

# Riemannian submersions from simple, compact Lie groups

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*Dedicated to J.-H. Eschenburg on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday*

**Abstract.** In this paper we construct infinitely many examples of a Riemannian submersion from a simple, compact Lie group  $G$  with bi-invariant metric onto a smooth manifold that cannot be a quotient of  $G$  by a group action. This partially addresses a question of K. Grove's about Riemannian submersions from Lie groups.

## INTRODUCTION

Riemannian submersions (which we always assume to have connected fibers) are fundamentally important in several areas of Riemannian geometry. For instance, it is a classical and important problem in Riemannian geometry to construct Riemannian manifolds with positive or non-negative sectional curvature. While there are a few methods, the most abundant source of examples comes via submersions from compact Lie groups (see [16] for a survey). In addition, many of the known examples of Einstein manifolds are constructed via Riemannian submersions (see [1]). Moreover, in order to prove the Diameter Rigidity Theorem for positively curved manifolds ([6], [14]), a classification of Riemannian submersions from spheres equipped with a round metric was required ([7], [14]). As it turns out, only Hopf fibrations can occur. In the special case where the fibers are totally geodesic, this classification had been achieved in [4] (see also [13]). It is natural, therefore, to ask for a classification of Riemannian submersions from *special* Riemannian manifolds. In [5] the author classified Riemannian submersions with totally geodesic fibers from  $\mathbf{CP}^n$  equipped with the usual Fubini-Study metric. Riemannian submersions from (flat) Euclidean space  $\mathbf{R}^{n+k}$  were classified in [8], where it was shown that the base must be diffeomorphic to  $\mathbf{R}^n$  and the quotient of  $\mathbf{R}^{n+k}$  by an isometric  $\mathbf{R}^k$  action. Given the many geometric situations in which Riemannian submersions from Lie groups arise, one should similarly address the following problem

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([9, Problem 5.4]): Determine the structure of all Riemannian submersions from  $G$ , where  $G$  is a compact Lie group with a bi-invariant metric  $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_0$ .

Until recently the only known Riemannian submersions from compact Lie groups equipped with bi-invariant metrics arose as biquotient submersions, namely Riemannian submersions from  $(G, \langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_0)$  given by the quotient of  $G$  by a two-sided, free, isometric action of some closed subgroup of  $G \times G$ . This changed with the discovery of a single example of a Riemannian submersion,  $\mathrm{SO}(16) \rightarrow \mathbf{S}^8$  (unpublished; see Section 1), such that the base is not a quotient of the total space  $\mathrm{SO}(16)$  by a free group action. In fact:

**Theorem.** *There exist infinitely many Riemannian submersions,  $G \rightarrow B$ , where  $G$  is a simple, compact Lie group equipped with a bi-invariant metric, and such that  $B$  is not a quotient  $G/U$  by any subgroup  $U \subseteq \mathrm{Diff}(G)$ .*

A list of examples is included in Table 1. The fiber in each case is a Lie group bundle over a homogeneous space. We remark that the bases of the final two examples in Table 1, namely the Stiefel manifold  $V_3(\mathbf{R}^{4n-1})$  and its quotient by a free circle action, have the same rational cohomology as  $\mathbf{S}^{4n-4} \times \mathbf{S}^{8n-5}$  and  $\mathbf{S}^{4n-4} \times \mathbf{CP}^{4n-2}$  respectively.

$G$	$\longrightarrow$	$B$	$n$
$\mathrm{SO}(16)$	$\longrightarrow$	$\mathbf{S}^8$	-
$\mathrm{SO}(2n)$	$\longrightarrow$	$\mathbf{S}^{2n-2}$	$n \geq 4$
$\mathrm{SU}(2n)$	$\longrightarrow$	$\mathbf{S}^{4n-3}$	$n \geq 3$
$\mathrm{SU}(2n)$	$\longrightarrow$	$\mathbf{CP}^{2n-2}$	$n \geq 3$
$\mathrm{SO}(4n)$	$\longrightarrow$	$V_3(\mathbf{R}^{4n-1})$	$n \geq 3$
$\mathrm{SO}(4n)$	$\longrightarrow$	$\mathbf{S}^1 \backslash V_3(\mathbf{R}^{4n-1})$	$n \geq 3$

**Table 1.** Riemannian submersions  $G \longrightarrow B$ , where  $B$  is not a quotient of  $G$ .

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## 1. A RIEMANNIAN SUBMERSION, $\mathrm{SO}(16) \rightarrow \mathbf{S}^8$

In 2007, at a week long workshop at AIM in Palo Alto, one of the working groups constructed this example. Since we were both at the workshop,

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Consider the Hopf fibration

$$\mathbf{S}^7 \rightarrow \mathbf{S}^{15} \rightarrow \mathbf{S}^8.$$

It is well-known that the round metric on  $\mathbf{S}^{15}$  induces a Riemannian submersion onto  $\mathbf{S}^8$ . Moreover, the isometry group of  $(\mathbf{S}^{15}, g_{\text{round}})$  is  $SO(16)$ , which also acts transitively on  $\mathbf{S}^{15}$  with isotropy subgroup  $SO(15)$ . Since  $SO(16)/SO(15)$  is isotropy irreducible, it follows that the bi-invariant metric  $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_0$  on  $SO(16)$  induces the round metric on  $\mathbf{S}^{15}$  via a Riemannian submersion. We may therefore compose these two Riemannian submersions to yield a Riemannian submersion  $(SO(16), \langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_0) \rightarrow \mathbf{S}^8$ .

However, this submersion is not the result of a free action by some Lie group  $U$ . In particular, this is not a biquotient submersion. If there were such a  $U$ , then  $\dim(U) = \dim(SO(16)) - 8 = 112$ . From the long exact sequence of homotopy groups associated to the fibration  $U \rightarrow SO(16) \rightarrow \mathbf{S}^8$ , we see that  $\pi_3(U) = \pi_3(SO(16)) = \mathbf{Z}$  and  $\pi_1(U) = \pi_1(SO(16)) = \mathbf{Z}_2$ . Since the rank of  $\pi_3$  for a Lie group is the number of simple factors, we conclude that  $U$  is a simple, compact Lie group of dimension 112. A quick look at the classification of simple Lie groups reveals that there is no such group.

## 2. THE BASIC CONSTRUCTION

The above example was, to date, the only known Riemannian submersion from a compact Lie group with bi-invariant metric that is not the result of a group action. It is natural to wonder if this example is special in some way. For instance, perhaps the construction relies on the fact that the Hopf fibration,  $\mathbf{S}^{15} \rightarrow \mathbf{S}^8$ , is not a principal bundle. It turns out that this is not the case. The important observation one should make is that the Hopf fibration is, in fact, a homogeneous fibration coming from the triple  $\text{Spin}(7) \subseteq \text{Spin}(8) \subseteq \text{Spin}(9)$ :

$$\text{Spin}(8)/\text{Spin}(7) = \mathbf{S}^7 \hookrightarrow \text{Spin}(9)/\text{Spin}(7) = \mathbf{S}^{15} \rightarrow \text{Spin}(9)/\text{Spin}(8) = \mathbf{S}^8.$$

In particular,  $\mathbf{S}^{15}$  may be written as a homogeneous space in two different ways.

There is another subtlety of which one should be wary. The round metric on  $\mathbf{S}^{15}$  is not isometric to the normal homogeneous metric on the quotient  $\text{Spin}(9)/\text{Spin}(7)$ . Thus, in order to combine the submersions so that the composed map is a Riemannian submersion, one has to choose the homogeneous metric on  $\text{Spin}(9)/\text{Spin}(7)$  carefully. The isotropy representation on  $\text{Spin}(9)/\text{Spin}(7)$  has two irreducible summands (of dimensions 7 and 8). Hence, as we shall see in Section 3, there is a two parameter family of homogeneous metrics on  $\text{Spin}(9)/\text{Spin}(7)$ . It is possible to choose these parameters so that  $\text{Spin}(9)/\text{Spin}(7)$  is equipped with the round metric. Now one of the irreducible summands is tangent to the base  $\text{Spin}(9)/\text{Spin}(8)$  and also irreducible under the  $\text{Spin}(8)$  isotropy action. Therefore the restriction of the metric on

$\text{Spin}(9)/\text{Spin}(7)$  to this isotropy summand yields a Riemannian submersion onto  $\text{Spin}(9)/\text{Spin}(8)$ .

The construction of all examples in this paper relies on putting together the two key ideas indicated above, namely:

First we look for homogeneous spaces that can be represented as the quotient of two distinct (simple) groups. Given a homogeneous space that can be represented as  $G/K_1 = K_2/H$ , we then proceed to find intermediate subgroups  $H \subseteq L \subseteq K_2$  which give rise to a homogeneous fibration,

$$L/H \longrightarrow K_2/H \longrightarrow K_2/L$$

We now have two submersions,  $\pi_1 : G \longrightarrow G/K_1$  and  $\pi_2 : K_2/H \longrightarrow K_2/L$  which we compose to obtain a submersion  $\pi : G \longrightarrow K_2/L$ . Then we show, in some cases, that there is no  $U \subseteq \text{Diff}(G)$  such that  $G/U = K_2/L$ .

The second idea is to find a homogeneous metric on  $K_2/H$  that is isometric to the normal homogeneous metric on  $G/K_1$  and which induces a well-defined homogeneous metric on  $K_2/L$  so that the map  $\pi_2 : K_2/H \longrightarrow K_2/L$  is a Riemannian submersion. It is not always possible to do this (see for instance Section 7). Whenever we can find such a metric, the submersion  $\pi = \pi_2 \circ \pi_1 : G \longrightarrow K_2/L$  is Riemannian.

Let us examine the first part of the construction suggested above. Suppose  $\mathfrak{g}$  is a compact Lie algebra with sub-algebras  $\mathfrak{k}_1, \mathfrak{k}_2$  such that  $\mathfrak{g} = \mathfrak{k}_1 + \mathfrak{k}_2$ . Then this is equivalent to the following: let  $G$  be the simply connected, compact, Lie group with Lie algebra  $\mathfrak{g}$  and let  $K_1, K_2$  be the closed subgroups in  $G$  corresponding to the sub-algebras  $\mathfrak{k}_1$  and  $\mathfrak{k}_2$  respectively. Then we have the homogeneous space identities,  $G/K_1 = K_2/(K_1 \cap K_2)$  and  $G/K_2 = K_1/(K_1 \cap K_2)$ . In 1962, A. L. Oniščik classified all  $(\mathfrak{g}, \mathfrak{k}_1, \mathfrak{k}_2)$ , where  $\mathfrak{g}$  is a simple, compact Lie algebra [12]; all his spaces are given in Table 3 in the Appendix.

Now suppose there is a subgroup  $U \subseteq \text{Diff}(G)$  such that the base  $K_2/L$  may be realized as the quotient  $G/U$ . Then from the long exact homotopy sequence of the fibration,  $U \rightarrow G \rightarrow K_2/L$ , we may compute the homotopy groups of  $U$ . Moreover, since we know  $G$  and  $K_2/L$ , we also know the dimension of  $U$ . From this we can determine the (local) decomposition of  $U$  into simple and torus groups. Every compact, connected Lie group  $U$  is finitely covered by a Lie group diffeomorphic to  $T^k \times \tilde{U}$ , where  $T^k$  is a torus and  $\tilde{U}$  is a product of compact, connected, simply connected, simple Lie groups. Now, since  $\pi_1(T^k \times \tilde{U}) = \mathbf{Z}^k$  injects into  $\pi_1(U)$  under the homomorphism induced by the covering, it follows that if we can determine  $\pi_1(U)$  then we will know the rank  $k$  of the torus  $T^k$ . In addition, if we can find  $\pi_3(U)$  then we will have determined the number of simple factors in  $\tilde{U}$ .

If we assume that the simple factors of  $\tilde{U}$  have dimension large enough, then determining  $\pi_5(U) = \pi_5(\tilde{U})$  will allow us to decide which classical Lie groups are possible for the simple factors. This is achieved via the isomorphisms  $\pi_5(\text{Spin}(n)) \cong \pi_5(\mathbf{O}) \cong 0$  if  $n \geq 7$ ;  $\pi_5(\text{SU}(n)) \cong \pi_5(\mathbf{U}) \cong \mathbf{Z}$  if  $n \geq 3$ ; and  $\pi_5(\text{Sp}(n)) \cong \pi_5(\mathbf{Sp}) \cong \mathbf{Z}_2$  if  $n \geq 1$ , where  $\mathbf{O}, \mathbf{Sp}, \mathbf{U}$  denote the stable

(infinite dimensional) limits of the corresponding Lie groups (see [2, pgs. 466–467] for more details). The remaining possibilities for simple factors are low-dimensional classical Lie groups and the exceptional Lie groups.

By examining the various examples in Oniřčík’s list, we see that in some of the cases such a  $U$  is not possible for dimension reasons (since all possible finite covers  $T^k \times \tilde{U}$  of  $U$  with  $\pi_1(\tilde{U}) = 0$  may be determined as above). This yields candidate (topological) submersions which need to be examined metrically. Some of these candidates are listed in Table 2. Evidently, the example in Section 1 falls neatly into this scheme.

$G$	$G/K_1$	$K_2/H$	$L$	$K_2/L$
<b><math>G/K_1</math> symmetric</b>				
SO(16)	SO(16)/SO(15)	Spin(9)/Spin(7)	Spin(8)	$\mathbf{S}^8$
SO(2n) ( $n \geq 4$ )	SO(2n)/U(n)	SO(2n – 1)/U(n – 1)	SO(2n – 2)	$\mathbf{S}^{2n-2}$
SU(2n) ( $n \geq 3$ )	SU(2n)/Sp(n)	SU(2n – 1)/Sp(n – 1)	SU(2n – 2)	$\mathbf{S}^{4n-3}$
SU(2n) ( $n \geq 3$ )	SU(2n)/Sp(n)	SU(2n – 1)/Sp(n – 1)	U(2n – 2)	$\mathbf{CP}^{2n-2}$
<b><math>G/K_1</math> non-symmetric</b>				
SO(2n) ( $n \geq 4$ )	SO(2n)/SU(n)	SO(2n – 1)/SU(n – 1)	SO(2n – 2)	$\mathbf{S}^{2n-2}$
SO(4n) ( $n \geq 3$ )	SO(4n)/Sp(n)Sp(1)	SO(4n – 1)/Sp(n – 1)Sp(1)	SO(4n – 2)	$\mathbf{S}^{4n-2}$
SO(4n) ( $n \geq 3$ )	SO(4n)/Sp(n)Sp(1)	SO(4n – 1)/Sp(n – 1)Sp(1)	SO(4n – 3)	$T^1\mathbf{S}^{4n-2}$
SO(4n) ( $n \geq 3$ )	SO(4n)/Sp(n)Sp(1)	SO(4n – 1)/Sp(n – 1)Sp(1)	SO(4n – 4)	$V_3(\mathbf{R}^{4n-1})$

**Table 2.** Candidate submersions  $G \rightarrow K_2/L$  that are not group quotients.

Besides the candidates listed above we also have  $\text{SO}(4n)/\text{Sp}(n)\text{U}(1) = \text{SO}(4n – 1)/\text{Sp}(n – 1)\text{U}(1)$  and  $\text{SO}(4n)/\text{Sp}(n) = \text{SO}(4n – 1)/\text{Sp}(n – 1)$ . Each of these yields the same base spaces as the last three examples in Table 2. The bases  $B_1 = T^1\mathbf{S}^{4n-2}$  and  $B_2 = V_3(\mathbf{R}^{4n-1})$  admit a free diagonal  $\text{SO}(2)$  action from the left which is isometric for any homogeneous metric on  $B_1, B_2$  respectively. Thus we have a (topological) submersion  $\text{SO}(4n) \rightarrow \text{SO}(2)\backslash B_i, i = 1, 2$ , which will be Riemannian if  $\text{SO}(4n) \rightarrow B_i, i = 1, 2$  respectively, is Riemannian. However, as we shall see, not all of the candidates in Table 2 yield Riemannian submersions from  $G$  onto the base. In order to complete the picture we also need to address the metric part of the construction.

### 3. HOMOGENEOUS METRICS ON $G/H$

Given a compact, semisimple Lie group  $G$  and a closed subgroup  $H \subseteq G$  one has a natural decomposition of the Lie algebra  $\mathfrak{g}$  into invariant subspaces under the adjoint action of  $H$ :  $\mathfrak{g} = \mathfrak{h} \oplus \mathfrak{m}$ , where  $\mathfrak{h}$  is the Lie algebra of  $H$  and  $\mathfrak{m}$

is an  $\text{Ad}(H)$ -invariant subspace complementary to  $\mathfrak{h} \subseteq \mathfrak{g}$ . The representation of  $H$  on  $\mathfrak{m}$  is called the isotropy representation of  $H$ . Homogeneous metrics on  $G/H$  are in one-to-one correspondence with  $\text{Ad}(H)$ -invariant inner products on  $\mathfrak{m}$ . Furthermore, if we let  $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_{\mathfrak{m}}$  be an  $\text{Ad}(H)$ -invariant inner product on  $\mathfrak{m}$  and  $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_{\mathfrak{h}}$  an arbitrary inner product on  $\mathfrak{h}$ , then we may define an inner product  $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle$  on  $\mathfrak{g}$  by declaring  $\mathfrak{h} \perp \mathfrak{m}$ . Via left translation we get a left-invariant metric (also denoted by  $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle$ ) on  $G$  and a homogeneous metric (also denoted by  $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_{\mathfrak{m}}$ ) on  $G/H$  for which the map  $\pi : (G, \langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle) \rightarrow (G/H, \langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_{\mathfrak{m}})$  is a Riemannian submersion.

So, in order to understand homogeneous metrics on  $G/H$ , we need to understand  $\text{Ad}(H)$ -invariant inner products on  $\mathfrak{m}$ . Now suppose  $\mathfrak{m}$  splits as  $\mathfrak{m} = \mathfrak{p}_1 \oplus \cdots \oplus \mathfrak{p}_s$  into a sum of  $\text{Ad}(H)$  irreducible sub-modules; the following well-known lemma follows readily from Schur's Lemma.

**Lemma 3.1.** *Let  $\mathfrak{g} = \mathfrak{h} \oplus \mathfrak{m}$  be as above, where  $\mathfrak{m} = \mathfrak{p}_1 \oplus \cdots \oplus \mathfrak{p}_s$  and  $\mathfrak{p}_k$  is  $\text{Ad}(H)$  irreducible for all  $1 \leq k \leq s$ , and let  $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_{\mathfrak{m}}$  be an  $\text{Ad}(H)$ -invariant inner product on  $\mathfrak{m}$ . Then  $\mathfrak{p}_i \perp \mathfrak{p}_j$  with respect to  $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_{\mathfrak{m}}$  whenever  $\mathfrak{p}_i$  and  $\mathfrak{p}_j$  are inequivalent representations of  $H$ .*

As it turns out,  $\text{Ad}(H)$ -invariant inner products on the irreducible summands  $\mathfrak{p}_k$  are very special. The following lemma is also well known.

**Lemma 3.2.** *Let  $H$  be any group and let  $V$  be an irreducible  $H$ -representation. Suppose there are two  $H$ -invariant inner products,  $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_1$  and  $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_2$ , on  $V$ . Then there exists a constant  $\lambda > 0$  such that  $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_1 = \lambda \langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_2$ .*

In the special case where the irreducible summands  $\mathfrak{p}_1, \dots, \mathfrak{p}_s$  of  $\mathfrak{m}$  are pairwise inequivalent, Lemmas 3.1 and 3.2 tell us that *all* homogeneous metrics on  $G/H$  are described by  $s$  positive real numbers, namely

$$(3.1) \quad \langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_{\mathfrak{m}} = \lambda_1 Q|_{\mathfrak{p}_1} \perp \lambda_2 Q|_{\mathfrak{p}_2} \perp \cdots \perp \lambda_s Q|_{\mathfrak{p}_s},$$

where  $Q$  is some bi-invariant metric on  $G$  and  $\lambda_1, \dots, \lambda_s > 0$ . We will always choose  $Q$  to be the negative of the Killing form on  $\mathfrak{g}$ .

Suppose now that some of our irreducible  $\text{Ad}(H)$  sub-modules are pairwise equivalent. In this situation it is more complicated to write down all possible homogeneous metrics on  $G/H$  because equivalent sub-modules need not be perpendicular. However, there is a well-established procedure. Any  $\text{Ad}(H)$ -invariant inner product  $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_{\mathfrak{m}}$  on  $\mathfrak{m}$  satisfies  $\langle X, Y \rangle_{\mathfrak{m}} = Q(\Phi(X), Y)$ , where  $\Phi : \mathfrak{m} \rightarrow \mathfrak{m}$  is a linear, positive definite, symmetric,  $\text{Ad}(H)$ -equivariant map. Therefore, the space of all possible  $\text{Ad}(H)$ -invariant inner products on  $\mathfrak{m}$  may be described by parametrizing the space of all possible maps  $\Phi$ . This is done as follows.

We first consider the complexification  $\psi \otimes \mathbf{C}$  of a real representation  $\psi : G \rightarrow \text{Aut}(V)$ . If  $\psi \otimes \mathbf{C}$  is irreducible, we say  $\psi$  is orthogonal. Otherwise  $\psi \otimes \mathbf{C} = \varphi \oplus \bar{\varphi}$ . If  $\varphi$  is not equivalent to  $\bar{\varphi}$ , we say  $\psi$  is unitary. If, on the other hand,  $\varphi$  and  $\bar{\varphi}$  are equivalent, we say  $\psi$  is symplectic. We call a map  $A : V \rightarrow V$  such that  $\psi \circ A = A \circ \psi$  an *intertwining operator*. The space of

all intertwining operators is has dimension one if  $\psi$  is orthogonal, two if  $\psi$  is unitary, and four if  $\psi$  is symplectic.

It follows that between each pair of equivalent irreducible representations  $\mathfrak{p}_i, \mathfrak{p}_j$  we have either a one, two, or four parameter family of  $\text{Ad}(H)$ -invariant inner products. That is,  $\langle \mathfrak{p}_i, \mathfrak{p}_j \rangle_{\mathfrak{m}} = Q(\Phi(\mathfrak{p}_i), \mathfrak{p}_j)$  is given by one, two or four real parameters. Therefore  $\Phi$  may be represented by an  $s \times s$  symmetric matrix whose  $ij$ -th entry is real when  $i = j$ , zero if  $\mathfrak{p}_i$  and  $\mathfrak{p}_j$  are inequivalent, and an element of  $\mathbf{R}, \mathbf{C}$  or  $\mathbf{H}$  when  $\mathfrak{p}_i$  and  $\mathfrak{p}_j$  are equivalent.

Let us return now to the second part of the construction suggested in Section 2. Consider the situation where we have  $G/K_1 = K_2/H$  as homogeneous spaces and a chain of subgroups  $H \subseteq L \subseteq K_2$  which gives the homogeneous fibration,  $L/H \rightarrow K_2/H \xrightarrow{\pi_2} K_2/L$ . We fix a bi-invariant metric  $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_0$  on  $G$  and hence a normal homogeneous metric on  $G/K_1$ . It is clear that  $K_2$  acts isometrically and transitively on  $G/K_1$  with isotropy group  $H$ . Therefore there is some homogeneous metric on  $K_2/H$  isometric to the normal homogeneous metric on  $G/K_1$ . We want to choose this metric on  $K_2/H$  and then determine whether the map  $\pi_2 : K_2/H \rightarrow K_2/L$  is a Riemannian submersion.

Consider the Lie algebras  $\mathfrak{h} \subseteq \mathfrak{l} \subseteq \mathfrak{k}_2$  corresponding to the Lie groups  $H \subseteq L \subseteq K_2$ . If we choose an  $\text{Ad}(H)$ -invariant complement  $\mathfrak{m}_1$  of  $\mathfrak{h} \subseteq \mathfrak{l}$  and an  $\text{Ad}(L)$ -invariant complement  $\mathfrak{m}_2$  of  $\mathfrak{l} \subseteq \mathfrak{k}_2$ , then we arrive at a decomposition

$$\mathfrak{k}_2 = \mathfrak{l} \oplus \mathfrak{m}_2 = (\mathfrak{h} \oplus \mathfrak{m}_1) \oplus \mathfrak{m}_2.$$

In particular,  $\mathfrak{m}_1 \oplus \mathfrak{m}_2$  is an  $\text{Ad}(H)$ -invariant complement of  $\mathfrak{h} \subseteq \mathfrak{k}_2$  since the  $H$  action on  $\mathfrak{m}_2$  is simply a restriction of the  $L$  action. We remark that  $\mathfrak{m}_1$  and  $\mathfrak{m}_2$  correspond to the tangent spaces of the fiber and base of the fibration  $L/H \rightarrow K_2/H \xrightarrow{\pi_2} K_2/L$  respectively.

Let  $\mathfrak{m}_2 = \mathfrak{q}_1 \oplus \cdots \oplus \mathfrak{q}_s$  be the irreducible decomposition of  $\mathfrak{m}_2$  with respect to  $\text{Ad}(L)$ . From our discussion above we can therefore determine all homogeneous metrics on  $K_2/L$ . Recall that we require  $\mathfrak{m}_2 \perp \mathfrak{l}$ . In particular, we see that a necessary condition for  $\pi_2$  to be a Riemannian submersion is  $\mathfrak{m}_1 \perp \mathfrak{m}_2$  with respect to the homogeneous metric on  $K_2/H$ .

Consider now homogeneous metrics on  $K_2/H$ . Let  $\mathfrak{m}_1 = \mathfrak{p}_1 \oplus \cdots \oplus \mathfrak{p}_r$  be the irreducible decomposition of  $\mathfrak{m}_1$  with respect to  $\text{Ad}(H)$ . In general, each of the  $\text{Ad}(L)$  irreducible summands  $\mathfrak{q}_j \subseteq \mathfrak{m}_2$ ,  $1 \leq j \leq s$ , will split further into  $\text{Ad}(H)$  irreducible summands. This is usually a problem when we want  $\pi_2$  to be a Riemannian submersion (given by restriction of the inner product on  $\mathfrak{m}_1 \oplus \mathfrak{m}_2$  to  $\mathfrak{m}_2$ ). Together with the discussion in the previous paragraph, this leads us to consider a special case. Suppose that the following conditions hold:

- (i)  $\mathfrak{q}_1 \oplus \cdots \oplus \mathfrak{q}_s$  is the irreducible decomposition of  $\mathfrak{m}_2$  with respect to both  $\text{Ad}(H)$  and  $\text{Ad}(L)$ ;
- (ii) For all  $1 \leq i \leq r$ ,  $1 \leq j \leq s$ , the  $\text{Ad}(H)$  irreducible representations  $\mathfrak{p}_i$  and  $\mathfrak{q}_j$  are pairwise inequivalent;
- (iii) If  $\mathfrak{q}_i$  and  $\mathfrak{q}_j$ ,  $i, j \in \{1, \dots, s\}$ , are two equivalent irreducible representations, then they are of the same type with respect to both  $\text{Ad}(H)$  and  $\text{Ad}(L)$ ,

i.e.  $\mathfrak{q}_i$  and  $\mathfrak{q}_j$  are either both orthogonal, both unitary or both symplectic as both  $H$  and  $L$  representations.

Conditions (i) and (ii) ensure, by Lemma 3.1, that  $\mathfrak{m}_1 \perp \mathfrak{m}_2$  for every homogeneous metric on  $K_2/H$ . Conditions (i) and (iii) (together with Lemmas 3.1 and 3.2) ensure that the restriction of a homogeneous metric on  $K_2/H$  to  $\mathfrak{m}_2$  yields a homogeneous metric on  $K_2/L$ . Therefore  $\pi_2$  gives a Riemannian submersion for *any* choice of homogeneous metric on  $K_2/H$ . In particular, when  $K_2/H$  is isometric to the normal homogeneous space  $G/K_1$ , we obtain a Riemannian submersion  $\pi : (G, \langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_0) \rightarrow K_2/L$  as desired. We have proved:

**Theorem 3.3.** *Suppose we have  $G/K_1 = K_2/H$ , where  $G$  is a compact, semi-simple Lie group with bi-invariant metric  $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_0$  and  $K_1, K_2, H$  are closed subgroups of  $G$ . If, for some closed subgroup  $H \subseteq L \subseteq K_2$ , conditions (i), (ii) and (iii) above hold, then there is a Riemannian submersion from  $(G, \langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_0)$  onto  $K_2/L$ .*

We are now ready to discuss the candidates from Table 2.

$$4. \text{SO}(2n) \rightarrow \mathbf{S}^{2n-2}, n \geq 4$$

**Theorem 4.1.** *For each  $n \geq 2$ , there is a Riemannian submersion*

$$(\text{SO}(2n), \langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_0) \rightarrow \mathbf{S}^{2n-2}.$$

*Proof.* Consider the Riemannian submersion  $\pi_1 : \text{SO}(2n) \rightarrow \text{SO}(2n)/\text{U}(n)$ , where we have equipped  $\text{SO}(2n)$  with a bi-invariant metric  $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_0$ . From Oniřčík's classification we know that  $\text{SO}(2n)/\text{U}(n) = \text{SO}(2n-1)/\text{U}(n-1)$ .

Now  $\text{U}(n-1) \subseteq \text{SO}(2n-2) \subseteq \text{SO}(2n-1)$  and so we have a fibration

$$\text{SO}(2n-2)/\text{U}(n-1) \rightarrow \text{SO}(2n-1)/\text{U}(n-1) \xrightarrow{\pi_2} \text{SO}(2n-1)/\text{SO}(2n-2) = \mathbf{S}^{2n-2}$$

The tangent space to the base may be identified with  $\mathfrak{p}_2$ , a  $2(n-1)$ -dimensional,  $\text{Ad}(\text{SO}(2n-2))$ -irreducible complement of  $\mathfrak{so}(2n-2) \subseteq \mathfrak{so}(2n-1)$ . The restriction of the  $\text{Ad}(\text{SO}(2n-2))$  action to  $\text{U}(n-1) \subseteq \text{SO}(2n-2)$  is the standard irreducible representation of  $\text{U}(n-1)$  on  $\mathfrak{p}_2 \cong \mathbf{C}^{n-1}$ .

On the other hand, the tangent space to the fiber may be identified with  $\mathfrak{p}_1$ , an  $\text{Ad}(\text{U}(n-1))$ -invariant complement of  $\mathfrak{u}(n-1) \subseteq \mathfrak{so}(2n-2)$ .  $\mathfrak{p}_1$  is  $(n-1)(n-2)$ -dimensional and is  $\text{Ad}(\text{U}(n-1))$ -irreducible (see for instance [11]).

Thus we may write

$$\begin{aligned} \mathfrak{so}(2n-1) &= \mathfrak{so}(2n-2) \oplus \mathfrak{p}_2 \\ &= (\mathfrak{u}(n-1) \oplus \mathfrak{p}_1) \oplus \mathfrak{p}_2 \end{aligned}$$

where  $\mathfrak{p}_1$  and  $\mathfrak{p}_2$  are orthogonal by the inequivalence of the  $\text{U}(n-1)$  representations. For  $n \neq 4$  this is clear for dimension reasons, while the case  $n = 4$  follows from the discussion in [11].

Hence all homogeneous metrics on  $\text{SO}(2n-1)/\text{U}(n-1)$  are given by

$$\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle = \lambda_1 Q|_{\mathfrak{p}_1} \perp \lambda_2 Q|_{\mathfrak{p}_2},$$

where  $Q(X, Y) = -\frac{1}{2} \operatorname{tr}(XY)$  (in particular,  $\operatorname{Ad}(U(n-1))$ -invariant) and  $\lambda_1, \lambda_2 > 0$ . We choose  $\lambda_1$  and  $\lambda_2$  such that  $\operatorname{SO}(2n-1)/U(n-1)$  is isometric to  $\operatorname{SO}(2n)/U(n)$  equipped with the normal homogeneous metric (from [11] it follows that the appropriate choice is  $\lambda_2 = \frac{1}{2}\lambda_1$ ). Furthermore, since  $\mathfrak{p}_2$  is  $\operatorname{Ad}(\operatorname{SO}(2n-2))$ -irreducible, perpendicular to  $\mathfrak{so}(2n-2)$  and equipped with an  $\operatorname{Ad}(\operatorname{SO}(2n-2))$ -invariant metric, the map

$$\pi_2 : \operatorname{SO}(2n-1)/U(n-1) \longrightarrow \operatorname{SO}(2n-1)/\operatorname{SO}(2n-2) = \mathbf{S}^{2n-2}$$

is a Riemannian submersion.

The composition  $\pi = \pi_2 \circ \pi_1$  is the desired Riemannian submersion from  $\operatorname{SO}(2n)$  (equipped with a bi-invariant metric) to  $\mathbf{S}^{2n-2}$ .  $\square$

Note that when  $n = 2$  we have  $\Delta \operatorname{SO}(2) \backslash \operatorname{SO}(4) / \operatorname{SO}(3) = \mathbf{S}^2$  and when  $n = 3$  we have  $\operatorname{SO}(3) \backslash \operatorname{SO}(6) / \operatorname{SU}(3) = \Delta \operatorname{SU}(2) \backslash \operatorname{SU}(4) / \operatorname{SU}(3) = \mathbf{HP}^1 = \mathbf{S}^4$ , where  $\Delta$  denotes the diagonal embedding in both cases. On the other hand, for  $n \geq 4$ :

**Theorem 4.2.** *For each  $n \geq 4$ , there is no Lie group  $U$  acting freely on  $\operatorname{SO}(2n)$  such that  $\operatorname{SO}(2n)/U = \mathbf{S}^{2n-2}$ .*

*Proof.* Suppose there is some Lie group  $U$  acting freely on  $\operatorname{SO}(2n)$ ,  $n \geq 4$ , such that  $\mathbf{S}^{2n-2} = \operatorname{SO}(2n)/U$ . Then we have a fibration  $U \longrightarrow \operatorname{SO}(2n) \longrightarrow \mathbf{S}^{2n-2}$ . The long exact sequence of homotopy groups for this fibration yields  $\pi_1(U) = \mathbf{Z}_2$  and  $\pi_3(U) = \mathbf{Z}$ . Therefore,  $U$  must be a simple Lie group of dimension  $(2n-1)(n-1) + 1$ .

Consider first the case  $n > 4$ . Then from the long exact sequence in homotopy and the stable homotopy groups of Lie groups we see that

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} \cdots & \pi_6(\mathbf{S}^{2n-2}) & \rightarrow & \pi_5(U) & \rightarrow & \pi_5(\operatorname{SO}(2n)) & \rightarrow & \pi_5(\mathbf{S}^{2n-2}) & \rightarrow & \cdots \\ & \parallel & & & & \parallel & & & & \\ & 0 & & & & 0 & & & & \end{array}$$

which forces  $\pi_5(U) = 0$ . Since  $\dim(U) = (2n-1)(n-1) + 1 \geq 37$ , we are in the stable range and may therefore conclude that either  $U \cong \operatorname{SO}(m)$  or  $U$  is an exceptional simple group. A quick check reveals that  $\dim(U)$  is never equal to the dimension of any exceptional group. On the other hand, we see evidently that  $\dim(\operatorname{SO}(2n-1)) = (2n-1)(n-1) < \dim(U) < \dim(\operatorname{SO}(2n)) = (2n-1)n$ .

When  $n = 4$ , the dimension of  $U$  is 22 and there is no simple Lie group of that dimension. Hence there are no Lie groups  $U$  for which  $\operatorname{SO}(2n)/U = \mathbf{S}^{2n-2}$  for each  $n \geq 4$ .  $\square$

$$5. \operatorname{SU}(2n) \longrightarrow \mathbf{S}^{4n-3} \text{ AND } \operatorname{SU}(2n) \longrightarrow \mathbf{CP}^{2n-2}, \quad n \geq 3$$

**Theorem 5.1.** *For each  $n \geq 3$ , there are Riemannian submersions*

$$(\operatorname{SU}(2n), \langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_0) \longrightarrow \mathbf{S}^{4n-3}, \quad (\operatorname{SU}(2n), \langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_0) \longrightarrow \mathbf{CP}^{2n-2}$$

*Moreover, there are no groups  $U, U' \subseteq \operatorname{Diff}(\operatorname{SU}(2n))$  so that  $\operatorname{SU}(2n)/U = \mathbf{S}^{4n-3}$  and  $\operatorname{SU}(2n)/U' = \mathbf{CP}^{2n-2}$ .*

The arguments in this case are essentially identical to the case of  $\mathrm{SO}(2n) \rightarrow \mathbf{S}^{2n-2}$  so we omit them. The only comment that may be of some independent interest is the choice of constants for the homogeneous metric on  $\mathrm{SU}(2n-1)/\mathrm{Sp}(n-1)$  to be isometric to the normal homogeneous metric on  $\mathrm{SU}(2n)/\mathrm{Sp}(n)$ . The isotropy representation of  $\mathrm{Sp}(n-1) \subseteq \mathrm{SU}(2n-1)$  splits into three irreducible summands,  $\mathfrak{su}(2n-1) = \mathfrak{sp}(n-1) \oplus \mathfrak{p}_1 \oplus \mathfrak{p}_2 \oplus \mathfrak{p}_3$ , where  $\mathfrak{sp}(n-1) \oplus \mathfrak{p}_1 = \mathfrak{su}(2n-2) = \mathfrak{l}$ ,  $\dim(\mathfrak{p}_2) = 1$  and  $\dim(\mathfrak{p}_3) = 4(n-1)$ . All homogeneous metrics on  $\mathrm{SU}(2n-1)/\mathrm{Sp}(n-1)$  are given by

$$\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle = \lambda_1 Q|_{\mathfrak{p}_1} \perp \lambda_2 Q|_{\mathfrak{p}_2} \perp \lambda_3 Q|_{\mathfrak{p}_3},$$

where  $Q(X, Y) = -\frac{1}{2}\mathrm{tr}(XY)$  is a bi-invariant metric. To be isometric to the normal homogeneous space  $\mathrm{SU}(2n)/\mathrm{Sp}(n)$ , it follows from [11] that the appropriate choices are:  $\lambda_2 = \frac{n}{2n-1}\lambda_1, \lambda_3 = \frac{1}{2}\lambda_1$ .

6.  $\mathrm{SO}(4n) \rightarrow V_3(\mathbf{R}^{4n-1}), n \geq 3$

**Theorem 6.1.** *For each  $n \geq 3$ , there is a Riemannian submersion*

$$(\mathrm{SO}(4n), \langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_0) \rightarrow V_3(\mathbf{R}^{4n-1}),$$

where  $V_3(\mathbf{R}^{4n-1})$  is the Stiefel manifold  $\mathrm{SO}(4n-1)/\mathrm{SO}(4n-4)$ .

*Proof.* Consider the Riemannian submersion  $\pi_1 : \mathrm{SO}(4n) \rightarrow \mathrm{SO}(4n)/\mathrm{Sp}(n)\mathrm{Sp}(1)$ , where  $\mathrm{SO}(4n)$  is equipped with a bi-invariant metric. From Oniřčík’s classification we know that  $\mathrm{SO}(4n)/\mathrm{Sp}(n)\mathrm{Sp}(1) = \mathrm{SO}(4n-1)/\mathrm{Sp}(n-1)\mathrm{Sp}(1)$ . Now  $\mathrm{Sp}(n-1)\mathrm{Sp}(1) \subseteq \mathrm{SO}(4n-4) \subseteq \mathrm{SO}(4n-1)$  and so we have a fibration

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \mathrm{SO}(4n-4)/\mathrm{Sp}(n-1)\mathrm{Sp}(1) & \longrightarrow & \mathrm{SO}(4n-1)/\mathrm{Sp}(n-1)\mathrm{Sp}(1) \\ & & \downarrow \pi_2 \\ & & \mathrm{SO}(4n-1)/\mathrm{SO}(4n-4) = V_3(\mathbf{R}^{4n-1}) \end{array}$$

The tangent space to the fiber may be indentified with  $\mathfrak{p}_1$ , an  $\mathrm{Ad}(\mathrm{Sp}(n-1)\mathrm{Sp}(1))$ -invariant complement of  $\mathfrak{so}(4n-4) \subseteq \mathfrak{so}(4n-1)$ .  $\mathfrak{p}_1$  is  $3(2n-1)(n-2)$ -dimensional and in [15, 1984] it is shown that it is  $\mathrm{Ad}(\mathrm{Sp}(n-1)\mathrm{Sp}(1))$ -irreducible.

On the other hand, we may use the chain of subgroups

$$\mathrm{SO}(4n-4) \subseteq \mathrm{SO}(4n-3) \subseteq \mathrm{SO}(4n-2) \subseteq \mathrm{SO}(4n-1)$$

to identify the tangent space to the base with

$$(6.1) \quad \mathfrak{m} := \mathfrak{p}_2 \oplus \mathfrak{p}_3 \oplus \mathfrak{p}_4 \oplus \mathfrak{p}_5 \oplus \mathfrak{p}_6 \oplus \mathfrak{p}_7 \subseteq \mathfrak{so}(4n-1)$$

where  $\mathfrak{p}_i \cong \mathbf{R}^{4n-4}, i = 2, 3, 4$ , and  $\mathfrak{p}_i \cong \mathbf{R}, i = 5, 6, 7$ , are  $\mathrm{Ad}(\mathrm{SO}(4n-4))$ -irreducible. The isotropy representation of  $\mathrm{SO}(4n-4)$  on  $\mathfrak{m}$  decomposes into standard  $\mathrm{SO}(4n-4)$  actions on  $\mathfrak{p}_i \cong \mathbf{R}^{4n-4}, i = 2, 3, 4$ , and trivial representations on  $\mathfrak{p}_i \cong \mathbf{R}, i = 5, 6, 7$ . This is easily seen by considering the

$\text{Ad}(\text{SO}(4n-4))$  action on

$$(6.2) \quad \mathfrak{so}(4n-1) = \left( \begin{array}{c|ccc} & \vdots & \vdots & \vdots \\ \mathfrak{so}(4n-4) & \mathfrak{p}_2 & \mathfrak{p}_3 & \mathfrak{p}_4 \\ \hline \cdots & 0 & \mathfrak{p}_5 & \mathfrak{p}_6 \\ \hline \cdots & \cdot & 0 & \mathfrak{p}_7 \\ \hline \cdots & \cdot & \cdot & 0 \end{array} \right)$$

where we recall that elements of  $\mathfrak{so}(k)$  are skew-symmetric. It is clear that the representations  $\mathfrak{p}_2$ ,  $\mathfrak{p}_3$  and  $\mathfrak{p}_4$  are equivalent *real* representations, as are  $\mathfrak{p}_5$ ,  $\mathfrak{p}_6$  and  $\mathfrak{p}_7$ . Moreover, by Schur's Lemma,  $(\mathfrak{p}_2 \oplus \mathfrak{p}_3 \oplus \mathfrak{p}_4) \perp (\mathfrak{p}_5 \oplus \mathfrak{p}_6 \oplus \mathfrak{p}_7)$ . In each case  $\mathfrak{p}_i \otimes \mathbf{C}$  is irreducible. Hence the space of intertwining operators is one-dimensional when  $\mathfrak{p}_i$  and  $\mathfrak{p}_j$  are equivalent, from which it follows that the space of all  $\text{Ad}(\text{SO}(4n-4))$ -invariant inner products on  $\mathfrak{m}$  is given by two real, symmetric,  $3 \times 3$  matrices, i.e., 12 real parameters.

We now consider the isotropy representation of  $\text{Sp}(n-1)\text{Sp}(1)$  and check whether the type and irreducible decomposition of the representation restricted from  $\text{SO}(4n-4)$  remains the same. We remark that this is crucial otherwise the number of parameters that determine the metric may be different and hence, likely, not yield a Riemannian submersion. The restriction of the  $\text{Ad}(\text{SO}(4n-4))$  action on  $\mathfrak{m}$  to  $\text{Sp}(n-1)\text{Sp}(1) \subseteq \text{SO}(4n-4)$  yields the same irreducible decomposition as in (6.1). An easy way to see this is by considering the subgroup  $\text{Sp}(n-1) \subseteq \text{Sp}(n-1)\text{Sp}(1)$ . It's clear that this gives the same decomposition as in (6.1), where the  $\text{Ad}(\text{Sp}(n-1))$  action on  $\mathfrak{p}_i$ ,  $i = 2, 3, 4$ , is the standard irreducible representation of  $\text{Sp}(n-1)$  on  $\mathbf{R}^{4n-4} \cong \mathbf{H}^{n-1}$ . Thus  $\text{Sp}(n-1)\text{Sp}(1)$  must also decompose  $\mathfrak{m}$  as in (6.1).

In [15, 1984] it is shown that the embedding of  $\text{Sp}(n-1)\text{Sp}(1)$  into  $\text{SO}(4n-4)$ , namely the restriction of the standard (complex)  $\text{SO}(4n-4)$  representation to  $\text{Sp}(n-1)\text{Sp}(1)$ , is given by the tensor product of the standard  $\text{Sp}(n-1)$  and  $\text{Sp}(1)$  (complex) representations. Since each of these is a symplectic representation, it follows from [3, p. 264, Exer. 3] that their tensor product is an orthogonal representation, i.e.  $\mathfrak{p}_i \otimes \mathbf{C}$  is  $\text{Sp}(n-1)\text{Sp}(1)$ -irreducible for  $i = 2, 3, 4$ . A similar argument works for  $\mathfrak{p}_i \otimes \mathbf{C} \cong \mathbf{C}$ ,  $i = 5, 6, 7$ . Hence the space of intertwining operators is one-dimensional whenever  $\mathfrak{p}_i$  and  $\mathfrak{p}_j$  are equivalent.

Thus we may write

$$\begin{aligned} \mathfrak{so}(4n-1) &= \mathfrak{so}(4n-4) \oplus \mathfrak{m} \\ &= (\mathfrak{sp}(n-1)\mathfrak{sp}(1) \oplus \mathfrak{p}_1) \oplus \mathfrak{m}. \end{aligned}$$

Since  $\dim(\mathfrak{p}_1) \neq \dim(\mathfrak{p}_i)$  for all  $i = 2, \dots, 7$ , Schur's Lemma ensures that  $\mathfrak{p}_1 \perp \mathfrak{m}$  for every  $\text{Ad}(\text{Sp}(n-1)\text{Sp}(1))$ -invariant inner product on  $\mathfrak{p}_1 \oplus \mathfrak{m}$ . Therefore it follows that the space of all  $\text{Ad}(\text{Sp}(n-1)\text{Sp}(1))$ -invariant inner products on  $\mathfrak{p}_1 \oplus \mathfrak{m}$  is given by one real parameter together with two real, symmetric,  $3 \times 3$  matrices, i.e., 13 real parameters.

In particular, for *any* homogeneous metric on  $SO(4n - 1)/Sp(n - 1)Sp(1)$ , the map  $\pi_2 : SO(4n - 1)/Sp(n - 1)Sp(1) \rightarrow SO(4n - 1)/SO(4n - 4)$  is a Riemannian submersion, where the metric on  $SO(4n - 1)/SO(4n - 4)$  is given by restricting the  $Ad(Sp(n - 1)Sp(1))$ -invariant inner product on  $\mathfrak{p}_1 \oplus \mathfrak{m}$  to  $\mathfrak{m}$ .

Hence, if we choose the 13 real parameters describing the homogeneous metric such that the metric on  $SO(4n - 1)/Sp(n - 1)Sp(1)$  is isometric to the normal homogeneous metric on  $SO(4n)/Sp(n)Sp(1)$ , then the composition

$$\pi = \pi_2 \circ \pi_1 : SO(4n) \rightarrow SO(4n - 1)/SO(4n - 4) = V_3(\mathbf{R}^{4n-1})$$

is a Riemannian submersion as desired. □

**Theorem 6.2.** *For each  $n \geq 3$ , there is no Lie group  $U$  acting freely on  $SO(4n)$  such that  $SO(4n)/U = V_3(\mathbf{R}^{4n-1})$ .*

*Proof.* Suppose there is some Lie group  $U$  acting freely on  $SO(4n)$ ,  $n \geq 3$ , such that  $V_3(\mathbf{R}^{4n-1}) = SO(4n)/U$ . Then we have a fibration  $U \rightarrow SO(4n) \rightarrow V_3(\mathbf{R}^{4n-1})$ . It is well-known that  $V_k(\mathbf{R}^m)$  is  $(m - k - 1)$ -connected [10, p. 382]. In particular,  $\pi_j(V_3(\mathbf{R}^{4n-1})) = 0$  for all  $j \leq 7$  since  $n \geq 3$ . The long exact sequence of homotopy groups for our fibration now yields  $\pi_1(U) = \mathbf{Z}_2$  and  $\pi_3(U) = \mathbf{Z}$ . Therefore,  $U$  must be a simple Lie group.

Since  $V_3(\mathbf{R}^{4n-1})$  is at least 7-connected, we see from the long exact sequence in homotopy that  $\pi_5(U) = \pi_5(SO(4n)) = 0$ . Since  $\dim(U) = 8n^2 - 14n + 9 \geq 39$ , we are in the stable range and it follows that  $U$  must be isomorphic to  $SO(m)$  for some  $m$  or to an exceptional simple group.  $\dim(U)$  is not equal to that of any exceptional group. On the other hand,

$$\dim(SO(4n-3)) = 8n^2 - 14n + 6 < 8n^2 - 14n + 9 < 8n^2 - 10n + 3 = \dim(SO(4n-2))_{=\dim(U)}$$

Hence there are no Lie groups  $U$  for which  $SO(4n)/U = V_3(\mathbf{R}^{4n-1})$  if  $n \geq 3$ . □

**Corollary 6.3.** *For each  $n \geq 3$ , there is a Riemannian submersion*

$$(SO(4n), \langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_0) \rightarrow M^{12n-10} := SO(2) \backslash SO(4n - 1)/SO(4n - 4).$$

*Moreover, this Riemannian submersion is not the result of a free, isometric Lie group action on  $SO(4n)$ .*

*Proof.* Consider the circle subgroup  $SO(2) \subseteq SO(4n - 1)$  given by  $\text{diag}(A, \dots, A, 1)$ ,  $A \in SO(2)$ . Then  $SO(2)$  acts freely on  $V_3(\mathbf{R}^{4n-1}) = SO(4n - 1)/SO(4n - 4)$  on the left since the two-sided action of  $SO(2) \times SO(4n - 4)$  on  $SO(4n - 1)$  is free. Now, since the metric on  $V_3(\mathbf{R}^{4n-1})$  described in Theorem 6.1 is homogeneous, this  $SO(2)$ -action is by isometries. Therefore  $V_3(\mathbf{R}^{4n-1}) \rightarrow M^{12n-10}$  is a Riemannian submersion and we may compose it with  $(SO(4n), \langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_0) \rightarrow V_3(\mathbf{R}^{4n-1})$  to yield the desired Riemannian submersion.

Consider the long exact sequence for homotopy associated to the fibration

$$\mathbf{S}^1 \rightarrow V_3(\mathbf{R}^{4n-1}) \rightarrow M.$$

Since  $\pi_j(V_3(\mathbf{R}^{4n-1})) = 0$  for all  $j \leq 7$ , it follows that  $\pi_2(M) = \mathbf{Z}$  and  $\pi_j(M) = 0$  for  $j = 1, 3, 4, 5, 6$ . Suppose that there is some Lie group  $U'$  acting freely on  $\text{SO}(4n)$  such that  $M = \text{SO}(4n)/U'$ . The long exact homotopy sequence for the fibration  $U' \rightarrow \text{SO}(4n) \rightarrow M$  shows that  $U'$  is diffeomorphic to either  $\mathbf{S}^1 \times U$  or  $(\mathbf{S}^1 \times U)/\mathbf{Z}_2$ , where  $U$  is a compact, connected, simply connected, simple Lie group.

From the long exact sequence it also follows that  $\pi_5(U') = \pi_5(U) = \pi_5(\text{SO}(4n)) = 0$ . So we are now looking for  $U$ , a compact, simple group of dimension  $8n^2 - 14n + 9$  and isomorphic to  $\text{SO}(m)$  for some  $m$  or to an exceptional simple group. From the proof of Theorem 6.2 there is no such  $U$  and hence, there can be no free  $U'$ -action on  $\text{SO}(4n)$  with quotient  $M$ .  $\square$

7.  $\text{SO}(4n) \rightarrow \mathbf{S}^{4n-2}$  AND  $\text{SO}(4n) \rightarrow T^1\mathbf{S}^{4n-2}$

These two examples yield topological submersions which are not group quotients. Indeed, one may adapt the proof of Theorem 6.2 to show that neither  $\mathbf{S}^{4n-2}$  nor  $T^1\mathbf{S}^{4n-2}$  are quotients of  $\text{SO}(4n)$  by a group action. However, our method of constructing a Riemannian submersion breaks down in this instance.

Consider our setup: we start with a bi-invariant metric on  $\text{SO}(4n)$  which yields a homogeneous metric  $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle$  on  $\text{SO}(4n-1)/\text{Sp}(n-1)\text{Sp}(1)$  isometric to the normal homogeneous metric on  $\text{SO}(4n)/\text{Sp}(n)\text{Sp}(1)$ . From the previous section we already know the isotropy representation of  $\text{Sp}(n-1)\text{Sp}(1)$ :

$$\mathfrak{so}(4n-1) = \mathfrak{sp}(n-1)\mathfrak{sp}(1) \oplus \mathfrak{p}_1 \oplus \underbrace{\mathfrak{p}_2 \oplus \mathfrak{p}_3 \oplus \mathfrak{p}_4 \oplus \mathfrak{p}_5 \oplus \mathfrak{p}_6 \oplus \mathfrak{p}_7}_{\mathfrak{m}}$$

where  $\mathfrak{p}_1$  is the complement of  $\mathfrak{sp}(n-1)\mathfrak{sp}(1)$  in  $\mathfrak{so}(4n-1)$  and  $\mathfrak{m}$  decomposes into six irreducible pieces: three equivalent modules isomorphic to  $\mathbf{R}^{4n-4}$  and three trivial (one dimensional) modules. The decomposition of  $\mathfrak{m}$  is the same for  $\text{SO}(4n-4)$  as it is for  $\text{Sp}(n-1)\text{Sp}(1)$ . Recall that in the Lie algebra  $\mathfrak{so}(4n-1)$  this decomposition is given by (6.2).

Consider now the quotient  $\text{SO}(4n-1)/\text{SO}(4n-3) = T^1\mathbf{S}^{4n-2}$ . The isotropy representation splits as  $\mathfrak{so}(4n-1) = \mathfrak{so}(4n-3) \oplus \mathfrak{n}$  which decomposes as:

$$\mathfrak{so}(4n-1) = \underbrace{(\mathfrak{sp}(n-1)\mathfrak{sp}(1) \oplus \mathfrak{p}_1 \oplus \mathfrak{p}_2)}_{\mathfrak{so}(4n-3)} \oplus \underbrace{(\mathfrak{q}_3 \oplus \mathfrak{q}_4 \oplus \mathfrak{p}_7)}_{\mathfrak{n}}$$

where  $\mathfrak{q}_3, \mathfrak{q}_4$  are equivalent, irreducible modules isomorphic to  $\mathbf{R}^{4n-3}$  and  $\mathfrak{p}_7$  is a trivial, one dimensional module. Note that  $\mathfrak{q}_j$  splits further under the action of  $\text{Sp}(n-1)\text{Sp}(1)$  as  $\mathfrak{q}_3 = \mathfrak{p}_3 \oplus \mathfrak{p}_5$  and  $\mathfrak{q}_4 = \mathfrak{p}_4 \oplus \mathfrak{p}_6$ . Therefore, the two isotropy actions have different irreducible decompositions.

In order for the maps,  $\pi_2 : \text{SO}(4n-1)/\text{Sp}(n-1)\text{Sp}(1) \rightarrow \text{SO}(4n-1)/\text{SO}(4n-3)$  and  $\pi'_2 : \text{SO}(4n-1)/\text{Sp}(n-1)\text{Sp}(1) \rightarrow \text{SO}(4n-1)/\text{SO}(4n-2)$  to be Riemannian submersions we need (see Section 3) that  $\mathfrak{p}_2$  is perpendicular to  $\mathfrak{p}_4$  with respect to  $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle$ . So we need to know the induced left invariant metric on  $\mathfrak{p}_2 \oplus \dots \oplus \mathfrak{p}_7$  inside  $\mathfrak{so}(4n-1)$ . This is done as follows: restrict the bi-invariant metric on  $\mathfrak{so}(4n)$  which is given by  $\langle X, Y \rangle_0 = -\frac{1}{2}\text{tr}(XY)$ , to  $\mathfrak{so}(4n-1)$ . The tangent space to  $\text{SO}(4n-1)/\text{Sp}(n-1)\text{Sp}(1)$  is isomorphic

to  $\mathfrak{p}_1 \oplus \dots \oplus \mathfrak{p}_7$ . On the other hand, we also have  $\mathfrak{so}(4n) = \mathfrak{sp}(n) \oplus \mathfrak{sp}(1) \oplus \mathfrak{r}$ ; let  $\pi_{\mathfrak{r}} : \mathfrak{so}(4n) \rightarrow \mathfrak{r}$  denote the orthogonal projection. If  $U, V$  are vectors in  $\mathfrak{p}_1 \oplus \dots \oplus \mathfrak{p}_7$ , then the induced metric is given by,  $\langle U, V \rangle = \langle \pi_{\mathfrak{r}}(U), \pi_{\mathfrak{r}}(V) \rangle_0$ .

Let  $E_{ij} \in \mathfrak{so}(4n)$  denote the vector whose  $ij$ -th entry is 1 (and therefore its  $ji$ -th entry is necessarily  $-1$ ). Then the  $E_{ij}$  form an orthogonal basis for  $\mathfrak{so}(4n)$ . Consider now the vectors,  $E_{1,4n-3} \in \mathfrak{p}_2, E_{3,4n-1} \in \mathfrak{p}_4$ . A simple calculation reveals that  $\langle E_{1,4n-3}, E_{3,4n-1} \rangle = \langle \pi_{\mathfrak{r}}(E_{1,4n-3}), \pi_{\mathfrak{r}}(E_{3,4n-1}) \rangle_0 = -\frac{1}{4}$ . This shows immediately that the subspaces are pairwise not orthogonal, as claimed, and hence the maps  $\pi_2$  and  $\pi'_2$  are **not** Riemannian submersions for the metric  $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle$  on  $\text{SO}(4n - 1)/\text{Sp}(n - 1)\text{Sp}(1)$ .

**Remark 7.1.** *One can, in fact, show that there is no homogeneous metric on  $\text{SO}(4n - 1)/\text{Sp}(n - 1)\text{Sp}(1)$  whatsoever such that the maps  $\pi_2$  (resp.  $\pi'_2$ ) and  $\pi = \pi_2 \circ \pi_1$  (resp.  $\pi' = \pi'_2 \circ \pi_1$ ) are both Riemannian submersions.*

APPENDIX A. ENLARGEMENTS OF TRANSITIVE ACTIONS

Table 3 is due to A. L. Oniřčík ([12]) and classifies simple, compact Lie algebras  $\mathfrak{g}$  with sub-algebras  $\mathfrak{k}_1, \mathfrak{k}_2$  such that  $\mathfrak{g} = \mathfrak{k}_1 + \mathfrak{k}_2$ . We present the group versions here and identify the space whenever possible.

$G/K_1$	$K_2/H$	Homogeneous space
<b><math>G/K_1</math> symmetric</b>		
$\text{SO}(4n)/\text{SO}(4n-1)$	$\text{Sp}(n)/\text{Sp}(n-1)$	$\mathbf{S}^{4n-1}$
$\text{SO}(4n)/\text{SO}(4n-1)$	$\text{Sp}(n)\text{U}(1)/\text{Sp}(n-1)\text{U}(1)$	$\mathbf{S}^{4n-1}$
$\text{SO}(4n)/\text{SO}(4n-1)$	$\text{Sp}(n)\text{Sp}(1)/\text{Sp}(n-1)\text{Sp}(1)$	$\mathbf{S}^{4n-1}$
$\text{SO}(2n)/\text{SO}(2n-1)$	$\text{U}(n)/\text{U}(n-1)$	$\mathbf{S}^{2n-1}$
$\text{SO}(2n)/\text{SO}(2n-1)$	$\text{SU}(n)/\text{SU}(n-1)$	$\mathbf{S}^{2n-1}$
$\text{SO}(2n)/\text{U}(n)$	$\text{SO}(2n-1)/\text{U}(n-1)$	
$\text{SO}(16)/\text{SO}(15)$	$\text{Spin}(9)/\text{Spin}(7)$	$\mathbf{S}^{15}$
$\text{SO}(8)/\text{SO}(7)$	$\text{Spin}(7)/\text{G}_2$	$\mathbf{S}^7$
$\text{SO}(8)/\text{Spin}(7)$	$\text{SO}(7)/\text{G}_2$	$\mathbf{RP}^7$
$\text{SO}(8)/\text{SO}(3)\text{SO}(5)$	$\text{Spin}(7)/\text{SO}(4)$	$G_3^+(\mathbf{R}^8)$
$\text{SO}(7)/\text{SO}(6)$	$\text{G}_2/\text{SU}(3)$	$\mathbf{S}^6$
$\text{SO}(7)/\text{SO}(2)\text{SO}(5)$	$\text{G}_2/\text{U}(2)$	$G_2^+(\mathbf{R}^7)$
$\text{SU}(2n)/\text{U}(2n-1)$	$\text{Sp}(n)/\text{Sp}(n-1)\text{U}(1)$	$\mathbf{CP}^{2n-2}$
$\text{SU}(2n)/\text{Sp}(n)$	$\text{SU}(2n-1)/\text{Sp}(n-1)$	

$G/K_1$ non-symmetric		
$SO(4n)/Sp(n)$	$SO(4n-1)/Sp(n-1)$	
$SO(4n)/Sp(n)U(1)$	$SO(4n-1)/Sp(n-1)U(1)$	
$SO(4n)/Sp(n)Sp(1)$	$SO(4n-1)/Sp(n-1)Sp(1)$	
$SO(2n)/SU(n)$	$SO(2n-1)/SU(n-1)$	
$SO(16)/Spin(9)$	$SO(15)/Spin(7)$	
$SO(8)/SO(6)$	$Spin(7)/SU(3)$	$V_2(\mathbf{R}^8)$
$SO(8)/SO(5)$	$Spin(7)/SU(2)$	$V_3(\mathbf{R}^8)$
$SO(8)/SO(2)SO(5)$	$Spin(7)/SO(2)SU(2)$	
$SO(7)/G_2$	$SO(2)SO(5)/U(2)$	$\mathbf{RP}^7$
$SO(7)/SO(5)$	$G_2/SU(2)$	$V_2(\mathbf{R}^7)$

**Table 3.** Oniščik's classification of  $(G, K_1, K_2)$  with  $\mathfrak{g} = \mathfrak{k}_1 + \mathfrak{k}_2$ , and  $G$  simple.

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