

SMALL GENERATORS OF COCOMPACT ARITHMETIC FUCHSIAN GROUPS

MICHELLE CHU AND HAN LI

ABSTRACT. In the study of Fuchsian groups, it is a nontrivial problem to determine a set of generators. Using a dynamical approach we construct for any cocompact arithmetic Fuchsian group a fundamental region in $\mathbf{SL}_2(\mathbb{R})$ from which we determine a set of small generators.

1. INTRODUCTION

Arithmetic Fuchsian groups form a subclass of Fuchsian groups with a special connection to number theory and the theory of automorphic forms. These groups are necessarily of finite covolume and thus finitely generated. However, as with general Fuchsian groups, it is a nontrivial problem to determine a set of generators. One way to do this involves constructing a polygonal fundamental domain in \mathbb{H}^2 and listing a set of generators corresponding to the side pairings of the polygon. Johansson, Voight, and Page produced algorithms to determine fundamental domains for groups of units in a maximal order of a quaternion algebra which are arithmetic Fuchsian (see [6, 17]) or Kleinian (see [15, Chapter 3]). Macasieb determined fundamental domains for derived arithmetic Fuchsian groups of genus 2 (see [11]). One could theoretically determine a set of generators for other groups in the commensurability class, but this seems hard in general.

We also note that Chinburg and Stover [4] obtain bounds for small generators S -units of division algebras using lattice point methods. However, their generators are small in the division algebra and their representatives in \mathbf{GL}_n do not necessarily have small entries.

In this paper, we consider any cocompact arithmetic Fuchsian group and use dynamical techniques to construct a fundamental region in $\mathbf{SL}_2(\mathbb{R})$ from which we determine a set of small generators. Our methods are reminiscent of methods used by Burger and Schroeder (see [3]) and in Page's thesis (see [15, Chapter 2]).

Although each of our generators will be small, the number of generators could be quite large. Given a presentation, Voight gives an algorithm (which works for general finite covolume Fuchsian groups) to construct a new generating set with a minimal number of generators (see [17]).

1.1. Statement of Results. Let $G = \mathbf{SL}_2(\mathbb{R})$ with a fixed Haar measure μ , and Γ be a cocompact arithmetic Fuchsian group (see subsection 3.1). Our main result gives a bound on norms of the generators in terms of the degree of the invariant

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trace field k , the volume of G/Γ , and the spectral gap of the Laplace-Beltrami operator on \mathbb{H}^2/Γ .

Theorem 1.1. *There exists a constant $C > 0$ depending only on the Haar measure μ and satisfying the following property. Let Γ be a cocompact arithmetic Fuchsian subgroup of G with invariant trace field k . Then Γ is generated by the finite subset*

$$(1.1) \quad \left\{ \gamma \in \Gamma : \|\gamma\| < C \cdot ([k : \mathbb{Q}]^{\frac{60}{1-\sqrt{1-4\lambda}}}) \cdot \text{vol}_\mu(G/\Gamma)^{\frac{6}{1-\sqrt{1-4\lambda}}} \right\}.$$

Here $\text{vol}_\mu(G/\Gamma)$ is the covolume of Γ with respect to the measure μ , and $\lambda = \min\{\frac{1}{4}, \lambda_1(\Gamma)\}$ where $\lambda_1(\Gamma)$ is the smallest non-zero eigenvalue of the Laplace-Beltrami operator on \mathbb{H}^2/Γ .

Note that over a finite-dimensional space the choice of norm $\|\cdot\|$ does not matter. However, for completeness we take the L^∞ -norm. The coefficient C in Theorem 1.1 can be explicitly calculated by following the methods of the proofs. Also, the result can be strengthened for certain families of arithmetic Fuchsian groups Γ , as we now describe.

Corollary 1.2. *If Γ is a cocompact congruence arithmetic Fuchsian group then it is generated by the finite subset*

$$(1.2) \quad \left\{ \gamma \in \Gamma : \|\gamma\| < C \cdot ([k : \mathbb{Q}]^{\frac{384}{5}}) \cdot \text{vol}_\mu(G/\Gamma)^{\frac{192}{25}} \right\}.$$

Corollary 1.3. *If Γ is torsion free cocompact arithmetic Fuchsian group then it is generated by the finite subset*

$$(1.3) \quad \left\{ \gamma \in \Gamma : \|\gamma\| < C \cdot (\log([k : \mathbb{Q}]^{\frac{180}{1-\sqrt{1-4\lambda}}})) \cdot \text{vol}_\mu(G/\Gamma)^{\frac{6}{1-\sqrt{1-4\lambda}}} \right\}.$$

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3. ARITHMETIC FUCHSIAN GROUPS

We recall the definition and some properties of arithmetic Fuchsian groups.

3.1. Definition and properties. Let k be a totally real number field and A a quaternion algebra over k ramified at all archimedean places except one. Let R_k be the ring of integers in k , \mathcal{O} an R_k -order in A , and \mathcal{O}^1 the elements of A -norm 1 in \mathcal{O} . Let ρ be a k -embedding of A in $M_2(\mathbb{R})$, 2×2 matrices over \mathbb{R} . Then $\rho(\mathcal{O}^1)$ is a Fuchsian group of finite covolume. By definition, a subgroup Γ in $\mathbf{SL}_2(\mathbb{R})$ is an arithmetic Fuchsian group if it is commensurable, up to conjugation, with some such $\rho(\mathcal{O}^1)$.

An arithmetic Fuchsian group Γ is called a congruence subgroup if there is a maximal order \mathcal{O} and an integral 2-sided \mathcal{O} -ideal I of \mathcal{O} in A such that Γ contains $\rho(\mathcal{O}^1(I))$ where $\mathcal{O}^1(I) = \{a \in \mathcal{O}^1 : a - 1 \in I\}$.

The field k in the definition of an arithmetic Fuchsian group Γ is a commensurability invariant and is recovered from Γ by $k\Gamma = \mathbb{Q}(\text{tr}(\Gamma^{(2)}))$, where $\Gamma^{(2)}$ is

the subgroup generated by the squares of elements in Γ . The number field $k\Gamma$ is the invariant trace field of Γ . The quaternion algebra is also recovered from Γ by $A\Gamma = \{\sum a_i \gamma_i : a_i \in k\Gamma, \gamma_i \in \Gamma^{(2)}\}$. For the remainder of the paper, we assume Γ is cocompact. The group Γ is cocompact when either $k \neq \mathbb{Q}$ or when $k = \mathbb{Q}$ and A is a division algebra. We note also that for any $\gamma \in \Gamma$, $\text{tr}\gamma$ is an algebraic integer of degree at most 2 over $k\Gamma$.

For more on arithmetic Fuchsian groups, including proofs of the statements mentioned, the reader is referred to [12, Chapter 8].

3.2. Lehmer’s and Salem’s conjectures. The Mahler measure of an algebraic integer θ is defined by

$$(3.1) \quad M(\theta) = |a_0| \prod \max(1, |\theta_i|)$$

where a_0 is the leading coefficient of the minimal polynomial for θ over \mathbb{Z} and θ_i ranges over the algebraic conjugates of θ .

In 1933 Lehmer posed the following conjecture:

Conjecture 3.1. [10] *There exists a universal lower bound $m > 1$ such that $M(\theta) \geq m$ for all θ which are not roots of unity.*

A Salem number is a real algebraic integer $\theta > 1$ such that θ^{-1} is a conjugate and all other conjugates lie on the unit circle. For Salem numbers, Lehmer’s conjecture restricts to the Salem conjecture.

Conjecture 3.2. *There exists $m_S > 1$ such that if θ is a Salem number then $M(\theta) \geq m_S$.*

The Salem conjecture is equivalent to the short geodesic conjecture of arithmetic 2-manifolds, which states that there is a universal lower bound for translation length for hyperbolic elements in arithmetic Fuchsian groups (see [14]). Assuming the Salem conjecture, the bounds in Theorem 1.1 can be modified to depend only on the covolume and the spectral gap whenever the group Γ contains no elliptic elements.

Corollary 3.3. *If the Salem conjecture is true and Γ is a torsion free, cocompact, arithmetic Fuchsian subgroup of G . Then Γ is generated by the finite subset*

$$(3.2) \quad \left\{ \gamma \in \Gamma : \|\gamma\| < C \cdot (\log(m_S))^{\frac{-60}{1-\sqrt{1-4\lambda}}} \cdot \text{vol}_\mu(G/\Gamma)^{\frac{6}{1-\sqrt{1-4\lambda}}} \right\}.$$

4. PREPARATION

4.1. Injectivity radius. Throughout this section, let d be the degree of the the invariant trace field of Γ .

Lemma 4.1. *Let Γ be a cocompact arithmetic Fuchsian group with invariant trace field of degree d and let*

$$(4.1) \quad W_d = \left\{ g \in G : 2 \cos\left(\frac{\pi}{2d}\right) < |\text{tr}(g)| < 2 \cosh\left(\frac{1}{16} \left(\frac{\log(\log(2d))}{\log(2d)}\right)^3\right) \right\}.$$

Then for any $g \in G$, $g\Gamma g^{-1} \cap W_d = \{1\}$

Proof. By the cocompactness condition, we consider only hyperbolic and elliptic elements in Γ .

If γ is hyperbolic then also γ^2 is hyperbolic, with $|\text{tr}(\gamma^2)| > 2$ and $\text{tr}(\gamma^2) \in k\Gamma$. Let u_γ be the root of the characteristic polynomial $x^2 - \text{tr}(\gamma)x + 1$ of γ which lies outside the unit circle (respectively, let u_{γ^2} be the root of the characteristic polynomial $x^2 - \text{tr}(\gamma^2)x + 1$ of γ^2 outside the unit circle). We have u_{γ^2} real and exactly two of its algebraic conjugates lie off the unit circle, namely u_{γ^2} and $u_{\gamma^2}^{-1}$ (see e.g. [12, Lemma 12.3.1]). Therefore, $\log M(u_{\gamma^2}) = \log |u_{\gamma^2}| = 2 \log |u_\gamma|$ where $M(u_{\gamma^2})$ is the Mahler measure (see Equation 3.1). As a hyperbolic element, γ acts on the hyperbolic plane by translating along its invariant axis a distance of $2 \log |u_\gamma|$. It then follows that $|\text{tr}(\gamma)| = 2 \cosh\left(\frac{1}{4} \log M(u_{\gamma^2})\right)$ (see e.g. [12, Lemma 12.1.2]). Since u_{γ^2} lies in an extension of degree 2 over $k\Gamma$, it has algebraic degree bounded above by $2d$. We now apply the main theorem of [18] which states that any algebraic integer θ of degree at most $2d$ has

$$(4.2) \quad \log M(\theta) > \frac{1}{4} \left(\frac{\log(\log(2d))}{\log(2d)} \right)^3$$

to get the following bound for the trace of a hyperbolic $\gamma \in \Gamma$

$$(4.3) \quad |\text{tr}(g)| > 2 \cosh \left(\frac{1}{16} \left(\frac{\log(\log(2d))}{\log(2d)} \right)^3 \right).$$

If γ is elliptic then by the discreteness of Γ , γ has order m and thus eigenvalues ω and ω^{-1} with $|\omega + \omega^{-1}| = |\text{tr}(\gamma)| < 2$ and such that ω is a primitive $2m$ -th root of unity. Since $\text{tr}(\gamma)$ lies in a field of degree at most 2 over $k\Gamma$, $(\omega + \omega^{-1})$ has algebraic degree of at most $2d$, or equivalently, ω has algebraic degree of at most $4d$. Then $|\text{tr}(\gamma)| = |u_\gamma + u_\gamma^{-1}|$ is bounded above by $|e^{\frac{2\pi i}{4d}} + e^{-\frac{2\pi i}{4d}}| = 2 \cos\left(\frac{\pi}{2d}\right)$.

Take W_d as in Equation 4.1. Since the trace is invariant under conjugation, for any $g \in G$ we have $g\Gamma g^{-1} \cap W_d = \{1\}$. \square

The injectivity radius of G/Γ at a point $x = h\Gamma \in G/\Gamma$ is related to the distance between the identity element and the nearest point in the lattice $h\Gamma h^{-1}$. Since the trace of a matrix is invariant under conjugation, the bounds in Lemma 4.1 for the traces of elements in any conjugate of Γ determine an injectivity radius for G/Γ .

For any $\eta > 0$ denote the ball of radius η centered at the identity $1 \in G$ by

$$B_G(\eta) = \{g \in G : \|g - 1\| < \eta\}.$$

Lemma 4.2. *There exists $\delta = \delta(d) = cd^{-2} > 0$ with c depending only on the Haar measure μ , such that the map $B_G(\delta) \rightarrow G/\Gamma$ given by $g \mapsto g.x$ is injective for any $x \in G/\Gamma$.*

Proof. Let

$$(4.4) \quad \delta_0 = \min \left\{ \cosh \left(\frac{1}{16} \left(\frac{\log(\log(2d))}{\log(2d)} \right)^3 \right) - 1, 1 - \cos \left(\frac{\pi}{2d} \right) \right\}.$$

Then for any $0 < \delta_1 < \delta_0$ and $g \in B_G(\delta_1)$,

$$|g_{1,1} - 1| < \delta_1 \quad \text{and} \quad |g_{2,2} - 1| < \delta_1,$$

where $g_{1,1}$ and $g_{2,2}$ are the (1, 1) and (2, 2) matrix entries of g . Then $|\text{tr}(g) - 2| < 2\delta_1$ and $g \in W_d$.

By the Taylor series expansion of $1 - \cos(\pi/2d)$,

$$(4.5) \quad 1 - \cos\left(\frac{\pi}{2d}\right) \approx \frac{\pi^2}{8d^2} - \frac{\pi^2}{384d^4}.$$

Since $1 - \cos\left(\frac{\pi}{2d}\right)$ goes to 0 at a faster rate than $\cosh\left(\frac{1}{16}\left(\frac{\log(\log(2d))}{\log(2d)}\right)^3\right) - 1$ goes to 0, there exists a positive constant c depending only on the measure μ such that $\delta(d) := c \cdot d^{-2} < \delta_0$ and such that for all $g_1, g_2 \in B_G(\delta)$, we have $g_1^{-1}g_2 \in B_G(\delta_0)$.

For any $x = h\Gamma \in G/\Gamma$, if $g_1, g_2 \in B_G(\delta)$ and $g_1.x = g_2.x$ then $g_1^{-1}g_2 \in h\Gamma h^{-1}$. Hence $g_1^{-1}g_2 \in W_d$ and by Lemma 4.1 it must be that $g_1 = g_2$. \square

Remark 4.3. When Γ is torsion free, only the traces of hyperbolic elements are relevant. In this case the constant $\delta(d)$ in Lemma 4.2 can be improved to $c\left(\frac{\log(\log(2d))}{\log(2d)}\right)^6$.

For a cleaner statement, we use the estimate $\log(d)^{-4} \ll \left(\frac{\log(\log(2d))}{\log(2d)}\right)^6$.

If the Salem conjecture is true, there is a universal lower bound for the trace of a hyperbolic element in an arithmetic Fuchsian group. Then for m_S the lower bound satisfying the Salem conjecture, the constant δ can be improved to $c \log^2(m_S)$ for all torsion free Γ . In particular, this constant would be independent of d .

4.2. Spectral gap. Let Γ be a cocompact Fuchsian group acting on the hyperbolic plane \mathbb{H}^2 from the right. Let $\lambda_1(\Gamma)$ be the first non-zero eigenvalue of the Laplacian operator on the locally symmetric space \mathbb{H}^2/Γ . Denote by $\lambda = \lambda(\Gamma) := \min\{\frac{1}{4}, \lambda_1(\Gamma)\}$. Let

$$(4.6) \quad \alpha_t = \begin{pmatrix} e^{\frac{t}{2}} & 0 \\ 0 & e^{-\frac{t}{2}} \end{pmatrix} \in \mathbf{SL}_2(\mathbb{R}), \quad \mathcal{D} = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 1 \\ -1 & 0 \end{pmatrix} \in \mathfrak{sl}_2(\mathbb{R}).$$

Denote by $\mu_{G/\Gamma}$ the G -invariant probability measure supported on G/Γ for which, whenever $X \subset G/\Gamma$ is a measurable set, we have $\text{vol}_\mu(X) = \text{vol}_\mu(G/\Gamma) \cdot \mu_{G/\Gamma}(X)$.

Lemma 4.4. *Let Γ be a cocompact lattice in G . Then for any smooth functions φ, ψ in $L_0^2(G/\Gamma) = \{f \in L^2(G/\Gamma) : \int f d\mu_{G/\Gamma} = 0\}$ it holds*

$$(4.7) \quad |\langle \alpha_t \cdot \varphi, \psi \rangle| \ll (e^{-t/3})^{1-\sqrt{1-4\lambda}} \cdot \|\mathcal{D} \cdot \varphi\| \cdot \|\mathcal{D} \cdot \psi\|.$$

Proof. This lemma follows from work of Ratner in [16] but is given explicitly in [13, Corollary 2.1] and with explicit constant. We use the estimate $t(e^{-t/2}) \ll (e^{-t/3})$ for a cleaner statement. \square

4.3. Translates. Given any two points in the G/Γ , some element $h \in G$ will translate one to the other. We use the injectivity radius, the spectral gap, and the covolume to give an upper bound on the norm of some such element h .

Theorem 4.5. *For any $g_1\Gamma, g_2\Gamma \in G/\Gamma$ there is some $h \in G$ and positive number c such that $h.g_1\Gamma = g_2\Gamma$ and*

$$(4.8) \quad \|h\| < c \cdot \text{vol}_\mu(G/\Gamma)^{\frac{3}{1-\sqrt{1-4\lambda}}} \cdot \delta^{\frac{-15}{1-\sqrt{1-4\lambda}}},$$

where δ is in Lemma 4.2 and λ is as in subsection 4.2.

Proof. Let φ and ψ be nonnegative, smooth bump functions supported in $B_G(\delta).g_1\Gamma$ and $B_G(\delta).g_2\Gamma$ respectively, and satisfying

$$(4.9) \quad \mu_{G/\Gamma}(\varphi) = \mu_{G/\Gamma}(\psi) = \text{vol}_\mu(G/\Gamma)^{-1}, \quad \|\mathcal{D} \cdot \varphi\|, \|\mathcal{D} \cdot \psi\| \ll \text{vol}_\mu(G/\Gamma)^{-\frac{1}{2}} \cdot \delta^{-\frac{5}{2}}.$$

These functions can be constructed as in [9, Lemma 2.4.7]. Applying Lemma 4.4 to the functions $\varphi - \mu_{G/\Gamma}(\varphi)$ and $\psi - \mu_{G/\Gamma}(\psi)$, we get

$$(4.10) \quad |\langle \alpha_t \cdot \varphi, \psi \rangle - \mu_{G/\Gamma}(\varphi) \cdot \mu_{G/\Gamma}(\psi)| \ll (e^{-t/3})^{1-\sqrt{1-4\lambda}} \cdot \|\mathcal{D} \cdot \varphi\| \cdot \|\mathcal{D} \cdot \psi\|.$$

Then for $t > 0$ such that

$$\|\alpha_t\| \leq e^t \ll \text{vol}_\mu(G/\Gamma)^{\frac{3}{1-\sqrt{1-4\lambda}}} \cdot \delta^{\frac{-15/2}{1-\sqrt{1-4\lambda}}},$$

we must have $\langle \alpha_t \cdot \varphi, \psi \rangle \neq 0$, since $\mu_{G/\Gamma}\varphi \cdot \mu_{G/\Gamma}\psi$ will dominate the error term in Equation 4.10. Therefore, the set

$$(\alpha_t \cdot \text{supp}(\varphi) \cap \text{supp}(\psi)) \subset (\alpha_t \cdot (B_G(\delta) \cdot g_1\Gamma) \cap (B_G(\delta) \cdot g_2\Gamma))$$

is not empty. There is some $h \in B_G(\delta)^{-1} \cdot \alpha_t \cdot B_G(\delta)$ for which $h \cdot g_1\Gamma = g_2\Gamma$. \square

5. PROOF OF RESULTS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

Proof of Theorem 1.1. Define the set

$$(5.1) \quad \mathcal{U} = \left\{ h \in G : \|h\| \leq \text{vol}_\mu(G/\Gamma)^{\frac{3}{1-\sqrt{1-4\lambda}}} \cdot \delta^{\frac{-15}{1-\sqrt{1-4\lambda}}} \right\}.$$

By Theorem 4.5, for any $g \in G$, there is some $h \in \mathcal{U}$ such that $h\Gamma = g\Gamma$. That is, we can write g as $h\gamma$ for some $\gamma \in \Gamma$. Therefore, we have constructed an open set $\mathcal{U} \subset G$ such that $\mathcal{U}\Gamma = G$. It follows that $\{\gamma \in \Gamma : \mathcal{U} \cdot \gamma \cap \mathcal{U} \neq \emptyset\}$ generates Γ (see e.g. [2, Lemma 6.6]). Then Γ is generated by the bigger set $\mathcal{U}^{-1}\mathcal{U} \cap \Gamma$, whose elements have norm bounded above by $\text{vol}_\mu(G/\Gamma)^{\frac{6}{1-\sqrt{1-4\lambda}}} \cdot \delta^{\frac{-30}{1-\sqrt{1-4\lambda}}}$.

The proof of Theorem 1.1 then follows by replacing δ with $c[k : \mathbb{Q}]^{-2}$, as given in Lemma 4.2 (where $d = [k : \mathbb{Q}]$). \square

Proof of Corollary 1.2. The proof of Corollary 1.2 follows from the well-known result that

$$(5.2) \quad \lambda_1(\Gamma) \geq 975/4096$$

for every congruence arithmetic Fuchsian group. For the sake of reader's convenience, we shall briefly explain (Equation 5.2) in the case when $k\Gamma = \mathbb{Q}$.

By the Jacquet-Langlands correspondence (see [5, Chapter 16]), if Γ is a congruence arithmetic Fuchsian group with $k\Gamma = \mathbb{Q}$ then $\lambda_1(\Gamma) \geq \inf\{\lambda_1(\Lambda(N)) : N \in \mathbb{N}\}$, where $\Lambda(N) = \{\gamma \in \mathbf{SL}_2(\mathbb{Z}) : \gamma \equiv 1 \pmod{N}\}$. As of this writing we have the estimate, which is due to Kim-Sarnak [8],

$$(5.3) \quad \inf\{\lambda_1(\Lambda(N)) : N \in \mathbb{N}\} \geq 975/4096.$$

We note that, for the case when $k\Gamma$ is a number field, Equation 5.2 follows from the Jacquet-Langlands correspondence together with the bounds on the Ramanujan conjecture over number fields (see [1]). \square

Proof of Corollary 1.3 and Corollary 3.3. The proof of Corollary 1.3 follows from the proof of Theorem 1.1 by replacing δ with $c \log(d)^{-4}$ as in Remark 4.3. Furthermore, if we assume the Salem conjecture is true, then Corollary 3.3 will follow by setting $\delta = c \log^2(m_S)$ as in Remark 4.3. \square

Remark 5.1. The arguments in the proof of Theorem 1.1 can be modified to give a similar result for cocompact arithmetic Kleinian groups. All lemmas will go through except that one would need an analogue of Lemma 4.4. An analogue of Lemma 4.4 (or [13, Corollary 2.1]) does hold. However, more work would need to be done to

get an explicit rate of the decay of correlations for functions on $\mathbf{SL}_2(\mathbb{C})/\Gamma$, from the λ_1 of the corresponding hyperbolic 3-manifold $\mathrm{SU}(2)\backslash\mathbf{SL}_2(\mathbb{C})/\Gamma$. At this time, we are not aware of such a statement in the current literature.

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DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS, UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN, AUSTIN, TX 78750, USA
E-mail address: `mchu@math.utexas.edu`

DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS AND COMPUTER SCIENCES, WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY, MIDDLETOWN, CT 06457, USA
E-mail address: `hli03@wesleyan.edu`