DECOMPOSITION OF COMPLEX HYPERBOLIC ISOMETRIES BY TWO COMPLEX SYMMETRIES

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Abstract. Let $\mathbf{PU}(2,1)$ denote the holomorphic isometry group of the 2-dimensional complex hyperbolic space $\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$, and the group $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ is a 3-fold covering of $\mathbf{PU}(2,1)$: $\mathbf{PU}(2,1) = \mathbf{SU}(2,1)/\{\omega I : \omega^3 = 1\}$. We study how to decompose a given pair of isometries $(A, B) \in \mathbf{SU}(2,1)^2$ under the form $A = I_1 I_2$ and $B = I_3 I_2$, where the I_k's are complex symmetries about complex lines. If (A, B) can be written as above, we call it is $\mathbb{C}$-decomposable. The main results are decomposability criteria, which improve and supplement the result of [17].

1. INTRODUCTION

Let $\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$ denote the 2-dimensional complex hyperbolic space, and $\mathrm{Iso}(\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}})$ denote the full isometry group which consists of holomorphic, as well as anti-holomorphic isometries. The projective unitary group $\mathbf{PU}(2,1) = \mathbf{SU}(2,1)/\{\omega I : \omega^3 = 1\}$ which is an index 2 subgroup of $\mathrm{Iso}(\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}})$ denotes the holomorphic isometry group of $\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$. There are two types of totally geodesic 2-dimensional submanifolds in $\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$: complex lines and the $\mathbb{R}$-planes. These correspond to two kinds of isometric involutions of $\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$. A complex line $C \subset \mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$ is fixed by a unique involutive holomorphic isometry. We call this isometry the complex symmetry about C, which is represented by an element $I_C \in \mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ that is given by

$$I_C(z) = -z + 2\frac{\langle z, \mathbf{c}\rangle}{\langle \mathbf{c}, \mathbf{c}\rangle}\mathbf{c}, \tag{1.1}$$

where $\mathbf{c}$ is a polar vector of C. Any $\mathbb{R}$-plane P is fixed pointwise by a unique anti-holomorphic isometry of order 2: the Lagrangian reflection about P. There is another involution in $\mathrm{Iso}(\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}})$: the complex reflection about a point in $\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$.

An element T in G is called reversible if T is conjugate to T^{-1}. Furthermore, if T is a product of two involutions, it is called strongly reversible. Reversible elements and strongly reversible elements have been extensive studied in several contexts (see [2], [3], [10], [11], [12], [15], [18]). In particular, when $G = \mathrm{Iso}(\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}})$ there are three kinds involutive elements as mentioned above. In [4], Falbel and Zocca proved that every element in $\mathbf{PU}(2,1)$ is strongly reversible in $\mathrm{Iso}(\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}})$, since it can be expressed as a product of two Lagrangian reflections. Gongopadhyay and Parker [9] classified reversible and strongly reversible element in $\mathbf{PU}(2,1)$ and shown that $T \in \mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ is reversible if and only if it is strongly reversible.

For simplicity of presentation, we call an element $A \in G$ $\mathbb{C}$-strongly reversible, if A is a product of two complex symmetries about complex lines. The $\mathbb{C}$-strong reversibility of loxodromic elements

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has been considered in [17] (Theorem 1). In this paper, we give the $\mathbb{C}$-strong reversibility criteria for parabolic and elliptic elements (Theorem 2 and Theorem 3).

Theorem 1 (Proposition 4 of [17])**.** *Let A be a loxodromic element of $\mathbf{PU}(2,1)$. A is $\mathbb{C}$-strongly reversible if and only if A admits a lift to $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ with real trace greater than 3.*

Theorem 2. *Let A be a parabolic element of $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)$. Then A is $\mathbb{C}$-strongly reversible if and only if A is a 3-step unipotent parabolic. In other words, A is $\mathbb{C}$-strongly reversible if and only if A is strongly reversible.*

Theorem 3. *Let A be an elliptic element of $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)$. A is $\mathbb{C}$-strongly reversible if and only if A is strongly reversible and A is not a complex symmetry.*

A pair of elements $(A, B) \in \mathbf{SU}(2,1)^2$ or $\mathbf{PU}(2,1)^2$ is said to be $\mathbb{C}$-decomposable (resp. $\mathbb{R}$-decomposable) if there exist three complex symmetries (resp. three Lagrangian reflections) I_1, I_2 and I_3 such that $A = I_1I_2$ and $B = I_3I_2$ holds. Note that when writing the two elements A and B as products of complex symmetries (or Lagrangian reflections), the order in which the involutions appear is not important. $\mathbb{C}$-decomposability (resp. $\mathbb{R}$-decomposability) is very closely related to triangle groups (groups generated by three involutions). In the setting of $\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$, many of the examples known of discrete groups are related to triangle groups, see for instance [6] and [16]. It also turns out that since the group $\langle A, B\rangle$ has index two in $\Gamma = \langle I_1, I_2, I_3\rangle$, then $\langle A, B\rangle$ is discrete if and only if Γ is. This can lead to considerable simplification in the study of the discreteness of 2-generator subgroups of $\mathbf{PU}(2,1)$. For example, Gilman has presented a new sufficient condition for a subgroup of $\mathbf{PSL}(2,\mathbb{C})$ to be discrete by using this idea in [5]. For these reasons, we wish to decompose a pair of elements (A, B) of $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)^2$ or $\mathbf{PU}(2,1)^2$ such that $\langle A, B\rangle$ contained with index 2 in a triangle group.

Will [17] gave $\mathbb{C}$-decomposability criterion and $\mathbb{R}$-decomposability criterion for a pair of loxodromic isometries (A, B) of $\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$, which are expressed in terms of traces of elements of the group $\langle A, B\rangle$. Since an element of $\mathbf{PU}(2,1)$ admits 3 lifts to $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)$, the trace of an isometry is well defined up to this indetermination. We will say that an isometry has real trace if and only if it admits a lift to $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ which has real trace.

Theorem 4 (Theorem 1 of [17])**.** *Let A and B be two loxodromic isometries of $\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$ and $G = \langle A, B\rangle$. Assume that G does not preserve a totally geodesic subspace. Then*

(1). *The following two propositions are equivalent:*
(i) *The isometry $[A, B]$ has real trace.*
(ii) *The pair (A, B) is $\mathbb{R}$-decomposable.*
(2). *The following two propositions are equivalent:*
(i) *The isometries A, B, AB and $A^{-1}B$ all have real trace.*
(ii) *Either the pair (A, B) is $\mathbb{C}$-decomposable, or the pair (A^2, B^2) is $\mathbb{C}$-decomposable.*

In 2013, Paupert and Will [14] provided a criterion to determine whether any two given elements of $\mathbf{PU}(2,1)$ is $\mathbb{R}$-decomposable, which completed the $\mathbb{R}$-decomposability criterion of elements in $\mathbf{PU}(2,1)$.

Theorem 5 (Theorem 4.1 of [14])**.** *Let $A, B \in \mathbf{PU}(2,1)$ be two isometries not fixing a common point in $\overline{\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}}$. Then: the pair (A, B) is $\mathbb{R}$-decomposable if and only if the commutator $[A, B]$ has a fixed point in $\overline{\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}}$ whose associated eigenvalue is real and positive.*

It should be pointed out that a number of issues related to $\mathbb{C}$-decomposability are still unclear. For example, a $\mathbb{C}$-decomposability criterion for a pair of parabolic or elliptic elements has never been considered. In this paper, we are concerned with how to decompose a pair elements $(A, B) \in \mathbf{SU}(2,1)^2$ under the form $A = I_1 I_2$ and $B = I_3 I_2$, where I_k's are complex symmetries, and we investigate criteria to determine whether two given elements of $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ can be $\mathbb{C}$-decomposable. Moreover, we also obtain the necessary and sufficient condition of $\mathbb{C}$-decomposability when one is a loxodromic element and the other one is a parabolic element. Our main results are the followings:

Theorem 6. *Let $A, B \in \mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ be two elements of the same type not fixing a common point in $\overline{\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}}$. Then, the pair (A, B) is $\mathbb{C}$-decomposable if and only if A, B are both $\mathbb{C}$-strongly reversible, and $\mathrm{tr}(AB) \in \mathbb{R}$, $\mathrm{tr}(BA^{-1}) \in \mathbb{R}$.*

Proposition 1.1. *If $A, B \in \mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ have a common fixed point in $\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$, then (A, B) is $\mathbb{C}$-decomposable if and only if A, B are both $\mathbb{C}$-strongly reversible.*

Proposition 1.2. *Let $A, B \in \mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ have a common fixed point on $\partial\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$.*

(i) *If A and B are both loxodromic elements, then (A, B) is $\mathbb{C}$-decomposable if and only if A, B are both $\mathbb{C}$-strongly reversible and $\mathrm{fix}(A) = \mathrm{fix}(B)$.*

(ii) *If A or B is a loxodromic element and the other one is a 3-step unipotent parabolic element, then (A, B) is not $\mathbb{C}$-decomposable.*

(iii) *If A and B are both 3-step unipotent parabolic elements, then (A, B) is $\mathbb{C}$-decomposable if and only if A, B don't commute or A, B have the same invariant fan.*

Theorem 7. *Let (A, B) be a pair of elements of $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)$, where A is a loxodromic element and B is a parabolic element. Then (A, B) is $\mathbb{C}$-decomposable if and only if A, B are both $\mathbb{C}$-strongly reversible, $\mathrm{tr}(AB) \in \mathbb{R}$, $\mathrm{tr}(BA^{-1}) \in \mathbb{R}$, and A, B have distinct fixed points.*

Our Theorem 6 contains the result of Will's Theorem 4 (2). Proposition 1.1 and 1.2 complement the conclusion of Theorem 4. Theorem 7 shows the $\mathbb{C}$-decomposability criterion for one element is loxodromic and the other one is parabolic, which hasn't been considered in [17].

This paper is organized as follows. We start with some geometric preliminaries is Section 2. The definition of invariant fan of a parabolic element in Proposition 1.2 is also in Section 2. The proofs of Theorem 2 and 3 will be given in Section 3. Finally the proofs of our main results are presented in Section 4.

2. PRELIMINARIES

2.1. **Complex hyperbolic space and isometries.** We begin with some background material on complex hyperbolic geometry. Much of this is found in Goldman's book [7].

Let $\mathbb{C}^{2,1}$ be a complex vector space of dimension 3 with a Hermitian form of signature $(2, 1)$. Consider the subspaces

$$\begin{aligned} V_- &= \{\mathbf{z} \in \mathbf{C}^{2,1} : \langle \mathbf{z}, \mathbf{z} \rangle < 0\}, \\ V_0 &= \{\mathbf{z} \in \mathbf{C}^{2,1} : \langle \mathbf{z}, \mathbf{z} \rangle = 0\}, \\ V_+ &= \{\mathbf{z} \in \mathbf{C}^{2,1} : \langle \mathbf{z}, \mathbf{z} \rangle > 0\}. \end{aligned}$$

where $\mathbf{z}$ is the column vector $\begin{bmatrix} z_1 & z_2 & z_3 \end{bmatrix}^T$. Let $\mathbf{P} : \mathbb{C}^{2,1} \setminus \{0\} \longrightarrow \mathbb{C}\mathbf{P}^2$ be the canonical projection onto complex projective space. The complex hyperbolic space is defined to be $\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}} = \mathbf{P}(V_-)$, and $\partial\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}} = \mathbf{P}(V_0)$ is its boundary.

For the projective model the metric on $\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$, called the Bergman metric is given by the distance function $\rho(\cdot, \cdot)$ defined by the formula

$$\cosh^2\left(\frac{\rho(\mathbf{P}(\mathbf{z}), \mathbf{P}(\mathbf{w}))}{2}\right) = \frac{\langle \mathbf{z}, \mathbf{w} \rangle \langle \mathbf{w}, \mathbf{z} \rangle}{\langle \mathbf{z}, \mathbf{z} \rangle \langle \mathbf{w}, \mathbf{w} \rangle}. \tag{2.2}$$

There are two standard models of $\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$. The first one is called the ball model of $\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$, when the Hermitian form is given by $\langle \mathbf{z}, \mathbf{z} \rangle = -|z_1|^2+|z_2|^2+|z_3|^2$. The second one is called the Siegel domain model of $\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$, when the Hermitian form is given by $\langle \mathbf{z}, \mathbf{z} \rangle = z_1\overline{w}_3+z_2\overline{w}_2+z_3\overline{w}_1$. From (2.2) it is easy to show that the projective unitary group $\mathbf{PU}(2,1)$ acts by isometries on $\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$, which we identify with the holomorphic isometry group of $\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$. The group $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ is a 3-fold covering of $\mathbf{PU}(2,1)$:

$$\mathbf{PU}(2,1) = \mathbf{SU}(2,1)/\{I, \omega I, \omega^2 I\},$$

where $\omega = (-1+\sqrt{3}i)/2$ is a cube root of unity.

The familiar trichotomy from real hyperbolic geometry applies in the complex hyperbolic setting as well: $A \in \mathbf{PU}(2,1)$ is said to be:

- loxodromic if it fixes exactly two points of $\partial\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$;
- parabolic if it fixes exactly one point of $\partial\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$;
- elliptic if it fixes at least one point of $\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$.

It is clear that a fixed point of an isometry A lying in $\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$ or its boundary corresponds to an eigenvector of the corresponding matrix lying in V_- or V_0 respectively. So we have the following theorem.

Theorem 8 ([13])**.** *Let A be a matrix in $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)$. Then one of the following possibilities occurs:*

(i) *A has two null eigenvectors with eigenvalues λ and $\overline{\lambda}^{-1}$ where $|\lambda| \neq 1$, in which case A is loxodromic;*

(ii) *A has a repeated eigenvalue of unit modulus whose eigenspace is spanned by a null vector, in which case A is parabolic;*

(iii) *A has a negative eigenvector, in which case A is elliptic.*

An eigenvalue λ of $A \in \mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ is said to be of negative type, positive type or null if every eigenvector of λ is in V_-, V_+ or V_0 respectively. The eigenvalue λ is said to be of indefinite type if there are some eigenvectors of λ in V_- and some in V_+.

A parabolic element in $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ is called unipotent if it is a unipotent matrix. Unipotent parabolic elements are either 2-step or 3-step, according to whether the minimal polynomial of the matrix is $(x-1)^2$ or $(x-1)^3$. If a parabolic element is not unipotent, we call it screw-parabolic. It can be decomposed as $A = PE = EP$, where P is a unipotent parabolic element and E is an elliptic element.

An elliptic element in $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ is called regular if it has three distinct eigenvalues. A non-regular elliptic element is called special. Special elliptic elements have two kinds: An elliptic element is a complex reflection about complex line if it has 2 equal eigenvalues, and one of which has eigenvectors in V_-; An elliptic element is a complex reflection in a point if it has 2 equal eigenvalues, and the remaining one has eigenvectors in V_-. These reflections may not have order 2, and not even finite order.

Also, we can use the trace of $A \in \mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ to decide whether it is elliptic, parabolic or loxodromic.

Lemma 9 ([7])**.** *Let f be the polynomial $f(z) = |z|^4-8\Re(z^3)+18|z|^2-27$, where $z \in \mathbb{C}$. Denote by C_3 is the set of cube roots of unity in $\mathbb{C}$. Let $A \in \mathbf{SU}(2,1)$. Then:*

(1) *A is regular elliptic $\Leftrightarrow f\big(\mathrm{tr}(A)\big) < 0$;*

(2) *A is loxodromic $\Leftrightarrow f\big(\mathrm{tr}(A)\big) > 0$;*

(3) *A is screw parabolic or special elliptic* $\Leftrightarrow f\big(\mathrm{tr}(A)\big)=0$ *and* $\mathrm{tr}(A)\notin 3C_3$*;*
(4) *A is unipotent or the identity* $\Leftrightarrow \mathrm{tr}(A)\in 3C_3$*;*

2.2. **The ball model of $\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$.** The ball model of $\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$ arises from the choice of Hermitian form

$$H=\begin{bmatrix}-1&0&0\\0&1&0\\0&0&1\end{bmatrix}. \tag{2.3}$$

The vector $\mathbf{z}=\begin{bmatrix}1 & z_1 & z_2\end{bmatrix}^T$ is the standard lift of $z\in\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$ to V_-. Furthermore, we see that $z\in\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$ provided

$$\langle\mathbf{z},\mathbf{z}\rangle=-1+|z_1|^2+|z_2|^2<0.$$

It is obviously that any elliptic element of $\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$ is conjugate to one given by the diagonal matrix

$$E_{(\alpha,\beta)}=\begin{bmatrix}e^{-i(\alpha+\beta)/3}&0&0\\0&e^{i(2\alpha-\beta)/3}&0\\0&0&e^{i(2\beta-\alpha)/3}\end{bmatrix}. \tag{2.4}$$

Projectively, the associated isometry is given by

$$(z_1,z_2)\mapsto(e^{i\alpha}z_1,e^{i\beta}z_2).$$

Sometimes it is more convenient to work with the lift to $\mathbf{U}(2,1)$ given by

$$\begin{bmatrix}1&0&0\\0&e^{i\alpha}&0\\0&0&e^{i\beta}\end{bmatrix}. \tag{2.5}$$

2.3. **The Siegel domain model of $\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$.** The Siegel domain model of complex hyperbolic space $\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$ corresponds to the Hermitian form given by the matrix :

$$J=\begin{bmatrix}0&0&1\\0&1&0\\1&0&0\end{bmatrix}.$$

The Siegel domain model of $\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$ with horospherical coordinates is

$$\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}=\{(z,t,u):z\in\mathbb{C},t\in\mathbb{R},u\in\mathbb{R}_+\}.$$

The boundary of the Siegel domain is

$$\partial\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}=\{(z,t,0):z\in\mathbb{C},t\in\mathbb{R}\}\cup\{\infty\}.$$

Points in $\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$ may be identified with negative vectors in $\mathbb{C}^{2,1}$ and points of $\partial\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$ may be identified with null vectors in $\mathbb{C}^{2,1}$ by the map $\psi:\overline{\mathbf{H}}^2_{\mathbb{C}}\to\mathbb{C}^{2,1}$ given by

$$\psi:(z,t,u)\mapsto\begin{bmatrix}(-|z|^2-u+it)/2\\z\\1\end{bmatrix},\quad \psi:\infty\mapsto\begin{bmatrix}1\\0\\0\end{bmatrix}. \tag{2.6}$$

The boundary $\partial\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}\backslash\{\infty\}$ is a copy of the Heisenberg group $\mathfrak{N}$ of dimension 3, with group law given in (z,t) coordinates by:

$$(z_1,t_1)*(z_2,t_2)=(z_1+z_2,t_1+t_2+2\Im(z_1\overline{z}_2)).$$

We conclude this subsection by considering the subgroup of $\mathbf{PU}(2,1)$ stabilising the point at infinity. Such maps will be called Heisenberg similarities. The corresponding elements in $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)$

are generated by the following 3 types: Heisenberg translations $T_{(z,t)}$ ($(z,t) \in \mathbb{C}\times\mathbb{R}$), Heisenberg rotations R_θ ($\theta \in \mathbb{R}/2\pi\mathbb{Z}$) and Heisenberg dilations D_r ($r > 1$), where:

$$T_{(z,t)} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & -\overline{z} & -(|z|^2-it)/2 \\ 0 & 1 & z \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix},\ R_\theta = \begin{bmatrix} e^{-i\theta/3} & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & e^{2i\theta/3} & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & e^{-i\theta/3} \end{bmatrix},\ D_r = \begin{bmatrix} r & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1/r \end{bmatrix}. \qquad (2.7)$$

2.4. **The invariant fan of a 3-step unipotent parabolic.** The standard reference for the invariant fan of a 3-unipotent parabolic element is [8] (see also Section 2.3 of [14]).

For any $z \in \mathbb{C}$ there exists a unique complex line which contains ∞ and the point $(z, 0)$. This induces a projection $\widetilde{\Pi} : \overline{\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}}\setminus\{\infty\} \longmapsto \mathbb{C}$ whose fibers are the complex lines through ∞. In restriction to the boundary, this projection is just the vertical projection $\Pi : (z,t) \longmapsto (z, 0)$, which is given in Heisenberg coordinates.

A fan through ∞ is the preimage of any affine line in $\mathbb{C}$ under the projection $\widetilde{\Pi}$. A general fan is the image of a fan through ∞ by an element of $\mathbf{PU}(2,1)$. As stated in [8], fans enjoy a double foliation, by $\mathbb{R}$-planes and complex lines. In [14], the authors make the foliation of fan explicit. See the following:

Lemma 10 (Lemma 2.2 of [14])**.** *Let $L_{w,k}$ be the affine line in $\mathbb{C}$ parameterized by $L_{w,k} = \{w(s+ik), s \in \mathbb{R}\}$, for some unit modulus w and $k \geq 0$. Then the boundary foliation of the fan above $L_{w,k}$ is given by the lines parameterized in Heisenberg coordinates by $L_{t_0} = \{(w(s+ik), t_0+2sk), s \in \mathbb{R}\}$.*

If T is a 3-step unipotent parabolic element of $\mathbf{PU}(2,1)$, there exists a unique fan F_T through the fixed point of T such that it is stable under T and every leaf of the foliation of F_T by real planes is stable under T. We call this fan F_T the invariant fan of T.

Remark 2.1. When $T = T_{(z,t)}$ with $z \neq 0$, the fan F_T is the one above the affine line $L_{w,k}$, where $w = z/|z|$ and $k = t/(4|z|)$.

For future reference, let us state the following proposition.

Proposition 2.1 (Lemma 2.3 of [14])**.** *Let $T_{(z_1,t_1)}$ and $T_{(z_2,t_2)}$ be two 3-step unipotent parabolic elements. Then these two translations commute if and only if $\overline{z}_1 z_2 \in \mathbb{R}$, which is equivalent to saying that their invariant fans are parallel.*

2.5. **$\mathbb{C}$-strong reversibility and $\mathbb{C}$-decomposability.** In [9], the authors described necessary and sufficient conditions of reversibility or strong reversibility of $A \in \mathbf{SU}(2,1)$, which is written in terms of trace and eigenvalue of A. Since reversibility is equivalent to strong reversibility for $A \in \mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ (see Theorem 4.2 of [9]), we have the following theorem:

Theorem 11 (Corollary 4.10 of [9])**.** *Let A be an element in $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)$.*

(1) *A is a loxodromic element. A is strongly reversible in $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ if and only if $\mathrm{tr}(A) \in \mathbb{R}$.*

(2) *$A = PE$ is a parabolic element. A is strongly reversible in $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ if and only if the trace of A is real, the null eigenvalue of A is 1 or -1 and the minimum polynomial of P is $(x-1)^3$.*

(3) *A is an elliptic element. A is strongly reversible in $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ if and only if the trace of A is real and the eigenvalue of negative type or indefinite type of A is 1 or -1.*

We define $A \in \mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ is $\mathbb{C}$-strongly reversible, if $A = I_1I_2$. A pair of elements $(A,B) \in \mathbf{SU}(2,1)^2$, if $A = I_1I_2$ and $B = I_3I_2$, we call (A,B) is $\mathbb{C}$-decomposable. The above I_1, I_2, I_3 are both elements of $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)$, which represent three complex symmetries about complex lines as (1.1).

It is apparent that if A is $\mathbb{C}$-strongly reversible, then A is strongly reversible. Generally speaking, the converse implication is not true.

Lemma 12. *Let $A \in \mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ be $\mathbb{C}$-strongly reversible, then A has real trace.*

Proof: If A is $\mathbb{C}$-strongly reversible, then it may be written as $A = I_1 I_2$, where I_1, I_2 are two matrices in $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ corresponding two complex symmetries. Hence $A^{-1} = I_2 I_1 = (I_1)^{-1} A (I_1) = (I_2) A (I_2)^{-1}$. In particular, A is conjugate to A^{-1}, so they have the same trace. Since in $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ we have $\mathrm{tr}(A^{-1}) = \overline{\mathrm{tr}(A)}$, we see $\mathrm{tr}(A) = \overline{\mathrm{tr}(A)}$, so $\mathrm{tr}(A)$ is real. □

The following proposition will be needed in the Section 4.

Proposition 2.2 (Proposition 4 of [17])**.** *$A \in \mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ is a loxodromic element, if I_1 and I_2 are two complex symmetries such that $A = I_1 I_2$, both I_1 and I_2 permute the fixed points of A.*

If $(A, B) \in \mathbf{SU}(2,1)^2$ is $\mathbb{C}$-decomposable, that is $A = I_1 I_2$ and $B = I_3 I_2$, where $I_1, I_2, I_3 \in \mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ given by (1.1) which represent three complex symmetries. It follows that $AB = I_1(I_2 I_3 I_2)$ and $BA^{-1} = I_3 I_1$ are both $\mathbb{C}$-strongly reversible. According to Lemma 12, we obtain the following proposition:

Proposition 2.3. *If $(A, B) \in \mathbf{SU}(2,1)^2$ is $\mathbb{C}$-decomposable. Then A, B, AB and BA^{-1} all have real trace.*

From the above we know that elements of $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ with real trace are very important for us.

Proposition 2.4 (Proposition 2.3 of [14])**.** *Let $A \in \mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ satisfy $\mathrm{tr}(A) \in \mathbb{R}$. Then A has an eigenvalue equal to 1. More precisely:*

- *If A is loxodromic then A has eigenvalues $\{1, r, 1/r\}$ for some $r > 1$ or $r < -1$.*
- *If A is elliptic then A has eigenvalues $\{1, e^{i\theta}, e^{-i\theta}\}$ for some $\theta \in (0, \pi]$.*
- *If A is parabolic then A has eigenvalues $\{1, 1, 1\}$ or $\{1, -1, -1\}$.*

The main purpose of this paper is to discuss the $\mathbb{C}$-strong reversibility and $\mathbb{C}$-decomposability of elements in $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)$. It is simple to show that the $\mathbb{C}$-strong reversibility for one element and the $\mathbb{C}$-decomposability for a pair elements of $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ are both invariant under conjugation, which make things a little easier.

3. $\mathbb{C}$-strong reversibility

In this section, we study the $\mathbb{C}$-strong reversibility of parabolic and elliptic elements. We have known the results about strong reversibility of elements of $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ from Theorem 11, then to investigate $\mathbb{C}$-strong reversibility one needs to rule out the case where at least one of I_1 and I_2 fixes a point.

Lemma 13. (1) *Suppose that $A = I_1 I_2$ where I_1 and I_2 are complex involutions in $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ with unique fixed points p_1 and p_2 respectively. Then*

$$\mathrm{tr}(A) = 2\cosh\big(\rho(p_1, p_2)\big) + 1.$$

In particular, if A is not the identity map then $\mathrm{tr}(A) > 3$, so A is hyperbolic.

(2) *Suppose that $A = I_1 I_2$ where I_1 and I_2 are complex involutions in $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)$, I_1 has a unique fixed points p_1 and I_2 fixes the complex line L_2. Then*

$$\mathrm{tr}(A) = -2\cosh\big(\rho(p_1, L_2)\big) + 1.$$

In particular, $\mathrm{tr}(A) \leq -1$. *If* $p_1 \notin L_2$ *then* $\mathrm{tr}(A) \leq -1$ *and* A *is hyperbolic. If* $p_1 \in L_2$ *then* A *is a complex symmetry fixing a complex line through* p_1 *orthogonal to* L_2.

The above result is easy to verify, so the proof is omitted.

3.1. **$\mathbb{C}$-strong reversibility of parabolic elements.** Owing to Proposition 2.4, in the Siegel domain model of $\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$, any parabolic element of $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ which has real trace is conjugate in $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ to exactly one of the following:

- If it is 3-step unipotent parabolic: $\begin{bmatrix} 1 & -1 & -1/2 \\ 0 & 1 & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}$;
- If it is 2-step unipotent parabolic: $\begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & i/2 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}$;
- If it is screw parabolic: $\begin{bmatrix} -1 & 0 & -i/2 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & -1 \end{bmatrix}$.

From Theorem 11, any 2-step unipotent parabolic elements and screw parabolic elements are not $\mathbb{C}$-strongly reversible. Combined with Lemma 13, we can get the following result immediately.

Theorem 14. *Let* A *be a parabolic element of* $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)$. *Then* A *is* $\mathbb{C}$*-strongly reversible if and only if* A *is a* 3*-step unipotent parabolic. In other words,* A *is* $\mathbb{C}$*-strongly reversible if and only if* A *is strongly reversible.*

As stated above, if A is a 3-step unipotent parabolic, we can assume $A = T_{(1,0)} \in \mathbf{SU}(2,1)$, and the null eigenvalue of A is 1. We can decompose A as following:

$$A = T_{(1,0)} = \begin{bmatrix} -1 & -1 & 1/2 \\ 0 & 1 & -1 \\ 0 & 0 & -1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} -1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & -1 \end{bmatrix}. \tag{3.8}$$

The first (resp. second) matrix in the right hand side product corresponds to the complex symmetry about the complex line polar to $\begin{bmatrix} 1/2 & -1 & 0 \end{bmatrix}^T$ (resp. $\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 1 & 0 \end{bmatrix}^T$).

More generally,

$$T_{(z,0)} = \begin{bmatrix} -1 & -\overline{z} & |z|^2/2 \\ 0 & 1 & -z \\ 0 & 0 & -1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} -1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & -1 \end{bmatrix}, \tag{3.9}$$

where $z \neq 0$. The first (resp. second) matrix in the right hand side product corresponds to the complex symmetry about the complex line polar to $\begin{bmatrix} \overline{z}/2 & -1 & 0 \end{bmatrix}^T$ (resp. $\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 1 & 0 \end{bmatrix}^T$).

Proposition 3.1. *Let* $A \in \mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ *be a* 3*-step unipotent parabolic element fixing* $p \in \partial\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$, *and* $A = I_1 I_2$, *where* I_1 *and* I_2 *are both complex symmetries. Then* I_1, I_2 *both fix the point* p. *Especially, the fixed lines of* I_1 *and* I_2 *lie in the invariant fan of* A.

Proof: Normalise $A = T_{(1,0)}$, suppose $I_2(\infty) = q \neq \infty$, where $q \in \partial\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$. Since $A(\infty) = I_1 I_2(\infty) = \infty$, then $I_1(q) = \infty$. Because $I_1^2 = I_2^2 = \mathrm{Id}$, we get $A(q) = q$ which is a contradiction. Thus, I_2 fixes ∞. Similarly, I_1 also fixes ∞. Let L_1 and L_2 be two complex lines fixed pointwise by I_1 and I_2 respectively. Then L_1 and L_2 both through ∞, we can obtain

$$I_k = \begin{bmatrix} -1 & -2\overline{z}_k & 2|z_k|^2 \\ 0 & 1 & -2z_k \\ 0 & 0 & -1 \end{bmatrix},$$

where $z_k \in \mathbb{C}, k = 1, 2$. As $A = I_1 I_2$, we have $z_1, z_2 \in \mathbb{R}$. Thus, L_1 and L_2 both lie in the invariant fan of A. □

3.2. **$\mathbb{C}$-strong reversibility of elliptic elements.** In this subsection, we use the unit ball model of $\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$ with the Hermitian form H in (2.3). Let A be an elliptic element with real trace. Combining Proposition 2.4 and Theorem 11, we know that if A is $\mathbb{C}$-strongly reversible, A may be conjugate in $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ to exactly one of the following:

- If it is regular elliptic: $E_{(\theta,-\theta)} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & e^{i\theta} & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & e^{-i\theta} \end{bmatrix}$, where $\theta \in (0, \pi)$;
- If it is a complex reflection about a complex line (or boundary elliptic): $E_l = \begin{bmatrix} -1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & -1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}$;
- If it is a complex reflection in a point: $E_{(\pi,-\pi)} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & -1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & -1 \end{bmatrix}$.

From the above analysis and Lemma 13, we obtain the following theorem, which states the $\mathbb{C}$-strong reversibility of elliptic elements in $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)$.

Theorem 15. *Let A be an elliptic element of $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)$. A is $\mathbb{C}$-strongly reversible if and only if A is a regular elliptic or a complex reflection in a point which is conjugate to one given by the matrix $E_{(\theta,-\theta)}$ ($\theta \in (0, \pi]$). In other words, A is $\mathbb{C}$-strongly reversible if and only if A is strongly reversible and A is not a complex symmetry.*

We can decompose $E_{(\theta,-\theta)}$ as following:

$$E_{(\theta,-\theta)} = I_1 I_2 = \begin{bmatrix} -1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & e^{i\theta} \\ 0 & e^{-i\theta} & 0 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} -1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 \end{bmatrix}, \quad \theta \in (0, \pi],$$

where I_1 represents the complex symmetry about the complex line polar to $\begin{bmatrix} 0 & \sqrt{2}e^{i\theta}/2 & \sqrt{2}/2 \end{bmatrix}^T$, I_2 represents the complex symmetry about the complex line polar to $\begin{bmatrix} 0 & \sqrt{2}/2 & \sqrt{2}/2 \end{bmatrix}^T$.

Remark 3.1. Any pair of elliptic elements which conjugates to $(E_{(\theta,-\theta)}, E_{(\alpha,-\alpha)})$ ($\theta, \alpha \in (0, \pi]$) is $\mathbb{C}$-decomposable.

We have known that if an elliptic element A is $\mathbb{C}$-strongly reversible, either it is a regular elliptic element which conjugates to $E_{(\theta,-\theta)}$ ($\theta \in (0, \pi)$), or it is a complex reflection of order 2 about a point in $\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$. Then the unique fixed point of A is in $\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$. The following proposition is well known.

Proposition 3.2. *Let $A \in \mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ be an elliptic element fixing $p \in \mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$, and $A = I_1 I_2$, where I_1 and I_2 are both complex symmetries. Then I_1, I_2 both fix the point p.*

Let E be any $\mathbb{C}$-strongly reversible regular elliptic element fixing the point 0 (or it is a complex reflection in the point 0). As E is conjugate in $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ to $E_{(\theta,-\theta)}$ ($\theta \in (0, \pi]$), we can represent such E by:

$$\begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & \cos\theta \pm i\sqrt{1-|b|^2}\sin\theta & i\bar{b}\sin\theta \\ 0 & ib\sin\theta & \cos\theta \mp i\sqrt{1-|b|^2}\sin\theta \end{bmatrix}, \tag{3.10}$$

where $\theta \in (0, \pi]$, $b \in \mathbb{C}$ and $0 \le |b| \le 1$.

4. $\mathbb{C}$-DECOMPOSABILITY

4.1. **Main results.** In this section, we give the $\mathbb{C}$-decomposability of two elements of the same type of $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ and get the necessary and sufficient condition of $\mathbb{C}$-decomposability when one is a loxodromic element and the other one is a parabolic element. Recall that a pair of elements $(A, B) \in \mathbf{SU}(2,1)^2$ is said to be $\mathbb{C}$-decomposable if there exist three complex symmetries I_1, I_2, I_3 such that $A = I_1 I_2$ and $B = I_3 I_2$. Now we are ready to prove our main result.

Theorem 16. *Let $A, B \in \mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ be two elements of the same type not fixing a common point in $\overline{\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}}$. Then, the pair (A, B) is $\mathbb{C}$-decomposable if and only if A, B are both $\mathbb{C}$-strongly reversible, and $\mathrm{tr}(AB) \in \mathbb{R}$, $\mathrm{tr}(BA^{-1}) \in \mathbb{R}$.*

Proof: (1). Let (A, B) be a pair of loxodromic elements of $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ and A, B have distinct fixed points. From Theorem 1 and Theorem 4, we get the result.

(2). Let $(A, B) \in \mathbf{SU}(2,1)^2$ be a pair of parabolic elements and $\mathrm{fix}(A) \cap \mathrm{fix}(B) = \emptyset$.

($\Rightarrow$) Assume (A, B) is $\mathbb{C}$-decomposable, then A and B must be $\mathbb{C}$-strongly reversible and A, B are both 3-step unipotent parabolic by Theorem 14. Thus, $\mathrm{tr}(AB) \in \mathbb{R}$ and $\mathrm{tr}(BA^{-1}) \in \mathbb{R}$ by Proposition 2.3.

($\Leftarrow$) Now that A and B are both $\mathbb{C}$-strongly reversible, it follows that A, B are both 3-step unipotent parabolic. For simplicity, we may take $A = T_{(z,t)}$, B is a 3-step unipotent parabolic element fixing 0, where B has the form:

$$\begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 \\ \zeta & 1 & 0 \\ \frac{-|\zeta|^2 + iv}{2} & -\bar{\zeta} & 1 \end{bmatrix}, \ (\zeta, v) \in \{\mathbb{C} \backslash 0\} \times \mathbb{R}.$$

Notice that AB and BA^{-1} both have real trace, we get:

$$\mathrm{tr}(AB) = 3 - 2\Re(\bar{z}\zeta) + \frac{|z|^2|\zeta|^2 - tv}{4} - \frac{i(|z|^2 v + |\zeta|^2 t)}{4} \in \mathbb{R}$$

and

$$\mathrm{tr}(BA^{-1}) = 3 + 2\Re(\bar{z}\zeta) + \frac{|z|^2|\zeta|^2 + tv}{4} - \frac{i(|z|^2 v - |\zeta|^2 t)}{4} \in \mathbb{R},$$

Due to $z \neq 0$ and $\zeta \neq 0$, it follows that $t = v = 0$. Thus we derived that

$$B = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 \\ \zeta & 1 & 0 \\ \frac{-|\zeta|^2}{2} & -\bar{\zeta} & 1 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} -1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & -1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} -1 & 0 & 0 \\ \zeta & 1 & 0 \\ |\zeta|^2/2 & \bar{\zeta} & -1 \end{bmatrix}. \tag{4.11}$$

The first(resp. second) matrix in the right hand side product corresponds to the complex symmetry about the complex line polar to $\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 1 & 0 \end{bmatrix}^T$ (resp. $\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 1 & \bar{\zeta}/2 \end{bmatrix}^T$).

Consequently, (A, B) is $\mathbb{C}$-decomposable from (3.9) and (4.11).

(3). Let A be a $\mathbb{C}$-strongly reversible elliptic element in $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ fixing the origin in the ball model. Then the origin corresponds to a 1-eigenvector of A, and so A has the following form:

$$A = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & \lambda_1 & -\overline{\mu}_1 \\ 0 & \mu_1 & \overline{\lambda}_1 \end{bmatrix},$$

where $\lambda_1 + \overline{\lambda}_1 = 2\cos(\theta_1)$ for some $\theta_1 \in (0, 2\pi)$. Without loss of generality, the fixed point of B is $p = (\tanh(t), 0) \in \mathbb{B}^2$. A map in $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ sending the origin to p is

$$\begin{bmatrix} \cosh(t) & \sinh(t) & 0 \\ \sinh(t) & \cosh(t) & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}.$$

Therefore we may suppose that B has the form

$$\begin{aligned} B &= \begin{bmatrix} \cosh(t) & \sinh(t) & 0 \\ \sinh(t) & \cosh(t) & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & \lambda_2 & -\overline{\mu}_2 \\ 0 & \mu_2 & \overline{\lambda}_2 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \cosh(t) & -\sinh(t) & 0 \\ -\sinh(t) & \cosh(t) & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \\ &= \begin{bmatrix} 1-(\lambda_2-1)\sinh^2(t) & (\lambda_2-1)\cosh(t)\sinh(t) & -\overline{\mu}_2\sinh(t) \\ -(\lambda_2-1)\cosh(t)\sinh(t) & \lambda_2+(\lambda_2-1)\sinh^2(t) & -\overline{\mu}_2\cosh(t) \\ -\mu_2\sinh(t) & \mu_2\cosh(t) & \overline{\lambda}_2 \end{bmatrix}. \end{aligned}$$

Note that if (A, B) is $\mathbb{C}$-decomposable as $A = I_1 I_2$ and $B = I_3 I_2$, then I_2 must fix the complex line passing through the fixed points of A and B from Proposition 3.2. In the case above,

$$I_2 = \begin{bmatrix} -1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & -1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}.$$

Thus, (A, B) is $\mathbb{C}$-decomposable if and only if $\mathrm{tr}(AI_2) = \mathrm{tr}(BI_2) = -1$.

$$\mathrm{tr}(AI_2) = -1+\overline{\lambda}_1-\lambda_1, \quad \mathrm{tr}(BI_2) = -1+\overline{\lambda}_2-\lambda_2,$$

so (A, B) is $\mathbb{C}$-decomposable if and only if λ_1 and λ_2 are both real.

The necessity is obvious. Now if $\mathrm{tr}(AB)$ and $\mathrm{tr}(BA^{-1})$ are both real. A simple calculation shows that

$$\mathrm{tr}(AB) = 1+\lambda_1\lambda_2+\overline{\lambda}_1\overline{\lambda}_2+(\lambda_1-1)(\lambda_2-1)\sinh^2(t)-(\overline{\mu}_1\mu_2+\mu_1\overline{\mu}_2)\cosh(t),$$

$$\mathrm{tr}(BA^{-1}) = 1+\overline{\lambda}_1\lambda_2+\lambda_1\overline{\lambda}_2+(\overline{\lambda}_1-1)(\lambda_2-1)\sinh^2(t)+(\overline{\mu}_1\mu_2+\mu_1\overline{\mu}_2)\cosh(t).$$

Therefore

$$2i\Im\big(\mathrm{tr}(AB)+\mathrm{tr}(BA^{-1})\big) = (\lambda_1+\overline{\lambda}_1-2)(\lambda_2-\overline{\lambda}_2)\sinh^2(t),$$

$$2i\Im\big(\mathrm{tr}(AB)-\mathrm{tr}(BA^{-1})\big) = (\lambda_1-\overline{\lambda}_1)(\lambda_2+\overline{\lambda}_2-2)\sinh^2(t).$$

Since $\lambda_j+\overline{\lambda}_j = 2\cos(\theta_j) < 2$ $(j = 1, 2)$, we see that λ_1 and λ_2 must be real as required. Thus, (A, B) is $\mathbb{C}$-decomposable.

□

4.2. **Groups fixing a point.** In this subsection, we think about the case when A and B have a common fixed point in $\overline{\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}}$.

Proposition 4.1. *If $A,B \in \mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ have a common fixed point in $\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$, then (A,B) is $\mathbb{C}$-decomposable if and only if A,B are both $\mathbb{C}$-strongly reversible.*

Proof: Let $(A,B) \in \mathbf{SU}(2,1)^2$ be a pair of elliptic elements and have a common point $p \in \mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$. The necessity is trivial.

Now suppose A and B are both $\mathbb{C}$-strongly reversible, thus A and B are both regular elliptic elements, or both complex symmetries in a point, or one of them is regular elliptic and the other one is complex reflection in a point by Theorem 15.

(i). If A and B are both complex symmetries in a point p, then $A = B$ and (A,B) is $\mathbb{C}$-decomposable.

(ii). If A and B are both regular elliptic elements, because $A(p) = B(p) = p$, we may assume $A = E_{(\theta,-\theta)}$ $(\theta \in (0,\pi))$, and B has the form (3.10) with parameters α, b, where $\alpha \in (0,\pi), b \in \mathbb{C}$ and $0 \leq |b| \leq 1$.

When $b \neq 0$, we put $z_1 = -i\bar{b}e^{i\theta}$, $z_2 = i/\bar{b}$ and $z_3 = b(\pm\sqrt{1-|b|^2}\sin\alpha + i\cos\alpha)$.

Therefore,

$$A = I_1 I_2 = \begin{bmatrix} -1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & z_1 \\ 0 & \overline{z}_1 & 0 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} -1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & \overline{z}_2 \\ 0 & z_2 & 0 \end{bmatrix},$$

and

$$B = I_3 I_2 = \begin{bmatrix} -1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & -\sqrt{1-|z_3|^2} & \overline{z}_3 \\ 0 & z_3 & \sqrt{1-|z_3|^2} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} -1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & \overline{z}_2 \\ 0 & z_2 & 0 \end{bmatrix}.$$

The polar vectors to the complex lines corresponding to I_k are $\mathbf{n}_k$, where

$$\mathbf{n}_1 = \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ \frac{\bar{b}}{\sqrt{2}} \\ \frac{ie^{-i\theta}}{\sqrt{2}} \end{bmatrix}, \mathbf{n}_2 = \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ \frac{-i}{\sqrt{2}} \\ \frac{1}{\bar{b}\sqrt{2}} \end{bmatrix}, \mathbf{n}_3 = \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ \sqrt{\frac{1-|b|\sin\alpha}{2}} \\ \frac{b(\pm\sqrt{1-|b|^2}\sin\alpha + i\cos\alpha)}{\sqrt{2(1-|b|\sin\alpha)}} \end{bmatrix}.$$

It is clear that (A,B) is $\mathbb{C}$-decomposable.

When $b = 0$, it is apparent from Remark 3.1 that (A,B) is $\mathbb{C}$-decomposable.

(iii). If one is a regular elliptic element and the other one is a complex reflection in a point, without loss of generality, we suppose A is a regular elliptic and B is a complex reflection in a point. Since A,B have the same fix point in $\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$, we set $A = E_{(\theta,-\theta)}$ $(\theta \in (0,\pi))$, $B = E_{(\pi,-\pi)}$. From Remark 3.1, then (A,B) is $\mathbb{C}$-decomposable. □

Proposition 4.2. *Let $A,B \in \mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ have a common fixed point on $\partial\mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$.*

(i) *If A and B are both loxodromic elements, then (A,B) is $\mathbb{C}$-decomposable if and only if A,B are both $\mathbb{C}$-strongly reversible and* $\mathrm{fix}(A) = \mathrm{fix}(B)$.

(ii) *If A or B is a loxodromic element and the other one is a 3-step unipotent parabolic element, then (A,B) is not $\mathbb{C}$-decomposable.*

(iii) *If A and B are both 3-step unipotent parabolic elements, then (A,B) is $\mathbb{C}$-decomposable if and only if A,B don't commute or A,B have the same invariant fan.*

Note that the 3 parts of Proposition 4.2 cover all cases where A and B have a common fixed point on $\partial \mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$, because an elliptic element which has a fixed point on $\partial \mathbf{H}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$ is not $\mathbb{C}$-strongly reversible and a parabolic element which is not 3-step unipotent is not $\mathbb{C}$-strongly reversible too.

We are now turning to the proof of Proposition 4.2.

Proof: (i) ($\Rightarrow$) A and B are both loxodromic elements and (A,B) is $\mathbb{C}$-decomposable. Then $A = I_1I_2, B = I_3I_2$, where $I_k (k = 1,2,3)$ is complex symmetry. Suppose A fixes the points p,q and B fixes the points p,q'. From Proposition 2.2, we get $I_2(p) = q = q'$. Thus $\mathrm{fix}(A) = \mathrm{fix}(B)$.

($\Leftarrow$) A,B are both $\mathbb{C}$-strongly reversible and $\mathrm{fix}(A) = \mathrm{fix}(B)$. Without loss of generality, we set the two fixed points are 0 and ∞. By Theorem 1, A,B are conjugate to

$$\begin{bmatrix} \lambda & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1/\lambda \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 & 1 \\ 0 & -1 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 & 1/\lambda \\ 0 & -1 & 0 \\ \lambda & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix} \quad (\lambda > 1).$$

Therefore (A,B) is $\mathbb{C}$-decomposable.

(ii) Assume that A is a loxodromic element and B is a 3-step unipotent parabolic element. The fixed points of A are p,q, the fixed point of B is p. If there exist three complex symmetries I_1, I_2, I_3 such that $A = I_1I_2$ and $B = I_3I_2$. Then from Proposition 2.2 and 3.1, we get $p = q$. This is a contradiction to $p \neq q$. So (A,B) is not $\mathbb{C}$-decomposable.

(iii) Let (A,B) be a pair of 3-step unipotent parabolic elements of $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)$ and A,B have the same fixed point.

($\Rightarrow$) If (A,B) is $\mathbb{C}$-decomposable, we can assume $A = I_1I_2$ and $B = I_3I_2$. From Proposition 3.1, we know that I_2 must fix a complex line in the invariant fan of A and one in the invariant fan of B. Hence, these two fans must intersect in (at least) a complex line. Therefore they are either the same or non-parallel.

($\Leftarrow$) If A and B either do not commute or have the same invariant fan, there exists a complex line L contained in both of their invariant fans. Writing I_2 for the complex symmetry fixing L, it is easy to check AI_2 and BI_2 are both complex symmetries. Thus (A,B) is $\mathbb{C}$-decomposable.

This completes the proof of Proposition 4.2. □

4.3. **The $\mathbb{C}$-decomposability of one loxodromic and one parabolic.** In this subsection, we consider the case that A is a loxodromic element and B is a parabolic element. Now we prove the following theorem.

Theorem 17. *Let (A,B) be a pair of elements of $\mathbf{SU}(2,1)$, where A is a loxodromic element and B is a parabolic element. Then (A,B) is $\mathbb{C}$-decomposable if and only if A,B are both $\mathbb{C}$-strongly reversible, $\mathrm{tr}(AB) \in \mathbb{R}$, $\mathrm{tr}(BA^{-1}) \in \mathbb{R}$, and A,B have distinct fixed points.*

Proof: ($\Rightarrow$) If the pair (A,B) is $\mathbb{C}$-decomposable, we can normalise the parabolic element $B = T_{(1,0)}$ and have the decomposition given in equation (3.8). Then

$$\begin{bmatrix} -1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & -1 \end{bmatrix}$$

should conjugate A to its inverse. Hence A has the form

$$A = \begin{bmatrix} a & b & c \\ d & e & -\overline{b} \\ g & -\overline{d} & \overline{a} \end{bmatrix}$$

where $a, b, d \in \mathbb{C}$, $c, e, g \in \mathbb{R}$. This immediately implies

$$\mathrm{tr}(AB) = 2\Re(a) - 2\Re(d) + e - g/2, \quad \mathrm{tr}(B^{-1}A) = 2\Re(a) + 2\Re(d) + e - g/2$$

are real. Moreover, to show A and B have distinct fixed points, it suffices to show $g \neq 0$. If $g = 0$, since $2\Re(a)g + |d|^2 = 0$, then $d = 0$ and so $a^2 - bd + cg = 1$ implies $a^2 = 1$; $\det(A) = |a|^2 e = 1$ implies $e = 1$. Thus $\mathrm{tr}(A) = 3$ or -1, which contradicts the assumption A is loxodromic.

($\Leftarrow$) If A, B are both $\mathbb{C}$-strongly reversible and $\mathrm{fix}(A) \cap \mathrm{fix}(B) = \emptyset$, we may assume $A = D_r$ ($r > 1$) by Theorem 1. Without loss of generality, the fixed point of B is $q = (x, t, 0) \neq 0, \infty$ ($x, t \in \mathbb{R}$). The standard lift of q is $\mathbf{q} = \begin{bmatrix}(-x^2+it)/2 & x & 1\end{bmatrix}^T$. B is conjugate to $T_{(1,0)}$ by Theorem 14, then we can denote B by

$$\begin{bmatrix} \lambda_{11} & \lambda_{12} & \lambda_{13} \\ \lambda_{21} & \lambda_{22} & \lambda_{23} \\ \lambda_{31} & \lambda_{32} & \lambda_{33} \end{bmatrix}, \tag{4.12}$$

where $\lambda_{11} = 1 + \overline{f}g - (\frac{-x^2+it}{2})(d\overline{g} + \frac{1}{2}|g|^2)$, $\lambda_{12} = \overline{f}gx - (\frac{-x^2+it}{2})(e\overline{g} + \frac{1}{2}|g|^2 x)$, $\lambda_{13} = i\Im[(x^2+it)\overline{f}g] - \frac{x^4+t^2}{8}|g|^2$, $\lambda_{21} = \overline{e}g - \overline{g}dx - \frac{1}{2}|g|^2 x$, $\lambda_{22} = 1 - \frac{1}{2}|g|^2 x^2 + 2xi\Im(\overline{e}g)$, $\lambda_{23} = (\frac{-x^2-it}{2})(\overline{e}g - \frac{1}{2}|g|^2 x) - \overline{g}fx$, $\lambda_{31} = 2i\Im(\overline{d}g) - \frac{1}{2}|g|^2$, $\lambda_{32} = \overline{d}gx - e\overline{g} - \frac{1}{2}|g|^2 x$, $\lambda_{33} = 1 - f\overline{g} + (\frac{-x^2-it}{2})(\overline{d}g - \frac{1}{2}|g|^2)$, $d, e, f, g \in \mathbb{C}$, $g \neq 0$ and $2\Re(d\overline{f}) + |e|^2 = 1$, $e\overline{g}x = \frac{x^2-it}{2}d\overline{g} - f\overline{g}$.

As $\mathrm{tr}(AB) \in \mathbb{R}$ and $\mathrm{tr}(BA^{-1}) \in \mathbb{R}$, a simple manipulation yields

$$r\overline{f}g - r(\frac{-x^2+it}{2})(d\overline{g} + \frac{1}{2}|g|^2) + 2xi\Im(\overline{e}g) - \frac{1}{r}f\overline{g} - \frac{1}{r}(\frac{x^2+it}{2})(\overline{d}g - \frac{|g|^2}{2}) \in \mathbb{R}, \tag{4.13}$$

and

$$\frac{1}{r}\overline{f}g - \frac{1}{r}(\frac{-x^2+it}{2})(d\overline{g} + \frac{1}{2}|g|^2) + 2xi\Im(\overline{e}g) - rf\overline{g} - r(\frac{x^2+it}{2})(\overline{d}g - \frac{|g|^2}{2}) \in \mathbb{R}. \tag{4.14}$$

(4.13) minus (4.14), we assert $t = 0$, then $x \neq 0$. Substitute $t = 0$ into formula (4.13), we find

$$2xi\Im(\overline{e}g) + r\overline{f}g - \frac{f\overline{g}}{r} + \frac{x^2}{2}(rd\overline{g} - \frac{\overline{d}g}{r}) \in \mathbb{R},$$

then $\Im(\overline{e}g) = 0$.

Set L be a complex line spanned by 0 and ∞. Let L_2 be a complex line through q orthogonal to L, and I_2 is the complex symmetry fixing L_2. In the case above,

$$I_2 = \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 & \frac{x^2}{2} \\ 0 & -1 & 0 \\ \frac{2}{x^2} & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}.$$

By a simple calculation, we can derive that AI_2 and BI_2 are both complex symmetries. Therefore, we claim that (A, B) is $\mathbb{C}$-decomposable. $\square$

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