

## THE LAW OF THE HITTING TIMES TO POINTS BY A STABLE LÉVY PROCESS WITH NO NEGATIVE JUMPS

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### Abstract

Let  $X = (X_t)_{t \geq 0}$  be a stable Lévy process of index  $\alpha \in (1, 2)$  with the Lévy measure  $\nu(dx) = (c/x^{1+\alpha})I_{(0,\infty)}(x) dx$  for  $c > 0$ , let  $x > 0$  be given and fixed, and let  $\tau_x = \inf\{t > 0 : X_t = x\}$  denote the first hitting time of  $X$  to  $x$ . Then the density function  $f_{\tau_x}$  of  $\tau_x$  admits the following series representation:

$$f_{\tau_x}(t) = \frac{x^{\alpha-1}}{\pi(c\Gamma(-\alpha)t)^{2-1/\alpha}} \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \left[ (-1)^{n-1} \sin(\pi/\alpha) \frac{\Gamma(n-1/\alpha)}{\Gamma(\alpha n-1)} \left(\frac{x^\alpha}{c\Gamma(-\alpha)t}\right)^{n-1} - \sin\left(\frac{n\pi}{\alpha}\right) \frac{\Gamma(1+n/\alpha)}{n!} \left(\frac{x^\alpha}{c\Gamma(-\alpha)t}\right)^{(n+1)/\alpha-1} \right]$$

for  $t > 0$ . In particular, this yields  $f_{\tau_x}(0+) = 0$  and

$$f_{\tau_x}(t) \sim \frac{x^{\alpha-1}}{\Gamma(\alpha-1)\Gamma(1/\alpha)} (c\Gamma(-\alpha)t)^{-2+1/\alpha}$$

as  $t \rightarrow \infty$ . The method of proof exploits a simple identity linking the law of  $\tau_x$  to the laws of  $X_t$  and  $\sup_{0 \leq s \leq t} X_s$  that makes a Laplace inversion amenable. A simpler series representation for  $f_{\tau_x}$  is also known to be valid when  $x < 0$ .

## 1 Introduction

If a Lévy process  $X = (X_t)_{t \geq 0}$  jumps upwards, then it is much harder to derive a closed form expression for the distribution function of its first passage time  $\tau_{(x,\infty)}$  over a strictly positive level  $x$ , and

in the existing literature such expressions seem to be available only when  $X$  has no positive jumps (unless the Lévy measure is discrete). A notable exception to this rule is the recent paper [1] where an explicit series representation for the density function of  $\tau_{(x,\infty)}$  was derived when  $X$  is a stable Lévy process of index  $\alpha \in (1, 2)$  having the Lévy measure given by  $\nu(dx) = (c/x^{1+\alpha})I_{(0,\infty)}(x)dx$  with  $c > 0$  given and fixed. This was done by performing a time-space inversion of the Wiener-Hopf factor corresponding to the Laplace transform of  $(t, y) \mapsto P(S_t > y)$  where  $S_t = \sup_{0 \leq s \leq t} X_s$  for  $t > 0$  and  $y > 0$ .

Motivated by this development our purpose in this note is to search for a similar series representation associated with the first hitting time  $\tau_x$  of  $X$  to a strictly positive level  $x$  itself. Clearly, since  $X$  jumps upwards and creeps downwards,  $\tau_x$  will happen strictly after  $\tau_{(x,\infty)}$ , and since  $X$  reaches  $x$  by creeping through it independently from the past prior to  $\tau_{(x,\infty)}$ , one can exploit known expressions for the latter portion of the process and derive the Laplace transform for  $(t, y) \mapsto P(\tau_y > t)$ . This was done in [6, Theorem 1] and is valid for any Lévy process with no negative jumps (excluding subordinators). A direct Laplace inversion of the resulting expression appears to be difficult, however, and we show that a simple (Chapman-Kolmogorov type) identity which links the law of  $\tau_x$  to the laws of  $X_t$  and  $S_t$  proves helpful in this context (due largely to the scaling property of  $X$ ). It enables us to connect the old result of [13] with the recent result of [1] through an additive factorisation of the Laplace transform of  $(t, y) \mapsto P(\tau_y > t)$ . This makes the Laplace inversion possible term by term and yields an explicit series representation for the density function of  $\tau_x$ .

## 2 Result and proof

1. Let  $X = (X_t)_{t \geq 0}$  be a stable Lévy process of index  $\alpha \in (1, 2)$  whose characteristic function is given by

$$\mathbb{E}e^{i\lambda X_t} = \exp\left(t \int_0^\infty (e^{i\lambda x} - 1 - i\lambda x) \frac{dx}{\Gamma(-\alpha)x^{1+\alpha}}\right) = e^{t(-i\lambda)^\alpha} \quad (1)$$

for  $\lambda \in \mathbb{R}$  and  $t \geq 0$ . It follows that the Laplace transform of  $X$  is given by

$$\mathbb{E}e^{-\lambda X_t} = e^{t\lambda^\alpha} \quad (2)$$

for  $\lambda \geq 0$  and  $t \geq 0$  (the left-hand side being  $+\infty$  for  $\lambda < 0$ ). From (2) we see that the Laplace exponent of  $X$  equals  $\psi(\lambda) = \lambda^\alpha$  for  $\lambda \geq 0$  and  $\varphi(p) := \psi^{-1}(p) = p^{1/\alpha}$  for  $p \geq 0$ .

2. The following properties of  $X$  are readily deduced from (1) and (2) using standard means (see e.g. [2] and [9]): the law of  $(X_{ct})_{t \geq 0}$  is the same as the law of  $(c^{1/\alpha}X_t)_{t \geq 0}$  for each  $c > 0$  given and fixed (scaling property);  $X$  is a martingale with  $\mathbb{E}X_t = 0$  for all  $t \geq 0$ ;  $X$  jumps upwards (only) and creeps downwards (in the sense that  $P(X_{\tau_{(-\infty, x])}} = x) = 1$  for  $x < 0$  where  $\tau_{(-\infty, x]} = \inf\{t > 0 : X_t < x\}$  is the first passage time of  $X$  over  $x$ );  $X$  has sample paths of unbounded variation;  $X$  oscillates from  $-\infty$  to  $+\infty$  (in the sense that  $\liminf_{t \rightarrow \infty} X_t = -\infty$  and  $\limsup_{t \rightarrow \infty} X_t = +\infty$  both a.s.); the starting point 0 of  $X$  is regular (for both  $(-\infty, 0)$  and  $(0, +\infty)$ ). Note that the constant  $c = 1/\Gamma(-\alpha)$  in the Lévy measure  $\nu(dx) = (c/x^{1+\alpha})dx$  of  $X$  is chosen/fixed for convenience so that  $X$  converges in law to  $\sqrt{2}B$  as  $\alpha \uparrow 2$  where  $B$  is a standard Brownian motion, and all the facts throughout can be extended to a general constant  $c > 0$  using the scaling property of  $X$ .

3. Letting  $f_{X_1}$  denote the density function of  $X_1$ , the following series representation is known to be

valid (see e.g. (14.30) in [14, p. 88]):

$$f_{X_1}(x) = \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{\sin(n\pi/\alpha)}{\pi} \frac{\Gamma(1+n/\alpha)}{n!} x^{n-1} \tag{3}$$

for  $x \in \mathbb{R}$ . Setting  $S_1 = \sup_{0 \leq t \leq 1} X_t$  and letting  $f_{S_1}$  denote the density function of  $S_1$ , the following series representation was recently derived in [1, Theorem 1]:

$$f_{S_1}(x) = \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} (-1)^{n-1} \frac{\sin(\pi/\alpha)}{\pi} \frac{\Gamma(n-1/\alpha)}{\Gamma(\alpha n-1)} x^{\alpha n-2} \tag{4}$$

for  $x > 0$ . Clearly, the series representations (3) and (4) extend to  $t \neq 1$  by the scaling property of  $X$  since  $X_t \stackrel{\text{law}}{=} t^{1/\alpha} X_1$  and  $S_t := \sup_{0 \leq s \leq t} X_s \stackrel{\text{law}}{=} t^{1/\alpha} S_1$  for  $t > 0$ .

4. Consider the first hitting time of  $X$  to  $x$  given by

$$\tau_x = \inf\{t > 0 : X_t = x\} \tag{5}$$

for  $x > 0$ . Then it is known (see (2.16) in [6]) that the time-space Laplace transform equals

$$\int_0^{\infty} e^{-\lambda x} \mathbb{E}(e^{-p\tau_x}) dx = \frac{1}{\lambda - \varphi(p)} + \frac{1}{\varphi'(p)(p - \psi(\lambda))} = \frac{1}{\lambda - p^{1/\alpha}} + \frac{\alpha}{p^{-1+1/\alpha}(p - \lambda^\alpha)} \tag{6}$$

for  $\lambda > 0$  and  $p > 0$ . Note that this can be rewritten as follows:

$$\int_0^{\infty} e^{-pt} dt \int_0^{\infty} e^{-\lambda x} \mathbb{P}(\tau_x > t) dx = \frac{1}{\lambda p} + \frac{1}{p(p^{1/\alpha} - \lambda)} - \frac{\alpha}{p^{1/\alpha}(p - \lambda^\alpha)} \tag{7}$$

for  $\lambda > 0$  and  $p > 0$ .

Let  $\mathbb{L}_p^{-1}$  denote the inverse Laplace transform with respect to  $p$ . Using that  $1/(p(p^{1/\alpha} - \lambda)) = \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \lambda^{n-1}/p^{1+n/\alpha}$  and  $\mathbb{L}_p^{-1}[1/p^a] = t^{a-1}/\Gamma(a)$  for  $a > 0$ , it is easily verified that

$$\mathbb{L}_p^{-1}\left[\frac{1}{p(p^{1/\alpha} - \lambda)}\right](t) = \frac{1}{\lambda} \left[E_{1/\alpha}(\lambda t^{1/\alpha}) - 1\right] \tag{8}$$

for  $t > 0$  where  $E_a(x) = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} x^n/\Gamma(an+1)$  denotes the Mittag-Leffler function. On the other hand, by (3) in [8, p. 238] we find

$$\mathbb{L}_p^{-1}\left[\frac{1}{p^{1/\alpha}(p - \lambda^\alpha)}\right](t) = \frac{1}{\Gamma(1/\alpha)} \frac{e^{\lambda^\alpha t}}{\lambda} \gamma(1/\alpha, \lambda^\alpha t) \tag{9}$$

for  $t > 0$  where  $\gamma(a, x) = \int_0^x y^{a-1} e^{-y} dy$  denotes the incomplete gamma function. Combining (7) with (8) and (9) we get

$$\begin{aligned} \int_0^{\infty} e^{-\lambda x} \mathbb{P}(\tau_x > t) dx &= \frac{1}{\lambda} E_{1/\alpha}(\lambda t^{1/\alpha}) - \frac{\alpha}{\Gamma(1/\alpha)} \frac{e^{\lambda^\alpha t}}{\lambda} \gamma(1/\alpha, \lambda^\alpha t) \\ &= \frac{\alpha}{\lambda} \left[ \frac{\alpha}{\Gamma(1/\alpha)} e^{\lambda^\alpha t} \int_{\lambda t^{1/\alpha}}^{\infty} e^{-z^\alpha} dz - e^{\lambda^\alpha t} + \frac{1}{\alpha} E_{1/\alpha}(\lambda t^{1/\alpha}) \right] \end{aligned} \tag{10}$$

for  $\lambda > 0$  and  $t > 0$ .

The first and the third term on the right-hand side of (10) may now be recognised as the Laplace transforms of particular functions considered in [1] and [13] respectively (recall also (2.2) above).

The proof of the following theorem provides a simple probabilistic argument (of Chapman-Kolmogorov type) for this additive factorisation (see Remark 1 below).

**Theorem 1.** *Let  $X = (X_t)_{t \geq 0}$  be a stable Lévy process of index  $\alpha \in (1, 2)$  with the Lévy measure  $\nu(dx) = (c/x^{1+\alpha})I_{(0,\infty)}(x)dx$  for  $c > 0$ , let  $x > 0$  be given and fixed, and let  $\tau_x$  denote the first hitting time of  $X$  to  $x$ . Then the density function  $f_{\tau_x}$  of  $\tau_x$  admits the following series representation:*

$$f_{\tau_x}(t) = \frac{x^{\alpha-1}}{\pi(c\Gamma(-\alpha)t)^{2-1/\alpha}} \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \left[ (-1)^{n-1} \sin(\pi/\alpha) \frac{\Gamma(n-1/\alpha)}{\Gamma(\alpha n-1)} \left(\frac{x^\alpha}{c\Gamma(-\alpha)t}\right)^{n-1} - \sin\left(\frac{n\pi}{\alpha}\right) \frac{\Gamma(1+n/\alpha)}{n!} \left(\frac{x^\alpha}{c\Gamma(-\alpha)t}\right)^{(n+1)/\alpha-1} \right] \tag{11}$$

for  $t > 0$ . In particular, this yields:

$$f_{\tau_x}(t) = o(1) \text{ as } t \downarrow 0; \tag{12}$$

$$f_{\tau_x}(t) \sim \frac{x^{\alpha-1}}{\Gamma(\alpha-1)\Gamma(1/\alpha)} (c\Gamma(-\alpha)t)^{-2+1/\alpha} \text{ as } t \uparrow \infty. \tag{13}$$

**Proof.** It is no restriction to assume below that  $c = 1/\Gamma(-\alpha)$  as the general case follows by replacing  $t$  in (11) with  $c\Gamma(-\alpha)t$  for  $t > 0$ .

Since  $X$  creeps downwards, we can apply the strong Markov property of  $X$  at  $\tau_x$ , use the additive character of  $X$ , and exploit the scaling property of  $X$  to find

$$\begin{aligned} P(S_1 > x) &= P(S_1 > x, X_1 > x) + P(S_1 > x, X_1 \leq x) \\ &= P(X_1 > x) + \int_0^1 P(X_1 \leq x | \tau_x = t) F_{\tau_x}(dt) \\ &= P(X_1 > x) + \int_0^1 P(x + X_{1-t} \leq x) F_{\tau_x}(dt) \\ &= P(X_1 > x) + \int_0^1 P((1-t)^{1/\alpha} X_1 \leq 0) F_{\tau_x}(dt) \\ &= P(X_1 > x) + (1/\alpha) P(\tau_x \leq 1) \end{aligned} \tag{14}$$

where we also use that  $P(X_1 \leq 0) = 1/\alpha$  and  $F_{\tau_x}$  denotes the distribution function of  $\tau_x$ . Note that the second equality in (14) represents a Chapman-Kolmogorov equation of Volterra type (see [11, Section 2] for a formal justification and a brief historical account of the argument). Since  $\tau_x \stackrel{\text{law}}{=} x^\alpha \tau_1$  by the scaling property of  $X$ , we find that (14) reads

$$P(S_1 > x) = P(X_1 > x) + (1/\alpha) F_{\tau_1}(1/x^\alpha) \tag{15}$$

for  $x > 0$ . Hence we see that  $F_{\tau_1}$  is absolutely continuous (cf. [10] for a general result on the absolute continuity) and by differentiating in (15) we get

$$f_{\tau_1}(1/x^\alpha) = x^{1+\alpha} [f_{S_1}(x) - f_{X_1}(x)] \tag{16}$$

for  $x > 0$ . Letting  $t = 1/x^\alpha$  we find that

$$f_{\tau_1}(t) = t^{-1-1/\alpha} [f_{S_1}(t^{-1/\alpha}) - f_{X_1}(t^{-1/\alpha})] \tag{17}$$

for  $t > 0$ . Hence (11) with  $x=1$  follows by (3) and (4) above. Moreover, since  $\tau_x \stackrel{\text{law}}{=} x^\alpha \tau_1$  we see that  $f_{\tau_x}(t) = x^{-\alpha} f_{\tau_1}(tx^{-\alpha})$  and this yields (11) with  $x > 0$ .

It is known that  $f_{X_1}(x) \sim c x^{-1-\alpha}$  as  $x \rightarrow \infty$  (see e.g. (14.34) in [14, p. 88]) and likewise  $f_{S_1}(x) \sim c x^{-1-\alpha}$  as  $x \rightarrow \infty$  (see [1, Corollary 3] and [7] for a proof). From (16) we thus see that  $f_{\tau_1}(0+) = 0$  and hence  $f_{\tau_x}(0+) = 0$  for all  $x > 0$  as claimed in (12). The asymptotic relation (13) follows directly from (11) using the reflection formula  $\Gamma(1-z)\Gamma(z) = \pi/\sin \pi z$  for  $z \in \mathbb{C} \setminus \mathbb{Z}$ . This completes the proof.  $\square$

**Remark 1.** Note that (14) can be rewritten as follows:

$$(1/\alpha)P(\tau_x > 1) = 1/\alpha + F_{S_1}(x) - F_{X_1}(x) = F_{S_1}(x) - (F_{X_1}(x) - F_{X_1}(0)) \tag{18}$$

for  $x > 0$ , and from (2.30) in [1] we know that

$$\int_0^\infty e^{-\lambda x} f_{S_1}(x) dx = e^{\lambda^\alpha} \int_\lambda^\infty e^{-z^\alpha} dz \tag{19}$$

for  $\lambda > 0$ . In view of (10) this implies that

$$\int_0^\infty e^{-\lambda x} f_{X_1}(x) dx = e^{\lambda^\alpha} - \frac{1}{\alpha} E_{1/\alpha}(\lambda) \tag{20}$$

for  $\lambda > 0$ . Recalling (2) we see that (20) is equivalent to

$$\int_{-\infty}^0 e^{-\lambda x} f_{X_1}(x) dx = \frac{1}{\alpha} E_{1/\alpha}(\lambda) \tag{21}$$

for  $\lambda > 0$ . An explicit series representation for  $f$  in place of  $f_{X_1}$  in (21) was found in [13] (see also [12]) and this expression coincides with (3) above when  $x < 0$ . (Note that (21) holds for all  $\lambda \in \mathbb{R}$  and substitute  $y = -x$  to connect to [13].) This represents an analytic argument for the additive factorisation addressed following (10) above.

**Remark 2.** In contrast to (12) note that

$$f_{\tau_{(x,\infty)}}(0+) = \frac{c}{\alpha x^\alpha} \tag{22}$$

for  $x > 0$ . This is readily derived from  $P(\tau_{(x,\infty)} \leq t) = P(S_t \geq x)$  using  $S_t \stackrel{\text{law}}{=} t^{1/\alpha} S_1$  and  $f_{S_1}(x) \sim c x^{-1-\alpha}$  for  $x \rightarrow \infty$  as recalled in the proof above.

**Remark 3.** If  $x < 0$  then applying the same arguments as in (14) above with  $I_t = \inf_{0 \leq s \leq t} X_s$  we find that

$$\begin{aligned} P(I_t \leq x) &= P(I_t \leq x, X_t \leq x) + P(I_t \leq x, X_t > x) \\ &= P(X_t \leq x) + \int_0^t P(x + X_{t-s} > x) F_{\tau_x}(ds) \\ &= P(X_t \leq x) + (1-1/\alpha) P(\tau_x \leq t) \end{aligned} \tag{23}$$

for  $t > 0$ . In this case, moreover, we also have  $P(I_t \leq x) = P(\sigma_x \leq t)$  since  $X$  creeps through  $x$ , so that (23) yields

$$P(\tau_x \leq t) = \alpha P(X_t \leq x) \quad (24)$$

for  $x < 0$  and  $t > 0$ . Since  $X_t \stackrel{\text{law}}{=} t^{1/\alpha} X_1$  this implies

$$f_{\tau_x}(t) = -x t^{-1-1/\alpha} F_{X_1}(x t^{-1/\alpha}) = - \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{\sin(n\pi/\alpha)}{\pi} \frac{\Gamma(1+n/\alpha)}{n!} \frac{x^n}{t^{1+n/\alpha}} \quad (25)$$

for  $t > 0$  upon using (3) above. Replacing  $t$  in (25) by  $c\Gamma(-\alpha)t$  we get a series representation for  $f_{\tau_x}$  in the case when  $c > 0$  is a general constant. The first identity in (25) is known to hold in greater generality (see [4] and [2, p. 190] for different proofs).

**Remark 4.** If  $c = 1/2\Gamma(-\alpha)$  and  $\alpha \uparrow 2$  then the series representations (11) and (25) with  $t/2$  in place of  $t$  reduce to the known expressions for the density function  $f_{\tau_x}$  of  $\tau_x = \inf\{t > 0 : B_t = x\}$  where  $B = (B_t)_{t \geq 0}$  is a standard Brownian motion:

$$f_{\tau_x}(t) = \frac{|x|}{\sqrt{2\pi t^3}} e^{-x^2/2t} = \frac{|x|}{\sqrt{2\pi t^3}} \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \frac{(-1)^n}{2^n n!} \frac{x^{2n}}{t^n} \quad (26)$$

for  $t > 0$  and  $x \in \mathbb{R} \setminus \{0\}$ .

**Remark 5.** Duality theory for Markov/Lévy processes (see [3, Chap. VI] and [2, Chap. II and Corollary 18 on p. 64]) implies that

$$\mathbb{E}e^{-p\tau_x} = \frac{\int_0^{\infty} e^{-pt} f_{X_t}(x) dt}{\int_0^{\infty} e^{-pt} f_{X_t}(0) dt} \quad (27)$$

from where the following identity can be derived (see [2, Lemma 13, p. 230]):

$$P(\tau_x \leq t) = \frac{1}{\Gamma(1-1/\alpha)\Gamma(1/\alpha)f_{X_1}(0)} \int_0^t \frac{f_{X_s}(x)}{(t-s)^{1-1/\alpha}} ds \quad (28)$$

for  $x \in \mathbb{R}$  and  $t > 0$  (being valid for any stable Lévy process). By the scaling property of  $X$  we have  $f_{X_s}(x) = s^{-1/\alpha} f_{X_1}(xs^{-1/\alpha})$  for  $s \in (0, t)$  and  $x \in \mathbb{R}$ . Recalling the particular form of the series representation for  $f_{X_1}$  given in (3), we see that it is not possible to integrate term by term in (28) in order to obtain an explicit series representation.

**Remark 6.** The density function  $f_{X_1}$  from (3) can be expressed in terms of the Fox functions (see [15]), and the density function  $f_{S_1}$  from (4) can be expressed in terms of the Wright functions (see [5, Sect. 12] and the references therein). In view of the identity (17) and the fact that  $f_{\tau_x}(t) = x^{-\alpha} f_{\tau_1}(t x^{-\alpha})$ , these facts can be used to provide alternative representations for the density function  $f_{\tau_x}$  from (11) above. We are grateful to an anonymous referee for bringing these references to our attention.

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