THE GEOMETRY OF 3-QUASI-SASAKIAN MANIFOLDS

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Abstract. 3-quasi-Sasakian manifolds were studied systematically by the authors in a recent paper as a suitable setting unifying 3-Sasakian and 3-cosymplectic geometries. This paper throws new light on their geometric structure which appears to be generally richer compared to the 3-Sasakian subclass. In fact, it turns out that they are multiply foliated by four distinct fundamental foliations. The study of the transversal geometries with respect to these foliations allows us to link the 3-quasi-Sasakian manifolds to the more famous hyper-Kähler and quaternionic-Kähler geometries. Furthermore, we strongly improve the splitting results previously obtained; we prove that any 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold of rank $4l + 1$ is 3-cosymplectic and any 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold of maximal rank is 3-$\alpha$-Sasakian.

1. Introduction

The well-known classes of 3-Sasakian and 3-cosymplectic manifolds belong to the wider family of almost 3-contact metric manifolds. Nevertheless, both classes sit also perfectly into the narrower class of 3-quasi-Sasakian manifolds which, as we will see, is a very natural framework for a unified study of the aforementioned geometries. A similar chain of inclusions takes place in the case of a single almost contact metric structure, whereas the class of quasi-Sasakian manifolds encloses both Sasakian and cosymplectic manifolds, but in the setting of 3-structures the interrelations between the triples of tensors produce key additional properties making the choice of the 3-quasi-Sasakian framework still more natural. 3-quasi-Sasakian manifolds were introduced long ago but their first systematic study was carried out by the authors in [6]. There, it was proven that in any 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold $(M, \phi, \xi, \eta, g)$ of dimension $4n + 3$ the vertical distribution $\mathcal{V}$ generated by the three Reeb vector fields is completely integrable determining a canonical totally geodesic and Riemannian foliation. The characteristic vector fields obey the commutation relations $[\xi, \zeta] = c\xi$ for any even permutation $(\alpha, \beta, \gamma)$ of $\{1, 2, 3\}$ and some $c \in \mathbb{R}$. Furthermore, it was shown that the ranks of the 1-forms $\eta_1, \eta_2, \eta_3$ coincide giving a single well-defined rank which falls into one of two possible families: $4l + 3$ or $4l + 1$ for some $0 \leq l \leq n$. A splitting theorem was proven for the manifolds in the first of the two families just for the case $c = 2$, under some additional hypotheses, while a sufficient condition for those of rank $4l + 1$ to be 3-cosymplectic was found. In this paper, the whole geometric structure of 3-quasi-Sasakian manifolds is enlightened. They appear to have in general an even richer structure compared to that of the more famous 3-Sasakian subclass. In fact, it turns out that they are multiply foliated by four distinct fundamental foliations, three of which become

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trivial in the case of 3-Sasakian manifolds. The study of the transversal geometries with respect to these foliations allows us to link 3-quasi-Sasakian manifolds to the more famous hyper-Kähler and quaternionic-Kähler geometries. Furthermore, we strongly improve the splitting results previously found, showing that any 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold of rank $4l + 3$ is locally the Riemannian product of a 3-α-Sasakian manifold and a hyper-Kähler manifold without any additional hypothesis. We obtain many additional properties of 3-quasi-Sasakian manifolds, characterizing those of minimal and maximal rank and we study Riemannian and Ricci curvature, determining exactly which 3-quasi-Sasakian manifolds are Einstein or $\eta$-Einstein. Some topological obstructions to the existence of 3-quasi-Sasakian structures on a given manifold are also found.

The article is organized as follows. In §2 we briefly recall the required preliminaries about almost contact metric geometry and 3-structures, the two pillars supporting 3-quasi-Sasakian geometry. The most relevant results already known about 3-quasi-Sasakian manifolds are also summarized. In the third section we mainly prove that all 3-quasi-Sasakian manifolds of rank $4l + 1$ are 3-cosymplectic. It follows that a 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold is Ricci-flat if and only if it is 3-cosymplectic. Such a corollary may be thought as an odd-dimensional analogue of the well-known fact that any quaternionic-Kähler manifold is Ricci-flat if and only if it is locally hyper-Kähler. §4 is devoted to the study of the complementary class: 3-quasi-Sasakian manifolds of rank $4l + 3$. We show that any 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold of maximal rank is 3-α-Sasakian (cf. [10]) and it is 3-Sasakian if and only if the constant $c$ in the commutators $[\xi_\alpha, \xi_\beta] = c\xi_\gamma$ is equal to 2. Some results concerning the Riemannian and sectional curvatures of 3-quasi-Sasakian manifolds of rank $4l + 3$ are also obtained. Finally, §5 contains the main results concerning the geometry of 3-quasi-Sasakian manifolds, shaped by the four fundamental foliations which we find out to be canonically associated to each of them. We start by analyzing the vertical foliation $\mathcal{V}$. The use of an adapted connection (cf. [7]) derived from the Bott connection allows us to show that the canonical transversal structure with respect to $\mathcal{V}$ is projectable (as a whole) and it is almost quaternionic-Hermitian. The projectability of each structure tensor $\phi_\alpha$ with respect to $\mathcal{V}$ is then shown to be equivalent to the integrability of the horizontal distribution. This happens if and only if the 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold $M$ has minimal rank 3 and in that case we prove that $M$ is locally the Riemannian product of a hyper-Kähler manifold and a three dimensional sphere. Next, we study a second fundamental integrable distribution, denoted by $\mathcal{E}^{4m}$ (where $m = n - l$), in any 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold of rank $4l + 3$. The leaves turn out to be hyper-Kähler while the leaf space is 3-α-Sasakian. Then, we prove that the integrability of the distribution $\mathcal{E}^{4m+3} = \mathcal{E}^{4m} \oplus \mathcal{V}$ gives rise to a foliation of $M$ in 3-quasi-Sasakian leaves of minimal rank whose leaf space has quaternionic-Kähler structure. In this way we generalize to the class of 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold a fundamental result proven by Ishihara [9] for 3-Sasakian manifolds with respect to the foliation $\mathcal{V}$ which turned out to be fundamental for the subsequent studies of C. P. Boyer, K. Galicki and many others giving to that class of manifolds their current relevance. Finally, in Theorem 5.6 we show that every 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold of rank $4l + 3$ admits a canonical transversal hyper-Kähler structure given by a foliation whose leaves are 3-α-Sasakian. As a very important corollary we are able to greatly improve the known splitting result obtained in [6].
We prove that any 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold of rank 4l + 3 is locally the Riemannian product of a 3-α-Sasakian manifold and a hyper-Kähler manifold. We do not make any assumption neither on the metric nor on the constant c. A number of notable consequences follow, among which the reduction of the structure group to \( Sp(m) \times Sp(l) \times I_3 \) and the existence of nine contact-symplectic pairs on any 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold of rank 4l + 3. It also allows us to compute the full Ricci tensor, proving that any 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold of rank 4l + 3 has positive scalar curvature and permits to determine which 3-quasi-Sasakian manifolds are Einstein or \( \eta \)-Einstein.

2. Preliminaries

An almost contact manifold is an odd-dimensional manifold \( M \) which carries a tensor field \( \phi \) of type \((1,1)\), a vector field \( \xi \), called characteristic or Reeb vector field, and a 1-form \( \eta \) satisfying \( \phi^2 = -I + \eta \otimes \xi \) and \( \eta(\xi) = 1 \), where \( I : TM \rightarrow TM \) is the identity mapping. From the definition it follows also that \( \phi \xi = 0 \), \( \eta \circ \phi = 0 \) and that the \((1,1)\)-tensor field \( \phi \) has constant rank \( 2n \) (cf. [2]). An almost contact manifold is said to be normal if the tensor field \( N^{(1)} = [\phi, \phi] + 2d\eta \otimes \xi \) vanishes identically. It is known that any almost contact manifold \((M,\phi,\xi,\eta)\) admits a Riemannian metric \( g \) such that \( g(\phi \cdot, \phi \cdot) = g(\cdot, \cdot) - \eta \otimes \eta \) holds. This metric, in general not unique, is called a compatible metric and the manifold \( M \) together with the structure \((\phi, \xi, \eta, g)\) is called an almost contact metric manifold. As an immediate consequence one has \( \eta = g(\xi, \cdot) \). The 2-form \( \Phi \) on \( M \) defined by \( \Phi(X,Y) = g(X,\phi Y) \) is called the fundamental 2-form of the almost contact metric manifold \( M \). The following formula gives the expression of the covariant derivative of \( \phi \) in terms of the remaining structure tensors in any almost contact metric manifold (2) and it will be useful in the sequel,

\[
2g((\nabla_X \phi)Y,Z) = 3d\Phi(X,\phi Y,\phi Z) - 3d\Phi(X,Y,Z) + g(N^{(1)}(Y,Z),\phi X) + N^{(2)}(Y,Z)\eta(X) + 2d\eta(\phi Y, X)\eta(Z) - 2d\eta(\phi Z, X)\eta(Y),
\]

(2.1)

where \( N^{(2)} \) is the tensor defined by \( N^{(2)}(X,Y) = (\mathcal{L}_X \eta)(Y) - (\mathcal{L}_Y \eta)(X) \) (cf. [2]).

Almost contact metric manifolds such that both \( \eta \) and \( \Phi \) are closed are called almost cosymplectic manifolds and almost contact metric manifolds such that \( d\eta = \Phi \) are called contact metric manifolds. Finally, a normal almost cosymplectic manifold is called a cosymplectic manifold and a normal contact metric manifold is said to be a Sasakian manifold.

The notion of quasi-Sasakian structure, introduced by D. E. Blair in [3], unifies those of Sasakian and cosymplectic structures. A quasi-Sasakian manifold is a normal almost contact metric manifold such that \( d\Phi = 0 \). A quasi-Sasakian manifold \( M \) (or more generally an almost contact manifold) of dimension \( 2n + 1 \) is said to be of rank \( 2p \) (for some \( p \leq n \)) if \( (d\eta)^p \neq 0 \) and \( \eta \wedge (d\eta)^p = 0 \) on \( M \), and to be of rank \( 2p + 1 \) if \( \eta \wedge (d\eta)^p \neq 0 \) and \( (d\eta)^{p+1} = 0 \) on \( M \) (cf. [3] [20]). It was proven in [3] that there are no quasi-Sasakian manifolds of even rank. Let the rank of \( M \) be \( 2p + 1 \). Then, the tangent bundle of \( M \) splits into two subbundles as follows:

\[
TM = \mathcal{E}^{2p+1} \oplus \mathcal{E}^{2p}, \quad p + q = n,
\]

and \( \mathcal{E}^{2p+1} = \mathcal{E}^{2p} \oplus \langle \xi \rangle \), \( \mathcal{E}^{2p} \) being the orthogonal complement of \( \mathcal{E}^{2q} \oplus \langle \xi \rangle \) in \( TM \). These distributions satisfy \( \phi \mathcal{E}^{2p} = \mathcal{E}^{2p} \) and \( \phi \mathcal{E}^{2q} = \mathcal{E}^{2q} \) (cf. [20]). Notice that for
all \( x \in M \) the subspace \( \mathcal{E}_x^{2q} \) coincides with the characteristic system defined by E. Cartan in [8] for an arbitrary differential form. The class of a differential form is one of the integral invariants defined by Cartan. The codimension \( 2p + 1 \) of \( \mathcal{E}_x^{2q} \) is called by Cartan the class of \( \eta \) in \( x \). It is easy to verify that when the class of \( \eta \) is constant the characteristic system has constant rank in any point and the determined distribution is integrable. This is the case in all important examples of quasi-Sasakian manifolds, such as Sasakian and cosymplectic manifolds. Thus, we will only consider, as Blair and Tanno implicitly did, quasi-Sasakian manifolds of constant class, i.e. of fixed (odd) rank. So, the rank of Blair and Tanno coincides with the class of Cartan.

Some useful properties of quasi-Sasakian manifolds will be now mentioned. For a quasi-Sasakian manifold we have the relation (cf. [17])

\[
(\nabla_x \phi) Y = -g(\nabla_x \xi, \phi Y) \xi - \eta(Y) \phi \nabla_x \xi,
\]

which generalizes the well-known conditions \( \nabla \phi = 0 \) and \( (\nabla_x \phi) Y = g(X, Y) \xi - \eta(Y) X \) characterizing respectively cosymplectic and Sasakian manifolds. The quasi-Sasakian condition reflects also in some properties of curvature and of the Reeb vector field. In fact we have the following results.

**Lemma 2.1** ([3], [17]). Let \((M, \phi, \xi, \eta, g)\) be a quasi-Sasakian manifold. Then

(i) the Reeb vector field \( \xi \) is Killing and its integral curves are geodesics;

(ii) the Ricci curvature in the direction of \( \xi \) is given by

\[
\text{Ric}(\xi) = \|\nabla \xi\|^2.
\]

We now come to the main topic of our paper, i.e. 3-quasi-Sasakian geometry, which is framed into the more general setting of almost 3-contact geometry. An *almost 3-contact manifold* is a \((4n + 3)\)-dimensional smooth manifold \( M \) endowed with three almost contact structures \((\phi_1, \xi_1, \eta_1), (\phi_2, \xi_2, \eta_2), (\phi_3, \xi_3, \eta_3)\) satisfying the following relations, for any even permutation \((\alpha, \beta, \gamma)\) of \(\{1, 2, 3\}\),

\[
\phi_\gamma = \phi_\alpha \phi_\beta - \eta_\beta \otimes \xi_\alpha = -\phi_\beta \phi_\alpha + \eta_\alpha \otimes \xi_\beta,
\]

\[
\xi_\gamma = \phi_\alpha \xi_\beta = -\phi_\beta \xi_\alpha, \quad \eta_\gamma = \eta_\alpha \phi_\beta = -\eta_\beta \phi_\alpha.
\]

This notion was introduced by Y. Y. Kuo ([15]) and, independently, by C. Udriste ([22]). In [15] Kuo proved that given an almost contact 3-structure \((\phi_\alpha, \xi_\alpha, \eta_\alpha)\), there exists a Riemannian metric \( g \) compatible with each of them and hence we can speak of *almost contact metric 3-structures*. It is well known that in any almost 3-contact metric manifold the Reeb vector fields \( \xi_1, \xi_2, \xi_3 \) are orthonormal with respect to the compatible metric \( g \) and that the structural group of the tangent bundle is reducible to \( Sp(n) \times I_3 \). Moreover, by putting \( \mathcal{H} = \bigcap_{\alpha=1}^3 \ker(\eta_\alpha) \) one obtains a \( 4n \)-dimensional distribution on \( M \) and the tangent bundle splits as the orthogonal sum \( TM = \mathcal{H} \oplus \mathcal{V} \), where \( \mathcal{V} = \langle \xi_1, \xi_2, \xi_3 \rangle \). We will call any vector belonging to the distribution \( \mathcal{H} \) horizontal and any vector belonging to the distribution \( \mathcal{V} \) vertical. An almost 3-contact manifold \( M \) is said to be *hyper-normal* if each almost contact structure \((\phi_\alpha, \xi_\alpha, \eta_\alpha)\) is normal.

A *3-quasi-Sasakian manifold* is, by definition, an almost 3-contact metric manifold such that each structure \((\phi_\alpha, \xi_\alpha, \eta_\alpha, g)\) is quasi-Sasakian. Important subclasses of the above defined class are the well-known 3-Sasakian and 3-cosymplectic manifolds. Many results about 3-quasi-Sasakian manifolds have been found in [6].
The Riemannian curvature satisfies

\[ \text{Theorem 2.3} \]

According to Theorem 2.2, the geometry of 3-quasi-Sasakian manifolds with \( c = 0 \) and those with \( c \neq 0 \), is very different. This can be seen, for instance, in the notion of the “rank” of a 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold, which is well defined due to the following theorem.

\[ \text{Theorem 2.3} \]

Now we collect some results on 3-quasi-Sasakian manifolds, which we will use in the sequel. As before, we refer the reader to [6] for the details.

\[ \text{Proposition 2.4.} \]

Finally, for the Levi Civita connection of a 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold, we have

\[ \nabla_{\xi_\alpha}\xi_\alpha = 0 \] and \( \nabla_{\xi_\alpha}\xi_\beta = \frac{2}{3}\xi_\gamma \) for any even permutation \((\alpha, \beta, \gamma)\) of \( \{1, 2, 3\}\). Hence, the Riemannian curvature satisfies

\[ R(\xi_\alpha, \xi_\beta)\xi_\beta = \frac{c^2}{4}\xi_\alpha \quad \text{and} \quad R(\xi_\alpha, \xi_\beta)\xi_\gamma = 0 \]

for an even permutation \((\alpha, \beta, \gamma)\) of \( \{1, 2, 3\} \).

\[ 3. \text{Further results on 3-quasi-Sasakian manifolds} \]

In the following we will use the notation \( \mathcal{E}^{4m} := \{X \in \mathcal{H} \mid i_X d\eta_\alpha = 0 \text{ for some } \alpha \in \{1, 2, 3\}\} \), while \( \mathcal{E}^{4l} \) will be the orthogonal complement of \( \mathcal{E}^{4m} \) in \( \mathcal{H} \), \( \mathcal{E}^{4l+3} := \mathcal{E}^{4l} \oplus \mathcal{V} \), and \( \mathcal{E}^{4m+3} := \mathcal{E}^{4m} \oplus \mathcal{V} \). It is easy to see that \( \phi_\alpha(\mathcal{E}^{4m}) = \mathcal{E}^{4m} \) and \( \phi_\alpha(\mathcal{E}^{4l}) = \mathcal{E}^{4l} \) for each \( \alpha \in \{1, 2, 3\} \). Note also that, regarding to the definition of \( \mathcal{E}^{4m} \), if for a horizontal vector \( X i_X d\eta_\alpha = 0 \text{ for some } \alpha \in \{1, 2, 3\} \), then by Lemma 5.4 in [6] \( i_X d\eta_\delta = 0 \) for any \( \delta \in \{1, 2, 3\} \). We remark that in the case of 3-quasi-Sasakian manifolds of rank \( 4l + 3 \) the distribution \( \mathcal{E}^{4m} \) is integrable since it coincides with the distribution defined by the characteristic systems of any form \( \eta_\alpha \) which is of constant rank (see the proof of Theorem 5.5 in [6] for details). In the case of 3-quasi-Sasakian manifolds of rank \( 4l + 1 \) the characteristic systems of the forms \( \eta_\alpha \) define three integrable distributions, given by \( \langle \xi_\alpha, \xi_\beta \rangle \oplus \mathcal{E}^{4m} \), for any \( \alpha \neq \beta \).
Now, according to [0], we define for each \( \alpha \in \{1, 2, 3\} \) two tensor fields of type \((1, 1)\) \( \psi_\alpha \) and \( \theta_\alpha \) on \( M \). We put, for a 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold of rank \( 4l + 3 \),

\[
\psi_\alpha X = \begin{cases} 
\phi_\alpha X, & \text{if } X \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^{4l+3}); \\
0, & \text{if } X \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^{4m});
\end{cases}
\]
and for a 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold of rank \( 4l + 1 \),

\[
\psi_\alpha X = \begin{cases} 
\phi_\alpha X, & \text{if } X \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^{4l}); \\
0, & \text{if } X \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^{4m+3});
\end{cases}
\]

and \( \theta_\alpha \) is the Levi Civita connection associated to the compatible metric \( \bar{g} \) on \( M \) setting

\[
\bar{g} (X, Y) = \begin{cases} 
-\delta \eta_\alpha (X, \phi_\alpha Y), & \text{for } X, Y \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^{4l}); \\
g (X, Y), & \text{elsewhere}.
\end{cases}
\]

Note that this definition is well posed by virtue of (iv) of Proposition 2.4. The metric \( \bar{g} \) is in fact a compatible metric and \( (\phi_\alpha, \xi_\alpha, \eta_\alpha, \bar{g}) \) is a normal almost 3-contact metric structure, in general non-3-quasi-Sasakian (cf. [0]). Concerning the Levi Civita connection \( \bar{\nabla} \) of the metric \( \bar{g} \) we prove the following useful formula.

**Proposition 3.1.** With the notation above, one has in a 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold

\[
\bar{\nabla}_X \xi_\alpha = -\psi_\alpha X
\]

for any \( X \in \Gamma(\mathcal{H}) \) and \( \alpha \in \{1, 2, 3\} \).

**Proof.** In the case \( c = 0 \) the result is an immediate consequence of Lemma 2.3 in [20]. As for the case \( c \neq 0 \), using the same Lemma, we have

\[
\bar{\nabla}'_X \xi_\alpha = -\psi'_\alpha X,
\]

where

\[
\psi'_\alpha X = \begin{cases} 
\phi_\alpha X, & \text{if } X \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^{4l} \oplus \langle \xi_\beta, \xi_\gamma \rangle); \\
0, & \text{if } X \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^{4m} \oplus \langle \xi_\alpha \rangle)
\end{cases}
\]

and \( \bar{\nabla}'_X \) is the Levi Civita connection associated to the compatible metric \( \bar{g}'_\alpha \) defined by

\[
\bar{g}'_\alpha (X, Y) = \begin{cases} 
-\delta \eta_\alpha (X, \phi_\alpha Y), & \text{for } X, Y \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^{4l} \oplus \langle \xi_\beta, \xi_\gamma \rangle); \\
g (X, Y), & \text{elsewhere}.
\end{cases}
\]

Note that \( \psi_\alpha = \psi'_\alpha \) on \( \Gamma(\mathcal{H}) \). Now, considering \( X \in \Gamma(\mathcal{H}) \), we prove that

\[
\bar{\nabla}'_X \xi_\alpha = \bar{\nabla}_X \xi_\alpha.
\]

It should be noted that the metric \( \bar{g}'_\alpha \), as well as \( \bar{g} \), preserves the orthogonal decomposition \( TM = \mathcal{H} \oplus \mathcal{V} \), whereas \( \xi_1, \xi_2, \xi_3 \) are only orthonormal and not orthonormal with respect to \( \bar{g}'_\alpha \); indeed \( \bar{g}'_\alpha (\xi_\beta, \xi_\beta) = \bar{\xi}_\beta \). Then \( \bar{g}|_{\mathcal{H} \times \mathcal{H}} = \bar{g}'_\alpha |_{\mathcal{H} \times \mathcal{H}} \) and \( \bar{g}|_{\mathcal{H} \times \mathcal{V}} = \bar{g}'_\alpha |_{\mathcal{H} \times \mathcal{V}} \). Now, in order to prove (3.3) we show preliminarily that \( \bar{\nabla}'_X \xi_\alpha, \bar{\nabla}_X \xi_\alpha \in \Gamma(\mathcal{H}) \). Indeed,

\[
2\bar{g}_\alpha (\bar{\nabla}'_X \xi_\alpha, \xi_\delta) = X(\bar{g}'_\alpha (\xi_\alpha, \xi_\delta)) + \xi_\alpha (\bar{g}'_\alpha (\xi_\delta, X)) - \xi_\delta (\bar{g}'_\alpha (\xi_\alpha, X)) + \bar{g}_\alpha (X, \xi_\alpha, \xi_\delta) + \bar{g}_\alpha ([\xi_\delta, X], \xi_\alpha) - \bar{g}_\alpha ([\xi_\alpha, \xi_\delta], X) = 0,
\]
since \( \bar{g}'_{\alpha}(\xi_{\alpha}, \xi_{\delta}) \) is constant, \( [\xi_{\delta}, \Gamma(H)] \subset \Gamma(H) \) for any \( \delta \), and \( V \) is integrable. Analogously, \( \bar{g}_{\alpha}(\nabla X_{\alpha}, \xi_{\delta}) = 0 \). Then, using the definitions of \( \bar{g} \) and \( \bar{g}'_{\alpha} \), we have that for any \( X, Y \in \Gamma(H) \),

\[
2\bar{g}(\nabla X_{\alpha} - \nabla'_{\alpha}X_{\alpha}, Y) = X(\bar{g}(\xi_{\alpha}, Y)) + \xi_{\alpha}(\bar{g}(X, Y)) - Y(\bar{g}(\xi_{\alpha}, X)) + \bar{g}([X, \xi_{\alpha}], Y) + \bar{g}([Y, \xi_{\alpha}], X) - \bar{g}'_{\alpha}(\xi_{\alpha}, Y) - \bar{g}'_{\alpha}(\xi_{\alpha}, Y) + \bar{g}'_{\alpha}(\xi_{\alpha}, Y) + \bar{g}'_{\alpha}(\xi_{\alpha}, Y) - \bar{g}(\xi_{\alpha}, X) - \xi_{\alpha}(\bar{g}(X, Y)) - \bar{g}'_{\alpha}(\xi_{\alpha}, Y) - \bar{g}'_{\alpha}(\xi_{\alpha}, Y) = X(\bar{g}(\xi_{\alpha}, Y)) + \bar{g}([X, \xi_{\alpha}], Y) + \bar{g}([Y, \xi_{\alpha}], X)\]

Therefore we have that \( \nabla X_{\alpha} = \nabla'_{\alpha}X_{\alpha} = -\psi'_{\alpha}X = -\psi_{\alpha}X \) and (3.1) is proved. \( \square \)

**Lemma 3.2.** In any 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold we have, for a cyclic permutation \((\alpha, \beta, \gamma)\) of \( \{1, 2, 3\} \),

\[
(3.4) \quad L_{\xi_{\alpha}}d\eta_{\beta} = c_{\alpha}d\eta_{\gamma},
\]

**Proof.** From the Cartan formula for the Lie derivative it follows that \( L_{\xi_{\alpha}}d\eta_{\beta} = i_{\xi_{\alpha}}d\eta_{\beta} + di_{\xi_{\alpha}}d\eta_{\beta} = di_{\xi_{\alpha}}d\eta_{\beta} \), so that it is enough to compute \( i_{\xi_{\alpha}}d\eta_{\beta} \). By (i) of Proposition 2.4, we have, for any \( X \in \Gamma(H) \),

\[
(i_{\xi_{\alpha}}d\eta_{\beta})(X) = 2d\eta_{\beta}(\xi_{\alpha}, X) = 0 = c_{\alpha}\eta_{\gamma}(X).
\]

Now, distinguishing the cases \( c = 0 \) and \( c \neq 0 \), one can verify that \( i_{\xi_{\alpha}}d\eta_{\beta} = c_{\alpha}\eta_{\gamma} \) also holds on \( \Gamma(V) \), thus getting the result. \( \square \)

**Lemma 3.3.** For any \( X \in \Gamma(H) \) and \( Y \in \Gamma(E^{4m}) \) we have \( [X, Y] \in \Gamma(H) \).

**Proof.** For any \( \alpha \in \{1, 2, 3\} \) one has \( \eta_{\alpha}([X, Y]) = -2d\eta_{\alpha}(X, Y) = (i_{X}d\eta_{\alpha})(X) = 0 \), since \( Y \in \Gamma(E^{4m}) \). Hence \( [X, Y] \in \bigcap_{\alpha=1}^{3} \ker(\eta_{\alpha}) = H. \) \( \square \)

**Lemma 3.4.** Let \((M^{4n+3}, \phi_{\alpha}, \xi_{\alpha}, \eta_{\alpha}, g)\) be a 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold. Then the Reeb vector fields are infinitesimal automorphisms with respect to the distributions \( E^{4d} \) and \( E^{4m} \).

**Proof.** Let us assume \( c \neq 0 \). Fixing \( \alpha \in \{1, 2, 3\} \), by Lemma 2.2 in [20] we have that \( [\xi_{\alpha}, \Gamma(E^{4d})] \subset \Gamma(E^{4d} \oplus \langle \xi_{\beta}, \xi_{\gamma} \rangle) \) and \( [\xi_{\alpha}, \Gamma(E^{4m})] \subset \Gamma(E^{4m}) \). Then the result follows from (ii) of Proposition 2.3. Analogously one obtains the claim for \( c = 0 \).

**Proposition 3.5.** In any 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold we have

\[
(3.5) \quad L_{\xi_{\alpha}}\phi_{\beta} = c_{\alpha}\psi_{\gamma},
\]

for any cyclic permutation \((\alpha, \beta, \gamma)\) of \( \{1, 2, 3\} \).

**Proof.** That (3.5) holds on \( V \) follows immediately from a direct computation and from the definitions of the tensors \( \psi_{\alpha} \). Next, for any \( X \in \Gamma(H) \) we have

\[
(L_{\xi_{\alpha}}\phi_{\beta})X = [\xi_{\alpha}, \phi_{\beta}X] - \phi_{\beta} [\xi_{\alpha}, X] = \nabla_{\xi_{\alpha}}\phi_{\beta}X - \nabla_{\phi_{\beta}X}\xi_{\alpha} - \phi_{\beta} \nabla_{\xi_{\alpha}}X + \phi_{\beta} \nabla_{X}\xi_{\alpha} = (\nabla_{\xi_{\alpha}}\phi_{\beta})X - \nabla_{\phi_{\beta}X}\xi_{\alpha} + \phi_{\beta} \nabla_{X}\xi_{\alpha}.
\]
Now, using (2.1), we compute $\nabla \xi_\alpha \phi_\beta$. Taking into account the normality of the structure $(\phi_\beta, \xi_\alpha, \eta_\beta)$, (i) of Proposition 2.4 and the horizontality of $X$ we have

$$2\bar{g}(\nabla \xi_\alpha \phi_\beta(X), Y) = 3d\bar{\Phi}_\beta(\xi_\alpha, \phi_\beta X, \phi_\beta Y) - 3d\bar{\Phi}_\beta(\xi_\alpha, X, Y).$$

If $Y = \xi_\delta$ for some $\delta \in \{1, 2, 3\}$, by (ii) of Proposition 2.4 and the integrability of the distribution spanned by $\xi_1, \xi_2, \xi_3$, we have

$$3d\bar{\Phi}_\beta(\xi_\alpha, X, \xi_\delta) = \xi_\alpha(\bar{\Phi}_\beta(X, \xi_\delta)) + X(\bar{\Phi}_\beta(\xi_\delta, \xi_\alpha)) + \xi_\delta(\bar{\Phi}_\beta(\xi_\alpha, X))$$

and, in the same way, we find $3d\bar{\Phi}_\beta(\xi_\alpha, \phi_\beta X, \phi_\beta \xi_\delta) = 0$, so that $(\nabla \xi_\alpha \phi_\beta X) \in \Gamma(H)$. Now we prove that

$$\bar{g}(\nabla \xi_\alpha \phi_\beta X, Y) = (c - 2) \bar{g}(\psi_\gamma X, Y)$$

for every $X, Y \in \Gamma(H)$. Indeed, by (3.7) we have

$$2\bar{g}(\nabla \xi_\alpha \phi_\beta X, Y) = \xi_\alpha(\bar{\Phi}_\beta(\phi_\beta X, \phi_\beta Y)) + \phi_\beta X(\bar{\Phi}_\beta(\phi_\beta Y, \xi_\alpha))$$

$$+ \phi_\beta Y(\bar{\Phi}_\beta(\xi_\alpha, \phi_\beta X)) - \bar{\Phi}_\beta([\xi_\alpha, \phi_\beta X], \phi_\beta Y)$$

$$- \bar{\Phi}_\beta([\phi_\beta X, \phi_\beta Y], \xi_\alpha) - \bar{\Phi}_\beta([\phi_\beta Y, \xi_\alpha], \phi_\beta X)$$

$$- \xi_\alpha(\bar{\Phi}_\beta(X, Y)) - X(\bar{\Phi}_\beta(Y, \xi_\alpha)) - Y(\bar{\Phi}_\beta(\xi_\alpha, X))$$

$$+ \bar{\Phi}_\beta([\xi_\alpha, X], Y) + \bar{\Phi}_\beta([X, Y], \xi_\alpha) + \bar{\Phi}_\beta([Y, \xi_\alpha], X)$$

$$= \xi_\alpha(\bar{\Phi}_\beta(\phi_\beta X, \phi_\beta Y)) - \bar{\Phi}_\beta([\xi_\alpha, \phi_\beta X], \phi_\beta Y)$$

$$- \bar{\Phi}_\beta([\phi_\beta X, \phi_\beta Y], \xi_\alpha) - \bar{\Phi}_\beta([\phi_\beta Y, \xi_\alpha], \phi_\beta X)$$

$$- \xi_\alpha(\bar{\Phi}_\beta(X, Y)) + \bar{\Phi}_\beta([\xi_\alpha, X], Y)$$

$$+ \bar{\Phi}_\beta([X, Y], \xi_\alpha) + \bar{\Phi}_\beta([Y, \xi_\alpha], X).$$

Because of the $\bar{g}$-orthogonal decomposition $H = E^4 \oplus E^{4m}$ we can distinguish the cases $X, Y \in \Gamma(E^4)$, or $X \in \Gamma(E^4)$, $Y \in \Gamma(E^{4m})$, or $X \in \Gamma(E^{4m})$, $Y \in \Gamma(E^4)$, or $X, Y \in \Gamma(E^{4m})$. In the first case, taking into account that $\phi_\beta(\Gamma(E^4)) = E^4$ and $[\xi_\alpha, \Gamma(E^{4m})] \subset \Gamma(E^4)$ (cf. Lemma 3.4) we get

$$2\bar{g}(\nabla \xi_\alpha \phi_\beta X, Y) = (L_{\xi_\alpha} d\eta_\beta)(\phi_\beta X, \phi_\beta Y) + \eta_\gamma([\phi_\beta X, \phi_\beta Y])$$

$$- (L_{\xi_\alpha} d\eta_\beta)(X, Y) - \eta_\gamma([X, Y])$$

$$= (L_{\xi_\alpha} d\eta_\beta)(\phi_\beta X, \phi_\beta Y) - 2d\eta_\gamma(\phi_\beta X, \phi_\beta Y)$$

$$- (L_{\xi_\alpha} d\eta_\beta)(X, Y) + 2d\eta_\gamma(X, Y).$$

Continuing the computation and using Lemma 3.2 and (v) of Proposition 2.2, (3.10) becomes

$$2\bar{g}(\nabla \xi_\alpha \phi_\beta X, Y) = cd\eta_\gamma(\phi_\beta X, \phi_\beta Y) - 2d\eta_\gamma(\phi_\beta X, \phi_\beta Y) - cd\eta_\gamma(X, Y) + 2d\eta_\gamma(X, Y)$$

$$= 2(1 - c) d\eta_\gamma(X, Y) = 2(c - 2) \bar{g}(\psi_\gamma X, Y).$$

If we take $X \in \Gamma(E^4)$ and $Y \in \Gamma(E^{4m})$ then, due to the orthogonality between $E^4$ and $E^{4m}$, (3.9) reduces to

$$2\bar{g}(\nabla \xi_\alpha \phi_\beta X, Y) = - \bar{\Phi}_\beta([\phi_\beta X, \phi_\beta Y], \xi_\alpha) + \bar{\Phi}_\beta([X, Y], \xi_\alpha)$$

$$= \eta_\gamma([\phi_\beta X, \phi_\beta Y]) - \eta_\gamma([X, Y]) = 0$$

for every $X, Y \in \Gamma(H)$. Indeed, by (3.7) we have

$$2\bar{g}(\nabla \xi_\alpha \phi_\beta X, Y) = \xi_\alpha(\bar{\Phi}_\beta(\phi_\beta X, \phi_\beta Y)) + \phi_\beta X(\bar{\Phi}_\beta(\phi_\beta Y, \xi_\alpha))$$

$$+ \phi_\beta Y(\bar{\Phi}_\beta(\xi_\alpha, \phi_\beta X)) - \bar{\Phi}_\beta([\xi_\alpha, \phi_\beta X], \phi_\beta Y)$$

$$- \bar{\Phi}_\beta([\phi_\beta X, \phi_\beta Y], \xi_\alpha) - \bar{\Phi}_\beta([\phi_\beta Y, \xi_\alpha], \phi_\beta X)$$

$$- \xi_\alpha(\bar{\Phi}_\beta(X, Y)) - X(\bar{\Phi}_\beta(Y, \xi_\alpha)) - Y(\bar{\Phi}_\beta(\xi_\alpha, X))$$

$$+ \bar{\Phi}_\beta([\xi_\alpha, X], Y) + \bar{\Phi}_\beta([X, Y], \xi_\alpha) + \bar{\Phi}_\beta([Y, \xi_\alpha], X).$$

Because of the $\bar{g}$-orthogonal decomposition $H = E^4 \oplus E^{4m}$ we can distinguish the cases $X, Y \in \Gamma(E^4)$, or $X \in \Gamma(E^4)$, $Y \in \Gamma(E^{4m})$, or $X \in \Gamma(E^{4m})$, $Y \in \Gamma(E^4)$, or $X, Y \in \Gamma(E^{4m})$. In the first case, taking into account that $\phi_\beta(\Gamma(E^4)) = E^4$ and $[\xi_\alpha, \Gamma(E^{4m})] \subset \Gamma(E^4)$ (cf. Lemma 3.4) we get

$$2\bar{g}(\nabla \xi_\alpha \phi_\beta X, Y) = (L_{\xi_\alpha} d\eta_\beta)(\phi_\beta X, \phi_\beta Y) + \eta_\gamma([\phi_\beta X, \phi_\beta Y])$$

$$- (L_{\xi_\alpha} d\eta_\beta)(X, Y) - \eta_\gamma([X, Y])$$

$$= (L_{\xi_\alpha} d\eta_\beta)(\phi_\beta X, \phi_\beta Y) - 2d\eta_\gamma(\phi_\beta X, \phi_\beta Y)$$

$$- (L_{\xi_\alpha} d\eta_\beta)(X, Y) + 2d\eta_\gamma(X, Y).$$

Continuing the computation and using Lemma 3.2 and (v) of Proposition 2.2, (3.10) becomes

$$2\bar{g}(\nabla \xi_\alpha \phi_\beta X, Y) = cd\eta_\gamma(\phi_\beta X, \phi_\beta Y) - 2d\eta_\gamma(\phi_\beta X, \phi_\beta Y) - cd\eta_\gamma(X, Y) + 2d\eta_\gamma(X, Y)$$

$$= 2(1 - c) d\eta_\gamma(X, Y) = 2(c - 2) \bar{g}(\psi_\gamma X, Y).$$

If we take $X \in \Gamma(E^4)$ and $Y \in \Gamma(E^{4m})$ then, due to the orthogonality between $E^4$ and $E^{4m}$, (3.9) reduces to

$$2\bar{g}(\nabla \xi_\alpha \phi_\beta X, Y) = - \bar{\Phi}_\beta([\phi_\beta X, \phi_\beta Y], \xi_\alpha) + \bar{\Phi}_\beta([X, Y], \xi_\alpha)$$

$$= \eta_\gamma([\phi_\beta X, \phi_\beta Y]) - \eta_\gamma([X, Y]) = 0$$

for every $X, Y \in \Gamma(H)$. Indeed, by (3.7) we have
by Lemma 3.3. Since $\tilde{g}(\psi_\gamma X, Y) = 0$, we get (3.8). Next, arguing as above, one finds that (3.8) also holds for $X \in \Gamma(E_4^m)$ and $Y \in \Gamma(E_4^d)$. Finally, if $X, Y \in \Gamma(E_4^m)$, by the definition of $\tilde{g}$ and $d\Phi_\beta = 0$, one has

$$2\tilde{g}(\tilde{\nabla}_{\xi_\alpha} \phi_\beta) X, Y) = 3d\Phi_\beta(\xi_\alpha, \phi_\beta X, \phi_\beta Y) - 3d\Phi_\beta(\xi_\alpha, X, Y) = 0$$

which proves (3.8), since $\psi_\gamma X = 0$. Therefore we get that (3.11) $(\nabla_{\xi_\alpha} \Phi_\beta) X = (c - 2)\psi_\gamma X$ for any $X \in \Gamma(H)$. Continuing the computation in (3.6), we obtain, by virtue of (3.11) and (3.1),

$$(L_{\xi_\alpha} \Phi_\beta) X = (c - 2)\psi_\gamma X + \psi_\alpha \phi_\beta X - \phi_\beta \psi_\alpha X,$$

so that $(L_{\xi_\alpha} \phi_\beta) X = c\psi_\gamma X$ if $X \in \Gamma(E_4^d)$ and $(L_{\xi_\alpha} \phi_\beta) X = 0$ if $X \in \Gamma(E_4^m)$, from which the assertion follows.

Now we prove the first strong consequence of Proposition 3.5, namely that the only 3-quasi-Sasakian manifolds whose Reeb vector fields commute are the 3-cosymplectic manifolds. We need the following lemma.

Lemma 3.6. In any 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold we have

$$(\nabla_{\xi_\alpha} \phi_\beta) X, Y) = g(X, (L_{\xi_\alpha} \phi_\beta) Y).$$

for all $X, Y \in \Gamma(TM)$ and $\alpha, \beta \in \{1, 2, 3\}$.

Proof. The assertion follows immediately from the fact that each $\xi_\alpha$ is Killing. □

Theorem 3.7. Every 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold of rank $4l + 1$ is 3-cosymplectic.

Proof. Using (iii) of Proposition 2.4 and (3.12), we have

$$2d\eta_\alpha(X, Y) = (L_{\xi_\beta} \Phi_\gamma) X, Y) = g(X, (L_{\xi_\beta} \phi_\gamma) Y)$$

and the last term vanishes since, for $c = 0$, $L_{\xi_\beta} \phi_\gamma = 0$ due to Proposition 3.3. □

Corollary 3.8. Any 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold is Ricci-flat if and only if it is 3-cosymplectic.

Proof. That any 3-cosymplectic manifold is Ricci-flat it has been proven in [7]. Conversely, if a 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold $(M, \phi_\alpha, \xi_\alpha, \eta_\alpha, g)$ is Ricci-flat, then by (2.3) we get $\nabla_{\xi_\alpha} = 0$ for all $\alpha \in \{1, 2, 3\}$, hence $c = 0$. Thus applying Theorem 3.7 we get the result. □

It should be remarked that Corollary 3.8 may be thought as an odd-dimensional analogue of the well-known fact that any quaternionic-Kähler manifold is Ricci-flat if and only if it is (locally) hyper-Kähler.

4. 3-QUASI-SASAKIAN MANIFOLDS OF RANK $4l + 3$

We recall that an almost $\alpha$-Sasakian manifold\footnote{In the sequel by an abuse of notation we will use the same symbol $\alpha$ both as an index and for indicating an $\alpha$-Sasakian structure. The different meaning of this symbol will be clear by the context.} ([12]) is an almost contact metric manifold satisfying $d\eta = \alpha \Phi$ for some $\alpha \in \mathbb{R}^*$. An almost $\alpha$-Sasakian manifold
which is also normal is called an \(\alpha\)-Sasakian manifold. It is well known that an almost contact metric manifold is \(\alpha\)-Sasakian if and only if
\[
(\nabla_X \phi)Y = \alpha(g(X, Y)\xi - \eta(Y)X)
\]
holds for all \(X, Y \in \Gamma(TM)\), for some \(\alpha \in \mathbb{R}^*\). From (4.1) it follows also that
\[
\nabla_X \xi = -\alpha \phi X, \quad R(X, Y)\xi = \alpha^2(\eta(Y)X - \eta(X)Y).
\]
Since the fundamental 2-form of an \(\alpha\)-Sasakian manifold is exact (in particular closed) then the manifold is quasi-Sasakian.

Now consider an almost 3-contact metric manifold \((M, \phi_3, \xi_3, \eta_3, g)\) of dimension \(4n + 3\), such that each structure is \(\alpha\)-Sasakian, and suppose \(d\eta_\alpha = \alpha_\delta \Phi_\delta\) for any \(\delta \in \{1, 2, 3\}\). Then, as it has been showed in [14], \(\alpha_1 = \alpha_2 = \alpha_3 := a\), and we have
\[
[\xi_\alpha, \xi_\beta] = \nabla_{\xi_\alpha} \xi_\beta - \nabla_{\xi_\beta} \xi_\alpha = -a \phi_\beta \xi_\alpha + a \phi_\alpha \xi_\beta = 2a \xi_\gamma.
\]
Hence, \(M\) is 3-quasi-Sasakian with \(c = 2a\) and maximal rank \(4n + 3\). We will call an almost 3-contact metric manifold such that each structure is (almost) \(\alpha\)-Sasakian simply by a \((\text{almost})\ 3\alpha\)-Sasakian manifold.

An example of these manifolds is given by the sphere \(S^{4n+3}(r)\) of radius \(r\), considered as a hypersurface in \(\mathbb{H}^{n+1}\). Indeed, taking the quaternionic structure \((J_1, J_2, J_3)\) on \(\mathbb{H}^{n+1}\), one can define three vector fields on the sphere, \(\xi_\alpha = -J_\alpha \nu\), \(\nu\) being a unit normal of \(S^{4n+3}(r)\). Next, one defines the tensor fields \(\phi_\alpha\) of type \((1, 1)\) and the 1-forms \(\eta_\alpha\) by requiring that, for any vector field \(X\) tangent to the sphere, \(\phi_\alpha X\) and \(\eta_\alpha(X)\nu\) are respectively the tangential and the normal component of \(J_\alpha X\) to the sphere. Considering the induced Riemannian metric \(g\), one obtains an almost 3-contact metric structure \((\phi_\alpha, \xi_\alpha, \eta_\alpha, g)\) which is \(3\alpha\)-Sasakian, since it is hyper-normal and the fundamental 2-forms satisfy \(d\eta_\alpha = \frac{1}{r} \Phi_\alpha\).

We prove that, in fact, strictly almost \(3\alpha\)-Sasakian manifolds do not exist. This is a consequence of a generalization of the Hitchin Lemma, due to Kashiwada, which we now recall.

**Lemma 4.1** ([13]). Let \((M^{4n}, J_\alpha, G)\), \(\alpha \in \{1, 2, 3\}\), be an almost hyper-Hermitian manifold such that each fundamental 2-form \(\Omega_\alpha\) satisfies \(d\Omega_\alpha = 2\omega \wedge \Omega_\alpha\), for some 1-form \(\omega\). Then each \(J_\alpha\) is integrable.

**Proposition 4.2.** Every almost \(3\alpha\)-Sasakian manifold is necessarily \(3\alpha\)-Sasakian.

**Proof.** Let \((M, \phi_\alpha, \xi_\alpha, \eta_\alpha, g)\), \(\alpha \in \{1, 2, 3\}\), be an almost \(3\alpha\)-Sasakian manifold and let us consider on the product manifold \(M \times \mathbb{R}\) the almost Hermitian structures \(J_1, J_2, J_3\) defined by
\[
J_\alpha \left( X, f \frac{d}{dt} \right) = \left( \phi_\alpha X - f\xi_\alpha, \eta_\alpha (X) \frac{d}{dt} \right),
\]
for any vector field \(X\) on \(M\) and any smooth function \(f\) on \(M \times \mathbb{R}\), where we have denoted by \(t\) the global coordinate on \(\mathbb{R}\). A straightforward computation shows that \(J_\alpha J_\beta = -J_\beta J_\alpha = J_\gamma\) for an even permutation \((\alpha, \beta, \gamma)\) of \(\{1, 2, 3\}\). Moreover, it is simple to check that the Riemannian metric \(G = g + dt^2\) is compatible with respect to the hyper-complex structure \((J_1, J_2, J_3)\). Computing the expressions of the fundamental 2-forms we find
\[
\Omega_\alpha (X, Y) = \Phi_\alpha (X, Y), \quad \Omega_\alpha \left( X, \frac{d}{dt} \right) = -\eta_\alpha (X),
\]
for all $X, Y \in \Gamma(TM)$ and $\alpha \in \{1, 2, 3\}$. From (4.4) it follows that

\begin{equation}
\tag{4.5}
d\Omega_\alpha (X, Y, Z) = d\Phi_\alpha (X, Y, Z) = 0, \quad d\Omega_\alpha \left( X, Y, \frac{d}{dt} \right) = -\frac{2}{3} d\eta_\alpha (X, Y),
\end{equation}

for every $X, Y, Z \in \Gamma(TM)$. In particular, we have that, for each $\delta \in \{1, 2, 3\}$,

\begin{equation}
\tag{4.6}
d\eta_\alpha (X, Y) = \frac{c}{2} g(X, \psi_\alpha Y)
\end{equation}

for all $X, Y \in \Gamma(TM)$. Consequently, on $E^{4n+3}$,

\begin{equation}
\tag{4.7}
d\eta_\alpha = \frac{c}{2} \Phi_\alpha.
\end{equation}

**Proof.** Using (3.12) and (3.5), for all $X, Y, Z \in \Gamma(TM)$, we have

\begin{equation}
(\mathcal{L}_{\xi_\alpha} \Phi_\alpha)(X, Y) = g(X, (\mathcal{L}_{\xi_\alpha} \Phi_\alpha) Y) = cg(X, \psi_\alpha Y).
\end{equation}

On the other hand, by (iii) of Proposition 2.4, $\mathcal{L}_{\xi_\alpha} \Phi_\gamma = 2d\eta_\alpha$ from which (4.6) follows.

\textbf{Corollary 4.4.} Every 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold of maximal rank is necessarily 3-$\alpha$-Sasakian.

\textbf{Remark 4.5.} It should be emphasized that in general no analogue of Theorem 4.3 as well as of Corollary 4.4 holds for a quasi-Sasakian manifold. These properties are thus a special feature of 3-quasi-Sasakian manifolds (cf. [13, 20]).

\textbf{Corollary 4.6.} Let $(M, \phi_\alpha, \xi_\alpha, \eta_\alpha, g)$ be a 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold. Then for each $\alpha \in \{1, 2, 3\}$

\begin{equation}
\tag{4.8}
\nabla \xi_\alpha = -\frac{c}{2} \psi_\alpha.
\end{equation}

\textbf{Proof.} By Theorem 3.7 the assertion easily holds for $c = 0$, so that we can assume $c \neq 0$. Then by (2.1) we have $g((\nabla_X \phi_\alpha) \xi_\alpha, Z) = d\eta_\alpha (\phi_\alpha \xi_\alpha, X) \eta_\alpha (Z) - d\eta_\alpha (\phi_\alpha Z, X) \eta_\alpha (\xi_\alpha) = -d\eta_\alpha (\phi_\alpha Z, X)$, from which, applying (4.6), it follows that

\begin{equation}
\tag{4.9}
g(\nabla_X \phi_\alpha, Z) = -d\eta_\alpha (\phi_\alpha Z, X) = -\frac{c}{2} g(\psi_\alpha, X, \phi_\alpha Z).
\end{equation}

Therefore, taking into account the fact that $g(\nabla_X \xi_\alpha, \xi_\alpha) = 0 = -\frac{c}{2} g(\psi_\alpha X, \xi_\alpha)$, (4.8) is proved.

\textbf{Corollary 4.7.} In any 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold one has, for each $\alpha \in \{1, 2, 3\}$,

\begin{equation}
\nabla (\phi_\alpha X) = \frac{c}{2} (\eta_\alpha (Y) \psi^2_\alpha X - g (\psi^2_\alpha X, Y) \xi_\alpha),
\end{equation}

for any $X, Y \in \Gamma(TM)$. Consequently, for any $X \in \Gamma(TM)$ and $\alpha \neq \beta$,

\begin{equation}
\nabla (\xi_\alpha \phi_\beta) X = \frac{c}{2} (\eta_\beta(X) \xi_\alpha - \eta_\alpha(X) \xi_\beta).
\end{equation}
Corollary 4.8. In any 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold of rank $4l + 3$ the Riemannian curvature satisfies:

\begin{itemize}
  \item[(i)] $R(X,Y)\xi_\alpha = 0$ for any $X, Y \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^{4m})$ and $\alpha \in \{1, 2, 3\}$;
  \item[(ii)] $R(X,\xi_\beta)\xi_\alpha = 0$ for any $X \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^{4m})$ and $\alpha, \beta \in \{1, 2, 3\}$;
  \item[(iii)] $R(X,\xi_\alpha)\xi_\alpha = \frac{\beta}{4}X$ for any $X \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^{4l})$ and $\alpha \in \{1, 2, 3\}$;
  \item[(iv)] $R(X,\xi_\alpha)\xi_\alpha = 0$ for any $X \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^{4l})$ and $\alpha \neq \beta$.
\end{itemize}

Consequently, for the sectional curvatures we have $K(\xi_\alpha, X) = 0$ for any $X \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^{4m})$ and $K(\xi_\alpha, X) = \frac{\beta}{4}\|X\|^2$ for any $X \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^{4l})$.

Proof. All formulas are obtained by direct computations using (1.8) and the definition of $\psi_\alpha$. In (i) we also apply the integrability of the distribution $\mathcal{E}^{4m}$, while in (ii) we use the fact that each $\xi_\alpha$ is an infinitesimal automorphism with respect to the distributions $\mathcal{E}^{4m}$. As for (iv), a direct computation shows that $R(X,\xi_\beta)\xi_\alpha = \frac{\beta}{4}(\nabla_\beta\phi_\alpha)X$ for any $X \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^{4l})$ and $\alpha \neq \beta$. Applying (1.10), we get the result. \qed

5. Transverse Geometry of a 3-Quasi-Sasakian Manifold

In this section we prove that every 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold is canonically foliated by four Riemannian and totally geodesic foliations, which play a fundamental role in the study of 3-quasi-Sasakian geometry. In particular we study the leaf spaces of these foliations which, as we will see, greatly influence the Riemannian geometry of the 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold in question.

We start with the study of the 3-dimensional foliation $\mathcal{V}$ defined by the Reeb vector fields. Let $\nabla^B$ be the Bott connection associated to $\mathcal{V}$, that is the partial connection on the normal bundle $TM/\mathcal{V} \cong \mathcal{H}$ of $\mathcal{V}$ defined by

$$\nabla^B V := [V, Z]_\mathcal{H}$$

for all $V \in \Gamma(\mathcal{V})$ and $Z \in \Gamma(\mathcal{H})$, where the subscript $\mathcal{H}$ denotes the horizontal component. Following [21] we may construct an adapted connection on $\mathcal{H}$ putting

$$\nabla_X Y := \begin{cases} 
\nabla^B_X Y, & \text{if } X \in \Gamma(\mathcal{V}); \\
(\nabla_X Y)_\mathcal{H}, & \text{if } X \in \Gamma(\mathcal{H}).
\end{cases}$$

This connection can be also extended to a connection on all $TM$ by requiring that $\nabla_X \xi_\alpha = 0$ for each $\alpha \in \{1, 2, 3\}$. Some properties of this global connection have been considered in [7] for any almost 3-contact metric manifold. Now combining Theorem 2.2 with Theorem 3.6 in [7] we have:

Theorem 5.1. Let $(M, \phi_\alpha, \xi_\alpha, \eta_\alpha, g)$ be a 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold. Then there exists a unique connection $\nabla$ on $M$ satisfying the following properties:

\begin{itemize}
  \item[(i)] $\nabla_{\eta_\alpha} = 0, \nabla_{\xi_\alpha} = 0$, for each $\alpha \in \{1, 2, 3\}$,
  \item[(ii)] $\nabla g = 0$,
  \item[(iii)] $\mathcal{T}(X,Y) = 2 \sum_{\alpha=1}^{3} d\eta_\alpha(X,Y)\xi_\alpha$, for all $X,Y \in \Gamma(TM)$.
\end{itemize}

Furthermore, we have, for any cyclic permutation $(\alpha, \beta, \gamma)$ of $\{1, 2, 3\}$,

$$\nabla_X \phi_\alpha Y = -c(\eta_\beta(X)\psi_\gamma(Y_\mathcal{H}) - \eta_\gamma(X)\psi_\beta(Y_\mathcal{H})).$$
Theorem 3.6 of [7] guarantees the existence and the uniqueness of a linear connection $\tilde{\nabla}$ on $M$ such that $\tilde{\nabla}\xi_\alpha = 0$, $(\tilde{\nabla}_{ZY}) (X, Y) = 0$ for all $X, Y, Z \in \Gamma(\mathcal{H})$ and $\tilde{T}(X,Y) = 2\sum_{\delta=1}^{3}d\eta_\delta(X,Y)\xi_\alpha$. $\tilde{T}(X,\xi_\alpha) = 0$ for all $X,Y \in \Gamma(\mathcal{H})$. This connection is explicitly defined as above. Since each $\xi_\alpha$ is Killing we have that $\tilde{\nabla}$ is metric ([7]). Moreover, (i) of Proposition [2.3] implies that each 1-form $\eta_\alpha$ is $\tilde{\nabla}$-parallel and, for the torsion tensor field, $T(X,\xi_\alpha) = 0 = \sum_{\delta=1}^{3}2d\eta_\delta(X,\xi_\alpha)\xi_\delta$ for any $X \in \Gamma(\mathcal{H})$ (cf. [7]). Finally, from the integrability of $\mathcal{V}$ it follows also $T(\xi_\alpha,\xi_\beta) = [\xi_\beta,\xi_\alpha] = \sum_{\delta=1}^{3}2d\eta_\delta(\xi_\alpha,\xi_\beta)\xi_\delta$. It remains to check the final part of the statement. We prove that

$$\tag{5.1} \left(\tilde{\nabla}_X\phi_\alpha\right)Y = \begin{cases} 0, & \text{for } X \in \Gamma(\mathcal{H}) \text{ or } X = \xi_\alpha \text{ or } Y \in \Gamma(\mathcal{V}); \\ -c\psi_\alpha Y, & \text{for } X = \xi_\beta, Y \in \Gamma(\mathcal{H}) \text{ and } (\alpha,\beta,\gamma) \text{ cyclic}. \end{cases}$$

Firstly, since the Reeb vector fields are parallel with respect to $\tilde{\nabla}$, one has $(\tilde{\nabla}_X\phi_1)\xi_\alpha = 0$ for any $\alpha \in \{1,2,3\}$. Next, taking $X,Y \in \Gamma(\mathcal{H})$, using (2.2) we have

$$\left(\tilde{\nabla}_X\phi_1\right)Y = \left(\tilde{\nabla}_X\phi_1\right)Y - \phi_1(\tilde{\nabla}_X Y)Y$$

$$= \nabla_X\phi_1 Y - \sum_{\alpha=1}^{3}g(\nabla_X\phi_1 Y,\xi_\alpha)\phi_\alpha - \phi_1 \nabla_X Y + \sum_{\alpha=1}^{3}g(\nabla_X Y,\xi_\alpha)\phi_1 \xi_\alpha$$

$$= \nabla_X\phi_1 Y + \sum_{\alpha=1}^{3}g(\phi_1 Y,\nabla_X\xi_\alpha)\phi_\alpha + g(\nabla_X Y,\xi_\alpha)\phi_\alpha - g(\nabla_X Y,\xi_\alpha)\phi_1 \xi_\alpha$$

$$= -g(\nabla_X Y,\xi_\alpha)\phi_\alpha + g(\phi_1 Y,\nabla_X\xi_\alpha)\phi_\alpha + g(\phi_1 Y,\nabla_X\xi_\alpha)\phi_\alpha - g(\nabla_X Y,\xi_\alpha)\phi_1 \xi_\alpha$$

$$= -g(\phi_1 Y,\nabla_X\xi_\alpha)\phi_\alpha + g(\phi_1 Y,\nabla_X\xi_\alpha)\phi_\alpha - g(\phi_1 Y,\nabla_X\xi_\alpha)\phi_1 \xi_\alpha$$

Indeed, one has $\nabla_X\xi_\alpha = -\nabla_X\phi_1 \xi_\alpha = -\phi_1 \nabla_X\xi_\alpha$, since (2.2) and the facts that $\xi_1$ is Killing and $\mathcal{V}$ is totally geodesic imply $(\nabla_X Y,\xi_\alpha)\phi_\alpha = g(\nabla_X Y,\xi_\alpha)\phi_\alpha = -g(\nabla_X Y,\xi_\alpha)\phi_1 \xi_\alpha = 0$. Analogously, $\nabla_X\xi_\alpha = \phi_1 \nabla_X\xi_\alpha$. Finally, for any $Y \in \Gamma(\mathcal{H})$, by the definition of $\nabla$ and by (ii) of Proposition [2.3] one has

$$\left(\tilde{\nabla}_{\xi_1}\phi_1\right)Y = \nabla_{\xi_1} Y - \phi_1 \nabla_{\xi_1} Y = [\xi_1,\phi_1 Y] - \phi_1 [\xi_1, Y] = (L_{\xi_1}\phi_1) Y = 0.$$

Similarly, using also Proposition [5.5] we have $(\tilde{\nabla}_{\xi_\alpha}\phi_1)Y = (L_{\xi_\alpha}\phi_1) Y = -c\psi_3 Y$ and $(\tilde{\nabla}_{\xi_\alpha}\phi_1)Y = (L_{\xi_\alpha}\phi_1) Y = c\psi_2 Y$. We have thus proved (5.1). Now, decomposing any vector fields $\mathcal{X}$ and $\mathcal{Y}$ in their horizontal and vertical components one easily gets the claimed formula for $\tilde{\nabla}\phi_\alpha$. 

Using the constructions above, we prove the projectability of a 3-quasi-Sasakian structure. Indeed we know by Theorem [2.2] that a 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold $M$ of dimension $4n + 3$ is foliated by a 3-dimensional foliation $\mathcal{V}$ which, as we have seen, influences greatly the geometry of $M$. It can be very useful to know more about the space of leaves $M' = M/\mathcal{V}$ generated by this foliation, which is, under some assumptions of regularity, a $4n$-dimensional smooth manifold, more in general an orbifold. As $\mathcal{V}$ is a Riemannian foliation, the metric $g$ projects along the leaves onto a Riemannian metric $g'$ on $M'$. What we have to study is the (local) projectability of the tensor fields $\phi_\alpha$ or, more in general, of the subbundle of $\text{End}(TM)$ that they span. This question is solved by the following Theorem.

**Theorem 5.2.** Every 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold admits a canonical, projectable, transversal almost quaternionic-Hermitian structure.
Proof. Let \((M^{4n+3}, \phi_{\alpha}, \xi_{\alpha}, \eta_{\alpha}, g)\) be a 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold of rank \(4l + 3\). We first notice that the distributions \(\mathcal{E}^{4l}\) and \(\mathcal{E}^{4m}\) are foliated objects, i.e., they locally project along the leaves of \(\mathcal{V}\) onto two distributions on the space of leaves which we denote by \(\mathcal{E}^{4l}\) and \(\mathcal{E}^{4m}\), respectively. In order to prove this, let \(\pi\) be a local submersion defining the foliation \(\mathcal{V}\). We note that, as \(\mathcal{V}\) is a Riemannian foliation, \(\pi\) is in fact a Riemannian submersion. We have to prove that, given any two points \(x\) and \(y\) on the same fiber, one has
\[
\pi_{\ast x}(\mathcal{E}^{4l}_x) = \pi_{\ast y}(\mathcal{E}^{4l}_y), \quad \pi_{\ast x}(\mathcal{E}^{4m}_x) = \pi_{\ast y}(\mathcal{E}^{4m}_y).
\] (5.2)

Firstly observe that from Lemma 3.4 it follows immediately that the Bott connection preserves the distributions \(\mathcal{E}^{4l}\) and \(\mathcal{E}^{4m}\). In particular these distributions are preserved by the parallel transport along vertical curves. Now, let \(x, y \in M\) such that \(\pi(x) = x' = \pi(y)\) and let \(\gamma\) be a leaf curve such that \(\gamma(0) = x\) and \(\gamma(1) = y\). Let \(\tau\) denote the parallel transport with respect to the Bott connection along the curve \(\gamma\). Then we preliminarily prove that the following diagram commutes,

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\mathcal{E}^{4l}_x & \xrightarrow{\tau} & \mathcal{E}^{4l}_y \\
\pi_{\ast x} & & \pi_{\ast y} \\
T_x'M' & \xrightarrow{} & T_y'M'
\end{array}
\]

Indeed, let \(v \in \mathcal{E}^{4l}_x \subset H_x\) and \(X : I \to H\) be the unique vector field along \(\gamma\) such that \(\nabla^{B}_{\gamma} X \equiv 0\) and \(X(0) = v\), so that \(\tau(v) = X(1)\). Let \(Y'\) be any vector field on the base space and \(Y\) be the corresponding basic vector field on \(M\). Then we have
\[
\frac{d}{dt} g'(\pi_{\ast x(t)}(X(t)), Y'_{\pi(\gamma(t))}) = \frac{d}{dt} g'(\pi_{\ast x(t)}(X(t)), \pi_{\ast x(t)}(Y_{\gamma(t)}))
\]
\[
= \frac{d}{dt} g(X(t), Y_{\gamma(t)})
\]
\[
= g(\nabla^{B}_{\gamma} X, Y)_{\gamma(t)} + g(X, \nabla^{B}_{\gamma} Y)_{\gamma(t)}
\]
\[
= g(\nabla^{B}_{\gamma} X, Y)_{\gamma(t)} + g(X, \nabla^{B}_{\gamma} Y)_{\gamma(t)}
\]
\[
= g(X, \nabla^{B}_{\gamma} Y)_{\gamma(t)}.
\]

Now, as \(\gamma'(t) \in V_{\gamma(t)}\) for all \(t \in I\), \(\gamma' = \sum_{\alpha=1}^{3} f_{\alpha} \xi_{\alpha}\) for some functions \(f_{\alpha}\), hence
\[
\nabla^{B}_{\gamma'} Y = \sum_{\alpha=1}^{3} f_{\alpha} \nabla^{B}_{\xi_{\alpha}} Y = \sum_{\alpha=1}^{3} f_{\alpha} [\xi_{\alpha}, Y]_{\mathcal{H}} = 0
\]
because \(Y\) is assumed to be basic. Therefore
\[
g'_{\pi(\gamma(0))}(\pi_{\ast x(0)}(X(0)), Y'_{\pi(\gamma(0))}) = g'_{\pi(\gamma(1))}(\pi_{\ast x(1)}(X(1)), Y'_{\pi(\gamma(1))}),
\]
that is
\[
g'_{\ast x}(\pi_{\ast x}(v), Y'_{\ast y}) = g'_{\ast y}(\pi_{\ast y}(\tau(v)), Y'_{\ast y}).
\]

By the arbitrariness of \(Y'\) we conclude that \(\pi_{\ast x}(v) = (\pi_{\ast x} \circ \tau)(v)\). Thus \(\pi_{\ast x}(\mathcal{E}^{4l}) = \pi_{\ast x}(\mathcal{E}^{4l}_x) = \pi_{\ast y}(\mathcal{E}^{4l}_x)\) and arguing analogously for \(\mathcal{E}^{4m}\) one has \(\pi_{\ast y}(\mathcal{E}^{4m}) = \pi_{\ast y}(\mathcal{E}^{4m}_x)\). Hence (5.2) are proved and \(\mathcal{E}^{4l}, \mathcal{E}^{4m}\) project to well-defined distributions \(\mathcal{E}^{4l}, \mathcal{E}^{4m}\) which are also mutually orthogonal since the Riemannian metric \(g\) is bundle-like. We can now construct an almost quaternionic structure on the space of leaves \(M'\). By an abuse of notation we will denote, for each \(\alpha \in \{1, 2, 3\}\), by \(\psi_{\alpha}\) and \(\theta_{\alpha}\) the restriction of \(\phi_{\alpha}\) to \(\mathcal{E}^{4l}\) and \(\mathcal{E}^{4m}\), respectively. Let \(\mathcal{Q}\) be the subbundle
of $\text{End}(\mathcal{E}^{4l})$ spanned by $\psi_1, \psi_2, \psi_3$ and $\bar{Q}$ be the subbundle of $\text{End}(\mathcal{E}^{4m})$ spanned by $\theta_1, \theta_2, \theta_3$. For any $X \in \mathcal{E}^{4l}$ we have

$$(\nabla^B_{\xi} \psi_\beta) X = [\xi, \psi_\beta X]_H - \psi_\beta [\xi, X]_H = (\mathcal{L}_{\xi} \phi_\beta) X = c \psi_\beta X,$$

by Lemma 3.3 and Proposition 3.5. Thus the Bott connection preserves the subbundle $\bar{Q}$ and this guarantees the projectability of $\bar{Q}$ onto an almost quaternionic structure $\bar{Q}' \subset \text{End}(\mathcal{E}^{4l})$ on the space of leaves of the foliation $\mathcal{Y}$ (cf. [19]). For the subbundle $\bar{Q}$ we can prove something more, namely that each $\theta_\alpha$ is projectable. Indeed, for any $Y \in \mathcal{E}^{4m}$ we have

$$(\mathcal{L}_{\xi} \phi_\beta) Y = [\xi, \phi_\beta Y] - \phi_\beta [\xi, Y] = (\mathcal{L}_{\xi} \phi_\beta) Y = c \psi_\beta Y = 0$$

again by Lemma 3.4 and Proposition 3.5. Thus each $\theta_\alpha$ projects to a tensor field $\theta'_\alpha$ defined on $\mathcal{E}^{4m}$. Let us denote by $\bar{Q}'$ the subbundle of $\text{End}(\mathcal{E}^{4m})$ that is spanned by $\theta'_1, \theta'_2, \theta'_3$. Since $TM' = \mathcal{E}^{4l} \oplus \mathcal{E}^{4m}$, from $\bar{Q}'$ and $\bar{Q}$ we can define an almost quaternionic structure on $M'$ in the following way. Let $\psi'_1, \psi'_2, \psi'_3$ be a local basis for $\bar{Q}'$ defined on an open coordinate neighborhood $U'$. Then we define three tensor fields, on $U'$, by

$$\phi'_\alpha := \begin{cases} 
\psi'_\alpha, & \text{on } \mathcal{E}^{4l}, \\
\theta'_\alpha, & \text{on } \mathcal{E}^{4m}, 
\end{cases}$$

for each $\alpha \in \{1, 2, 3\}$. Let $Q'$ be the subbundle of $\text{End}(TM')$ spanned by $\phi'_1, \phi'_2, \phi'_3$. Since in the overlapping of two coordinate neighborhoods $U'$ and $V'$ the matrix of the components of the $\phi'_\alpha|_{U'}$ with respect to the $\phi'_\alpha|_{V'}$ has the form

$$
\begin{pmatrix}
A & 0 \\
0 & I_{4m}
\end{pmatrix}
$$

for some $A \in SO(4l)$, we conclude that $Q'$ defines an almost quaternionic-Hermitian structure on $M'$. $\square$

We now examine more explicitly the case when a 3-quasi-Sasakian structure projects (locally) onto a hyper-Kähler structure.

**Proposition 5.3.** Let $(M, \phi_\alpha, \xi_\alpha, \eta_\alpha, g)$ be a 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold of rank $4l + 3$. Then the following statements are equivalent:

(i) each structure tensor $\phi_\alpha$ is projectable with respect to $\mathcal{Y}$;

(ii) for all $\alpha \in \{1, 2, 3\}$ $d\eta_\alpha = 0$ on $\mathcal{H}$;

(iii) the horizontal subbundle $\mathcal{H}$ is integrable;

(iv) $M$ is locally a Riemannian product of a hyper-Kähler manifold and the 3-dimensional sphere of constant curvature $\frac{3}{4}$;

(v) $M$ is a 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold of rank 3.

Furthermore, if one of the above conditions holds, then the Ricci tensor of $M$ is given by

$$\text{Ric} = \frac{c^2}{2} (\eta_1 \otimes \eta_1 + \eta_2 \otimes \eta_2 + \eta_3 \otimes \eta_3),$$

hence $M$ is $\eta$-Einstein.

**Proof.** Each $\phi_\alpha$ is projectable if and only if $(\mathcal{L}_{\xi_\alpha} \phi_\alpha) X = 0$ for all $\beta \in \{1, 2, 3\}$ and $X \in \Gamma(\mathcal{H})$, which, by virtue of (3.12), is equivalent to the vanishing of $(\mathcal{L}_{\xi_\alpha} \Phi_\alpha)(X, Y)$ for all $\beta \in \{1, 2, 3\}$ and $X, Y \in \Gamma(\mathcal{H})$. This proves that (i) is equivalent to (ii). The equivalence of (ii), (iii) and (v) is obvious. In order to prove the equivalence of (iii) and (iv), let us assume the integrability of $\mathcal{H}$. Then, since $\mathcal{Y}$
defines a Riemannian foliation with totally geodesic leaves, \( M \) is a local Riemannian product of a manifold \( M^{4n} \) tangent to the distribution \( \mathcal{H} \) and a 3-dimensional manifold tangent to \( \mathcal{V} \), which is a space of constant curvature \( \frac{c^2}{4} \) by virtue of (2.5).

We denote by \( G \) the projection of the Riemannian metric \( g \) on \( M^{4n} \). The tensor fields \( \phi_1, \phi_2, \phi_3 \) project to three tensor fields \( J_1, J_2, J_3 \) on \( M^{4n} \) and it is easy to check that they satisfy the quaternionic relations. In fact \((J_\alpha, G)\) are almost Kähler structures which are integrable because \( N^4_\alpha = 0 \). Now, since \( M \) is a local Riemannian product of a hyper-Kähler manifold, which is Ricci-flat, and the sphere \( S^3(\frac{c^2}{4}) \) which is parallelized by the vector fields \( \xi_1, \xi_2, \xi_3 \), the Ricci tensor of \( M \) is given by (5.3), and \( M \) is \( \eta \)-Einstein. \( \square \)

Now we study the transverse geometry of a 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold with respect to three other different foliations: \( \mathcal{E}^{4m} \), \( \mathcal{E}^{4m+3} \) and \( \mathcal{E}^d \). We will prove that \( \mathcal{E}^{4m} \) is transversely 3-\( \alpha \)-Sasakian, \( \mathcal{E}^{4m+3} \) transversely quaternionic-Kähler and \( \mathcal{E}^d \) transversely hyper-Kähler.

**Theorem 5.4.** Let \((M, \phi_\alpha, \xi_\alpha, \eta_\alpha, g)\) be a 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold of rank \( 4l+3 \). Then the integrable distribution \( \mathcal{E}^{4m} \) defines a Riemannian foliation of dimension \( 4m \) whose leaves are hyper-Kähler manifolds. Furthermore, the space of leaves of this foliation is \( 3-\alpha \)-Sasakian.

**Proof.** Let \( N \) be a leaf of the foliation defined by \( \mathcal{E}^{4m} \) and let, for each \( \alpha \in \{1, 2, 3\} \), \( J_\alpha, \Omega_\alpha, G \) be the tensors on \( N \) obtained from \( \phi_\alpha, \Phi_\alpha, g \) by restriction. Then \((J_\alpha, \Omega_\alpha, G)\) defines an almost hyper-Hermitian structure on \( N \) which is integrable because its Nijenhuis tensor satisfies \( [J_\alpha, J_\beta] = [\phi_\alpha, \phi_\beta]|_N = ([\phi_\alpha, \phi_\beta] + 2d\eta_\alpha \otimes \xi_\alpha)|_N = 0 \), since \( M \) is hyper-normal. We prove that the foliation \( \mathcal{E}^{4m} \) is transversely 3-\( \alpha \)-Sasakian. We begin observing that, for each \( \alpha \in \{1, 2, 3\} \), the forms \( \eta_\alpha \) and \( d\eta_\alpha \) are projectable, since for all \( V \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^{4m}) \) we have \( i_V \eta_\alpha = 0 \) and \( i_V d\eta_\alpha = 0 \) by definition of \( \mathcal{E}^{4m} \). Next, by Lemma 3.3, the Reeb vector fields \( \xi_1, \xi_2, \xi_3 \) are basic vector fields. More delicate is the projectability of the tensor fields \( \phi_\alpha \). First note that as each 2-form \( d\eta_\alpha \) is non-degenerate on \( \mathcal{E}^d \), it induces a musical isomorphism \((d\eta_\alpha)^\flat : X \mapsto d\eta_\alpha(X, \cdot) \) between \( \mathcal{E}^d \) and the 1-forms which vanish on \( \mathcal{E}^{4m+3} \). We denote its inverse by \((d\eta_\alpha)^\sharp \). As in Lemma 4.1 in [7], we have

\[
(5.4) \quad \phi_\alpha X = -(d\eta_\beta)^\sharp(d\eta_\gamma)^\sharp(X)
\]

for all \( X \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^d) \), where as usual \((\alpha, \beta, \gamma)\) is an even permutation of \( \{1, 2, 3\} \). In order to prove that each \( \phi_\alpha \) is foliate with respect to the foliation \( \mathcal{E}^{4m} \), it is sufficient to show that \( \phi_\alpha \) maps basic vector fields to basic vector fields. In view of (5.4) we prove in fact that for each \( \delta \in \{1, 2, 3\} \) \((d\eta_\delta)^\flat \) (respectively, \((d\eta_\delta)^\sharp \)) maps basic vector fields (respectively, basic 1-forms) to basic 1-forms (respectively, basic vector fields). Indeed let \( X \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^d) \) be a basic vector field. Then we have immediately \( i_V((d\eta_\delta)^\flat(X)) = d\eta_\delta(X, V) = 0 \) for any \( V \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^{4m}) \). Next, we have to compute \( i_V((d((d\eta_\delta)^\flat)(X)))(Y) \) for all \( Y \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^d) \). It is not restrictive to assume
Y basic. Moreover for simplify the notation we put \( \omega := (d\eta)^3(X) \). Then we have
\[
i_X(d((d\eta^3)^3(X)))(Y) = 2d\omega(V,Y) = V(\omega(Y)) - Y(\omega(V)) - \omega([V,Y])
\]
\[
= V(d\eta(X,Y)) - Y(d\eta(X,V)) - d\eta(X,[V,Y])
\]
\[
= V(d\eta(X,Y)) - Y(d\eta(X,V)) - d\eta(X,[V,Y])
\]
\[
- X(d\eta(Y,V)) + d\eta(Y,[V,X]) + d\eta(V,[X,Y])
\]
\[
= 3d^2\eta^3(X,Y,V) = 0,
\]
for all \( V \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^{4m}) \), so that the 1-form \((d\eta)(X)\) is basic. Conversely, let \( \omega \) be a basic 1-form which vanishes on \( \mathcal{E}^{4m+3} \). Then we prove that, for each \( \alpha \in \{1,2,3\} \), the vector field \( X = (d\eta)^3(\omega) \) is basic, that is \([X,V] \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^{4m})\) for any \( V \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^{4m}) \).

Since, by Lemma 3.4, \([X,V] \in \Gamma(\mathcal{H})\), the last condition is equivalent to require that \( d\eta_\alpha([X,V],Y) = 0 \) for any \( Y \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^{4l}) \). Without loss in generality we can assume \( Y \) to be a basic vector field. We have
\[
d\eta_\alpha([X,V],Y) = 3d^2\eta_\alpha(V,X,Y) - V(d\eta_\alpha(X,Y)) + d\eta_\alpha(X,[V,Y])
\]
\[
- X(d\eta_\alpha(V,Y)) - Y(d\eta_\alpha(V,X)) + d\eta_\alpha([X,Y],V)
\]
\[
= -V(d\eta_\alpha(X,Y)) - V((d\eta)^3(X)(Y)) = -V(\omega(Y))
\]
\[
= -V(\omega(Y)) + Y(\omega(V)) + \omega([V,Y]) = -2d\omega(V,Y)
\]
\[
= -(i_Yd\omega)(Y) = 0,
\]
since \( \omega \) is basic. This proves that \( X \) is basic. Therefore by (6.1) we get the projectability of \( \phi_\alpha \). Finally we show that \( \mathcal{E}^{4m} \) is a Riemannian foliation, that is for any \( V \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^{4m}) \) \( (\mathcal{L}_V g)|_{N(\mathcal{E}^{4m})} = 0 \), where \( N(\mathcal{E}^{4m}) = TM/\mathcal{E}^{4m} \) is the normal bundle of the foliation \( \mathcal{E}^{4m} \) which is identified with \( \mathcal{E}^{4l} \oplus V \) via the Riemannian metric \( g \). For any \( V \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^{4m}) \) and \( X,Y \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^{4l}) \)
\[
(\mathcal{L}_V g)(X,Y) = V(g(X,Y)) - g([V,X]_{\mathcal{E}^{4l}},Y) - g(X,[V,Y]_{\mathcal{E}^{4l}})
\]
\[
= -V(d\eta_\alpha(X,\phi_\alpha Y)) + d\eta_\alpha([V,X],\phi_\alpha Y) - d\eta_\alpha(X,\phi_\alpha [V,Y])
\]
\[
= -V(d\eta_\alpha(X,\phi_\alpha Y)) + d\eta_\alpha([V,X],\phi_\alpha Y) + d\eta_\alpha(X,[V,\phi_\alpha Y])
\]
\[
= -(\mathcal{L}_V d\eta_\alpha)(X,\phi_\alpha Y) = 0,
\]
where we have used the projectability of \( d\eta_\alpha \) and \( \phi_\alpha \). Moreover, by Lemma 3.3 and Lemma 4.4 we get that \( (\mathcal{L}_V g)(\xi_\delta,Y) = (\mathcal{L}_V g)(\xi_\delta,\xi_\alpha) = 0 \). Thus the situation is the following: for each \( \alpha \in \{1,2,3\} \) \( \eta_\alpha \) and \( d\eta_\alpha \) project to a 1-form \( \eta'_\alpha \) and a 2-form \( \Phi'_\alpha = d\eta'_\alpha \); the vector field \( \xi_\alpha \) projects to a vector field \( \xi'_\alpha \) satisfying \( \eta'_\alpha(\xi'_\alpha) = 1 \) and \( d\eta'_\alpha(\xi'_\alpha,\cdot) = 0 \); the tensor field \( \phi_\alpha \) projects to a tensor field \( \phi'_\alpha \) such that \( \phi'^2_\alpha = -I + \eta'_\alpha \otimes \xi'_\alpha \). Moreover the Riemannian metric \( g \) projects to a Riemannian metric \( g' \) compatible with each almost contact structure \( (\phi'_\alpha, \xi'_\alpha, \eta'_\alpha) \).

Then one easily checks that (2.1) hold. Finally, that this projected structure is in fact 3-\( \alpha \)-Sasakian follows directly from Corollary 4.4.

We consider now the distribution \( \mathcal{E}^{4m+3} = \mathcal{E}^{4m} \oplus V \).

**Theorem 5.5.** Every 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold \( M^{4m+3} \) of rank 4l + 3 admits a canonical transversal quaternionic-Kähler structure given by a foliation whose leaves are 3-quasi-Sasakian manifolds of rank 3.

**Proof.** By the integrability of \( \mathcal{E}^{4m} \) and of \( V \) and Lemma 3.4 it follows that the distribution \( \mathcal{E}^{4m+3} \) is involutive, hence it defines a \((4m+3)\)-dimensional foliation.
of $M$. Let $N$ be a leaf of this foliation and $(\phi^N_\alpha, \xi^N_\alpha, \eta^N_\alpha, g^N)$ be the normal almost 3-contact metric structure on $N$ obtained from $M$ by restriction. Then, since $d\Phi_\alpha = 0$ and each 1-form $\eta_\alpha$ is closed on $\mathcal{E}^{4m}$, we have that $N$ is endowed with a 3-quasi-Sasakian structure of rank 3 (cf. Proposition 5.3). Next, that $\mathcal{E}^{4m+3}$ is a Riemannian foliation follows from the fact that each Reeb vector field is Killing and $\mathcal{L}_Y g|_{\mathcal{E}^4} = 0$, $V \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^{4m})$, (cf. Theorem 5.4). Finally, let $Q$ be the subbundle of the endomorphism bundle $\text{End}(\mathcal{E}^{4l})$ spanned by $\phi_1$, $\phi_2$, $\phi_3$. Then, since each $\phi_\alpha$ is foliate with respect to the foliation $\mathcal{E}^{4m}$ (cf. Theorem 5.4), by (3.5), we have that the subbundle $Q$ is projectable with respect to the foliation $\mathcal{E}^{4m+3}$. Arguing as in [9] one can prove that the space of leaves is in fact quaternionic-Kähler. \hfill \Box

Finally, we turn our attention to the distribution $\mathcal{E}^{4l+3}$ on which the 1-forms $\eta_\alpha$ have maximal rank.

**Theorem 5.6.** Every 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold of rank $4l + 3$ admits a canonical transversal hyper-Kähler structure given by a foliation whose leaves are 3-α-Sasakian manifolds.

**Proof.** We first prove that the distribution $\mathcal{E}^{4l+3}$ is integrable and defines a Riemannian foliation of the 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold $(M^{4m+3}, \phi_\alpha, \xi_\alpha, \eta_\alpha, g)$. Let $Y, Y' \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^{4l})$. Then for any $X \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^{4m})$ we have

$$
0 = 3d\Phi_\alpha(X, Y, Y') = X(\Phi_\alpha(Y, Y')) + Y(\Phi_\alpha(Y', X)) + Y'(\Phi_\alpha(X, Y)) - \Phi_\alpha([X, Y], Y') - \Phi_\alpha([Y, Y'], X) - \Phi_\alpha([Y', X], Y) - \Phi_\alpha([Y, Y'], X)
$$

$$
= (\mathcal{L}_X \Phi_\alpha)(Y, Y') - \Phi_\alpha([Y, Y'], X)
$$

$$
= (\mathcal{L}_X g)(Y, \phi_\alpha Y') + g(Y, (\mathcal{L}_X \phi_\alpha)Y') - \Phi_\alpha([Y, Y'], X)
$$

$$
= -g([Y, Y'], \phi_\alpha X),
$$

where we have used the projectability of the metric $g$ and of the tensor field $\phi_\alpha$ with respect to the foliation $\mathcal{E}^{4m}$, proved in Theorem 5.4. It follows that $[Y, Y']$ is orthogonal to $\mathcal{E}^{4m}$ and hence belongs to $\mathcal{E}^{4l+3}$. Moreover, by Lemma 3.4 and the integrability of $\mathcal{V}$, we have that $\mathcal{E}^{4l+3}$ is integrable and it is easy to check, using (4.7), that the normal almost 3-contact metric structure induced from $(\phi_\alpha, \xi_\alpha, \eta_\alpha, g)$ on each leaf of $\mathcal{E}^{4l+3}$ is in fact 3-α-Sasakian. Now we pass to study the space of leaves of $\mathcal{E}^{4l+3}$. We prove that $\mathcal{E}^{4l+3}$ is a Riemannian foliation and that the tensor fields $\phi_1$, $\phi_2$, $\phi_3$ locally project, together with $g$, to a hyper-Kähler structure on the space of leaves. For all $Y \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^{4l+3})$ and $X, X' \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^{4m})$ we have

$$
(\mathcal{L}_Y \Phi_\alpha)(X, X') = Y(\Phi_\alpha(X, X')) - \Phi_\alpha([Y, X], X') - \Phi_\alpha(X, [Y, X'])
$$

$$
= X(\Phi_\alpha(X', Y)) + X'(\Phi_\alpha(Y, X)) + Y(\Phi_\alpha(X, X'))
$$

$$
- \Phi_\alpha([X, X'], Y) - \Phi_\alpha([X', Y], X) - \Phi_\alpha([Y, X], X')
$$

$$
= 3d\Phi_\alpha(X, X', Y) = 0,
$$

thus each fundamental 2-form $\Phi_\alpha$ projects to a 2-form $\Omega'_\alpha$ which is closed since $\Phi_\alpha$ is. Next we prove that also each tensor field $\phi_\alpha$ is foliate, that is it maps basic vector fields to basic vector fields. As in Lemma 4.1 in [7] we have that, for an even permutation $(\alpha, \beta, \gamma)$ of $\{1, 2, 3\}$,

$$
\phi_\alpha X = -(\Phi_\beta)^{\gamma}(\Phi_\gamma)^{\beta} X
$$

(5.5)
for all $X \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^{4m})$, where, for each $\delta \in \{1, 2, 3\}$, $(\Phi_\delta)^\flat : X \mapsto \Phi_\delta(X, \cdot)$ is the musical isomorphism induced from $\Phi_\delta$ between $\mathcal{E}^{4m}$ and the 1-forms which vanish on $\mathcal{E}^{4l+3}$, and $(\Phi_\delta)^\sharp$ denotes its inverse. Therefore, in order to prove that $\phi_\alpha$ is foliate it is sufficient to check that, for each $\delta \in \{1, 2, 3\}$, $(\Phi_\delta)^\flat$ maps basic vector fields to basic 1-forms and, conversely, $(\Phi_\delta)^\sharp$ maps basic 1-forms to basic vector fields. Let $X \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^{4m})$ be a basic vector field. We have to show that the 1-form $\omega := (\Phi_\delta)^\flat X$ is basic, i.e. satisfies $i_Y \omega = i_Y d\omega = 0$ for all $Y \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^{4l+3})$. Indeed we have $i_Y \omega = \omega(Y) = \Phi_\delta(X, Y) = g(X, \phi_\delta Y) = 0$ since $\phi_\delta(\mathcal{E}^{4l+3}) \subset \mathcal{E}^{4l+3}$. Next, one has $i_Y d\omega(X') = 2i_Y Y(X') = Y(\omega(X')) - (\phi_\delta(X), X) - \omega(Y, X') = (\nabla_Y \phi_\delta)(X, X') = 0$ for any $X' \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^{4m})$ (which is not restrictive to assume basic). Conversely, for any basic 1-form $\omega$ we have to show that the vector field $X := (\Phi_\delta)^\flat(\omega)$ is basic, that is $[X, Y] \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^{4l+3})$ for any $Y \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^{4l+3})$. This last condition is equivalent to require that $\Phi_\delta([X, Y], X') = 0$ for any $X' \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^{4m})$. It is not restrictive to assume $X'$ basic. Then we have

\[
\Phi_\delta([X, Y], X') = -3d\Phi_\delta(X, X') + X(\Phi_\delta(Y, X')) + Y(\Phi_\delta(X', X)) + X'(\Phi_\delta(Y, X)) - \Phi_\delta([Y, X'], X) - \Phi_\delta([X', X], Y)
\]

\[= -Y(\Phi_\delta(X, X')) = i_Y d\omega(X') = 0.
\]

It remains to prove that the Riemannian metric $g$ is bundle-like. This follows easily from the projectability of $\Phi_\alpha$ and $\phi_\alpha$. Indeed for any $Y \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^{4l})$ and $X, X' \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^{4m})$ we have

\[
(\nabla_Y g)(X, X') = -2(\nabla_Y \Phi_\alpha)(X, \phi_\alpha X') + g(X, (\nabla_Y \phi_\alpha)\phi_\alpha X') = 0,
\]

whereas $(\nabla_\xi g)(X, X') = 0$ since $\xi_\alpha$ is Killing. We denote by $J'_\alpha$ and $g'$ the tensor fields induced on the space of leaves by each $\phi_\alpha$ and by the Riemannian metric $g$. Then a straightforward computation yields that $(J'_\alpha, \Omega'_1, \Omega'_2, \Omega'_3)$ is an almost hyper-Hermitian structure. Thus, the closedness of $\Omega'_1, \Omega'_2, \Omega'_3$ imply, by the Hitchin Lemma ([13]), that $(J'_\alpha, \Omega'_1, \Omega'_2, \Omega'_3)$ in fact hyper-Kähler.

**Corollary 5.7.** Let $(M^{4n+3}, \phi_\alpha, \xi_\alpha, \eta_\alpha, g)$ be a 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold of rank $4l + 3$ with $[\xi_\alpha, \xi_\beta] = c \xi_\gamma$, $c \neq 0$. Then $M^{4n+3}$ is locally the Riemannian product of a 3-\alpha-Sasakian manifold $M^{4l+3}$, where $\alpha = \frac{\epsilon}{2}$, and a hyper-Kähler manifold $M^{4m}$, with $m = n - l$.

**Proof.** The tangent bundle of $M^{4n+3}$ splits up as the orthogonal sum of the Riemannian foliations $\mathcal{E}^{4l+3}$ and $\mathcal{E}^{4m}$. Because of the duality Riemannian-totally geodesic, $\mathcal{E}^{4l+3}$ and $\mathcal{E}^{4m}$ are also totally geodesic foliations. It follows that $M^{4n+3}$ is the Riemannian product of a leaf $M^{4l+3}$ of $\mathcal{E}^{4l+3}$ and a leaf $M^{4m}$ of $\mathcal{E}^{4m}$. Taking into account that $\psi_\alpha$ and $\phi_\alpha$ agree on $\mathcal{E}^{4l+3}$ and applying (4.7), we have that $(\nabla_\psi, \xi_\alpha, \eta_\alpha, g)|_{\mathcal{E}^{4l+3}}$ is an almost 3-\alpha-Sasakian structure over $M^{4l+3}$, where we have put $c = \frac{\epsilon}{2}$. Hence, by Proposition (4.2), it is 3-\alpha-Sasakian. Since $\theta_\alpha$ agrees with $\phi_\alpha$ on $\mathcal{E}^{4m}$, the maps $\theta_\alpha|_{\mathcal{E}^{4m}}$ define a quaternionic structure which is compatible with the metric $g|_{\mathcal{E}^{4m}}$. Finally, define the 2-forms $\Theta_\alpha$ by $\Theta_\alpha(X, Y) = g(X, \theta_\alpha Y)$ for any $X, Y \in \Gamma(\mathcal{E}^{4m})$. We have $\Theta_\alpha = \Phi_\alpha|_{\mathcal{E}^{4m}}$ and hence $d\Theta_\alpha = 0$. By virtue of the mentioned Hitchin Lemma ([13]) the structure defined on $M^{4m}$ turns out to be hyper-Kähler.
Remark 5.8. Note that Corollary 5.7 strongly improves, both in the assumptions and in the results, the splitting theorem which is proven in [6] (Theorem 5.6). It should be also emphasized that an analogous result does not hold for a quasi-Sasakian manifold.

Corollary 5.7 also happens to have some notable consequences. First of all, the structure group of a 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold of rank 4l + 3 is clearly reduced to \( Sp(m) \times Sp(l) \times I_3 \). Next, we obtain an improving of Theorem 5.2. Namely, under the assumption of regularity for the foliation \( \mathcal{V} \), the space of leaves \( M/\mathcal{V} \) is an almost quaternionic-Hermitian manifold which is the local Riemannian product of a quaternionic-Kähler manifold and a hyper-Kähler manifold. Another consequence is related to the concept of contact-symplectic pair defined by Bande in [1]. A contact-symplectic pair of type \((h, k)\) on a manifold \( M \) of dimension \( 2h + 2k + 1 \) is a pair \((\beta, \omega)\) of a 1-form \( \beta \) and a closed 2-form \( \omega \) such that the following conditions are satisfied: \( \beta \wedge (d\beta)^h \wedge \omega^k \) is a volume form, \( (d\beta)^{h+1} = 0 \) and \( \omega^{k+1} = 0 \). Due to Corollary 5.7, any 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold of rank 4l + 3 is canonically endowed with nine contact-symplectic pairs as it is stated in the following claim which is easy to verify.

Corollary 5.9. Let \((M^{4n+3}, \phi_\alpha, \xi_\alpha, \eta_\alpha, g)\) be a 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold of rank 4l + 3. Then, for each \( \beta, \gamma \in \{1, 2, 3\} \), \((\eta_\beta, \Theta_\gamma)\) is a contact-symplectic pair of type \( (2l + 1, 2m) \).

Finally, using Corollary 5.7 we can compute the complete expression of the Ricci tensor in any 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold. Before, we prove the following preliminary result.

Proposition 5.10. Every 3-\( \alpha \)-Sasakian manifold of dimension \( 4n+3 \) is an Einstein manifold with Einstein constant \( 2\alpha^2(2n+1) \).

Proof. Let \((M, \phi_\delta, \xi_\delta, \eta_\delta, g)\), \( \delta \in \{1, 2, 3\} \), be a 3-\( \alpha \)-Sasakian manifold. Then by virtue of (4.2) and Proposition 4.4 in [17] we have that \((\phi_\delta, \xi_\delta, \eta_\delta, g)\) can be obtained by a homothetic deformation of a 3-Sasakian structure \((\tilde{\phi}_\delta, \tilde{\xi}_\delta, \tilde{\eta}_\delta, \tilde{g})\) given by

\[
\tilde{\phi}_\delta = \phi_\delta, \quad \tilde{\xi}_\delta = \left\{ \begin{array}{c} \xi_\delta, \\
1 \end{array} \right\} \delta = \alpha \eta_\delta, \quad \tilde{g} = \alpha^2 g.
\]

Then, since it is well known that any 3-Sasakian manifold is Einstein, we conclude that also the metric \( g \) is Einstein. For computing the Einstein constant \( \lambda \) we use (2.3) and (4.2) getting

\[
\lambda = \lambda g(\xi_\delta, \xi_\delta) = \text{Ric}(\xi_\delta, \xi_\delta) = \|\nabla \xi_\delta\|^2 = 2\alpha^2(2n + 1).
\]

\[\square\]

As pointed out in Corollary 5.8, 3-quasi-Sasakian manifolds of rank \( 4l + 1 \) are Ricci-flat, being 3-cosymplectic. As for the case of rank \( 4l + 3 \), we have the following

Theorem 5.11. Let \( M \) be a 3-quasi-Sasakian manifold of rank \( 4l + 3 \). The Ricci tensor is given by

\[
\text{Ric}(X, Y) = \begin{cases} \frac{c^2}{2}(2l + 1)g(X, Y), & \text{if } X, Y \in \Gamma(E^{4l+3}); \\
0, & \text{elsewhere}. \end{cases}
\]

In particular, \( M \) has positive scalar curvature \( \frac{c^2}{2}(2l + 1)(4l + 3) \).
Proof. In view of Corollary 5.7, $M$ is locally the Riemannian product of a $(4l + 3)$-dimensional $3$-$\alpha$-Sasakian manifold $M'$, with $\alpha = \frac{2}{3}$, and a $4m$-dimensional hyper-Kähler manifold $M''$. Thus, because of Proposition 5.10 and the Ricci-flatness of $M''$, we get the assertion. \qed

Corollary 5.12. No $3$-quasi-Sasakian manifold is $\eta$-Einstein unless the following cases:

(i) $3$-$\alpha$-Sasakian manifolds, which are Einstein with strictly positive scalar curvature;

(ii) $3$-cosymplectic manifolds, which are Ricci-flat;

(iii) $3$-quasi-Sasakian manifolds of rank $3$, which are $\eta$-Einstein non-Einstein.

Remark 5.13. Applying the Pasternack’s refinement [18] of the classical Bott vanishing theorem to the Riemannian foliations $\mathcal{V}$, $\mathcal{E}^{4m}$, $\mathcal{E}^{4m+3}$ and $\mathcal{E}^{4l+3}$, considered in Theorem 5.2, Theorem 5.4, Theorem 5.5, and Theorem 5.6 respectively, we get the following topological obstructions to the existence of a $3$-quasi-Sasakian structure of rank $4l + 3$ on a manifold $M$ of dimension $4n + 3$: $\text{Pontrjagin}(\mathcal{H}) = 0$ for all $j > 4n$, $\text{Pontrjagin}(\mathcal{E}^{4l+3}) = 0$ for all $j > 4l$, $\text{Pontrjagin}(\mathcal{E}^{4l}) = 0$ for all $j > 4m + 3$ and $\text{Pontrjagin}(\mathcal{E}^{4m}) = 0$ for all $j > 4l + 3$, where $\text{Pontrjagin}(\mathcal{H})$, $\text{Pontrjagin}(\mathcal{E}^{4l+3})$, $\text{Pontrjagin}(\mathcal{E}^{4l})$, and $\text{Pontrjagin}(\mathcal{E}^{4m})$ denote, respectively, the Pontryagin algebras of the subbundles $\mathcal{H}$, $\mathcal{E}^{4l+3}$, $\mathcal{E}^{4l}$ and $\mathcal{E}^{4m}$ of the tangent bundle of $M$. Furthermore, the vanishing of these primary characteristic classes permits also the construction of some secondary characteristic classes as it is done in [16] and [19].

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