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RIEMANNIAN MANIFOLDS OF FINITE ORDER

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ABSTRACT. Several types of Riemannian manifolds are characterized by the growth of area of displacements of hypersurfaces along normal geodesics.

If H is a compact hypersurface with oriented normal bundle in a Riemannian manifold M and H_s is the (possibly singular) hypersurface of points at distance s along normal geodesics, then let $A_H(s)$ be the area of H_s. In [**4**], [**3**], [**2**], the functions A_H were used to give characterizations respectively of the Euclidean plane, surfaces of constant curvature, manifolds of constant sectional curvature. A different proof, yielding further results, is outlined here.

Say that a manifold M has finite order r if there is a linear differential equation of order r with constant coefficients which is satisfied by A_H for every hypersurface H and r is the least such integer. If there is no such differential equation, say that M has infinite order.

THEOREM 1. (a) $\operatorname{ord} M \geqq \dim M$;
(b) $\operatorname{ord} M = \dim M \Leftrightarrow M$ *has constant sectional curvature*;
(c) $\operatorname{ord} M = 1 + \dim M \Leftrightarrow M$ *is locally isometric to a complex projective space other than* CP^1, *or to its dual symmetric space*;
(d) *if* $\dim M = 2$, $\operatorname{ord} M < \infty \Leftrightarrow M$ *has constant curvature*;
(e) *if* M *is symmetric*, $\operatorname{ord} M < \infty \Leftrightarrow M$ *has rank* 1 *or is flat.*

The first step of the proof is to choose a point x in H, take an orthonormal frame $E_1, \ldots, E_n$ at x with E_n normal to H (where $n = \dim M$) and parallel translate this frame along the normal geodesic through x. (A similar moving frame is also used in [**1**].) Let f_s be the obvious map $H \to H_s$ and $T_1, \ldots, T_{n-1}$ a moving frame along, and orthogonal to, the same geodesic, with $T_i(f_s(x)) = df_s(T_i(x))$. It can be shown that if we define functions t_{ij} $(1 \leqq i, j \leqq n-1)$ by $T_i = \sum t_{ij}E_j$, then $t''_{ij} = \sum t_{ik}c_{kj}$, where $c_{kj} = \langle R(E_n, E_k)E_n, E_j\rangle$. The "if" portions of (b), (c), (d), and (e) now follow quite directly.

LEMMA. *If in a symmetric space* M, *the eigenvalues of the bilinear form* $\langle R(E, -)E, -\rangle$ *are the same for all unit vectors* E, *then* M *has rank* 1 *or is flat.*

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