RIGIDITY AND CIRCULAR SLICES

DONGRYUL M. KIM AND HEE OH

ABSTRACT. Let $n, m \geq 2$. Let $\Gamma < \mathrm{SO}^\circ(n+1, 1)$ be a Zariski dense convex cocompact subgroup and $\Lambda \subset \mathbb{S}^n$ its limit set. Sullivan proved in 1979 that the δ-dimensional Hausdorff measure satisfies $0 < \mathcal{H}^\delta(\Lambda) < \infty$ where δ is the Hausdorff dimension of Λ. Suppose that the ordinary set $\Omega = \mathbb{S}^n - \Lambda$ has at least two components. For a Zariski dense convex cocompact faithful representation $\rho : \Gamma \to \mathrm{SO}^\circ(m+1, 1)$ and its boundary map $f : \Lambda \to \mathbb{S}^m$, we present a criterion on when ρ is algebraic (i.e., given by a conjugation by a Möbius transformation on $\mathbb{S}^n$) in terms of the Hausdorff measure of all circular slices of Λ that are mapped into circles, or more generally, into proper spheres of $\mathbb{S}^m$.

More precisely, letting

$$\Lambda_f := \bigcup \left\{ C \cap \Lambda : \begin{array}{l} C \subset \mathbb{S}^n \text{ is a circle such that} \\ f(C \cap \Lambda) \text{ is contained in a proper sphere of } \mathbb{S}^m \end{array} \right\},$$

we prove the following dichotomy:

$$\text{either} \quad \Lambda_f = \Lambda \quad \text{or} \quad \mathcal{H}^\delta(\Lambda_f) = 0,$$

and in the former case, we have $n = m$ and ρ is a conjugation by a Möbius transformation on $\mathbb{S}^n$. Our proof uses ergodic theory and higher rank conformal measure theory for Anosov subgroups of higher rank semisimple Lie groups.

1. INTRODUCTION

Let $\mathbb{H}^{n+1}$ denote the $(n+1)$-dimensional real hyperbolic space for $n \geq 2$. The group of its orientation preserving isometries is given by the identity component $\mathrm{SO}^\circ(n+1, 1)$ of the special orthogonal group. A discrete subgroup $\Gamma < \mathrm{SO}^\circ(n+1, 1)$ is called *convex cocompact* if the convex core[1] of the associated hyperbolic manifold $\Gamma \backslash \mathbb{H}^{n+1}$ is compact. Let $\Gamma < \mathrm{SO}^\circ(n+1, 1)$ be a Zariski dense convex cocompact subgroup for $n \geq 2$, and

$$\rho : \Gamma \to \mathrm{SO}^\circ(m+1, 1)$$

be a Zariski dense convex cocompact faithful representation where $m \geq 2$. For simplicity, we will call a discrete faithful representation $\rho : \Gamma \to \mathrm{SO}^\circ(m+1, 1)$ a deformation of Γ into $\mathrm{SO}^\circ(m+1, 1)$. If $\Gamma < \mathrm{SO}^\circ(n+1, 1)$ is cocompact and $n = m$, Mostow strong rigidity theorem [19] says that ρ is always

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[1]The convex core of $\Gamma \backslash \mathbb{H}^{n+1}$ is the smallest convex submanifold containing all closed geodesics.

algebraic, more precisely, it is given by a conjugation by a Möbius transformation on $\mathbb{S}^n$. However in other cases, Marden's isomorphism theorem and the Teichmüller theory imply that there exists a continuous family of convex cocompact deformations, modulo the conjugations by Möbius transformation on $\mathbb{S}^m$ (cf. [17, section 5]).

Let $\Lambda \subset \mathbb{S}^n$ denote the limit set of Γ, which is set of all accumulation points of $\Gamma(o)$ in $\mathbb{S}^n$, $o \in \mathbb{H}^{n+1}$. Let $\mathcal{H}^\delta$ be the δ-dimensional Hausdorff measure on $\mathbb{S}^n$, where δ is the Hausdorff dimension of Λ with respect to the spherical metric on $\mathbb{S}^n$. Sullivan [21, Theorem 7] showed that for Γ convex cocompact, we have

$$0 < \mathcal{H}^\delta(\Lambda) < \infty.$$

The main aim of this paper is to present a criterion on when ρ is algebraic, in terms of the Hausdorff measure of the union of all circular slices of Λ that are mapped into circles, or more generally into some proper spheres of $\mathbb{S}^m$ by the ρ-boundary map. More precisely, by Tukia [24], there is a unique ρ-equivariant continuous embedding

$$f : \Lambda \to \mathbb{S}^m,$$

called the ρ-boundary map. We consider all circular slices of Λ which are mapped into some proper spheres of $\mathbb{S}^m$ by f:

$$\Lambda_f := \bigcup \left\{ C \cap \Lambda : \begin{array}{c} C \subset \mathbb{S}^n \text{ is a circle such that} \\ f(C \cap \Lambda) \text{ is contained in a proper sphere of } \mathbb{S}^m \end{array} \right\}.$$
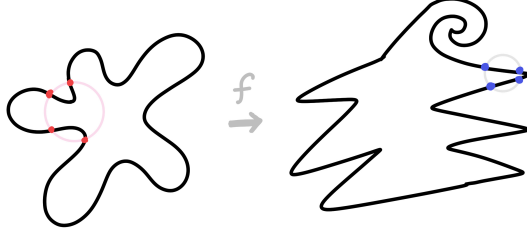

FIGURE 1. $f(C \cap \Lambda)$ is contained in a circle

We emphasize that the boundary map f is defined only on Λ and therefore our definition of Λ_f involves the image of the intersection $C \cap \Lambda$ under f, but not the whole circle C (see Figure 1). If $n = m$ and f is a Möbius transformation of $\mathbb{S}^n$, then f clearly maps all circles to circles and hence $\Lambda_f = \Lambda$. The following main theorem of this paper says that in all other cases, Λ_f has $\mathcal{H}^\delta$-measure zero, in other words, if $\mathcal{H}^\delta(\Lambda_f) > 0$, then f is the restriction of a Möbius transformation of $\mathbb{S}^n$ and ρ is algebraic.

Theorem 1.1. *Let $n, m \geq 2$. Let $\Gamma < \mathrm{SO}^\circ(n + 1, 1)$ be a Zariski dense convex cocompact subgroup such that the ordinary set $\Omega = \mathbb{S}^n - \Lambda$ has at*

least two components. Let $\rho : \Gamma \to \mathrm{SO}^\circ(m+1,1)$ be a Zariski dense convex cocompact deformation and $f : \Lambda \to \mathbb{S}^m$ the ρ-boundary map. Then

$$\text{either} \quad \Lambda_f = \Lambda \quad \text{or} \quad \mathcal{H}^\delta(\Lambda_f) = 0.$$

In the former case, we have $n = m$, f extends to some $g \in \mathrm{M\ddot{o}b}(\mathbb{S}^n)$ and ρ is a conjugation by g.

Remark 1.2.
- If $\Gamma < \mathrm{SO}^\circ(3,1)$ is convex cocompact with Λ connected, then Ω is disconnected [16, Chapter IX]; hence Theorem 1.1 applies.
- We say $\Lambda \subset \mathbb{S}^n$ *doubly stable* if for any $\xi \in \Lambda$, there exists a circle C containing ξ such that for any sequence of circles C_k converging to C, $\# \lim\sup(C_k \cap \Lambda) \geq 2.$[2] If Ω has at least two components, then Λ is doubly stable (Lemma 4.6) but there are also examples of Λ doubly stable while Ω connected. We prove Theorem 1.1 whenever Λ is doubly stable (see Theorem 5.1).

In terms of the quasiconformal deformation indicated in Figure 2, our theorem implies that the union of circular slices of the left limit set which are mapped into circles has zero $\mathcal{H}^\delta$-measure.
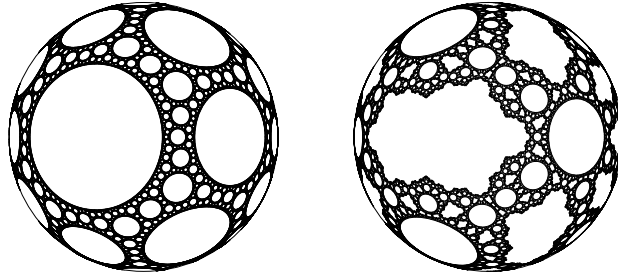

FIGURE 2. Non-trivial quasiconformal deformation[3]

Note that $(n + 2)$-distinct points on $\mathbb{S}^n$ form the set of vertices of a unique ideal hyperbolic $(n + 1)$-simplex of $\mathbb{H}^{n+1}$. Gromov-Thurston's proof of Mostow rigidity theorem ([6], [23]) uses the fact that a homeomorphism of $\mathbb{S}^n$ mapping vertices of every maximal volume $(n+1)$-simplex of $\mathbb{H}^{n+1}$ to vertices of a maximal volume $(n + 1)$-simplex is a Möbius transformation.

Since $(n+2)$-distinct points on $\mathbb{S}^n$ form vertices of a zero-volume $(n+1)$-simplex of $\mathbb{H}^{n+1}$ if and only if they lie in some codimension one sphere in $\mathbb{S}^n$, and every circle in $\mathbb{S}^n$ is contained in a codimension one sphere in $\mathbb{S}^n$, Theorem 1.1 implies the following higher dimensional version of [10, Theorem 1.3], which answered McMullen's question for $n = 2$:

Corollary 1.3. *If the ρ-boundary map $f : \Lambda \to \mathbb{S}^n$ maps vertices of every $(n + 1)$-simplex of zero-volume to vertices of an $(n + 1)$-simplex of zero-volume, then f extends to a Möbius transformation of $\mathbb{S}^n$.*

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[2]The limsup of a sequence of subsets $S_k \subset \mathbb{S}^n$ is defined as $\lim\sup S_k = \bigcap_k \overline{\bigcup_{j \geq k} S_j}$.

[3]Image credit: Curtis McMullen and Yongquan Zhang [26]

See Theorem 5.2 for a more general version where Γ is not assumed to be convex cocompact.

On the proof of Theorem 1.1. We use the theory of Anosov representations. Consider the following self-joining subgroup of $G = \mathrm{SO}^\circ(n+1,1) \times \mathrm{SO}^\circ(m+1,1)$:

$$\Gamma_\rho := (\mathrm{id} \times \rho)(\Gamma) = \{(\gamma, \rho(\gamma)) : \gamma \in \Gamma\}.$$

The crucial point is that under the assumption that both Γ and $\rho(\Gamma)$ are Zariski dense and convex cocompact and not conjugate to each other,

Γ_ρ is a Zariski dense *Anosov* subgroup of G

with respect to a minimal parabolic subgroup

(see the discussion around (2.2)). Hence the recent classification theorem on higher rank conformal measures by Lee-Oh [13] (Theorem 2.3) and the ergodicity theorem of Burger-Landesberg-Lee-Oh [2] (Theorem 2.4) apply to our setting, yielding that for any Γ_ρ-conformal measure on the limit set of Γ_ρ, the associated Bowen-Margulis-Sullivan measure on $\Gamma_\rho \backslash G$ is ergodic for a unique one-parameter diagonal flow $A_u = \{\exp tu : t \in \mathbb{R}\}$ where u is a vector in the interior of the positive Weyl chamber.

A general higher rank conformal measure seems mysterious. However, the graph structure of our self-joining group Γ_ρ allows us to pin down a very explicit Γ_ρ-conformal measure, which we call the graph-conformal measure [11]. Indeed, under the convex cocompactness hypothesis on Γ, the graph-conformal measure is given by the pushforward measure $(\mathrm{id} \times f)_*(\mathcal{H}^\delta|_\Lambda)$, and this is the reason why we can relate the Hausdorff measure $\mathcal{H}^\delta|_\Lambda$ with dynamics on the Anosov homogeneous space $\Gamma_\rho \backslash G$ in the proof of Theorem 1.1.

The conclusion of Theorem 1.1 follows if we show that Γ_ρ cannot be Zariski dense in G (Lemma 2.2). We give a proof by contradiction. Suppose that Γ_ρ is Zariski dense. Considering the action of Γ_ρ on the space Υ_ρ of all ordered pairs $Y = (C, S)$ of a circle $C \subset \mathbb{S}^n$ and a codimension one sphere $S \subset \mathbb{S}^m$ intersecting the limit set $\Lambda_\rho \subset \mathbb{S}^n \times \mathbb{S}^m$ of Γ_ρ, we are then able to prove, together with the work of Guivarch-Raugi [8] and the aforementioned ergodicity result for the directional diagonal flows, that for $\mathcal{H}^\delta|_\Lambda$-almost all $\xi \in \Lambda$, the Γ_ρ-orbit of $Y \in \Upsilon_\rho$ containing $(\xi, f(\xi))$ is dense in the space Υ_ρ. On the other hand, we show that the hypothesis that Λ is doubly stable implies that for any $Y_0 = (C_0, S_0) \in \Upsilon_\rho$ with $f(C_0 \cap \Lambda) \subset S_0$, the orbit $\Gamma_\rho Y_0$ cannot be dense in Υ_ρ (Theorem 4.1). This shows that Γ_ρ cannot be Zariski dense when $\mathcal{H}^\delta(\Lambda_f) > 0$. We also show that a convex cocompact Γ with Ω disconnected always has a doubly stable limit set (Lemma 4.6).

Analogous question for rational maps. We close the introduction by the following question which seems natural in view of Sullivan's dictionary between Kleinian groups and rational maps ([22], [18]).

Question 1.4. Let $h_1, h_2 : \hat{\mathbb{C}} \to \hat{\mathbb{C}}$ be rational maps of degree at least 2 whose Julia sets are not contained in circles. Suppose that $h_2 = F \circ h_1 \circ F^{-1}$ for some quasiconformal homeomorphism $F : \hat{\mathbb{C}} \to \hat{\mathbb{C}}$. Suppose that the Julia set $J = J_{h_1}$ of h_1 is doubly stable. Let

$$J_F := \bigcup \left\{ C \cap J : \begin{array}{c} C \subset \hat{\mathbb{C}} \text{ is a circle such that} \\ F(C \cap J) \text{ is contained in a circle} \end{array} \right\}.$$

(1) If $J_F = J$, is $F \in \text{Möb}(\hat{\mathbb{C}})$?
(2) Suppose that h_1, h_2 are hyperbolic. Let $\delta = \dim_H J$. Is it true that

$$\text{either} \quad J_F = J \quad \text{or} \quad \mathcal{H}^\delta(J_F) = 0?$$

Organization. The main goal of section 2 is to prove Theorem 2.6, which we deduce from the classification of conformal measures in [13] and the ergodicity of directional diagonal flows in [2] with respect to Bowen-Margulis-Sullivan measure associated to the Γ_ρ-conformal measure constructed from the δ-dimensional Hausdorff measure on Λ. The main theorem of section 3 is Theorem 3.3 which we deduce from Theorem 2.6 and a theorem of Guivarch-Raugi (Theorem 3.2). In section 4, we discuss an obstruction to dense Γ_ρ-orbits in the space Υ_ρ using the hypothesis that Λ is doubly stable. In section 5, we give a proof of Theorem 1.1. We also discuss a topological version of Theorem 1.1 without convex cocompactness assumption (Theorem 5.2).

2. Ergodicity and graph-conformal measure

Let (X_1, d_1) and (X_2, d_2) be rank one Riemannian symmetric spaces. Let G be the product $G_1 \times G_2$ where $G_1 = \text{Isom}^\circ(X_1)$ and $G_2 = \text{Isom}^\circ(X_2)$ are connected simple real algebraic groups of rank one. Then $G = \text{Isom}^\circ X$ where $X = X_1 \times X_2$ is the Riemannian product. We fix a Cartan involution θ of the Lie algebra $\mathfrak{g}$ of G, and decompose $\mathfrak{g}$ as $\mathfrak{g} = \mathfrak{k} \oplus \mathfrak{p}$, where $\mathfrak{k}$ and $\mathfrak{p}$ are the $+1$ and -1 eigenspaces of θ, respectively. We denote by K the maximal compact subgroup of G and choose a maximal abelian subalgebra $\mathfrak{a}$ of $\mathfrak{p}$. Choosing a closed positive Weyl chamber $\mathfrak{a}^+$ of $\mathfrak{a}$, let $A := \exp \mathfrak{a}$ and $A^+ = \exp \mathfrak{a}^+$. The centralizer of A in K is denoted by M, and we let N^+ and $N = N^-$ be the horospherical subgroups so that $\log N^+$ and $\log N^-$ are the sum of all negative and positive root subspaces for our choice of A^+ respectively. We set

$$P^+ = MAN^+, \quad \text{and} \quad P = P^- = MAN;$$

they are minimal parabolic subgroups of G that are opposite to each other. The quotient $\mathcal{F} = G/P$ is known as the Furstenberg boundary of G, and is isomorphic to K/M. Let $\text{N}_K(\mathfrak{a})$ be the normalizer of $\mathfrak{a}$ in K and let

$\mathcal{W} := \mathrm{N}_K(\mathfrak{a})/M$ denote the Weyl group. Let $w_0 \in N_K(\mathfrak{a})$ be the unique element in $\mathcal{W}$ such that $w_0 P w_0^{-1} = P^+$. For each $g \in G$, we define

$$g^+ := gP \in \mathcal{F} \quad \text{and} \quad g^- := g w_0 P \in \mathcal{F}.$$

An element $g \in G$ is loxodromic if $g = h a m h^{-1}$ for some $a \in \operatorname{int} A^+$, $m \in M$ and $h \in G$. The Jordan projection of g is defined to be $\lambda(g) := \log a \in \operatorname{int} \mathfrak{a}^+$.

In the rest of the section, let Δ be a Zariski dense discrete subgroup of G. The *limit cone* $\mathcal{L}_\Delta \subset \mathfrak{a}^+$ is defined as the smallest closed cone containing all Jordan projections of loxodromic elements of Δ. It is a convex subset of $\mathfrak{a}^+$ with non-empty interior [1, Section 1.2]. Benoist showed that $\mathcal{F}$ contains a unique Δ-minimal subset of $\mathcal{F}$, which is called the limit set of Δ. We denote it by Λ_Δ.

Bowen-Margulis-Sullivan measures. Let $\mathcal{F}_i$ be the Furstenberg boundary of G_i, which is equal to the geometric boundary ∂X_i. For each $i = 1, 2$, the Busemann function $\beta_{\xi_i}(x_i, y_i)$ is defined as

$$\beta_{\xi_i}(x_i, y_i) = \lim_{t \to \infty} d_i(\xi_{i,t}, x_i) - d_i(\xi_{i,t}, y_i)$$

where $\xi_{i,t}$ is a geodesic ray toward to ξ_i. For $\xi = (\xi_1, \xi_2) \in \mathcal{F} = \mathcal{F}_1 \times \mathcal{F}_2$ and $x = (x_1, x_2), y = (y_1, y_2) \in X$, the $\mathfrak{a}$-valued Busemann function is defined componentwise:

$$\beta_\xi(x, y) = (\beta_{\xi_1}(x_1, y_1), \beta_{\xi_2}(x_2, y_2)) \in \mathfrak{a}$$

where we have identified $\mathfrak{a} = \mathfrak{a}_1 \oplus \mathfrak{a}_2$ with $\mathbb{R}^2$.

In the following we fix $o = (o_1, o_2) \in X$ so that the stabilizer of o is K.

Definition 2.1. For a linear form $\psi \in \mathfrak{a}^*$, a Borel probability measure ν on $\mathcal{F}$ is called a (Δ, ψ)-*conformal measure* (with respect to o) if for any $g \in \Delta$ and $\xi \in \mathcal{F}$,

$$\frac{dg_*\nu}{d\nu}(\xi) = e^{\psi(\beta_\xi(o, go))}$$

where $g_*\nu(B) = \nu(g^{-1}B)$ for any Borel subset $B \subset \mathcal{F}$. By a Δ-conformal measure, we mean a (Δ, ψ)-conformal measure for some $\psi \in \mathfrak{a}^*$.

Two points $\xi = (\xi_1, \xi_2)$ and $\eta = (\eta_1, \eta_2)$ are in general position if $\xi_i \neq \eta_i$ for each $i = 1, 2$. Let $\mathcal{F}^{(2)}$ be the set of all pairs $(\xi, \eta) \in \mathcal{F} \times \mathcal{F}$ which are in general position. The map $G \to \mathcal{F}^{(2)} \times \mathfrak{a}$, $g \mapsto (g^+, g^-, \beta_{g^+}(o, go))$ induces a G-equivariant homeomorphism $G/M \simeq \mathcal{F}^{(2)} \times \mathfrak{a}$, called the Hopf-parametrization.

For a (Δ, ψ)-conformal measure ν supported on the limit set Λ_Δ for some $\psi \in \mathfrak{a}^*$, we can define the following Borel measure on G/M using the Hopf-parametrization:

$$d\tilde{m}_\nu^{\mathrm{BMS}}(gM) = e^{\psi(\beta_{g^+}(o, go) + \beta_{g^-}(o, go))} d\nu(g^+) d\nu(g^-) db \qquad (2.1)$$

where db is the Haar measure on $\mathfrak{a}$. By integrating over the fiber of $G \to G/M$ with respect to the Haar measure of M, we will consider $\tilde{m}_\nu^{\mathrm{BMS}}$ as

a Radon measure on G, which is then a left Δ-invariant and right AM-invariant measure. We denote by m_ν^{BMS} the Radon measure on $\Delta\backslash G$ induced by $\tilde{m}_\nu^{\mathrm{BMS}}$. This measure is called the Bowen-Margulis-Sullivan measure associated to ν. Its support is

$$\Omega_\Delta = \{[g] \in \Delta\backslash G : g^\pm \in \Lambda_\Delta\}.$$

We refer to [5] for a detailed discussion on the construction of this measure.

Self-joinings of convex cocompact groups. In the rest of the section, we will consider the following special type of discrete subgroups of G. Let $\Gamma < G_1$ be a Zariski dense convex cocompact subgroup and $\rho : \Gamma \to G_2$ be a Zariski dense convex cocompact faithful representation. Define

$$\Gamma_\rho := (\mathrm{id} \times \rho)(\Gamma) = \{(\gamma, \rho(\gamma)) : \gamma \in \Gamma\}$$

which is a discrete subgroup of G.

It follows from the convex cocompactness assumption for Γ and $\rho(\Gamma)$ that if we fix a word metric $|\cdot|$ on Γ for some finite generating set and fix $o_1 \in X_1$ and $o_2 \in X_2$, then there exist constants $C, C' > 0$ such that for all $\gamma \in \Gamma$,

$$\min\{d_1(\gamma o_1, o_1), d_2(\rho(\gamma)o_2, o_2)\} \geq C|\gamma| - C'. \qquad (2.2)$$

In other words, Γ_ρ is an Anosov subgroup of G with respect to a minimal parabolic subgroup in the sense of Labourie [12], and Guichard and Wienhard [7] (see also [9]). This enables us to use the general theory developed for Anosov subgroups.

Since both G_1 and G_2 are simple, we have the following equivalence between Zariski density of the self-joining and the rigidity of ρ.

Lemma 2.2 ([10, Lemma 4.1]). *The subgroup Γ_ρ is Zariski dense in G if and only if ρ does not extend to a Lie group isomorphism $G_1 \to G_2$.*

Since Γ and $\rho(\Gamma)$ are convex cocompact, there exists a unique ρ-equivariant continuous embedding $f : \Lambda \to \mathcal{F}_2$ [24]. Hence the limit set $\Lambda_\rho \subset \mathcal{F}$ of Γ_ρ is written as

$$\Lambda_\rho = (\mathrm{id} \times f)(\Lambda).$$

We denote by $\mathcal{L}_\rho \subset \mathfrak{a}^+$ the limit cone of Γ_ρ:

$$\mathcal{L}_\rho = \mathcal{L}_{\Gamma_\rho}.$$

Since Γ_ρ is Anosov, the following Theorems 2.3 and 2.4 are special cases of theorems proved in those respective papers.

Theorem 2.3 (Classification of conformal measures, [13]). *Suppose that Γ_ρ is Zariski dense in G. The space of unit vectors in $\mathrm{int}\,\mathcal{L}_\rho$ is in bijection with the space of all Γ_ρ-conformal measures on Λ_ρ. Moreover, each Γ_ρ-conformal measure on Λ_ρ is a (Γ_ρ, ψ)-conformal measure for a unique linear form $\psi \in \mathfrak{a}^*$.*

We will denote this bijection by

$$u \mapsto \nu_u. \tag{2.3}$$

For each unit vector $u \in \operatorname{int} \mathcal{L}_\rho$, we also denote by $\psi_u \in \mathfrak{a}^*$ the (unique) linear form associated to ν_u, that is, ν_u is (Γ_ρ, ψ_u)-conformal.

Ergodicity. For simplicity, we set

$$\tilde{m}_u^{\mathrm{BMS}} := \tilde{m}_{\nu_u}^{\mathrm{BMS}} \quad \text{and} \quad m_u^{\mathrm{BMS}} := m_{\nu_u}^{\mathrm{BMS}}$$

For any non-zero vector $u \in \mathfrak{a}$, we consider the following one-parameter semigroup/subgroup:

$$A_u^+ := \{a_{tu} : t \geq 0\} \text{ and } A_u := \{a_{tu} : t \in \mathbb{R}\}.$$

where $a_{tu} = \exp tu$. The following ergodicity result is due to Burger-Landesberg-Lee-Oh [2], together with Lemma 2.5 proved in [11], is the main ingredient of our proof of Theorem 1.1:

Theorem 2.4 (Ergodicity of directional flows, [2]). *Suppose that Γ_ρ is Zariski dense in G. For any unit vector $u \in \operatorname{int} \mathcal{L}_\rho$, $(m_u^{\mathrm{BMS}}, \Gamma_\rho \backslash G)$ is ergodic for the A_u-action. In particular, for m_u^{BMS}-almost all x, xA_u^+ is dense in Ω_{Γ_ρ}.*

Graph-conformal measure. Let ν_Γ be the Γ-conformal measure supported on the limit set Λ of Γ; since Γ is convex cocompact, it exists uniquely [21]. It turns out that the measure $(\operatorname{id} \times f)_* \nu_\Gamma$ is a Γ_ρ-conformal measure where $\operatorname{id} \times f : \Lambda \to \Lambda_\rho$ is the diagonal embedding; we called this measure the graph-conformal measure in [11]. More precisely, we have the following lemma, thanks to which we were able to apply Theorem 2.4 in the proof of Theorem 1.1: we denote by δ_Γ the critical exponent of Γ.[4]

Lemma 2.5. [11, Proposition 4.9] *The measure*

$$(\operatorname{id} \times f)_* \nu_\Gamma$$

is a (Γ_ρ, σ_1)-conformal measure supported on Λ_ρ, where $\sigma_1 \in \mathfrak{a}^*$ is the linear form given by $\sigma_1(t_1, t_2) = \delta_\Gamma t_1$ for $(t_1, t_2) \in \mathfrak{a}$.

We now deduce Theorem 2.6 from Theorems 2.3 and 2.4: first, there exists a unique unit vector

$$u_\rho \in \operatorname{int} \mathcal{L}_\rho \text{ such that } (\operatorname{id} \times f)_* \nu_\Gamma = \nu_{u_\rho}. \tag{2.4}$$

Hence if we write $\Omega_\rho := \Omega_{\Gamma_\rho}$, we get the following main theorem of this section:

Theorem 2.6. *Suppose that Γ_ρ is Zariski dense. Then there exists a $(\operatorname{id} \times f)_* \nu_\Gamma$-conull subset*

$$\Lambda_\rho' \subset \Lambda_\rho$$

such that for any $g \in G$ with $g^+ \in \Lambda_\rho'$, the closure $\overline{[g]A_{u_\rho}^+}$ contains Ω_ρ.

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[4]The critical exponent δ_Γ is the abscissa of convergence of the Poincaré series $\sum_{\gamma \in \Gamma} e^{-s d_1(o_1, \gamma o_1)}$ for $o_1 \in X_1$.

Proof. Since $\tilde{m}_{u_\rho}^{\mathrm{BMS}}$ is equivalent to the product measure $d\nu_{u_\rho} \times d\nu_{u_\rho} \times da \times dm$ where da and dm denote Haar measures on A and M respectively, it follows from Theorem 2.4 that there exists a ν_{u_ρ}-conull subset $\Lambda_\rho' \subset \Lambda_\rho$ such that for all $\xi \in \Lambda_\rho'$, there exists $g_0 \in G$ with $g_0^+ = \xi$ and $g_0^- \in \Lambda_\rho$ such that $[g_0]A_{u_\rho}^+$ is dense in Ω_ρ. Hence the claim follows by the following Lemma 2.7. $\qquad\square$

Lemma 2.7 (see [10, Corollary 2.3]). *Let $u \in \mathrm{int}\,\mathfrak{a}^+$ and $\Delta < G$ be a Zariski dense discrete subgroup. If $[g_0]A_u^+$ is dense in Ω_Δ, then for any $g \in G$ with $g^+ = g_0^+$, the closure $\overline{[g]A_u^+}$ contains Ω_Δ.*

3. Orbits in the space of circle-sphere pairs

Let $G = G_1 \times G_2$ where $G_1 = \mathrm{SO}°(n+1, 1)$ and $G_2 = \mathrm{SO}°(m+1, 1)$ where $n, m \geq 2$. We set

$$\Upsilon = \{Y = (C, S) : C \subset \mathbb{S}^n \text{ a circle}, S \subset \mathbb{S}^m \text{ a codimension one sphere}\}.$$

The group G acts on Υ componentwise:

$$(g_1, g_2)(C, S) = (g_1 C, g_2 S)$$

for $(g_1, g_2) \in G_1 \times G_2$ and $(C, S) \in \Upsilon$. Let $\Delta < G$ be a Zariski dense discrete subgroup. Then Δ acts on the space

$$\Upsilon_\Delta = \{Y \in \Upsilon : Y \cap \Lambda_\Delta \neq \emptyset\},$$

which is a closed subset of Υ.

Denseness of Υ_Δ^*. Let

$$\Upsilon_\Delta^* := \{Y \in \Upsilon_\Delta : \#Y \cap \Lambda_\Delta \geq 2\}.$$

Theorem 3.1. *The subset Υ_Δ^* is dense in Υ_Δ.*

Recalling that $\mathcal{F} \simeq K/M$, consider the projection $\pi : K \to K/M$, and set

$$\tilde{\Lambda}_\Delta = \pi^{-1}(\Lambda_\Delta) \subset K.$$

Since $M \simeq \mathrm{SO}(n) \times \mathrm{SO}(m)$ is connected, the following is a special case of a theorem of Guivarch and Raugi [8]:

Theorem 3.2 ([8, Theorem 2]). *The action of Δ on $\tilde{\Lambda}_\Delta$ is minimal.*

Indeed, this theorem is a key ingredient of the proof of Theorem 3.1, which we now begin.

Proof of Theorem 3.1. For simplicity, we write Λ for Λ_Δ in this proof. Write $K = K_1 \times K_2$ where $K_1 = K \cap (G_1 \times \{e\}) = \mathrm{SO}(n+1)$ and $K_2 = K \cap (\{e\} \times G_2) = \mathrm{SO}(m+1)$, and similarly, we write $M = M_1 \times M_2 = \mathrm{SO}(n) \times \mathrm{SO}(m)$. Via the projection $K_i \to K_i/M_i = \mathcal{F}_i$, we can think of a point of K_i as an orthonormal frame f_ξ based at $\xi \in \mathcal{F}_i$. Hence an element of K is a pair of orthonormal frames $(\mathsf{f}_{\xi_1}, \mathsf{f}_{\xi_2}) \in K_1 \times K_2$. For an infinite sequence $(\xi_{1,j}, \xi_{2,j}) \in \mathcal{F}_1 \times \mathcal{F}_2$ converging to (ξ_1, ξ_2), we say that the

convergence is $(1,1)$-tangential to the frame (f_{ξ_1}, f_{ξ_2}) if, for each $i = 1, 2$, the sequence of unit vectors $\frac{\overrightarrow{\xi_i \xi_{i,j}}}{\|\overrightarrow{\xi_i \xi_{i,j}}\|}$ at ξ_i converges to the first vector of the frame f_{ξ_i} as $j \to \infty$.

Let
$$\mathcal{E} = \left\{ (f_{\xi_1}, f_{\xi_2}) \in \tilde{\Lambda} : \begin{array}{c} \text{there exists a sequence } (\xi_{1,j}, \xi_{2,j}) \in \Lambda \\ \text{converging to } (f_{\xi_1}, f_{\xi_2}) \ (1,1)\text{-tangentially} \end{array} \right\}.$$

We first note that $\mathcal{E}$ is non-empty. Since Δ is Zariski dense in G, Δ contains a loxodromic element, say, $g \in \Delta$. Denote by $y_g \in \mathcal{F}$ the attracting fixed point of g. Choose $\zeta \in \Lambda$ which is in general position with $y_{g^{\pm 1}}$. Then the sequence $g^\ell \zeta$ converges to y_g as $\ell \to +\infty$. The claim follows from the compactness of the unit sphere in the tangent space of $\mathcal{F}$ at y_g.

On the other hand, since the action of G on $\mathcal{F}$ is conformal and Λ is Δ-invariant, $\mathcal{E}$ is a Δ-invariant subset of $\tilde{\Lambda}$. Hence by Theorem 3.2,
$$\overline{\mathcal{E}} = \tilde{\Lambda}.$$

Let $Y = (C, S) \in \Upsilon_\Delta$. We will construct a sequence $Y_k \in \Upsilon_\Delta^*$ converging to Y as $k \to \infty$. Choose $\xi = (\xi_1, \xi_2) \in Y \cap \Lambda$. Choose a unit vector v_1 at ξ_1 tangent to C and a unit vector v_2 at ξ_2 tangent to S. For each $i = 1, 2$, choose an orthonormal frame f_{ξ_i} in $\mathcal{F}_i$ based at ξ_i whose first vector is v_i. Since $(f_{\xi_1}, f_{\xi_2}) \in \tilde{\Lambda}$ and $\mathcal{E}$ is dense in $\tilde{\Lambda}$, we can find a sequence $(f_{\eta_{1,k}}, f_{\eta_{2,k}}) \in \mathcal{E}$ converging to (f_{ξ_1}, f_{ξ_2}) as $k \to \infty$. Hence, for each k, there exists a sequence $\{(\eta_{1,j}^{(k)}, \eta_{2,j}^{(k)}) \in \Lambda : j = 1, 2, \cdots\}$ converging $(1,1)$-tangentially to $(f_{\eta_{1,k}}, f_{\eta_{2,k}})$ as $j \to \infty$. Since $(f_{\eta_{1,k}}, f_{\eta_{2,k}}) \to (f_{\xi_1}, f_{\xi_2})$ as $k \to \infty$, we can choose large enough j_k for each k so that the following holds for each $i = 1, 2$:

(1) $\eta_{i,j_k}^{(k)} \to \xi_i$ as $k \to \infty$; and

(2) the unit tangent vector $\frac{\overrightarrow{\eta_{i,k} \eta_{i,j_k}^{(k)}}}{\|\overrightarrow{\eta_{i,k} \eta_{i,j_k}^{(k)}}\|}$ at $\eta_{i,k}$ converges to v_i as $k \to \infty$.

Now we are ready to construct a sequence $Y_k = (C_k, S_k) \in \Upsilon_\Delta^*$:

(1) Fix $z_1 \in C - \{\xi_1\}$ and let C_k be the circle passing through z_1, $\eta_{1,k}$ and $\eta_{1,j_k}^{(k)}$.

(2) Fix $z_2 \in S - \{\xi_2\}$. The tangent space $\mathsf{T}_{\xi_2} S$ of S at ξ_2 is a codimension one subspace of the tangent space $\mathsf{T}_{\xi_2} \mathcal{F}_2$. Noting that $v_2 \in \mathsf{T}_{\xi_2} S$, we can choose unit tangent vectors $w_1, \cdots, w_{m-2} \in \mathsf{T}_{\xi_2} S$ so that $v_2, w_1, \cdots, w_{m-2}$ form a basis of $\mathsf{T}_{\xi_2} S$. For each $\ell = 1, \cdots, m-2$, we choose a sequence $\zeta_{\ell,k} \in \mathcal{F}_2$ converging to ξ_2 such that the unit vectors $\frac{\overrightarrow{\eta_{2,k} \zeta_{\ell,k}}}{\|\overrightarrow{\eta_{2,k} \zeta_{\ell,k}}\|}$ converges to w_ℓ as $k \to \infty$. Then for each $k \geq 1$ large enough, the set
$$\{z_2, \eta_{2,k}, \eta_{2,j_k}^{(k)}, \zeta_{1,k}, \cdots, \zeta_{m-2,k}\}$$
has cardinality $(m+1)$ and hence uniquely determines an $(m-1)$-dimensional sphere in $\mathcal{F}_2 = \mathbb{S}^m$, which we set to be S_k.

Since $(C_k, S_k) \cap \Lambda$ contains two distinct points $(\eta_{1,k}, \eta_{2,k})$ and $(\eta_{1,j_k}^{(k)}, \eta_{2,j_k}^{(k)})$, we have

$$(C_k, S_k) \in \Upsilon_\Delta^*.$$

Moreover, as $k \to \infty$, C_k converges to the unique circle passing through z_1 and tangent to v_1 which must be C, and S_k converges to the unique sphere passing through z_2 and whose tangent space at ξ_2 is same as $\mathsf{T}_{\xi_2}S$, which must be S. Therefore $(C_k, S_k) \in \Upsilon_\Delta^*$ converges to $Y = (C, S)$. This finishes the proof of Theorem 3.1.

Dense orbits. Let $\Gamma < \mathrm{SO}^\circ(n+1, 1)$ be a convex cocompact subgroup. Then ν_Γ is equal to δ_Γ-dimensional Hausdorff measure $\mathcal{H}^{\delta_\Gamma}|_\Lambda$ and $\delta = \delta_\Gamma$ is equal to the Hausdorff dimension of Λ by [21]. Let $\rho : \Gamma \to \mathrm{SO}^\circ(m+1, 1)$ be a Zariski dense convex cocompact faithful representation. Let $\Gamma_\rho := (\mathrm{id} \times \rho)(\Gamma) < G$ and

$$\Upsilon_\rho := \Upsilon_{\Gamma_\rho} = \{Y = (C, S) \in \Upsilon : Y \cap \Lambda_\rho \neq \emptyset\}.$$

Theorem 3.3. *Suppose that Γ_ρ is Zariski dense. Then there exists a $\mathcal{H}^\delta|_\Lambda$-conull $\Lambda' \subset \Lambda$ such that for any $Y \in \Upsilon_\rho$ intersecting $(\mathrm{id} \times f)(\Lambda')$ non-trivially,*

$$\overline{\Gamma_\rho Y} = \Upsilon_\rho.$$

Proof. Since G acts transitively on Υ as homeomorphisms, we have the homeomorphism

$$\Upsilon \simeq G/H$$

where $H = \mathrm{Stab}(Y_0)$ is the stabilizer of some $Y_0 = (C_0, S_0) \in \Upsilon$. Noting that H° is a semisimple real algebraic subgroup conjugate to $(\mathrm{SO}^\circ(2, 1) \times \mathrm{SO}(n-1)) \times \mathrm{SO}^\circ(m, 1)$, we may choose Y_0 so that $H \supset A$ and that $H \cap P$ is a minimal parabolic subgroup of H.

In particular, if $g \in G$ is such that the closure of $[g]A_u^+$ contains Ω_ρ for some $u \in \mathrm{int}\,\mathfrak{a}^+$, then the closure of $\Gamma_\rho g Y_0$ contains Υ_ρ^*, and hence by Theorem 3.1,

$$\overline{\Gamma_\rho g Y_0} = \Upsilon_\rho.$$

Since $\Gamma < \mathrm{SO}^\circ(n+1, 1)$ is convex cocompact, we have that $\mathcal{H}^\delta|_\Lambda$ is the unique Γ-conformal measure on Λ, up to a constant multiple [21]. Therefore Theorem 3.3 follows from Theorem 2.6 and Lemma 2.5. $\square$

4. Doubly stable condition on Λ

In this section, let $\Gamma < \mathrm{SO}^\circ(n+1, 1)$ be a discrete group, $n \geq 2$, which is not necessarily convex cocompact. Let $\Lambda \subset \mathbb{S}^n$ denote its limit set. Recall that $\Lambda \subset \mathbb{S}^n$ is said to be *doubly stable* if for any $\xi \in \Lambda$, there exists a circle $C \ni \xi$ such that for any sequence of circles C_k converging to C,

$$\# \limsup(C_k \cap \Lambda) \geq 2.$$

Theorem 4.1. *Let $\Gamma < \mathrm{SO}^\circ(n+1,1)$ be a discrete subgroup and $\rho : \Gamma \to \mathrm{SO}^\circ(m+1,1)$ be a discrete faithful representation with a boundary map $f : \Lambda \to \mathbb{S}^m$. Assume that Λ is doubly stable. If $(C_0, S_0) \in \Upsilon_\rho$ such that $f(C_0 \cap \Lambda) \subset S_0$, then*

$$\overline{\Gamma_\rho(C_0, S_0)} \neq \Upsilon_\rho.$$

Proof. The proof is very similar to the proof of [10, Theorem 1.1]. We add it for the sake of completeness. First, we observe that there exists a codimension one sphere S meeting $\Lambda_{\rho(\Gamma)}$ at precisely one point, say $f(\xi_0)$. This can be constructed as follows; fixing any $\eta_0 \in \mathbb{S}^m$, let $B \subset \mathbb{S}^m$ be the minimal closed ball centered at η_0 containing $\Lambda_{\rho(\Gamma)}$. Let $f(\xi_0) \in \Lambda_{\rho(\Gamma)}$ so that the distance $d(\eta_0, f(\xi_0))$ is equal to the radius of B. It now suffices to take any codimension one sphere $S \subset \mathbb{S}^m$ tangent to B at $f(\xi_0)$. Since Λ is doubly stable, there exists a circle $C \subset \mathbb{S}^n$ containing ξ_0 such that for any sequence of circles $C_k \subset \mathbb{S}^n$ converging to C as $k \to \infty$,

$$\# \limsup(C_k \cap \Lambda) \geq 2. \tag{4.1}$$

Set $Y = (C, S)$. It suffices to show that $Y \notin \overline{\Gamma_\rho(C_0, S_0)}$. Suppose on the contrary that there exists a sequence $\gamma_k \in \Gamma$ such that $\gamma_k C_0 \to C$ and $\rho(\gamma_k) S_0 \to S$ as $k \to \infty$. By (4.1), we have

$$\# \limsup(\gamma_k C_0 \cap \Lambda) \geq 2. \tag{4.2}$$

By the ρ-equivariance of f, we have

$$f(\gamma_k C_0 \cap \Lambda) = f(\gamma_k(C_0 \cap \Lambda)) = \rho(\gamma_k) f(C_0 \cap \Lambda) \subset \rho(\gamma_k) S_0 \cap \Lambda_{\rho(\Gamma)}.$$

Hence

$$\limsup f(\gamma_k C_0 \cap \Lambda) \subset \limsup(\rho(\gamma_k) S_0 \cap \Lambda_{\rho(\Gamma)}) \subset S \cap \Lambda_{\rho(\Gamma)}.$$

It now follows from (4.2) and the injectivity of f that $\#S \cap \Lambda_{\rho(\Gamma)} \geq 2$. This contradicts the choice of S that $\#S \cap \Lambda_{\rho(\Gamma)} = 1$, hence the claim follows. $\square$

Weak Koebe-Maskit condition. We denote by $\Omega = \mathbb{S}^n - \Lambda$ the ordinary set. The following is known as the Koebe-Maskit theorem for finitely generated Kleinian groups ([15, Theorem 6], [20, Theorem 1]):

Theorem 4.2 (Koebe-Maskit theorem). *Let $\Gamma < \mathrm{SO}^\circ(3,1)$ be finitely generated and $\{\Omega_k\}$ the collection of all components of Ω. Then for any $\alpha > 2$, $\sum_k \mathrm{Diam}(\Omega_k)^\alpha < \infty$ where $\mathrm{Diam}(\cdot)$ is the diameter in the spherical metric on $\mathbb{S}^2$.*

Inspired by this, we introduce the following:

Definition 4.3 (Weak Koebe-Maskit condition). We say that a discrete subgroup $\Gamma < \mathrm{SO}^\circ(n+1,1)$ satisfies the *weak Koebe-Maskit condition* (or simply WKM) if for any $\varepsilon > 0$, there are only finitely many components of Ω with diameter bigger than ε.

Theorem 4.4 ([25, Corollary E]). *Any convex cocompact discrete subgroup $\Gamma < \mathrm{SO}^\circ(n+1,1)$ satisfies WKM.*

The following lemma was proved for $n = 2$ in [10, Lemma 3.3], following the proof of [14, Lemma 8.1], but the proof works in the same way for all $n \geq 2$.

Lemma 4.5. *Suppose that $\Gamma < \mathrm{SO}°(n+1, 1)$ satisfies WKM. Let $C \subset \mathbb{S}^n$ be a circle not contained in the closure of any component of Ω. If C_k is a sequence of circles converging to C, then*

$$\# \limsup(C_k \cap \Lambda) \geq 2.$$

Lemma 4.6. *If $\Gamma < \mathrm{SO}°(n+1, 1)$ satisfies WKM (e.g., Γ convex cocompact) and Ω has at least two components, then Λ is doubly stable.*

Proof. Since Ω is disconnected, we may choose $x, y \in \Omega$ which belong to distinct components. For any $\xi \in \Lambda$, let $C \subset \mathbb{S}^n$ be the unique circle containing ξ, x, y. It remains to apply Lemma 4.5 for the conclusion. $\square$

5. Rigidity via circular slices

Let $n, m \geq 2$. Let $\Gamma < \mathrm{SO}°(n+1, 1)$ be a Zariski dense convex cocompact subgroup. Let $\rho : \Gamma \to \mathrm{SO}°(m+1, 1)$ be a Zariski dense convex cocompact deformation and $f : \Lambda \to \mathbb{S}^m$ be its boundary map. Recall

$$\Lambda_f = \bigcup \left\{ C \cap \Lambda : \begin{array}{l} C \subset \mathbb{S}^n \text{ is a circle such that} \\ f(C \cap \Lambda) \text{ is contained in a } (m-1)\text{-sphere of } \mathbb{S}^m \end{array} \right\}.$$

Theorem 1.1 is a special case of the following:

Theorem 5.1. *Suppose that Λ is doubly stable (e.g. Ω has at least two components). Then*

$$either \quad \Lambda_f = \Lambda \quad or \quad \mathcal{H}^\delta(\Lambda_f) = 0.$$

In the former case, we have $n = m$, f extends to some $g \in \mathrm{M\ddot{o}b}(\mathbb{S}^n)$ and ρ is a conjugation by g.

Proof. Suppose that $\mathcal{H}^\delta(\Lambda_f) > 0$. We need to show that $\Lambda_f = \Lambda$. We claim that Γ_ρ cannot be Zariski dense in G. Suppose the contrary. Let $\Lambda' \subset \Lambda$ be the $\mathcal{H}^\delta|_\Lambda$-conull subset given by Theorem 3.3. Since $\mathcal{H}^\delta(\Lambda_f) > 0$, there exists $\xi_0 \in \Lambda_f \cap \Lambda'$. By the definition of Λ_f, we can find $Y_0 = (C_0, S_0) \in \Upsilon_\Delta$ so that $Y_0 \ni (\xi_0, f(\xi_0))$ and $f(C_0 \cap \Lambda) \subset S_0$. By the definition of Λ' as in Theorem 3.3, we have

$$\overline{\Gamma_\rho Y_0} = \Upsilon_\rho.$$

On the other hand, since Λ is doubly stable, Theorem 4.1 implies that $\overline{\Gamma_\rho Y_0} \neq \Upsilon_\rho$. This yields a contradiction. Hence by Theorem 2.2, ρ extends to a Lie group isomorphism $\mathrm{SO}°(n+1, 1) \to \mathrm{SO}°(m+1, 1)$ and in particular $n = m$. Since the Lie group automorphism of $\mathrm{SO}°(n+1, 1)$ is a conjugation by some $g \in \mathrm{M\ddot{o}b}(\mathbb{S}^n)$, it follows that ρ is a conjugation by g and by the uniqueness of the ρ-boundary map, f is the restriction of g to Λ. Therefore $\Lambda_f = \Lambda$.

By Theorem 4.4 and Lemma 4.6, the limit set of a convex cocompact group whose ordinary set is disconnected is doubly stable. Hence the proof is now complete. □

Topological version without convex cocompactness. The assumption that Γ and $\rho(\Gamma)$ are convex cocompact was used to apply the ergodicity as in Theorem 2.4. The approach of our paper proves the following theorem without the convex cocompact hypothesis, which was shown in [10] for $n = m = 2$:

Theorem 5.2. *Let $\Gamma < \mathrm{SO}^\circ(n + 1, 1)$ be a Zariski dense discrete subgroup whose limit set is doubly stable. Let $\rho : \Gamma \to \mathrm{SO}^\circ(m + 1, 1)$ be a Zariski dense deformation with a ρ-boundary map $f : \Lambda \to \mathbb{S}^m$. Then*

$$\text{either} \quad \Lambda_f = \Lambda \quad \text{or} \quad \Lambda_f \text{ has empty interior in } \Lambda.$$

In the former case, we have $n = m$, f extends to some $g \in \mathrm{M\ddot{o}b}(\mathbb{S}^n)$ and ρ is a conjugation by g.

For this, we need to replace the ergodicity theorem (Theorem 2.4) by the following theorem of Chow-Sarkar for $\Delta = \Gamma_\rho$ (when M is abelian, this was also proved by Dang [4]):

Theorem 5.3 ([3, Theorem 8.1]). *Let $\Delta < G$ be a Zariski dense discrete subgroup. For any $u \in \mathrm{int}\,\mathcal{L}_\Delta$, there exists a dense A_u^+-orbit in*

$$\Omega_\Delta := \{[g] \in \Delta \backslash G : g^\pm \in \Lambda_\Delta\}.$$

This theorem provides a dense subset $\Lambda' \subset \Lambda$ such that for any $Y \subset \Upsilon_\rho$ intersecting $(\mathrm{id} \times f)(\Lambda')$ non-trivially, $\Gamma_\rho Y$ is dense in Υ_ρ, which is a topological version of Theorem 3.3. With this replacement, the rest of the proof can be repeated in verbatim.

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Department of Mathematics, Yale University, New Haven, CT 06511
Email address: dongryul.kim@yale.edu

Department of Mathematics, Yale University, New Haven, CT 06511
Email address: hee.oh@yale.edu