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## Rank and symmetry of Riemannian manifolds

J.-H. ESCHENBURG and C. OLMOS\*

*Dedicated to Wilhelm Klingenberg on the occasion of his 70th birthday*

Let  $M$  be a complete irreducible Riemannian manifold. A  $k$ -flat in  $M$  is a complete connected flat totally geodesic immersed submanifold of dimension  $k$ . The rank of  $M$  is the maximal dimension  $k$  such that every geodesic in  $M$  lies in a  $k$ -flat. Examples of manifolds of rank  $k$  are locally symmetric spaces of rank  $k$ . If  $M$  has sectional curvature  $K \leq 0$ , it is an open conjecture that these are the only examples for  $k \geq 2$ . This has been proved in many special cases (cf. [BBE], [BS], [BGS], [ES], [EH], [H]). In particular it is true if  $M$  is homogeneous [H]. On the other hand, if  $K \geq 0$ , there are homogeneous counterexamples [SS]. However, in these examples, the various  $k$ -flats are very different. What happens if we require that any two  $k$ -flats are isometric? More precisely, let us assume:

- (I) A group  $G$  of isometries of  $M$  acts transitively on the set of pairs  $(p, F)$  where  $F$  is a  $k$ -flat and  $p \in F$ .

In the case  $k = 1$ , these are two-point-homogeneous spaces which are known to be rank-one symmetric (cf. [W], [Hg], [Sz]). Using the classification of strongly isotropy irreducible Riemannian manifolds, Heintze, Palais, Terng and Thorbergsson recently obtained the following result [HPTT]:

**THEOREM A.** *If  $M$  is compact of rank  $k$  and satisfies (I), then  $M$  is globally symmetric of rank  $k$ .*

The noncompact case is still open. The case  $k = 2$  was recently solved by E. Samiou. In the present paper, we omit the dependence of the point in Condition (I) and discuss the following weaker condition which no longer implies homogeneity.

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(II) A group  $G$  of isometries of  $M$  acts transitively on the set of  $k$ -flats.

**THEOREM B.** *If  $M$  is compact of rank  $k$  satisfying (II), then  $M$  is locally symmetric of rank  $k$ . Moreover, if any  $k$ -flat is one-to-one immersed and intrinsically symmetric, then  $M$  is globally symmetric.*

(In fact we prove a slightly more general result, cf. Theorem B', Ch. 2). The additional hypothesis for  $M$  being globally symmetric is necessary; if we omit it, the flat Kleinian bottle is a simple counterexample. For  $k = 1$ , following an idea of E. Heintze, we do not need compactness:

**THEOREM C.** *A complete Riemannian manifold  $M$  with the property that  $I(M)$  acts transitively on the set of geodesics, is globally rank-one symmetric.*

In fact, we will prove a local statement which implies Theorem C (cf. Ch. 6).

We have started our work on this subject with a conceptual proof of Theorem A which is mainly as follows. We consider the action of the group  $G = I(M)$  on the tangent bundle  $TM$ , equipped with the Sasaki metric  $\langle\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle\rangle$  which makes the vertical and the horizontal distributions (defined by the Levi-Civita connection) perpendicular. We noticed that the  $G$ -orbits on  $TM$  are perpendicular to the tangent spaces of any flat totally geodesic submanifold (cf. Ch. 1). This observation essentially goes back to R. Hermann [Hr]. For a rank- $k$  manifold satisfying (I) this means that the horizontal distribution is tangent to the  $G$ -orbits. Thus, parallel vectors along a curve remain in the same  $G$ -orbit. In particular, the holonomy orbits are contained in the orbits of the isotropy group, and by the Berger-Simons holonomy theorem and our Theorem C,  $M$  is locally symmetric. An argument involving the deck group of the universal cover of  $M$  then finishes the proof (cf. Ch. 5).

If we only assume (II), the  $G$ -orbits are not large enough to contain all horizontal curves. Instead, we look for a collection of  $G$ -orbits, namely  $G.P_v$  where  $P_v$  for some  $v \in TM$  is the set of all vectors being tangent to the same  $k$ -flat as  $v$  and parallel to  $v$ . It turns out that in an open and dense subset of  $TM$ , these  $G.P_v$  are manifolds and form a foliation which is perpendicular and transversal to the tangent spaces of the  $k$ -flats. Again, the horizontal distribution is tangent to these (larger) manifolds, and we get local symmetry by applying the Berger-Simons theorem to the local holonomy group; the local rank-one factors have to be treated separately (cf. Ch. 4, 6).

## 1. The Hermann Lemma on the tangent bundle

Let  $(M, \langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle)$  be a Riemannian manifold. Then there exists a natural Riemannian metric  $\langle\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle\rangle$  on the tangent bundle  $TM$  of  $M$ . Let  $\mathcal{V}(M)$  and  $\mathcal{H}(M)$  be the

vertical and horizontal distributions of  $TM$  (with respect to the Levi-Civita connections on  $M$ ). Then  $\mathcal{V}(M) \perp \mathcal{H}(M)$  with respect to  $\langle\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle\rangle$ . Moreover  $\langle\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle\rangle|_{\mathcal{V}(M)}$  is the usual metric on the fibers of  $\pi : TM \rightarrow M$  and  $\langle\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle\rangle|_{\mathcal{H}(M)}$  is such that  $\pi$  is a Riemannian submersion., So, if  $v_1, v_2 : (-\epsilon, \epsilon) \rightarrow TM$  are  $C^1$  with  $v_1(0) = v_2(0)$ ,

$$\langle\langle v_1'(0), v_2'(0) \rangle\rangle = \langle (\pi v_1)'(0), (\pi v_2)'(0) \rangle + \left\langle \frac{D}{dt} \Big|_0 v_1(0), \frac{D}{dt} \Big|_0 v_2(0) \right\rangle$$

**LEMMA 1.** *Let  $(M, \langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle)$  be a complete Riemannian manifold and let  $G$  be a Lie subgroup of  $I(M)$  with bounded Killing fields. Let  $e$  be a parallel Jacobi field along some geodesic  $\gamma : \mathbb{R} \rightarrow M$  with  $\gamma(0) = p, \gamma'(0) = v$ . Then the orbit  $Gv$  is perpendicular at  $v$  to the vertical submanifold  $v + \mathbb{R} \cdot e(0) \subset T_p M \subset TM$ .*

*Proof.* If  $A \in L(G)$  and  $g(t) = \exp tA$ , we have to show that

$$\begin{aligned} \alpha &:= \left\langle \left\langle \frac{d}{dt} \Big|_0 g(t)v, \frac{d}{dt} \Big|_0 (v + te(0)) \right\rangle \right\rangle \\ &= \left\langle \frac{D}{dt} \Big|_0 f(t) \star v, e(0) \right\rangle \end{aligned}$$

vanishes. Recall that

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{D}{dt} \Big|_0 g(t) \star v &= \frac{D}{\partial t} \frac{\partial}{\partial s} \Big|_{0,0} g(t)\gamma(s) \\ &= \frac{D}{ds} \Big|_0 A \cdot \gamma(s), \end{aligned}$$

hence

$$\alpha = \frac{d}{ds} \Big|_0 \langle A \cdot \gamma(s), e(s) \rangle.$$

Since  $x \mapsto A \cdot x$  is Killing,  $A \cdot \gamma$  is a Jacobi field, and since  $e$  is parallel, we have

$$\frac{d^2}{ds^2} \langle A \cdot \gamma(s), e(s) \rangle = 0.$$

Thus

$$\langle A \cdot \gamma(s), e(s) \rangle = a + bs$$

for some  $a, b \in \mathbb{R}$ . But since  $A$  is bounded, we get  $b = 0$  and therefore,  $\alpha = 0$ .  $\square$

**COROLLARY.** *Let  $(M, \langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle)$  be a complete Riemannian manifold and  $G$  a Lie subgroup of  $I(M)$  with bounded Killing fields. Let  $F$  be a complete flat totally geodesic immersed submanifold (called a “flat”) in  $M$  and  $w \in T_p F$ . Then the orbit  $Gw$  is perpendicular to the vertical submanifold  $T_p F$ .  $\square$*

## 2. The set of regular vectors

From now on, let  $M$  be a complete irreducible Riemannian manifold with the following property.

- (III) There is a  $k$ -dimensional flat ( $k$ -flat)  $F$  in  $M$  and a Lie subgroup  $G$  of  $I(M)$  with bounded Killing fields such that  $G.TF = TM$ .

Clearly, (II) implies (III) if  $M$  is compact and of rank  $k$ . We will prove the following generalization of Theorem B:

**THEOREM B'.** *Let  $M$  be complete irreducible satisfying (III). Then  $M$  is locally symmetric of rank  $K$ . Moreover, if all  $k$ -flats in  $M$  are one-to-one immersed and intrinsically symmetric, then  $M$  is globally symmetric.*

The proof of this theorem will be finished in Ch. 5.

Consider the  $G$ -equivariant smooth map

$$\phi : G \times TF \rightarrow TM$$

$$\phi(g, v) = g.v = g_*v.$$

By (III),  $\phi$  is onto. Sard's theorem says that the set of regular values of  $\phi$  has full measure. Therefore, the subset

$$\mathcal{R} = \{w \in TM; \exists (g, v) \in \phi^{-1}(w): d\phi|_{(g,v)} \text{ is onto}\}$$

(called the *set of regular vectors*) is open and dense in  $TM$ .

**LEMMA 2.** *For any  $w \in \mathcal{R}$ , there is exactly one  $k$ -flat  $F_w$  tangent to  $w$  and any parallel Jacobi field  $e$  along the geodesic  $\gamma_w$  is tangent to  $F_w$ . Moreover,  $\mathcal{R} \cap TF$  is dense in  $TF$ .*

*Proof.* Let  $U$  be an open subset of  $G \times TF$  where  $d\phi$  has constant rank. By equivariance, we may assume  $U = G' \times (TF)'$  where  $G'$  is a neighborhood of  $1 \in G$

and  $(TF)'$  an open subset of  $TF$ . Making  $U$  smaller if necessary, we may assume that  $\phi(U)$  is a submanifold  $\mathcal{S}$  of  $TM$ . Let  $(g, v) \in U$  and  $w = \phi(g, v)$ . Then  $w$  is tangent to the flat  $F_w := gF$ , and

$$T_w \mathcal{S} = \text{im } d\phi|_{(g,v)} = T_w TF_w + T_w Gw. \quad (1)$$

Suppose that there is a parallel Jacobi field  $e$  along  $\gamma = \gamma_w$  which is not tangent to  $F_w$ . Since  $F_w$  is totally geodesic and flat, we may assume  $e \perp F_w$ . It follows that the vertical vector  $\hat{e}(0) = d/dt|_0 (w + te(0)) \in T_w TM$  is perpendicular to the first term on the right hand side of (1). By Lemma 1,  $\hat{e}(0)$  is also perpendicular to the second term. Hence,  $\hat{e}(0) \perp T_w \mathcal{S}$ .

In particular we have shown that  $F_w$  is the only  $\mathcal{S}$ -flat tangent to  $w$ . (A  $k$ -flat  $F'$  is called  $\mathcal{S}$ -flat if an open subset of  $TF'$  belongs to  $\mathcal{S}$ .) It follows that for any  $(g, v) \in (\phi|U)^{-1}(w)$ ,

$$\phi(\{g\} \times TF) = TF_w.$$

Thus the foliation of  $U = G' \times (TF)'$  by the second factor induces the smooth foliation

$$\mathcal{FF} : w \mapsto TF_w \cap \mathcal{S}$$

of  $\mathcal{S}$ , by applying the submersion  $\phi|U : U \rightarrow \mathcal{S}$ . Making  $U$  even smaller (if necessary), we may assume that  $\mathcal{S} = \phi(U)$  is diffeomorphic to a product  $S' \times (TF)'$  such that  $\mathcal{FF}$  becomes the foliation by the second factor. Since any  $g \in G'$  preserves this foliation on  $\mathcal{S} \cap g^{-1}(\mathcal{S})$ , each Killing field  $A \in L(G)$  induces a tangent vector field  $A_1$  on the transversal manifold  $S'$ , and we have  $A_1(s') = 0$  for some  $s' \in S'$  if and only if  $\exp tA$  leaves invariant the  $k$ -flat corresponding to  $\{s'\} \times (TF)'$ . Thus, for any  $w \in \mathcal{S} \cap TF$ , the connected component of the stabilizer  $G_w$  is contained in  $G_F = \{g \in G; g(F) = F\}$  (by uniqueness of  $F_w$ ) and

$$T_w TF \cap T_w Gw = T_w G_F w.$$

So by (1), we have

$$\begin{aligned} \dim \mathcal{S} &= \dim TF + \dim Gw - \dim G_F w \\ &= \dim TF + \dim (G/G_F). \end{aligned}$$

In particular, this holds if  $\mathcal{S}$  is an open subset of  $\mathcal{R}$  which shows that

$$\dim TF + \dim (G/G_F) = \dim TM.$$

Therefore, any such  $\mathcal{S}$  has full dimension and must be an open subset of  $\mathcal{R}$ .

If  $\mathcal{R} \cap TF$  were not dense, we could find an open subset  $(TF)'$  of  $TF$  such that  $\text{rank}(d\phi)$  is constant but not maximal on  $\{1\} \times (TF)'$ . By equivariance of  $\phi$ , the same would be true on some open subset  $U$  of  $G \times TF$  which we have excluded. □

*Remark.* The uniqueness of the flat  $F_w$  tangent to  $w \in \mathcal{R}$  shows that  $\mathcal{R}$  is in fact the set of regular values of  $\phi$ .

### 3. The local holonomy

On the set  $\mathcal{R}$  of regular vectors, we have introduced the smooth foliation

$$\mathcal{F} : w \mapsto TF_w$$

where  $F_w$  is the unique  $k$ -flat through  $w$ . (The smoothness of this foliation can also be seen using the arguments in [BBE], Lemma 2, where the Jacobi operator  $R(\cdot, \gamma'_w)\gamma'_w$  has to be replaced by its square, for sake of definiteness.)

The tangent distribution  $T\mathcal{F}$  of this foliation splits into its horizontal and vertical parts:

$$T\mathcal{F} = \mathcal{V}\mathcal{F} \oplus \mathcal{H}\mathcal{F}$$

where

$$(\mathcal{V}\mathcal{F})_w = \mathcal{V}_w\mathcal{F}_w = T_w T_{\pi(w)}F_w,$$

$$(\mathcal{H}\mathcal{F})_w = \mathcal{H}_w\mathcal{F}_w = T_w P_w$$

where  $P_w \subset TF_w$  is the set of vectors which arise from  $w$  by parallel transport along curves in  $F_w$ . Now from Equation (1) in the previous section we get for all  $w \in \mathcal{R}$ :

$$T_w TM = T_w Gw + (\mathcal{H}\mathcal{F})_w + (\mathcal{V}\mathcal{F})_w. \tag{2}$$

**LEMMA 3.** *The distribution  $(\mathcal{V}\mathcal{F})^\perp$  on  $\mathcal{R}$  is integrable with integral leaf  $G.P'_v$  through  $v \in \mathcal{R}$ , where  $P'_v = P_v \cap \mathcal{R}$ .*

*Proof.* Let  $g \in G$  and  $v \in \mathcal{R} \cap TF$ . Let  $w \in P'_v$ . Recall that  $G_F$  is the subgroup of  $G$  which leaves the flat  $F$  invariant. We have

$$\phi^{-1}(g.w) = \{(gh^{-1}, hw); h \in G_F\}.$$

Thus

$$T_{(g,w)}(\phi^{-1}(g.w)) = \{(-gA, Aw); A \in L(G_F)\}.$$

Since  $G$  has bounded Killing fields,  $A \in L(G_F)$  induces an infinitesimal translation on  $F$ . Thus  $Aw$  is tangent to  $P'_v$  and

$$T_{(g,w)}(\phi^{-1}(g.w)) \subset T_{(g,w)}(G \times P'_v).$$

So  $G \times P'_v$  is a submanifold of  $\phi^{-1}(\mathcal{R})$  containing the fibres of the submersion  $\phi : \phi^{-1}(\mathcal{R}) \rightarrow \mathcal{R}$ . Therefore  $G.P'_v = \phi(G \times P'_v)$  is a smooth submanifold of  $\mathcal{R}$ . Clearly

$$T_w(G.P'_v) = T_w Gw + (\mathcal{H}\mathcal{F})_w,$$

which shows that  $T_w(G.P'_v)$  is the orthogonal complement of  $(\mathcal{V}\mathcal{F})_w$  (cf. (2) and Lemma 1).

*Remark.* There are no singular orbits on  $\mathcal{R}$ , i.e. the orbits of  $G$  define a smooth foliation on  $\mathcal{R}$ . In fact, let  $w \in \mathcal{R}$  and  $G_w$  its stabilizer subgroup. If  $X \in L(G_w)$  then  $\exp tX$  preserves the  $k$ -flat  $F_w$  (by Lemma 2). Since  $G$  has bounded Killing fields,  $\exp tX$  is a translation. But  $(\exp tX).\pi(w) = \pi(w)$  and therefore  $\exp tX|_{F_w} = id$  for all  $t \in \mathbb{R}$ . So  $(G_w)_0 = (G^{F_w})_0$  where  $G^{F_w} = \{g \in G : g \text{ fixes pointwise } F_w\}$ . Thus  $(G_w)_0$  is the same group for all  $w' \in F_w$  which shows that all orbits have the same dimension.

**COROLLARY.** *If  $w \in \mathcal{R}$  and  $p = \pi(w)$  is its base point, then*

$$T_w(\Phi_p^{loc}.w) \perp T_w T_p F_w$$

where  $\Phi_p^{loc}$  denotes the local holonomy group of  $M$  at  $p$  (cf. [KN], p. 94).

*Proof.* On  $\mathcal{R}$ , the horizontal distribution  $\mathcal{H}\mathcal{M} = (\mathcal{V}\mathcal{M})^\perp$  is contained in  $(\mathcal{V}\mathcal{F})^\perp$ . Thus, by Lemma 3, any  $w \in \mathcal{R}$  has a neighborhood  $\mathcal{U}_w$  in  $\mathcal{R}$  such that any horizontal curve in  $\mathcal{U}_w$  starting at  $w$  stays in  $G.P'_w$ . Let  $B_\epsilon(w) \subset \mathcal{U}_w$ . By the theorem in the appendix, there exists a neighborhood  $N$  of  $1 \in \Phi_p^{loc}$  such that any  $\phi \in N$  is the parallel transport along a piecewise  $C^1$ -loop  $\beta$  starting and ending at  $p$  with



length  $L(\beta) < \epsilon$ . Thus, the horizontal lift  $\hat{\beta}$  of  $\beta$  starting at  $w$  has also length  $< \epsilon$  which shows  $\hat{\beta} \subset \mathcal{U}_w$ . Hence  $\hat{\beta} \subset G.P'_w$ , and in particular,  $\varphi.w \in G.P'_w$  since  $\varphi.w$  is the end point of  $\hat{\beta}$ . Thus, if  $t \mapsto \varphi_t$  is a smooth curve in  $N$  with  $\varphi_0 = 1$ , then

$$\frac{d}{dt} \Big|_0 \varphi_t.w \in T_w(G.P'_w) \perp (V\mathcal{F})_w = T_w T_p F_w$$

which finishes the proof. □

Now by the Berger-Simons holonomy theorem (cf. [Be], [S]), the curvature tensor on  $\pi(\mathcal{R})$  is parallel unless we have locally a Riemannian product with a factor with transitive holonomy. This will be considered in the next section.

#### 4. Local factors with transitive holonomy

Consider  $w \in \mathcal{R}$  with base point  $\pi(w) = p$ . There exists a simply connected open neighborhood  $M'$  of  $p$  in  $M$  such that the holonomy group  $\Phi$  of  $M'$  at  $p$  equals the local holonomy  $\Phi_p^{loc}$  of  $M$  at  $p$ . By the de Rham theorem, perhaps making  $M'$  smaller if necessary, we may assume that  $M'$  splits metrically as

$$M' = M_0 \times M_1 \times \cdots \times M_k$$

with  $p = (p_0, p_1, \dots, p_k)$ , and

$$\Phi = \Phi_1 \times \cdots \times \Phi_k$$

where  $\Phi_j$  is the holonomy group of  $M_j$  at  $p_j$ , acting irreducibly on  $T_{p_j}M_j$  for  $j = 1, \dots, k$ , while  $M_0$  is the flat factor.

By the Berger-Simons theorem ([Be], [S]), each  $M_j$  is locally symmetric unless  $\Phi_j$  acts transitively on the unit sphere in  $T_{p_j}M_j$ . Call these latter factors *holonomy-transitive*. We will show that those are also locally symmetric:

**LEMMA 4.** *Each holonomy-transitive factor  $M_i$  of  $M'$  is locally symmetric of rank one.*

*Proof.* We will show that  $M_i$  satisfies the assumption of Lemma 6, Ch. 6. Let  $\gamma_i$  be a geodesic in  $M_i$ . We have  $M' = M_i \times \bar{M}$  where  $\bar{M}$  contains all other factors. So  $\gamma = \gamma_i \times \{\bar{q}\}$  is a geodesic in  $M'$ , for any  $\bar{q} \in \bar{M}$ . This geodesic lies in a  $k$ -flat  $F' = g(F)$  for some  $g \in G$ . We may assume that  $F' = F$ . Since  $\mathcal{R} \cap TF$  is dense in  $TF$  (Lemma 2), we may choose a regular vector  $w \in TF$  with base point

$\pi(w) = p = (p_i, \bar{p}) \in F \cap M'$ . Let  $w = (w_i, \bar{w})$ . We may assume  $w_i \neq 0$ . We saw in Lemma 3 that the holonomy orbit  $\Phi.w$  is perpendicular to  $T_w T_p F$ . Thus  $\Phi_i w_i$  is perpendicular to  $\pi_i(T_w T_p F) = T_{w_i} T_{p_i}(\pi_i F)$  where  $\pi_i$  denotes the projection onto the  $i$ th factor on  $M', TM', TTM'$ ; But  $\Phi_i w_i$  is the sphere of radius  $\|w_i\|$  in  $T_{p_i} M_i$ . Therefore,  $T_{p_i}(\pi_i F)$  is one-dimensional, i.e.  $F_i := \pi_i F$  is a geodesic in  $M'$ . Since  $\gamma_i \subseteq \pi_i F$ , we get  $F_i = \gamma_i$ , and  $w_i$  is a tangent vector of  $\gamma_i$ .

For any Riemannian manifold  $X$ , let  $\mathcal{K}(X)$  denote the space of Killing fields. A Killing field, being an infinitesimal isometry, can be applied to points of  $X$  as well as to vectors in  $TX$ . By Section 3, Equation (2), we have

$$\mathcal{K}(M).w + \mathcal{H}_w \mathcal{F} + \mathcal{V}_w \mathcal{F} = T_w TM'.$$

Applying the  $i$ th projection  $\pi_i$  (which commutes with the horizontal and vertical projections), we get

$$\pi_i \mathcal{K}(M).w + \mathcal{H}_{w_i} F_i + \mathcal{V}_{w_i} F_i = T_{w_i} TM_i.$$

Since Killing fields on  $M'$  project onto Killing fields on  $M_i$ , we have

$$\pi_i \mathcal{K}(M).w \subset \mathcal{K}(M_i).w_i,$$

thus

$$\mathcal{K}(M_i)w_i + \mathcal{H}_{w_i} \mathcal{F}_i + \mathcal{V}_{w_i} F_i = T_{w_i} TM_i.$$

Now we may apply Lemma 6, Ch. 6, to see that  $M_i$  is locally rank-one symmetric. This proves the first part of Theorem B'.

### 5. Global symmetry

For any symmetric space  $X$ , let  $Tr(X)$  denote the transvection group, i.e. the subgroup of the isometry group  $I(X)$  which is generated by the compositions of any two symmetries.

**LEMMA 5.** *Let  $M$  be complete, locally symmetric of rank  $k$  with universal cover  $\pi : X \rightarrow M$ . Suppose that there is a connected Lie subgroup  $G \subset I(M)$  with the following properties:*

- (1) *The connected component of the lift  $\tilde{G}$  of  $G$  lies in  $T := Tr(X)$ .*
- (2)  *$G$  acts transitively on the set of  $k$ -flats in  $M$ , and any  $k$ -flat is one-to-one immersed and intrinsically symmetric.*

*Then  $M$  is globally symmetric.*

*Remark.* If  $M$  satisfies condition (III) for a group  $G$  then the universal covering  $X$  of  $M$  satisfies also (III) for the lifting group  $\tilde{G}$ . Since  $X$  is symmetric, any  $k$ -flat has a regular element and it is easy to see that  $X$  satisfies also (II) for  $\tilde{G}$ . Since the set of  $k$ -flats in a (globally) symmetric space is connected, the connected component  $\tilde{G}_0$  acts transitively on the set of  $k$ -flats of  $X$  and hence also  $G_0 = \pi(\tilde{G}_0)$  acts transitively on the  $k$ -flats of  $M$ . Since  $\tilde{G}_0$  acts with bounded Killing fields, it lies in  $Tr(X)$  (which only says that it acts by translations on the euclidean factor). Thus, Lemma 5 proves the second part of Theorem B'.

*Proof.*  $X$  is globally symmetric, and  $M = X/\Gamma$  where  $\Gamma$  is a discrete subgroup of  $I(X)$ . Let  $\sigma \in I(X)$  be the symmetry at some point  $x_0 \in X$ . We have to show that  $\sigma$  descends to an isometry of  $M$ , i.e. that

$$\sigma(\Gamma) = \Gamma. \tag{*}$$

(For any subgroup  $\Gamma' \subset I(X)$  and  $\tau \in I(X)$ , we denote by  $\tau(\Gamma')$  the conjugate subgroup  $\tau\Gamma'\tau^{-1}$ .) Let  $\mathcal{F}$  denote the set of  $k$ -flats in  $X$ . For any  $k$ -flat  $F \in \mathcal{F}$ , let

$$\Gamma_F = \{g \in \Gamma; gF = F\}.$$

**SUBLEMMA 1.** *Each  $\Gamma_F$  acts as a translation subgroup on  $F$ , and*

$$\Gamma = \bigcup_{F \in \mathcal{F}} \Gamma_F.$$

*Proof.* Let  $g \in \Gamma$ ,  $x \in X$  and let  $\gamma$  be a geodesic connecting  $x$  and  $gx$ . There is a  $k$ -flat  $F \in \mathcal{F}$  containing  $\gamma$ . By assumption, the  $k$ -flat  $\pi(F) \subset M$  is symmetric without selfintersection. So the geodesic loop  $\pi \circ \gamma$  in  $\pi(F)$  is a closed geodesic, and  $\pi(F) = \pi(gF)$ . Thus  $g \in \Gamma_F$ . Moreover, any  $g \in \Gamma_F$  translates the geodesic from  $y$  to  $gy$  for any  $y \in F$ , thus  $g$  is a translation on  $F$ . □

**SUBLEMMA 2.** *For any  $t \in T$  and  $F \in \mathcal{F}$ ,*

$$t(\Gamma_F) = \Gamma_{tF}.$$

*Proof.*  $\tilde{G}$  normalizes  $\Gamma$ , so this holds for any  $t \in \tilde{G}$ . Since  $\tilde{G}$  and hence  $\tilde{G}_0$  act transitively on  $\mathcal{F}$ , we have  $T = \tilde{G}_0 \cdot T_F$  where

$$T_F = \{t \in T; tF = F\}.$$

Recall that  $T_F$  is a finite extension (by the Weyl group) of its connected component  $(T_F)_0$  which acts as translation group on  $F$ . Since  $T$  is connected, we get already  $T = \tilde{G}_0 \cdot (T_F)_0$ . Thus let  $t = g \cdot \tau$  with  $g \in \tilde{G}_0$  and  $\tau \in (T_F)_0$ . Then

$$t(\Gamma_F) = g\tau(\Gamma_F) = g(\Gamma_F) = \Gamma_{gF} = \Gamma_{tF}. \quad \square$$

Now fix a  $k$ -flat  $F_0$  through  $x_0$ . Since  $\pi(F_0)$  is symmetric,  $\sigma|_{F_0}$  descends to the symmetry of  $\pi(F_0)$  at  $\pi(x_0)$ , and therefore

$$\sigma(\Gamma_{F_0}) = \Gamma_{F_0} = \Gamma_{\sigma F_0}. \quad (*)$$

Next let  $F$  be an arbitrary  $k$ -flat and choose  $g \in Tr(X)$  with

$$g\sigma F = F_0.$$

Since  $\sigma g\sigma \in Tr(X)$ , we have

$$\sigma g\sigma(\Gamma_F) = \Gamma_{\sigma g\sigma F} = \Gamma_{\sigma F_0} = \sigma(\Gamma_{F_0}),$$

using (\*). Hence we get

$$g\sigma(\Gamma_F) = \Gamma_{F_0}$$

and consequently

$$\sigma(\Gamma_F) = g^{-1}(\Gamma_{F_0}) = \Gamma_{g^{-1}F_0} = \Gamma_{\sigma F}$$

always applying Sublemma 2. Thus  $\sigma(\Gamma_F) \subset \Gamma$  for every flat  $F$ , and by Sublemma 1 we get  $\sigma(\Gamma) \subset \Gamma$  which shows that  $\sigma$  descends to  $M$ . This finishes the proof of Lemma 5 and Theorem B'.

### 6. The rank-one case

Let  $M$  be a Riemannian manifold, not necessarily complete. A geodesic  $\gamma$  in  $M$  will be considered as (part of a) 1-flat, so for any tangent vector  $v$  of  $\gamma$  we have the

one-dimensional subspaces  $\mathcal{H}_v\gamma$  (tangent to the curve  $t \mapsto \gamma'(t)$ ) and  $\mathcal{V}_v\gamma$  (tangent to  $t \mapsto tv$ ) of  $T_vTM$ . Let  $\mathcal{K}(M)$  denote the set of Killing fields (which we apply to points and to tangent vectors of  $M$ ).

LEMMA 6. *Let  $M$  be any Riemannian manifold, possibly not complete, with the following property: There is an open subset  $\mathcal{R}$  of  $TM$  such that any geodesic in  $M$  has a tangent vector in  $\mathcal{R}$  and so that for any  $v \in \mathcal{R}$ ,*

$$\mathcal{K}(M).v + \mathcal{H}_v\gamma + \mathcal{V}_v\gamma = T_vTM \quad (3)$$

*Then  $M$  is locally rank-one symmetric.*

*Proof.* The tangent vectors of the geodesics form the 2-dimensional foliation

$$\mathcal{F} = \{s \cdot \gamma'_v(t); s \in (0, \infty), t \in \text{Dom}(\gamma'_v)\}$$

of  $TM \setminus \{\text{zero section}\}$  (notation as in section 3). By assumption, any geodesic  $\gamma$  has a tangent vector  $v$  such that the infinitesimal isometry orbit  $\mathcal{K}(M).v$  is transversal to this foliation. In other words, for any  $w \in TM$  which is sufficiently close to  $v$ , there is a local isometry  $g_w$  mapping  $w$  to a tangent vector of  $\gamma$  (note that transversality is an open property).

For any  $p \in M$  we consider

$$\mathcal{K}(M)_p = \{A \in \mathcal{K}(M); A.p = 0\}.$$

This is a Lie subalgebra of  $L(O(T_pM))$ , and there is a compact connected subgroup  $G_p$  of  $O(T_pM)$  with  $L(G_p) = \mathcal{K}(M)_p$ ; this is the connected component of the isometry group of a small ball in  $M$  centered at  $p$ . For any nonzero  $x \in T_pM$ , let  $G_x \subset G_p$  denote the stabilizer of  $x$ , i.e. the group of local isometries fixing  $p$  and  $x$ .

Clearly,  $G_x$  does not change under the geodesic flow, more precisely,  $G_{\Phi_t x}$  is isomorphic to  $G_x$ , where  $\Phi_t x = \gamma'_x(t)$  denotes the action of the geodesic flow. This is because  $g \in G_x$  fixes any tangent vector of  $\gamma_x$  in its domain. Moreover, the isomorphic type of  $G_x$  cannot change near a regular vector  $v$  since any  $x$  near  $v$  is mapped to some  $\Phi_t v$  by a local isometry  $g_x$  which conjugates  $G_x$  and  $G_{\Phi_t v} \cong G_v$ . Thus, the isomorphic type of  $G_x$  is locally constant on the unit tangent bundle. In particular, for any  $p \in M$  and any two unit vectors  $x, y \in T_pM$ , the subgroups  $G_x$  and  $G_y$  of  $G_p$  are isomorphic. Hence, all orbits of  $G$  on the unit sphere  $S_pM$  have the same dimension.

On the other hand,

$$\mathcal{H}(M)_p v = \mathcal{H}(M)v \cap T_v T_p M.$$

Hence, if  $v \in \mathcal{R}$  with  $\pi(v) = p$ , then by (3),  $\mathcal{H}(M)_p v$  has codimension 2 or less in  $T_v T_p M$ . Thus the principal orbits of  $G_p$  in the unit sphere  $S_p M$  are hypersurfaces unless  $G_p$  acts transitively on  $S_p M$ . In the first case, the  $G_p$ -orbits form a family of homogeneous isoparametric hypersurfaces. These have focal manifolds, i.e. orbits of lower dimension, but this was excluded. So  $G_p$  acts transitively on  $S_p M$ . Now by Szabo's local theorem on 2-point homogeneous spaces [Sz],  $M$  is locally rank-one symmetric.  $\square$

Now Theorem C follows from Lemma 6 and Lemma 5. Lemma 5 can be used since any geodesic in  $M$  must be a one-to-one immersed circle or line. Namely, if there exists a geodesic loop, then any geodesic is a loop, so the cut locus distance is finite and  $M$  must be compact. Hence any Killing field  $X$  translates a geodesic (namely the geodesic  $\gamma_v$  for  $v = X(p)$  where  $\|X\|$  takes its maximum at  $p$ ), so the geodesic loop must be a closed geodesic.

## Appendix

The goal of this appendix is to prove the fact that parallel translations along short loops form a neighborhood of the identity in the local holonomy group. This was used in the proof of the corollary in section 3.

Let  $G$  be a Lie group of dimension  $n$  and let  $F \subset G$  be such that

- (i)  $F$  generates (algebraically)  $G$ .
- (ii)  $F^{-1} = F$ .
- (iii) For each  $f \in F$  there exists  $\gamma : [0, c_\gamma) \rightarrow F$  of class  $C^1$  such that  $\gamma(0) = e$  and  $\gamma(t_0) = f$ , for some  $t_0 \in [0, c_\gamma)$ .

For  $k \in \mathbb{N}$ , let

$$F^k = \{f_1 \cdots f_k; f_1, \dots, f_k \in F\},$$

$$\Gamma^k = \{\gamma : [0, c_\gamma) \rightarrow F^k; \gamma \text{ is } C^1, \gamma(0) = e\}.$$

Define

$$S_k = \{\gamma'(0) : \gamma \in \Gamma^k\} \subset \mathcal{G} = L(G).$$

Observe:

- (i)  $\gamma \in \Gamma^k \Rightarrow \gamma^{-1} \in \Gamma^k$  and  $(\gamma^{-1})'(0) = -\gamma'(0)$ .
- (ii)  $\gamma_1 \in \Gamma^k, \gamma_2 \in \Gamma^j \Rightarrow \gamma_1 \cdot \gamma_2 \in \Gamma^{k+j}$ .
- (iii) If  $\gamma \in \Gamma^k, r > 0$ , then  $\bar{\gamma} = \{t \mapsto \gamma(r \cdot t), t \in [0, \epsilon_\gamma \cdot r^{-1}]\} \in \Gamma^k$  and  $\bar{\gamma}'(0) = r\gamma'(0)$ .
- (iv)  $S_k \subset S_{k+1}$ .

If  $\gamma_1, \gamma_2 \in \Gamma^k$ , then

$$\gamma_1(t)\gamma_2(t)\gamma_1^{-1}(t)\gamma_2^{-1}(t) = w(t^2)$$

for some  $w \in \Gamma^{4k}$ , and

$$w'(0) = [\gamma_1'(0), \gamma_2'(0)]$$

(see [KN], Appendix 4). On the other hand, if  $\gamma_1, \dots, \gamma_n \in \Gamma^k$ , then  $\gamma_1 \cdot \dots \cdot \gamma_n \in \Gamma^{kn}$  and  $(\gamma_1 \cdot \dots \cdot \gamma_n)'(0) = \gamma_1'(0) + \dots + \gamma_n'(0)$ . Hence,

$$S_1 + \langle [S_1, S_1] \rangle \subset S_{4n},$$

$$S_{4n} + \langle [S_{4n}, S_{4n}] \rangle \subset S_{(4n)^2},$$

$$S_{(4n)^2} + \langle [S_{(4n)^2}, S_{(4n)^2}] \rangle \subset S_{(4n)^3},$$

and so on. Since  $\dim(\mathcal{G}) = n$  we get that after  $n$  steps, that  $S_{(4n)^n}$  must be a Lie subalgebra of  $\mathcal{G}$ .

LEMMA A1.  $S_{(4n)^n} = \mathcal{G}$ .

*Proof.* Let  $f \in F$  and let  $\gamma \in \Gamma^1$  with  $\gamma(t_0) = f$  for some  $t_0 \in [0, \epsilon_\gamma)$ . Then, for each  $s_0 \in [0, \epsilon_\gamma)$ ,

$$\bar{\gamma} := (t \mapsto \gamma^{-1}(s_0)\gamma(t + s_0)) \in \Gamma^2$$

(cf. [KN], Appendix 4) and therefore  $\bar{\gamma}'(0) \in S_2 \subset S_{(4n)^n}$ . Hence,  $\bar{\gamma}$  is a  $C^1$  curve which lies in the left invariant distributions of  $G$  defined by  $S_{(4n)^n}$ . Since  $\bar{\gamma}(0) = e$  we get that  $\gamma(t_0) \in H$ , where  $H$  is the Lie subgroup of  $G$  corresponding to  $S_{(4n)^n}$ . Since  $F$  generates  $G$  we get  $H = G$  and hence  $S_{(4n)^n} = \mathcal{G}$ . □

LEMMA A2.  $F^{(4n)^n \cdot n}$  contains a neighborhood of  $e$  in  $G$ .

*Proof.* (cf. [KN], Appendix 4). Let  $\gamma_1, \dots, \gamma_n \in \Gamma^{(4n)^n}$  be such that  $\gamma'_1(0), \dots, \gamma'_n(0)$  is a basis of  $\mathcal{G}$ . We may assume that  $\gamma_i : [0, \epsilon) \rightarrow F^{(4n)^n}$  and define  $\bar{\gamma}_i : (-\epsilon, \epsilon) \rightarrow F^{(4n)^n}$  by

$$\bar{\gamma}_i(t) = \begin{cases} \gamma_i(t), & \text{if } t \in [0, \epsilon) \\ \gamma_i^{-1}(-t), & \text{if } t \in (-\epsilon, 0]. \end{cases}$$

Clearly,  $\bar{\gamma}_i$  is  $C^1$  ( $i = 1, \dots, n$ ) and  $(s_1, \dots, s_n) \mapsto \bar{\gamma}_1(s_1) \dots \bar{\gamma}_n(s_n)$  defines a coordinate system of  $G$  near  $e$ . Since  $\bar{\gamma}_1(s_1) \dots \bar{\gamma}_n(s_n) \in F^{(4n)^n \cdot n}$  we get that  $F^{(4n)^n \cdot n}$  contains a neighborhood of  $e$  in  $G$ . □

Now let  $(M, \langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle)$  be a Riemannian manifold,  $p \in M$ , and let  $\Phi^{loc}$  denote the local holonomy group at  $p$ . Let  $\epsilon$  be such that  $exp_p : B_{4\epsilon}^E(0) \rightarrow B_{4\epsilon}(p)$  is a diffeomorphism, where  $B^E$  denotes euclidean balls in  $T_p M$  and  $B$  balls in  $M$ . We may assume that the holonomy group of  $B_{4\epsilon}(p)$  is  $\Phi^{loc}$ . In  $B_{3\epsilon}(p)$  we have also the Euclidean metric  $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_E$  induced by  $exp_p : B_{3\epsilon}^E(0) \rightarrow B_{3\epsilon}(p)$ .

We have that there exist  $\alpha, \beta \in \mathbb{R}, 0 < \alpha, \beta \leq 1$  such that

$$\beta \text{ length}(c) \leq \text{length}_E(c) \leq \alpha^{-1} \text{ length}(c) \tag{I}$$

for all piecewise  $C^1$ -curves in  $B_{3\epsilon}(p)$ .

For each  $0 < r < \epsilon$  let  $A_r$  (resp.  $A_r^E$ ) be the set of piecewise  $C^1$  loops through  $p$  of length (resp. Euclidean length) less than  $r$ . Let  $P_r$  (resp.  $P_r^E$ ) denote the set of all parallel transports along loops in  $A_r$  (resp.  $A_r^E$ ).

From (I) we get

$$A_{\alpha r} \subset A_r^E, \quad A_{\beta r}^E \subset A_r \tag{II}$$

and hence

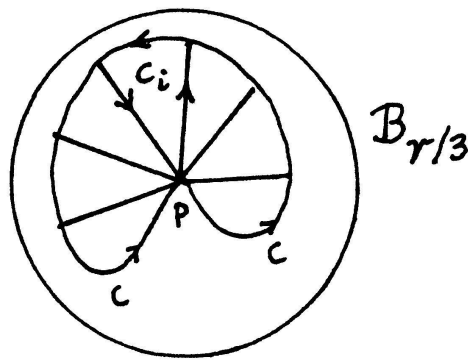
$$P_{\alpha r} \subset P_r^E, \quad P_{\beta r}^E \subset P_r. \tag{III}$$

LEMMA A3. For all  $r \in (0, \epsilon)$ ,  $P_r$  (resp.  $P_r^E$ ) generates algebraically  $\Phi^{loc}$ .

*Proof.* Let  $c : [0, 1] \rightarrow B_{r/3}$  be piecewise  $C^1$  with  $c(0) = p = c(1)$ . Then there exist piecewise  $C^1$ -curves  $c_1, \dots, c_k : [0, 1] \rightarrow B_{r/3}$  with  $c_1(0) = c_1(1) = \dots = c_k(0) = c_k(1) = p$  and such that

- (i)  $\tau_c = \tau_{c_k} \circ \tau_{c_{k-1}} \circ \dots \circ \tau_{c_1}$ , where  $\tau$  denotes parallel transport.
- (ii)  $\text{length}(c_i) \leq r$  for all  $i = 1, \dots, k$ .





Since the holonomy group of  $B_{r/3}$  is  $\Phi^{loc}$  we get that  $P_r$  generates  $\Phi^{loc}$ . From (III) we get now that  $P_r^E$  also generates  $\Phi^{loc}$ . □

**THEOREM.** For all  $r \in (0, \epsilon)$ ,  $P_r$  contains a neighborhood of  $e$  in  $\Phi^{loc}$ .

*Proof.* By (III) it suffices to show that  $P_r^E$  contains a neighborhood of  $e$  in  $\Phi^{loc}$ . Let  $m = (4n)^n \cdot n$ , where  $n = \dim(\Phi^{loc})$  (cf. Lemma A2). Then, by Lemma A3,  $P_{r/m}^E$  generates  $\Phi^{loc}$ . Let  $g \in P_{r/m}^E$  and let  $c : [0, 1] \rightarrow M$  belong to  $A_{r/m}^E$  such that  $g = \tau_c$ . Let, for  $s \in [0, 1]$ ,  $c_s : [0, 1] \rightarrow M$  be defined by  $c_s(t) = s \cdot c(t)$  (we identify  $B_{r/m}(p)$  with  $B_{r/m}^E(0)$ ). Then  $\text{length}_E(c_s) \leq \text{length}(c)$ .

If  $g_s = \tau_{c_s}$ , then  $(s \mapsto g_s)$  defines a  $C^1$  curve in  $P_{r/m}^E$ . We can now apply Lemma A2 to  $F = P_{r/m}^E$  in order to conclude that  $(P_{r/m}^E)^m$  contains a neighborhood of  $e$  in  $\Phi^{loc}$ . But  $(P_{r/m}^E)^m \subset P_r^E$ . Hence  $P_r^E$  contains a neighborhood of  $e$  in  $\Phi^{loc}$ . □

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