \otimes \mathcal{L}^{\otimes i})) = 0$ ; but since  $R^2 f_* (\omega_{T/B} \otimes \mathcal{L}^{\otimes i})$  is a subsheaf of  $R^2 \tilde{f}_* \omega_{\tilde{T}/\tilde{B}}$  (which is locally free, see [18]) it is torsion free and hence  $R^2 f_* (\omega_{T/B} \otimes \mathcal{L}^{\otimes i}) = 0$ . Finally note that  $\chi(T, \omega_{T/B} \otimes \mathcal{L}^{\otimes i}) = \chi(T, \omega_T)$

( $\mathcal{L} \in \text{Pic}^0(T)$ ). Then from Leray's spectral sequence and Riemann-Roch on  $B$  we get

$$\begin{aligned} \chi(\omega_{T/B}) &= \chi(T, \omega_T \otimes \mathcal{L}^{\otimes i}) = \sum_{j=0}^2 (-1)^j \chi(B, R^j f_*(\omega_{T/B} \otimes \mathcal{L}^{\otimes i})) = \\ &= \left[ \sum_{j=0}^2 (-1)^j \deg R^j f_*(\omega_{T/B} \otimes \mathcal{L}^{\otimes i}) \right] + \chi(F, \omega_F \otimes \mathcal{L}|_F) \chi \mathcal{O}_B \end{aligned}$$

Since again  $\chi(F, \omega_F \otimes \mathcal{L}|_F) = \chi(F, \omega_F)$  we obtain that

$$\sum_{j=0}^2 (-1)^j \deg R^j f_*(\omega_{T/B} \otimes \mathcal{L}^{\otimes i}) = \deg f_*(\omega_{T/B}) - \deg R^1 f_*(\omega_{T/B}) = \chi_f$$

Then  $\lambda_2(f) = \lambda_2(\tilde{f})$ .

Note that in general  $\deg f_*(\omega_{T/B} \otimes \mathcal{L}^{\otimes i}) \neq \deg f_* \omega_{T/B}$  and hence  $\lambda_1$  need not be invariant.  $\square$

The question now is whether  $\chi_f \geq 0$  holds. This is not always true (see Remark 1.7). We give criteria for its non-negativity depending on the Albanese dimension of  $T$ . By Lemma 1.2 we have that  $\chi_f = \chi_{\tilde{f}}$  where  $\tilde{f} = f \circ \beta$ ,  $\beta : \tilde{T} \rightarrow T$  being a desingularization. Hence we can assume  $T$  is smooth.

First of all, consider  $t \in B$ , such that  $F_t$  is smooth, and the Albanese maps

$$\begin{array}{ccc} F_t & \xrightarrow{\text{alb}_{F_t}} & \text{Alb}(F_t) \\ \downarrow i_t & & \downarrow (i_t)_* \\ T & \xrightarrow{\text{alb}_T} & \text{Alb}(T) \\ \downarrow f & & \downarrow f_* \\ B & \xrightarrow{\text{alb}_B} & \text{Alb}(B) \end{array}$$

and let  $\Sigma = \text{alb}_T(T)$ . We set  $a = \text{albdim}(T) = \dim \Sigma$ . Let  $S \rightarrow \Sigma$  be a minimal desingularization of  $\Sigma$  and  $\pi : \tilde{T} \rightarrow S$  the induced map on a birational model of  $T$ .

Note that by rigidity,  $\text{Im} (i_t)_* = A$  is an abelian variety independent of  $t$ , of dimension  $q(T) - b$ .

Consider also the induced map  $\text{Pic}^0 T \xrightarrow{(i_t)^*} \text{Pic}^0(F_t)$  which image is  $\hat{A} \hookrightarrow \text{Pic}^0(F_t)$ . We say that  $f$  is *special* if for general  $t \in B$ ,  $\hat{A} \hookrightarrow (h_t)^*(\text{Pic}^0 C_t) \subseteq \text{Pic}^0(F_t)$ , for some  $h_t : F_t \rightarrow C_t$  a fibration over a curve of genus  $g(C_t) \geq 2$ . Otherwise we say that  $f$  is *general*.

**THEOREM 1.6.** *Let  $f : T \rightarrow B$  be a fibration of a normal,  $\mathbb{Q}$ -factorial, projective threefold with only canonical singularities onto a smooth curve of genus  $b$ . Let  $F$  be a general fibre of  $f$ . Let  $a = \text{dimalb}(T)$ .*

*Then  $\chi_f = \chi \mathcal{O}_B \chi \mathcal{O}_F - \chi \mathcal{O}_T \geq 0$  provided one of the following conditions holds*

- (i)  $b \leq 1$  and  $\chi\mathcal{O}_T \leq 0$ .
- (ii)  $a = 2$  and  $h^0(S, \pi_*\omega_{\tilde{T}/S}) \neq 0$ .
- (iii)  $a = 3$ ,  $f$  is special and has no non-reduced fibres.
- (iv)  $a = 3$  and  $f$  is general.

REMARK 1.7. Part (i) of the theorem is trivial since when  $b \leq 1$   $\chi_f \geq -\chi\mathcal{O}_T$ . We only want to remark that condition  $\chi\mathcal{O}_T \leq 0$  holds in most cases. Indeed, if  $T$  is smooth and  $K_T$  ample then  $\chi\mathcal{O}_T = \frac{1}{24}c_1c_2 < 0$  by Miyaoka-Yau inequality. Also, if  $T$  is minimal and Gorenstein  $\chi\mathcal{O}_T \leq 0$  holds (cf. [24]). Finally, if  $a = 3$  then  $\chi\mathcal{O}_T \leq 0$  by a consequence of generic vanishing results (see [12]). Observe that if  $a = 0$  then necessarily  $q(T) = b = 0$  and hence this possibility is included in (i).

Extra conditions included for the cases  $a = 2, 3$  are very mild. This is clear for the case  $a = 3$ . In the case  $a = 2$  observe that if  $E$  is a general curve on  $S$  and  $H$  is its pullback on  $\tilde{T}$ , then  $h^0(S, \pi_*\omega_{\tilde{T}/S}) = h^0(E, \pi_*\omega_{H/E})$  (see proof of part (iii) of the theorem). Then, remember that by Proposition 3.1.(v)  $\pi_*\omega_{H/E}$  is nef and contains an ample vector bundle, so condition  $h^0(E, \pi_*\omega_{H/E}) \neq 0$  is not very restrictive.

We want to stress that in the statement of the theorem some hypotheses are needed since  $\chi_f \geq 0$  is not always true. Indeed, we can construct counterexamples as follows. Let  $(C_i, \tau_i)$  ( $i=1,2,3$ ) be smooth curves with an involution. Let  $D_i = C_i/\tau_i$  and  $g_i = g(C_i) \geq 2$ ,  $b_i = g(D_i)$ . Consider  $X = C_1 \times C_2 \times C_3$  and  $\tau : X \rightarrow X$  the involution acting on  $C_i$  as  $\tau_i$ . Consider  $T = X/\tau$ . Then  $T$  is a threefold of general type with a finite number of (canonical) singularities, endowed with a fibration  $f : T \rightarrow D_1 =: B$  with general fibre  $F \cong C_2 \times C_3$  (hence it is isotrivial). Since  $H^0(T, \Lambda^i\Omega_T^1) \cong H^0(X, \Lambda^i\Omega_X^1)^\tau$  (see [9]) a standard computation shows that

$$\chi\mathcal{O}_B = 1 - b_1$$

$$\chi\mathcal{O}_F = (1 - g_1)(1 - g_2)$$

$$h^1\mathcal{O}_T = q(T) = b_1 + b_2 + b_3$$

$$\begin{aligned} h^2\mathcal{O}_T &= b_1b_2 + b_1b_3 + b_2b_3 + (g_1 - b_1)(g_2 - b_2) + (g_1 - b_1)(g_3 - b_3) + \\ &\quad + (g_2 - b_2)(g_3 - b_3) \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} h^3\mathcal{O}_T &= b_1b_2b_3 + (g_1 - b_1)(g_2 - b_2)b_3 + (g_1 - b_1)(g_3 - b_3)b_2 + \\ &\quad + (g_2 - b_2)(g_3 - b_3)b_1. \end{aligned}$$

If we take  $b_1 = b_2 = b_3 = 0$  ( $C_i$  must be hyperelliptic then) we obtain  $a = 0$  and  $\chi_f < 0$ . Any base change of this fibration to a curve of positive genus produces a new fibration with  $q(\tilde{T}) = \tilde{b} \geq 1$  (hence with  $a = 1$ ) and  $\chi_{\tilde{f}} < 0$ .

If we take  $b_1 = b_2 = 1, b_3 = 0$  we obtain again  $\chi_f < 0$  and  $q(T) > b$  (so  $a \geq 2$ ).

Finally we must say that we do not have any reasonable criteria for the non-negativity of  $\chi_f$  when  $a = 1$ , which corresponds to the case when  $q(T) = b$ ,  $f_* = \text{Id}$  and  $\text{alb}_T$  factors through  $f$  ( $f$  is, then, an Albanese fibration). Nevertheless this is precisely the case in which we are not interested in Theorem 3.3.

*Proof.* (ii) By Remark 2.3 we have that  $\chi_f = \chi_{\tilde{f}}$ , where  $\tilde{f} = f \circ \beta, \beta : \tilde{T} \rightarrow T$  is a desingularization. Hence we can assume  $T$  smooth. We can always assume, by the same arguments, that  $\pi : T \rightarrow S$  has ramification locus contained in a normal crossings divisor and that is flat using a *flattening* base change ([25], 1.10).

We have now a factorization of  $f$

$$\begin{array}{ccc} T & & \\ \downarrow f & \searrow \pi & \\ & & S \\ & \swarrow g & \\ B & & \end{array}$$

where  $g$  need not to be a relatively minimal fibration. Let  $C_t = g^{-1}(t)$  be a general fibre ( $g(C_t) \geq 1$ ) and  $\pi_t : F_t \rightarrow C_t$  the induced fibration. Let  $G$  be a general fibre of  $\pi_t$ . Note that we have  $(\pi_t)_* \omega_{F_t/C_t} = \pi_* \omega_{T/S} \otimes \mathcal{O}_{C_t}$  and hence  $(R^1 \pi_t)_* \mathcal{O}_{F_t} = (R^1 \pi_* \mathcal{O}_T) \otimes \mathcal{O}_{C_t}$  by relative duality on  $C_t$ .

Take a  $n$ -torsion element  $\mathcal{L} \in \text{Pic}^0(S)$  verifying that for  $1 \leq i \leq n-1$   $\mathcal{L}^{\otimes i} \notin g^*(\text{Pic}^0(B))$  (this is possible since  $S$  is of Albanese general type by construction) and such that  $h^0(C_t, R^1(\pi_t)_* \mathcal{O}_{F_t} \otimes \mathcal{L}|_{C_t}) = 0$  (this is also possible since  $\{\tilde{\mathcal{L}} \in \text{Pic}^0(C_t) \mid h^0(C_t, (R^1 \pi_t)_* \mathcal{O}_{F_t} \otimes \tilde{\mathcal{L}}) \neq 0\}$  is a finite set (see Proposition 1.8) and the image of  $\text{Pic}^0(S) \rightarrow \text{Pic}^0(C_t)$  is a subtorus of positive dimension otherwise  $q(S) = b$ , a contradiction).

Let  $\mathcal{M} = \pi^* \mathcal{L} \in \text{Pic}^0(T)$ . Since  $\pi$  has a normal crossings ramification locus we have that  $R^1 \pi_* \mathcal{O}_T$  is locally free (cf. [18] Theorem 2.6 and §3) and hence  $g_*(R^1 \pi_* \mathcal{O}_T \otimes \mathcal{L})$  is torsion free (hence it is locally free since  $B$  is a smooth curve). Then

$$g_*(R^1 \pi_* \mathcal{O}_T \otimes \mathcal{L}) = 0$$

since  $\text{rk } g_*(R^1 \pi_* \mathcal{O}_T \otimes \mathcal{L}) = h^0(C_t, R^1(\pi_t)_* \mathcal{O}_{F_t} \otimes \mathcal{L}|_{C_t}) = 0$  by election of  $\mathcal{L}$ .

Using the spectral sequence  $E_2^{p,q} = R^p g_*(R^q \pi_* \mathcal{F}) \Rightarrow R^{p+q} f_* \mathcal{F}$  and that  $R^2 \pi_* = R^2 g_* = 0$  by dimension of fibres we have

$$(1) \quad R^2 f_*(\mathcal{M}) = R^1 g_*(R^1 \pi_*(\mathcal{M})) = R^1 g_*(R^1 \pi_* \mathcal{O}_T \otimes \mathcal{L}).$$

We observe that  $R^2 f_*(\mathcal{M})$  is locally free. Indeed  $\mathcal{M} = \pi^* \mathcal{L}$ ; since  $\mathcal{L}$  is torsion and  $\mathcal{L}|_C^{\otimes i} \neq \mathcal{O}_C$  for  $1 \leq i \leq n-1$  we can consider the induced étale base change of  $\pi$ :

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \widehat{T} & \longrightarrow & T \\ \widehat{\pi} \downarrow & & \downarrow \pi \\ \widehat{S} & \longrightarrow & S \\ & \searrow \widehat{g} & \downarrow g \\ & & B \end{array}$$

and get

$$(2) \quad \begin{aligned} R^j \widehat{f}_* \omega_{\widehat{T}/B} &= \bigoplus_{i=0}^{n-1} R^j f_*(\omega_{T/B} \otimes \mathcal{M}^{\otimes i}) \\ R^j \widehat{f}_* \mathcal{O}_{\widehat{T}} &= \bigoplus_{i=0}^{n-1} R^j f_*(\mathcal{M}^{\otimes i}). \end{aligned}$$

Hence  $R^2 f_*(\mathcal{M})$  is locally free, being a subsheaf of  $R^2 \widehat{f}_* \mathcal{O}_{\widehat{T}}$  (which is locally free by relative duality and [18]).

Finally remember that for fibrations of surfaces over curves we have (cf. [34]; we do not need for this that the fibration be relatively minimal):

$$\deg(\pi_t)_* \omega_{F_t/C_t} = \chi \mathcal{O}_F - \chi \mathcal{O}_C \chi \mathcal{O}_G; \quad \deg g_* \omega_{S/B} = \chi \mathcal{O}_S - \chi \mathcal{O}_C \chi \mathcal{O}_B.$$

Now we can compute

$$\begin{aligned} \chi \mathcal{O}_T &= \chi(\pi_* \mathcal{O}_T) - \chi(R^1 \pi_* \mathcal{O}_T) = \\ &= \chi \mathcal{O}_S - \chi(R^1 \pi_* \mathcal{O}_T \otimes \mathcal{L}) && \text{since } \mathcal{L} \in \text{Pic}^0(S) \\ &= \chi \mathcal{O}_S + \chi(R^1 g_*(R^1 \pi_* \mathcal{O}_T \otimes \mathcal{L})) && \text{by Leray} \\ &= \chi \mathcal{O}_S + \chi(R^2 f_*(\mathcal{M})) && \text{by (1)} \\ &= \chi \mathcal{O}_S + \chi(f_*(\omega_{T/B} \otimes \mathcal{M}^{-1})^*) && \text{by relative duality} \\ &= \chi \mathcal{O}_S - \deg(f_*(\omega_{T/B} \otimes \mathcal{M}^{-1})) + h^0(F, \omega_F \otimes \mathcal{M}_{|F}^{-1}) \chi \mathcal{O}_B && \text{by R.R. on } B \end{aligned}$$

By election of  $\mathcal{L}$ , Serre duality on  $B$  and relative duality on  $B$  and  $C$  we obtain

$$(3) \quad \begin{aligned} h^0(F, \omega_F \otimes \mathcal{M}_{|F}^{-1}) &= h^0(C, \pi_* \omega_{F/C} \otimes \omega_C \otimes \mathcal{L}_{|C}^{-1}) = \chi(\pi_* \omega_{F/C} \otimes \omega_C \otimes \mathcal{L}_{|C}^{-1}) \\ &= -\chi(R^1 \pi_* \mathcal{O}_F \otimes \mathcal{L}) = -\chi(R^1 \pi_* \mathcal{O}_F) = (\chi \mathcal{O}_F - \chi \mathcal{O}_C \chi \mathcal{O}_G) - g(G) \chi \mathcal{O}_C \\ &= \chi \mathcal{O}_F - \chi \mathcal{O}_C \end{aligned}$$

Hence:

$$(4) \quad \chi_f = \chi \mathcal{O}_F \chi \mathcal{O}_B - \chi \mathcal{O}_T = \deg(f_*(\omega_{T/B} \otimes \mathcal{M}^{-1})) - \deg(g_* \omega_{S/B})$$

Now we use the hypothesis:  $\pi_*\omega_{T/S}$  has a section and hence we have an injection

$$0 \longrightarrow \mathcal{O}_S \longrightarrow \pi_*\omega_{T/S}$$

which gives

$$0 \longrightarrow \omega_{S/B} \otimes \mathcal{L}^{-1} \longrightarrow \pi_*\omega_{T/S} \otimes \omega_{S/B} \otimes \mathcal{L}^{-1} = \pi_*(\omega_{T/B} \otimes \mathcal{M}^{-1})$$

and so

$$(5) \quad 0 \longrightarrow g_*(\omega_{S/B} \otimes \mathcal{L}^{-1}) \xrightarrow{\tau} g_*(\pi_*(\omega_{T/B} \otimes \mathcal{M}^{-1})) = f_*(\omega_{T/B} \otimes \mathcal{M}^{-1})$$

Note that  $\deg(g_*(\omega_{S/B} \otimes \mathcal{L}^{-1})) = \deg g_*\omega_{S/B}$ . Indeed, by election of  $\mathcal{L}$  we have that  $h^1(C, \omega_C \otimes \mathcal{L}_C^{-1}) = 0$ ; on the other hand  $R^1g_*(\omega_{S/B} \otimes \mathcal{L}^{-1})$  is locally free, being a subsheaf of  $R^1\tilde{g}_*\omega_{\tilde{S}/B}$  for the étale cover  $\tilde{S} \rightarrow S$  induced by  $\mathcal{L}$ . Hence  $R^1g_*(\omega_{S/B} \otimes \mathcal{L}^{-1}) = 0$ . Then use Leray spectral sequence and Riemann-Roch on  $B$  and  $S$  as in the proof of Lemma 1.5 (iii).

In order to finish the proof it suffices to check that  $f_*(\omega_{T/B} \otimes \mathcal{M}^{-1})$  is nef. By (2) we have that  $f_*(\omega_{T/B} \otimes \mathcal{M}^{-1}) = f_*(\omega_{T/B} \otimes \mathcal{M}^{\otimes(n-1)})$  is nef since it is a quotient of a nef vector bundle.

(iii) Assume that for general  $t \in B$  we have a fibration  $h_t : F_t \rightarrow C_t$ . Let  $\mathring{B} \subseteq B$  be a non-empty open set such that  $f^\circ : \mathring{T} \rightarrow \mathring{B}$  is smooth and for every  $t \in \mathring{B}$  there exists such a  $h_t$ . We can consider now the fibration of abelian varieties  $\psi : \text{Alb}_{\mathring{T}/\mathring{B}} \rightarrow \mathring{B}$ . For every  $t \in \mathring{B}$  we have an abelian subvariety  $K_t = \ker(\text{Alb}F_t \rightarrow \text{Alb}C_t) \hookrightarrow \text{Alb}F_t = \psi^{-1}(t)$ . Then we can apply [3] Theorem 2.5 and get, up to base change, a relative abelian subvariety  $K \hookrightarrow \text{Alb}_{\mathring{T}/\mathring{B}}$  over  $\mathring{B}$ . Let  $J = \text{Alb}_{\mathring{T}/\mathring{B}}/K$ . Consider the natural map, up to base change,  $\varphi : \mathring{T} \rightarrow \text{Alb}_{\mathring{T}/\mathring{B}} \rightarrow J$  over  $\mathring{B}$ . For general  $t \in \mathring{B}$ ,  $\varphi_t : F_t \rightarrow J_t$  has as image  $C_t$  by construction. Let  $\mathring{S} = \varphi(\mathring{T})$  and complete the map to get

$$\begin{array}{ccccc} & & \tilde{T} & & \\ & & \downarrow & \searrow \pi & \\ T & \xleftarrow{\bar{\sigma}} & \bar{T} & \xrightarrow{\quad} & S \\ f \downarrow & & \bar{f} \downarrow & \swarrow & \\ B & \xleftarrow{\sigma} & \bar{B} & & \end{array}$$

Note that we are in the same situation for  $\bar{f}$  as in (ii). We have even more since by construction the hypothesis  $h^0(\pi_*\omega_{T/S}) > 0$  holds; indeed, let  $E$  be a general curve on  $S$  and let  $H$  be its pullback on  $T$ . We have that

$$\pi_*\omega_{H/E} = (\pi_*\omega_{T/S}) \otimes \mathcal{O}_E.$$

If  $E$  is ample enough, we also have

$$h^0(S, \pi_*\omega_{T/S} \otimes \mathcal{O}_S(-E)) = h^1(S, \pi_*\omega_{T/S} \otimes \mathcal{O}_S(-E)) = 0$$

Hence  $h^0(S, \pi_*\omega_{T/S}) = h^0(E, \pi_*\omega_{H/E})$ . But in the case of fibred surfaces  $h^0(E, \pi_*\omega_{H/E}) \geq q(H) - g(E)$  according to Fujita's decomposition (see Proposition 1.8). Finally note that by [7]  $q(H) - g(E) \geq q(T) - q(S) \geq 1$ .

So we can apply the same argument than in (ii) and get  $\chi_{\bar{f}} \geq 0$ .

We apply now the hypothesis:  $f$  has no non-reduced fibres. In fact, after some blow-ups in  $T$  and  $\bar{T}$ , that do not modify  $\chi_f$  and  $\chi_{\bar{f}}$ , we can assume  $f$  to be semistable, and  $\bar{T}$  smooth. Then we have

$$\begin{array}{ccccc} \bar{T} & \xrightarrow{\alpha} & T \times_B \bar{B} & \longrightarrow & T \\ & \searrow \bar{f} & \downarrow f' & & \downarrow f \\ & & \bar{B} & \xrightarrow{\sigma} & B \end{array}$$

where  $\alpha$  is induced by  $\bar{f}$  and  $\bar{\sigma}$ . Since  $f$  is semistable we can apply base change theorem ([25], 4.10) and get

$$\bar{f}_*\omega_{\bar{T}/\bar{B}} = f'_*\omega_{T \times_B \bar{B}/\bar{B}} = \sigma^*(f_*\omega_{T/B}).$$

In fact we also have the same equality for  $R^1f_*$ : take  $\mathcal{H}$  a very ample line bundle in  $T$  and let  $H$  be a general smooth member of its associated linear system. We have in a natural way

$$0 \longrightarrow f_*\omega_{T/B} \longrightarrow f_*(\omega_{T/B} \otimes \mathcal{H}) \longrightarrow f_*\omega_{H/B} \longrightarrow R^1f_*\omega_{T/B} \longrightarrow 0$$

since  $R^1f_*(\omega_{T/B} \otimes \mathcal{H}) = 0$  (by Kodaira vanishing  $h^1(F, \omega_F \otimes \mathcal{H}|_F) = 0$  and  $R^1f_*(\omega_{T/B} \otimes \mathcal{H})$  is locally free by the trick of a cyclic cover used in (ii)).

Note that all of them are locally free. Hence we have that after taking  $\sigma^*$  we still have a long exact sequence. Considering the analogous exact sequence for  $\bar{f}$  and the natural maps we get

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} 0 & \longrightarrow & \sigma^*(f_*\omega_{T/B}) & \longrightarrow & \sigma^*(f_*\omega_{T/B} \otimes \mathcal{H}) & \longrightarrow & \sigma^*(f_*\omega_{H/B}) \longrightarrow \sigma^*(R^1f_*\omega_{T/B}) \longrightarrow 0 \\ & & \cong \uparrow & & \uparrow & & \cong \uparrow & & \uparrow \gamma \\ 0 & \longrightarrow & \bar{f}_*(\omega_{\bar{T}/\bar{B}}) & \longrightarrow & \bar{f}_*(\omega_{\bar{T}/\bar{B}} \otimes \bar{\mathcal{H}}) & \longrightarrow & \bar{f}_*\omega_{\bar{H}/\bar{B}} \longrightarrow R^1\bar{f}_*\omega_{\bar{T}/\bar{B}} \longrightarrow 0 \end{array}$$

where  $\gamma$  is naturally induced and exhaustive. Since  $R^1\bar{f}_*\omega_{\bar{T}/\bar{B}}$  and  $\sigma^*(R^1f_*\omega_{T/B})$  are both locally free sheaves of the same rank over  $\bar{B}$ ,  $\gamma$  is an isomorphism.

So we have

$$0 \leq \chi_{\tilde{f}} = \deg \tilde{f}_* \omega_{\tilde{T}/\overline{B}} - \deg R^1 \tilde{f}_* \omega_{\tilde{T}/\overline{B}} = n(\deg f_* \omega_{T/B} - \deg R^1 f_* \omega_{T/B}) = n\chi_f.$$

(iv) Since  $T$  is of Albanese general type, then so is  $F_t$  for  $t \in B$  general. We can apply then [6] Theorem 1 to get that  $\{\mathcal{L} \in \text{Pic}^0(F_t) \mid h^1(F_t, \mathcal{L}) \neq 0\}$  is the union of subtori  $h_i^*(\text{Pic}^0(C_i))$  for fibrations  $h_i : F_t \rightarrow C_i$  with  $g(C_i) \geq 2$  and a finite number of (torsion) points.

Under our assumptions we can take a  $n$ -torsion element  $\mathcal{L} \in \text{Pic}^0(T)$  such that for  $1 \leq i \leq n-1$ ,  $h^1(F_t, \mathcal{L}|_{F_t}^{\otimes i}) = 0$ .

Hence as in Lemma 1.5 (iii) if we consider the étale cover  $\sigma : \tilde{T} \rightarrow T$  associated to  $\mathcal{L}$ , and  $\tilde{f} = f \circ \sigma$  we have that  $f_*(\omega_{T/B} \otimes \mathcal{L})$  is a quotient of  $\tilde{f}_* \omega_{\tilde{T}/B}$  hence it is nef.

Since  $h^1(F_t, \mathcal{L}|_{F_t}^{-1}) = 0$  we have  $R^1 f_*(\omega_{T/B} \otimes \mathcal{L}) = 0$  (as above it is locally free) and hence

$$\begin{aligned} \chi_f &= \deg f_* \omega_{T/B} - \deg R^1 f_* \omega_{T/B} = \\ &= \deg f_*(\omega_{T/B} \otimes \mathcal{L}) - \deg R^1 f_*(\omega_{T/B} \otimes \mathcal{L}) = \deg f_*(\omega_{T/B} \otimes \mathcal{L}) \geq 0 \end{aligned}$$

□

We finish with the following result on the structure of  $\mathcal{E} = f_* \omega_{T/B}$ . The first part is a well known result of Fujita ([10], [11]). The second part can be found in [2].

**PROPOSITION 1.8.** *Let  $X, Y$  be smooth varieties of dimensions  $n > m$  respectively. Let  $f : X \rightarrow Y$  be a fibration with a simple normal crossings branching.*

*Then*

- (i) *If  $m = 1$ ,  $\mathcal{E} = f_* \omega_{X/Y} = \mathcal{A} \oplus \bigoplus_{i=1}^r E_i \oplus \mathcal{O}_Y^{\oplus(q(X)-q(Y))}$  where  $\mathcal{A}$  is an ample vector bundle and  $E_i$  are stable, degree zero non-trivial vector bundles. Moreover, if  $E$  is a stable degree zero vector bundle which is a quotient of  $\mathcal{E}$ , then  $E$  is one of the  $E_i$ .*
- (ii) *If there exist a vector bundle  $E$  with  $\det(E) = L \in \text{Pic}^0(Y)$  and an epimorphism  $\mathcal{E} = f_* \omega_{X/Y} \rightarrow E$ , then  $L$  is torsion. In particular, when  $m = 1$ ,  $E_i$  is a torsion line bundle whenever  $\text{rank}(E_i) = 1$ .*

## 2. Lower bounds for the slopes of fibred threefolds

We give here a lower bound for  $\lambda_1(f)$  (and hence for  $\lambda_2(f)$  provided it is well defined) in the case of a relatively minimal fibred threefold with fibres of general type. The bounds we obtain are considerably better than Ohno's ones ([28] Main Theorem 1) as far as  $p_g(F) \gg 0$ .

First we need some results on linear systems on surfaces of general type.

LEMMA 2.1. *Let  $F$  be a minimal surface of general type such that  $p_g(F) \geq 3$  and let  $\tau : \tilde{F} \rightarrow F$  be a birational morphism. Let  $0 \leq P \leq Q \leq \tau^*K_F$  be two nef and effective divisors, such that the complete linear systems  $|P|$  and  $|Q|$  are base point free. Let  $r \leq s$  be the ranks of  $|P|$  and  $|Q|$  respectively. Let  $\Sigma$  be the image of  $\tilde{F}$  through the map  $\varphi$  induced by  $|P|$ . Then*

(i) *If  $\varphi$  is a generically finite map then we have*

- $P(\tau^*K_F) \geq P^2 \geq 2r - 4 + 2q(\Sigma)$  if  $\varphi$  is a double cover of a geometrically ruled surface  $\Sigma$ .
- $P(\tau^*K_F) \geq P^2 \geq 3r - 7$  otherwise

(ii) *If  $|P|$  is composed with a pencil of generic fibre  $D$  of (geometric) genus  $g$ ,  $\widehat{D} = \tau_*D$ , and  $|Q|$  induces a generically finite map then we have*

- $QP \geq 2(r - 1)$
- $QP \geq 3(r - 1)$  except if  $D$  is hyperelliptic and  $|Q|_{|D} = g_2^1$ .
- $QP \geq 4(r - 1)$  except if  $D$  is hyperelliptic or trigonal and  $|Q|_{|D} = g_2^1$  or  $g_3^1$ .
- $QP \geq 5(r - 1)$  except if  $D$  is hyperelliptic, trigonal or tetragonal and  $|Q|_{|D} = g_2^1, 2g_2^1, g_3^1$  or  $g_4^1$ , or  $D$  is of genus 2 or 3.
- $P(\tau^*K_F) \geq (2g - 2)(r - 1)$  or  $(2g - 2)r$ , according to the pencil is rational or not, if the pencil  $|\widehat{D}|$  in  $F$  has no base point.
- $P(\tau^*K_F) \geq (2p_a(\widehat{D}) - 2 - \widehat{D}^2)(r - 1)$  if the pencil  $|\widehat{D}|$  has some base point.

(iii) *If  $|K_F|$  is composed with a pencil of generic fibre  $D$  as in (ii) then we have*

- $P(\tau^*K_F) \geq (2g - 2)(r - 1)$  or  $(2g - 2)r$ , according to the pencil is rational or not, if the pencil  $|\widehat{D}|$  in  $F$  has no base point.
- $P(\tau^*K_F) \geq \max\left\{\sqrt{2(g - 1)\left(1 - \frac{1}{p_g(F)}\right)}(p_g(F) - 1)\widehat{D}^2, (2p_a(\widehat{D}) - 2 - \widehat{D}^2)(r - 1)\right\}$  otherwise.

*Proof.* (i) Since  $P$  is nef and  $P \leq \tau^*K_F$  we obviously have  $P(\tau^*K_F) \geq P^2$ . It is a well known fact that  $\deg \Sigma \geq r - 2 + q(\Sigma)$  if  $\Sigma$  is geometrically ruled and that  $\deg \Sigma \geq 2r - 4$  otherwise (see [4]).

Let  $a = \deg \varphi$ . If  $a \geq 3$  then  $P^2 \geq 3\deg \Sigma \geq 3(r - 2) > 3r - 7$ . If  $a = 2$  and  $\Sigma$  is not geometrically ruled  $P^2 \geq 2(2r - 4) = 4r - 8 \geq 3r - 7$ . If  $\Sigma$  is geometrically ruled  $P^2 \geq 2\deg \Sigma \geq 2r - 4 + 2q(\Sigma)$ .

If  $a = 1$ , let  $C \in |P|$  be a smooth curve ( $|P|$  has no base point). Then  $2P|_C \leq (\tau^*K_F + P)|_C \leq (K_{\tilde{F}} + P)|_C = K_C$ . So  $\deg P|_C \leq g(C) - 1$ . We can then

apply ‘‘Clifford plus’’ lemma (cf. [5]) and get  $P^2 = \deg P|_C \geq 3h^0(C, P|_C) - 4 \geq 3h^0(\tilde{F}, P) - 7 = 3r - 7$ .

(ii) Let  $\varphi_P(F) = C \subseteq \mathbb{P}^{r-1}$ . The map  $F \rightarrow C$  may not have connected fibres; consider the Stein factorization of  $\varphi_P$ ,  $F \rightarrow \tilde{C} \rightarrow C$ . Note that then we have  $P \equiv \alpha D$  where  $D$  is an irreducible smooth curve such that  $D^2 = 0$  and  $\alpha = \alpha_1 \alpha_2$  where  $\alpha_1 = \deg(\tilde{C} \rightarrow C)$  and  $\alpha_2 \geq r - 1$  (and equality holds only when  $C$  is rational). The pencil  $|P|$  is said to be rational if  $\tilde{C} = \mathbb{P}^1$  and irrational otherwise. Note that in general also  $\alpha \geq r - 1$  and  $\alpha \geq r$  if the pencil is irrational.

Since  $P \leq Q$ , the map  $\varphi_P$  factors through  $\varphi_Q$ . Let  $\Sigma = \varphi_Q(F)$  and consider the induced map  $\psi : \Sigma \rightarrow C$ . By construction clearly  $\varphi_Q(D) \subseteq \psi^{-1}(t)$  for  $t \in C$  (note that  $\psi^{-1}(t)$  does not need to be connected).

We have that  $QP = \alpha_2(\alpha_1 QD) \geq (r-1)(\alpha_1 QD)$ . Let  $a$  be the degree of  $\varphi_Q|_D$ ,  $\overline{D} = \varphi_Q(D)$  and  $d = \deg \overline{D}$ . Note that  $a$  divides  $\deg \varphi_Q$  although we will not use it. We have then  $\alpha_1 QD = \alpha_1 a d$ . Note that  $ad \geq 2$  (otherwise  $\tilde{F}$  were covered by rational curves) and hence  $QP \geq 2(r-1)$ . But if  $QP < 3(r-1)$  then  $\alpha_1 = 1$ ,  $a = 2$ ,  $d = 1$  (if  $a = 1$ ,  $d = 2$  again  $\tilde{F}$  is covered by rational curves). Hence  $D$  is hyperelliptic and  $|Q|_D = g_2^1$ .

If  $QP < 4(r-1)$  then  $\alpha_1 a d \leq 3$ . If  $\alpha_1 a d = 2$  the previous argument holds. If  $\alpha_1 a d = 3$  then  $\alpha_1 = 1$ ,  $a = 3$ ,  $d = 1$  (if  $a = 1$ ,  $d = 3$ ,  $\tilde{F}$  would be covered by elliptic or rational curves, a contradiction since  $F$  is of general type). Then  $D$  is trigonal and  $|Q|_D = g_3^1$ .

If  $QP < 5(r-1)$  then  $\alpha_1 a d \leq 4$  and we only must study the case  $\alpha_1 a d = 4$ . Four possibilities may occur. Either  $\alpha_1 = 2$ ,  $a = 2$ ,  $d = 1$  (then  $D$  is hyperelliptic and  $|Q|_D = g_2^1$ ) or  $\alpha_1 = 1$ ,  $a = 4$ ,  $d = 1$  (then  $D$  is tetragonal and  $|Q|_D = g_4^1$ ) or  $\alpha_1 = 1$ ,  $a = 2$ ,  $d = 2$  (then  $D$  is again hyperelliptic and  $|Q|_D = 2g_2^1$ ) or  $\alpha_1 = a = 1$ ,  $d = 4$  (then  $D$  has at most genus 3; in particular  $D$  is also hyperelliptic or trigonal).

Finally note that  $D\tau^*K_F = 2g - 2$  if  $|\widehat{D}|$  has no base point and  $D\tau^*K_F = \widehat{D}K_F = 2p_a(\widehat{D}) - 2 - \widehat{D}^2$  (by adjunction formula on  $F$ ) otherwise. Hence the result follows from  $P(\tau^*K_F) = \alpha D(\tau^*K_F)$  and the previous bound of  $\alpha$ .

(iii) The first result is analogous to (ii) having in mind that if  $P \leq \tau^*K_F$  then  $|P|$  is composed with a pencil of the same genus than  $|K_F|$  and with the same general fibre.

Part of the second statement follows as in (ii). For the rest consider that from Hodge Index theorem  $(K_F \widehat{D})^2 \geq K_F^2 \widehat{D}^2$  and that when  $|K_F|$  is composed of a pencil of genus zero then  $K_F^2 \geq 2(g-1) \left(1 - \frac{1}{p_g(F)}\right) (p_g(F) - 1)$  ([21], Lemma 3.3).  $\square$

**DEFINITION 2.2.** We say that a linear pencil  $|Q|$  on  $F$  is of type  $(r, g, p)$ ,  $r \geq 2$ ,  $g \geq 2$ ,  $p = 0, 1$  if  $|Q|$  is a complete linear system of  $r$ -gonal (but not  $s$ -gonal for  $s < r$ ) curves of (geometric) genus  $g$ , rational if  $p = 0$ , irrational if  $p = 1$ . If  $|Q|$  is

a rational pencil, we call  $\widehat{D}$  a generic member and  $\delta = K_F \widehat{D} = 2p_a(\widehat{D}) - 2 - \widehat{D}^2$ . If  $|Q|$  is base point free, then clearly  $\delta = 2g - 2$ .

REMARK 2.3. We recall the following result, originally due to Xiao ([34]) for the case of surfaces and to Ohno ([28]) for 3-folds and given in full generality by Konno in [22]. We refer there for details.

Given  $f : T \rightarrow B$  as before, consider  $\mathcal{E} = f_* w_{T/B}$  and the Harder-Narasimhan filtration of  $\mathcal{E}$ :

$$0 = \mathcal{E}_0 \subseteq \dots \subseteq \mathcal{E}_{\ell-1} \subseteq \mathcal{E}_\ell = \mathcal{E}$$

and  $\mu_1 > \mu_2 > \dots > \mu_\ell \geq 0$ , where  $\mu_i = \mu(\mathcal{E}_i/\mathcal{E}_{i-1})$ . If  $r_i = \text{rk} \mathcal{E}_i$  we have that  $\deg \mathcal{E} = \sum_{i=1}^{\ell} r_i (\mu_i - \mu_{i-1})$ .

Consider the induced rational maps  $\varphi_i : T \dashrightarrow \mathbb{P}_B(\mathcal{E}_i)$  and let  $\widetilde{T} \xrightarrow{\mu} T$  be a desingularization of  $T$  which eliminates the indeterminacy of the  $\varphi_i$ . Let  $\tau = \mu|_{\widetilde{F}} : \widetilde{F} \rightarrow F$  the restriction of  $\mu$  to a general fibre  $\widetilde{F}$  of  $f \circ \mu$ . Then we have a sequence of nef effective Cartier divisors on  $\widetilde{F}$ ,  $P_1 < P_2 < \dots < P_\ell \leq P_{\ell+1} \leq \tau^* K_F$  (where  $P_{\ell+1}$  can be chosen to be  $P_\ell$  or  $\tau^* K_F$ ) such that the (projective) dimension of the linear systems  $|P_i|$  are  $r_i - 1$  ( $r_i = \text{rank}(\mathcal{E}_i)$ ) and such that, for any  $1 \leq i < \dots < i_n \leq i_{n+1} = \ell + 1$  and any  $1 \leq m \leq n$  we have

$$(6) \quad K_{T/B}^3 = (\mu^* K_{T/B})^3 \geq \sum_{p=1}^{m-1} (P_{i_p} + P_{i_{p+1}}) P_{i_m} (\mu_{i_p} - \mu_{i_{p+1}}) + \sum_{p=m}^n (P_{i_p}^2 + P_{i_p} P_{i_{p+1}} + P_{i_{p+1}}^2) (\mu_{i_p} - \mu_{i_{p+1}})$$

$$(7) \quad K_{T/B}^3 \geq \sum_{p=1}^n (P_{i_p} + P_{i_{p+1}}) (\tau^* K_F) (\mu_{i_p} - \mu_{i_{p+1}})$$

where  $\mu_{\ell+1} = 0$ .

In particular, for the indexes  $\{1, \ell\}$  we have

$$(8) \quad K_{T/B}^3 \geq P_\ell^2 \mu_1 + (P_\ell^2 + P_{\ell+1}^2) \mu_\ell \geq P_\ell^2 (\mu_1 + 2\mu_\ell).$$

Now we can state the main result of this paragraph:

THEOREM 2.4. *Let  $T$  be a normal,  $\mathbb{Q}$ -factorial, projective threefold with only canonical singularities and let  $f : T \rightarrow B$  be a relatively minimal fibration onto a smooth curve of genus  $b$ . Let  $F$  be the general fibre.*

*Assume  $F$  is of general type,  $p_g(F) \geq 3$  and that  $\chi_f = \chi \mathcal{O}_F \chi \mathcal{O}_B - \chi \mathcal{O}_T > 0$ . Then*

(i) If  $|K_F|$  is not composed with a pencil and  $|K_F|$  has no subpencil  $|P|$  of type  $(r, g, p)$ ,  $r = 2, 3, 4$ , then

$$\lambda_2(f) \geq \lambda_1(f) \geq 9 \left( 1 - \frac{17}{3p_g(F) + 10} \right)$$

(ii) If  $|K_F|$  is composed with a pencil with generic fibre  $\widehat{D}$  of (geometric) genus  $g$ , then

$$\begin{aligned} \lambda_2(f) \geq \lambda_1(f) &\geq 4g - 4 && \text{if the pencil is irrational} \\ \lambda_2(f) \geq \lambda_1(f) &\geq \frac{p_g(F)}{p_g(F)+1} (4p_a(\widehat{D}) - 4 - 2\widehat{D}^2) && \text{if the pencil is rational} \end{aligned}$$

(iii) If  $|K_F|$  is not composed, has no hyperelliptic subpencils, and has subpencils  $\{|Q_i|\}_{i \in I}$  of type  $(r_i, g_i, p_i)$  with  $r_i = 3$ , or 4 then

$$\lambda_2(f) \geq \lambda_1(f) \geq \min_{i \in I} \{\lambda_{r_i}^{p_i}(Q_i)\}$$

where

$$\begin{aligned} \lambda_3^1(Q) &= 9 - \frac{9}{4g-7} - \varepsilon_3^1(p_g(F), g) \\ \lambda_3^0(Q) &= \begin{cases} 9 - \frac{9}{\delta-3} - \varepsilon_3^0(p_g(F), \delta) & \text{if } \delta \geq 7, \\ 6 \left( 1 - \frac{17}{3p_g(F)+10} \right) & \text{otherwise} \end{cases} \\ \lambda_4^1(Q) &= 9 - \frac{3}{4g-9} - \varepsilon_4^1(p_g(F), g) \\ \lambda_4^0(Q) &= \begin{cases} 9 - \frac{3}{\delta-5} - \varepsilon_4^0(p_g(F), \delta) & \text{if } \delta \geq 7, \\ 8 \left( 1 - \frac{17}{3p_g(F)+10} \right) & \text{otherwise} \end{cases} \end{aligned}$$

(iv) If  $|K_F|$  has hyperelliptic subpencils  $\{|Q_i|\}_{i \in I}$  of type  $(2, g_i, p_i)$  then

$$\lambda_2(f) \geq \lambda_1(f) \geq \min_{i \in I} \{\lambda_{r_i}^{p_i}(Q_i)\}$$

where

$$\begin{aligned} \lambda_2^1(Q) &= \begin{cases} 6 - \frac{2}{2g-3} - \varepsilon_2^1(p_g(F), g) & \text{if } g \geq 3, \\ 4 \left( 1 - \frac{1}{p_g(F)-1} \right) & \text{if } g = 2 \end{cases} \\ \lambda_2^0(Q) &= \begin{cases} 6 - \frac{4}{\delta-2} - \varepsilon_2^0(p_g(F), \delta) & \text{if } \delta \geq 4, \\ 4 \left( 1 - \frac{9}{2p_g(F)+5} \right) & \text{otherwise} \end{cases} \end{aligned}$$

and where  $\varepsilon_r^p \sim o\left(\frac{1}{p_g(F)}\right)$  are the following positive functions

$$\varepsilon_4^1 = \frac{(68g - 159)(36g - 84)}{(4g - 9)^2(3p_g(F) - 7) + (68g - 159)(4g - 9)} \quad \varepsilon_4^0 = \frac{(17\delta - 91)(9\delta - 48)}{(\delta - 5)^2(3p_g(F) - 7) + (\delta - 5)(17\delta - 91)}$$

$$\begin{aligned}\varepsilon_3^1 &= \frac{36(g-2)(68g-137)}{(4g-7)^2(3p_g(F)-7) + (68g-137)(4g-7)} & \varepsilon_3^0 &= \frac{(9\delta-36)(17\delta-69)}{(\delta-3)^2(3p_g(F)-7) + (\delta-3)(17\delta-69)} \\ \varepsilon_2^1 &= \frac{4(3g-5)(9g-17)}{(2g-3)^2(p_g(F)-2) + (9g-17)(2g-3)} & \varepsilon_2^0 &= \frac{(9\delta-24)(6\delta-16)}{(\delta-2)^2(2p_g(F)-4) + (\delta-2)(9\delta-24)}\end{aligned}$$

REMARK 2.5. The statement of Theorem 2.4 looks considerably easier if we consider the bounds for  $p_g(F) \gg 0$  (in which case the functions  $\varepsilon$  tend to be zero). This behaviour will play a special role in next section. We also observe that even if  $\chi_f < 0$  then the bounds in the theorem hold for  $\lambda_1(f)$  as far as  $\Delta(f) \neq 0$ .

*Proof.* We consider  $\mathcal{E} = f_*\omega_{T/B}$  and its Harder-Narasimhan filtration

$$0 = \mathcal{E}_0 \subseteq \mathcal{E}_1 \subseteq \dots \subseteq \mathcal{E}_\ell = \mathcal{E}$$

with slopes  $\mu_1 > \mu_2 > \dots > \mu_\ell \geq 0$  and ranks  $1 \leq r_1 < r_2 < \dots < r_\ell = p_g(F)$ . As in §1.2, each piece induces a Cartier divisor  $P_i$  on  $F$  such that the linear system  $|P_i|$  has projective dimension at least  $r_i - 1$ . We define as usual  $\mu_{\ell+1} = 0$ ,  $P_{\ell+1} = P_\ell$ . We observe that following Remark 2.3 we could define, if necessary,  $P_{\ell+1} = \tau^*K_F \geq P_\ell$  ( $|P_\ell|$  is the moving part of  $|K_F|$ ), although this possibility will only be used in very special computations and will be specifically pointed out.

Remember that we have  $\Delta_f = \deg \mathcal{E} = \sum_{i=1}^{\ell} r_i(\mu_i - \mu_{i+1})$ .

Consider first the case  $|K_F|$  composed. Using Lemma 2.1 (iii) and Remark 2.3 we get, if the pencil is irrational

$$\begin{aligned}K_{T/B}^3 &\geq \sum_{i=1}^{\ell} (P_i + P_{i+1})(\tau^*K_F)(\mu_i - \mu_{i+1}) \geq \\ &\geq \sum_{i=1}^{\ell-1} ((4g-4)r_i + (2g-2))(\mu_i - \mu_{i+1}) + (4g-4)r_\ell\mu_\ell = \\ &= (4g-4)\Delta_f + (2g-2)(\mu_1 - \mu_\ell) \geq (4g-4)\Delta_f\end{aligned}$$

using that  $r_{i+1} \geq r_i + 1$ . If the pencil is rational and  $\widehat{D}$  is a generic member of its moving part then we have

$$\begin{aligned}K_{T/B}^3 &\geq \sum_{i=1}^{\ell-1} ((4p_a(\widehat{D}) - 4 - 2\widehat{D}^2)r_i - (2p_a(\widehat{D}) - 2 - \widehat{D}^2))(\mu_i - \mu_{i+1}) + \\ &\quad + (4p_a(\widehat{D}) - 4 - 2\widehat{D}^2)(r_\ell - 1)\mu_\ell = \\ &= (4p_a(\widehat{D}) - 4 - 2\widehat{D}^2)\Delta_f - (2p_a(\widehat{D}) - 2 - \widehat{D}^2)(\mu_1 + \mu_\ell)\end{aligned}$$

By Remark 2.3 using the indexes  $\{1, \ell\}$

$$\begin{aligned}K_{T/B}^3 &\geq (P_1 + P_\ell)(\tau^*K_F)(\mu_1 - \mu_\ell) + 2P_\ell(\tau^*K_F)\mu_\ell \geq \\ &\geq P_\ell(\tau^*K_F)(\mu_1 + \mu_\ell) \geq \\ &\geq (2p_a(\widehat{D}) - 2 - \widehat{D}^2)p_g(F)(\mu_1 + \mu_\ell)\end{aligned}$$

And hence eliminating  $(\mu_1 + \mu_\ell)$  from the above inequalities

$$\left(1 + \frac{1}{p_g(F)}\right) K_{T/B}^3 \geq (4p_a(\widehat{D}) - 4 - 2\widehat{D}^2)\Delta_f$$

which proves (ii).

From now on we assume  $|K_F|$  not composed. Let

$$m = \min\{k \mid |P_k| \text{ induces a generically finite map}\} \leq \ell$$

By Remark 2.3 we have

$$K_{T/B}^3 \geq \sum_{i=1}^{m-1} (P_i + P_{i+1})P_m(\mu_i - \mu_{i+1}) + \sum_{i=m}^n (P_i^2 + P_iP_{i+1} + P_{i+1}^2)(\mu_i - \mu_{i+1})$$

Note that for  $i \geq m$  we have  $P_{i+1}^2 \geq P_iP_{i+1} \geq P_i^2$  and if  $P_iP_{i+1} = P_i^2$  then  $P_i = P_{i+1}$ . Indeed, we have  $P_{i+1} = P_i + D_i$ , with  $D_i \geq 0$ . Hence  $P_{i+1}^2 = P_{i+1}(P_i + D_i) \geq P_{i+1}P_i = (P_i + D_i)P_i \geq P_i^2$  since  $P_i$  and  $P_{i+1}$  are nef and  $D_i$  effective. If  $P_iP_{i+1} = P_i^2$  we would have  $P_iD_i = 0$ . Since  $|P_i|$  is base point free and is not composed, Hodge Index Theorem applies and hence either  $D_i^2 < 0$  (which is impossible since then  $P_{i+1}^2 = P_i^2 + 2P_iD_i + D_i^2 < P_i^2$ ) or  $D_i = 0$ . So we get  $P_i = P_{i+1}$ .

Assume  $|K_F|$  has no hyperelliptic subpencil (in particular, the maps induced by the linear systems  $|P_i|$  are never double covers of geometrically ruled surfaces). Then

$$(9) \quad \begin{array}{ll} \text{for } m \leq i \leq \ell - 1 & P_i^2 + P_iP_{i+1} + P_{i+1}^2 \geq 9r_i - 17 \\ \text{for } i = \ell & P_\ell^2 + P_\ell P_{\ell+1} + P_{\ell+1}^2 \geq 9r_\ell - 21 \end{array}$$

Indeed, we call  $\varphi_i$  the map induced by  $|P_i|$  and  $a_i = \deg \varphi_i$ . Note that  $r_i \geq 3$ . First consider the case  $m \leq i \leq \ell - 1$ . By Lemma 2.1, if  $\varphi_i$  and  $\varphi_{i+1}$  are not double covers of geometrically ruled surfaces we have  $P_i^2 \geq 3r_i - 7$  and  $P_{i+1}^2 \geq 3r_{i+1} - 7 \geq 3r_i - 4$ ; if  $P_i \neq P_{i+1}$  then  $P_iP_{i+1} > P_i^2 \geq 3r_i - 7$  and we are done. If  $P_i = P_{i+1}$  then  $(P_i^2 + P_iP_{i+1} + P_{i+1}^2) = 3P_{i+1}^2 \geq 9r_{i+1} - 21 \geq 9r_i - 12$ .

If  $i = \ell$  the result follows immediately from the previous considerations.

Similarly, if  $|K_F|$  admits hyperelliptic subpencils

$$(10) \quad \begin{array}{ll} \text{for } m \leq i \leq \ell - 1 & P_i^2 + P_iP_{i+1} + P_{i+1}^2 \geq 6r_i - 9 \\ \text{for } i = \ell & P_\ell^2 + P_\ell P_{\ell+1} + P_{\ell+1}^2 \geq 6r_\ell - 12 \end{array}$$

Indeed,  $9r_i - 17 \geq 6r_i - 9$  (since  $r_i \geq 3$ ) so we only have to check the case  $a_i = 2$  and  $\varphi_i(\tilde{F})$  a geometrically ruled surface. Since  $\varphi_i$  factorizes through  $\varphi_{i+1}$ ,  $a_{i+1} = 1$  or  $2$ . In any case  $P_{i+1}^2 \geq 2r_{i+1} - 4 \geq 2r_i - 2$ . If  $P_i \neq P_{i+1}$  we have  $P_iP_{i+1} > P_i^2 \geq 2r_i - 4$  and we are done. If  $P_i = P_{i+1}$  then  $P_i^2 + P_{i+1}P_i + P_{i+1}^2 = 3P_{i+1}^2 \geq 6r_i - 6$ . For  $i = \ell$  the assertion is clear.

Observe that since  $P_1 \leq \dots \leq P_{m-1}$ , all the maps  $\varphi_i$  induced by  $|P_i|$  are composed of the same pencil (with the only exception of  $r_1 = 1$ ,  $P_1 = 0$  for which

we have no defined map  $\varphi_1$ ). Indeed if  $i < j \leq m-1$  the map  $\varphi_i$  factors through the map  $\varphi_j$ . Since  $\varphi_i(\tilde{F})$  and  $\varphi_j(\tilde{F})$  are curves, both maps have, up to Stein factorization, the same fibre.

Let  $P_{m-1}$  (and hence  $P_i$  for  $i \leq m-1$ ) be of type  $(r, g, p)$ . Now

$$(11) \quad \text{If } i = m-1 \quad \text{then} \quad (P_{m-1} + P_m)P_m \geq \begin{cases} 10r_{m-1} - 10 & \text{if } r \geq 5 \\ 8r_{m-1} - 8 & \text{if } r = 4 \\ 6r_{m-1} - 6 & \text{if } r = 3 \\ 4r_{m-1} - 4 & \text{if } r = 2 \end{cases}$$

For this just note that  $(P_{m-1} + P_m)P_m \geq 2P_{m-1}P_m$  since  $P_{m-1} \leq P_m$  and  $P_m$  is nef. Then apply Lemma 2.1. Note that even if  $r_{m-1} = r_1 = 1$  (hence  $P_1 = 0$ )  $(P_{m-1} + P_m)P_m \geq 10r_{m-1} - 10$  holds.

Finally, we have

$$(12) \quad \text{If } 1 \leq i \leq m-2 \quad \text{then} \quad (P_i + P_{i+1})P_m \geq \begin{cases} 10r_i - 5 & \text{if } r \geq 5 \\ 8r_i - 4 & \text{if } r = 4 \\ 6r_i - 3 & \text{if } r = 3 \\ 4r_i - 2 & \text{if } r = 2 \end{cases}$$

which follows immediately from Lemma 5.9, even if  $P_i = P_1 = 0$  ( $r_1 = 1$ ).

If  $\Delta_f = \deg \mathcal{E} = \sum_{i=1}^{\ell} r_i(\mu_i - \mu_{i+1})$ , call  $\Delta_1 = \sum_{i=1}^{m-1} r_i(\mu_i - \mu_{i+1})$  and  $\Delta_2 = \Delta_f - \Delta_1$ .

Let us proof first (i) and (iii); we can assume then that  $|K_F|$  has no hyperelliptic subpencil. We get, using (9),(11) and (12)

If  $r \geq 5$

$$(13) \quad K_{T/B}^3 \geq 10\Delta_1 + 9\Delta_2 - 5\mu_1 - 5\mu_{m-1} - 7\mu_m - 4\mu_\ell \geq 9\Delta_f - 17\mu_1 - 4\mu_\ell$$

If  $r = 4$

$$K_{T/B}^3 \geq 8\Delta_1 + 9\Delta_2 - 4\mu_1 - 4\mu_{m-1} - 9\mu_m - 4\mu_\ell \geq 8\Delta_1 + 9\Delta_2 - 17\mu_1 - 4\mu_\ell$$

If  $r = 3$

$$K_{T/B}^3 \geq 6\Delta_1 + 9\Delta_2 - 3\mu_1 - 3\mu_{m-1} - 11\mu_m - 4\mu_\ell \geq 6\Delta_1 + 9\Delta_2 - 17\mu_1 - 4\mu_\ell$$

Note that the bound for  $r \geq 5$  also holds for  $m = 2$ ,  $P_{m-1} = P_1 = 0$  ( $r_1 = 1$ ), or  $m = 1$ . Using now Remark 2.3 and Lemma 2.1 (i) we have

$$K_{T/B}^3 \geq P_\ell^2(\mu_1 + 2\mu_\ell) \geq (3p_g(F) - 7)(\mu_1 + 2\mu_\ell)$$

and so (we use  $-17\mu_1 - 4\mu_\ell \geq -17(\mu_1 + 2\mu_\ell)$ ; note that  $\mu_\ell$  may be zero):

$$(14) \quad \begin{aligned} \text{If } r \geq 5 & \quad \left(1 + \frac{17}{3p_g(F) - 7}\right) K_{T/B}^3 \geq 9\Delta_f \\ \text{If } r = 4 & \quad \left(1 + \frac{17}{3p_g(F) - 7}\right) K_{T/B}^3 \geq 8\Delta_1 + 9\Delta_2 \\ \text{If } r = 3 & \quad \left(1 + \frac{17}{3p_g(F) - 7}\right) K_{T/B}^3 \geq 6\Delta_1 + 9\Delta_2 \end{aligned}$$

The first inequality proves (i) and holds also when  $m = 2$ ,  $P_{m-1} = P_1 = 0$  ( $r_1 = 1$ ), or  $m = 1$ .

In order to prove (iii) we can assume from now on that  $r = 3$  or  $4$ , otherwise we have (i) which is stronger than (iii).

We can also assume  $m \geq 2$  and, as pointed out, that  $|P_{m-1}|$  is composed with a pencil.

We divide the argument according to the pencil  $|P_{m-1}|$  is irrational or not.

If the pencil is rational we use the same notation than in Lemma 2.1 and Definition 2.2 and set  $\widehat{D}$  for the (possible singular) general element of the linear system  $|\tau_* P_i| = |Q_i|$  in  $F$  (with possible base points).

Then using Lemma 2.1 and according to the pencil is irrational or not we have

for  $i \leq m - 2$

$$(15) \quad (P_i + P_{i+1})(\tau^* K_F) \geq (4g - 4)r_i + (2g - 2) \quad (\text{except if } P_i = P_1 = 0, r_1 = 1)$$

$$(P_i + P_{i+1})(\tau^* K_F) \geq (4p_a(\widehat{D}) - 4 - 2\widehat{D}^2)r_i - (2p_a(\widehat{D}) - 2 - \widehat{D}^2)$$

for  $i = m - 1$

$$(P_{m-1} + P_m)(\tau^* K_F) \geq 2P_{m-1}(\tau^* K_F) \geq (4g - 4)r_{m-1}$$

$$(P_{m-1} + P_m)(\tau^* K_F) \geq 2P_{m-1}(\tau^* K_F) \geq (4p_a(\widehat{D}) - 4 - 2\widehat{D}^2)(r_{m-1} - 1)$$

for  $m \leq i \leq \ell - 1$

$$(P_i + P_{i+1})(\tau^* K_F) \geq P_i^2 + P_{i+1}^2$$

for  $i = \ell$

$$(P_\ell + P_{\ell+1}^2)(\tau^* K_F) \geq 2P_\ell^2$$

Using Remark 2.3 we know

$$K_{T/B}^3 \geq \sum_{i=1}^{\ell} (P_i + P_{i+1})(\tau^* K_F)(\mu_i - \mu_{i+1})$$

and so we can conclude

If  $r = 3, 4$ ,  $p = 1$

$$(16) \quad K_{T/B}^3 \geq (4g - 4)\Delta_1 + 6\Delta_2 - 11\mu_m - 3\mu_\ell \geq (4g - 4)\Delta_1 + 6\Delta_2 - 11\mu_1 - 3\mu_\ell$$

Finally,

If  $r = 3, 4$ ,  $p = 0$

$$(17) \quad K_{T/B}^3 \geq (4p_a(\widehat{D}) - 4 - 2\widehat{D}^2)\Delta_1 + 6\Delta_2 - (2p_a(\widehat{D}) - 2 - \widehat{D}^2)(\mu_1 - \mu_{m-1}) -$$

$$-(4p_a(\widehat{D}) - 4 - 2\widehat{D}^2)(\mu_{m-1} - \mu_m) - 11\mu_m - 3\mu_\ell \geq$$

$$\geq (2p_a(\widehat{D}) - 2 - \widehat{D}^2)\Delta_1 + 6\Delta_2 - 11\mu_1 - 3\mu_\ell$$

since  $\Delta_1 \geq (\mu_1 - \mu_{m-1}) + 2(\mu_{m-1} - \mu_m)$  (this is immediate if  $m - 1 \geq 2$ ; if  $m = 2$ , then  $r_1 \geq 2$  and  $\Delta_1 = r_1(\mu_1 - \mu_2) \geq 2(\mu_1 - \mu_m)$ ).

Note also that these formulas include the possibility  $r_1 = 1$ ,  $P_1 = 0$ .

Using now that  $K_{T/B}^3 \geq (3p_g(F) - 7)(\mu_1 + 2\mu_\ell)$  we get

$$\left(1 + \frac{11}{3p_g(F) - 7}\right) K_{T/B}^3 \geq \begin{cases} (4g - 4)\Delta_1 + 6\Delta_2 & \text{if } r = 3, 4, p = 1 \\ (2p_a(\widehat{D}) - 2 - \widehat{D}^2)\Delta_1 + 6\Delta_2 & \text{if } r = 3, 4, p = 0 \end{cases}$$

Considering simultaneously this last inequality together with (14) and using that  $\Delta_2 = \Delta_f - \Delta_1$  we get (iii). All the arguments work similarly so we only give details of one of them. Assume  $P_{m-1}$  is a tetragonal irrational pencil. Then last inequality together with (14) give

$$\begin{aligned} \left(1 + \frac{17}{3p_g(F) - 7}\right) K_{T/B}^3 &\geq 8\Delta_1 + 9\Delta_2 = 8\Delta_f + \Delta_2 \\ \left(1 + \frac{11}{3p_g(F) - 7}\right) K_{T/B}^3 &\geq (4g - 4)\Delta_1 + 6\Delta_2 = (4g - 4)\Delta_f - (4g - 10)\Delta_2 \end{aligned}$$

Observe that since  $|P_{m-1}|$  is not an hyperelliptic pencil, then  $g \geq 3$  and so we can get a lower bound for  $\Delta_2$  from the second inequality and we obtain

$$\left[1 + \frac{17}{3p_g(F) - 7} + \frac{1}{4g - 10} \left(1 + \frac{11}{3p_g(F) - 7}\right)\right] K_{T/B}^3 \geq \left[8 + \frac{4g - 4}{4g - 10}\right] \Delta_f$$

which gives  $\lambda_4^1(P_{m-1})$ . As for the computation of  $\lambda_4^0(P_{m-1})$  or  $\lambda_3^0(P_{m-1})$  we only must be careful when  $\delta \leq 6$  since then the corresponding second inequality does not give a lower bound for  $\Delta_2$ . If this case happens, then just deduce from (14)

$$\begin{aligned} \left(1 + \frac{17}{3p_g(F) - 7}\right) K_{T/B}^3 &\geq 8\Delta_f && \text{if the pencil is tetragonal} \\ \left(1 + \frac{17}{3p_g(F) - 7}\right) K_{T/B}^3 &\geq 6\Delta_f && \text{if the pencil is trigonal} \end{aligned}$$

which give the special values of  $\lambda_r^0$  in (iii).

Of course we must consider all the possibilities for  $|P_{m-1}|$  being trigonal or tetragonal subpencils of  $|K_F|$  and so we must consider the minimum of all such lower bounds.

Finally we must prove (iv). Assume  $|K_F|$  has hyperelliptic subpencils. Then it may happens that for some  $i \geq m$   $\varphi_i$  is of degree two onto a ruled surface. Also may happen that  $r = 2$ . Altogether, Remark 2.3, Lemma 2.1 and inequalities (13), (14), (16) and (17) read

$$K_{T/B}^3 \geq P_\ell^2(\mu_1 + 2\mu_\ell) \geq (2p_g(F) - 4)(\mu_1 + 2\mu_\ell)$$

$$\text{If } r \geq 3 \text{ or } m = 1 \text{ or } m = 2 \quad P_{m-1} = P_1 = 0 \\ K_{T/B}^3 \geq 6\Delta_1 + 6\Delta_2 - 3\mu_1 - 3\mu_{m-1} - 3\mu_m - 3\mu_\ell \geq 6\Delta_f - 9\mu_1 - 3\mu_\ell$$

and so

$$(18) \quad \text{If } r \geq 3 \quad \left(1 + \frac{9}{2p_g(F) - 4}\right) K_{T/B}^3 \geq 6\Delta_f$$

If  $r = 2$

$$K_{T/B}^3 \geq 4\Delta_1 + 6\Delta_2 - 2\mu_1 - 2\mu_{m-1} - 5\mu_m - 3\mu_\ell \geq 4\Delta_1 + 6\Delta_2 - 9\mu_1 - 3\mu_\ell$$

and so

$$(19) \quad \text{If } r = 2 \quad \left(1 + \frac{9}{2p_g(F) - 4}\right) K_{T/B}^3 \geq 4\Delta_1 + 6\Delta_2$$

If  $r = 2$   $p = 0$

$$K_{T/B}^3 \geq (2p_a(\widehat{D}) - 2 - \widehat{D}^2)\Delta_1 + 4\Delta_2 - 6\mu_1 - 2\mu_\ell$$

If  $r = 2$   $p = 1$

$$K_{T/B}^3 \geq (4g - 4)\Delta_1 + 4\Delta_2 - 2\mu_m - 2\mu_\ell \geq (4g - 4)\Delta_1 + 4\Delta_2 - 2\mu_1 - 2\mu_\ell$$

This last inequality needs an extra explanation for the coefficient of  $\mu_m$ . If  $r = 2$ , we have an hyperelliptic pencil on  $\tilde{F}$ . Let  $D$  be a general irreducible member. For  $i \geq m$ ,  $|P_i|_{|D|}$  is a base point free sublinear system of  $|K_D|$  by adjunction and hence maps  $D$  onto  $\mathbb{P}^1$ . Hence,  $\Sigma_i = \varphi_i(\tilde{F})$  is always a ruled surface. Moreover,  $\varphi_i$  is of degree at least two. Since  $\varphi_{m-1}$  factors through  $\Sigma_i$  for  $i \geq m$ , then  $q(\Sigma_i) \geq 1$  (the pencil is irrational). Hence for  $i \geq m$ :

$$P_i(\tau^* K_F) \geq P_i^2 \geq (\deg \varphi_i)(r_i - 2 + q(\Sigma_i)) \geq 2r_i - 2.$$

From here we get

$$(20) \quad \left(1 + \frac{2}{2p_g(F) - 4}\right) K_{T/B}^3 \geq (4g - 4)\Delta_1 + 4\Delta_2 \quad \text{if } r = 2, p = 1 \\ \left(1 + \frac{6}{2p_g(F) - 4}\right) K_{T/B}^3 \geq (2p_a(\widehat{D}) - 2 - \widehat{D}^2)\Delta_1 + 4\Delta_2 \quad \text{if } r = 2, p = 0$$

If  $r = 2$  (i.e.,  $|P_{m-1}|$  is one of the hyperelliptic subpencils of  $|K_F|$ ) then we can proceed as in (iii) using (19) and (20) and inequalities in (iv) follow. Here

the exceptional bounds appear in the cases rational and irrational. When  $p = 0$  and  $\delta \leq 4$  (19) gives

$$\left(1 + \frac{9}{2p_g(F) - 4}\right) K_{T/B}^3 \geq 4\Delta_f$$

and so

$$\lambda_1(f) \geq 4 \left(1 - \frac{9}{2p_g(F) + 5}\right)$$

When  $p = 1$ ,  $g = 2$  we have from (20)

$$\lambda_1(f) \geq 4 \left(1 - \frac{1}{p_g(F) - 1}\right)$$

If  $r \geq 3$  or  $|P_{m-1}|$  is not composed with a pencil the situation can only be better; indeed, in this case inequality (18) holds, which is better than inequality (19) and hence it is better than any inequalities coming from (19) as (iv) are.  $\square$

**REMARK 2.6.** Theorem 2.4 shows that there is some influence on the slope of the existence of certain special maps on the general fibre. This is precisely what is known partially to happen in the case of fibred surfaces, where the gonality of the general fibre seems to play an special role (cf. [31], [23], [22]).

**REMARK 2.7.** In [1] using a different approach the author find some lower bounds for  $\lambda_2(f)$  assuming that  $T$  is Gorenstein and either the sheaf  $\mathcal{E}$  is semistable or the canonical image of  $F$  lies in few quadrics.

### 3. The slope of non Albanese fibred threefolds

Consider, for  $t \in B$  such that  $F_t$  is smooth, the natural diagram of Albanese maps

$$\begin{array}{ccc} F_t & \xrightarrow{\text{alb}_{F_t}} & \text{Alb}(F_t) \\ \downarrow i_t & & (i_t)_* \downarrow \\ T & \xrightarrow{\text{alb}_T} & \text{Alb}(T) \\ \downarrow f & & f_* \downarrow \\ B & \xrightarrow{\text{alb}_B} & \text{Alb}(B) \end{array}$$

As  $t$  varies, the abelian subvariety  $(i_t)_*\text{Alb}(F_t)$  remains constant, say  $A$ , by the rigidity property of abelian varieties. Let  $\alpha = \dim A$ . From this we get

$$b \leq q(T) = b + \alpha \leq b + g$$

Moreover, from the diagram and the universal property of Albanese varieties it is immediate to check that if  $b \geq 1$  then  $b = q$  if and only if  $\text{alb}_T(T) = B$ .

In this case we say that  $f$  is an *Albanese fibration*. We will say that  $f$  is a *non-Albanese fibration* if  $q(T) > b$  (i.e., if  $b = 0$  and  $q(T) > 0$  or if  $a = \dim \text{alb}(T) \geq 2$ ). We want to analyze the influence of this fact in the slope as in Xiao's result for surfaces (cf. [34] Corollary 2.1): if  $q(S) > b$  then  $\lambda(f) \geq 4$ . Our main tool will be Theorem 2.4 together with an argument of étale covers.

First of all we need to control when étale covers of curves are  $d$ -gonal.

LEMMA 3.1. *Let  $D$  be a smooth curve and  $\mathcal{L} \in \text{Pic}^0(D)$  a  $n$ -torsion element.*

*Let  $\alpha : \widetilde{D} \rightarrow D$  the associated étale cover of degree  $n$ .*

*Assume  $\widetilde{D}$  has a unique (base point free)  $g_d^1$ ; then*

(i)  *$D$  has a  $g_d^1$ .*

(ii)  *$n|d$ .*

*Proof.* (i) Let  $\varphi$  be the automorphism of order  $n$  of  $\widetilde{D}$  such that  $D \cong \widetilde{D}/\langle \varphi \rangle$ . Since  $\widetilde{D}$  has a unique  $g_d^1$ ,  $\varphi$  commutes with the map  $\ell : \widetilde{D} \rightarrow \mathbb{P}^1$  and hence there is an order  $\bar{n}$  automorphism  $\bar{\varphi}$  of  $\mathbb{P}^1$  such that

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \widetilde{D} & \xrightarrow{\varphi} & \widetilde{D} \\ \ell \downarrow & & \downarrow \ell \\ \mathbb{P}^1 & \xrightarrow{\bar{\varphi}} & \mathbb{P}^1 \end{array}$$

commutes. Clearly  $\bar{n}|n$  and  $\frac{n}{\bar{n}}|d$ . Hence we have an induced degree  $\bar{d} = \frac{d\bar{n}}{n}$  map  $D = \widetilde{D}/\langle \varphi \rangle \rightarrow \mathbb{P}^1/\langle \bar{\varphi} \rangle = \mathbb{P}^1$ . Composing with a map  $\mathbb{P}^1 \rightarrow \mathbb{P}^1$  of degree  $\frac{n}{\bar{n}}$  we have the desired  $g_d^1$  on  $D$ .

(ii) Let  $\psi$  be the automorphism of  $\mathbb{P}^1$  given by  $\begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 0 & \alpha \end{pmatrix}$  with  $\alpha^n = 1$ ,  $\alpha^i \neq 1$  if  $i < n$ . Consider the diagonal action of  $\mathbb{Z}_n$  on  $\mathbb{P}^1 \times \widetilde{D}$  by  $\psi$  and  $\varphi$  respectively. Put  $S = (\mathbb{P}^1 \times \widetilde{D})/\mathbb{Z}_n$ . We have a natural fibration

$$\pi : S \rightarrow \mathbb{P}^1/\mathbb{Z}_n = \mathbb{P}^1$$

such that  $\pi^{-1}(t) \cong \widetilde{D}$  for general  $t \in \mathbb{P}^1$  and  $\pi^{-1}(\overline{(1:0)}) = n(\widetilde{D}/\langle \varphi \rangle) = nD$ . Moreover  $S$  is smooth along  $\pi^{-1}(\overline{(1:0)})$  (cf. [30] pp. 65, 66), so for our purposes can be considered smooth.

Then  $\pi$  verifies the hypotheses of Theorem 3.1 (b) in [3] and then one has

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \widehat{S} & & \\ \sigma \downarrow & \searrow & \\ S & \xrightarrow{\Phi} & R \\ \pi \downarrow & \swarrow \tau & \\ \mathbb{P}^1 & & \end{array}$$

where  $R$  is a ruled surface,  $\Phi$  is of degree  $d$  and  $\sigma$  solves  $\Phi$ . Notice that  $\widehat{S}$  still has a fibre of multiplicity  $n$  over  $(1 : 0)$ . Since  $R$  is ruled,  $\tau$  has a section so  $\pi \circ \sigma$  has a  $d$ -section  $Z$ . Then  $d = \widetilde{D}Z = nDZ$  is a multiple of  $n$ .  $\square$

LEMMA 3.2. *Let  $F$  be a surface of general type and  $\mathcal{L} \in \text{Pic}^0(F)$  a  $n$ -torsion element. Let  $\alpha : \widetilde{F} \rightarrow F$  be the associated étale cover of degree  $n$ . Then, if  $n$  is prime and big enough*

- (i)  $\widetilde{F}$  has no rational pencil of  $d$ -gonal curves ( $d = 2, 3$ ).
- (ii) If  $\widetilde{F}$  has an irrational pencil of  $d$ -gonal curves ( $d = 2, 3$ ) of genus  $g$ , then so has  $F$  and there exists a base change

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \widetilde{F} & \xrightarrow{\alpha} & F \\ \widetilde{h} \downarrow & & \downarrow h \\ \widetilde{C} & \longrightarrow & C \end{array}$$

such that  $\mathcal{L} = h^*(\mathcal{M}) \in h^*(\text{Pic}^0(C))$  and  $\widetilde{C} \rightarrow C$  is induced by  $\mathcal{M}$ .

- (iii) If  $\widetilde{F}$  has a pencil of tetragonal curves then, either so has  $F$  and there exists a base change diagram as in (ii) (and necessarily the pencil is irrational), or the pencil  $\{\widetilde{D}\}$  is of bielliptic curves and  $F$  has a pencil  $\{D\}$  of bielliptic (hence tetragonal) or hyperelliptic curves such that  $\alpha^*(D) = \widetilde{D}$  (and  $2g(\widetilde{D}) - 2 = n(2g(D) - 2)$ ) where

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \widetilde{F} & \xrightarrow{\alpha} & F \\ & \searrow \widetilde{h} & \swarrow h \\ & & C \end{array}$$

*Proof.* Assume first  $\widetilde{F}$  has a base point free pencil  $\widetilde{h} : \widetilde{F} \rightarrow \widetilde{C}$ . Let  $\widetilde{D}$  be a general fibre and let  $D = (\alpha(\widetilde{D}))_{\text{red}}$ . Clearly  $D$  is smooth since  $\widetilde{D}$  moves algebraically.

If  $\mathcal{L}|_D \neq \mathcal{O}_D$ , then since  $n$  is prime  $\mathcal{L}|_D^{\otimes i} \neq \mathcal{O}_D$  for  $1 \leq i \leq n-1$  and hence  $\alpha^*(D)$  is a connected smooth étale cover of  $D$  containing  $\widetilde{D}$  and so  $\alpha^*(D) = \widetilde{D}$ .

If  $D^2 > 0$ , by [27],  $\mathcal{L}|_D \neq \mathcal{O}_D$  and by the previous argument  $\alpha^*(D) = \widetilde{D}$ ,  $0 = \widetilde{D}^2 = nD^2 > 0$ , a contradiction. So necessarily we have  $D^2 = 0$ .

If  $\mathcal{L}|_D = \mathcal{O}_D$  then  $\alpha^*(D) = \widetilde{D}_1 + \dots + \widetilde{D}_n$  ( $\widetilde{D}_1 = \widetilde{D}$ ),  $\widetilde{D}_i \widetilde{D}_j = 0$ ,  $\widetilde{D}_i \neq \widetilde{D}_j$  if  $i \neq j$ , and hence we have a factorization

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \widetilde{F} & \xrightarrow{\alpha} & F \\ \widetilde{h} \downarrow & & \downarrow h \\ \widetilde{C} & \xrightarrow{\beta} & C \end{array}$$

such that  $\mathcal{L} \in h^*Pic^0(C)$  and  $\beta$  is an étale cover. In particular  $g(C) \geq 1$ .

Now we want to explore the possibility  $\widetilde{D} = \alpha^*(D)$ . Since  $n$  is big enough then so is  $g(\widetilde{D})$  and hence, if  $\widetilde{D}$  has a  $g_d^1$  ( $d = 2, 3, 4$ ) it is unique except if  $d = 4$  and  $\widetilde{D}$  is bielliptic. So Lemma 3.1 (ii) says that  $\widetilde{D}$  has no  $g_d^1$  ( $d = 2, 3, 4$ ) as far as  $n$  does not divide  $d$  except when  $\widetilde{D}$  is bielliptic.

But in this case, let  $\sigma$  be the (unique, if  $g(\widetilde{D}) \geq 6$ ) bielliptic involution of  $\widetilde{D}$ . Let  $\varphi$  be the rank  $n$  automorphism of  $\widetilde{D}$  induced by  $\alpha$ . Since  $\sigma$  is unique we must have that  $\varphi \circ \sigma \circ \varphi^{-1} = \sigma$  and hence there exists an automorphism  $\bar{\varphi}$  of the elliptic base curve  $E$  such that the following diagram commutes

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \widetilde{D} & \xrightarrow{\varphi} & \widetilde{D} \\ \downarrow 2:1 & & \downarrow 2:1 \\ E = \widetilde{D}/\langle \sigma \rangle & \xrightarrow{\bar{\varphi}} & E \end{array}$$

Hence there is an induced degree two map  $D = \widetilde{D}/\langle \varphi \rangle \longrightarrow E/\langle \bar{\varphi} \rangle = E'$ , where  $E'$  is  $\mathbb{P}^1$  or an elliptic curve according  $\bar{\varphi}$  has fixed points or not. Then  $D$  is hyperelliptic or bielliptic (hence tetragonal).  $\square$

Then we can consider which is the influence of the irregularity of  $T$  in the slope of  $f$ . We have an exceptional good behaviour:

**THEOREM 3.3.** *Let  $f : T \longrightarrow B$  be a relatively minimal fibration of a normal,  $\mathbb{Q}$ -factorial, projective threefold with only canonical singularities onto a smooth curve of genus  $b$ . Let  $F$  be a general fibre. Assume  $F$  is of general type,  $p_g(F) \geq 3$ , and that  $\chi_f = \chi \mathcal{O}_F \chi \mathcal{O}_B - \chi \mathcal{O}_T > 0$ .*

*Then, if  $q(T) > b$  we have*

- (i)  $\lambda_2(f) \geq 4$ .
- (ii) If  $F$  has no irrational pencil of  $d$ -gonal curves ( $d = 2, 3, 4$ ) then  $\lambda_2(f) \geq 9$ .
- (iii) If  $F$  has an irrational tetragonal pencil of (minimal) genus  $g$  and no irrational pencil of trigonal curves nor pencil of hyperelliptic curves then  $\lambda_2(f) \geq 9 - \frac{3}{4g-9}$ .
- (iv) If  $f$  has an irrational tetragonal pencil of (minimal) genus  $g_1$ , an irrational trigonal pencil of (minimal) genus  $g_2$  and no hyperelliptic pencil, then

$$\lambda_2(f) \geq \min \left\{ 9 - \frac{3}{4g_1 - 9}, 9 - \frac{9}{4g_2 - 7} \right\}.$$

- (v) If  $F$  has an irrational hyperelliptic pencil of (minimal) genus  $g$ , then  $\lambda_2(f) \geq 6 - \frac{2}{2g-3}$ .

- (vi) If  $F$  has a rational hyperelliptic pencil and none irrational, then  $\lambda_2(f) \geq 6$ .

(vii) If  $\lambda_2(f) < 9$  then either  $F$  has a rational pencil of hyperelliptic curves or there exists, perhaps up to base change, a factorization of  $f$

$$\begin{array}{ccc} T & \xrightarrow{h} & S \\ \downarrow f & \swarrow g & \\ B & & \end{array}$$

where  $S$  is a smooth surface fibred over  $B$  by curves  $C_t$  of genus  $g(C_t) \geq 1$  and  $h$  is everywhere defined at the general fibre  $F_t$  of  $f$ , such that

- for  $t \in B$  general the image of  $((i_t)^* : \text{Pic}^0(T) \rightarrow \text{Pic}^0(F_t))$  lies in  $h_t^*(\text{Pic}^0(C_t)) \subseteq \text{Pic}^0(F_t)$ .
- for  $s \in S$  general  $D_s = h^{-1}(s)$  is hyperelliptic, trigonal or tetragonal (necessarily hyperelliptic or of genus 3 if  $\lambda_2(f) < 8$ ).

*Proof.* Note that (i) follows from (ii), (iii), (iv), (v) and (vi). Since  $q(T) > b$  then for every  $n \gg 0$  there exists a  $n$ -torsion element  $\mathcal{L} \in \text{Pic}^0 T \setminus f^*(\text{Pic}^0(B))$  such that for  $1 \leq i \leq n-1$ ,  $\mathcal{L}|_F^{\otimes i} \neq \mathcal{O}_F$ . Then we can construct the associated étale cover  $\alpha : \tilde{T} \rightarrow T$  as in Lemma 1.5 (iii) and get  $\tilde{f} = f \circ \alpha$  such that  $\lambda_2(f) = \lambda_2(\tilde{f})$ .

If  $\tilde{F}$  is the fibre of  $\tilde{f}$ , we have an étale cover  $\alpha_1 : \tilde{F} \rightarrow F$  and hence  $p_g(\tilde{F}) \geq \chi \mathcal{O}_{\tilde{F}} = n \chi \mathcal{O}_F \geq n$  (note that  $q(\tilde{F}) \geq q(F) \geq 1$  since  $q(T) > b$ ). Since we can do this process for  $n$  as big as needed, we can take in the bounds of Theorem 2.4 limit when  $p_g(F)$  goes to infinity.

Assume that  $|K_F|$  is composed. We have  $p_g(\tilde{F}) \geq n$  and either the genus of the fibre of the pencil or the genus of the base curve increases, except if  $q(F) = 1$  and the pencil is elliptic. When  $|K_F|$  is composed the pencil can only be rational or elliptic and the genus of the fibre is at most 5 provided  $p_g \gg 0$  ([5], [33]). So if  $n$  is big enough and the pencil is rational  $|K_{\tilde{F}}|$  can not be composed. Since  $\lambda_2(f) = \lambda_2(\tilde{f})$  we can assume  $|K_F|$  not composed with a rational pencil.

Finally, if the pencil is elliptic and  $q(F) = 1$ , note that we can apply Theorem 2.4 (ii) and get that  $\lambda_2(f) \geq 12$  if  $g \geq 4$ ,  $\lambda_2(f) \geq 8$  if  $g = 3$ ,  $\lambda_2(f) \geq 4$  if  $g = 2$ . So we have that (ii), (iii), (iv), (v) and (vi) hold. From now on we assume  $|K_F|$  is not composed.

When  $F$  has a fibration  $h : F \rightarrow C$  we have an induced map  $\tilde{h} = h \circ \alpha_1 : F \rightarrow C$ . This map may not have connected fibres and hence factorizes through an étale cover  $\tilde{C} \rightarrow C$ . We have two possibilities.

It may exist an unbounded sequence  $\{n_i\}_{i \in \mathbb{N}} \subseteq \mathbb{N}$  such that for every  $i$   $\tilde{h}_{n_i}$  has connected fibres over  $C$  (hence it is a fibration) or for every  $n \geq n_0$ ,  $\tilde{h}_n$  factorizes through a non trivial étale cover  $\tilde{C}_n \rightarrow C$ .

In any case we have that, if  $g_n$  is the genus of the fibration  $\tilde{F}_n \rightarrow \tilde{C}_n$ ,  $g \leq g_n \leq n(g-1) + 1$ , the border cases being the two extreme possibilities.

If  $C = \mathbb{P}^1$  (rational pencil) then  $\tilde{C}_n = C$  for all  $n$  and the sequence  $\{\delta_n\}$  is unbounded. If  $F$  has a pencil of tetragonal curves which are bielliptic, then by Lemma 3.2 (iii) again may happen that  $\{g_n\}$  is unbounded. Otherwise by using Lemma 3.2, we have that  $g_n = g$  holds for all  $n$ .

If the sequence  $\{g_n\}$  is bounded, since  $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} p_g(\tilde{F}_n) = \infty$ , we can consider Theorem 2.4 (iii), (iv) and get the bounds of (iii), (iv), (v) and (vi) (note that  $g_n = g$  is the worst case).

Finally assume  $\{g_n\}$  (or  $\delta_n$ ) is unbounded. We must take limit in the bounds of Theorem 2.4 when  $g$  (or  $\delta$ ) and  $p_g(F)$  simultaneously (and linearly) grow. In all the cases, the limit is 9.

If  $F$  has no irrational  $d$ -gonal pencil ( $d = 2, 3, 4$ ) so has not  $\tilde{F}$  by Lemma 5.13. If  $F$  has a rational  $d$ -gonal pencil ( $d = 2, 3, 4$ ) we know yet that  $\lambda_2(f) \geq 9$ . So we can assume that if  $F$  verifies the hypotheses of Theorem 5.11 (i) then so does  $\tilde{F}$  and so we get  $\lambda_2(f) \geq 9$  in the limit process. This proves (ii).

In order to prove (vii) note that in the previous arguments we always have  $\lambda_2(f) \geq 9$  except when there exists  $h_t : F_t \rightarrow C_t$  with hyperelliptic, trigonal or tetragonal fibres (such that  $g(C_t) \geq 1$  when non-hyperelliptic) and for every  $\mathcal{L} \in \text{Pic}^0(T)$  the étale cover  $\tilde{F}_t \rightarrow F_t$  given by  $\mathcal{L}|_{F_t}$  factorizes through an étale cover of  $C_t$ . This says that  $\text{Im}((i_t)^* \text{Pic}^0 T \rightarrow \text{Pic}^0(F_t))$  lies in the subtorus  $h_t^* \text{Pic}^0 C_t$ .

In order to glue all the maps  $h_t$  we can proceed as in Theorem 1.6 (iii).  $\square$

**COROLLARY 3.4.** *With the same notations as in Theorem 3.3, if  $q(T) > b$  then*

- (i) *If  $\lambda_2(f) < 9$  then  $F$  is fibred by hyperelliptic, trigonal or tetragonal curves.*
- (ii) *If  $\lambda_2(f) < 8$  then  $F$  is fibred by genus 3 or hyperelliptic curves.*
- (iii) *If  $\lambda_2(f) < \frac{16}{3}$  then  $F$  is fibred by genus 2 curves.*

**COROLLARY 3.5.** *With the same notations as in Theorem 3.3, if  $\mathcal{E} = f_* \omega_{T/B}$  has a quotient of rank one and degree zero, then the same conclusions as in Theorem 3.3 hold.*

*In particular, if  $b = 0, 1$  and  $F$  is not fibred by  $d$ -gonal curves ( $d = 2, 3, 4$ ) and  $\lambda_2(f) < 9$  then  $\mathcal{E}$  is ample.*

*Proof.* According to Proposition 1.18 (ii), if  $\mathcal{E}$  has a quotient  $\mathcal{L}$  of rank 1 and degree zero, then it is torsion and so it is trivial after an étale base change  $\sigma : \tilde{B} \rightarrow B$ . Using now part (i) of Proposition 1.18, the induced new fibration  $\tilde{f} : \tilde{S} \rightarrow \tilde{B}$  verifies  $q(\tilde{T}) > g(\tilde{B})$  and hence Theorem 3.3 applies. Finally note that both fibrations have the same slope  $\lambda_2$  by Lemma 1.5 (ii).  $\square$

**REMARK 3.6.** Although in Theorem 2.4 we only must take care of subpencils of  $|K_F|$ , in the proof of Theorem 3.3 we must take care of subpencils of  $|K_{\tilde{F}}|$  for any étale cover  $\tilde{F} \rightarrow F$ , hence corresponding to *arbitrary* pencils in  $F$ . Hence

the hypotheses that appear in the statement of Theorem 3.3 can not be restricted to subpencils of  $|K_F|$ .

EXAMPLE 3.7. We give a family of examples of fibred threefolds with  $F$  fibred by genus two curves and with slope arbitrarily near to 6. For this consider a ruled surface  $R$  onto a smooth curve  $C$  of genus  $m$ , and let  $B$  be a smooth curve of genus  $b$ . Let  $Y = R \times B$  and consider a suitable double cover  $T \rightarrow Y$ . If the ramification locus is suitable chosen, the general fibre  $F$  of the induced fibration  $f : T \rightarrow B$  has a genus two fibration. A standard computation shows that  $\lambda_2(f)$  is arbitrarily near to 6 provided  $m \geq 1$  (in fact equal to 6 if  $m = 1$ ). Observe that by construction  $q(T) - b \geq m$  and so  $f$  is a non Albanese fibration. So we can conclude that the bound 6 has certainly some meaning for fibrations with general fibre fibred by hyperelliptic curves. The same construction produces examples with arbitrary  $g \geq 3$  but then  $\lambda_2(f)$  is far from 6.

#### 4. Fibred threefolds with low slope

In [28], the following possibilities for fibred threefolds with fibre of general type and  $\lambda_2(f) < 4$  are listed.

THEOREM 4.1. (Ohno, [28] Main Theorem 2). *Let  $f : T \rightarrow B$  be a relatively minimal fibred threefold as in Theorem 2.4. Assume  $F$  is of general type. If  $K_{T/B}^3 < 4(\chi_{\mathcal{O}_B}\chi_{\mathcal{O}_F} - \chi_{\mathcal{O}_T})$  then  $F$  has one of the following properties:*

- (i)  $F$  carries a linear pencil of curves of genus two.
- (ii)  $K_F^2 \leq 2p_g(F) - 1$
- (iii)  $K_F^2 = 2p_g(F)$ ,  $p_g(F) \geq 3$ ,  $q(F) \leq 2$  and  $|K_F|$  is not composed ( $q(F) = 2$  only if  $p_g(F) = 3$ ).
- (iv)  $|K_F|$  is not composed and
  - $K_F^2 = 8$ ,  $p_g(F) = 3$ ,  $q(F) \leq 1$  or
  - $K_F^2 = 9$ ,  $p_g(F) = 4$ ,  $q(F) \leq 1$  or
  - $K_F^2 = 7$ ,  $p_g(F) = 3$ ,  $q(F) \leq 2$
- (v)  $K_F^2 = 4$  or  $5$ ,  $p_g(F) = 2$  and the movable part of  $|K_F|$  is a linear pencil of curves of genus three with only one base point.
- (vi)  $K_F^2 = 2$  or  $3$  and  $p_g(F) = 1$
- (vii)  $p_g(F) = 0$

Moreover Ohno gives an example of fibration of type (i).

In the case of fibred surfaces, no examples are known with slope less than 4 and non-hyperelliptic general fibre if  $g = g(F) \gg 0$ . It seems rather plausible that is

the genus of the fibre is big enough, then the general fibre must be hyperelliptic. The analogy in the case of threefolds is clear: the canonical map  $\varphi_{|K_F|}$  should not be *general*. Curiously enough, we can prove this. If  $p_g(F) \leq 2$  the canonical map is clearly very special. We can prove that if  $p_g(F) \geq 8$ ,  $F$  is fibred by hyperelliptic curves (in fact of genus 2 is  $p_g(F) \geq 15$ ) and hence  $\varphi_{|K_F|}$  has at least degree two. In the remaining cases  $3 \leq p_g(F) \leq 7$  we also prove that the canonical map of  $F$  has degree 3 up to some exceptions.

In fact what happens is that only the first case in Ohno's classification holds when  $p_g(F)$  is big enough. More concretely:

**THEOREM 4.2.** *Let  $f : T \rightarrow B$  be a relatively minimal fibration of a normal,  $\mathbb{Q}$ -factorial projective threefold  $T$  with only canonical singularities onto a smooth curve  $B$  of genus  $b$ . Assume that the general fibre  $F$  is of general type,  $p_g(F) \geq 3$  and  $\chi_f = \chi \mathcal{O}_F \chi \mathcal{O}_B - \chi \mathcal{O}_T > 0$ .*

*Then if  $\lambda_2(f) < 4$  we have*

- (i)  $q(T) = b$
- (ii)  $\mathcal{E} = f_* \omega_{T/B}$  has no invertible rank zero quotient sheaf (in particular,  $\mathcal{E}$  is ample provided  $b \leq 1$ ).
- (iii) If  $p_g(F) \geq 15$  then  $F$  has a rational pencil of curves of genus 2.
- (iv) If  $p_g(F) \leq 14$  then one of the following holds
  - (a)  $F$  has a rational pencil of hyperelliptic curves
  - (b)  $F$  has a rational pencil of trigonal curves,  $q(F) = 0$  and
    - . either the canonical map of  $F$  is of degree 3 and either  $p_g(F) = 3$ ,  $3 \leq K_F^2 \leq 8$  or  $p_g(F) = 4, 5$   $3p_g(F) - 6 \leq K_F^2 \leq 9$
    - . or the canonical map of  $F$  is birational and

$$p_g(F) = 4 \quad 5 \leq K_F^2 \leq 9$$

$$5 \leq p_g(F) \leq 7 \quad 3p_g(F) - 7 \leq K_F^2 \leq 2p_g(F).$$

- (c)  $F$  is canonical,  $p_g(F) = 4$ ,  $q(F) = 0$ ,  $K_F^2 = 5$ .

**REMARK 4.3.** It is doubtful that the cases of fibre  $F$  canonical in (iv)(b) and in (iv)(c) occur. In [1] the author proves that then  $K_{T/B}^3 \geq 4\chi_f$ , provided  $T$  is Gorenstein, so any example should necessarily have  $T$  non Gorenstein.

*Proof.*

The first two statements follow from Theorem 3.3 and Corollary 3.5. Following the list of Ohno in Theorem 4.1, if  $\lambda_2(f) < 4$  and  $p_g(F) \geq 3$ ,  $|K_F|$  is not composed.

We follow the notations of the proof of Theorem 2.4.

Assume  $F$  has a rational hyperelliptic pencil. We must prove that the pencil is of genus 2 provided  $p_g(F) \geq 15$ . Call  $\delta = K_F \widehat{D}$ . If the (geometric) genus of

$\widehat{D}$  is not 2 then we observe that  $\delta \geq 4$  (if  $\widehat{D}^2 = 0$  then  $\delta = 2g - 2$ ; if  $\widehat{D}^2 > 0$  Hodge index theorem gives  $\delta^2 \geq K_F^2 \geq 2p_g(F) - 4 \geq 26$ ). Formula (17) reads for  $r = 2, p = 0$

$$\begin{aligned} K_{T/B}^3 &\geq 2\delta\Delta_1 + 4\Delta_2 - \delta(\mu_1 - \mu_{m-1}) - 2\delta(\mu_{m-1} - \mu_m) - 6\mu_m - 2\mu_\ell \\ &\geq 2\delta\Delta_1 + 4\Delta_2 - 2\delta\mu_1 \end{aligned}$$

and using that  $K_{T/B}^3 \geq (2p_g(F) - 4)(\mu_1 + 2\mu_\ell)$  we get

$$\left(1 + \frac{2\delta}{2p_g(F) - 4}\right) K_{T/B}^3 \geq 2\delta\Delta_1 + 4\Delta_2$$

which together with (19) gives that  $K_{T/B}^3 \geq 4\Delta_f$  provided  $p_g(F) \geq 15$ .

Assume  $F$  has no rational hyperelliptic pencil. According to Remark 2.3 we must check when the coefficient of  $(\mu_i - \mu_{i+1})$  is greater or equal than  $4r_i$ .

Take  $i$  such that  $m \leq i \leq \ell - 1$ . If  $a_i = 2$ , then  $P_i^2 \geq 2r_i - 2$  if the image is ruled (since  $F$  has no hyperelliptic rational pencil,  $\deg \varphi_i(F) \geq r_i - 1$ ) or  $P_i^2 \geq 4r_i - 8$  otherwise. In any case  $P_i^2 \geq 2r_i - 2$  ( $r_i \geq 3$  since  $|P_i|$  is not composed), and hence  $P_i^2 + P_i P_{i+1} + P_{i+1}^2 \geq 3P_i^2 \geq 6r_i - 6 \geq 4r_i$ .

If  $a_i = 3$  then  $a_{i+1} = 1$  or  $3$  and hence  $P_{i+1}^2 \geq 3r_{i+1} - 7 \geq 3r_i - 4$ . If  $P_i \neq P_{i+1}$  then  $P_i^2 + P_i P_{i+1} + P_{i+1}^2 \geq 2P_i^2 + 1 + P_{i+1}^2 \geq 9r_i - 15 \geq 4r_i$ . If  $P_i = P_{i+1}$ ,  $P_i^2 + P_i P_{i+1} + P_{i+1}^2 = 3P_{i+1}^2 \geq 9r_i - 12 \geq 4r_i$ .

If  $a_i \geq 4$ ,  $P_i^2 + P_i P_{i+1} + P_{i+1}^2 \geq 3P_i^2 \geq 12r_i - 24 \geq 4r_i$ . Finally if  $a_i = 1$  then  $a_{i+1} = 1$  and hence, by the same argument as in (9),  $P_i^2 + P_i P_{i+1} + P_{i+1}^2 \geq 9r_i - 17 \geq 4r_i$  (since  $r_i \geq 4$  if  $\varphi_i$  is birational).

Let  $i = \ell$ . As pointed in Remark 2.3, we can set  $P_{\ell+1} = \tau^* K_F$ . Hence, if  $P_\ell = P_{\ell+1} = \tau^* K_F$  we have  $P_\ell^2 + P_\ell P_{\ell+1} + P_{\ell+1}^2 = 3P_\ell^2$  but if  $P_{\ell+1} \neq P_\ell$  we have  $P_\ell^2 + P_\ell P_{\ell+1} + P_{\ell+1}^2 \geq K_F^2 + 2P_\ell^2 + 1 \geq 3P_\ell^2 + 2$ . Having this in mind we obtain that  $P_\ell^2 + P_\ell P_{\ell+1} + P_{\ell+1}^2 \geq 4r_\ell$  except when  $r_\ell = p_g(F) = 4$ ,  $P_\ell^2 = K_F^2 = 3p_g - 7 = 5$  and  $F$  is canonical or  $r_\ell = p_g(F) = 3$ ,  $P_\ell^2 = 3p_g - 6 = 3$ ,  $K_F^2 = 3p_g(F) - 6$  or  $3p_g(F) - 5$  and the canonical map is of degree three. In both cases we have necessarily  $q(F) = 0$  (see Chapter 2 for the canonical case and [35] for the degree 3 case).

Take  $i$  such that  $1 \leq i \leq m - 1$ . If  $r_i = 1$  (then  $i = 1$  and  $P_1 = 0$ ) we have  $(P_1 + P_2)P_m \geq 4r_1 = 4$  except when  $r_2 = 2$  and  $P_m$  induces a  $g_3^1$  in the fibre of the rational pencil  $|P_2|$ . Assume  $r_i \geq 2$ . If  $a_m = 2$ , then  $P_i P_m \geq 2r_i$ ; for this we must look at the proof of Lemma 2.1 (ii). Assume  $2r_i - 1 \geq P_i P_m \geq \alpha_2(\alpha_1 ad) \geq (\alpha_1 ad)(r_i - 1)$ ; we have that  $|P_m|_D = g_2^1$ , hence  $a = 2$  and necessarily  $\alpha_1 = d = 1$ ; if  $\alpha_2 = r_i - 1$  the pencil would be rational (since  $\alpha_1 = 1$ ) which is impossible by our assumptions; hence  $\alpha_2 \geq r_i$  which is again impossible. Then  $(P_i + P_{i+1})P_m \geq 2P_i P_m \geq 4r_i$ . If  $a_m \geq 3$  then by Lemma 2.1  $P_i P_m \geq 3(r_i - 1) \geq 2r_i$  except if  $r_i = 2$ ,  $a_m = 3$ . In this exceptional case, if  $P_{i+1} \neq P_m$  then  $(P_i + P_{i+1})P_m \geq (3r_i - 3) + (3r_{i+1} - 3) \geq 6r_i - 3 = 9 > 8 = 4r_i$ ; if  $P_{i+1} = P_m$  then  $(P_i + P_m)P_m \geq 8 = 4r_i$  except if  $4 \geq P_m^2 \geq 3r_m - 6$ , i.e.,  $r_1 = 2$ ,  $r_2 = 3$ ,

$m = 2$ ,  $a_m = 3$  (which again produces a rational trigonal pencil in  $F$ ). Finally if  $a_m = 1$   $P_i P_m \geq 4r_i - 4$  (Lemma 2.1) and hence  $P_i P_m \geq 2r_i$ ,  $(P_i + P_{i+1})P_m \geq 4r_i$ .

So we can conclude than either  $p_g(F) = 4$ ,  $q(F) = 0$ ,  $K_F^2 = 5$  or  $F$  has a rational trigonal pencil.

Note that in the discussion above, when  $F$  has a rational trigonal pencil,  $|P_m|$  induces a degree 3 map. Hence the canonical map of  $F$  can only be of degree 1 or 3. In any case  $K_F^2 \geq 3p_g(F) - 7$ . Hence, applying Theorem 4.1 we have  $3p_g(F) - 7 \leq K_F^2 \leq 2p_g(F)$  (if  $p_g(F) \geq 5$ ) and hence  $p_g(F) \leq 7$ ,  $K_F^2 \leq 2p_g(F) \leq 14$ .

Finally we must prove that  $q(F) = 0$ . If  $q(F) = 1$ , then  $K_F^2 \geq 3p_g(F) + 7q(F) - 7 = 3p_g(F)$  (cf. [20]) which is impossible. Assume  $q(F) \geq 2$ . If  $|K_F|$  is birational we have  $3p_g(F) - 4 \leq K_F^2 \leq 2p_g(F) - 1$  (if  $q(F) \geq 1$  we have  $K_F^2 \geq 3p_g(F) + q(F) - 7$  but if equality holds then  $q(F) \geq 3$  (cf., e.g., [1])) which is impossible. If  $|K_F|$  induces a map of degree 3 we have  $3p_g(F) - 3 \leq K_F^2 \leq 2p_g(F)$  (cf. [35] and Theorem 4.1) or  $p_g(F) = 3$ ,  $q(F) = 2$ ,  $K_F^2 = 7$ ; so in any case we get  $p_g(F) = 3$ ,  $K_F^2 \geq 6$ . Following the above discussion the only possibilities for the Harder-Narasimhan filtration of  $\mathcal{E}$  are  $r_1 = 2$ ,  $r_2 = 3$  or  $r_1 = 1$ ,  $r_2 = 2$ ,  $r_3 = 3$ . The first one gives

$$K_{T/B}^3 \geq (P_1 + P_2)P_2(\mu_1 - \mu_2) + 3P_2^2\mu_2 \geq 9(\mu_1 - \mu_2) + 18\mu_2 \geq 8(\mu_1 - \mu_2) + 12\mu_2 = 4\Delta_f$$

The last one gives

$$\begin{aligned} K_{T/B}^3 &\geq (P_1 + P_2)P_3(\mu_1 - \mu_2) + (P_2 + P_3)P_3(\mu_2 - \mu_3) + 3P_3^2\mu_3 \\ &\geq 3(\mu_1 - \mu_2) + 9(\mu_2 - \mu_3) + 18\mu_3 \geq 4(\mu_1 - \mu_2) + 8(\mu_2 - \mu_3) + 12\mu_3 = 4\Delta_f \end{aligned}$$

if  $\mu_2 - \mu_3 \geq \mu_1 - \mu_2$ ; otherwise consider

$$\begin{aligned} K_{T/B}^3 &\geq (P_1 + P_3)P_3(\mu_1 - \mu_3) + 3P_3^2\mu_3 \\ &\geq 6(\mu_1 - \mu_3) + 18\mu_3 \geq 4(\mu_1 - \mu_2) + 8(\mu_2 - \mu_3) + 12\mu_3 = 4\Delta_f \end{aligned}$$

So we have necessarily  $q(F) = 0$ .

As for the restrictions for  $(p_g(F), K_F^2)$  when the canonical map is of degree 3, we refer to [29], [35], [19].

Finally we note that in [1] the author proves that if  $T$  is Gorenstein and  $|K_F|$  is birational, then  $\lambda_2(f) \geq 4$ . Then the last exceptional case and those verifying  $3 \leq p_g(F) \leq 7$  and  $|K_F|$  birational only can happen when  $T$  is not Gorenstein.  $\square$

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