Geometry of Hsiang algebras, or Where Hsiang meets Clifford and Jordan?



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(based on a joint work with D.J. Fox, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid)

During the writing my talk I realized that a more relevant title should be

Where Hsiang meets Elduque and Okubo?









Prom PDE to Nonassociative Algebra

- Basic facts on Hsiang algebras
- 4 How to construct more Hsiang algebras?
- 5 Where idempotents live?



Prom PDE to Nonassociative Algebra

3 Basic facts on Hsiang algebras

4 How to construct more Hsiang algebras?

5 Where idempotents live?

Many distinguished algebras appear as the most natural places where certain interesting structures live in.

- They appear in various areas of mathematics, including Differential Geometry, Nonlinear PDEs, Algebra and Combinatorial Design.
- They are intimately related to the classical structures like Jordan, Clifford, Lie and axial algebras.
- Moreover, they are also very related and contain pseudo-composition and Elduque-Okubo (aka admissible cubic) algebras.
- Similarly to the latter, they have infinitely many regular families vs finitely many exceptional families.
- They are essentially the only known examples of commutative nonassociative algebras with infinitely many idempotents where all idempotents have the same length and the same algebraic spectrum.
- Furthermore, the set of idempotents has a nice structure of a smooth (Riemannian) homogeneous submanifold.

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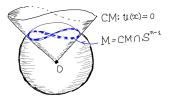
Initial geometrical context

- A geodesic line is a shortest curve between two points.
- A minimal surface is a surface that *locally minimizes its area*.



Malmö Live Concert, Sweden, https://www.fotosidan.se/blogs/wolfgang/offentlig-konst-i-malmo.htm

 Minimal submanifolds in spheres: M ⊂ Sⁿ⁻¹ is (locally) minimal iff the cone CM ⊂ Rⁿ is so. The majority of known minimal cones are algebraic



• W.-Y. Hsiang (1967): the cone $u^{-1}(0)$ is a minimal hypersurface in \mathbb{R}^n iff

$$\sum_{j=1}^{n}\sum_{i=1}^{n}u_{x_{i}x_{j}}^{\prime\prime}u_{x_{i}}^{\prime}u_{x_{j}}^{\prime}-(\sum_{i=1}^{n}u_{x_{i}}^{\prime})(\sum_{j=1}^{n}u_{x_{j}x_{j}}^{\prime})=Q(x)u(x).$$

where deg $Q(x) = 2 \deg u - 4$

• The first **non-trivial case**: deg u = 3 and

 $\frac{1}{2}\langle \nabla u; \nabla |\nabla u|^2 \rangle - |\nabla u|^2 \Delta u = q(x) \cdot u(x) \tag{(*)}$

Hisang's Problem

Classify all cubic polynomials satisfying (*).

In fact, all known **irreducible** solutions satisfy $q(x) = \theta \cdot \langle x; x \rangle$ for some real θ :

$$\frac{1}{2}\langle \nabla u; \nabla |\nabla u|^2 \rangle - |\nabla u|^2 \Delta u = \theta \cdot \langle x; x \rangle u(x) \tag{\tilde{x}}$$

Such a solution is called a *radial* Hsiang eigencubic.

Theorem 1.1

Any radial Hsiang eigencubic is harmonic, i.e. $\Delta u(x) = 0$, unless $u(x) = \langle x; a \rangle^3$ In other words, any nontrivial radial Hsiang eigencubic satisfies

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So one can reformulate the original Hsiang problem as

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2 From PDE to Nonassociative Algebra

3) Basic facts on Hsiang algebras

4 How to construct more Hsiang algebras?

5 Where idempotents live?

- A bilinear form h is **invariant** in a commutative algebra if h(xy, z) = h(x, zy).
- An algebra with an invariant bilinear form is called **metrized**.
- An algebra is called **exact** if tr L(x) = 0.

Theorem 2.1 (V.T., 2010)

Let \mathbb{R}^n be a Euclidean space with an inner product $\langle ; \rangle$. Any cubic polynomial solution u(x) of (**) can be written as

$$u(x) = \frac{1}{6} \langle x; x^2 \rangle$$

in an exact commutative nonassociative metrized algebra on \mathbb{R}^n satisfying

$$\langle x^3; x^2 \rangle = \theta \langle x^2; x \rangle \langle x; x \rangle, \qquad (1$$

or equivalently, satisfying the following degree 4 identity

$$4xx^{3} + x^{2}x^{2} - 3\theta\langle x; x\rangle x^{2} - 2\theta\langle x^{2}; x\rangle x = 0.$$

The multiplication in \mathbb{A} is defined by $xy = x \cdot y = \text{Hess } u(x)y$.

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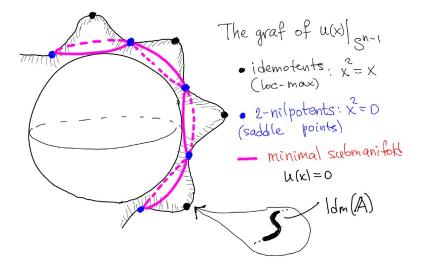
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The multiplication in \mathbb{A} is defined by $xy = x \cdot y = \text{Hess } u(x)y$.



An exact commutative *h*-metrized algebra (\mathbb{A}, h) is called **Hsiang** if there exists $\theta \in \mathbb{K}$ such that the following identity holds:

$$h(x^3, x^2) = \theta h(x, x) h(x, x^2)$$
 (3)

An algebra satisfying the above identity only is called almost-Hsiang.

• Any Hsiang algebra is a *almost* Hsiang algebra.

- A subalgebra of a Hsiang algebra is an almost-Hsiang algebra.
- I A subalgebra of an almost-Hsiang algebra is also almost-Hsiang.
- The equation $\langle x; x^2 \rangle = 0$ describes a minimal cone iff A a Hsiang algebra.
- The exactness condition affects mostly finer properties'.
- $\theta = 0$ implies that AA = 0 (see [V.T., 2015]).
- An immediate corollary of (3) is that any idempotent in A has length $1/\theta$.
- If one scales $\langle x; y \rangle := \theta h(x, y)$ then (3) and (1) become respectively

$$\langle x^3; x^2 \rangle = \langle x^2; x \rangle \langle x; x \rangle, 4xx^3 + x^2x^2 - 3\langle x; x \rangle x^2 - 2\langle x^2; x \rangle x = 0.$$

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Two important classes of almost-Hsiang algebras

A. A commutative algebra with a symmetric bilinear form *h* is called **pseudo-composition** (Meyberg, Osborn, Walcher, Röhrl, Gradl) if

$$x^3 = h(x, x)x \tag{5}$$

Elduque and Okubo (2000) proved that in fact *h* above must be an *invariant* form. This implies that any pseudo-composition algebra is almost-Hsiang:

(5)
$$\Rightarrow$$
 $h(x^3, x^2) = h(x, x)h(x, x^2), \quad \theta = 1.$

The linearization of (5) gives $2L(x)^2 + L(x^2) = x \otimes_h x + h(x,x)\mathbf{1}$ implying for any idempotent c that

$$2L(c)^2+L(c)-\mathbf{1}=0$$

 \Rightarrow the spectrum of L(c) on c^{\perp} is $\{-1, \frac{1}{2}\}$ with the Peirce decomposition

$$\mathbb{A} = \mathbb{K} c \oplus \mathbb{A}_c(-1) \oplus \mathbb{A}_c(\frac{1}{2})$$

Definition 2.2

If additionally to (5), tr L(x) = 0, such a **Hsiang** algebra is called **eikonal**.

Two important classes of almost-Hsiang algebras

B. Elduque and Okubo studied commutative admissible cubic algebras, i.e.

$$x^{2}x^{2} = N(x)x = h(x^{2}, x)x$$
(6)

and proved that there exists an invariant bilinear form h:

$$N(x)=h(x^2,x).$$

Such an algebra is also almost-Hsiang:

(6)
$$\Rightarrow h(x^2, x^3) = h(x^2x^2, x) = h(x^2, x)h(x, x), \quad \theta = 1.$$

The classification of Elduque and Okubo contains two relevant for us classes:

- The simple Jordan algebras of **degree 3** with the new multiplication $x^2 := x^{\sharp}$
- **2** The contraction of **trace zero** elements of a simple **degree 4** Jordan algebra.

The Elduque-Okubo algebras have the following Peirce decomposition:

$$\mathbb{A} = \mathbb{K} c \oplus \mathbb{A}_c(-\frac{1}{2}) \oplus \mathbb{A}_c(\frac{1}{2})$$

The case 2 appears in the Hsiang paper Hs'67.



Prom PDE to Nonassociative Algebra

Basic facts on Hsiang algebras

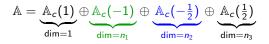
4 How to construct more Hsiang algebras?

5 Where idempotents live?

Assume for simplicity that \mathbb{A} is **normalized** by (4).

Theorem (Basic facts on Hsiang algebras, I)

- $\textbf{0} \ \ \mathsf{The set of nonzero idempotents in any Hsiang algebra} \ \ \mathbb{A} \ \ \mathsf{is nonempty} \ \ }$
- ② All idempotents have the *unit length* and share the *same fusion laws*.
- So For any idempotent c, the associated Peirce decomposition is



A_c(1) ⊕ A_c(-1) is a subalgebra of A and is a pseudo-composition algebra.
 Λ_c := A_c(1) ⊕ A_c(-¹/₂) is a subalgebra and is an Elduque-Okubo algebra
 Λ_c carries a rank 3 Jordan algebra structure (an isotopy of multiplication)

Remark 1

The structure of the Peirce subspace $\mathbb{A}(\frac{1}{2})$ is much more involved and it is related to the structure of **idempotents** of \mathbb{A} .



These two cases are quite independent as the following lemma shows:

Observation

In an almost-Hsiang algebra, the elements satisfying both the Elduque-Okubo and the pseudo-composition conditions are exactly the cone over idempotents.

Proof. Substitution $x^3 = \langle x; x \rangle x$ and $x^2 x^2 = \langle x^2; x \rangle x$ into (4) yields $\langle x; x \rangle x^2 = \langle x^2; x \rangle x$. We have $x^2 \neq 0$ because otherwise $0 = x^3 = \langle x; x \rangle x$, a contradiction. This yields $x^2 = \frac{\langle x^2; x \rangle}{\langle x; x \rangle} x$, and thus the desired conclusion.



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A toy example I: the simplicial algebra \mathbb{E}_2

•
$$u(x) = \frac{1}{6}(x_1^3 - 3x_2^2x_1), x = (x_1, x_2) \in \mathbb{K}^2$$
, Hess $u(x) = \begin{pmatrix} x_1 & -x_2 \\ -x_2 & -x_1 \end{pmatrix}$

- ② x ◊ y := Hess u(x)y = (x₁y₁ x₂y₂, -x₂y₁ x₁y₂) = x · y, where · is the complex number multiplication on ℝ² ≅ C.
- (A, ◊) ≅ (Ĉ, ·) ≅ E₂ (para-complex numbers, resp. the 2D simplicial algebra) with an invariant bilinear form ⟨x; y⟩ := Re(x̄ · y).
- $x \diamond (x \diamond x) = \langle x; x \rangle x$ (a **pseudo-composition** algebra!)
- **(a)** A is a **Hsiang algebra** for $\theta = \frac{3}{2}$.
- Idm $(\mathbb{E}_2) = \{1, \epsilon, \epsilon^2\}, \epsilon^3 = 1.$
- Since Aut(\mathbb{E}_2) stabilizes idempotents, one has Aut(\mathbb{E}_2) = S_3 .
- For any $c \in \mathsf{Idm}(\mathbb{E}_2)$, the Peirce dimensions of \mathbb{E}_2 are

 $(\dim \mathbb{A}_c(-1), \dim \mathbb{A}_c(-\frac{1}{2}), \dim \mathbb{A}_c(\frac{1}{2})) = (1, 0, 0)$

 $@~\mathbb{E}_2$ is a Hsiang algebra with a finite $\mathsf{Aut}(\mathbb{A})$ and set of idempotents.

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The simplicial algebra \mathbb{E}_3 plays a prominent role in the Hsiang algebras.

● E₃ is metrized w.r. to the natural Killing form h(x, y) := ²/₃ tr L(x)L(y)
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- **③** \mathbb{E}_3 is an Elduque-Okubo algebra: $x^2x^2 = \langle x; x^2 \rangle x$
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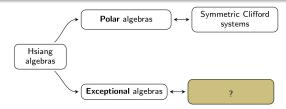
Further examples of Hsiang algebras

Definition 3.2

A commutative *h*-metrized algebra \mathbb{A} is **polar** if there is a nontrivial \mathbb{Z}_2 -grading $\mathbb{A} = \mathbb{A}_0 \oplus \mathbb{A}_1$ such that $\mathbb{A}_0 \mathbb{A}_0 = 0$ and x(xy) = h(x, x)y, $x \in \mathbb{A}_0$, $y \in \mathbb{A}_1$.

Theorem (V.T. 2010)

There exists a bijection between polar algebras symmetric Clifford systems.



For example, any exact pseudo-composition algebra \mathbb{A} is exceptional. Indeed, we have $\langle x^2; x^2 \rangle = \langle x^3; x \rangle = \langle x; x \rangle \neq 0$ for $x \neq 0$. This contradicts to $\mathbb{A}_0 \mathbb{A}_0 = 0$.

Basic facts on Hsiang algebras, II

- A is exceptional if and only if A_c(1) ⊕ A_c(-¹/₂) is (isotopy of) a simple Jordan algebra. In this case, either n₂ = 0 or n₂ = 3d + 2 and the hidden simple Jordan algebra is Herm₃(H_d), d ∈ {1, 2, 4, 8}.
- **2** A is **mutant iff** $n_2 = 2$, this corresponds to $\mathbf{d} = 0$.
- A is exceptional or mutant iff tr $L(x)^2 = m\langle x; x \rangle$ for some real *m*. In this case, $m = 2(n_1 + \mathbf{d} + 1)$.
- There are finitely many dimensions n of A where exceptional Hsiang algebras can exist. Except the case n₂ = 0, in all other cases, dim A = 3(n₁ + 2d + 1), where dim A_c(-1/2) = 3d + 2, d ∈ {0, 1, 2, 4, 8}.

n	2	5	8	14	26	3	6	12	24	9	12	21	15	18	30	42	27	30	54
n_1	1	2	3	5	9	0	1	3	7	0	1	4	0	1	5	9	0	1	1
<i>n</i> ₂	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	2	5	5	5	8	8	8	8	14	14	26
d	_	_	_	_	_	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	4	4	8

The colours correspond to pseudo-composition, mutants and two unsettled cases.



Prom PDE to Nonassociative Algebra

3) Basic facts on Hsiang algebras

4 How to construct more Hsiang algebras?

5 Where idempotents live?

Tripling construction

Let (\mathbb{A}, h, σ) be a metrized algebra with involution σ . Define a **commutative** algebra structure on $\mathbb{A} \times \mathbb{A} \times \mathbb{A}$ (the **tripling**) with a \circ -invariant form T by

$$(x_1, x_2, x_3) \circ (y_1, y_2, y_3) := (x_3^{\sigma} y_2^{\sigma} + y_2^{\sigma} x_2^{\sigma}, x_1^{\sigma} y_3^{\sigma} + y_1^{\sigma} x_3^{\sigma}, y_2^{\sigma} x_1^{\sigma} + x_2^{\sigma} y_1^{\sigma}),$$

$$H((x_1, x_2, x_3), (y_1, y_2, y_3)) := \sum_{i=1}^3 h(x_i, y_j).$$

When $\mathbb{A} = \mathfrak{g}$ is a **Lie algebra** endowed with the **standard** involution $\sigma = -1$, its triple is the Nahm algebra construction of Kinyuon-Sagle (2002).

Definition

A metrized algebra $(\mathbb{A}, \sigma, h, \circ)$ is called a quasicomposition algebra if

$$x \circ (x^{\sigma} \circ (x \circ y)) = h(x, x)(x \circ y), \quad x, y \in \mathbb{A}.$$

Theorem 4.1 (D.J. Fox, V.T., 2024)

 $T(\mathbb{A})$ is a Hsiang algebra iff \mathbb{A} is a quasicomposition algebra. In that case, $T(\mathbb{A})$ is a exceptional or mutant Hsiang algebra with $d(\mathbb{A}) \in \{0, 1, 2, 4, 8\}$.

Contractions of Jordan algebras

Theorem (V.T., 2015)

Given a simple unital rank 3 Jordan algebra (\mathbb{A}, \bullet) and its arbitrary unital subalgebra $\mathbb{B} \trianglelefteq \mathbb{A}$, the contraction of \mathbb{A} onto \mathbb{B}^{\perp} is a Hsiang algebra. More precisely, let e be the unit of \mathbb{A} , $\operatorname{Tr}(x)$ be the trace form such that $\operatorname{Tr}(e) = 3$, $h(x, y) := \operatorname{Tr}(x \bullet y)$, and

 $\mathbb{A} = \mathbb{B} \oplus_{h} \mathbb{B}^{\perp}, \quad \pi : \mathbb{A} \to \mathbb{B}^{\perp}$ be the orthogonal projection.

If $x \diamond y := \pi(x \bullet y)$ then $(\mathbb{B}^{\perp}, \diamond, h)$ is a Hsiang algebra with $\theta = 1/6$.

- If B = ⟨e⟩ then (e[⊥], •) is the *deunitalization* of A and it is known as an eikonal algebra. The classes of eikonal algebras and trace-less pseudo-composition algebras coincide (and appear only in dimensions n = 5, 8, 14, 26). These algebras occur in many contexts including the Cartan isoparametric hypersurfaces with 3 distinct principal curvatures.
- Another important case is a "diagonal frame" B = D = ⟨e₁, e₂, e₂⟩, ∑ e_i = e; then D[⊥] is known as a mutant Hsiang algebra, i.e. the tripling of a Hurwitz algebra.

The contractions of cubic Jordan algebras

Let $\mathcal{H}_3(\operatorname{Hurv}_d)$ denote the Jordan algebra of Hermitean 3 × 3-matrices over the Hurwitz algebra Hurv_d , $d \in \{1, 2, 4, 8\}$. Then

	$\mathcal{H}_3(\Omega_1)$	$\mathcal{H}_3(\Omega_2)$	$\mathcal{H}_3(\Omega_4)$	$\mathcal{H}_3(\Omega_8)$	<u>,</u> п
$\langle e angle$	K ⁵	K ⁸	\mathbf{K}^{14}	K ²⁶	
$\langle e, e_1 angle$	K ⁴	K ⁷	K ¹³	K ²⁵	
$\langle e, e_1, e_2 angle$	K ³	K ⁶	K ¹²	K ²⁴	
$\mathcal{H}_3(\Omega_1)$	—	—	K ⁹	K ²¹	
$\mathcal{H}_3(\Omega_2)$	_	_	_	\mathbf{K}^{18}	sBundhu
$\mathcal{H}_3(\Omega_4)$	_	_	_	_	

In the remained (-) cases, the contraction is a zero algebra.

Mutants

A borderline case of polar algebras, called mutants, share important properties of exceptional algebras.

Given a Hurwitz algebra Hurv_d with unity e, conjugation \overline{x} , norm n(x), dim $\mathbf{H}_d = d \in \{1, 2, 4, 8\}$, the **tripling**

$$\mathsf{Tri}(\mathsf{H}_d) := \mathsf{H}_d \times \mathsf{H}_d \times \mathsf{H}_d = V_1 \oplus V_2 \oplus V_3$$

with commutative multiplication

$$(x_1, x_2, x_3) * (y_1, y_2, y_3) = (\bar{x}_3 \bar{y}_2 + \bar{y}_3 \bar{x}_2, \bar{x}_1 \bar{y}_3 + \bar{y}_1 \bar{x}_3, \bar{x}_2 \bar{y}_1 + \bar{y}_2 \bar{x}_1)$$

and an invariant bilinear form $H((x_1, x_2, x_3), (y_1, y_2, y_3)) = \sum_{i=1}^{3} t(\bar{x}_i y_i)$, where t(x) = n(x + e) - n(x) - n(e) is the trace form ('the real part'). Note that

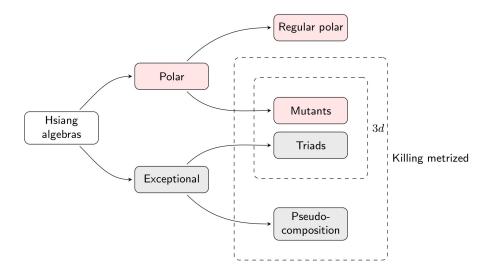
$$V_i V_i = 0, \qquad V_i V_j = V_k$$

(cf. the concept of Cartan's triality)

Proposition (D. Fox, V.T., 2024)

Tri(\mathbf{H}_d) is a **polar algebra** w.r.t. to any of the three decompositions $V_k \oplus V_k^{\perp}$. The corresponding defining form $u(x) = u(x_1, x_2, x_3) = t(x_1(x_2x_3))$.

On the Origin of Species





Prom PDE to Nonassociative Algebra

3) Basic facts on Hsiang algebras

4 How to construct more Hsiang algebras?

5 Where idempotents live?

All examples of Hsiang algebras (including the infinite family of polar algebras) reveal a remarkable structure of idempotents:

Not a theorem yet

- Except the dimensions 2 and 3, the set of idempotents Idm(A) of a Hsiang algebra is a homogeneous subspace of the Euclidean sphere.
- **2** The dimension of the submanifold $\operatorname{Idm}(\mathbb{A})$ is $\operatorname{dim} A_c(\frac{1}{2})$.
- For finer properties and Aut(A) one need to work with pre-idempotents (i.e. the elements x satisfying x²x² = -x²)

A heuristic argument explaining item (2) (Krasnov-V.T., 2018): Let $c \in Idm(\mathbb{A})$ be a fixed idempotent, then for $c + x \in Idm(\mathbb{A})$ close to c enough:

$$c + x = (c + x)^2 = c + 2cx + x^2 \approx c + 2cx \quad \Rightarrow \quad 2cx = c$$

$$\Rightarrow \quad x \in \mathbb{A}_c(\frac{1}{2}) \quad \Rightarrow \quad \dim \operatorname{Idm}(\mathbb{A}) = \dim \mathbb{A}_c(\frac{1}{2})$$

Idempotents in $Triple(\mathbb{B})$

Proposition 5.1

Let \mathbb{B} be a quasicomposition algebra. Then $c \in \text{Idm}(\text{Triple}(\mathbb{B}))$ iff $c = (x, y, 2(xy)^{\sigma})$, where $|x| = |y| = \frac{1}{2}$ and $y \in \text{im}(L(x^{\sigma}))$

Example 5.1

• If $\mathbb{B} = \operatorname{Hurv}_d$ is a Hurwitz algebra then $\operatorname{im}(L(x^{\sigma})) = \operatorname{Hurv}_d$, therefore

$$\mathsf{Idm}(\mathsf{Triple}(\mathsf{Hurv}_d)) \cong S^{d-1} \times S^{d-1}$$

② If
$$(\mathfrak{so}(3,\mathbf{K}), imes)$$
 then $\operatorname{im}(L(x^{\sigma}))=x^{\perp}$

 $\operatorname{Idm}(\operatorname{Triple}(\mathfrak{so}(3,\mathbf{K}))\cong\operatorname{St}(2,\mathbf{K}^3)=SO(3,\mathbf{K}).$

• If \mathbb{M} the Malcev algebra of imaginary octonions then $\operatorname{im}(L(x^{\sigma})) = x^{\perp}$ and

 $\operatorname{Idm}(\operatorname{Triple}(\mathbb{M}) \cong \operatorname{St}(2, \mathbb{K}^7) = \frac{G_2}{SU(2)}$

$\dim \mathbb{A}$	$\dim Idm(\mathbb{A})$	ldm(Ѧ)	type	tripling
5	2	\mathbb{RP}^2	EO. (eikonal)	
6	2	$S^1 imes S^1$	mutant	yes
8	4	\mathbb{CP}^2	EO. (eikonal)	
9	3	<i>SO</i> (3)	pseudo-comp.	yes
12	5	<i>SU</i> (3)/ <i>SO</i> (3)	para-complex	
12	6	$S^3 imes S^3$	mutant	yes
14	8	\mathbb{HP}^2	EO. (eikonal)	
15	6	$SU(4)/S(U(1) \times U(3))$	pseudo-comp.	
18	8	<i>SU</i> (4)	para-complex	yes
21	11	$G_2/SU(2)$	contraction	yes
24	14	$S^7 imes S^7$	mutant	yes
26	16	\mathbb{OP}^2	EO. (eikonal)	
27	12	Sp(4)/Sp(1) imes Sp(3)	pseudo-comp.	
30	14		para-complex	
54	26	E_6/F_4	para-complex	

項武義 Hsiang Wa-Yi Nor 十一月四日 2016

Thank you!

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5	2	0	2											P2P2	3	3 50(3)	Eikonal	
8	3	0	4										Τ	CPL	6	8 SU(3)	Eikonal	
14	5	0	8	-									Τ	HP2	12	21 Sp(3)	Eikonal	
26	9	0	16											OP2	24	52 E6	Eikonal	
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