

STABILITY OF HARMONIC MAPS AND STANDARD MINIMAL IMMERSIONS

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1. Introduction. Let f be a smooth map of a compact Riemannian manifold M into another Riemannian manifold N . The *energy functional* $E(f)$ for f is defined by

$$E(f) = (1/2) \int_M \|df\|^2 dv_M.$$

A smooth map f of M into N is called a *harmonic map* if f is a critical point of the energy functional E . A harmonic map f is called *stable* if every second variation of E at f is nonnegative. Let S^n be an n -dimensional Euclidean sphere. Then the following remarkable theorems are known.

THEOREM (Xin [22]). *For $n \geq 3$ there exists no nonconstant stable harmonic map from S^n to any Riemannian manifold.*

THEOREM (Leung [5]). *For $n \geq 3$ there exists no nonconstant stable harmonic map from any compact Riemannian manifold to S^n .*

It is natural to ask what kind of a compact Riemannian manifold M has the property that there exists no nonconstant stable harmonic map from M to any Riemannian manifold nor from any compact Riemannian manifold to M . We call such an M *harmonically unstable*. We know topological restrictions on harmonically unstable Riemannian manifolds; if M is harmonically unstable, then by a classical result on closed geodesics we have $\pi_1(M) = \{1\}$ and by the theorem of Sacks and Uhlenbeck [15] $\pi_2(M) = \{1\}$.

The purpose of this note is to classify harmonically unstable compact symmetric spaces.

THEOREM 1. *A compact symmetric space M is harmonically unstable, if and only if M is a product of simply connected compact irreducible symmetric spaces belonging to the following list;*

- (i) *simple Lie groups of type A_n ($n \geq 2$), B_2 and C_n ($n \geq 3$),*
- (ii) *$SU(2n)/Sp(n)$ ($n \geq 3$),*
- (iii) *spheres S^n ($n \geq 3$),*

- (iv) quaternionic Grassmann manifolds $Sp(p + q)/Sp(p) \times Sp(q)$ ($p \geq q \geq 1$),
- (v) E_6/F_4 ,
- (vi) Cayley projective plane $F_4/Spin(9)$.

The method of Xin and Leung was to deform a harmonic map along conformal vector fields of S^n and take the average of the second variations. Our method generalized theirs. We deform a harmonic map along gradient vector fields of the first eigenfunctions for the Laplacian of a compact symmetric space, and use the standard immersion of the compact symmetric space into the first eigenspace in order to compute the average of the second variations. In [11], using the same method, we investigated the stability of minimal submanifolds in compact symmetric spaces.

Theorem 1 is proved in Section 3. In Section 4 we study the harmonic instability of convex hypersurfaces of a Euclidean space and isoparametric minimal hypersurfaces in a unit sphere.

2. Trace formulas and standard minimal immersions. Let M be an n -dimensional compact Riemannian manifold and Φ an isometric immersion of M into the Euclidean space E^N with the inner product \langle , \rangle . We denote by R and B the curvature tensor of M and the second fundamental form of Φ , respectively. The equation of Gauss is given by

$$\langle R(X, Y)Z, W \rangle = \langle B(X, W), B(Y, Z) \rangle - \langle B(X, Z), B(Y, W) \rangle$$

for $X, Y, Z, W \in T_x(M)$. Let $\{v_1, \dots, v_n\}$ be an orthonormal basis of $T_x(M)$. The Ricci tensor of M is defined by

$$\rho(X, Y) = \sum_{i=1}^n \langle R(X, v_i)v_i, Y \rangle, \text{ for } X, Y \in T_x(M),$$

and the mean curvature vector of Φ is defined by

$$\eta = (1/n) \sum_{i=1}^n B(v_i, v_i).$$

For a vector v in E^N we consider a vector field $V = \text{grad } f_v$ on M , where $f_v(x) = \langle \Phi(x), v \rangle$ for $x \in M$. We denote by ψ_t the flow generated by V .

Let $f: N \rightarrow M$ be a harmonic map, where N is an m -dimensional compact Riemannian manifold. We now define a quadratic form Q_f on E^N by

$$Q_f(v) = (d^2/dt^2)E(\psi_t \circ f)|_{t=0}.$$

Then the trace of Q_f on E^N is given as follows (cf. Leung [6]):

$$(1) \quad \text{Tr } Q_f = \int_N \sum_{\alpha=1}^m \sum_{i=1}^n (2\|B(df(e_\alpha), v_i)\|^2 - \langle B(df(e_\alpha), df(e_\alpha)), B(v_i, v_i) \rangle) dv_N,$$

where $\{e_1, \dots, e_m\}$ is an orthonormal basis at $x \in N$ and $\{v_1, \dots, v_n\}$ is an orthonormal basis at $f(x) \in M$.

On the other hand, let $h: M \rightarrow N'$ be a harmonic map, where N' is a Riemannian manifold with the metric \langle, \rangle' . We define a quadratic form Q_h on E^N by

$$Q_h(v) = (d^2/dt^2)E(h \circ \psi_t)|_{t=0}.$$

Then the trace of Q_h on E^N is given as follows (cf. Pan [14]):

$$(2) \quad \text{Tr } Q_h = \int_M \sum_{i,j=1}^n \sum_{k=1}^n (2\langle B(v_i, v_k), B(v_k, v_j) \rangle - \langle B(v_i, v_j), B(v_k, v_k) \rangle) \langle dh(v_i), dh(v_j) \rangle' dv_M,$$

where $\{v_1, \dots, v_n\}$ is an orthonormal basis at $x \in M$.

Next we consider the case where M is a product submanifold of E^N . Suppose that M is a product manifold $M_1 \times \dots \times M_r$, and Φ is a product isometric immersion $\Phi_1 \times \dots \times \Phi_r$, where, for each s with $1 \leq s \leq r$, M_s is an $n(s)$ -dimensional compact Riemannian manifold and Φ_s is an isometric immersion of M_s into $E^{N(s)}$. We denote by B_s the second fundamental form of Φ_s . Then the formulas (1) and (2) are written as follows:

$$(1)' \quad \text{Tr } Q_f = \sum_{s=1}^r \int_N \sum_{\alpha=1}^m \sum_{k(s)}^{n(s)} (2\|B_s((df)_s(e_\alpha), v_{k(s)})\|^2 - \langle B_s((df)_s(e_\alpha), (df)_s(e_\alpha)), B_s(v_{k(s)}, v_{k(s)}) \rangle) dv_N,$$

and

$$(2)' \quad \text{Tr } Q_h = \sum_{s=1}^r \int_M \sum_{i(s), j(s)} \sum_{k(s)} (2\langle B_s(v_{i(s)}, v_{k(s)}), B_s(v_{k(s)}, v_{j(s)}) \rangle - \langle B_s(v_{i(s)}, v_{j(s)}), B_s(v_{k(s)}, v_{k(s)}) \rangle) \langle dh(v_{i(s)}), dh(v_{j(s)}) \rangle' dv_M,$$

where $(df)_s$ denotes the $T(M_s)$ -component of df , $\{v_{k(s)}; k(s) = n(1) + \dots + n(s-1) + 1, \dots, n(1) + \dots + n(s-1) + n(s)\}$ is an orthonormal basis of $T_x(M_s)$, and each of the indices $i(s), j(s)$ and $k(s)$ runs from $n(1) + \dots + n(s-1) + 1$ to $n(1) + \dots + n(s-1) + n(s)$.

We shall review quickly the definition of the standard minimal immersions of compact irreducible symmetric spaces.

Let $M = G/K$ be an n -dimensional compact irreducible symmetric space and g_0 a G -invariant Riemannian metric on M induced by the Killing form of the Lie algebra of G . We should note that the scalar curvature of (M, g_0) is equal to $n/2$. Let Δ be the Laplacian of (M, g_0) acting on

functions. For the k -th eigenvalue λ_k of Δ , we choose an orthonormal basis $\{f_0, \dots, f_{m(k)}\}$ of the k -th eigenspace with respect to the L^2 -inner product defined by g_0 . We consider the mapping Φ_k of M into $E^{m(k)+1}$ defined by

$$\Phi_k: M \ni x \mapsto C \cdot (f_0(x), \dots, f_{m(k)}(x)) \in E^{m(k)+1},$$

where $C = (\text{Vol}(M, g_0)/(m(k) + 1))^{1/2}$. Then Φ_k is a full G -equivariant minimal isometric immersion of $(M, (\lambda_k/n)g_0)$ into the unit sphere $S^{m(k)+1}(1)$ (cf. Takahashi [20], Wallach [21]). This Φ_k is called the k -th standard minimal immersion of M . In [10] we studied some properties of the first standard immersions of compact irreducible symmetric spaces.

3. Main Results. First we shall show the following.

THEOREM 2. *Let M be an n -dimensional compact minimal submanifold immersed in a unit sphere $S^{N-1}(1)$. If the Ricci curvature ρ of M satisfies $\rho > n/2$, then M is harmonically unstable.*

PROOF. We use the same notation as in Section 2 and denote by $\underline{\rho}$ the minimum value of the Ricci curvature of M . Let $f: N \rightarrow M$ be a nonconstant harmonic map. By the equation of Gauss, (1) becomes

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Tr } Q_f &= \int_N \sum_{\alpha=1}^m \sum_{i=1}^n (\langle B(df(e_\alpha), df(e_\alpha)), B(v_i, v_i) \rangle - 2\langle R(df(e_\alpha), v_i)v_i, df(e_\alpha) \rangle) dv_N \\ &= \int_N \sum_{\alpha=1}^m (n\langle B(df(e_\alpha), df(e_\alpha)), \eta \rangle - 2\rho(df(e_\alpha), df(e_\alpha))) dv_N. \end{aligned}$$

Since the minimality of M in $S^{N-1}(1)$ implies $\langle B(X, Y), \eta \rangle = \langle X, Y \rangle$, we have

$$\text{Tr } Q_f \leq 2(n - 2\rho)E(f).$$

Since $\underline{\rho} > n/2$ and $E(f) > 0$, we get $\text{Tr } Q_f < 0$. Thus f is unstable. Next let $h: M \rightarrow N'$ be a nonconstant harmonic map. In the formula (2) we choose an orthonormal basis $\{v_1, \dots, v_n\}$ at $x \in M$ such that $\langle dh(v_i), dh(v_j) \rangle' = a_i \delta_{ij}$, where each a_i is nonnegative. By the equation of Gauss and the minimality of M in $S^{N-1}(1)$, (2) becomes

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Tr } Q_h &= \int_M \sum_{i,k=1}^n (2\langle B(v_i, v_k), B(v_k, v_i) \rangle - \langle B(v_i, v_i), B(v_k, v_k) \rangle) a_i dv_M \\ &= \int_M \sum_{i=1}^n (n\langle B(v_i, v_i), \eta \rangle - 2\rho(v_i, v_i)) a_i dv_M \\ &\leq 2(n - 2\rho)E(h). \end{aligned}$$

Thus h is unstable.

q.e.d.

COROLLARY 3. *Let M be an n -dimensional compact minimal submanifold immersed in a unit sphere $S^{N-1}(1)$. If the Ricci curvature ρ*

of M satisfies $\rho > n/2$, then $\pi_1(M) = \{1\}$ and $\pi_2(M) = \{1\}$.

REMARK. The result is sharp; M satisfies $\rho = n/2$ and $\pi_2(M) \neq \{1\}$, if M is an n -dimensional compact irreducible Hermitian symmetric space isometrically imbedded in a unit sphere by its first standard minimal immersion or if M is the Clifford minimal hypersurface $S^2(\sqrt{1/2}) \times S^2(\sqrt{1/2})$ of the unit sphere $S^5(1)$.

Applying Theorem 2 to the first standard minimal immersions of compact irreducible symmetric spaces, we obtain the following theorem.

THEOREM 4. *Let M be an n -dimensional compact irreducible symmetric space and denote by λ_1 and c the first eigenvalue of the Laplacian on functions and the scalar curvature of M respectively. Then the following four conditions are equivalent:*

- (a) $\lambda_1 < 2c/n$.
- (b) *There exists no nonconstant stable harmonic map from M to any Riemannian manifold.*
- (c) *There exists no nonconstant stable harmonic map from any compact Riemannian manifold to M .*
- (d) *The identity map of M is unstable as a harmonic map.*

PROOF. (b) \Rightarrow (d) and (c) \Rightarrow (d) are trivial. Since the first eigenvalue for the Jacobi operator of the identity map as a harmonic map is $\text{Min}\{0, \lambda_1 - 2c/n\}$, we have (a) \Leftrightarrow (d) (cf. Smith [16]). We have only to show (a) \Rightarrow (b) and (a) \Rightarrow (c). We may assume that the Riemannian metric on M is the metric g_0 defined in Section 2. Since the scalar curvature of (M, g_0) is $n/2$, we suppose that $\lambda_1 < 1$. Let $\Phi_1: (M, (\lambda_1/n)g_0) \rightarrow S^{m(1)}(1)$ be the first standard minimal isometric immersion of M . Since M is an Einstein manifold and the scalar curvature of $(M, (\lambda_1/n)g_0)$ is equal to $n^2/2\lambda_1$, we have $\rho = \underline{\rho} = n/2\lambda_1$, where $\underline{\rho}$ is the minimum of the Ricci curvature ρ of $(M, (\lambda_1/n)g_0)$. Hence we get $n - 2\rho = n - n/\lambda_1 = n(1 - 1/\lambda_1) < 0$. By Theorem 2 we obtain the conditions (b) and (c). q.e.d.

From Theorem 4 we see that a compact irreducible symmetric space is simply connected if its identity map is unstable. The eigenvalues of the Laplacian on a simply connected compact symmetric space can be computed by using the formula of Freudenthal and the theorems of Sugiura [17], [18]. Simply connected compact irreducible symmetric spaces with the unstable identity map were determined by Smith [16] and Nagano [9] as follows. (There seem to be inaccuracies in [9].)

PROPOSITION 5. *Let M be a simply connected compact irreducible*

symmetric space. Its identity map is unstable if and only if M belongs to the following list;

- (i) *simple Lie groups of type A_n ($n \geq 2$), B_2 and C_n ($n \geq 3$),*
- (ii) *$SU(2n)/Sp(n)$ ($n \geq 3$),*
- (iii) *S^n ($n \geq 3$),*
- (iv) *$Sp(p+q)/Sp(p) \times Sp(q)$ ($p \geq q \geq 1$),*
- (v) *E_6/F_4 ,*
- (vi) *$F_4/Spin(9)$.*

PROOF OF THEOREM 1. Suppose that $M = M_1 \times \cdots \times M_r$ is a product of compact irreducible symmetric spaces belonging to the list of Theorem 1. We isometrically imbed each M_i into some Euclidean space $E^{N^{(i)}}$ by using the first standard minimal immersion of M_i . Thus we get a product isometric imbedding of $M = M_1 \times \cdots \times M_r$ into $E^N = E^{N^{(1)}} \times \cdots \times E^{N^{(r)}}$. Applying (1)' and (2)' to this product isometric imbedding, we obtain the harmonic instability of M .

Conversely, suppose that a compact symmetric space M is harmonically unstable. Since M is simply connected, M is a product $M_1 \times \cdots \times M_r$, where each M_i is a simply connected compact irreducible symmetric space. Without loss of generality, we assume that the identity map of some M_1 is stable as a harmonic map. Fix a point (y_1, \cdots, y_r) in M . We define a mapping $f: M \rightarrow M$ by

$$f: M \ni (x_1, x_2, \cdots, x_r) \mapsto (x_1, y_2, \cdots, y_r) \in M.$$

Then f is a nonconstant stable harmonic map, a contradiction. Hence each M_i has the unstable identity map. By Proposition 5 M is a product of compact irreducible symmetric spaces belonging to the list of Theorem 1. q.e.d.

4. Other Examples. By virtue of the formulas (1) and (2) we can find many examples of harmonically unstable Riemannian manifolds. We look at convex hypersurfaces of a Euclidean space and isoparametric minimal hypersurfaces of a unit sphere.

PROPOSITION 6. *Let M be an n -dimensional compact convex hypersurface in the Euclidean space E^{n+1} . If the principal curvatures $\kappa_i > 0$ ($i = 1, \cdots, n$) of M satisfies*

$$\kappa_i < \kappa_1 + \cdots + \kappa_{i-1} + \kappa_{i+1} + \cdots + \kappa_n,$$

for each i with $1 \leq i \leq n$, the M is harmonically unstable.

PROOF. Let $f: N \rightarrow M$ and $h: M \rightarrow N'$ be nonconstant stable harmonic maps, where N is a compact Riemannian manifold. By simple computa-

tions, (1) and (2) give

$$\text{Tr } Q_f = \int_N \sum_{\alpha=1}^m \sum_{i=1}^n \kappa_i (\kappa_i - \sum_{j=1, j \neq i}^n \kappa_j) \langle df(e_\alpha), v_i \rangle^2 dv_N$$

and

$$\text{Tr } Q_h = \int_M \sum_{i=1}^n \kappa_i \left(\kappa_i - \sum_{j=1, j \neq i}^n \kappa_j \right) \langle dh(v_i), dh(v_i) \rangle' dv_M. \quad \text{q.e.d.}$$

EXAMPLE. (1) Let M be a compact convex hypersurface in E^{n+1} , $n \geq 3$, such that its principal curvatures $\kappa_i > 0$ ($i = 1, \dots, n$) satisfy $1/(n-1) < \kappa_i \leq 1$. Then M is harmonically unstable.

(2) Let M be an ellipsoid in E^{n+1} defined by an equation $ax_0^2 + x_1^2 + \dots + x_n^2 = 1$, $a > 0$. If $n \geq 3$ and $0 < a < n-1$, then M is harmonically unstable.

PROOF of (2). It is easy to check that M has at most two distinct principal curvatures $\kappa_1 = \{a(a-1)x_0^2 + 1\}^{-1/2}$ and $\kappa_2 = a\{a(a-1)x_0^2 + 1\}^{-3/2}$ with multiplicities $n-1$ and 1 , respectively. Hence we have $\kappa_1 \leq \kappa_2 \leq a\kappa_1$ for $a \geq 1$, and $a\kappa_1 \leq \kappa_2 \leq \kappa_1$ for $a \leq 1$. The rest of the proof is immediate. q.e.d.

The above example (2) is a slight extension of the result of Leung [6].

Next let M be an isoparametric hypersurface in an $(n+1)$ -dimensional unit sphere with g distinct principal curvatures. Let $\kappa_0 > \kappa_1 > \dots > \kappa_{g-1}$ be the distinct principal curvatures of M and denote by m_i the multiplicity for κ_i . Münzner [7], [8] showed the following;

- (i) $m_\alpha = m_{\alpha+2}$ (indices modulo g) for any $\alpha \in \{0, \dots, g-1\}$,
- (ii) $g = 1, 2, 3, 4$ or 6 ,
- (iii) if $g = 3$ or 6 , then $m_0 = m_1$.

Recently Abresch [1] showed that if $g = 6$, then $m_0 = m_1 = 1$ or 2 .

Assume that M is a minimal submanifold in the unit sphere. Then, using the result of [7], we can show that in each case $\kappa_0, \dots, \kappa_{g-1}$ are given as follows:

PROPOSITION 7.

- (1) If $g = 1$, then $\kappa_0 = 0$.
- (2) If $g = 2$, then $\kappa_0 = \sqrt{m_1/m_0}$ and $\kappa_1 = -\sqrt{m_0/m_1}$.
- (3) If $g = 3$, then $\kappa_0 = \sqrt{3}$, $\kappa_1 = 0$ and $\kappa_2 = -\sqrt{3}$.
- (4) If $g = 4$, then $\kappa_0 = (\sqrt{m_0 + m_1} + \sqrt{m_1})/\sqrt{m_0}$, $\kappa_1 = (\sqrt{m_0 + m_1} - \sqrt{m_0})/\sqrt{m_1}$, $\kappa_2 = (\sqrt{m_1} - \sqrt{m_0 + m_1})/\sqrt{m_0}$ and $\kappa_3 = -(\sqrt{m_0 + m_1} + \sqrt{m_0})/\sqrt{m_1}$.
- (5) If $g = 6$, then $\kappa_0 = 2 + \sqrt{3}$, $\kappa_1 = 1$, $\kappa_2 = 2 - \sqrt{3}$, $\kappa_3 = -(2 - \sqrt{3})$, $\kappa_4 = -1$ and $\kappa_5 = -(2 + \sqrt{3})$.

By Proposition 7 and the equation of Gauss we can compute the Ricci

curvature ρ of M . The following isoparametric minimal hypersurfaces satisfy $\rho > n/2$;

- (1) $g = 1$, $m_0 = n \geq 3$,
- (2) $g = 2$, $m_0 \geq 3$ and $m_1 \geq 3$,
- (3) $g = 3$, $m_0 = m_1 \geq 3$,
- (4) $g = 4$, $m_0, m_1 \geq 4$,
- (5) $g = 6$, $m_0 = m_1 \geq 5$.

By Theorem 2 we obtain the following:

PROPOSITION 8. *If M is an isoparametric compact minimal hypersurface in a unit sphere belonging to the above list, then M is harmonically unstable.*

We consider each of the five cases. Let M be an isoparametric compact minimal hypersurface in a unit sphere with g distinct principal curvatures.

- (1) $g = 1$: M is a great sphere S^n .
- (2) $g = 2$: M is a Clifford minimal hypersurface $S^2(\sqrt{p/n}) \times S^q(\sqrt{q/n})$ ($n = p + q$, $1 \leq p, q \leq n$, $m_0 = p$, $m_1 = q$) (cf. Cartan [2]).
- (3) $g = 3$: According to Cartan [3], all the isoparametric compact minimal hypersurfaces with $g = 3$ and $m_0 = m_1 \geq 3$ are homogeneous hypersurfaces $Sp(3)/Sp(1)^3$ ($(m_0, m_1) = (4, 4)$) and $F_4/Spin(8)$ ($(m_0, m_1) = (8, 8)$), which appear as principal orbits of the isotropy representations of the symmetric spaces $SU(6)/Sp(3)$ and E_6/F_4 , respectively (cf. [19]).
- (4) $g = 4$: According to Takagi and Takahashi [19], all the homogeneous compact minimal hypersurfaces with $g = 4$ and $m_0, m_1 \geq 4$ are $(Sp(2) \times Sp(p))/(Sp(1)^2 \times Sp(p-1))$ ($p \geq 3$, $(m_0, m_1) = (4, 4p-5)$), $U(5)/(SU(2) \times SU(2) \times T^1)$ ($(m_0, m_1) = (4, 5)$) and $(U(1) \times Spin(10))/(T^1 \times SU(4))$ ($(m_0, m_1) = (6, 9)$), which appear as principal orbits of the isotropy representations of the symmetric spaces $Sp(p+2)/Sp(2) \times Sp(p)$, $SO(10)/U(5)$ and $E_6/U(1) \times Spin(10)$, respectively. There are many inhomogeneous isoparametric compact minimal hypersurfaces satisfying $g = 4$ and $m_0, m_1 \geq 4$ (cf. Ozeki and Takeuchi [12], [13], Ferus, Karcher and Münzner [4]).
- (5) $g = 6$: By the result of Abresch there exists no isoparametric hypersurface in a unit sphere with $g = 6$ and $m_0 = m_1 \geq 5$.

REMARK. I take this occasion to correct errors in my paper [10]:

- (i) P38 ↓ 12, “except $SO(9)/SO(6) \times SO(3)$ and” should be replaced by “except $Spin(5)$, $Spin(7)$, $Spin(8)$, $SO(9)/SO(6) \times SO(3)$ and”.
- (ii) P38 ↓ 13, “non simply connected spaces $SO(p+q)/S(O(p) \times O(q))$ ($p \geq q \geq 1$)” should be replaced by “non simply connected spaces $SO(n)$ ($n \geq 5$), $SO(p+q)/S(O(p) \times O(q))$ ($p \geq q \geq 1$)”.

(iii) P38 ↓ 18, “one of $SO(9)/SO(6) \times SO(3)$ and” should be replaced by “one of $Spin(8)$, $SO(9)/SO(6) \times SO(3)$ and”.

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