

**DISCRETENESS OF ULTRA-PARALLEL COMPLEX
HYPERBOLIC TRIANGLE GROUPS OF TYPE $[m_1, m_2, 0]$**

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ABSTRACT. In this paper we consider ultra-parallel complex hyperbolic triangle groups of type $[m_1, m_2, 0]$, i.e. groups of isometries of the complex hyperbolic plane, generated by complex reflections in three ultra-parallel complex geodesics two of which intersect on the boundary of the complex hyperbolic plane. We prove some discreteness and non-discreteness results for these groups and discuss the connection between the discreteness results and ellipticity of certain group elements.

1. INTRODUCTION

Complex hyperbolic triangle groups are groups of isometries of the complex hyperbolic plane $H_{\mathbb{C}}^2$, generated by complex reflections in three complex geodesics. For groups of complex hyperbolic isometries, the main obstacle to discreteness is the presence of elliptic elements of infinite order. More precisely, a group of holomorphic isometries of $H_{\mathbb{C}}^2$ without stable proper totally geodesic subspaces and without elliptic elements of infinite order is discrete (see [CG, Gol, Will]).

For a triple p_1, p_2, p_3 , where each of the numbers p_k can be either a positive integer or equal to ∞ , we say that a *complex hyperbolic (p_1, p_2, p_3) -triangle group representation* is a representation of the group

$$\langle \gamma_1, \gamma_2, \gamma_3 \mid \gamma_k^2 = (\gamma_{k-1}\gamma_{k+1})^{p_k} = 1, \quad k = 1, 2, 3 \rangle$$

(where $\gamma_{k+3} = \gamma_k$, and the relation $(\gamma_{k-1}\gamma_{k+1})^{p_k} = 1$ is to be omitted when $p_k = \infty$) into the group $\mathrm{PU}(2, 1)$ of holomorphic isometries of $H_{\mathbb{C}}^2$, given by taking the generators $\gamma_1, \gamma_2, \gamma_3$ to complex reflections I_1, I_2, I_3 of order 2 in complex geodesics C_1, C_2, C_3 in $H_{\mathbb{C}}^2$ such that C_{k-1} and C_{k+1} meet at the angle π/p_k when p_k is finite resp. at the angle 0 when p_k is equal to ∞ . R. Schwartz in his ICM talk in 2002 [Sch02] conjectured that a complex hyperbolic (p_1, p_2, p_3) -triangle group representation is discrete and faithful if and only if a group element w is non-elliptic, where $w = w_A = I_1 I_2 I_1 I_3$ or $w = w_B = I_1 I_2 I_3$ depending on (p_1, p_2, p_3) .

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In this paper we will consider instead the case of groups generated by complex reflections in complex geodesics that do not intersect inside $H_{\mathbb{C}}^2$. In this case we will show that it is necessary to consider a larger set of elements, in fact infinitely many, $w_A^{(\ell)} = I_1(I_2I_1)^\ell I_3$ for $\ell \in \mathbb{Z}$ and $w_B = I_1I_2I_3$, and we will prove a generalisation of Schwartz' conjecture in a special case.

For a triple m_1, m_2, m_3 of non-negative real numbers, we say that a *complex hyperbolic ultra-parallel $[m_1, m_2, m_3]$ -triangle group* is a subgroup of $\text{PU}(2, 1)$ generated by complex reflections I_1, I_2, I_3 of order 2 in complex geodesics C_1, C_2, C_3 in $H_{\mathbb{C}}^2$ such that the distance between the closures of C_{k-1} and C_{k+1} in $H_{\mathbb{C}}^2$ is equal to m_k . A *complex hyperbolic $[m_1, m_2, m_3]$ -triangle group representation* is a representation of the group $\Gamma = \langle \gamma_1, \gamma_2, \gamma_3 \mid \gamma_k^2 = 1, k = 1, 2, 3 \rangle = (\mathbb{Z}/2\mathbb{Z})^{*3}$ into the group $\text{PU}(2, 1)$ given by taking the generators γ_k to the generators I_k of an $[m_1, m_2, m_3]$ -triangle group. The deformation space of $[m_1, m_2, m_3]$ -triangle groups for given distances m_1, m_2, m_3 is of real dimension one, such a group is determined up to an isometry by the angular invariant $\alpha \in [0, 2\pi]$, see section 2.6 for a definition. Some special cases of ultra-parallel triangle groups have been considered previously, such as $[m, m, 0]$ -groups and $[m, m, 2m]$ -groups in [WG] and $[m, m, m]$ -groups in [Vas].

Our results on complex hyperbolic $[m_1, m_2, 0]$ -triangle group representations are summarized in Figure 1.

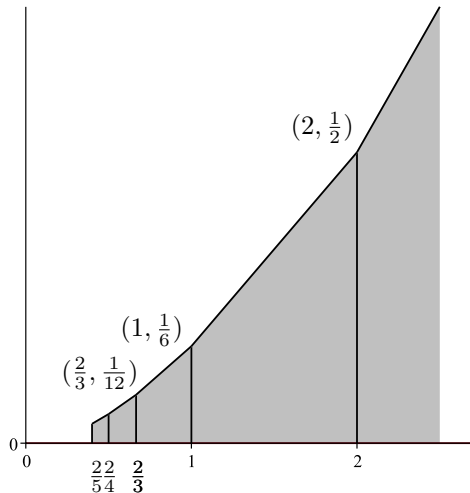


FIGURE 1. Conditions of Propositions 1 and 2

The upper right quadrant represents all pairs of distances m_1 and m_2 , where (m_1, m_2) with $m_1 \geq m_2 > 0$ corresponds to the point with the coordinates

$$(X, Y) = \left(\frac{\cosh^2(m_1/2) - 1}{\cosh^2(m_2/2) - 1} - 1, \frac{1}{\cosh^2(m_2/2) - 1} \right).$$

Consider the piecewise linear curve that consists of segments between the points $\left(\frac{2}{k}, \frac{1}{k(k+1)}\right)$, $k \in \mathbb{Z}$, $k \geq 1$ and the ray starting at the point $(2, \frac{1}{2})$ with the gradient $\frac{1}{2}$. Only the points and segments up to $k = 5$ are shown in the figure, but the

broken line continues to the left. Proposition 1 states that the shaded region below the broken line corresponds to pairs (m_1, m_2) such that $[m_1, m_2, 0]$ -representations are discrete and faithful if and only if the element $w_A^{(k)}$ is non-elliptic, where $k = 1$ corresponds to the part of the shaded region with $X \geq 2$, while each $k \geq 2$ corresponds to the part of the shaded region with $\frac{2}{k} \leq X \leq \frac{2}{k-1}$. For the unshaded region above the broken line we expect that the ellipticity of the element w_B plays a key role. Proposition 2 says that this region corresponds to pairs (m_1, m_2) such that $[m_1, m_2, 0]$ -representations are discrete and faithful if $\text{Re}(\text{trace}(w_B)) \leq -5$ which is a condition sufficient but not necessary for the element w_B to be non-elliptic.

Proposition 1. *Suppose that $m_1 \geq m_2 > 0$ and for some $k \in \mathbb{Z}$, $k \geq 1$*

$$\max \left\{ \frac{1}{k} + \frac{k+1}{r_2^2 - 1}, \frac{2}{k} \right\} \leq \frac{r_1^2 - 1}{r_2^2 - 1} - 1 \leq \frac{2}{k-1},$$

where $r_j = \cosh(m_j/2)$, $j = 1, 2$ and the second inequality is omitted for $k = 1$. Then a complex hyperbolic $[m_1, m_2, 0]$ -triangle group representation is discrete and faithful if and only if the element $w_A^{(k)} = I_1(I_2 I_1)^k I_3$ is non-elliptic.

Proposition 2. *Suppose that $m_1 \geq m_2 > 0$ and for all $k \in \mathbb{Z}$, $k \geq 1$*

$$\frac{r_1^2 - 1}{r_2^2 - 1} - 1 \leq \frac{1}{k} + \frac{k+1}{r_2^2 - 1}$$

or $m_1 \geq m_2 = 0$ and $s_1 \leq \sqrt{2}$, where $r_j = \cosh(m_j/2)$, $j = 1, 2$. Then a complex hyperbolic $[m_1, m_2, 0]$ -triangle group representation is discrete and faithful if $\text{Re}(\text{trace}(w_B)) \leq -5$.

We also demonstrate in Proposition 3 that in some cases Proposition 1 can be used to prove discreteness for all values of the angular invariant. These results are summarized in Figure 2. The coordinates and the light shading are as in Figure 1. The regions in Proposition 3 correspond to the darkly shaded regions under hyperbolae in Figure 2.

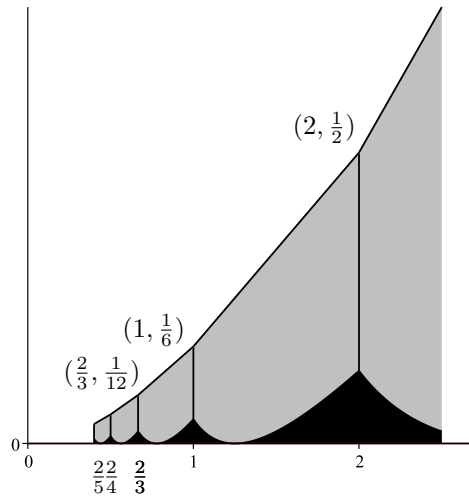


FIGURE 2. Conditions of Proposition 3

Proposition 3. *Any complex hyperbolic ultra-parallel $[m_1, m_2, 0]$ -triangle group with $m_1 \geq m_2 \geq 0$ is discrete if the following condition on $r_j = \cosh(m_j/2)$, $j = 1, 2$ is satisfied:*

$$r_1 - r_2 \in \left(\bigcup_{k=2}^{\infty} \left[\frac{r_2 + 1}{k}, \frac{r_2 - 1}{k - 1} \right] \right) \cup [r_2 + 1, \infty).$$

We also show the following discreteness test that is easier to check but less powerful than Propositions 1 and 2. It was first proved in the PhD thesis of the first author ([Mo], Theorem 3.3.0.8, p. 113) and generalises the results by J. Wyss-Gallifent ([WG], Chapter 4) about ultra-parallel $[m, m, 0]$ -triangle groups.

Proposition 4. *A complex hyperbolic ultra-parallel $[m_1, m_2, 0]$ -triangle group with angular invariant α is discrete if*

$$\sin\left(\frac{\alpha}{2}\right) \geq \frac{1}{r_1 + r_2},$$

where $r_j = \cosh(m_j/2)$, $j = 1, 2$.

In contrast to the discreteness results we also prove the following non-discreteness results obtained using Shimizu's lemma [Par97]:

Proposition 5. *A complex hyperbolic ultra-parallel $[m_1, m_2, 0]$ -triangle group with angular invariant α is non-discrete if one of the following conditions on $r_j = \cosh(m_j/2)$, $j = 1, 2$ is satisfied:*

- $34r_1^2r_2^2 - 15r_1^4 - 15r_2^4 + 2r_1^2 + 2r_2^2 \geq 0$ and

$$64r_1r_2 \sin^2\left(\frac{\alpha}{2}\right) < 32r_1r_2 - 15r_1^2 - 15r_2^2 + 1 - \sqrt{34r_1^2r_2^2 - 15r_1^4 - 15r_2^4 + 2r_1^2 + 2r_2^2}.$$

- $34r_1^2r_2^2 - 15r_1^4 - 15r_2^4 + 2r_1^2 + 2r_2^2 < 0$ and

$$64r_1r_2 \sin^2\left(\frac{\alpha}{2}\right) < 1 - 16(r_1 - r_2)^2.$$

The paper is organised as follows: In section 2 we summarise the necessary basics in complex hyperbolic and Heisenberg geometry. We introduce the standard parametrisation for ultra-parallel $[m_1, m_2, 0]$ -triangle groups in section 3. In section 4 we use the compression property to derive discreteness conditions for $[m_1, m_2, 0]$ -groups and prove Propositions 1, 2 and 4. We use these discreteness conditions in section 5 to show in some cases the discreteness for all values of the angular invariant and prove Proposition 3. In section 6 we use a version of Shimizu's lemma to show some non-discreteness results and prove Proposition 5. In section 7 we recall the conjecture of R. Schwartz in more detail and put our results in the context of this general conjecture. In section 8 we summarise all our results in the case of isosceles triangles $m_1 = m_2$.

2. BASICS

We will first recall some basic notions of the complex hyperbolic geometry. For general references on complex hyperbolic geometry and complex hyperbolic triangle groups see [Gol, Par09, Par10].

2.1. Complex hyperbolic plane: Let $\mathbb{C}^{2,1}$ denote the vector space \mathbb{C}^3 equipped with a Hermitian form of signature $(2, 1)$, for example $\langle z, w \rangle = z_1 \bar{w}_3 + z_2 \bar{w}_2 + z_3 \bar{w}_1$. We call a vector $z \in \mathbb{C}^{2,1}$ *negative*, *null* or *positive* if $\langle z, z \rangle$ is negative, zero or positive respectively. Let $P(\mathbb{C}^{2,1})$ denote the projectivisation of $\mathbb{C}^{2,1} - \{0\}$. We denote the image of $z = (z_1, z_2, z_3) \in \mathbb{C}^{2,1}$ under the projectivisation map by $[z] = [z_1 : z_2 : z_3]$. The *complex hyperbolic plane* $H_{\mathbb{C}}^2$ is the projectivisation of the set of negative vectors in $\mathbb{C}^{2,1}$, equipped with the *Bergman metric* given by

$$\cosh^2 \left(\frac{\text{dist}([z], [w])}{2} \right) = \frac{\langle z, w \rangle \langle w, z \rangle}{\langle z, z \rangle \langle w, w \rangle}.$$

The ideal boundary $\partial H_{\mathbb{C}}^2$ of $H_{\mathbb{C}}^2$ is defined as the projectivisation of the set of null vectors in $\mathbb{C}^{2,1} - \{0\}$.

2.2. Isometries: The holomorphic isometry group of $H_{\mathbb{C}}^2$ is the projectivisation $\text{PU}(2, 1)$ of the group of those complex linear transformations which preserve the Hermitian form. Isometries can be classified according to their fixed point behaviour, an isometry is *elliptic* if it has at least one fixed point in $H_{\mathbb{C}}^2$, *parabolic* if it has one fixed point in $\partial H_{\mathbb{C}}^2$ and *loxodromic* if it has two fixed points in $\partial H_{\mathbb{C}}^2$. An isometry is called *regular elliptic* if for the corresponding element in $\text{SU}(2, 1)$ all eigenvalues are distinct. The type of an isometry can be determined from the position of the trace of the corresponding matrix in the complex plane. The deltoid curve

$$\Delta = \{z \in \mathbb{C} \mid |z|^4 - 8\text{Re}(z^3) + 18|z|^2 = 27\}$$

has the property that an isometry A in $\text{SU}(2, 1)$ is regular elliptic if and only if $\text{trace}(A)$ is inside Δ and is loxodromic if and only if $\text{trace}(A)$ is outside Δ (see [Gol], Theorem 6.2.4).

2.3. Complex geodesics: A *complex geodesic* is a projectivisation of a 2-dimensional complex subspace of $\mathbb{C}^{2,1}$. Any positive vector $c \in \mathbb{C}^{2,1}$ determines a complex geodesic

$$P(\{z \in \mathbb{C}^{2,1} \mid \langle c, z \rangle = 0\}).$$

Conversely, any complex geodesic is of this form for some positive vector $c \in \mathbb{C}^{2,1}$, called a *polar vector* of the complex geodesic. A polar vector is unique up to multiplication by a complex scalar. We say that the polar vector c is *normalised* if $\langle c, c \rangle = 1$.

A typical example is the complex geodesic $\{[z : 0 : 1] \in H_{\mathbb{C}}^2\}$ with polar vector $c = (0, 1, 0)$. Any complex geodesic is isometric to this one.

Let C_1 and C_2 be complex geodesics with normalised polar vectors c_1 and c_2 respectively. Then C_1 and C_2 intersect in $\partial H_{\mathbb{C}}^2$ if and only if $|\langle c_1, c_2 \rangle| = 1$. We call C_1 and C_2 *ultra-parallel* if they have no points of intersection in $H_{\mathbb{C}}^2 \cup \partial H_{\mathbb{C}}^2$, in which case $|\langle c_1, c_2 \rangle| > 1$ and $|\langle c_1, c_2 \rangle| = \cosh\left(\frac{1}{2} \cdot \text{dist}(C_1, C_2)\right)$, where $\text{dist}(C_1, C_2)$ is the distance between C_1 and C_2 .

2.4. Complex reflections: Given a complex geodesic C , there is a unique isometry I_C in $\text{PU}(2, 1)$ of order 2, whose fixed point set is equal to C . This isometry is called the *complex reflection of order 2* in C (or *inversion* on C) and is given by

$$I_C(z) = -z + 2 \frac{\langle z, c \rangle}{\langle c, c \rangle} c,$$

where c is a polar vector of C . (Unlike real reflections, complex reflections in complex geodesics can be of arbitrary order. We will only treat the order 2 case in this paper.)

2.5. Complex hyperbolic triangle groups: A *complex hyperbolic triangle* is a triple (C_1, C_2, C_3) of complex geodesics in $H_{\mathbb{C}}^2$. For a triple (m_1, m_2, m_3) , where each of the numbers m_j is non-negative, we say that a triangle (C_1, C_2, C_3) is a *complex hyperbolic ultra-parallel $[m_1, m_2, m_3]$ -triangle* if the complex geodesics C_{j-1} and C_{j+1} are ultra-parallel at distance m_j . A *complex hyperbolic ultra-parallel $[m_1, m_2, m_3]$ -triangle group* is a subgroup of $\text{PU}(2, 1)$ generated by complex reflections I_j of order 2 in the sides C_j of a complex hyperbolic ultra-parallel $[m_1, m_2, m_3]$ -triangle (C_1, C_2, C_3) .

2.6. The space of complex hyperbolic triangle groups: For a given triple m_1, m_2, m_3 the space of $[m_1, m_2, m_3]$ -triangles is of real dimension one. We now describe a parameterisation of the space of complex hyperbolic triangles in $H_{\mathbb{C}}^2$ by means of an angular invariant α (see section 3 in [Pra] for details). Let (C_1, C_2, C_3) be a complex hyperbolic triangle. Let c_k be the normalised polar vector of the complex geodesic C_k . We define the *angular invariant* α of the triangle (C_1, C_2, C_3) as

$$\alpha = \arg \left(\prod_{k=1}^3 \langle c_{k-1}, c_{k+1} \rangle \right).$$

An ultra-parallel complex hyperbolic triangle in $H_{\mathbb{C}}^2$ is determined uniquely up to isometry by the three distances between the complex geodesics and the angular invariant α . For any $\alpha \in [0, 2\pi]$ an $[m_1, m_2, m_3]$ -triangle with the angular invariant α exists if and only if

$$\cos \alpha < \frac{r_1^2 + r_2^2 + r_3^2 - 1}{2r_1 r_2 r_3},$$

where $r_j = \cosh(m_j/2)$. In the case $m_3 = 0$ we have $r_3 = 1$ and therefore

$$\frac{r_1^2 + r_2^2 + r_3^2 - 1}{2r_1 r_2 r_3} = \frac{r_1^2 + r_2^2}{2r_1 r_2} \geq 1,$$

thus for every $\alpha \in (0, 2\pi)$ there exists an $[m_1, m_2, 0]$ -triangle with the angular invariant α .

2.7. Heisenberg group: In the same way that the boundary of the real hyperbolic space is the one point compactification of the Euclidean space of one dimension lower, we may identify the boundary $\partial H_{\mathbb{C}}^2$ with $\mathcal{N} = \mathbb{C} \times \mathbb{R} \cup \{\infty\}$, a one point compactification of the Heisenberg group. One such homeomorphism taking $\partial H_{\mathbb{C}}^2$ to \mathcal{N} is given by the stereographic projection:

$$[z_1 : z_2 : z_3] \mapsto \left(\frac{z_2}{z_3 \sqrt{2}}, \text{Im} \left(\frac{z_1}{z_3} \right) \right) \quad \text{if } z_3 \neq 0; \quad [z : 0 : 0] \mapsto \infty.$$

2.8. Chains: A complex geodesic is homeomorphic to a disc, its intersection with the boundary of the complex hyperbolic plane is homeomorphic to a circle. Circles that arise as the boundaries of complex geodesics are called *chains*. From two distinct points on a chain we can retrieve the complex geodesic through them, so there is a bijection between chains and complex geodesics. We now discuss the representations of the chains in Heisenberg space \mathcal{N} , see [Gol], [Par10] for more details. Chains passing through ∞ are represented as vertical straight lines defined

by $\zeta = \zeta_0$, such chains are called *vertical*. The vertical chain defined by $\zeta = \zeta_0$ consists of all points $[z_1 : \sqrt{2}\zeta_0 z_2 : z_2]$ in $P(\mathbb{C}^{2,1})$. It has normalised polar vector $[-\sqrt{2}\bar{\zeta}_0 : 1 : 0]$. A chain not containing ∞ is called *finite*. A finite chain is represented by an ellipse whose vertical projection $\mathbb{C} \times \mathbb{R} \rightarrow \mathbb{C}$ is a (Euclidean) circle in \mathbb{C} . The finite chain with centre $(\zeta_0, v_0) \in \mathcal{N}$ and radius $r_0 > 0$ has polar vector

$$[r_0^2 - |\zeta_0|^2 + iv_0 : \sqrt{2}\zeta_0 : 1]$$

and consists of all $(\zeta, v) \in \mathcal{N}$ satisfying the equations

$$|\zeta - \zeta_0| = r_0, \quad v = v_0 - 2\operatorname{Im}(\zeta\bar{\zeta}_0).$$

In particular, the finite chain with centre $(0, 0)$ and radius 1 is the unit circle in the $\mathbb{C} \times \{0\}$ plane and has polar vector $[1 : 0 : 1]$, hence it has a normalised polar vector $[1/\sqrt{2} : 0 : 1/\sqrt{2}]$.

2.9. Heisenberg isometries: The Heisenberg group \mathcal{N} is equipped with the *Cygan metric*

$$\rho_0((\zeta_1, v_1), (\zeta_2, v_2)) = \left| |\zeta_1 - \zeta_2|^2 - i(v_1 - v_2) - 2i\operatorname{Im}(\zeta_1\bar{\zeta}_2) \right|^{1/2}.$$

A *Heisenberg translation* by $(\tau, t) \in \mathcal{N}$ is given by

$$(\zeta, v) \mapsto (\tau, t) + (\zeta, v) = (\zeta + \tau, v + t + 2\operatorname{Im}(\zeta\bar{\tau}))$$

and corresponds to the following matrix in $\operatorname{PU}(2, 1)$ (see [Gol], section 4.2):

$$\begin{pmatrix} 1 & -\sqrt{2}\bar{\tau} & -|\tau|^2 + it \\ 0 & 1 & \sqrt{2}\tau \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}.$$

There is a bijection between chains and complex geodesics. We can therefore, without loss of generality, talk about reflections in chains instead of reflections in complex geodesics. An inversion $I_{C_{\zeta_0}}$ in a vertical chain C_{ζ_0} which intersects $\mathbb{C} \times \{0\}$ at ζ_0 and has the polar vector $c_{\zeta_0} = [-\sqrt{2}\bar{\zeta}_0 : 1 : 0]$ corresponds to the following element in $\operatorname{PU}(2, 1)$:

$$\begin{pmatrix} -1 & -2\sqrt{2}\bar{\zeta}_0 & 4|\zeta_0|^2 \\ 0 & 1 & -2\sqrt{2}\bar{\zeta}_0 \\ 0 & 0 & -1 \end{pmatrix}$$

For an element $h = (h_{ij})_{1 \leq i, j \leq 3} \in \operatorname{SU}(2, 1)$ with $h(\infty) \neq \infty$ we can define the *isometric sphere* of h as the sphere with respect to the Cygan metric with centre $h^{-1}(\infty)$ and radius $r_h = 1/\sqrt{|h_{31}|}$ see [Par97] and section 5.4 in [Gol].

2.10. Products of reflections in chains: What effect does an inversion in a vertical chain have on another vertical chain? Suppose we have vertical chains C_ζ and C_ξ which intersect $\mathbb{C} \times \{0\}$ at ζ and ξ and have polar vectors

$$c_\zeta = [-\sqrt{2}\bar{\zeta} : 1 : 0] \quad \text{and} \quad c_\xi = [-\sqrt{2}\bar{\xi} : 1 : 0]$$

respectively. What effect does the inversion in C_ζ have on C_ξ ? We calculate

$$I_{C_\zeta}(z) = \begin{pmatrix} -1 & -2\sqrt{2}\bar{\zeta}_0 & 4|\zeta_0|^2 \\ 0 & 1 & -2\sqrt{2}\bar{\zeta}_0 \\ 0 & 0 & -1 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} -\sqrt{2}\bar{\xi} \\ 1 \\ 0 \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} -\sqrt{2}(2\bar{\zeta} - \bar{\xi}) \\ 1 \\ 0 \end{pmatrix}$$

which is a polar vector of the vertical chain that intersects $\mathbb{C} \times \{0\}$ at $2\zeta - \xi$. Therefore inversion in the vertical chain C_ζ rotates the vertical chain C_ξ as a set around C_ζ through π .

2.11. Bisectors and spinal spheres: Unlike in the real hyperbolic space, there are no totally geodesic real hypersurfaces in $H_{\mathbb{C}}^2$. An acceptable substitute is the collection of metric bisectors: Let $z_1, z_2 \in H_{\mathbb{C}}^2$ be two distinct points. The *bisector* equidistant from z_1 and z_2 is defined as

$$\{z \in H_{\mathbb{C}}^2 \mid \rho(z_1, z) = \rho(z_2, z)\}.$$

A *spinal sphere* is an intersection of a bisector with the boundary of $H_{\mathbb{C}}^2$. It is a smooth hypersurface in $\partial H_{\mathbb{C}}^2$, diffeomorphic to a sphere.

An example is the bisector

$$\mathfrak{C} = \{[z_1 : z_2 : z_3] \in H_{\mathbb{C}}^2 \mid |z_1| = |z_3|\}$$

and its boundary, the *unit spinal sphere*, which can be described as

$$U = \{(\zeta, v) \in \mathcal{N} : |\zeta|^4 + v^2 = 1\}.$$

For more details on bisectors and spinal spheres see [Gol].

2.12. A discreteness criterion: Let I_1, I_2 and I_3 be reflections in the complex geodesics C_1, C_2 and C_3 respectively. Let Γ be the group generated by I_1, I_2 and I_3 . Let Γ' be the group generated by I_1 and I_2 . We say that the group Γ is *compressing* if there exist subsets U_1, U_2, V of \mathcal{N} with $U_1 \cap U_2 = \emptyset$ and $V \subsetneq U_1$ such that

- (1) $I_3(U_1) = U_2$;
- (2) $g(U_2) \subsetneq V$ for all elements $g \in \Gamma' \setminus \{\text{id}\}$.

We will use the following discreteness criterion used by Schwartz and Wyss-Gallifent [WG]: If Γ is compressing, then Γ is a discrete subgroup of $\text{PU}(2, 1)$.

3. A PARAMETRISATION OF $[m_1, m_2, 0]$ -TRIANGLE GROUPS

For $r_1, r_2 \geq 1$ and $\alpha \in (0, 2\pi)$ let C_1, C_2 and C_3 be the complex geodesics with respective normalised polar vectors

$$c_1 = \begin{pmatrix} \sqrt{2}r_2 e^{-i\theta} \\ 1 \\ 0 \end{pmatrix}, \quad c_2 = \begin{pmatrix} -\sqrt{2}r_1 e^{i\theta} \\ 1 \\ 0 \end{pmatrix}, \quad c_3 = \begin{pmatrix} 1/\sqrt{2} \\ 0 \\ 1/\sqrt{2} \end{pmatrix}.$$

where $\theta = (\pi - \alpha)/2 \in (-\pi/2, \pi/2)$. The type of the triangle formed by C_1, C_2 and C_3 is determined by

$$|\langle c_3, c_2 \rangle| = r_1, \quad |\langle c_1, c_3 \rangle| = r_2, \quad |\langle c_2, c_1 \rangle| = 1$$

and the angular invariant

$$\arg \left(\prod_{k=1}^3 \langle c_{k-1}, c_{k+1} \rangle \right) = \arg(-r_1 r_2 e^{-2i\theta}) = \pi - 2\theta = \alpha.$$

The triangle formed by C_1, C_2 and C_3 is then an ultra-parallel $[m_1, m_2, 0]$ -triangle with angular invariant α , where $\cosh(m_j/2) = r_j$ for $j = 1, 2$.

Every value of the angular invariant between 0 and 2π and hence each isometry type of $[m_1, m_2, 0]$ -triangles is represented among the parametrisations of the form given above.

Let I_j denote the inversion in the chain C_j , $j = 1, 2, 3$. Let $\Gamma = \langle I_1, I_2, I_3 \rangle$ be the group generated by I_1 , I_2 and I_3 and let $\Gamma' = \langle I_1, I_2 \rangle$ be the group generated by just I_1 and I_2 .

We shall now revert from looking at reflections in the geodesics C_1 , C_2 and C_3 and instead talk about reflections in the corresponding chains, which we denote by C_1 , C_2 and C_3 as well. If we look at the arrangement of the chains C_1 , C_2 and C_3 in \mathcal{N} , the finite chain C_3 is the (Euclidean) unit circle in $\mathbb{C} \times \{0\}$, whereas C_1 and C_2 are vertical lines through $r_2e^{i\theta}$ and $-r_1e^{-i\theta}$ respectively, see Figure 3. Since $r_1, r_2 > 1$, the chains C_1 and C_2 lie outside the chain C_3 .

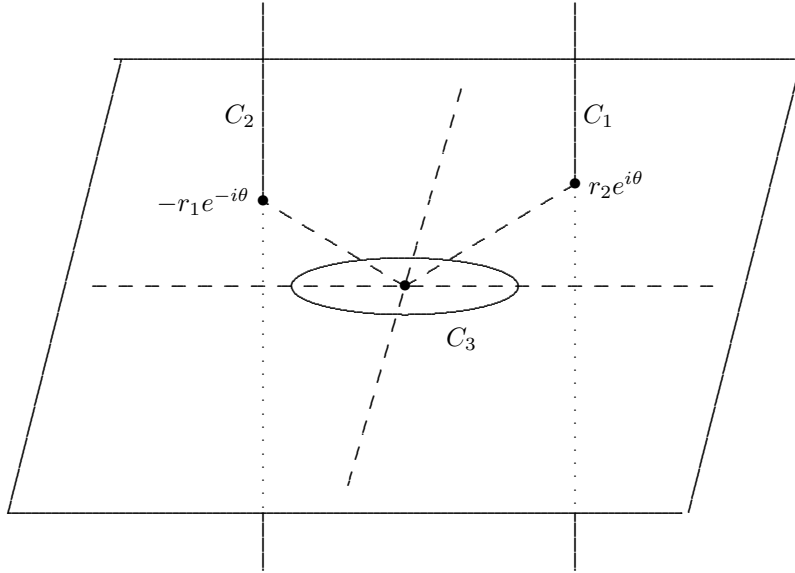


FIGURE 3. Chains C_1 , C_2 and C_3

Recall that inversion I_j in the vertical chain C_j rotates any vertical chain as a set around C_j through π . Let J_1 and J_2 be the rotations of $\mathbb{C} \times \{0\}$ around $r_2e^{i\theta}$ and $-r_1e^{-i\theta}$ through π respectively. Let $\Lambda = \langle J_1, J_2 \rangle$ be the group of isometries of $\mathbb{C} \times \{0\}$ generated by J_1 and J_2 . The rotations J_1 and J_2 are of order 2, so we can represent any element of Λ as an alternating product of J_1 and J_2 :

$$\Lambda = \{(J_2J_1)^\ell, J_1(J_2J_1)^\ell \mid \ell \in \mathbb{Z}\}.$$

We compute

$$\begin{aligned} (J_2J_1)^\ell(0) &= -2\ell(r_2e^{i\theta} + r_1e^{-i\theta}), \\ J_1(J_2J_1)^\ell(0) &= 2r_2e^{i\theta} + 2\ell(r_2e^{i\theta} + r_1e^{-i\theta}). \end{aligned}$$

Note that the projection $\Gamma' \rightarrow \Lambda$ given by $I_1 \mapsto J_1$ and $I_2 \mapsto J_2$ is injective.

4. DISCRETENESS RESULTS

We will need the following lemma:

Lemma 1. *If $|g(0)| \geq 2$ for each $g \in \Lambda \setminus \{\text{id}\}$, then the group Γ is discrete.*

Proof. We will use the discreteness criterion described above. Consider the unit spinal sphere

$$U = \{(\zeta, v) \in \mathcal{N} : |\zeta|^4 + v^2 = 1\}.$$

The inversion I_3 in C_3 is given by

$$I_3([z_1 : z_2 : z_3]) = [z_3 : -z_2 : z_1] \quad \text{for} \quad [z_1 : z_2 : z_3] \in H_{\mathbb{C}}^2.$$

The inversion I_3 preserves the bisector

$$\mathfrak{C} = \{[z_1 : z_2 : z_3] \in H_{\mathbb{C}}^2 \mid |z_1| = |z_3|\}$$

and hence preserves the unit spinal sphere U , which is the boundary of \mathfrak{C} . The inversion I_3 interchanges the points $[0 : 0 : 1]$ and $[1 : 0 : 0]$ in $H_{\mathbb{C}}^2$, which correspond to the points $(0, 0) \in \mathbb{C} \times \mathbb{R}$ and infinity in \mathcal{N} . Hence I_3 leaves U invariant and switches the inside of U with the outside.

Let U_1 be the part of $\mathcal{N} \setminus U$ outside U , containing ∞ , and let U_2 be the part inside U , containing the origin. Clearly we have $U_1 \cap U_2 = \emptyset$ and $I_3(U_1) = U_2$. Therefore if we find a subset $V \subsetneq U_1$ such that $g(U_2) \subsetneq V$ for all elements $g \in \Gamma \setminus \{\text{id}\}$, then we have proved that Γ is compressing and hence discrete. Let

$$W = \{(\zeta, v) \in \mathcal{N} : |\zeta| = 1\}$$

be the set of all vertical chains through $\zeta \in \mathbb{C}$ with $|\zeta| = 1$. Let

$$W_1 = \{(\zeta, v) \in \mathcal{N} : |\zeta| > 1\} \quad \text{and} \quad W_2 = \{(\zeta, v) \in \mathcal{N} : |\zeta| < 1\}.$$

We have $U_2 \subset W_2$ and so $g(U_2) \subset g(W_2)$ for all elements $g \in \Gamma' \setminus \{\text{id}\}$. The set W_2 is a union of vertical chains. Elements of Γ' map vertical chains to vertical chains. Therefore we can simply look at the intersection of the images of W_2 with $\mathbb{C} \times \{0\}$. For each g the image $g(W_2)$ of W_2 intersects $\mathbb{C} \times \{0\}$ in a disc. Elements of Γ' move the intersection with $\mathbb{C} \times \{0\}$ by rotations J_1 and J_2 around $r_2 e^{i\theta}$ and $-r_1 e^{-i\theta}$ through π . The projection $\Gamma' \rightarrow \Lambda$ is injective, hence elements of $\Gamma' \setminus \{\text{id}\}$ move the intersection with $\mathbb{C} \times \{0\}$ by elements of $\Lambda \setminus \{\text{id}\}$. Provided that the interior of the unit circle is mapped completely off itself under all elements in $\Lambda \setminus \{\text{id}\}$, then the same is true for W_2 and hence for U_2 under Γ' . We can then choose V to be the union of all the images of U_2 . We can be sure that $V \neq U_1$ since V is missing all the images of $W_2 \setminus U_2$. We are therefore only left to find what is required to be sure that the interior of the unit circle is mapped off itself by any element in $\Lambda \setminus \{\text{id}\}$. Since the radius of a circle is preserved under rotations, it suffices to show that the origin is moved to a distance of at least 2 by any element in $\Lambda \setminus \{\text{id}\}$. This is precisely the condition of the lemma. \square

Lemma 2. *The condition $|g(0)| \geq 2$ holds for all elements $g \in \Lambda \setminus \{\text{id}\}$ if and only if*

$$a(\ell) \geq 1 \quad \text{for all } \ell \in \mathbb{Z} \setminus \{-1, 0\} \quad \text{and} \quad b \geq 1 \quad (*),$$

where

$$a(\ell) = |r_2 e^{i\theta} + \ell(r_2 e^{i\theta} + r_1 e^{-i\theta})|, \quad b = |r_2 e^{i\theta} + r_1 e^{-i\theta}|.$$

Proof. Recall that

$$\Lambda = \{(J_2 J_1)^\ell, J_1 (J_2 J_1)^\ell \mid \ell \in \mathbb{Z}\}$$

and

$$\begin{aligned} (J_2 J_1)^\ell(0) &= -2\ell(r_2 e^{i\theta} + r_1 e^{-i\theta}), \\ J_1 (J_2 J_1)^\ell(0) &= 2r_2 e^{i\theta} + 2\ell(r_2 e^{i\theta} + r_1 e^{-i\theta}). \end{aligned}$$

We need $|g(0)| \geq 2$ for all $g \in \Lambda \setminus \{\text{id}\}$, i.e.

$$\begin{aligned} a(\ell) &= |r_2 e^{i\theta} + \ell(r_2 e^{i\theta} + r_1 e^{-i\theta})| \geq 1 \quad \text{for all } \ell \in \mathbb{Z}, \\ |\ell| \cdot b &= |\ell(r_2 e^{i\theta} + r_1 e^{-i\theta})| \geq 1 \quad \text{for all } \ell \in \mathbb{Z} \setminus \{0\}. \end{aligned}$$

Note that it is sufficient to check the inequality $a(\ell) \geq 1$ for $\ell \in \mathbb{Z} \setminus \{-1, 0\}$ as it is always satisfied for $a(-1) = r_1$ and $a(0) = r_2$. Also note that it is sufficient to only check that $|\ell| \cdot b \geq 1$ for $\ell = 1$ as $b \geq 1$ implies that the inequality holds for all $\ell \in \mathbb{Z} \setminus \{0\}$. \square

We will start with a rough estimate on $a(\ell)$ and b obtained by taking $|\text{Re}(z)|$ as a lower bound for $|z|$:

Lemma 3.

$$\sin\left(\frac{\alpha}{2}\right) \geq \frac{1}{r_1 + r_2}$$

implies conditions (*).

Proof. Recall that $\sin(\alpha/2) = \cos(\theta)$. Note that $\theta \in (-\pi/2, \pi/2)$ and hence $\cos \theta > 0$. Suppose $\cos \theta \geq \frac{1}{r_1 + r_2}$. Then

$$\begin{aligned} b &= |r_2 e^{i\theta} + r_1 e^{-i\theta}| \geq |\text{Re}(r_2 e^{i\theta} + r_1 e^{-i\theta})| = (r_1 + r_2) \cdot \cos \theta \geq 1, \\ a(\ell) &= |r_2 e^{i\theta} + \ell(r_2 e^{i\theta} + r_1 e^{-i\theta})| \geq |\text{Re}(r_2 e^{i\theta} + \ell(r_2 e^{i\theta} + r_1 e^{-i\theta}))| \\ &= |r_2 + \ell(r_1 + r_2)| \cdot \cos \theta = |\ell r_1 + (\ell + 1)r_2| \cdot \cos \theta \\ &\geq (r_1 + r_2) \cdot \cos \theta \geq 1 \quad \text{for } \ell \in \mathbb{Z} \setminus \{-1, 0\}. \end{aligned} \quad \square$$

Combining the results of Lemmas 1, 2 and 3 we obtain Proposition 4. We will now calculate $a(\ell)$ and b to obtain more refined estimates:

Lemma 4. *Conditions* (*) *are equivalent to*

$$\begin{aligned} 4r_1 r_2 \sin^2\left(\frac{\alpha}{2}\right) &\geq f_B, \\ 4r_1 r_2 \sin^2\left(\frac{\alpha}{2}\right) &\geq f_A(\ell) \quad \text{for all } \ell \in \mathbb{Z} \setminus \{-1, 0\}, \end{aligned}$$

where

$$f_A(\ell) = \frac{1 - (\ell r_1 - (\ell + 1)r_2)^2}{\ell(\ell + 1)}, \quad f_B = 1 - (r_1 - r_2)^2.$$

Proof. Conditions (*) state that $b \geq 1$ and $a(\ell) \geq 1$ for all $\ell \in \mathbb{Z} \setminus \{-1, 0\}$, where

$$\begin{aligned} b^2 &= |r_2 e^{i\theta} + r_1 e^{-i\theta}|^2 \\ &= r_2^2 + 2r_1 r_2 \cos(2\theta) + r_1^2 \\ &= (r_1 - r_2)^2 + 4r_1 r_2 \cos^2(\theta), \\ a^2(\ell) &= |r_2 e^{i\theta} + \ell(r_2 e^{i\theta} + r_1 e^{-i\theta})|^2 \\ &= (\ell + 1)^2 r_2^2 + 2\ell(\ell + 1)r_1 r_2 \cos(2\theta) + \ell^2 r_1^2 \\ &= (\ell r_1 - (\ell + 1)r_2)^2 + 4\ell(\ell + 1)r_1 r_2 \cos^2(\theta). \end{aligned}$$

Rearranging these expressions to give an inequality in $\cos^2(\theta)$ and using $\cos(\theta) = \sin(\alpha/2)$ gives the result. \square

We will now discuss some properties of f_A as a function of ℓ :

Lemma 5. *Consider the function*

$$f_A(\ell) = \frac{1 - (\ell r_1 - (\ell + 1)r_2)^2}{\ell(\ell + 1)} \quad \text{for } \ell \in \mathbb{Z} \setminus \{-1, 0\}.$$

(a) *Suppose that*

$$r_1^2 - 1 \geq \frac{k+2}{k}(r_2^2 - 1) \quad \text{for some integer } k \geq 1,$$

then $f_A(\ell_1) \geq f_A(\ell_2)$ *for all integers* ℓ_1, ℓ_2 *with either* $k \leq \ell_1 < \ell_2$ *or* $\ell_2 \leq -2$, $\ell_1 \geq k/2$.

(b) *Suppose that*

$$r_1^2 - 1 \leq \frac{k+1}{k-1}(r_2^2 - 1) \quad \text{for some integer } k \geq 2,$$

then $f_A(\ell_1) \geq f_A(\ell_2)$ *for all integers* ℓ_1, ℓ_2 *with* $1 \leq \ell_2 < \ell_1 \leq k$.

Proof. The function f_A can be rewritten as

$$f_A(\ell) = \frac{1 - (\ell r_1 - (\ell + 1)r_2)^2}{\ell(\ell + 1)} = \frac{r_1^2 - 1}{\ell + 1} - \frac{r_2^2 - 1}{\ell} - (r_1 - r_2)^2.$$

For any $\ell_1, \ell_2 \in \mathbb{Z} \setminus \{-1, 0\}$ we have

$$f_A(\ell_1) - f_A(\ell_2) = (\ell_1 - \ell_2) \left(\frac{r_2^2 - 1}{\ell_1 \ell_2} - \frac{r_1^2 - 1}{(\ell_1 + 1)(\ell_2 + 1)} \right).$$

Suppose that $r_2 = 1$, then

$$f_A(\ell_1) - f_A(\ell_2) = -\frac{(\ell_1 - \ell_2)(r_1^2 - 1)}{(\ell_1 + 1)(\ell_2 + 1)}.$$

In this case the condition

$$r_1^2 - 1 \geq 3(r_2^2 - 1)$$

is satisfied. This corresponds to part (a) with $k = 1$. Then for $1 \leq \ell_1 < \ell_2$ we have $f_A(\ell_1) - f_A(\ell_2) \geq 0$ since

$$\ell_1 - \ell_2 < 0, \quad \ell_1 + 1, \ell_2 + 1 > 0.$$

For $\ell_2 \leq -2$, $\ell_1 \geq 1$ we have $f_A(\ell_1) - f_A(\ell_2) \geq 0$ since

$$\ell_1 - \ell_2, \ell_1 + 1 > 0, \quad \ell_2 + 1 < 0.$$

Now suppose that $r_2 \neq 1$, then we can rewrite $f_A(\ell_1) - f_A(\ell_2)$ as

$$f_A(\ell_1) - f_A(\ell_2) = \frac{(\ell_1 - \ell_2)(r_2^2 - 1)}{(\ell_1 + 1)(\ell_2 + 1)} \left(\frac{1}{\ell_1} + \frac{1}{\ell_2} + \frac{1}{\ell_1 \ell_2} - \frac{r_1^2 - r_2^2}{r_2^2 - 1} \right).$$

Suppose, for some integer $k \geq 1$, that

$$r_1^2 - 1 \geq \frac{k+2}{k}(r_2^2 - 1), \quad \text{i.e.} \quad \frac{r_1^2 - r_2^2}{r_2^2 - 1} \geq \frac{2}{k}.$$

Then for $1 \leq k \leq \ell_1 < \ell_2$ we have $f_A(\ell_1) - f_A(\ell_2) \geq 0$ since $\ell_1 - \ell_2 < 0$, $\ell_1 + 1, \ell_2 + 1 > 0$ and

$$\frac{1}{\ell_1} + \frac{1}{\ell_2} + \frac{1}{\ell_1 \ell_2} - \frac{r_1^2 - r_2^2}{r_2^2 - 1} \leq \frac{1}{k} + \frac{1}{k+1} + \frac{1}{k(k+1)} - \frac{2}{k} = 0.$$

For $\ell_2 \leq -2$, $\ell_1 \geq k/2$ we have $f_A(\ell_1) - f_A(\ell_2) \geq 0$ since $\ell_1 - \ell_2, \ell_1 + 1 > 0$, $\ell_2 + 1 < 0$ and

$$\frac{1}{\ell_1} + \frac{1}{\ell_2} + \frac{1}{\ell_1 \ell_2} - \frac{r_1^2 - r_2^2}{r_2^2 - 1} \leq \frac{2}{k} - \frac{2}{k} \leq 0.$$

Suppose, for some integer $k \geq 2$, that

$$r_1^2 - 1 \leq \frac{k+1}{k-1}(r_2^2 - 1), \quad \text{i.e.} \quad \frac{r_1^2 - r_2^2}{r_2^2 - 1} \leq \frac{2}{k-1}.$$

Then for $1 \leq \ell_2 < \ell_1 \leq k$ we have $f_A(\ell_1) - f_A(\ell_2) \geq 0$ since $\ell_1 - \ell_2, \ell_1 + 1, \ell_2 + 1 > 0$ and

$$\frac{1}{\ell_1} + \frac{1}{\ell_2} + \frac{1}{\ell_1 \ell_2} - \frac{r_1^2 - r_2^2}{r_2^2 - 1} \geq \frac{1}{k} + \frac{1}{k-1} + \frac{1}{k(k-1)} - \frac{2}{k-1} = 0. \quad \square$$

We will now discuss for which ℓ , depending on r_1 and r_2 , does the inequality

$$4r_1 r_2 \sin^2\left(\frac{\alpha}{2}\right) \geq f_A(\ell)$$

in Lemma 4 give the strongest estimate on $\sin^2(\alpha/2)$:

Lemma 6. *Suppose $m_1 \geq m_2 \geq 0$. Conditions (*) hold if one of the following conditions is satisfied:*

- (i) $3(r_2^2 - 1) \leq r_1^2 - 1$ and $4r_1 r_2 \sin^2(\alpha/2) \geq \max\{f_B, f_A(1)\}$.
- (ii) For some integer $k \geq 2$

$$\frac{k+2}{k}(r_2^2 - 1) \leq r_1^2 - 1 \leq \frac{k+1}{k-1}(r_2^2 - 1)$$

and

$$4r_1 r_2 \sin^2(\alpha/2) \geq \max\{f_B, f_A(k)\}.$$

Proof. Note that part (i) is identical to part (ii) with $k = 1$ except that there is no upper bound on $r_1^2 - 1$. Setting $\ell_1 = k$ in Lemma 5 we obtain that $f_A(k) \geq f_A(\ell)$ for all $\ell \in \mathbb{Z} \setminus \{0, -1\}$. This means that our hypothesis $4r_1 r_2 \sin^2(\alpha/2) \geq f_A(k)$ implies $4r_1 r_2 \sin^2(\alpha/2) \geq f_A(\ell)$ for all $\ell \in \mathbb{Z} \setminus \{0, -1\}$. This proves the result. \square

It remains to decide which of f_B and $f_A(k)$, depending on r_1 and r_2 , is the stronger estimate on $4r_1 r_2 \sin^2(\alpha/2)$:

Lemma 7. *Suppose $m_1 \geq m_2 \geq 0$. Conditions (*) hold if one of the following conditions is satisfied:*

(a)

$$\max \{2r_2^2, 3(r_2^2 - 1)\} \leq r_1^2 - 1 \quad \text{and} \quad 4r_1r_2 \sin^2(\alpha/2) \geq f_A(1).$$

(b) For some integer $k \geq 2$

$$\max \left\{ \frac{k+1}{k}(r_2^2 - 1) + (k+1), \frac{k+2}{k}(r_2^2 - 1) \right\} \leq r_1^2 - 1 \leq \frac{k+1}{k-1}(r_2^2 - 1)$$

and

$$4r_1r_2 \sin^2(\alpha/2) \geq f_A(k).$$

(c) For all integers $\ell \geq 1$

$$r_1^2 - 1 \leq \frac{\ell+1}{\ell}(r_2^2 - 1) + (\ell+1) \quad \text{and} \quad 4r_1r_2 \sin^2(\alpha/2) \geq f_B.$$

Remark. Figure 1 shows the regions in parts (a)–(c) of Lemma 7 in the case $r_2 \neq 1$ in the coordinates

$$(X, Y) = \left(\frac{r_1^2 - r_2^2}{r_2^2 - 1}, \frac{1}{r_2^2 - 1} \right) = \left(\frac{\cosh^2(m_1/2) - 1}{\cosh^2(m_2/2) - 1} - 1, \frac{1}{\cosh^2(m_2/2) - 1} \right).$$

Part (a) corresponds to the part of the shaded region with $X \geq 2$. Part (b) for $k \geq 2$ corresponds to the part of the shaded region with $\frac{2}{k} \leq X \leq \frac{2}{k-1}$. Part (c) corresponds to the unshaded region above the broken line.

Finally we compute traces of certain elements in the group to rephrase conditions (*) in Lemmas 2 and 4 in terms of these traces and in terms of ellipticity of these elements.

Lemma 8. *The traces of the elements*

$$w_A^{(\ell)} = I_1(I_2I_1)^\ell I_3 \quad \text{and} \quad w_B = I_1I_2I_3$$

are

$$\begin{aligned} \text{trace}(w_A^{(\ell)}) &= 4|\ell r_1 e^{i\theta} + (\ell+1)r_2 e^{-i\theta}|^2 - 1 \\ &= 4(\ell r_1 - (\ell+1)r_2)^2 - 1 + 16\ell(\ell+1)r_1r_2 \sin^2(\alpha/2), \\ \text{trace}(w_B) &= -4|r_2 e^{i\theta} + r_1 e^{-i\theta}|^2 - 1 + i \cdot 8r_1r_2 \sin(2\theta) \\ &= -(4r_1^2 + 4r_2^2 + 1) + 8r_1r_2 \cdot e^{i\alpha} \\ &= -4(r_1 - r_2)^2 - 1 - 16r_1r_2 \sin^2(\alpha/2) + i \cdot 16r_1r_2 \sin(\alpha/2) \cos(\alpha/2), \end{aligned}$$

therefore conditions (*) in Lemmas 2 and 4 are equivalent to

$$\text{Re}(\text{trace}(w_B)) \leq -5 \quad \text{and} \quad \text{trace}(w_A^{(\ell)}) \geq 3 \quad \text{for all } \ell \in \mathbb{Z} \setminus \{-1, 0\}.$$

Moreover, $\text{trace}(w_A^{(\ell)}) \geq 3$ is equivalent to $w_A^{(\ell)}$ being not regular elliptic, while $\text{Re}(\text{trace}(w_B)) \leq -5$ implies that w_B is non-elliptic (but is not equivalent to it).

Proof. The computations of the traces are straightforward. The ellipticity of the elements $w_A^{(\ell)}$ and w_B can be determined by looking at the position of their traces in the complex plane in relation to the deltoid Δ as explained in section 2. The traces of the elements $w_A^{(\ell)}$ are real. The portion of the real axis within the deltoid Δ is $(-1, 3)$. It is easy to see that $\text{trace}(w_A^{(\ell)}) \geq -1$, hence $\text{trace}(w_A^{(\ell)}) \geq 3$ is equivalent to $w_A^{(\ell)}$ being not regular elliptic. The condition $\text{Re}(\text{trace}(w_B)) \leq -5$ implies that w_B is non-elliptic (but is not equivalent to it). \square

Combining the results of Lemmas 1, 2, 4, 7 and 8 we obtain Propositions 1 and 2.

5. DISCRETENESS FOR ALL VALUES OF THE ANGULAR INVARIANT

Let $\Gamma(\alpha)$ be a complex hyperbolic $[m_1, m_2, 0]$ -triangle groups with the angular invariant α . Proposition 3 states that for some choices of m_1 and m_2 the discreteness conditions in Lemma 4 allow us to show that $\Gamma(\alpha)$ is discrete for all values of α .

Proof of Proposition 3: The conditions

$$r_1 - r_2 \in \left(\bigcup_{k=2}^{\infty} \left[\frac{r_2 + 1}{k}, \frac{r_2 - 1}{k-1} \right] \right) \cup [r_2 + 1, \infty)$$

of Proposition 3 can be rewritten as

$$r_1 \geq 2r_2 + 1, \quad \text{or} \quad \frac{(k+1)r_2 + 1}{k} \leq r_1 \leq \frac{kr_2 - 1}{k-1}$$

for some integer $k \geq 2$. (Note that the latter condition can only hold for $r_2 \geq 2k-1$.) The corresponding regions (in the coordinates $x = \frac{r_1 - r_2}{r_2} = \frac{r_1}{r_2} - 1$, $y = \frac{1}{r_2}$) are the shaded areas in Figure 4.

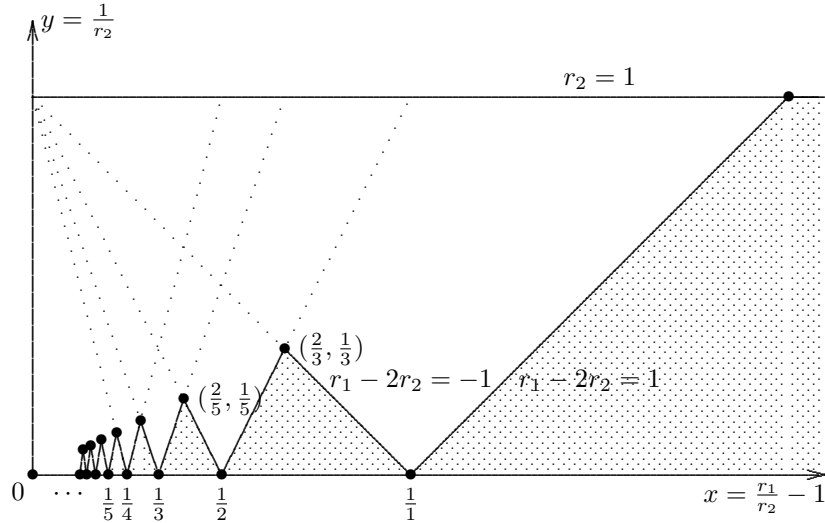


FIGURE 4. Conditions of Proposition 3

First suppose $r_1 \geq 2r_2 + 1$. Then

$$r_1 - r_2 \geq r_2 + 1 \geq 2.$$

If $\ell \geq 1$ then

$$\ell r_1 - (\ell + 1)r_2 \geq (\ell - 1)r_2 + \ell \geq 1.$$

If $\ell \leq 0$

$$\ell r_1 - (\ell + 1)r_2 \leq (\ell - 1)r_2 + \ell \leq -1.$$

Therefore $f_B, f_A(\ell) \leq 0$ and the conditions on $4r_1 r_2 \sin^2(\alpha/2)$ in Lemma 4 are always satisfied.

Now suppose $\frac{(k+1)r_2+1}{k} \leq r_1 \leq \frac{kr_2-1}{k-1}$ for some integer $k \geq 2$ and note that $r_2 \geq 2k-1$. Then

$$r_1 - r_2 \geq \frac{r_2+1}{k} \geq 2.$$

If $\ell \geq k$ then

$$\ell r_1 - (\ell+1)r_2 \geq \frac{(\ell-k)r_2 + \ell}{k} \geq 2(\ell-k) + 1 \geq 1.$$

If $0 \leq \ell \leq k-1$ then

$$\ell r_1 - (\ell+1)r_2 \leq \frac{-(k-\ell-1)r_2 - \ell}{k-1} \leq -2(k-\ell-1) - 1 \leq -1.$$

If $\ell \leq 0$ then

$$\ell r_1 - (\ell+1)r_2 \leq \frac{(\ell-k)r_2 + \ell}{k} \leq 2\ell - 2(k-1) - 1 \leq -1.$$

Therefore $f_B, f_A(\ell) \leq 0$ and the conditions on $4r_1r_2 \sin^2(\alpha/2)$ in Lemma 4 are always satisfied. \square

We now compare the conditions on r_1 and r_2 coming from Lemma 7 and from Proposition 3.

Proposition 6. *Suppose $m_1 \geq m_2 \geq 0$. In the case $m_2 = 0$ any complex hyperbolic ultra-parallel $[m_1, 0, 0]$ -triangle group is discrete if $r_1 \geq 3$. Now suppose $m_2 > 0$. For each positive integer k define*

$$\Phi_k(X) = \frac{(k^2X - 2k - 1)^2}{4k(k+1)(kX - 1)}.$$

(a) If

$$\frac{r_1^2 - r_2^2}{r_2^2 - 1} \geq 2 \quad \text{and} \quad \frac{1}{r_2^2 - 1} \leq \Phi_1\left(\frac{r_1^2 - r_2^2}{r_2^2 - 1}\right)$$

then any complex hyperbolic ultra-parallel $[m_1, m_2, 0]$ -triangle group is discrete.

(b) If there is an integer $k \geq 2$ so that

$$\frac{2}{k} \leq \frac{r_1^2 - r_2^2}{r_2^2 - 1} \leq \frac{2}{k-1} \quad \text{and} \quad \frac{1}{r_2^2 - 1} \leq \Phi_k\left(\frac{r_1^2 - r_2^2}{r_2^2 - 1}\right)$$

then any complex hyperbolic ultra-parallel $[m_1, m_2, 0]$ -triangle group is discrete.

Proof. In the case $m_2 = 0$ we have $r_2 = 1$, so that the conditions of part (b) of Lemma 7 are never satisfied, while the conditions of parts (a) and (c) can be rewritten as

$$r_1 \geq \sqrt{3} \quad \text{and} \quad \sin^2\left(\frac{\alpha}{2}\right) \geq \frac{1 - (r_1 - 2)^2}{8r_1}$$

or

$$r_1 \leq \sqrt{3} \quad \text{and} \quad \sin^2\left(\frac{\alpha}{2}\right) \geq \frac{1 - (r_1 - 1)^2}{4r_1}.$$

For $r_1 \geq 3$ we use part (a) of Lemma 7 to see that the conditions are satisfied for all values of α . Proposition 3 in the case $r_2 = 1$ gives the same condition $r_1 \geq 3$.

Now suppose $m_2 > 0$, i.e. $r_2 > 1$. Note that the statement in part (a) is the same as the statement in (b) with $k = 1$ but where there is no upper bound on

$(r_1^2 - r_2^2)/(r_2^2 - 1)$. The conditions on $r_1^2 - 1$ in part (b) of Lemma 7 can be rewritten as

$$\max \left\{ \frac{1}{k} + \frac{k+1}{r_2^2 - 1}, \frac{2}{k} \right\} \leq \frac{r_1^2 - r_2^2}{r_2^2 - 1} \leq \frac{2}{k-1}$$

for $k \geq 2$ and the same but without the upper bound on $(r_1^2 - r_2^2)/(r_2^2 - 1)$ for $k = 1$. Note that the function

$$\Phi_k(X) = \frac{(k^2X - 2k - 1)^2}{4k(k+1)(kX - 1)} = \frac{1}{4} \left(\frac{k(kX - 1)}{k+1} + \frac{k+1}{k(kX - 1)} \right) - \frac{1}{2}$$

defines a hyperbola with vertical asymptote $X = \frac{1}{k}$, tangent to the X axis at $X = \frac{2k+1}{k^2}$ with values

$$\Phi_k \left(\frac{2}{k-1} \right) = \frac{1}{4(k-1)k}, \quad \Phi_k \left(\frac{2}{k} \right) = \frac{1}{4k(k+1)}.$$

It is not hard to show that when $k \geq 2$ and $\frac{2}{k} \leq X \leq \frac{2}{k-1}$

$$\Phi_k(X) \leq \frac{kX - 1}{4k(k+1)} < \frac{kX - 1}{k(k+1)},$$

hence $\frac{1}{r_2^2 - 1} \leq \Phi_k(X)$ implies

$$\frac{1}{r_2^2 - 1} \leq \Phi_k(X) \leq \frac{kX - 1}{4k(k+1)} < \frac{kX - 1}{k(k+1)}$$

and therefore

$$\frac{1}{k} + \frac{k+1}{r_2^2 - 1} \leq X.$$

To summarise,

$$\frac{2}{k} \leq \frac{r_1^2 - r_2^2}{r_2^2 - 1} \leq \frac{2}{k-1} \quad \text{and} \quad \frac{1}{r_2^2 - 1} \leq \Phi_k \left(\frac{r_1^2 - r_2^2}{r_2^2 - 1} \right)$$

implies

$$\max \left\{ \frac{1}{k} + \frac{k+1}{r_2^2 - 1}, \frac{2}{k} \right\} \leq \frac{r_1^2 - r_2^2}{r_2^2 - 1} \leq \frac{2}{k-1}.$$

Thus, using Lemma 7, if we can show that

$$\sin^2(\alpha/2) \geq \frac{1 - (kr_1 - (k+1)r_2)^2}{4k(k+1)r_1r_2}$$

then conditions (*) hold, and so the group is discrete.

The condition

$$\frac{1}{r_2^2 - 1} \leq \Phi_k \left(\frac{r_1^2 - r_2^2}{r_2^2 - 1} \right)$$

is equivalent to

$$\begin{aligned} 0 &\leq \left(k^2(r_1^2 - 1) - (k+1)^2(r_2^2 - 1) \right)^2 - 4k(k+1) \left(k(r_1^2 - 1) - (k+1)(r_2^2 - 1) \right) \\ &= (k^2r_1^2 - (k+1)^2r_2^2)^2 - 2k^2r_1^2 - 2(k+1)^2r_2^2 + 1 \\ &= \left((kr_1 + (k+1)r_2)^2 - 1 \right) \left((kr_1 - (k+1)r_2)^2 - 1 \right). \end{aligned}$$

In particular, we have $(kr_1 - (k+1)r_2)^2 \geq 1$. Hence the conditions from Lemma 7 are satisfied for all values of α . \square

Remark. Figure 2 shows the regions in parts (a)–(b) of Proposition 6 in the case $r_2 \neq 1$ in the coordinates

$$(X, Y) = \left(\frac{r_1^2 - r_2^2}{r_2^2 - 1}, \frac{1}{r_2^2 - 1} \right) = \left(\frac{\cosh^2(m_1/2) - 1}{\cosh^2(m_2/2) - 1} - 1, \frac{1}{\cosh^2(m_2/2) - 1} \right).$$

The lightly shaded region is as in Figure 1. The values of (m_1, m_2) in Proposition 6 correspond to the darkly shaded regions under hyperbolae in Figure 2. Only hyperbolae Φ_k for $1 \leq k \leq 5$ are shown, but the dark shaded regions continue to the left.

6. NON-DISCRETENESS RESULTS

In this section we will use Shimizu's Lemma to describe those values of the angular invariant α for which the group is not discrete, compare also with the similar use of Shimizu's Lemma for (non ultra-parallel) complex hyperbolic (m, n, ∞) groups in [Sun], Theorem 3.7(2). We will use the following complex hyperbolic version of Shimizu's Lemma introduced in [Par97], Theorem 2.1:

Lemma 9. *Let G be a discrete subgroup of $\text{PU}(2, 1)$. Let $g \in G$ be a Heisenberg translation by (ξ, v) and $h \in G$ be an element that satisfies $h(\infty) \neq \infty$, then*

$$r_h^2 \leq \rho_0(g(h^{-1}(\infty)), h^{-1}(\infty))\rho_0(g(h(\infty)), h(\infty)) + 4|\xi|^2,$$

where ρ_0 is the Cygan metric on \mathcal{N} and r_h is the radius of the isometric sphere of h .

Proof of Proposition 5: In an ultra-parallel triangle group $\langle I_1, I_2, I_3 \rangle$ we will apply Lemma 9 to the elements $g = I_2I_1$ and $h = I_3$. Direct computation shows that

$$g = I_2I_1 = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & -\sqrt{2}\bar{\xi} & -|\xi|^2 + iv \\ 0 & 1 & \sqrt{2}\xi \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$$

where $\xi = 2(r_1e^{-i\theta} + r_2e^{i\theta})$ and $v = 8r_1r_2\sin(2\theta)$. This is the matrix of the Heisenberg translation by $(\xi, v) \in \mathcal{N}$. The radius of the isometric sphere of the element

$$h = I_3 = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 & 1 \\ 0 & -1 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$$

is $r_h = 1$. The element h satisfies

$$h(\infty) = h^{-1}(\infty) = [0 : 0 : 1], \quad \text{in particular } h(\infty) \neq \infty.$$

The point $[0 : 0 : 1] \in \partial H_{\mathbb{C}}^2$ corresponds to the point $(0, 0) \in \mathcal{N}$. The translation length of g at $h(\infty) = h^{-1}(\infty)$ is

$$\rho_0(g(h(\infty)), h(\infty)) = \rho_0(g(h^{-1}(\infty)), h^{-1}(\infty)) = \sqrt{|\xi|^2 - iv}.$$

Substituting these values in the inequality in Lemma 9 we obtain that if the group is discrete then

$$1 \leq ||\xi|^2 - iv| + 4|\xi|^2 = \sqrt{|\xi|^4 + v^2} + 4|\xi|^2.$$

Finally note that

$$|\xi|^2 = |2(r_1e^{-i\theta} + r_2e^{i\theta})|^2 = 4(r_1^2 + r_2^2 + 2r_1r_2\cos(2\theta)).$$

Using $\cos(2\theta) = -\cos(\alpha) = 2\sin^2(\frac{\alpha}{2}) - 1$ and $\sin(2\theta) = \sin(\alpha) = 2\sin(\frac{\alpha}{2})\cos(\frac{\alpha}{2})$ we obtain

$$|\xi|^2 = 4(r_1 - r_2)^2 + 16r_1r_2\sin^2\left(\frac{\alpha}{2}\right), \quad v = 16r_1r_2\sin\left(\frac{\alpha}{2}\right)\cos\left(\frac{\alpha}{2}\right)$$

and hence $\sqrt{|\xi|^4 + v^2} + 4|\xi|^2$ is equal to

$$4 \cdot \sqrt{(r_1 - r_2)^4 + 8r_1r_2(r_1^2 + r_2^2)\sin^2\left(\frac{\alpha}{2}\right) + 16(r_1 - r_2)^2 + 64r_1r_2\sin^2\left(\frac{\alpha}{2}\right)}.$$

Thus the group is not discrete if the following inequality is satisfied:

$$\sqrt{16(r_1 - r_2)^4 + 128r_1r_2(r_1^2 + r_2^2)\sin^2\left(\frac{\alpha}{2}\right) + 16(r_1 - r_2)^2 + 64r_1r_2\sin^2\left(\frac{\alpha}{2}\right)} < 1.$$

Rearranging and taking squares on both sides, we conclude that $X = 64r_1r_2\sin^2(\frac{\alpha}{2})$ satisfies the following inequalities

$$X^2 - 2bX + c > 0, \quad X < d, \tag{1}$$

where

$$b = 1 - 16(r_1 - r_2)^2 + (r_1^2 + r_2^2), \quad c = (1 - 16(r_1 - r_2)^2)^2 - 16(r_1 - r_2)^4, \\ d = 1 - 16(r_1 - r_2)^2.$$

A straightforward computation shows that

$$d^2 - 2bd + c = -2d(r_1^2 + r_2^2) - 16(r_1 - r_2)^4 < 0.$$

If $b^2 - c \geq 0$ then the quadratic polynomial $X^2 - 2bX + c$ has real roots and X satisfies the inequalities (1) if and only if it is less than the smaller root $b - \sqrt{b^2 - c}$ of $X^2 - 2bX + c$. That is:

$$X < 1 - 16(r_1 - r_2)^2 + (r_1^2 + r_2^2) \\ - \sqrt{16(r_1 - r_2)^4 + 2(1 - 16(r_1 - r_2)^2)(r_1^2 + r_2^2) + (r_1^2 + r_2^2)^2}.$$

If $b^2 - c < 0$ then the polynomial $X^2 - 2bX + c$ has no real roots and X satisfies the inequalities (1) if and only if $X < d$. That is:

$$X < 1 - 16(r_1 - r_2)^2.$$

Using $X = 64r_1r_2\sin^2(\alpha/2)$ and rearranging these expressions, we obtain the inequalities in Proposition 5. \square

7. SCHWARTZ'S CONJECTURE

In this section we will consider our results in the context of the conjecture put forward by R. Schwartz in his ICM talk in 2002 [Sch02]:

A complex hyperbolic (p_1, p_2, p_3) -triangle group representation is discrete and faithful if and only if a group element w is non-elliptic, where $w = w_A = I_3I_2I_3I_1$ or $w = w_B = I_1I_2I_3$ depending on (p_1, p_2, p_3) .

Note that Schwartz assumes $p_1 \leq p_2 \leq p_3$ which implies $r_1 \leq r_2 \leq r_3$. We normalise differently so that $r_1 \geq r_2 \geq r_3 = 1$, hence instead of $I_3I_2I_3I_1$ the relevant element for us is $w_A = I_1I_2I_1I_3$.

Discreteness conditions in Propositions 1 and 2 are $\text{trace}(w_A^{(\ell)}) \geq 3$ which is equivalent to $w_A^{(\ell)}$ being not regular elliptic and $\text{Re}(\text{trace}(w_B)) \leq -5$ which implies that w_B is non-elliptic but is not equivalent to it. If we relax the conditions

$$\text{trace}(w_A^{(\ell)}) \geq 3 \quad \text{for all } \ell \in \mathbb{Z} \quad \text{and} \quad \text{Re}(\text{trace}(w_B)) \leq -5$$

so that $\text{trace}(w_A^{(\ell)}) < 3$ for a single value of $\ell = k$ then the corresponding group element $w_A^{(k)}$ is elliptic:

Proposition 7. *Suppose that $m_1 \geq m_2 > 0$ and for some integer $k \geq 2$*

$$\max \left\{ \frac{1}{k} + \frac{k+1}{r_2^2 - 1}, \frac{2}{k} \right\} \leq \frac{r_1^2 - 1}{r_2^2 - 1} - 1 \leq \frac{2}{k-1},$$

where $r_j = \cosh(m_j/2)$, $j = 1, 2$. If the condition

$$\max\{f_A(k+1), f_A(k-1)\} \leq 4r_1r_2 \sin^2\left(\frac{\alpha}{2}\right) < f_A(k)$$

is satisfied, then $w_A^{(k)}$ is elliptic and $w_A^{(\ell)}$ for $\ell \in \mathbb{Z} \setminus \{-1, 0, k\}$ are all non-elliptic.

Proof. Setting $\ell_1 = k+1$ in the first and $\ell_1 = k-1$ in the other two cases in Lemma 5 we obtain that $f_A(k+1) \geq f_A(\ell)$ for all integers $\ell > k+1$ and $f_A(\ell) \geq f_A(k-1)$ for all integers $\ell < k-1$, $\ell \neq -1, 0$. This means that our hypothesis that $4r_1r_2 \sin^2(\alpha/2) \geq \max\{f_A(k-1), f_A(k+1)\}$ implies $4r_1r_2 \sin^2(\alpha/2) \geq f_A(\ell)$ for all $\ell \in \mathbb{Z} \setminus \{-1, 0, k\}$. Recall that

$$4r_1r_2 \sin^2(\alpha/2) \geq f_A(\ell) \iff \text{trace}(w_A^{(\ell)}) \geq 3 \iff w_A^{(\ell)} \text{ is non-elliptic,}$$

hence the conditions on $4r_1r_2 \sin^2(\alpha/2)$ imply that $w_A^{(k)}$ is elliptic and $w_A^{(\ell)}$ for $\ell \in \mathbb{Z} \setminus \{-1, 0, k\}$ are all non-elliptic. \square

With the help of this proposition we can choose α so that w_B is non-elliptic, the element $w_A^{(k)}$ for some $k \geq 2$ is elliptic of infinite order and all $w_A^{(\ell)}$ for $\ell \in \mathbb{Z} \setminus \{-1, 0, k\}$ are non-elliptic, in particular $w_A^{(1)} = w_A$ is non-elliptic. Then the elements w_A and w_B are non-elliptic, but $w_A^{(k)}$ is elliptic of infinite order, hence the group is not discrete. Therefore, in the ultra-parallel case, Schwartz's conjecture should be extended to include elements not only w_A and w_B but also $w_A^{(\ell)}$ with $\ell \neq 1$.

Example. For $k \geq 2$ let $r_1 = k+1$ and $r_2 = k$. The conditions

$$\max \left\{ \frac{1}{k} + \frac{k+1}{r_2^2 - 1}, \frac{2}{k} \right\} \leq \frac{r_1^2 - 1}{r_2^2 - 1} - 1 \leq \frac{2}{k-1}$$

become

$$\max \{(k+1)(k^2 + k - 1), (k+2)(k^2 - 1)\} \leq k^2(k+2) \leq k(k+1)^2$$

and are always satisfied. In this case we have

$$f_B = f_A(k-1) = f_A(k+1) = 0, \quad f_A(k) = \frac{1}{4k^2(k+1)^2}.$$

Proposition 1 says that the group is discrete if

$$4r_1r_2 \sin^2\left(\frac{\alpha}{2}\right) \geq f_A(k) = \frac{1}{4k^2(k+1)^2}.$$

Proposition 7 implies that if

$$4r_1r_2 \sin^2\left(\frac{\alpha}{2}\right) < f_A(k) = \frac{1}{4k^2(k+1)^2}$$

then $w_A^{(k)}$ is elliptic while $w_A^{(\ell)}$ for all $\ell \neq k$ are non-elliptic. The condition

$$4r_1r_2 \sin^2\left(\frac{\alpha}{2}\right) \geq f_B = 0$$

is always satisfied, hence $\operatorname{Re}(\operatorname{trace}(w_B)) \leq -5$ and the element w_B is non-elliptic. Choosing α with

$$\sin\left(\frac{\alpha}{2}\right) < \frac{1}{2k(k+1)}, \quad \sin\left(\frac{\alpha}{2}\right) \neq \frac{\cos(q \cdot \pi)}{2k(k+1)} \quad \text{for all } q \in \mathbb{Q},$$

we obtain $[k+1, k, 0]$ -groups with non-elliptic w_B and $w_A^{(\ell)}$ for $\ell \in \mathbb{Z} \setminus \{-1, 0, k\}$, but $w_A^{(k)}$ is elliptic of infinite order, hence the group is not discrete.

The condition for $w_A^{(k)}$ to be non-elliptic is given by an explicit inequality on the angular invariant α . The question of where w_B is non-elliptic is more subtle. The trace

$$\operatorname{trace}(w_B) = -(4r_1^2 + 4r_2^2 + 1) + 8r_1r_2 \cdot e^{i\alpha}$$

is on the circle with centre $-(4r_1^2 + 4r_2^2 + 1)$ and radius $8r_1r_2$. One has to carefully study the intersection of this circle and the deltoid Δ .

Proposition 8. *The element w_B is non-elliptic for all values of α if*

$$7 - 4(r_1^2 + r_2^2) + 16(r_1^2 - r_2^2)^2 > 0.$$

Proof. In the case $r_1 = r_2 = r \geq 1$ we have that

$$7 - 4(r_1^2 + r_2^2) + 16(r_1^2 - r_2^2)^2 = 7 - 8r^2$$

is never positive, hence we only need to consider the case

$$r_1 \neq r_2.$$

When does $\operatorname{trace}(w_B) = 8r_1r_2e^{i\alpha} - (4r_1^2 + 4r_2^2 + 1)$ lie outside the deltoid Δ for all α ? Any point where $\operatorname{trace}(w_B)$ lies on the deltoid is a solution to

$$8r_1r_2e^{i\alpha} - (4r_1^2 + 4r_2^2 + 1) = 2e^{i\theta} + e^{-2i\theta}$$

for some θ . In other words,

$$\begin{aligned} (8r_1r_2)^2 &= |4r_1^2 + 4r_2^2 + 1 + 2e^{i\theta} + e^{-2i\theta}|^2 \\ &= (4r_1^2 + 4r_2^2 + 1 + 2\cos(\theta) + \cos(2\theta))^2 + (2\sin(\theta) - \sin(2\theta))^2 \\ &= 4(2r_1^2 + 2r_2^2 + \cos(\theta) + \cos^2(\theta))^2 + 4(1 - \cos(\theta))^2(1 - \cos^2(\theta)). \end{aligned}$$

Dividing by 4 and simplifying means that $X = \cos(\theta) \in [-1, 1]$ is a root of the cubic polynomial $Q(X)$ given by

$$Q(X) = 4X^3 + X^2 - 2X + 1 + 4(r_1^2 + r_2^2)X(1 + X) + 4(r_1^2 - r_2^2)^2.$$

Note that $Q(-1) = 4(r_1^2 - r_2^2)^2 > 0$ and $Q(1) = 4 + 8(r_1^2 + r_2^2) + 4(r_1^2 - r_2^2)^2 > 0$. We have

$$\begin{aligned} Q'(X) &= 12X^2 + 2X - 2 + 4(r_1^2 + r_2^2)(1 + 2X) \\ &= 2(3X + 2(r_1^2 + r_2^2) - 1)(1 + 2X), \end{aligned}$$

hence the critical points of Q are

$$X_1 = \frac{1 - 2(r_1^2 + r_2^2)}{3} < -1 \quad \text{and} \quad X_2 = -\frac{1}{2}.$$

The polynomial Q satisfies $Q(-1), Q(1) > 0$ and X_2 is the only critical point of Q in $[-1, 1]$, hence

$$Q(X_2) = \frac{7}{4} - (r_1^2 + r_2^2) + 4(r_1^2 - r_2^2)^2 > 0$$

implies that Q has no roots in $[-1, 1]$ and hence $\text{trace}(w_B)$ is always outside the deltoid Δ . \square

Remark. Analysing the polynomial Q in the proof above, we can understand the ellipticity of w_B in other cases as well. If $7 - 4(r_1^2 + r_2^2) + 16(r_1^2 - r_2^2)^2 \leq 0$ and $r_1 \neq r_2$ then there exist $\alpha_1, \alpha_2 \in (0, \pi/2)$ with $\alpha_1 \leq \alpha_2$ such that w_B is hyperbolic for $|\alpha| < \alpha_1$ and for $|\alpha| > \alpha_2$ and elliptic for $\alpha_1 < |\alpha| < \alpha_2$. If $r_1 = r_2$ then there exists $\alpha_0 \in (0, \pi/2)$ such that w_B is hyperbolic for $|\alpha| < \alpha_0$ and elliptic for $|\alpha| > \alpha_0$, moreover α_0 can be computed explicitly, see next section.

8. ISOSCELES CASE

In this section we will give a summary of the results in the special case of an isosceles triangle, i.e. $m_1 = m_2 = m$ and $r_1 = r_2 = r$.

In this case the discreteness conditions in both Propositions 2 and 4 become

$$\sin^2\left(\frac{\alpha}{2}\right) \geq \frac{1}{4r^2} = \left(\frac{1}{2r}\right)^2,$$

hence we obtain the same result as in [WG]. (To compare the results, note that $\sin^2(\alpha/2) = (1 + t^2)^{-1}$, where $t = \tan(\theta)$ is the parameter used in [WG].)

On the other hand Proposition 5 says that the group is non-discrete if

$$\sin^2\left(\frac{\alpha}{2}\right) < \frac{2r^2 + 1 - 2r\sqrt{r^2 + 1}}{64r^2} = \left(\frac{r - \sqrt{r^2 + 1}}{8r}\right)^2.$$

Now let us discuss the ellipticity of the elements $w_A^{(\ell)}$ and w_B . For $r_1 = r_2 = r \geq 1$ we have

$$4r_1r_2 \sin^2\left(\frac{\alpha}{2}\right) \geq 0 \geq \frac{1 - r^2}{\ell(\ell + 1)} = f_A(\ell) \quad \text{and hence} \quad \text{trace}(w_A^{(\ell)}) \geq 3$$

(with equality in the case $\alpha = 0$ and $r = 1$). Therefore $w_A^{(\ell)}$ are always non-elliptic. As was shown in section 12 of [Pra] the element w_B is non-elliptic for

$$\sin^2\left(\frac{\alpha}{2}\right) > \frac{2r^2 - 2}{r^2 \cdot (64r^4 - 80r^2 + 13 + (8r^2 - 7)^{3/2} \cdot (8r^2 + 1)^{1/2})}.$$

(To compare the results, note that $\sin^2(\alpha/2) = (1 + t^2)^{-1}$, where $t = (\tan(\alpha/2))^{-1}$ is the parameter used in [Pra].) Hence under the condition on $\sin^2(\alpha/2)$ above the elements $w_A^{(\ell)}$ and w_B are all non-elliptic.

Remark. In the case $m_1 = m_2 = 0$ conditions (1) and (2) imply that the ideal triangle group is discrete for $\sin(\alpha/2) \geq 0.5$. But as conjectured by Goldman and Parker [GP] and proved by Schwartz [Sch01], the ideal triangle group is still discrete for smaller values of α , namely if and only if $\sin(\alpha/2) \geq \frac{\sqrt{6}}{16} \approx 0.153$.

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