



# Flow state transition induced by emergence of orbiting satellite eddies in two-dimensional turbulent Rayleigh–Bénard convection

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(Received 27 April 2024; revised 14 July 2024; accepted 1 September 2024)

We report a numerical investigation of a previously noticed but less explored flow state transition in two-dimensional turbulent Rayleigh–Bénard convection. The simulations are performed in a square domain over a Rayleigh number range of  $10^7 \leq Ra \leq 2 \times 10^{11}$  and a Prandtl number range of  $0.25 \leq Pr \leq 20$ . The transition is characterized by the emergence of multiple satellite eddies with increasing  $Ra$ , which orbit around and interact with the main vortex roll in the system. Consequently, the main roll is squeezed to a smaller size compared with the domain and wanders around in the bulk region irregularly and extensively. This is in sharp contrast to the flow state before the transition, which is featured by a domain-sized circulatory roll with its vortex centre ‘condensed’ near the domain’s centre. Detailed velocity field analysis reveals that there exists an abrupt increase in the energy fluctuations of the Fourier modes during the transition. Based on this phase-transition-like signal, the critical condition for the transition is found to follow a scaling relation as  $Ra_t \sim Pr^{1.41}$  where  $Ra_t$  is the critical Rayleigh number for the transition. This scaling relation is quantitatively explained by a phenomenological model grounded on the bistability behaviour (i.e. spontaneous and stochastic switching between the two flow states) observed at the edge of the transition. The model can also account for the effects of aspect ratio on the transition reported in the literature (van der Poel *et al.*, *Phys. Fluids*, vol. 24, 2012).

**Key words:** Bénard convection, turbulent convection

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## 1. Introduction

Turbulent thermal convection is ubiquitous in nature and engineering applications. Examples include thermal convection in the solar convection zone (Cattaneo, Emonet & Weiss 2003), in the atmosphere (Hartmann, Moy & Fu 2001) and in the metal-production processes (Brent, Voller & Reid 1988). Rayleigh–Bénard convection (RBC), a fluid layer heated from below and cooled from above, is an ideal system for studying the general mechanism of thermal convection (for reviews, see Ahlers, Grossmann & Lohse 2009; Lohse & Xia 2010; Chillà & Schumacher 2012; Xia 2013). For a given geometry, the RBC system is controlled by two dimensionless parameters, namely, the Rayleigh number  $Ra$  measuring the strength of the thermal driving and the Prandtl number  $Pr$  characterizing the relative diffusion of momentum and heat.

A salient feature of RBC is the existence of a domain-sized circulatory roll, known as the large-scale circulation (LSC) or the ‘wind of turbulence’ in the literature, which appears when the  $Ra$  number is sufficiently large. Thanks to its rich intriguing dynamics, the LSC has been studied extensively over the years. These studies include its formation and evolution processes (e.g. Xi, Lam & Xia 2004; Li *et al.* 2021; Wei 2021; Ren *et al.* 2022); its spatial-temporal motion, such as the azimuthal meandering, the periodic twisting and sloshing oscillation, and the recently discovered jump rope mode (e.g. Ciliberto, Cioni & Laroche 1996; Qiu, Yao & Tong 2000; Funfschilling, Brown & Ahlers 2008; Xi *et al.* 2009; Zhou *et al.* 2009; Yanagisawa *et al.* 2010; Vogt *et al.* 2018; Li *et al.* 2022); its sudden change in flow structure and dynamics, such as cessation, reorientation and reversal (e.g. Brown, Nikolaenko & Ahlers 2005; Brown & Ahlers 2006; Xi & Xia 2007; Xie, Wei & Xia 2013; Chen *et al.* 2019); and the flow mode transition (e.g. Xi & Xia 2008; Zvirner, Tilgner & Shishkina 2020; Chen *et al.* 2023). One important message learnt from these studies is that, while the LSC dynamics is three dimensional, its geometric structure is mostly quasi two dimensional.

The quasi-two-dimensional (quasi-2-D) character of the LSC has motivated researchers to employ 2-D geometry to investigate its behaviours by means of direct numerical simulations (DNS) (Sugiyama *et al.* 2009, 2010), as it is more feasible to get long-term statistics over a wide parameter space. Although 2-D DNS cannot reflect the complex flow dynamics in three-dimensional (3-D) systems, it has been shown that 2-D and 3-D RBCs share many similarities in flow morphology and global properties, in particular when  $Pr$  is large (Schmalzl, Breuer & Hansen 2004; van der Poel, Stevens & Lohse 2013; He *et al.* 2021; Li *et al.* 2021). Moreover, the Grossmann–Lohse model based on 2-D boundary-layer equations has achieved great success in predicting heat transfer behaviours in 3-D turbulent RBC (Grossmann & Lohse 2000, 2001; Stevens *et al.* 2013). These findings suggest that 2-D RBC can be utilized as an efficient approach to shed light on the physics of its 3-D counterpart.

Indeed, fruitful 2-D studies over the past decade have improved our understanding of turbulent RBC in various aspects. These aspects are not limited to the LSC *per se* (e.g. Chandra & Verma 2011; Podvin & Sergent 2015; Castillo-Castellanos *et al.* 2019; Wang *et al.* 2020; Xu, Chen & Xi 2021), but also include the heat transport behaviours (e.g. van der Poel, Stevens & Lohse 2011; Huang & Zhou 2013; Zhu *et al.* 2018; Zhang & Zhou 2024), the structure and dynamics of boundary layers (e.g. Zhou *et al.* 2010; van der Poel *et al.* 2015; Pandey 2021) and small-scale statistics of turbulence (e.g. Zhang, Zhou & Sun 2017; Xie & Huang 2022; He, Bao & Chen 2023; Samuel & Verma 2024). Despite the diverse topics, a common phenomenon can be noticed (but less mentioned) from the instantaneous flow fields shown in most of these studies on 2-D turbulent RBC:

the domain-sized LSC breaks up and is replaced by several vortices of smaller sizes under certain conditions.

This phenomenon was first reported by van der Poel *et al.* (2012), where they termed the flow field dominated by a LSC of domain size as the condensed state, and that featured by several vortices of smaller sizes as the uncondensed state. Although the two distinct flow states are visible in many studies of 2-D RBC mentioned above, this transition has received less attention before. To the best of our knowledge, the two relevant studies mainly focused on how the heat transport behaviours in 2-D RBC are connected to different flow states (van der Poel *et al.* 2012; Labarre, Fauve & Chibbaro 2023). Specifically, based on a sudden change in the heat transfer efficiency at  $Pr = 1$ , van der Poel *et al.* (2012) found that a transitional Rayleigh number  $Ra_t$  scales with the aspect ratio  $\Gamma$  (the width-to-height ratio of the domain) as  $Ra_t \sim \Gamma^{-2.44}$  in the range of  $0.23 \leq \Gamma \leq 2/3$ , which becomes almost  $\Gamma$  independent for  $\Gamma = 1$  and 2. Recently, Labarre *et al.* (2023) reported that heat-flux fluctuation is more sensitive to the change in flow state and the transition occurs at  $Ra_t/Pr \approx 10^9$  for  $Pr = 0.71$  and 7.

However, the above two studies were conducted in limited parameter ranges. It remains unclear how the flow state transition occurs quantitatively and what determines the critical condition for  $Ra_t$ . Since how the flow structure evolves with increasing  $Ra$  and  $Pr$  is an important issue in the studies of turbulent RBC, it deserves to carry out an in-depth investigation of this transition and unravel its mechanism. The knowledge gained from the study in 2-D RBC could stimulate further studies in quasi-2-D turbulent RBC, as we shall discuss in the conclusion of this paper. In addition, similar transitions in flow topology can be observed in various turbulence systems (e.g. Weeks *et al.* 1997; Bouchet & Simonnet 2009; Huisman *et al.* 2014; Xie, Ding & Xia 2018; Favier, Guervilly & Knobloch 2019; Yang *et al.* 2020). A systematic investigation of the present transition may also provide new insights into similar phenomena in other systems.

In the present study, by conducting extensive DNS of 2-D turbulent RBC over a wide parameter space (see figure 1) and quantifying the flow field in detail, we found that the critical condition for the flow state transition follows a scaling relation as  $Ra_t = 1.1 \times 10^9 Pr^{1.41}$ , rather than  $Ra_t/Pr \approx 10^9$  reported by Labarre *et al.* (2023) based on only two values of  $Pr$ . By examining the spontaneous switching processes between the two flow states, which are observed in the vicinity of  $Ra_t$ , we reveal that the critical condition for the transition is set by the balance between the typical travel time of thermal plumes (the elementary flow structures in RBC) and their typical dissipation time in the flow. This physical picture not only gives a prediction in good agreement with the  $Ra_t$ - $Pr$  scaling found in the present study, but also explains the effect of aspect ratio on the aforementioned transition reported by van der Poel *et al.* (2012).

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. We first introduce details of the numerical simulations in § 2. Then we show in § 3.1 how the flow pattern and dynamics are changed before and after the flow state transition. These changes are further quantified by Fourier mode analysis in § 3.2, based on which we obtain the  $Ra_t$ - $Pr$  dependence for the transition. The mechanism that determines this transition is revealed in § 3.3 by examining the flow states in the vicinity of  $Ra_t$ . The main findings of the present study are summarized in § 4, where we also discuss the implication of the present phenomenon to quasi-2-D RBC and its similarity to the flow transitions in other turbulence systems.

## 2. The numerical set-up

We consider a 2-D RBC system in a square domain with no-slip and impermeable velocity boundary conditions for all walls. The temperature boundary conditions for the sidewalls

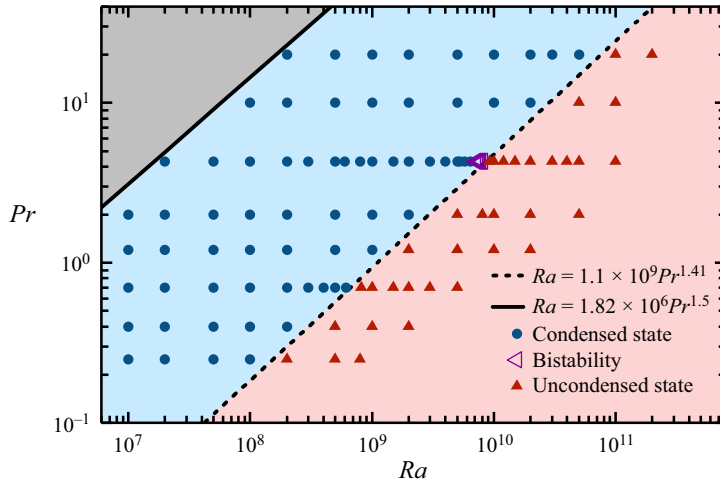


Figure 1. A  $Ra$ - $Pr$  phase diagram showing all parameters explored in the present study. The grey region is the flow regime without a LSC and its boundary is given by the solid line (Grossmann & Lohse 2000). The blue and red regions are the flow regimes characterized by the condensed state (solid circles) and the uncondensed state (solid triangles), respectively, which are separated by the dashed line  $Ra_i = 1.1 \times 10^9 Pr^{1.41}$  determined in § 3.2. The open triangles highlight the  $Ra$  range (from  $Ra = 7.15 \times 10^9$  to  $Ra = 8.10 \times 10^9$ ) with bistable states observed at  $Pr = 4.3$ . This bistability behaviour will be discussed in § 3.3.

are adiabatic, while those for the top and bottom walls are isothermal. By employing the Oberbeck–Boussinesq approximation and the linear equation of state (Landau & Lifshitz 1987), the dimensionless governing equations for this system are

$$\nabla \cdot \mathbf{u} = 0, \tag{2.1}$$

$$\frac{\partial \mathbf{u}}{\partial t} + (\mathbf{u} \cdot \nabla) \mathbf{u} = -\nabla p + \sqrt{\frac{Pr}{Ra}} \nabla^2 \mathbf{u} + T \hat{\mathbf{e}}_z, \tag{2.2}$$

$$\frac{\partial T}{\partial t} + (\mathbf{u} \cdot \nabla) T = \frac{1}{\sqrt{RaPr}} \nabla^2 T, \tag{2.3}$$

where  $\mathbf{u} = (u_x, u_z)$ ,  $T$  and  $p$  are, respectively, the dimensionless velocity, temperature and pressure fields;  $\hat{\mathbf{e}}_z$  is the unit vector antiparallel to gravity. The  $Ra = \alpha g \Delta T H^3 / (\nu \kappa)$  and  $Pr = \nu / \kappa$  numbers in these equations are the two control parameters of the system. Here,  $H$  is the domain’s height;  $\Delta T$  is the imposed temperature difference between the top and bottom walls;  $g$  is the gravitational acceleration;  $\alpha$ ,  $\nu$  and  $\kappa$  are the isobaric thermal expansion coefficient, the kinematic viscosity and the thermal diffusivity of the working fluid, respectively. The control parameters explored in the present study are shown in figure 1 (a total of 109 cases), covering four decades in the  $Ra$  number and almost two decades in the  $Pr$  number. To better capture the transition process, more  $Ra$  numbers were simulated in the vicinity of the transition for  $Pr = 4.3$ .

We solved (2.1)–(2.3) by employing a numerical code (Bao, Luo & Ye 2018) that has been used in a previous study of turbulent RBC (Bao *et al.* 2015). This code applies a second-order central difference for the spatial discretization and a second-order Runge–Kutta scheme for the time marching. To resolve the smallest length scale in the flow, i.e. the Kolmogorov scale  $\eta_K$  when  $Pr \leq 1$  or the Batchelor scale  $\eta_B$  when  $Pr > 1$ , the maximal grid sizes  $\Delta_g$  are set to be smaller than  $\eta_K$  or  $\eta_B$ . Moreover, the grid points used for resolving the boundary layer are typically four times larger than the requirements proposed by Shishkina *et al.* (2010). The time steps are also small enough so that the

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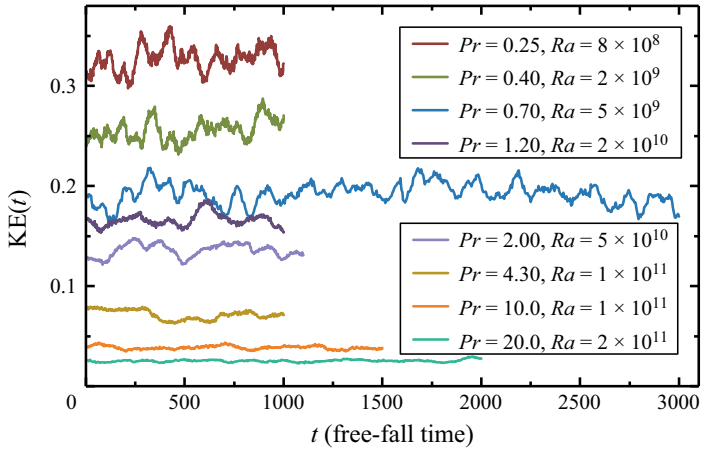


Figure 2. Time traces of the kinetic energy of the whole flow in the stationary state. The data at the highest  $Ra$  for each  $Pr$  are shown as examples.

Courant–Friedrichs–Lewy numbers are smaller than 0.1 for all the cases. Details of the grid setting used for each simulation are provided in [table 1](#) of the [Appendix](#).

To avoid the potential influence of initial conditions, all the simulations were started with the same flow field being  $\mathbf{u} = (0, 0)$  and  $T = 0$ . After the flow had reached the stationary state, we kept running the simulations for at least 1000 free-fall times to get statistics. According to a recent study (Lindborg 2023), the numerical convergence of 2-D RBC is very slow due to the inverse energy cascade, with the convergence time scale proportional to  $\sqrt{Ra/Pr}$ . For example, the computational time required for the convergence of the kinetic energy at  $Pr = 1$  is approximately 1000 free-fall times at  $Ra = 1 \times 10^{10}$ , which increases to 3000 free-fall times at  $Ra = 1 \times 10^{11}$ . To check the convergence of our simulations, we plot in [figure 2](#) the time traces of the kinetic energy of the whole flow in the stationary state at the highest  $Ra$  for each  $Pr$ . These parameters require the most computational time for convergence, but the corresponding data display no tendency to increase over time, indicating good convergence of our simulations.

The reliability of our simulations has been checked by comparing the values of the Nusselt number  $Nu$  (dimensionless heat transfer efficiency) obtained by three different methods:  $Nu = \sqrt{RaPr} \langle u_z T \rangle_{V,t} + 1$  calculated from the definition;  $Nu_{\epsilon_\theta} = \sqrt{RaPr} \langle \epsilon_\theta \rangle_{V,t}$  based on the thermal energy dissipation rate  $\epsilon_\theta$ ; and  $Nu_{\epsilon_u} = \sqrt{RaPr} \langle \epsilon_u \rangle_{V,t} + 1$  based on the kinetic energy dissipation rate  $\epsilon_u$ . Here  $\langle \cdot \rangle_{V,t}$  represents averaging over space and time. It is found that the relative differences between  $Nu$  and  $Nu_{\epsilon_\theta}$  ( $Nu_{\epsilon_u}$ ) are less than 1% (3%) for most of the cases (see [table 1](#) in the [Appendix](#)). In addition, we have checked the statistical convergence by comparing the time-averaged values of  $Nu$  over the first and the last halves of each simulation, the relative difference of which is smaller than 1% for all the cases in the present study. These validations suggest that the present simulations are reliable.

The accuracy of our simulations is further confirmed by comparing the compensated  $Nu$  shown in [figure 3](#). It is seen that our data are in good agreement with those obtained in previous studies (Huang & Zhou 2013; van der Poel *et al.* 2013; Zhang *et al.* 2017; Labarre *et al.* 2023). It is worth noting that there exist some discrepancies between different studies at  $Ra \simeq 10^9$  for  $Pr = 0.70$  and  $Ra \simeq 10^{10}$  for  $Pr = 4.30$ , which could be attributed to the bistability behaviour (van der Poel *et al.* 2012). This behaviour will be discussed in [§ 3.3](#).



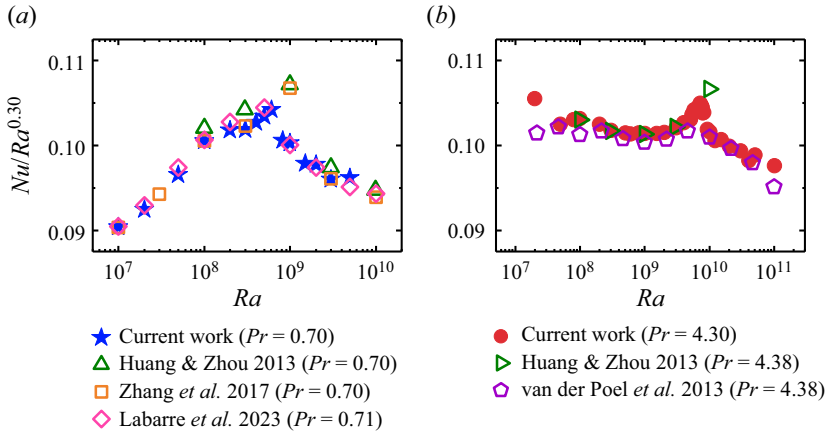


Figure 3. Plots of  $Nu$  compensated by  $Ra^{0.30}$  as a function of  $Ra$  obtained in the present study (indicated by solid symbols): (a)  $Pr = 0.70$  and (b)  $Pr = 4.30$ . The results obtained in previous studies (indicated by open symbols) at similar  $Pr$  are plotted together for comparison.

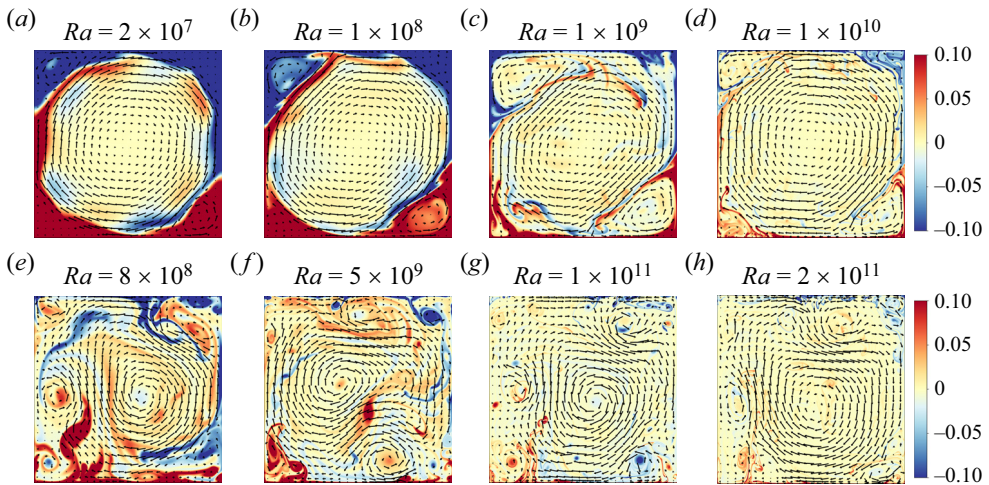


Figure 4. Instantaneous velocity–temperature fields for (a–d) the condensed state and (e–h) the uncondensed state for different  $Pr$ : (a,e)  $Pr = 0.25$ , (b,f)  $Pr = 0.7$ , (c,g)  $Pr = 4.3$  and (d,h)  $Pr = 20$ . The velocity is coded by the length and orientation of the vector, and the temperature is colour coded with red (blue) representing hot (cold) fluid. The  $Ra$  number for each flow state is indicated on top of each subplot.

### 3. Results and discussion

#### 3.1. Flow states before and after the transition

We first present how the flow pattern and dynamics are different before and after the flow state transition. Figure 4 shows typical snapshots of the flow field at two different  $Ra$  for each of the four selected  $Pr$ . For the cases with smaller  $Ra$  (the top panel of figure 4), the flow patterns for different  $Pr$  are all characterized by a domain-sized circulatory roll (i.e. the LSC known in the literature) and counter-circulating rolls in the corners, which are similar to those observed in quasi-2-D rectangular convection cells (e.g. Sugiyama *et al.* 2010; Chen *et al.* 2019). Although the LSC keeps changing its morphology with increasing  $Pr$ , which evolves from a circular shape at  $Pr = 0.25$  to a tilted elliptical

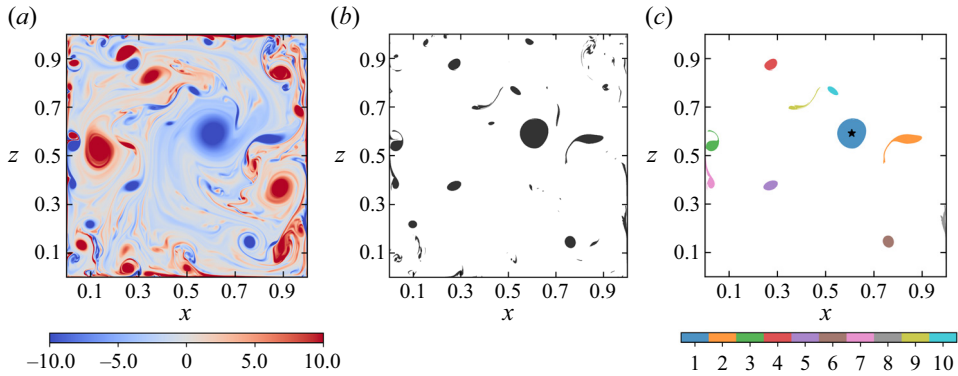


Figure 5. Illustration of how to identify the vortex centre of the largest roll from the flow field. (a) A snapshot of the original vorticity field at  $Pr = 4.3$  and  $Ra = 1 \times 10^{11}$ . The vorticity is colour coded with blue (red) representing clockwise (anti-clockwise) rotating vortices. (b) The identified vortices after applying a filtered threshold of  $\omega < -8$  to the vorticity field in (a). (c) The vortices in (b) are sorted by their sizes and labelled with different colours. The star indicates the identified vortex centre of the largest roll. Note that different thresholds (ranging from  $\omega < -4$  to  $\omega < -12$ ) have been tested for this case and they have little impact on the result.

shape at  $Pr = 4.3$  and recovers to a quasi-circular shape at  $Pr = 20$ , it can maintain at a stable state over tens of turnover time for all these cases. In addition, thermal plumes emitted from the top/bottom thermal boundary layers mostly follow the LSC's motion and move along the periphery region of the domain. In contrast, for the cases with larger  $Ra$  (figure 4e–h), no stable LSC of domain size can be seen any more. Instead, one observes a main circulatory roll smaller than the domain and several satellite eddies orbit around it. Due to the squeezing from these satellite eddies, the main roll is unstable and wanders in the bulk region irregularly. Moreover, some thermal plumes can survive and travel through the strongly turbulent bulk region for a long time. As a result, the flow field becomes more fluctuating and disordered. These dramatic changes in flow patterns and dynamics can be seen clearly in the supplementary movies available at <https://doi.org/10.1017/jfm.2024.847>.

The change from a stable LSC to an unstable main roll can be characterized by the motions of their vortex centres. To do so, we first identify the largest roll from the instantaneous flow field. This is achieved by filtering the vorticity field  $\omega = \nabla \times \mathbf{u}(\mathbf{x}, t)$  with appropriate thresholds for different  $Ra$  and  $Pr$  numbers. The basic requirement to determine the threshold is that, after applying the threshold to the original vorticity field, the vortices with strong vorticities should be well distinguished and then extracted from the background flow. Taking the case with  $Pr = 4.3$  and  $Ra = 1 \times 10^{11}$  as an example, figure 5(a) shows that the flow is abundant of vortices with different sizes and strengths. By applying a threshold of  $\omega < -8$  to the original vorticity field, the strong clockwise-rotating vortices, including the largest roll in the system, are identified (see figure 5b). These vortices were further sorted by their sizes and labelled with different colours. Then the centroid of the first labelled vortex is determined as the vortex centre of the largest roll, as indicated by a star in figure 5(c). As demonstrated in the supplementary movie, this method allows us to track the motion of the largest roll nicely.

The thus-determined trajectories of the vortex centre of the largest roll in different flow states are plotted in figure 6. It is seen that the vortex centre of the largest roll before the transition always stays near the domain's centre; in other words, its trajectory is 'condensed' in a limited area. By contrast, the vortex centre of the largest roll after the transition exhibits irregular motion and can explore the domain extensively; thus, its

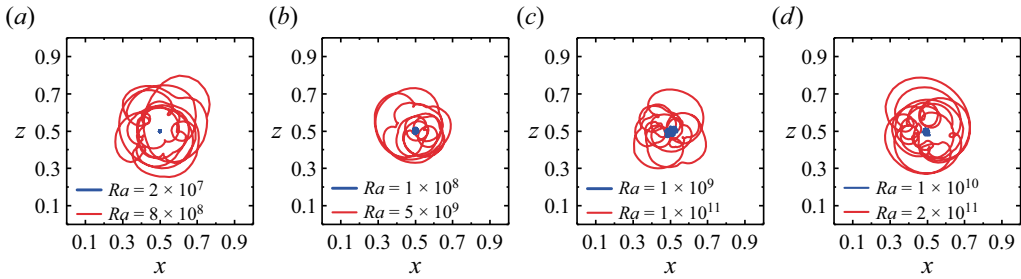


Figure 6. The trajectories of the vortex centre of the largest roll in the condensed state (blue) and the uncondensed state (red) for different  $Pr$ : (a)  $Pr = 0.25$ , (b)  $Pr = 0.70$ , (c)  $Pr = 4.3$  and (d)  $Pr = 20.0$ . The  $Ra$  number for each flow state is indicated in the subplots.

trajectory is ‘uncondensed’. Note that no appreciable sign of periodicity could be found by examining the autocorrelation functions of these trajectories, differing from the obvious periodically orbiting motion observed in a cylindrical cell of  $\Gamma = 2$  by Li *et al.* (2022). Based on the distinct features of these trajectories, we term the flow states before and after the transition as the condensed and uncondensed states, respectively. It is worth noting that this terminology is the same as that in a previous study but from a different perspective (van der Poel *et al.* 2012). Here, we focus on the dynamics of the largest roll, while van der Poel *et al.* (2012) adopted the notation of condensation in 2-D turbulence (Kraichnan 1967; Xia *et al.* 2011) in the sense that the energy is piled up to a scale of the domain size in the condensed state, whereas the largest roll in the uncondensed state is smaller than the system scale. However, as the energy cascade of RBC is always contaminated by the walls and other complicating factors (Xie & Huang 2022), whether the present phenomenon could be understood by 2-D turbulence theory, which assumes homogeneity and isotropy of the flow, remains elusive and is outside the scope of this study.

### 3.2. Determination of the transitional Rayleigh number $Ra_t$

In addition to the change in the largest roll, another important feature of the flow state transition is the emergence of multiple satellite eddies with different sizes. This multi-scale feature could be captured by employing the Fourier mode analysis, which has been demonstrated as an efficient tool in previous studies of 2-D turbulent RBC (Chandra & Verma 2011; Wang *et al.* 2018; Xu *et al.* 2021). Specifically, the instantaneous velocity fields are projected onto the Fourier basis as below:

$$u_x(x, z, t) = \sum_{m,n} \hat{u}_x(m, n, t) [2 \sin(m\pi x) \cos(n\pi z)], \quad (3.1)$$

$$u_z(x, z, t) = \sum_{m,n} \hat{u}_z(m, n, t) [-2 \cos(m\pi x) \sin(n\pi z)]. \quad (3.2)$$

Here,  $\hat{u}_i(m, n, t)$  ( $i = x, z$ ) is the amplitude of the  $(m, n)$  mode in the  $i$  direction at time instant  $t$ , and the corresponding energy contained in the  $(m, n)$  mode is  $E^{m,n}(t) = |\hat{u}_x(m, n, t)|^2 + |\hat{u}_z(m, n, t)|^2$ . Note that we have analysed the data by other methods such as proper orthogonal decomposition (Podvin & Sargent 2015; Xu *et al.* 2021). The results obtained are similar and the findings below are unaffected.

We first take the results obtained at  $Pr = 4.3$  as an example for discussion. Figure 7(a,b) shows the time traces of the normalized energy contained in the first nine Fourier modes



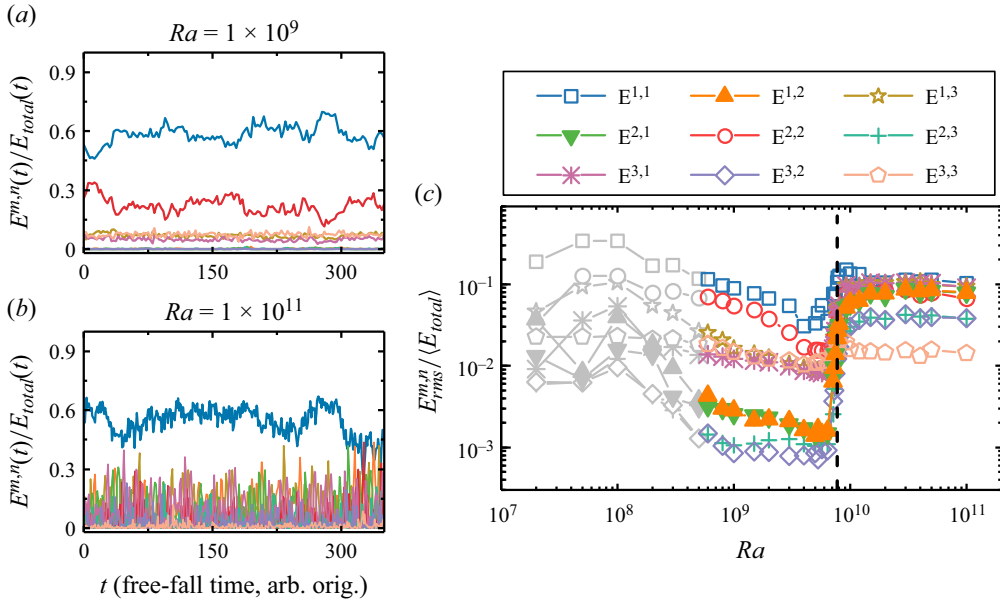


Figure 7. Time traces of the energy contained in the first nine Fourier modes  $E^{m,n}$  normalized by the total energy of all modes  $E_{total}$  at  $Pr = 4.3$ : (a) an example in the condensed state and (b) an example in the uncondensed state. (c) The normalized r.m.s. values of  $E^{m,n}$  as a function of  $Ra$  at  $Pr = 4.3$ . The vertical dashed line indicates the location of the transitional  $Ra$  number  $Ra_t$ . The grey symbols represent the cases with LSC reversals, which is consistent with the finding by Sugiyama *et al.* (2010).

$E^{m,n}$  (i.e.  $m$  and  $n = 1, 2, 3$ ) before and after the flow state transition. Here  $E_{total}(t)$  represents the total energy of all Fourier modes at time instant  $t$ . It is seen that the system is dominated by the (1,1) and (2,2) modes before the transition, corresponding to the LSC and the corner rolls observed in the condensed state, respectively. Although the contributions from some other modes are also visible, their fluctuations in time are relatively gentle. When it goes to the uncondensed state, the (1,1) mode is still prevailing but becomes more fluctuating, consistent with the observation that the largest roll is unstable in this state. More importantly, vigorous fluctuations can be seen in the time traces of the normalized energy for almost all modes after the transition. This is in particular for the (1,2) and (2,1) modes, which are activated pronouncedly in the uncondensed state, in contrast to their negligible energies and fluctuations in the condensed case. As the (1,2) or (2,1) mode represents a flow structure with two horizontally or vertically stacked rolls, their activation could be attributed to the emergence of the satellite eddies that orbit around the main roll. It is their orbiting motions and interaction with the main roll that lead to the vigorous fluctuations observed here.

To quantify how the energy fluctuations of different Fourier modes change during the transition, we plot their root-mean-square (r.m.s.) values  $E_{rms}^{m,n}$  as a function of  $Ra$  in figure 7(c). Here,  $E_{rms}^{m,n}$  is normalized by the time-averaged total energy of all Fourier modes  $\langle E_{total} \rangle$ . The grey symbols represent that LSC reversals can be observed for these cases, which makes the  $Ra$  dependence of  $E_{rms}^{m,n}/\langle E_{total} \rangle$  complicated. For  $Ra > 4 \times 10^8$  without LSC reversals, the data first decreases with  $Ra$  gradually and then jumps up abruptly at a transitional  $Ra$  number  $Ra_t$  for all modes. Visual inspection of the flow field confirms that it is in the vicinity of  $Ra_t$  that the flow state transition occurs. Therefore, the abrupt change in  $E_{rms}^{m,n}/\langle E_{total} \rangle$  can be used as an indicator of the transition. Since

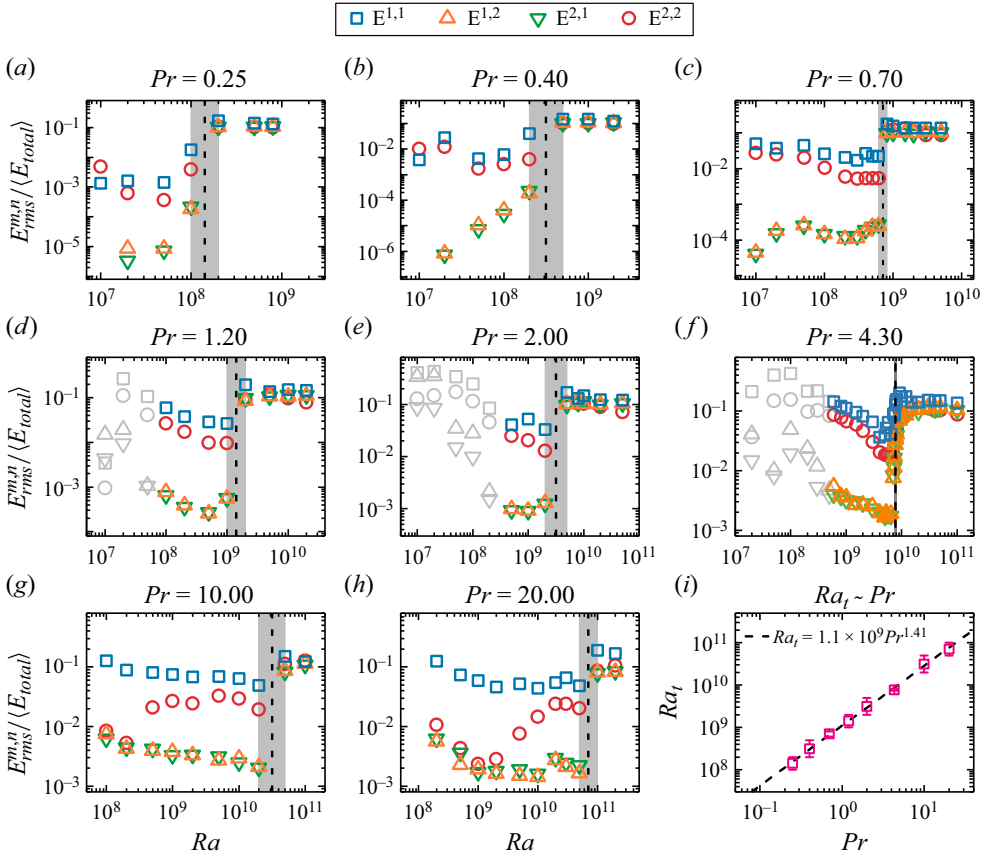


Figure 8. (a–h) The normalized r.m.s. values of the energy contained in the Fourier modes as a function of  $Ra$  for different  $Pr$ . Only the first four modes are shown for the clarity of presentation, as they are sufficient to reveal the transition behaviour. The vertical dashed line indicates the location of  $Ra_t$  with the uncertainty marked by the shaded region. The grey symbols represent the cases with LSC reversals, which is consistent with the  $Ra$ - $Pr$  phase diagram of LSC reversals reported by Sugiyama *et al.* (2010), further illustrating the reliability of our simulations. (i) Plot of  $Ra_t$  as a function of  $Pr$ . The error bar represents the shaded region in (a–h). The dashed line is a power law fit to the data.

such a jump is most significant in the (1,2) and (2,1) modes, the value of  $Ra_t$  can be determined by finding the location of the maximum growth rate of  $E_{rms}^{1,2}$  or  $E_{rms}^{2,1}$ , which yields  $Ra_t = 7.7 \times 10^9$  for  $Pr = 4.3$ .

The above-discussed abrupt change in the energy fluctuations of Fourier modes can be found for all  $Pr$  explored in the present study. As shown in figure 8(a–h), although the detailed  $Ra$ -dependent trends of  $E_{rms}^{m,n} / \langle E_{total} \rangle$  are different for different  $Pr$ , the (1,2) and (2,1) modes exhibit a similar sharp jump for all the cases. However, due to the unaffordable cost of running massive simulations near  $Ra_t$  for all  $Pr$ , we did not determine the values of  $Ra_t$  for other  $Pr$  using the same method as that for  $Pr = 4.3$ . Instead, we first locate the  $Ra$  range where  $E_{rms}^{1,2}$  (or  $E_{rms}^{2,1}$ ) shows an abrupt increase, and then estimate  $Ra_t$  as the average value of the two  $Ra$  numbers just before and after this increase. The so-obtained  $Ra_t$  is indicated by the dashed line in each subplot of figure 8(a–h), with its uncertainty represented by the shaded region. Quantitatively, one sees in figure 8(i) that  $Ra_t$  increases with  $Pr$  and can be fitted by a power law as  $Ra_t = 1.1 \times 10^9 Pr^{1.41 \pm 0.02}$ . This scaling

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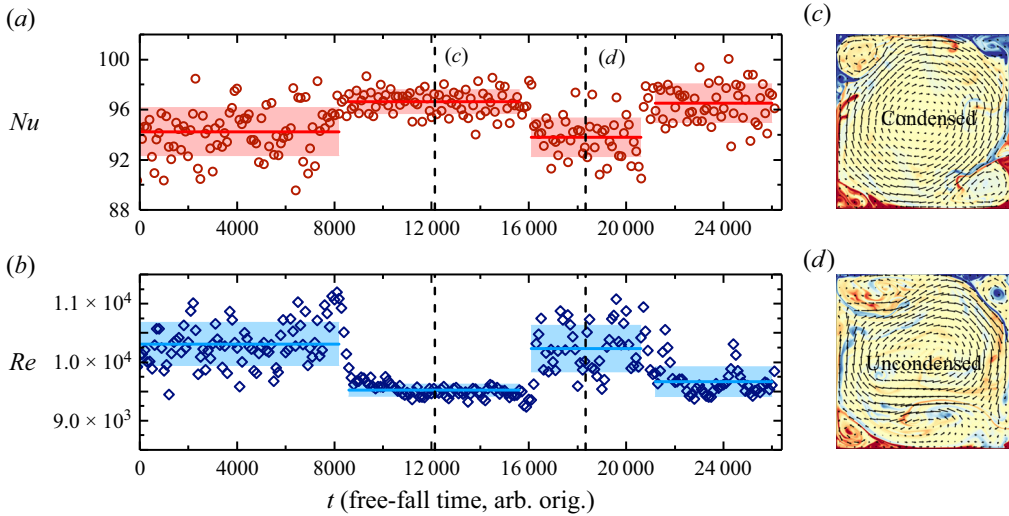


Figure 9. Time traces of (a)  $Nu$  and (b)  $Re$  numbers for  $Pr = 4.3$  and  $Ra = 7.5 \times 10^9$ . The circles (diamonds) represent the short time-averaged values of  $Nu$  ( $Re$ ) over 50 free-fall times, corresponding to about five turnover times of the large-scale flow for this case. Four time intervals between successive switching events can be detected in panels (a,b). The time-averaged and r.m.s. values of  $Nu$  ( $Re$ ) during each time interval are represented by the red (blue) solid lines and the red (blue) shaded regions, respectively. The instantaneous flow fields at the moments marked by the two dashed lines are shown in panels (c,d), respectively. The velocity and temperature fields are coded in the same way as [figure 4](#).

relation is also plotted in [figure 1](#), which separates the two flow regimes, i.e. the condensed state and the uncondensed state in the phase diagram.

### 3.3. Bistability and the mechanism of the transition

To understand the scaling relation for  $Ra_t$ , we now focus on the flow state in the vicinity of  $Ra_t$  to see what happens during the transition. Again we take the cases at  $Pr = 4.3$  as examples. By performing long-term simulations, it is found that the flow exhibits a bistability behaviour near  $Ra_t$ . This behaviour is characterized by spontaneous switching events between the condensed and uncondensed states, which can be quantified by the Nusselt number  $Nu$  (dimensionless heat transport) and the Reynolds number  $Re$  (dimensionless flow strength) as shown in [figure 9\(a,b\)](#). It is seen that both  $Nu$  and  $Re$  exhibit two plateaus with distinct time-averaged and r.m.s. values, and the switching events between the two plateaus in  $Nu$  and  $Re$  occur concurrently. Detailed inspection of the flow field indicates that the plateau with higher  $Nu$  and smaller  $Re$  corresponds to the condensed state ([figure 9c](#)), and that with lower  $Nu$  and larger  $Re$  corresponds to the uncondensed state ([figure 9d](#)). The larger r.m.s. values of  $Nu$  and  $Re$  for the uncondensed state are also clearly seen, in line with the vigorous energy fluctuations of the Fourier modes. It is worth noting that the lifetimes of the condensed and uncondensed states are comparable for the case shown in [figure 9\(a,b\)](#), both of which exceed 5000 free-fall times. As the  $Ra$  number decreases (increases) slightly from  $Ra = 7.5 \times 10^9$  to  $Ra = 7.15 \times 10^9$  ( $Ra = 7.85 \times 10^9$ ), it is found that the lifetime of the uncondensed (condensed) state decreases to about 1000 free-fall times and the flow becomes dominated by the condensed (uncondensed) state. This sensitive variation trend in lifetimes suggests that the uncondensed (condensed) state will disappear with  $Ra$  further decreasing

(increasing) away from  $Ra_t$ . In other words, the bistability behaviour exists in a limited  $Ra$  number range near  $Ra_t$ , as highlighted by open triangles in figure 1. Similar responses of  $Nu$  and  $Re$  to multiple flow states and the corresponding lifetimes have been reported in previous studies of RBC under different configurations (Xi & Xia 2008; Weiss & Ahlers 2011; van der Poel *et al.* 2012; Xie *et al.* 2018; Zwirner *et al.* 2020; Labarre *et al.* 2023), so we will not discuss this phenomenon further here. What we focus on is how the flow state transition occurs.

Through closely examining the bistability behaviour (see the supplementary movie), it is found that the switching event from the condensed state to the uncondensed case is triggered by some energetic plumes. These plumes, rather than dissipating most of their kinetic energy after travelling across the domain, intrude into the corner rolls when reaching the opposite boundary. As a result, the corner rolls become unstable and detach in the form of orbiting satellite eddies, which release extra thermal energy into the bulk flow and in turn result in more energetic plumes. This chain-reaction-like dynamics maintains the uncondensed state, explaining why the fluctuation is so violent in this state.

The above dynamical process reveals that the flow state transition occurs when the typical time for thermal plumes travelling across the domain  $\tau_{pt} \sim H/U$  becomes comparable to their typical dissipative time in the flow  $\tau_{\epsilon_u} \sim U^2/\epsilon_u$ . In other words, the two time scales are approximately balanced at the edge of the transition. By using the definition of the  $Re$  number  $Re = UH/\nu$  and the kinetic energy dissipation in the bulk region of the RBC  $\epsilon_u = (\nu^3/H^4)NuRaPr^{-2}$  (Lohse & Toschi 2003), the balance of  $\tau_{pt} \sim \tau_{\epsilon_u}$  suggests that the critical condition for the transition is given by  $Re^3 \sim NuRaPr^{-2}$ . Note that the present time-scale balance analysis is a simple dimensional argument, so we have taken the maximum velocity in the flow and the globally averaged kinetic energy dissipation rate as the characteristic properties of thermal plumes, the latter of which is further connected to global responses of the system. This approximation is reasonable in the condensed state, as thermal plumes mostly follow the LSC's motion and primarily determine the global heat transport in this state (Xia *et al.* 2023). By substituting the corresponding scaling relations  $Nu \sim Ra^{0.32}Pr^{-0.01}$  and  $Re \sim Ra^{0.58}Pr^{-0.87}$  obtained in the condensed state (see figure 11 in the Appendix), we obtain that  $Ra_t \sim Pr^{1.43}$ , which agrees well with our numerical finding  $Ra_t \sim Pr^{1.41}$ . The same data analysis has been made in the uncondensed state. The global responses in this state are found to follow  $Nu \sim Ra^{0.27}Pr^{0.05}$  and  $Re \sim Ra^{0.61}Pr^{-0.94}$  (see figure 11 in the Appendix), leading to a slightly different transition scaling as  $Ra_t \sim Pr^{1.55}$ . Given the complex dynamics of the main roll and the satellite eddies in the uncondensed state, the discrepancy in the scaling exponents could be attributed to the dramatically different flow states and the uncertainty in estimating the characteristic properties of plumes.

The present phenomenological model can be further generalized to explain the effects of aspect ratio  $\Gamma$  on the transition. For domains with  $\Gamma > 1$ , because the plume travel distance remains to be the domain's height  $H$ , and the  $Nu$  and  $Re$  numbers depend weakly on  $\Gamma$  (van der Poel *et al.* 2012; Wang *et al.* 2020), so the value of  $Ra_t$  is expected to be insensitive to  $\Gamma$ . When  $\Gamma < 1$ , the flow pattern is featured by vertically stacked rolls (van der Poel *et al.* 2012). For this situation, the plume travel distance can be quantified as  $\Gamma H$  without loss of generality, and then the critical condition for the transition turns out to follow  $Re^3 \sim \Gamma NuRaPr^{-2}$ . By making use of the data at  $Pr = 1$  in the range  $0.23 \leq \Gamma \leq 2/3$  reported by van der Poel *et al.* (2012), which can be described by  $Nu \sim \Gamma^{0.34}$  and  $Re \sim \Gamma^{0.79}$  roughly (see the Appendix), and assuming that the  $Ra$  dependence of  $Nu$  and  $Re$  remains unchanged, we have  $Ra_t \sim \Gamma^{-2.46}$ . These predictions

on the  $\Gamma$  dependence of  $Ra_t$  are in good agreement with the findings by van der Poel *et al.* (2012) mentioned in the introduction.

#### 4. Summary and concluding remarks

In summary, we have carried out a systematic numerical study of 2-D turbulent RBC in a square domain over the Rayleigh number range  $10^7 \leq Ra \leq 2 \times 10^{11}$  and the Prandtl number range  $0.25 \leq Pr \leq 20$ , aiming to understand a previously noticed but less explored flow state transition. We first show in detail how the flow changes its morphology and dynamics substantially with increasing  $Ra$ : from the condensed state characterized by a stable LSC of domain size to the uncondensed state characterized by the emergence of orbiting satellite eddies and irregular wandering motion of the main roll. Then based on a sharp jump in the energy fluctuations of the Fourier modes during the transition, we obtain a scaling relation for the transitional  $Ra$  number:  $Ra_t = 1.1 \times 10^9 Pr^{1.41}$ . Finally, through a close examination of the bistability behaviour near  $Ra_t$ , we reveal that the critical condition for the transition is determined by the balance between the travel time of thermal plumes and their dissipation time in the flow, which is supported by our  $Ra_t$ - $Pr$  scaling relation. This physical picture also works for the transition observed in 2-D RBC with different aspect ratios (van der Poel *et al.* 2012).

To the best of our knowledge, the flow state transition observed in the present study has not been reported in the studies of both 3-D and quasi-2-D turbulent RBC so far. As discussed in 3.3, one important process during the transition is that the corner rolls become unstable due to the intrusion of some energetic plumes and then detach in the form of satellite eddies. This strong interaction between corner rolls and thermal plumes is enforced by the spatial confinement in 2-D geometry, which can also be achieved by using quasi-2-D configurations. Quasi-2-D RBC shares many similarities in the flow pattern and dynamics with its counterpart in two dimensions (Sugiyama *et al.* 2010; He *et al.* 2021; Li *et al.* 2021), suggesting that a similar flow state transition might occur in quasi-2-D RBC. However, the spatial confinement in quasi-2-D geometry increases the viscous drag on the flow and, thus, the energy dissipation (Chong & Xia 2016; Huang & Xia 2016; Xia *et al.* 2023), which would lead to a higher transitional  $Ra$  number according to the present study (similar to the situation of increasing the  $Pr$  number). Therefore, to observe a similar flow state transition in quasi-2-D RBC, one should employ a strongly confined convection cell on one hand; but the spatial confinement should not be too severe on the other hand, so that the transitional  $Ra$  number is not that high and can be reached by conventional experiments and numerical simulations. It is unknown *a priori* what degree of spatial confinement is appropriate. Some exploratory efforts are on the way and the findings, if any, will be reported in the future.

We end this paper by discussing more on the abrupt change in the energy fluctuations of the Fourier modes during the transition. This signal, together with the bistability behaviour observed in the vicinity of  $Ra_t$ , implies that the flow state transition observed here is a phase transition. To confirm this, we adopt an order parameter based on the orientational correlation of the local velocity field to quantify the flow state, which was introduced in the studies of the so-called bacterial turbulence (Cisneros *et al.* 2011; Peng, Liu & Cheng 2021). To be specific, we first calculate the coherence of local velocities by  $\phi_{i,local} = \langle \mathbf{n}_i \cdot \mathbf{n}_j \rangle_{j=1,\dots,4}$  as illustrated in figure 10(a). Here,  $\mathbf{n}_i \cdot \mathbf{n}_j$  stands for the cosine of the angle between adjacent velocity vectors and four neighbours are used for the average. Apparently,  $\phi_{i,local} = 1$  represents a perfect-aligned local flow motion and decreasing  $\phi_{i,local}$  indicates the velocity field becoming disordered. Thus, the spatiotemporal average



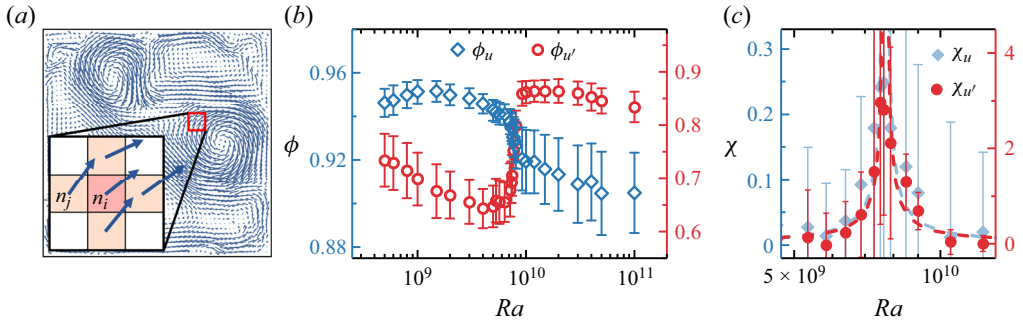


Figure 10. (a) Illustration of how to define the orientational correlation  $\phi_{i,local}$  from an instantaneous velocity field at  $Pr = 4.3$  and  $Ra = 1 \times 10^{11}$ . (b) The order parameter  $\phi = \langle \phi_{i,local} \rangle_{V,t}$  of the whole system as a function of  $Ra$  at  $Pr = 4.3$ . Here  $\phi_u$  and  $\phi_{u'}$  are obtained from the original and the fluctuating velocity fields, respectively. Panel (c) shows  $\chi = |\partial\phi/\partial \log(Ra)|$  in the vicinity of the transition. The dashed lines represent data fittings based on the mean field approach:  $\chi \propto [\log Ra - \log Ra_t]^{-1}$  with  $Ra_t = 7.7 \times 10^9$ .

$\phi = \langle \phi_{i,local} \rangle_{V,t}$  represents the global order of the flow. Note that the flow field has been downsampled to a resolution of  $48 \times 48$  vectors before calculating  $\phi_{i,local}$ , because neighbouring velocities are naturally aligned when the vector resolution is high. Different sampling densities (ranging from  $16 \times 16$  to  $128 \times 128$ ) have been tested and the results are little affected.

Figure 10(b) plots the  $Ra$  dependence of the thus-obtained order parameter  $\phi$ . It is seen that the data calculated from the fluctuating velocity field also shows a sharp jump near  $Ra_t$ , in line with the behaviour of the energy fluctuations of the Fourier modes. When the system is in the condensed state, the flow field is dominated by the (1,1) and (2,2) modes, whose temporal evolution are relatively gentle. Hence, the order parameter calculated from the fluctuating velocity field is comparatively small. When the flow gets into the uncondensed state, higher-order flow modes characterized by orbiting satellite eddies emerge. Their orbiting motions and interactions with the main roll result in significant temporal evolution in the velocity field. For this flow state, the fluctuating velocity field is dominated by those unsteady eddies (see figure 10a), which exhibit stronger spatial correlation and, thus, result in a larger order parameter. The stronger temporal evolution in the flow field also explains why the order parameter obtained from the original velocity field decreases, though slightly, during and after the transition, as the flow structures in the uncondensed state become less organized due to the interaction between multiple vortices. Despite the different variation trends of  $\phi_u$  and  $\phi_{u'}$ , the absolute values of their gradients  $\chi = |\partial\phi/\partial \log(Ra)|$  in the vicinity of transition could be well described by the mean field approach  $\chi \propto [\log Ra - \log Ra_t]^{-1}$  (see figure 10c). This finding, reminiscent of the classical ferromagnetic phase transition (Pathria & Beale 2011), is striking to see in the present far-from-equilibrium system. A similar result was reported previously in an experimental study of turbulent von Kármán swirling flow (Cortet *et al.* 2010), where the critical exponent for the transition is also 1. In their study, the control parameter is the  $Re$  number and the order parameter is defined by the space-averaged angular momentum, which are different from the present study but represent similar physical essences.

While it is unclear to us why the two vastly different flow configurations share the same critical exponent, we propose that the order parameter adopted here could be a unique indicator to quantify the transition behaviours observed in various turbulent flows (e.g. Seshasayanan, Benavides & Alexakis 2014; Benavides & Alexakis 2017; Seshasayanan & Alexakis 2018; van Kan, Nemoto & Alexakis 2019; Musacchio & Boffetta

2019; van Kan & Alexakis 2020; Linkmann, Hohmann & Eckhardt 2020; de Wit *et al.* 2022). Such abrupt transitions between different turbulent flow states have received great interest in recent years (see Alexakis & Biferale (2018) for a review of this topic). It is interesting to see whether these diverse turbulent flows could fall into a universal class in terms of their critical exponents for the transition, which may help to understand the origin of this kind of non-equilibrium phase transition through a unifying framework.

**Supplementary movies.** Supplementary movies are available at <https://doi.org/10.1017/jfm.2024.847>.

**Acknowledgements.** We thank X. Zhu, J.-H. Xie, X.-G. Ma and K.L. Chong for their helpful discussions. S.-D.H. and Y.-C.X. are grateful to K.-Q. Xia for his guidance over the years and for his support of this study. The computational support from the Center for Computational Science and Engineering at Southern University of Science and Technology is also acknowledged.

**Funding.** This work is supported by the National Natural Science Foundation of China (grant nos. 11961160719, 92152104 and 11702128) and the Department of Science and Technology of Guangdong (no. 2023B1212060001). S.-D.H. acknowledges the support from the Pearl River Talent Recruitment Program (no. 2019QN01H691).

**Declaration of interests.** The authors report no conflict of interest.

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**Appendix. Simulation parameters; scaling relations of  $Nu$  and  $Re$  numbers**

In this appendix, we detail the control parameters and numerical settings used for the present study in table 1. The global response parameters, i.e. the  $Nu$  and  $Re$  numbers, are also provided in the table, and their  $Ra$ - $Pr$  dependent scaling relations are plotted in figures 11(a)–11(d). Figures 11(e,f) show the data taken from van der Poel *et al.* (2012). Note that their data at  $\Gamma = 0.5$  exhibit some abnormal  $Ra$ -dependence in the range  $10^7 < Ra < 10^9$ , the reason of which is unclear to us, so only their data at  $Ra = 10^9$  are considered here. The scaling relations obtained in figure 11 are used to estimate the transition scaling exponents for  $Ra_t$  in § 3.3.

No.	$Pr$	$Ra$	$N_x \times N_z$	$\Delta_g/\eta$	$N_{BL}$	$N_{BL}^{min}$	$\tau_f$	$Nu$	$Nu_{\theta_0}(\Delta\theta_0, \%)$	$Nu_{\theta_1}(\Delta\theta_1, \%)$	$Re_{U_{rms}}$	$Re_{U_{max}}$
1	0.25	$1.00 \times 10^7$	$512 \times 576$	0.392	34	5	8000	11.14	11.13(-0.1)	11.07(-0.7)	2588	4735
2	0.25	$2.00 \times 10^7$	$512 \times 576$	0.504	26	6	7000	14.87	14.85(-0.1)	14.72(-1.0)	3871	7229
3	0.25	$5.00 \times 10^7$	$1024 \times 1152$	0.345	49	7	2000	20.41	20.40(-0.0)	20.29(-0.6)	6745	12473
4	0.25	$1.00 \times 10^8$	$1280 \times 1440$	0.348	62	8	2000	25.49	25.48(-0.0)	25.33(-0.6)	9312	17888
5	0.25	$2.00 \times 10^8$	$1536 \times 1728$	0.360	80	9	1400	30.22	30.21(-0.0)	29.79(-1.4)	15361	33090
6	0.25	$5.00 \times 10^8$	$2048 \times 2304$	0.361	93	10	1000	38.37	38.39(0.1)	37.83(-1.4)	24944	57511
7	0.25	$8.00 \times 10^8$	$2048 \times 2304$	0.420	84	10	1000	43.87	43.83(-0.1)	42.85(-2.3)	32338	76615
8	0.4	$1.00 \times 10^7$	$512 \times 576$	0.313	33	4	8000	11.51	11.50(-0.1)	11.46(-0.4)	1679	3169
9	0.4	$2.00 \times 10^7$	$512 \times 576$	0.395	27	5	8000	14.43	14.41(-0.1)	14.34(-0.6)	2518	4768
10	0.4	$5.00 \times 10^7$	$512 \times 576$	0.543	20	6	8000	20.19	20.14(-0.2)	19.96(-1.1)	4191	8035
11	0.4	$1.00 \times 10^8$	$1024 \times 1152$	0.340	42	6	2000	24.52	24.51(-0.1)	24.41(-0.5)	6275	11773
12	0.4	$2.00 \times 10^8$	$1024 \times 1152$	0.432	34	7	1000	31.68	31.66(-0.1)	31.33(-1.1)	8714	17258
13	0.4	$5.00 \times 10^8$	$1280 \times 1440$	0.461	42	8	2800	39.95	39.92(-0.1)	39.04(-2.3)	16810	36922
14	0.4	$1.00 \times 10^9$	$1536 \times 1728$	0.479	56	8	1400	47.79	47.72(-0.1)	46.49(-2.7)	24187	56365
15	0.4	$2.00 \times 10^9$	$2048 \times 2304$	0.449	67	9	1000	58.21	58.12(-0.2)	56.43(-3.1)	35730	85684
16	0.7	$1.00 \times 10^7$	$512 \times 576$	0.236	33	3	8000	11.38	11.37(-0.1)	11.35(-0.3)	965	1951
17	0.7	$2.00 \times 10^7$	$512 \times 576$	0.298	27	4	8000	14.33	14.31(-0.1)	14.27(-0.4)	1417	2912
18	0.7	$5.00 \times 10^7$	$512 \times 576$	0.408	20	4	1000	19.70	19.66(-0.2)	19.56(-0.7)	2398	4970
19	0.7	$1.00 \times 10^8$	$1024 \times 1152$	0.259	41	5	2000	25.26	25.25(-0.1)	25.17(-0.4)	3634	7347
20	0.7	$2.00 \times 10^8$	$1024 \times 1152$	0.326	34	5	2000	31.49	31.46(-0.1)	31.32(-0.6)	5392	10755
21	0.7	$3.00 \times 10^8$	$1024 \times 1152$	0.373	30	5	1600	35.58	35.54(-0.1)	35.38(-0.6)	6776	13501
22	0.7	$4.00 \times 10^8$	$1024 \times 1152$	0.410	28	6	1600	39.12	39.05(-0.2)	38.82(-0.7)	8036	15872
23	0.7	$5.00 \times 10^8$	$1024 \times 1152$	0.442	26	6	1600	42.11	42.04(-0.2)	41.77(-0.8)	9151	18013
24	0.7	$6.10 \times 10^8$	$1024 \times 1152$	0.473	25	6	1200	45.04	44.96(-0.2)	44.62(-0.9)	10499	20263
25	0.7	$8.20 \times 10^8$	$1024 \times 1152$	0.516	23	6	1600	47.51	47.39(-0.3)	46.58(-2.0)	13797	29848
26	0.7	$1.00 \times 10^9$	$1024 \times 1152$	0.550	22	6	2000	50.26	50.11(-0.3)	49.00(-2.5)	15212	33359
27	0.7	$1.50 \times 10^9$	$1536 \times 1728$	0.416	49	7	1200	55.41	55.35(-0.1)	54.54(-1.6)	19246	43514
28	0.7	$2.00 \times 10^9$	$1536 \times 1728$	0.457	46	7	1200	60.34	60.22(-0.2)	59.35(-1.6)	22484	51359
29	0.7	$3.00 \times 10^9$	$1536 \times 1728$	0.519	42	7	1200	66.91	66.78(-0.2)	65.03(-2.8)	28243	65644
30	0.7	$5.00 \times 10^9$	$2048 \times 2304$	0.460	53	8	3000	78.15	78.00(-0.2)	75.05(-4.0)	37078	87853
31	1.2	$1.00 \times 10^7$	$512 \times 576$	0.185	40	3	8000	9.12	9.11(-0.1)	9.11(-0.2)	530	1136
32	1.2	$2.00 \times 10^7$	$512 \times 576$	0.252	26	3	7000	14.96	14.94(-0.1)	14.91(-0.3)	950	1957

Table 1. For caption see next page.

Flow state transition in 2-D turbulent RB convection

No.	Pr	Ra	$N_x \times N_z$	$\Delta g/\eta$	$N_{BL}$	$N_{BL}^{min}$	$\tau_f$	Nu	$Nu_{\theta_0}$ (%)	$Nu_{\theta_1}$ (%)	$Re_{U_{rms}}$	$Re_{U_{max}}$
33	1.2	$5.00 \times 10^7$	$512 \times 576$	0.346	19	4	3000	20.73	20.68(-0.2)	20.63(-0.5)	1580	3339
34	1.2	$1.00 \times 10^8$	$512 \times 576$	0.433	16	4	3000	25.22	25.13(-0.3)	25.04(-0.7)	2279	4826
35	1.2	$2.00 \times 10^8$	$512 \times 576$	0.545	13	4	3000	31.37	31.20(-0.5)	31.06(-1.0)	3326	7020
36	1.2	$5.00 \times 10^8$	$1024 \times 1152$	0.368	26	5	1200	41.43	41.35(-0.2)	41.16(-0.7)	5431	11477
37	1.2	$1.00 \times 10^9$	$1024 \times 1152$	0.463	22	5	2000	51.43	51.26(-0.3)	51.04(-0.8)	8445	16870
38	1.2	$2.00 \times 10^9$	$1280 \times 1440$	0.462	29	6	2400	62.33	62.19(-0.2)	61.36(-1.6)	14423	31424
39	1.2	$5.00 \times 10^9$	$1536 \times 1728$	0.515	36	7	1200	79.04	78.81(-0.3)	77.46(-2.0)	23914	54505
40	1.2	$1.00 \times 10^{10}$	$1536 \times 1728$	0.643	30	7	1600	96.18	95.71(-0.5)	92.99(-3.3)	34785	82679
41	1.2	$2.00 \times 10^{10}$	$2048 \times 2304$	0.605	37	8	1000	118.47	118.07(-0.3)	115.72(-2.3)	52605	126781
42	2	$1.00 \times 10^7$	$512 \times 576$	0.198	33	3	8000	11.48	11.47(-0.1)	11.46(-0.1)	351	763
43	2	$2.00 \times 10^7$	$512 \times 576$	0.249	27	3	8000	14.22	14.21(-0.1)	14.19(-0.2)	540	1166
44	2	$5.00 \times 10^7$	$512 \times 576$	0.345	19	4	8000	20.56	20.51(-0.2)	20.48(-0.4)	1018	2132
45	2	$1.00 \times 10^8$	$512 \times 576$	0.433	16	4	8000	25.17	25.08(-0.3)	25.03(-0.5)	1499	3202
46	2	$2.00 \times 10^8$	$512 \times 576$	0.544	13	4	3000	30.99	30.81(-0.6)	30.74(-0.8)	2186	4713
47	2	$5.00 \times 10^8$	$512 \times 576$	0.734	10	5	3000	40.79	40.42(-0.9)	40.27(-1.3)	3515	7558
48	2	$1.00 \times 10^9$	$1024 \times 1152$	0.460	22	5	1250	50.18	50.01(-0.3)	49.98(-0.4)	5234	10978
49	2	$2.00 \times 10^9$	$1024 \times 1152$	0.579	18	6	1500	62.90	62.63(-0.4)	62.46(-0.7)	8431	16463
50	2	$5.00 \times 10^9$	$1536 \times 1728$	0.519	35	7	1200	81.84	81.54(-0.4)	80.93(-1.1)	15336	34084
51	2	$8.00 \times 10^9$	$1536 \times 1728$	0.602	32	7	1200	92.41	92.08(-0.4)	90.96(-1.6)	19502	44764
52	2	$1.00 \times 10^{10}$	$1536 \times 1728$	0.648	30	7	1200	99.17	98.56(-0.6)	97.64(-1.5)	22417	51300
53	2	$2.00 \times 10^{10}$	$1536 \times 1728$	0.810	25	8	1400	120.36	119.54(-0.7)	117.58(-2.3)	32875	78099
54	2	$5.00 \times 10^{10}$	$2048 \times 2304$	0.813	29	9	1100	154.60	153.53(-0.7)	148.95(-3.7)	58260	138309
55	4.3	$2.00 \times 10^7$	$288 \times 320$	0.460	19	3	48000	16.36	16.29(-0.4)	16.28(-0.5)	281	622
56	4.3	$5.00 \times 10^7$	$288 \times 320$	0.617	15	4	12000	20.92	20.78(-0.7)	20.77(-0.7)	473	1046
57	4.3	$8.00 \times 10^7$	$384 \times 432$	0.541	19	4	6000	24.21	24.08(-0.5)	24.07(-0.5)	640	1390
58	4.3	$1.00 \times 10^8$	$384 \times 432$	0.582	18	4	6000	25.92	25.78(-0.6)	25.78(-0.6)	730	1581
59	4.3	$2.00 \times 10^8$	$512 \times 576$	0.547	13	4	6000	31.70	31.51(-0.6)	31.53(-0.5)	1098	2384
60	4.3	$3.00 \times 10^8$	$1024 \times 1152$	0.312	30	4	4000	35.56	35.51(-0.1)	35.50(-0.2)	1388	3044
61	4.3	$5.00 \times 10^8$	$1024 \times 1152$	0.368	27	5	8000	41.32	41.23(-0.2)	41.13(-0.5)	1826	4041
62	4.3	$6.00 \times 10^8$	$1024 \times 1152$	0.390	25	5	5000	43.60	43.51(-0.2)	43.43(-0.4)	2021	4466
63	4.3	$8.00 \times 10^8$	$1024 \times 1152$	0.429	23	5	5000	47.57	47.43(-0.3)	47.32(-0.5)	2368	5213
64	4.3	$1.00 \times 10^9$	$1024 \times 1152$	0.461	22	5	3000	50.84	50.66(-0.4)	50.56(-0.6)	2680	5880

Table 1. For caption see next page.

No.	Pr	Ra	$N_x \times N_z$	$\Delta_g/\eta$	$N_{BL}$	$N_{BL}^{min}$	$\tau_f$	Nu	$Nu_{\epsilon_0} (A_\theta, \%)$	$Nu_{\epsilon_0} (A_u, \%)$	$ReU_{rms}$	$ReU_{max}$
65	4.3	$1.50 \times 10^9$	$1024 \times 1152$	0.527	20	6	3000	57.41	57.17(-0.4)	56.98(-0.7)	3345	7269
66	4.3	$2.00 \times 10^9$	$1024 \times 1152$	0.579	18	6	3000	62.69	62.37(-0.5)	62.18(-0.8)	3997	8551
67	4.3	$3.00 \times 10^9$	$1536 \times 1728$	0.441	40	6	1500	71.14	70.93(-0.3)	70.72(-0.6)	5168	10713
68	4.3	$4.00 \times 10^9$	$1536 \times 1728$	0.485	37	6	1500	78.01	77.76(-0.3)	77.61(-0.5)	6285	12602
69	4.3	$5.00 \times 10^9$	$1536 \times 1728$	0.522	34	7	2500	83.75	83.47(-0.3)	83.22(-0.6)	7364	14426
70	4.3	$5.30 \times 10^9$	$1536 \times 1728$	0.533	34	7	2000	85.69	85.37(-0.4)	85.23(-0.5)	7713	14969
71	4.3	$5.70 \times 10^9$	$1536 \times 1728$	0.547	33	7	2000	88.03	87.64(-0.4)	87.35(-0.8)	8079	15651
72	4.3	$6.40 \times 10^9$	$1536 \times 1728$	0.568	32	7	1000	91.36	91.00(-0.4)	90.63(-0.8)	8668	16640
73	4.3	$7.15 \times 10^9$	$1536 \times 1728$	0.590	31	7	9500	94.94	94.51(-0.5)	94.03(-1.0)	9585	18143
74	4.3	$7.35 \times 10^9$	$1536 \times 1728$	0.595	31	7	10300	95.55	95.14(-0.4)	94.64(-1.0)	9734	18712
75	4.3	$7.45 \times 10^9$	$1536 \times 1728$	0.597	31	7	11700	95.86	95.41(-0.5)	94.82(-1.1)	9861	19024
76	4.3	$7.50 \times 10^9$	$1536 \times 1728$	0.599	31	7	39500	95.43	95.05(-0.4)	94.19(-1.3)	10023	19403
77	4.3	$7.70 \times 10^9$	$1536 \times 1728$	0.603	30	7	6250	96.64	96.20(-0.5)	95.99(-0.7)	10477	20292
78	4.3	$7.85 \times 10^9$	$1536 \times 1728$	0.606	30	7	9400	96.62	96.16(-0.5)	95.66(-1.0)	10379	20500
79	4.3	$8.10 \times 10^9$	$1536 \times 1728$	0.613	30	7	2750	97.57	97.04(-0.5)	96.69(-0.9)	11054	21654
80	4.3	$9.20 \times 10^9$	$1536 \times 1728$	0.636	30	7	2000	99.43	98.99(-0.4)	98.63(-0.8)	11463	24222
81	4.3	$1.00 \times 10^{10}$	$1536 \times 1728$	0.652	29	7	1600	101.47	100.87(-0.6)	100.48(-1.0)	11945	25569
82	4.3	$1.20 \times 10^{10}$	$1536 \times 1728$	0.691	28	7	1600	106.23	105.72(-0.5)	105.44(-0.7)	13237	28249
83	4.3	$1.50 \times 10^{10}$	$1536 \times 1728$	0.743	26	8	1600	113.73	113.03(-0.6)	112.41(-1.2)	14484	32142
84	4.3	$2.00 \times 10^{10}$	$1536 \times 1728$	0.814	24	8	1600	123.05	122.16(-0.7)	122.32(-0.6)	16984	38134
85	4.3	$3.00 \times 10^{10}$	$2048 \times 2304$	0.695	32	8	2000	138.16	137.42(-0.5)	135.85(-1.7)	20920	48200
86	4.3	$4.00 \times 10^{10}$	$2048 \times 2304$	0.761	30	9	1200	148.88	147.77(-0.7)	144.31(-3.1)	25029	58092
87	4.3	$5.00 \times 10^{10}$	$2048 \times 2304$	0.820	28	9	1200	160.32	159.02(-0.8)	153.91(-4.0)	27030	64133
88	4.3	$1.00 \times 10^{11}$	$2560 \times 2880$	0.874	50	10	1000	194.85	193.23(-0.8)	188.04(-3.5)	40780	98461
89	10	$1.00 \times 10^8$	$512 \times 576$	0.443	15	4	8000	27.58	27.45(-0.4)	27.51(-0.3)	337	742
90	10	$2.00 \times 10^8$	$512 \times 576$	0.555	12	4	8000	33.55	33.33(-0.7)	33.44(-0.3)	496	1089
91	10	$5.00 \times 10^8$	$512 \times 576$	0.745	10	5	8000	43.44	42.95(-1.1)	43.21(-0.5)	846	1824
92	10	$1.00 \times 10^9$	$1024 \times 1152$	0.466	21	5	1500	52.75	52.55(-0.4)	52.70(-0.1)	1275	2722
93	10	$2.00 \times 10^9$	$1024 \times 1152$	0.584	17	6	1500	64.74	64.33(-0.6)	64.53(-0.3)	1875	3960
94	10	$5.00 \times 10^9$	$1024 \times 1152$	0.786	14	7	1500	84.96	84.05(-1.1)	84.66(-0.3)	3256	6819
95	10	$1.00 \times 10^{10}$	$1536 \times 1728$	0.657	28	7	3000	104.66	103.99(-0.6)	103.78(-0.8)	4921	10146

Table 1. For caption see next page.



No.	$Pr$	$Ra$	$N_x \times N_z$	$\Delta_g/\eta$	$N_{BL}$	$N_{BL}^{min}$	$\tau_f$	$Nu$	$Nit_{e\theta} (\Delta\theta, \%)$	$Nit_{e_u} (\Delta u, \%)$	$ReU_{rms}$	$ReU_{max}$
96	10	$2.00 \times 10^{10}$	$2048 \times 2304$	0.619	34	8	1750	130.15	129.45(-0.5)	129.38(-0.6)	7745	15 143
97	10	$5.00 \times 10^{10}$	$2048 \times 2304$	0.822	28	9	1500	161.45	159.81(-1.0)	160.07(-0.9)	13 602	29 920
98	10	$1.00 \times 10^{11}$	$2560 \times 2880$	0.876	49	10	1500	196.89	195.45(-0.7)	195.12(-0.9)	19 633	44 883
99	20	$2.00 \times 10^8$	$512 \times 576$	0.556	12	4	3000	33.93	33.66(-0.8)	33.82(-0.3)	280	606
100	20	$5.00 \times 10^8$	$512 \times 576$	0.748	9	5	3000	44.10	43.54(-1.3)	43.90(-0.4)	472	1001
101	20	$1.00 \times 10^9$	$1024 \times 1152$	0.468	21	5	1500	53.63	53.42(-0.4)	53.62(-0.0)	701	1465
102	20	$2.00 \times 10^9$	$1024 \times 1152$	0.586	17	6	1500	65.67	65.30(-0.6)	65.63(-0.1)	1038	2128
103	20	$5.00 \times 10^9$	$1024 \times 1152$	0.788	13	7	1500	85.79	84.84(-1.1)	85.68(-0.1)	1750	3554
104	20	$1.00 \times 10^{10}$	$1536 \times 1728$	0.659	28	7	1200	105.49	104.78(-0.7)	105.35(-0.1)	2627	5316
105	20	$2.00 \times 10^{10}$	$2048 \times 2304$	0.618	34	8	2500	129.54	128.79(-0.6)	129.26(-0.2)	3936	8075
106	20	$3.00 \times 10^{10}$	$2048 \times 2304$	0.706	31	9	2500	146.54	145.45(-0.7)	146.07(-0.3)	5014	10 209
107	20	$5.00 \times 10^{10}$	$2048 \times 2304$	0.835	27	9	2500	171.66	169.81(-1.1)	170.96(-0.4)	7022	13 812
108	20	$1.00 \times 10^{11}$	$2560 \times 2880$	0.878	49	10	2000	198.93	196.88(-1.0)	197.68(-0.6)	11 116	23 753
109	20	$2.00 \times 10^{11}$	$2560 \times 2880$	1.096	41	11	2000	240.88	237.56(-1.4)	234.93(-2.5)	15 898	34 937

Table 1. The numerical details and the global response parameters of the present study. Here  $Pr$  and  $Ra$  are the control parameters;  $N_x \times N_z$  is the spatial resolution;  $\Delta_g$  is the maximal grid spacing;  $\eta$  represents the Kolmogorov scale estimated by  $\eta_K = HPr^{1/2}/[Ra(Nu - 1)]^{1/4}$  when  $Pr \leq 1$ , or the Batchelor scale estimated by  $\eta_B = \eta_K Pr^{-1/2}$  when  $Pr > 1$ ;  $N_{BL}$  is the number of grid points used for the boundary layer and  $N_{BL}^{min}$  is the required minimum number according to Shishkina *et al.* (2010);  $\tau_f$  is the time duration (in units of free-fall time) to get statistics;  $Nu$ ,  $Nit_{e\theta}$  and  $Nit_{e_u}$  are the dimensionless heat transfer efficiency obtained through the definition, the thermal and the kinetic dissipation rates, respectively;  $\Delta\theta$  ( $\Delta u$ ) is the relative error between  $Nu$  and  $Nit_{e\theta}$  ( $Nit_{e_u}$ );  $ReU_{rms}$  and  $ReU_{max}$  are the Reynolds numbers characterized by different velocities  $U$ , where  $U_{rms} = \sqrt{(u^2 + w^2)_{V,t}}$  and  $U_{max} = (\max\{U\})_t$ .

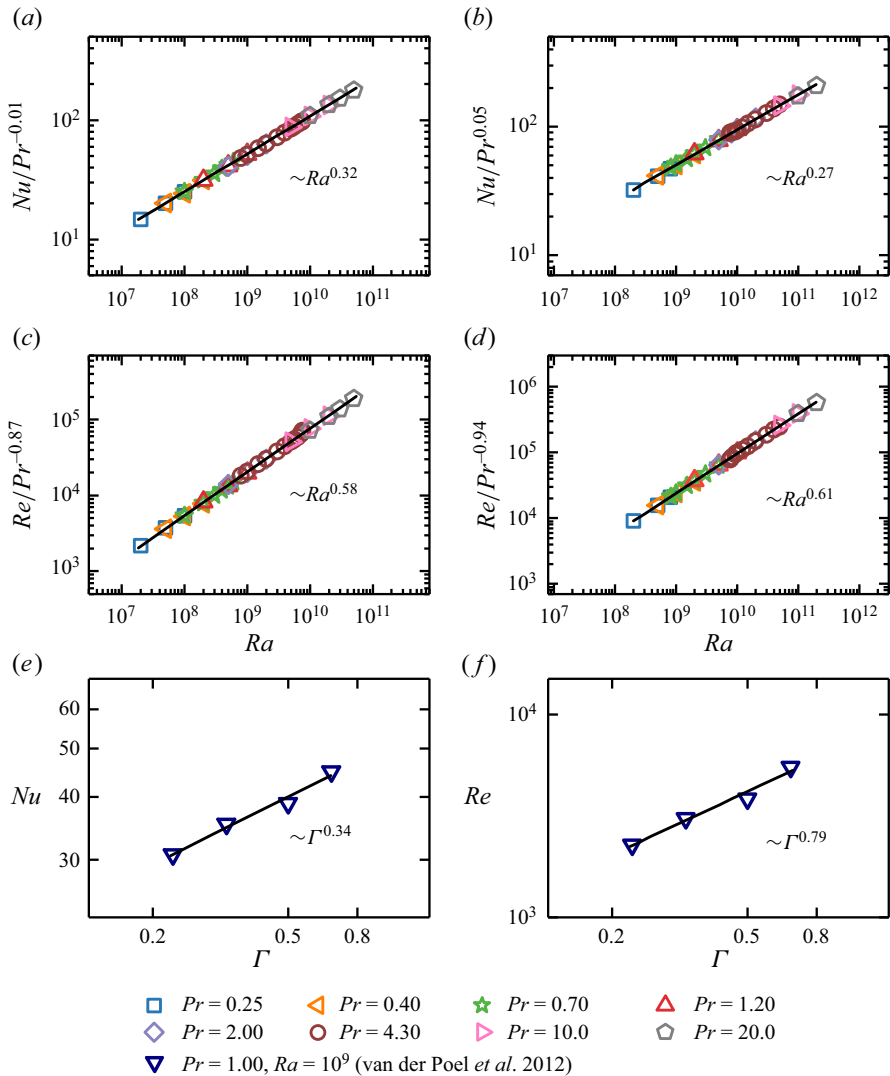


Figure 11. The compensated  $Nu$  and  $Re$  as a function of  $Ra$  for each  $Pr$  obtained in the present study: panels (a,c) show the results in the condensed state and (b,d) are in the uncondensed state. Solid lines are the corresponding least-square fits, which yield  $Nu \sim Ra^{0.32} Pr^{-0.01}$ ,  $Re \sim Ra^{0.58} Pr^{-0.87}$  and  $Nu \sim Ra^{0.27} Pr^{0.05}$ ,  $Re \sim Ra^{0.61} Pr^{-0.94}$  for the condensed and uncondensed states, respectively. Since there exists no simple scaling law over a wide  $Ra$  range (Grossmann & Lohse 2000), only the data one decade before or after  $Ra_t$  are used to get the effective scaling exponents. Panels (e,f) show the  $\Gamma$  dependencies of  $Nu$  and  $Re$ , respectively. The data are taken from figure 2 of van der Poel *et al.* (2012), and the least-square power law fitting yields  $Nu \sim \Gamma^{0.34}$  and  $Re \sim \Gamma^{0.79}$  roughly.

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