

ON BOHR SETS OF INTEGER-VALUED TRACELESS MATRICES

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ABSTRACT. In this paper we show that any Bohr-zero non-periodic set B of traceless integer-valued matrices, denoted by Λ , intersects non-trivially the conjugacy class of any matrix from Λ . As a corollary, we obtain that the family of characteristic polynomials of B contains all characteristic polynomials of matrices from Λ . The main ingredient used in this paper is an equidistribution result for an $SL_d(\mathbb{Z})$ random walk on a finite-dimensional torus deduced from Bourgain-Furman-Lindenstrauss-Mozes work [J. Amer. Math. Soc. **24** (2011), 231–280].

1. INTRODUCTION

Let us denote by $Mat_d^0(\mathbb{Z})$, $d \geq 2$, the set of integer-valued $d \times d$ matrices with zero trace, and by \mathbb{T}^n , $n \geq 1$, the n -dimensional torus $\mathbb{R}^n/\mathbb{Z}^n$. Let G be a countable abelian group. A set $B \subset G$ is called a *non-periodic Bohr set* if there exist a homomorphism $\tau : G \rightarrow \mathbb{T}^n$, for some $n \geq 1$, with $\overline{\tau(G)} = \mathbb{T}^n$, and an open set $U \subset \mathbb{T}^n$ satisfying $B = \tau^{-1}(U)$. If the open set U contains the zero element of \mathbb{T}^n , then the set B is called a *Bohr-zero set*. We will also denote by $SL_d(\mathbb{Z})$ the group of $d \times d$ integer-valued matrices of determinant one.

The main result of this paper is the following.

Main Theorem. *Let $d \geq 2$, and $B \subset Mat_d^0(\mathbb{Z})$ be a Bohr-zero non-periodic set. Then for any matrix $C \in Mat_d^0(\mathbb{Z})$ there exist a matrix $A \in B$ and a matrix $g \in SL_d(\mathbb{Z})$ such that $C = g^{-1}Ag$.*

The same result has also been proved independently by Björklund and Bulinski [4]. They use the recent works of Benoist-Quint [2] and [3] instead of the work of Bourgain-Furman-Lindenstrauss-Mozes as the main ingredient in the proof. Use of Bourgain-Furman-Lindenstrauss-Mozes' work enables us to prove a strong equidistribution result for the random walk of $SL_d(\mathbb{Z})$ acting on $Mat_d^0(\mathbb{R})/Mat_d^0(\mathbb{Z})$ by the conjugation (see Theorem 2.2). This result is interesting on its own and may have other number-theoretic applications. This should be compared with Theorem 1.15 in [4], where the equidistribution is established for the Cesàro average of the random walk (a weaker statement).

Corollary 1.1. *Let $d \geq 2$, and $B \subset Mat_d^0(\mathbb{Z})$ be a Bohr-zero non-periodic set. The set of characteristic polynomials of the matrices in B coincides with the set of all characteristic polynomials of the matrices in $Mat_d^0(\mathbb{Z})$.*

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The following number-theoretic statement is an immediate implication of Corollary 1.1.

Corollary 1.2. *Let $B \subset \mathbb{Z}$ be a Bohr-zero non-periodic set. Then the set of the discriminants over B defined by*

$$D := \{xy - z^2 \mid x, y, z \in B\}$$

satisfies that $D = \mathbb{Z}$.

At this point we will define Furstenberg’s system corresponding to a set B of positive density in a countable abelian group G . It is well known that in any (countable) abelian group we can find sequences of almost invariant finite sets, so-called Følner sequences. A sequence of finite sets (F_n) in G is called Følner if it is asymptotically G -invariant; i.e., for every $g \in G$ we have $\frac{|F_n \cap (F_n + g)|}{|F_n|} \rightarrow 1$, as $n \rightarrow \infty$. We will say that B has *positive density* if *upper Banach density* of B is positive, i.e., if

$$d^*(B) = \sup_{(F_n) \subset G \text{ Følner}} \limsup_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{|B \cap F_n|}{|F_n|}$$

is positive. Furstenberg in his seminal paper [9] constructed a G -measure-preserving system¹ (X, η, σ) and a clopen set $\tilde{B} \subset X$ such that

- $d^*(B \cap (B + h)) \geq \eta(\tilde{B} \cap \sigma(h)\tilde{B})$, for any $h \in G$.
- $\eta(\tilde{B}) = d^*(B)$.

Moreover, we can further refine the statement of the correspondence principle² and require the system to be ergodic.³ We will denote Furstenberg’s (ergodic) system corresponding to B by $X_B = (X, \eta, \sigma, \tilde{B})$. Next, we will define the notion of the spectral measure corresponding to a set B of a countable abelian group G of positive density and its Furstenberg system $X_B = (X, \eta, \sigma, \tilde{B})$. Denote by $1_{\tilde{B}}$ the indicator function of the set \tilde{B} . Then by Bochner’s spectral theorem [8] there exists a non-negative finite Borel measure ν on \hat{G} (the dual of G) which satisfies

$$\langle 1_{\tilde{B}}, \sigma(h)1_{\tilde{B}} \rangle = \int_{\hat{G}} \chi(h) d\nu(\chi), \text{ for } h \in G.$$

The measure ν will be called the *spectral measure of the set B and its Furstenberg system X_B* , and we will denote by $\hat{\nu}(h)$ the right hand side of the last equation. We are at the position to state the main technical claim of the paper (see section 3 for the proof).

Theorem 1.1. *Let $d \geq 2$, and let $B \subset \text{Mat}_d^0(\mathbb{Z})$ be a set of positive density such that the spectral measure⁴ of B has no atoms at non-trivial characters having finite torsion. Then for every $C \in \text{Mat}_d^0(\mathbb{Z})$ there exist $A \in B - B$ and $g \in \text{SL}_d(\mathbb{Z})$ with $C = g^{-1}Ag$.*

¹A triple (X, η, σ) is a G -measure-preserving system if X is a compact metric space on which G acts by a measurable action denoted by σ , η is a Borel probability measure on X , and the action of G preserves η .

²The proof of Correspondence Principle II of Appendix I in [5] will work also for the finite intersections and therefore will imply the claim.

³A G -measure-preserving system is *ergodic* if any G -invariant measurable set has measure either zero or one.

⁴We assume the existence of some Furstenberg system X_B corresponding to the set B , such that the associated spectral measure satisfies the requirement of the theorem.

Theorem 1.1 is an extension of the following result that has been proved in [5] by use of the equidistribution result of Benoist-Quint [1].

Theorem 1.2. *Let $d \geq 2$, and let $B \subset \text{Mat}_d^0(\mathbb{Z})$ be a set of positive density. Then there exists $k \geq 1$ such that for any matrix $C \in k\text{Mat}_d^0(\mathbb{Z})$ there exist $A \in B - B$ and $g \in \text{SL}_d(\mathbb{Z})$ with $C = g^{-1}Ag$.*

We would like to finish the introduction by stating the piecewise version of the Main Theorem. We recall that a set $B \subset G$ is called a *piecewise (non-periodic) Bohr set* if there is a (non-periodic) Bohr set $B_0 \subset G$ and a (thick) set $T \subset G$ of upper Banach density one, i.e., $d^*(T) = 1$ such that $B = B_0 \cap T$. Theorem 1.1 implies the following result (see the proof in section 3).

Theorem 1.3. *Let $d \geq 2$, and let $B \subset \text{Mat}_d^0(\mathbb{Z})$ be a piecewise Bohr non-periodic set. Then for every $C \in \text{Mat}_d^0(\mathbb{Z})$ there exist $A \in B - B$ and $g \in \text{SL}_d(\mathbb{Z})$ with $C = g^{-1}Ag$.*

Let us show that Theorem 1.3 implies the Main Theorem.

Proof of Main Theorem. Let $B \subset \text{Mat}_d^0(\mathbb{Z})$ be a Bohr-zero non-periodic set. Notice that there exists $B_0 \subset \text{Mat}_d^0(\mathbb{Z})$, a Bohr-zero non-periodic set with the property that

$$B_0 - B_0 \subset B.$$

Now, we apply Theorem 1.3 for the set B_0 and as a conclusion obtain the statement of the theorem. □

Organisation of the paper. In section 2 we establish the consequences of the equidistribution result of Bourgain-Furman-Lindenstrauss-Mozes [7] related to the adjoint action of $\text{SL}_d(\mathbb{Z})$ on $\text{Mat}_d^0(\mathbb{R})/\text{Mat}_d^0(\mathbb{Z})$. In section 3 we prove Theorems 1.1 and 1.3.

2. CONSEQUENCES OF THE WORK OF BOURGAIN-FURMAN-LINDENSTRAUSS-MOZES

We start by recalling the property of strong irreducibility of an action of a discrete group. Let Γ be a countable group and V be a finite-dimensional real space. We say that an action $\rho : \Gamma \rightarrow \text{End}(V)$ is *strongly irreducible* if for every finite index subgroup H of Γ , the restriction of the action of ρ to H is irreducible. We also will be using the notion of a proximal element. An operator $T \in \text{End}(V)$ will be called *proximal* if there is only one eigenvalue of the largest absolute value, and corresponding to it eigenspace is one-dimensional.

Assume that a countable group Γ acts on a compact Borel measure space (X, ν) . Let μ be a probability measure on Γ . Then the convolution measure $\mu * \nu$ on X is defined by

$$\int_X f d(\mu * \nu) = \int_X \left(\sum_{g \in \Gamma} f(gx) \mu(g) \right) d\nu(x), \text{ for any } f \in C(X).$$

We will denote the Dirac probability measure at a point $x \in X$ by δ_x . For every $k \geq 2$, we define the probability measure μ^{*k} on Γ by

$$\mu^{*k}(g) = \sum_{g_1 \cdots g_k = g} \mu(g_1) \mu(g_2) \cdots \mu(g_k).$$

The main ingredient in the proofs of all our main results is the following seminal equidistribution statement due to Bourgain-Furman-Lindenstrauss-Mozes [7].

Theorem 2.1 (Corollary B in [7]). *Let $\Gamma < SL_n(\mathbb{Z})$ be a subgroup which acts totally irreducibly on \mathbb{R}^n and having a proximal element. Let μ be a finite generating probability measure on Γ . Let $x \in \mathbb{T}^n$ be a non-rational point. Then the measures $\mu^{*k} * \delta_x$ converge in weak*-topology as $k \rightarrow \infty$ to Haar measure on \mathbb{T}^n .*

In this note, the acting group will be $\Gamma = SL_d(\mathbb{Z})$. The group Γ acts by the conjugation on the real vector space $V = Mat_d^0(\mathbb{R})$ of real valued $d \times d$ matrices with zero trace. So, an element $g \in SL_d(\mathbb{Z})$ acts on $v \in V$ by $Ad(g)v = g^{-1}vg$, and such action is called the *adjoint action* of $SL_d(\mathbb{Z})$. Notice that V is isomorphic to \mathbb{R}^{d^2-1} and for any element g of $SL_d(\mathbb{Z})$, the endomorphism of V obtained by the conjugate action of g has determinant one. The next claim will allow us to apply Theorem 2.1 in our setting.

Proposition 2.1. *The adjoint action of $SL_d(\mathbb{Z})$ on $Mat_d^0(\mathbb{R})$ is strongly irreducible, and $SL_d(\mathbb{Z})$ contains an element which acts proximally.*

Proof. It is proved in [5, Corollary 5.4] that the adjoint action of $SL_d(\mathbb{Z})$ on $Mat_d^0(\mathbb{R})$ is strongly irreducible. Therefore, it remains to prove that there is at least one element of $SL_d(\mathbb{Z})$ which acts on $Mat_d^0(\mathbb{R})$ proximally. Proposition 2.2 below finishes the proof of the statement. \square

Proposition 2.2. *The matrix*

$$B_2 = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & -1 \\ -1 & 2 \end{bmatrix}$$

acts (by conjugation) on $Mat_2^0(\mathbb{R})$ proximally. For $d \geq 3$, the matrix

$$B_d = \left[\begin{array}{cc|c} 1 & -1 & \mathbf{0}_{2 \times (d-2)} \\ -1 & 2 & \\ \hline \mathbf{0}_{(d-2) \times 2} & & Id_{(d-2) \times (d-2)} \end{array} \right]$$

acts proximally on $Mat_d^0(\mathbb{R})$.

Proof. It is straightforward to check that the operator $B_2 : Mat_2^0(\mathbb{R}) \rightarrow Mat_2^0(\mathbb{R})$ can be written in the matrix form as⁵

$$\begin{bmatrix} 3 & -2 & 1 \\ -4 & 4 & -1 \\ 2 & -1 & 1 \end{bmatrix}.$$

The characteristic polynomial of this operator is $\chi_{B_2}(\lambda) = (1 - \lambda)(\lambda^2 - 7\lambda + 1)$. Since all eigenvalues are distinct by their absolute value, it follows that the operator acts proximally.

In the case $d \geq 3$, notice that the action of B_d on $Mat_d^0(\mathbb{R})$ is decomposed into 4 orthogonal spaces: the actions on the 2×2 upper left corner, $2 \times (d - 2)$ upper right corner, $(d - 2) \times 2$ bottom left corner, and the identity action on the bottom

⁵We use the identification between $Mat_2^0(\mathbb{R})$ and \mathbb{R}^3 by

$$\begin{bmatrix} x & y \\ z & -x \end{bmatrix} \rightarrow [x, y, z]^t.$$

right $(d - 2) \times (d - 2)$ corner. Correspondingly, the dimensions of the spaces are $4, 2 \cdot (d - 2), (d - 2) \cdot 2$, and $(d - 2)^2 - 1$.⁶

The four-dimensional left upper corner part can be written in the matrix form as⁷

$$\begin{bmatrix} 2 & -2 & 1 & -1 \\ -2 & 4 & -1 & 2 \\ 1 & -1 & 1 & -1 \\ -1 & 2 & -1 & 2 \end{bmatrix}.$$

Its characteristic polynomial is $(\lambda - 1)^2(\lambda^2 - 7\lambda + 1)$. Therefore there is a unique highest eigenvalue by the absolute value equal to $\frac{7+3\sqrt{5}}{2}$, and it has multiplicity one.

The operator B_d acts on the upper right corner in the following way:

$$\begin{bmatrix} x_1 & y_1 \\ x_2 & y_2 \\ \dots & \dots \\ x_{d-2} & y_{d-2} \end{bmatrix}^t \rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} 2x_1 + y_1 & x_1 + y_1 \\ 2x_2 + y_2 & x_2 + y_2 \\ \dots & \dots \\ 2x_{d-2} + y_{d-2} & x_{d-2} + y_{d-2} \end{bmatrix}^t.$$

It is clear that it has two eigenvalues with multiplicity $d - 2$. These eigenvalues correspond to the eigenvalues of the matrix

$$C = \begin{bmatrix} 2 & 1 \\ 1 & 1 \end{bmatrix}.$$

These eigenvalues are the roots of the characteristic polynomial of the matrix C which are $\frac{3 \pm \sqrt{5}}{2}$.

The operator B_d acts on the bottom left corner in the following way:

$$\begin{bmatrix} x_1 & y_1 \\ x_2 & y_2 \\ \dots & \dots \\ x_{d-2} & y_{d-2} \end{bmatrix} \rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} x_1 - y_1 & -x_1 + 2y_1 \\ x_2 - y_2 & -x_2 + 2y_2 \\ \dots & \dots \\ x_{d-2} - y_{d-2} & -x_{d-2} + 2y_{d-2} \end{bmatrix}.$$

Therefore it has two eigenvalues of the matrix C^{-1} , each one having multiplicity $d - 2$. It is immediate to check that C^{-1} has the same characteristic polynomial as C ; therefore the eigenvalues of the operator B_d acting on the bottom left corner are $\frac{3 \pm \sqrt{5}}{2}$, each one having multiplicity $d - 2$.

As the conclusion of the previous considerations we find that the eigenvalues of the operator B_d are $\frac{7+3\sqrt{5}}{2}, \frac{3+\sqrt{5}}{2}, 1, \frac{7-3\sqrt{5}}{2}, \frac{3-\sqrt{5}}{2}$ with corresponding algebraic multiplicities equal to $1, 2(d - 2), [(d - 2)^2 - 1] + 2, 1, 2(d - 2)$. This implies that B_d acts proximally on $Mat_d^0(\mathbb{R})$. \square

Let us denote $A_d = V/\Lambda$, where $\Lambda = Mat_d^0(\mathbb{Z})$. Notice that A_d is isomorphic to \mathbb{T}^{d^2-1} , and it is the dual group of Λ . The adjoint action of $SL_d(\mathbb{Z})$ leaves Λ invariant. Therefore, $SL_d(\mathbb{Z})$ also acts on A_d . Proposition 2.1 implies by Theorem 2.1 the following statement.

⁶We identify the vector space $Mat_d^0(\mathbb{R})$ with \mathbb{R}^{d^2-1} by omitting the (d, d) -entry of matrices in $Mat_d^0(\mathbb{R})$.

⁷We choose the standard basis for $Mat_2(\mathbb{R})$:

$$\begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}, \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 1 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}, \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 \end{bmatrix}, \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}.$$

Proposition 2.3. *Let μ be a probability measure on $SL_d(\mathbb{Z})$ with finite generating support. Let $x \in A_d$ be a non-rational point. Then the measures $\mu^{*k} * \delta_x$ converge as $k \rightarrow \infty$ in the weak* topology to the normalised Haar measure on A_d .*

We will be using Proposition 2.3 to prove the following:

Theorem 2.2. *Let μ be a probability measure on $SL_d(\mathbb{Z})$ with finite generating support. Let ν be a probability measure on A_d with no atoms at rational points. Then the measures $\mu^{*k} * \nu$ converge as $k \rightarrow \infty$ in the weak* topology to the normalised Haar measure on A_d .*

Proof. Let ν be a probability measure on A_d with no atoms at rational points, and let μ be a probability measure on $\Gamma = SL_d(\mathbb{Z})$ with finite generating support. By Proposition 2.3 for every non-rational $x \in A_d$ the measures $\mu^{*k} * \delta_x$ converge in weak*-topology as $k \rightarrow \infty$ to the Haar measure on A_d . Let f be a continuous function on A_d . Denote by A'_d the set of all non-rational points of A_d . Notice that $\nu(A'_d) = 1$. Then for every $x \in A'_d$ we have that $f_k(x) := \int f d(\mu^{*k} * \delta_x) \rightarrow \int f$. We have to show that

$$\int_{A_d} f d(\mu^{*k} * \nu) \rightarrow \int f.$$

By Egorov’s theorem, for every $\varepsilon > 0$, there exists $X' \subset A'_d$ with $\nu(X') \geq 1 - \varepsilon$ and $K(\varepsilon)$ with the property that for every $x \in X'$ and every $k \geq K(\varepsilon)$ we have

$$\left| f_k(x) - \int f \right| < \varepsilon.$$

Notice that

$$\begin{aligned} \int f d(\mu^{*k} * \nu) &= \sum_{g \in \Gamma} \int f(gx) \mu^{*k}(g) d\nu(x) = \int \left(\sum_{g \in \Gamma} f(gx) \mu^{*k}(g) \right) d\nu(x) \\ &= \int \left(\int f d(\mu^{*k} * \delta_x) \right) d\nu(x) = \int f_k(x) d\nu(x). \end{aligned}$$

Let $\delta > 0$. Denote $M = \|f\|_\infty$, and take $\varepsilon > 0$ so small that $\varepsilon M < 2\delta$ and $\varepsilon < \delta$. Then we have

$$\left| \int f d(\mu^{*k} * \nu) - \int f \right| = \left| \int \left(f_k(x) - \int f \right) d\nu(x) \right| < (1 - \varepsilon)\varepsilon + \varepsilon M < 3\delta,$$

for $k \geq K(\varepsilon)$. Since δ can be chosen arbitrarily small, we have shown that

$$\int f d(\mu^{*k} * \nu) \rightarrow \int f.$$

This finishes the proof because the function f was an arbitrary continuous function on A_d . □

3. PROOFS OF THEOREMS 1.1 AND 1.3

First, we will prove a very useful statement.

Lemma 3.1. *Let G be a countable abelian group, and let $(F_n) \subset G$ be a Følner sequence. Let $\chi \in \widehat{G}$ be a non-trivial character. Then we have*

$$\frac{1}{|F_n|} \sum_{g \in F_n} \chi(g) \rightarrow 0, \text{ as } n \rightarrow \infty.$$

Proof. Let (n_k) be a sequence along which the limit of

$$\frac{1}{|F_{n_k}|} \sum_{g \in F_{n_k}} \chi(g)$$

exists. Let us denote the limit by $F(\chi)$. For every $h \in G$ we have

$$\frac{1}{|F_{n_k}|} \sum_{g \in F_{n_k}} \chi(g+h) = \chi(h) \frac{1}{|F_{n_k}|} \sum_{g \in F_{n_k}} \chi(g) \rightarrow \chi(h)F(\chi).$$

On the other hand, by use of the Følner property of (F_{n_k}) we obtain

$$\frac{1}{|F_{n_k}|} \sum_{g \in F_{n_k}} \chi(g+h) = \frac{1}{|F_{n_k}|} \sum_{g \in F_{n_k}+h} \chi(g) \rightarrow F(\chi).$$

Therefore, we have for every $h \in G$:

$$F(\chi) = \chi(h)F(\chi).$$

Since $\chi \neq 1$, we get that $F(\chi) = 0$. The statement of the lemma follows, since our conclusion is independent of the subsequence (n_k) . \square

Recall that $\Lambda = Mat_d^0(\mathbb{Z})$, and we denote $\Gamma = SL_d(\mathbb{Z})$. We make the identification of the dual space of Λ with the torus $A_d = Mat_d^0(\mathbb{R})/Mat_d^0(\mathbb{Z}) \simeq \mathbb{T}^{d^2-1}$ by corresponding for every $x \in A_d$ the character χ_x on Λ given by

$$\chi_x(h) = \exp(2\pi i \langle x, h \rangle), \text{ for } h \in \Lambda.$$

Notice that the trivial character on Λ corresponds to the zero element o_{A_d} of A_d , and characters having finite torsion correspond to the rational points of A_d .

Proof of Theorem 1.1. Let $B \subset \Lambda$ be a set of positive density with Furstenberg’s system $X_B = (X, \eta, \sigma, \tilde{B})$ and such that the spectral measure of B has no atoms at non-trivial characters. Denote by ν the spectral measure of B ; i.e., for every $h \in \Lambda$ we have

$$(1) \quad \langle 1_{\tilde{B}}, \sigma(h)1_{\tilde{B}} \rangle = \int_{A_d} \exp(2\pi i \langle x, h \rangle) d\nu(x).$$

By the assumptions of the theorem, ν has no atoms at the rational points. We will show that for every $h \in \Lambda$ there exists $g \in \Gamma$ such that

$$\widehat{\nu}(g^{-1}hg) = \langle 1_{\tilde{B}}, \sigma(g^{-1}hg)1_{\tilde{B}} \rangle > 0.$$

This will imply the claim of the theorem by the first property of Furstenberg’s system X_B . Assume that, on the contrary, there exists $h \in \Lambda$ such that for all $g \in \Gamma$ we have

$$(2) \quad \widehat{\nu}(g^{-1}hg) = 0.$$

Since for $h = 0_\Lambda$ we have $g^{-1}0_\Lambda g = 0_\Lambda$ and $\widehat{\nu}(0_\Lambda) = \eta(\tilde{B}) > 0$, we conclude that there exists a non-zero $h \in \Lambda$ such that (2) holds for all $g \in \Gamma$.

For any Følner sequence (F_n) in Λ ,

$$(3) \quad \begin{aligned} & \frac{1}{|F_n|} \sum_{h \in F_n} \langle 1_{\tilde{B}}, \sigma(h)1_{\tilde{B}} \rangle \\ &= \int_{A_d} \frac{1}{|F_n|} \sum_{h \in F_n} \exp(2\pi i \langle x, h \rangle) d\nu(x) \rightarrow \nu(\{o_{A_d}\}), \text{ as } N \rightarrow \infty. \end{aligned}$$

In the last transition, we have used Lebesgue’s dominated convergence theorem and Lemma 3.1. By ergodicity of Furstenberg’s system and von-Neumann’s ergodic theorem it follows that the left hand side of (3) satisfies

$$\frac{1}{|F_n|} \sum_{h \in F_n} \langle 1_{\tilde{B}}, \sigma(h)1_{\tilde{B}} \rangle \rightarrow \eta(\tilde{B})^2, \text{ as } n \rightarrow \infty.$$

Altogether it implies that

$$\nu(\{o_{A_d}\}) = \eta(\tilde{B})^2 > 0.$$

Let μ be a probability measure on Γ having finite generating support. By Proposition 2.2 the measures $\mu^{*k} * \nu$ converge as $k \rightarrow \infty$ in weak*-topology to

$$\eta(\tilde{B}) \left(1 - \eta(\tilde{B}) \right) m_{A_d} + \eta(\tilde{B})^2 \delta_{o_{A_d}},$$

where m_{A_d} stands for the normalised Haar measure on A_d . Notice that Γ also acts on A_d by $g \cdot x = (g^t)^{-1}xg^t$, for $g \in \Gamma$. The action of Γ on A_d and the adjoint action of Γ on Λ are related by the following:

$$\langle (g \cdot x), h \rangle = \langle x, Ad(g)h \rangle, \text{ for every } g \in \Gamma, h \in \Lambda, x \in A_d.$$

Notice that

$$\begin{aligned} \widehat{\mu^{*k} * \nu}(h) &= \int_{A_d} \exp(2\pi i \langle x, h \rangle) d(\mu^{*k} * \nu)(x) \\ &= \int_{A_d} \left(\sum_{g \in \Gamma} \exp(2\pi i \langle (g \cdot x), h \rangle) \mu^{*k}(g) \right) d\nu(x) \\ &= \sum_{g \in \Gamma} \left(\int_{A_d} \exp(2\pi i \langle x, (g^{-1}hg) \rangle) d\nu(x) \right) \mu^{*k}(g) = \sum_{g \in \Gamma} \widehat{\nu}(g^{-1}hg) \mu^{*k}(g). \end{aligned}$$

Recall that we assumed there exists a non-zero $h \in \Lambda$ such that $\widehat{\nu}(g^{-1}hg) = 0$, for all $g \in \Gamma$. Therefore, we have $\widehat{\mu^{*k} * \nu}(h) = 0$, for all $k \geq 1$. On the other hand, since $\widehat{m_{A_d}}(h) = 0$ and $\widehat{\delta_{o_{A_d}}}(h) = 1$, we have

$$\widehat{\mu^{*k} * \nu}(h) \rightarrow \eta(\tilde{B})^2 > 0, \text{ as } k \rightarrow \infty.$$

Thus, we have a contradiction. This finishes the proof of the theorem. □

Proof of Theorem 1.3. We will use the following statement, which will be proved below.

Proposition 3.1. *Let $B \subset \Lambda$ be a non-periodic piecewise Bohr set corresponding to a Jordan measurable⁸ open set in a finite-dimensional torus. Then there exists a spectral measure associated with B that does not have atoms at non-zero rational points of A_d .*

Let $B \subset \Lambda$ be a piecewise non-periodic Bohr set given by $B = \tau^{-1}(U) \cap T$, where $\tau : \Lambda \rightarrow \mathbb{T}^n$ is a homomorphism with a dense image, $U \subset \mathbb{T}^n$ is an open set, and $T \subset \Lambda$ is a set with $d^*(T) = 1$. Then U contains an open ball U_o , and $m_{\mathbb{T}^n}(\partial U_o) = 0$, where $m_{\mathbb{T}^n}$ denotes the Haar normalised measure on \mathbb{T}^n . Denote $B' = \tau^{-1}(U_o) \cap T \subset B$. The statement of Theorem 1.3 for the non-periodic

⁸A set A in a topological space X equipped with a measure m_X is *Jordan measurable* if $m_X(\partial A) = 0$, where $\partial A = \overline{A} \setminus \overset{\circ}{A}$.

piecewise Bohr set B' follows from Proposition 3.1 and Theorem 1.1. The latter implies the statement of the theorem for the set B . \square

Proof of Proposition 3.1. We are given a piecewise Bohr non-periodic set $B \subset \Lambda$ corresponding to a Jordan measurable open set in a finite-dimensional torus. This means that $B = B_o \cap T$, where $T \subset \Lambda$ with $d^*(T) = 1$, and $B_o = \tau^{-1}(U_o) \subset \Lambda$, where $\tau : \Lambda \rightarrow \mathbb{T}^n$, for some $n \geq 1$, is a homomorphism with a dense image, and $U_o \subset \mathbb{T}^n$ is an open Jordan measurable set. We will construct an ergodic Furstenberg Λ -system $X_B = (X, \eta, \sigma, \tilde{B})$ corresponding to the set B and will show that the spectral measure of the function $1_{\tilde{B}}$ has no atoms at the rational non-zero points of $A_d := \widehat{\Lambda}$.

Let $X = \mathbb{T}^n$, η be the Haar normalised measure on X , $\sigma_h(x) := x + \tau(h)$ for $x \in X, h \in \Lambda$, and $\tilde{B} = U_o$. We will denote $X_B := (X, \eta, \sigma, \tilde{B})$. It remains to show that:

- For every $h \in \Lambda$ we have $d^*(B \cap (B + h)) \geq \eta(\tilde{B} \cap \sigma_h(\tilde{B}))$.
- $\eta(\tilde{B}) = d^*(B)$.
- The spectral measure of $1_{\tilde{B}}$ has no atoms at non-zero rational points of A_d .

The first two properties will follow from the statement that for every $h \in \Lambda$,

$$d^*(B \cap (B + h)) = \eta(\tilde{B} \cap \sigma_h(\tilde{B})).$$

First, notice that for every $h \in \Lambda$ the set $U_o \cap \sigma_h(U_o)$ is Jordan measurable. The uniqueness of the σ -invariant probability measure on X implies the unique ergodicity of X_B . Therefore, for every Følner sequence (F_k) in Λ and any $h \in \Lambda$ we have

$$\frac{1}{|F_k|} \sum_{g \in F_k} 1_{U_o \cap \sigma_h(U_o)}(\sigma_g(0_X)) \rightarrow \int_X 1_{U_o \cap \sigma_h(U_o)}(x) d\eta(x) = \eta(\tilde{B} \cap \sigma_h(\tilde{B})),$$

as $k \rightarrow \infty$. Since the left hand side of the last equation is equal to $\frac{|B_o \cap (B_o + h) \cap F_k|}{|F_k|}$, we obtain

$$(4) \quad \frac{|B_o \cap (B_o + h) \cap F_k|}{|F_k|} \rightarrow \eta(\tilde{B} \cap \sigma_h(\tilde{B})), \text{ as } k \rightarrow \infty.$$

Since $B \subset B_o$, the latter implies that for every $h \in \Lambda$ we have

$$(5) \quad \eta(\tilde{B} \cap \sigma_h(\tilde{B})) \geq d^*(B \cap (B + h)).$$

On the other hand, for any Følner sequence (F_k) which lies inside the thick set T by identity (4) we have for every $h \in \Lambda$,

$$\frac{|B \cap (B_o + h) \cap F_k|}{|F_k|} \rightarrow \eta(\tilde{B} \cap \sigma_h(\tilde{B})), \text{ as } k \rightarrow \infty.$$

By use of the Følner property of the sequence (F_k) , we have that

$$\left| \frac{|B \cap (B_o + h) \cap F_k|}{|F_k|} - \frac{|(B - h) \cap B_o \cap F_k|}{|F_k|} \right| \rightarrow 0, \text{ as } k \rightarrow \infty.$$

But, since $F_k \subset T$ it follows that for every $k \geq 1$ we have

$$\frac{|(B - h) \cap B_o \cap F_k|}{|F_k|} = \frac{|(B - h) \cap B \cap F_k|}{|F_k|}.$$

Finally, since

$$\frac{|(B - h) \cap B \cap F_k|}{|F_k|} = \frac{|B \cap (B + h) \cap (F_k + h)|}{|F_k|}$$

and the Følner property implies that

$$\left| \frac{|B \cap (B + h) \cap (F_k + h)|}{|F_k|} - \frac{|B \cap (B + h) \cap F_k|}{|F_k|} \right| \rightarrow 0, \text{ as } k \rightarrow \infty,$$

we obtain that

$$\frac{|B \cap (B + h) \cap F_k|}{|F_k|} \rightarrow \eta \left(\tilde{B} \cap \sigma_h(\tilde{B}) \right), \text{ as } k \rightarrow \infty.$$

This establishes that for every $h \in \Lambda$,

$$d^*(B \cap (B + h)) \geq \eta(\tilde{B} \cap \sigma_h(\tilde{B})).$$

Together with the identity (5) this implies that for every $h \in \Lambda$ we have

$$d^*(B \cap (B + h)) = \eta(\tilde{B} \cap \sigma_h(\tilde{B})).$$

It remains to prove that the spectral measure corresponding to $1_{\tilde{B}}$ and the system X_B has no atoms at non-zero rational points of A_d . We will be abusing the notation and will also use T to denote the Koopman operator on $L^2(X)$ corresponding to σ . Let us list two important properties of the system X_B :

- (1) X_B is *totally ergodic*; i.e., every subgroup $H < \Lambda$ of a finite index acts ergodically on X_B .
- (2) For every $f \in L^2(X)$ there exists the spectral measure μ_f of f on A_d satisfying

$$\widehat{\mu}_f(h) := \int_{A_d} \exp(2\pi h \cdot x) d\mu_f(x) = \langle f, T_h f \rangle.$$

Moreover, if $f \geq 0$, then μ_f is non-negative.

The first property follows from Lemma 3.3 while the second property is Bochner’s spectral theorem; see [8]. To prove Lemma 3.3 we will need the following result.

Lemma 3.2. *Let $H < \Lambda$ be a subgroup of a finite index. Then for every point $x \in X$, the H -orbit of x , i.e., $\{\sigma_h(x) \mid h \in H\}$, is dense in X .*

Proof. If $\overline{\tau(H)} \neq X$, then since $H < \Lambda$ has a finite index, it follows that finitely many translates of $\tau(H)$ cover X . But X is connected, and we get a contradiction. □

Lemma 3.3. *Let $H < \Lambda$ be a subgroup of a finite index. The restriction of the Λ -action of X to H is uniquely ergodic.*

Proof. It follows from Lemma 3.2 that any H -invariant Borel probability measure on X is also X -invariant. The uniqueness of the Haar normalised measure on X implies the statement of the lemma. □

Let $f \in L^2(X)$. Then by the ergodicity of X_B (property (1)) it follows that for any Følner sequence $(F_k)_{k \geq 1}$ of finite sets in Λ we have

$$\frac{1}{|F_k|} \sum_{h \in F_k} \langle f, T_h f \rangle \rightarrow |\langle f, 1 \rangle|^2, \text{ as } k \rightarrow \infty.$$

On the other hand, it follows from Bochner's spectral theorem, Lebesgue's dominated convergence theorem and Lemma 3.1 that

$$\frac{1}{|F_k|} \sum_{h \in F_k} \langle f, T_h f \rangle \rightarrow \mu_f(\{o_{A_d}\}),$$

which implies that

$$(6) \quad |\langle f, 1 \rangle|^2 = \mu_f(\{o_{A_d}\}).$$

Let $x_0 \in A_d$ be a non-zero rational point with the least common denominator equal to q . Then the stabiliser of x_0 in Λ is $H_{x_0} = q\Lambda$. Using the ergodicity of H_{x_0} action on X_B (property (1)), we obtain

$$\frac{1}{|F_k|} \sum_{h \in F_k} \langle f, T_{qh} f \rangle \rightarrow |\langle f, 1 \rangle|^2, \text{ as } k \rightarrow \infty.$$

On the other hand, we have

$$\frac{1}{|F_k|} \sum_{h \in F_k} \exp(2\pi i \langle h, qx \rangle) \rightarrow \begin{cases} 1, & qx = o_{A_d} \\ 0, & qx \neq o_{A_d}. \end{cases}$$

Therefore, by Lebesgue's dominated convergence theorem we obtain

$$(7) \quad |\langle f, 1 \rangle|^2 = \sum_{qx = o_{A_d}} \mu_f(\{x\}).$$

If we know in addition that $f \geq 0$, then by property (2), the spectral measure μ_f is non-negative. Therefore, by use of equations (6) and (7) we get that for all non-zero points $x \in A_d$ with $qx = o_{A_d}$ we have

$$\mu_f(\{x\}) = 0.$$

In particular, we have that $\mu_f(\{x_0\}) = 0$. This finishes the proof of Proposition 2.2, if we choose $f = 1_{\bar{B}}$.

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