THE LARGE SCALE GEOMETRY OF SOME METABELIAN GROUPS

JENNIFER TABACK AND KEVIN WHYTE

ABSTRACT. We study the large scale geometry of the upper triangular subgroup of $PSL_2(\mathbb{Z}[\frac{1}{n}])$, which arises naturally in a geometric context. We prove a quasi-isometry classification theorem and show that these groups are quasi-isometrically rigid with infinite dimensional quasi-isometry group. We generalize our results to a larger class of groups which are metabelian and are higher dimensional analogues of the solvable Baumslag-Solitar groups $BS(1,n)$.

1. INTRODUCTION

We consider quasi-isometries of the upper triangular subgroup Γ_n of $PSL_2(\mathbb{Z}[\frac{1}{n}])$. These groups arise in a geometric way because they are subgroups of both $PSL_2(\mathbb{R})$ and $PSL_2(\mathbb{Q}_p)$, for all p dividing n. Both $PSL_2(\mathbb{R})$ and $PSL_2(\mathbb{Q}_p)$ act on their respective Bruhat-Tits buildings; for $PSL_2(\mathbb{Q}_p)$ this building is a regular $p+1$ valent tree, and for $PSL_2(\mathbb{R})$ it is $\mathbb{H}^2$. Then $G = PSL_2(\mathbb{R}) \times \Pi_{p_i|n} PSL_2(\mathbb{Q}_{p_i})$ has an induced action on $\mathbb{H}^2 \times \Pi_{i=1}^k T_i$, where T_i is the Bruhat-Tits building of $PSL_2(\mathbb{Q}_{p_i})$. This action is properly discontinuous and has cofinite volume, but its restriction to Γ_n is no longer cofinite. However, the induced action of Γ_n on the product of trees is cocompact; the quotient is a k-torus. The stabilizer of any point is an infinite cyclic group which acts parabolically on $\mathbb{H}^2$. Thus Γ_n has a decomposition as a k dimensional complex of groups [BH].

The upper triangular subgroup Γ_n arises naturally as the stabilizer of a point at infinity under the action of G on $\mathbb{H}^2 \times \Pi_{i=1}^k T_i$. For n prime, this group of upper triangular matrices is isomorphic to the solvable Baumslag-Solitar group $BS(1,p^2) = \langle a, b | aba^{-1} = b^{p^2} \rangle$, and our results on quasi-isometries and rigidity generalize the results of [FM1]. In this case, the rigidity of the groups Γ_n should be useful for understanding the groups $PSL_2(\mathbb{Z}[\frac{1}{n}])$, analogously to how the results of Farb and Mosher are used in [T].

The upper triangular groups Γ_n are also basic examples of metabelian groups, fitting into the short exact sequence

$$1 \to \mathbb{Z}[\frac{1}{n}] \to \Gamma \to \mathbb{Z}^k \to 1.$$

In the sections below, we describe geometric models for these groups as warped products of $\mathbb{R}$ with the product of trees on which Γ_n acts. This identifies Γ_n as a cocompact

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lattice in the isometry group $\mathbb{R} \rtimes (Sim(\mathbb{Q}_{m_1}) \times \cdots \times Sim(\mathbb{Q}_{m_k}))$ of this model space, where $Sim(\mathbb{Q}_m)$ is the group of similarities of the m-adic rationals. We also describe the group of all self quasi-isometries of Γ_n and classify them up to quasi-isometry.

Our results rely on the technology available for groups acting on trees. However, products of trees are substantially more complicated than trees. For example, a group which acts freely on a tree is free, while groups which act freely on a product of trees need not be products of free groups. Such groups can, in fact, be simple [BM].

Our results generalize immediately to a larger class of groups which do not arise as nicely in a geometric context but are interesting nonetheless. This larger class of groups generalizes the solvable Baumslag-Solitar groups $BS(1,n) = \langle a, b | aba^{-1} = b^n \rangle$. Let $S = (n_1, n_2, \cdots n_k)$ where $(n_i, n_j) = 1$ when $i \neq j$, and define $\Gamma = \Gamma(S)$ by

$$\Gamma = \Gamma(S) = \langle a_1, \ldots, a_k, b | a_i^{-1} b a_i = b^{n_i},\ a_i a_j = a_j a_i,\ i \neq j \rangle.$$

These groups are $k+1$ dimensional metabelian groups, fitting into a short exact sequence

$$1 \to A \to \Gamma \to \mathbb{Z}^k \to 1$$

where the map onto $\mathbb{Z}^k$ is given by sending the $\{a_i\}$ to a basis and sending b to 0. The kernel, A, is normally generated by b and is an infinitely generated abelian group. Thus these groups provide natural examples of finite type solvable groups which are not polycyclic.

The groups Γ_n are also of the above form. Namely, let $n = p_1^{e_1} p_2^{e_2} \cdots p_k^{e_k}$ where the p_i are distinct primes. Then Γ_n is isomorphic to $\Gamma(p_1^{2e_1}, \ldots, p_k^{2e_k})$, where the isomorphism is given by:

$$a_i \mapsto \begin{pmatrix} p_i^{e_i} & 0 \\ 0 & {p_i}^{-e_i} \end{pmatrix}$$

$$b \mapsto \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}.$$

The decomposition of Γ_n into a k-dimensional complex of groups can be generalized to the groups $\Gamma(S)$. Indeed, the presentation given is that of a k-torus of infinite cyclic groups, generalizing the fact that all the Baumslag-Solitar groups are HNN extensions of $\mathbb{Z}$. This decomposition is fundamental to our study of the geometry of these groups. The groups $\Gamma(S)$ have geometric models analogous to those of the Γ_n. As a result, our quasi-isometry classification and rigidity results immediately generalize to this larger class of groups. We are able to identify $\Gamma(S)$ as a cocompact lattice in the isometry group of the model space, describe its quasi-isometry group, and classify these groups up to quasi-isometry.

1.1. **Statement of Results.** Let Γ_n be the upper triangular subgroup of $PSL_2(\mathbb{Z}[\frac{1}{n}])$ and X_n the model space for Γ_n which is quasi-isometric to Γ_n and constructed below in §3.

Theorem 1.1 (Quasi-isometry classification)**.** *Let* Γ_n *be the upper triangular subgroup of* $PSL_2(\mathbb{Z}[\frac{1}{n}])$, *and* Γ_m *the upper triangular subgroup of* $PSL_2(\mathbb{Z}[\frac{1}{m}])$. *If* $n = p_1^{e_1} \cdots p_k^{e_k}$ *and* $m = q_1^{f_1} \cdots q_l^{f_l}$ *where* $\{p_i\}$ *and* $\{q_j\}$ *are sets of distinct primes, then* Γ_n *and* Γ_m *are quasi-isometric iff* $k = l$ *and for* $i = 1, 2, \cdots, k$, *after possibly reordering,* $p_i = q_i$.

Theorem 1.2 (Quasi-isometry group)**.** *Let* $n = p_1^{e_1} \cdots p_k^{e_k}$ *where all* p_i *are distinct primes. The quasi-isometry group,* $QI(\Gamma_n)$, *is isomorphic to the product*

$$Bilip(\mathbb{R}) \times Bilip(\mathbb{Q}_{p_1}) \times \cdots \times Bilip(\mathbb{Q}_{p_k}).$$

Theorem 1.3 (Cusp group rigidity)**.** *If* Γ' *is a finitely generated group which is quasi-isometric to* Γ_n *then there is a finite normal subgroup* F *of* Γ' *so that* Γ'/F *is commensurable to* Γ_n, *meaning that* Γ'/F *and* Γ_n *have isomorphic subgroups of finite index.*

When we replace Γ_n by the more general group $\Gamma(S)$ defined above, where all elements in S are pairwise relatively prime, we obtain the following generalizations of the above theorems.

Theorem 1.4. *Consider the sets* $S_1 = (n_1, n_2, \cdots n_k)$ *and* $S_2 = (m_1, m_2, \cdots, m_l)$ *with* $(n_i, n_j) = (m_i, m_j) = 1$ *for* $i \neq j$. *Define* $\Gamma_1 = \Gamma(S_1)$ *and* $\Gamma_2 = \Gamma(S_2)$. *The groups* Γ_1 *and* Γ_2 *are quasi-isometric iff* $k = l$ *and for* $i = 1, 2, \cdots k$, *after possibly reordering, each* n_i *is a rational power of* m_i.

Theorem 1.5. *Let* $S = (n_1, n_2, \cdots n_k)$. *The quasi-isometry group* $QI(\Gamma(S))$ *is isomorphic to the product*

$$Bilip(\mathbb{R}) \times Bilip(\mathbb{Q}_{n_1}) \times \cdots \times Bilip(\mathbb{Q}_{n_k}).$$

Theorem 1.6. *Let* Γ' *be any finitely generated group quasi-isometric to* $\Gamma(S)$. *There are integers* $m_1, m_2, \cdots, m_k$, *with each* m_i *a rational power of* n_i, *and a finite normal subgroup* F *of* Γ' *so that* Γ'/F *is isomorphic to a cocompact lattice in* $Iso(X(m_1, \cdots, m_k)) = \mathbb{R} \rtimes (Sim(\mathbb{Q}_{m_1}) \times \cdots \times Sim(\mathbb{Q}_{m_k}))$.

1.2. **Outline of the Proofs.** The key to all of our results is understanding the self quasi-isometries of the model space $X = X_n$ for Γ_n, and in general for $\Gamma(S)$, constructed in §3. This model space is the warped product of $\mathbb{R}$ and a product of trees $\Pi_{i=1}^k T_i$. We begin with a definition crucial to understanding the following outline of the proofs, and refer the reader to §2 for additional definitions. Throughout, let $f : X \to X$ be any quasi-isometry.

When considering points in $\Pi_{i=1}^k T_i$ it is important to define a notion of *height* on each tree T_i. Fix a basepoint $(t_1, t_2, \cdots, t_k) \in \Pi_{i=1}^k T_i$. The height of a vertex $t \in T_i$ is the height change between t and the i-th coordinate t_i of the basepoint. Extend this notion to a height function h_i on each tree T_i through linear interpolation along the edges. The metric on X is then given by a warped product of $\mathbb{R}$ and $\Pi_{i=1}^k T_i$ where on each tree T_i the warping function is given by e^{-h_i}.

In the following outline, as in the majority of the paper, we only consider the groups Γ_n. The similarities in the construction of the model spaces for the groups Γ_n and $\Gamma(S)$

ensure that the generalizations of the proofs are immediate. Let $n = p_1^{e_1}, p_2^{e_2}, \cdots, p_r^{e_r}$ where the p_i are distinct primes.

- **Warped product structure is preserved.** We first show that any quasi-isometry preserves, up to bounded distance, the *horocycles*, i.e. the subsets of the form $\mathbb{R} \times (t_1, \cdots, t_k)$. In other words, that there is a quasi-isometry $\bar{f}$ of the product of trees $T_1 \times \cdots \times T_k$, so that f and $\bar{f}$ commute with the projection $X \to T_1 \times \cdots \times T_k$. Results of [KL] imply that, up to permuting the factors, $\bar{f}$ splits as a product of quasi-isometries $\bar{f}_i$ of the trees T_i.
- **Quasi-isometries are *almost height translations* on the tree factors.** The geometry of the space X restricts the quasi-isometries $\bar{f}_i$. The warping function can be reconstructed as the (logarithm of the) amount of stretching induced by closest point projection between the horocycles. This splits as a sum of functions, h_i, on each of the trees. The quasi-isometries $\bar{f}_i$ preserve these warping functions, in the sense that $h_i(\bar{f}_i(x)) - h_i(\bar{f}_i(y))$ differs from $h_i(x) - h_i(y)$ by a uniformly bounded amount. We call such quasi-isometries *almost height translations*. In [FM1], the group of almost height translations of T_n is identified as $Bilip(\mathbb{Q}_n)$.
- **f induces a bilipschitz homeomorphism of $\mathbb{R}$.** This shows that the group of quasi-isometries of $T_1 \times \cdots \times T_k$ which quasi-preserve the warping function is $Bilip(\mathbb{Q}_{p_1}) \times \cdots \times Bilip(\mathbb{Q}_{p_r})$. All of these quasi-isometries extend to quasi-isometries of X. The quasi-isometries of X which induce the identity on $T_1 \times \cdots \times T_r$ induce a bilipschitz homeomorphism of $\mathbb{R}$. This allows us to identify the quasi-isometry group of X, and prove theorem 1.2 (quasi-isometry group).
- **These methods hold for quasi-isometries between Γ_n and Γ_m.** Consider a quasi-isometry $f : \Gamma_n \to \Gamma_m$. Using the above methods again shows that f induces a bilipschitz homeomorphism of $\mathbb{R}$ and a quasi-isometry on the product of trees which is a bounded distance from a product quasi-isometry. Theorem 1.1 (quasi-isometry classification) now follows by combining results of [FM1] and [W1].
- **Quasi-actions.** Understanding the quasi-isometries of X lets us understand groups quasi-isometric to Γ via the quasi-action principle. Suppose Γ' is quasi-isometric to Γ_n (and hence to X), and let $f : \Gamma' \to X$ be a quasi-isometry. For every $\gamma' \in \Gamma'$ we get a quasi-isometry of X by $x \mapsto f(\gamma' f^{-1}(x))$. These quasi-isometries all have uniform constants, and compose, up to bounded distance, according to the multiplication table of Γ'. In other words, Γ' quasi-acts on X, and therefore gives an almost height translation action on each of the T_i.
- **Obtaining similarity actions on $\mathbb{Q}_n$.** According to [MSW], these almost height translation actions are equivalent, via a quasi-isometry $T_i \to T_i'$, to a height translation action on trees T_i'. In terms of the p_i-adics, this says that there is some q_i so that the bilipschitz action of Γ' on $\mathbb{Q}_{p_i}$ is bilipschitz equivalent to a similarity action on $\mathbb{Q}_{q_i}$. Similarly, the bilipschitz action on $\mathbb{R}$ is equivalent to an affine action on $\mathbb{R}$. Further, the uniformity of the quasi-isometry constants implies that the expansion factor of the affine action on $\mathbb{R}$ is the inverse of the product of the factors from the similarity actions on the $\mathbb{Q}_{q_i}$. This shows Γ' is a lattice in the subgroup of $Aff(\mathbb{R}) \times Sim(\mathbb{Q}_{q_1}) \times \cdots \times Sim(\mathbb{Q}_{q_k})$ which satisfies

this condition. This subgroup is $\mathbb{R} \rtimes Sim(\mathbb{Q}_{q_1}) \times \cdots \times Sim(\mathbb{Q}_{q_k})$, and can be identified as the isometry group of a complex X', proving theorem 1.3.

2. Preliminaries

2.1. **Definitions and Notation.** We begin with the definition of a quasi-isometry.

Definition. Let $K \geq 1$ and $C \geq 0$. A (K, C)-*quasi-isometry* between metric spaces (X, d_X) and (Y, d_Y) is a map $f : X \to Y$ satisfying:

1. $\frac{1}{K} d_X(x_1, x_2) - C \leq d_Y(f(x_1), f(x_2)) \leq K d_X(x_1, x_2) + C$ for all $x_1, x_2 \in X$.

2. For some constant C', we have $Nbhd_{C'}(f(X)) = Y$.

We will assume that our quasi-isometries have been changed by a bounded amount using the standard "connect-the-dots" procedure to be continuous. (See, for example, [SW].) A quasi-isometry has a *coarse inverse*, i.e. a quasi-isometry $g : Y \to X$ so that $f \circ g$ and $g \circ f$ are a bounded distance from the appropriate identity map in the sup norm. A map satisfying 1. but not 2. in the definition above is called a *quasi-isometric embedding*.

We define the *quasi-isometry group* $QI(X)$ of a space X to be the collection of all self quasi-isometries of X, identifying those which differ by a bounded amount in the sup norm.

Given a group G and a metric space X, a *quasi-action* of G on X associates to each $g \in G$ a quasi-isometry of X, i.e. $A_g : X \to X$, subject to certain conditions. This map is defined by $A_g(x) = g \cdot x$, and the collection of these maps has uniform quasi-isometry constants, so that $A_{Id} = Id_X$ and $d_{sup}(A_g \circ A_h, A_{gh})$ is bounded independently of g and h.

2.2. **Previous results.** The following theorems will be referred to repeatedly in §4. We state them below for easy reference.

2.2.1. *Rigidity of Baumslag-Solitar groups.* Since the geometry of the group Γ_n is so dependent on its various Baumslag-Solitar subgroups, we will often refer to the following classification and rigidity results for the solvable Baumslag-Solitar groups due to Farb and Mosher.

Theorem 2.1 ([FM1] Theorem 7.1)**.** *For integers $m, n \geq 2$, the groups $BS(1, m)$ and $BS(1, n)$ are quasi-isometric if and only if they are commensurable. This happens if and only if there exist integers $r, j, k > 0$ such that $m = r^j$ and $n = r^k$.*

Theorem 2.2 ([FM1] Theorem 8.1)**.** *The quasi-isometry group of $BS(1,n)$ is given by the following isomorphism:*

$$QI(BS(1,n)) \cong Bilip(\mathbb{R}) \times Bilip(\mathbb{Q}_n).$$

2.2.2. *Products of trees and groups acting on products of trees.* A major step in the proofs below is to show that a quasi-isometry $f : \Gamma_1 \to \Gamma_2$ induces a map on the product of trees on which each group acts. Once this is accomplished, we use the following result of Kleiner and Leeb to show that our map is uniformly close to a product of quasi-isometries.

Theorem 2.3 ([KL] Theorem 1.1.2)**.** *Let T_i and T'_i be irreducible thick Euclidean Tits buildings with cocompact affine Weyl group. Let $X = \mathbb{E}^n \times \Pi_{i=1}^k T_i$ and $X' = \mathbb{E}^{n'} \times \Pi_{i=1}^{k'} T'_i$ be a metric products. Then for all $K, C > 0$ there exist K', C', D' so that the following holds: If $f : X \to X'$ is a (K,C)-quasi-isometry, then $n = n'$, $k = k'$ and there are (K', C')-quasi-isometries $f_i : T_i \to T_j$ so that $d(p \circ f, \Pi_{i=1}^k f_i \circ p) \leq D'$ where p is the projection map.*

The following result of [MSW] will be needed for the proof of rigidity of the groups Γ. It applies to *bushy* trees, meaning that each vertex is a uniformly bounded distance from a vertex having at least three unbounded complementary components. In addition we require *bounded valence*, meaning that vertices have uniformly finite bounded valence. All of the trees in the discussion below satisfy these properties.

Theorem 2.4 ([MSW])**.** *If $G \times T \to T$ is a quasi-action of a group G on a bounded valence, bushy tree T, then there is a bounded valence, bushy tree T', an isometric action $G \times T' \to T'$, and a quasi-isometry $f : T' \to T$ which intertwines the actions of G on T' and the quasi-action of G on T to within a uniformly bounded distance.*

3. The Geometric Models

To illustrate the geometry of Γ_n, and $\Gamma(S)$ in general, we describe a metric $(k+1)$-complex X quasi-isometric to Γ_n, i.e. on which Γ_n acts properly discontinuously and cocompactly by isometries. We begin with the simplest case of the upper triangular subgroup Γ_n of $PSL_2(\mathbb{Z}[\frac{1}{n}])$. We then describe the geometry of the more general groups $\Gamma(S)$. For all of these groups, the complex X is a warped product of $\mathbb{R}$ with a product of trees on which the group acts. When the n_i are not relatively prime, the group $\Gamma(S)$ does not act on a product of trees, and we do not consider this case here.

First recall that the Baumslag-Solitar groups $BS(1,n) = \langle a, b | aba^{-1} = b^n \rangle$, for integral $n \geq 2$, for integral $n \geq 2$, act properly discontinuously and cocompactly by isometries on a metric 2-complex we denote Y_n. This complex Y_n is topologically the product $T \times \mathbb{R}$ where each vertex of the tree has 1 incoming edge and n outgoing edges. Metrically we define a height function on T so that if $l \subset T$ is a line on which the height function is strictly increasing, then $l \times \mathbb{R}$ is metrically a hyperbolic plane (1). See [FM1] for a more detailed construction of this complex, and figure .

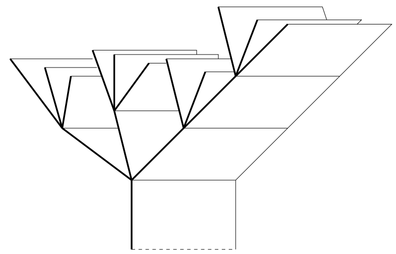

FIGURE 1. The geometric model of the solvable Baumslag-Solitar group $BS(1,3)$, which is topologically a warped product of a tree and $\mathbb{R}$.

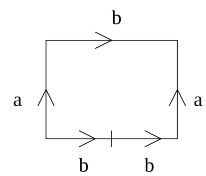

FIGURE 2. The "horobrick" building block for the geometric model of $BS(1,2)$.

3.1. **The geometric model of Γ_n.** We give the most comprehensive description of the model space X in this case because the trees on which Γ_n acts are easier to understand than the trees on which $\Gamma(S)$ acts. We present several ways to understand the complex X.

When p is prime, the group $BS(1,p)$, acts on the Bruhat-Tits tree T_p associated to $PSL_2(\mathbb{Q}_p)$. This is not true for $BS(1,n)$ when n is not prime. We will describe the $BS(1,n)$ tree below.

Assume p is prime, and consider the geometric model Y_p of $BS(1,p)$. Let (x,y) be the coordinates on the upper half space model of hyperbolic space, where $y>0$. One can also view Y_p as built from the "horobrick" with $0 \le x \le n$ and $1 \le y \le p$. The vertical sides of this brick have length $\log p$. In the Cayley graph of $BS(1,p)$ this horobrick has the form given in figure 2.

If $n = p_1^{e_1}, p_2^{e_2}, \cdots, p_r^{e_r}$, then Γ_n acts on the product of the trees $\Pi_{i=1}^k T_i$, where T_i is the tree on which $BS(1,p_i)$ acts, i.e. it has 1 incoming edge at each vertex and p_i outgoing edges. The complex X is the same warped product of $\Pi_{i=1}^k T_i$ with $\mathbb{R}$ as we saw above for $BS(1,p)$.

Analogously for Γ_n, there is an $(k+1)$-dimensional building block used to construct the complex X, whose 1-skeleton is the Cayley graph of Γ. When n is a product of two primes, an examples of this block is given in figure 3. It is not difficult to see that the correct branching occurs when these blocks are arranged so as to form the appropriate Baumslag-Solitar subcomplexes. In general the $(k+1)$-dimensional building block will be an $(k+1)$-cube, with appropriate edge labels in terms of the generators of $\Gamma(S)$. We refer to the horocycle along which the sheets meet as *branching horocycles.*

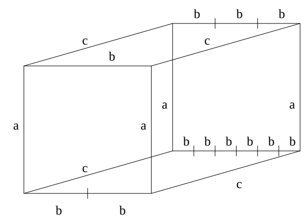

FIGURE 3. The analogous building block for $\Gamma(2,3)$.

A second way of understanding the complex X is in terms of some of its special subspaces. Let $n = p_1^{e_1} p_2^{e_2} \cdots p_k^{e_k}$ where the p_i are prime. Then

$$\Gamma_n \cong \langle a_1, \ldots, a_k, b | a_i^{-1} b a_i = b^{p_i^{2e_i}},\ a_i a_j = a_j a_i,\ i \neq j \rangle.$$

We consider in particular two types of subspaces of X:

- Y_{p_i}, corresponding to $BS(1, p_i^{2e_i})$ generated by a_i and b in the presentation above
- $\mathbb{Z}^l$, for $1 \leq l \leq k$, generated by l distinct generators a_i in the presentation above.

Notice that the $BS(1, p_i)$ subgroups of Γ all share the generator b; In X this means that the subcomplexes Y_{p_i} for $i = 1, 2, \cdots, k$, are joined along branching horocycles. Namely, consider a subcomplex Y_{p_i} of X. At each branching horocycle of Y_{p_i} there is a copy of Y_{p_j} for all $j \neq i$ attached along that horocycle. The same is true for every branching horocycle of those Y_{p_j} and the process continues.

For any point $x \in X$, there is a Y_{p_i} subspace for each $i = 1, 2, \cdots, n$ in X which contains x. For each i, the set $\{a_i^m \cdot x | m \in \mathbb{Z}\}$ is a line in the Cayley graph of Γ which is the 1-skeleton of X. These lines form the axes of a $\mathbb{Z}^n$ subspace of X. The orbit of x under the group generated by the entire collection $\{a_i\}$ is a $\mathbb{Z}^n$ subspace of X, for any $x \in X$. The $\mathbb{Z}^l$ subspaces for $l < k$ are contained in the $\mathbb{Z}^n$ subspaces and are formed by taking the orbit of $x \in X$ under the group generated by a subset of l of the generators a_i.

3.2. **The geometric model of $\Gamma(S)$.** When $\Gamma = \Gamma(n_1, n_2, \cdots n_k)$ and the n_i are relatively prime, but not all prime, the product of trees on which $\Gamma = \Gamma(n_1, n_2, \cdots n_k)$ acts is not as simple.

We first discuss the tree T^n on which the group $BS(1, n)$ acts when n is not prime. Suppose that $n = p_1^{e_1}, p_2^{e_2}, \cdots, p_r^{e_r}$, and let T_i be the Bruhat-Tits tree associated to $PSL_2(\mathbb{Q}_{p_i})$. The tree T^n is a subspace of $\Pi_{i=1}^r T_i$, whose branching may not be constant, but depends on the exponents of the primes.

Define a folding function $F_i : T_i \to \mathbb{R}$ as follows. If h_i is the height function defined on T_i, then $F_i(t) = h_i(t)$ for $t \in T_i$. Combining folding functions on the T_i we get a map $F(r) : \Pi_{i=1}^r T_i \to \mathbb{R}^r$ defined by $F(r) = (F_1, F_2, \cdots, F_r)$. Consider the grid of lines in $\mathbb{R}^r$ of the form $(x_1, x_2, \cdots, x_{j-1}, \mathbb{R}, x_{j+1}, \cdots, x_r)$ where $x_i \in \mathbb{Z}$. So we really have r families of parallel lines in $\mathbb{R}^r$. View each family as representing folded copies of one of the trees T_i under $F(r)$.

The branching of the tree T^n is determined by the line $e_1x_1 + e_2x_2 + \cdots + e_rx_r = 0$ in $\mathbb{R}^r$. When the line crosses a line in the family of parallel lines corresponding to T_i, the tree T^n branches n times. When the line crosses the intersection of two lines, one from the family of T_i and one from the family of T_j, the branching is $i + j$.

Example. Consider the group $BS(1, 6)$. The tree T^6 on which it acts is a subset of $T_2 \times T_3$, determined by the line $y = x$ in the plane $\mathbb{R}^2$, since the exponent of each prime is 1. This line only crosses vertices of the grid of lines, so the branching is uniform of valence 6.

Example. Consider the group $BS(1, 12)$. The tree T^{12} on which it acts is a subset of $T_2 \times T_3$, only now the line in $\mathbb{R}^2$ which determines the branching is $2x = y$. From the way this line crosses the grid of lines, we see that the branching of T is not uniform. The vertices alternate between valence 2 and valence 6, where the valence 2 arises from the line crossing only a horizontal grid line, and the valence 6 arises when the line crosses a vertex in this grid of lines.

Example. Consider the group $BS(1, 60)$. The tree T^{60} on which it acts is a subset of $T_2 \times T_3 \times T_5$, and now the folding map $F(3)$ is a map to $\mathbb{R}^3$. The line in $\mathbb{R}^3$ determining the branching of T is $2x + y + z = 0$. Again we see that the amount of branching at each valence varies.

Now consider $\Gamma = \Gamma(n_1, n_2, \cdots n_k)$ where the n_i are not all prime. Consider any n_i, and let $p_1, p_2, \cdots, p_r$ be the list of primes dividing n_i, with T_i the Bruhat-Tits tree of $PSL_2(\mathbb{Q}_{p_i})$. Then let T^i be the tree on which $BS(1, n_i)$ acts (described above) which is a subspace of $\Pi_{i=1}^r T_i$. Then Γ acts on $\Pi_{i=1}^k T^i$. The complex $X(S)$ is then warped product of $\Pi_{i=1}^k T^i$ with $\mathbb{R}$.

4. The Structure of Quasi-Isometries

The key step in the proofs of the theorems in this paper is understanding the structure of the quasi-isometries of Γ, or equivalently of X. We begin with two groups Γ_1 and Γ_1 and a (K, C)-quasi-isometry between their geometric models, $f : X_1 \to X_2$.

Let π be the projection $X \to \Pi_{i=1}^k T_i$. Define a *horocycle* of the complex X to be a subset of the form $\pi^{-1}((t_1, t_2, \cdots, t_k))$ where $(t_1, t_2, \cdots, t_k)$ is a point in $\Pi_{i=1}^k T_i$. A *hyperplane* in X is a subcomplex of the form $\pi^{-1}(\times l_1 \times \cdots \times l_n)$ where each l_i is a geodesic in T_i. The first goal is to show that the quasi-isometry f preserves horocycles and hence induces a quasi-isometry of a product of trees. These arguments are similar to those in [W2].

Lemma 4.1. *For any (K,C) there is an $R>0$ so that for any $f: X_1 \to X_2$, a (K,C)-quasi-isometry, and every hyperplane H of X_1, there is a subset Y of $\Pi_{i=1}^k T_i$ so that the image $f(H)$ is within R of $\pi^{-1}(Y)$.*

Proof. Let g be a quasi-inverse of f, so that $g \circ f$ is a bounded distance from the identity map, and hence proper. By a standard connect-the-dots argument, we may assume f and g are continuous. As the X_i are uniformly contractible, the compositions are homotopic to the identity through homotopies of length at most R_0 (depending only on the X_i and the constants (K,C)). The the maps f and g are, in particular, proper homotopy equivalences.

Consider the fundamental class $[H]$ in $H_{n+1}^{uf}(X_1)$. The push forward $f_*([H])$ is thus a non-trivial class in $H_{n+1}^{uf}(X_2)$. Further, this class clearly has a representative c with support contained in the R_0 neighborhood of $f(H)$. The simplicial structure of X_2 forces the coefficients of c to be constant along horocycles. Thus the support of c is of the form $Y \times \mathbb{R}$ for some subcomplex Y of $\Pi_{i=1}^k T_i$. This shows that the R_0-neighborhood of $f(H)$ contains $Y \times \mathbb{R}$.

To complete the proof we must show that a neighborhood of $Y \times \mathbb{R}$ ($= \text{supp}(c)$) contains $f(H)$. If not, then there are arbitrarily large balls in $f(H)$ which are not contained in $Y \times \mathbb{R}$. Applying the inverse map, g, this would give a representative of $[H]$ whose support misses large balls in H. This is impossible, as any representative of the fundamental class has full support. □

Lemma 4.2 (Horocycles are preserved)**.** *For every (K,C) there is an R so that if f is a (K,C)-quasi-isometry of X and h is a horocycle in X then there is a horocycle h' so that $d_H(f(h),h') \leq R$.*

Proof. This is an immediate consequence of the previous lemma. For any horocycle h there are a finite number of hyperplanes $H_1, \cdots, H_k$ in X_1 which have coarse intersection at Hausdorff distance at most R from h (the constants k and R depend only on the geometry of X_1). The previous lemma implies that the image of h is Hausdorff equivalent to a complex of the form $Y \times \mathbb{R}$ for some subset Y of X_2. Applying the same argument to the inverse map g and each horocycle in $Y \times \mathbb{R}$, we conclude that Y must be of finite diameter (bounded independently of h). This proves the lemma. □

Corollary 4.3 (Factor preserving)**.** *Consider the groups $\Gamma_1 = \Gamma(n_1, n_2, \cdots n_k)$ and $\Gamma_2 = \Gamma(m_1, m_2, \cdots, m_l)$ where $(n_i, n_j) = (m_i, m_j) = 1$ for $i \neq j$, and a quasi-isometry $f : \Gamma_1 \to \Gamma_2$ between them. Then:*

1. *$k = l$,*
2. *f induces a quasi-isometry $f_T : \Pi_{i=1}^k T_i \to \Pi_{i=1}^k T_i'$,and*
3. *there are (K', C')-quasi-isometries $\overline{f_i} : T_i \to T_i'$ (after possibly reindexing the tree factors) so that f_T is a bounded distance from the product quasi-isometry $\overline{f_1} \times \cdots \times \overline{f_k}$.*

Proof. Since every point $(t_1, t_2, \cdots, t_n) \in \Pi_{i=1}^k T_i$ determines a horocycle in X, it follows from lemma 4.2 that the quasi-isometry f induces a quasi-isometry on the product of trees: $f_T : \Pi_{i=1}^k T_i \to \Pi_{i=1}^l T_i$. It now follows from theorem 2.3 that $k = l$ and thus there are the same numbers of parameters in Γ_1 and Γ_2. It then follows from theorem 2.3 that this map is a bounded distance from a product $f_1 \times \cdots \times f_k$ of quasi-isometries. □

Corollary 4.4 (Bilipschitz maps)**.** *Let $f : \Gamma_1 \to \Gamma_2$ be a (K, C)-quasi-isometry. Then there are bilipschitz maps $g : \mathbb{R} \to \mathbb{R}$ and $fi : T_i \to T_i$ (after possibly re-indexing the tree factors) so that f is a bounded distance from $(g, f_1, \cdots f_k)$.*

Proof. Applying corollary 4.3 we may assume that the quasi-isometry f preserves the individual tree factors. We use the notation of corollary 4.3 and let f_i denote the induced map on the i-th tree factor. It follows that the quasi-isometry f restricts to a map on each Baumslag-Solitar subcomplex $T_i \times \mathbb{R}$, which is also a quasi-isometry. Applying theorem 2.2 of Farb and Mosher, we conclude that f_i is a bounded distance from the product of a bilipschitz map of T_i with a bilipschitz map of $\mathbb{R}$. It is easy to see that we must obtain the same bilipschitz map of $\mathbb{R}$ regardless of which Baumslag-Solitar subspace we restrict to, and the corollary follows. □

We are now able to prove theorem 1.1.

Proof of Theorem 1.1. Applying corollary 4.4, we consider our quasi-isometry to be factor preserving of the form $(g, f_1, \cdots f_n)$, with each individual map bilipschitz. Then any pair $(g, f_i) : \mathbb{R} \times T_i \to \mathbb{R} \times T_i'$ is a quasi-isometry of $BS(1, p_i)$ to $BS(1, q_i)$, by theorem 2.2 . It follows from theorem 2.1 that, after reordering, $p_i = q_i$. □

4.1. **Description of the quasi-isometry group.** We begin with a lemma important for the proof of theorem 1.2.

Lemma 4.5 ([FM2]Rubber Band Principle)**.** *For all $L, M > 0$ there is a constant C satisfying the following property. Suppose X and Y are path metric spaces and $f : X \to Y$ is a map. Suppose that there are collections of isometrically embedded subspaces C_X of X and C_Y of Y satisfying:*

- *Any two points in X (or in Y) can be connected by an M-quasi-geodesic made up of a finite number of subpaths, each lying in an element of C_X or C_Y.*
- *f induces a one-to-one correspondence between elements of C_X and C_Y.*
- *f restricts to an L-quasi-isometry between corresponding elements of C_X and C_Y.*

Then $f : X \to Y$ is a C-quasi-isometry.

We are now able to prove theorem 1.2 and describe the quasi-isometry group of Γ.

Proof of Theorem 1.2. It is clear that we have a homomorphism

$$\Phi : QI(X) \to Bilip(\mathbb{R}) \times Bilip(\mathbb{Q}_{p_1}) \times Bilip(\mathbb{Q}_{p_1}) \times \cdots \times Bilip(\mathbb{Q}_{p_k})$$

given by $\Phi(f) = (f_R, f_1, f_2, \cdots, f_n)$. In addition we get a homomorphism

$$\Phi_i : QI(X) \to QI(BS(1,p_i)) \cong Bilip(\mathbb{R}) \times Bilip(\mathbb{Q}_{p_i})$$

for each $i = 1, 2, \cdots, n$, given by $\Phi(f) = (f_R, f_i)$. Following the reasoning in [FM1], we see that for any $f \in ker(\Phi)$, the quasi-isometry $\Phi_i(f)$ is a bounded distance B_i from the identity map on X_n. Letting $B = \max\{B_i\}$, the Rubber Band Principle implies that $\Phi(f)$ is a bounded distance B from the identity.

To see that Φ is surjective, we again use the Rubber band Principle to piece together quasi-isometries of the X_n subcomplexes. Choose $f_R \in Bilip(\mathbb{R})$ and maps $f_i \in Bilip(\mathbb{Q}_{p_i})$. We must show that $f_R \times f_1 \times \cdots \times f_n$ is a quasi-isometry of Γ_1. From [FM1] we know that any pair (f_R, f_i) yields a quasi-isometry of X_i. We can assume the quasi-isometry constants are uniform by taking the largest pair of constants from any of these maps. Since the f_R is common to any two pairs, we obtain a product map f of the entire complex. Thus we have a collection of subspaces and map $f = f_R \times f_1 \times \cdots \times f_n$ satisfying the Rubber Band Principle, so f is a quasi-isometry of Γ. ☐

5. Rigidity

We finish with the proof of theorem 1.3, which shows that this class of groups is quasi-isometrically rigid.

Proof of Theorem 1.3. Let Γ' be any finitely generated group quasi-isometric to $\Gamma(S)$, with X a the model space for $\Gamma(S)$ as before, and let $f : \Gamma' \to X$ be a quasi-isometry with g a coarse inverse. We get a quasi-action of Γ' on X where $\gamma' x = f(\gamma' g(x))$. By lemma 4.2, horocycles are preserved, so we get an induced quasi-action of Γ' on the product of trees $\Pi_{i=1}^k T_i$. By passing to a finite index subgroup of Γ' we may assume that the quasi-action is the diagonal quasi-action of a collection of quasi-actions Γ' on T_i. The maps to the complexes of the Baumslag-Solitar subgroups of $\Gamma(S)$ are Γ' equivariant (to within finite distance), and so quasi-preserve the height function. By [MSW], there are trees T_i' quasi-isometric to the T_i and actions of Γ' on T_i which are quasi-conjugate to the quasi-actions on the T_i. Further, each of these trees is homogeneous with a Γ' invariant orientation with one edge directed into each vertex. Thus we get an action of Γ' on the product of the T_i', with vertex stabilizers virtually cyclic, preserving the orientations, and with finite quotient, in other words we get a description of Γ' as a finite complex of virtual $\mathbb{Z}$s.

Consider the edges in this quotient which come from edges of a T_i'. These are oriented, and as there is exactly one edge oriented toward every vertex in T_i', the same is true in the quotient. Since the quotient is finite, this implies that there is precisely one such edge oriented away from each vertex of the quotient. This implies that these edges consist of a finite union of circles. Further, this implies that for any $v \in T_i'$, the action of $stab(v)$ on edges pointing away from v is transitive. Similarly, fixing any edge in T_i' and looking at two cells coming from $T_i' \times T_j'$ we have exactly two such two cells at every edge of the quotient, with one oriented towards, and one away from, this edge. Continuing over higher dimensional cubes, we see that the quotient is product of oriented circles, with the inclusions of the stabilizer of a cube to a face stabilizer is an isomorphism if it goes against the orientation. Thus we may collapse such a cube, unless its opposite faces are the same in the quotient. Making all such possible collapses gives a complex of groups description of Γ' with underlying complex a product of oriented loops, with stabilizers all virtually $\mathbb{Z}$, and with the inclusions isomorphism when going against the orientation. As in [FM1], we may pass to a finite index subgroup of Γ' which has such a description with all stabilizers $\mathbb{Z}$. Such a complex of groups has a presentation precisely of the form $\Gamma(S')$ for some S'. Thus Γ' is commensurable to $G(S')$ for some S', as desired. □

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Jennifer Taback
Dept. of Mathematics and Statistics
University of Albany
Albany, NY 12222
jtaback@math.albany.edu

Kevin Whyte
Dept. of Mathematics
University of Illinois at Chicago
Chicago, Il 60607
kwhyte@math.uchicago.edu