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The Tits-Freudenthal magic square yields a description of certain real forms of the exceptional Lie algebras in terms of a pair of (possibly split) division algebras. At the group level, the first two rows are well understood geometrically, with the minimal representations of  $F_4$  and  $E_6$  expressed in terms of the Albert algebra. In the third row, the minimal representation of  $E_7$  consists of Freudenthal triples.

We present here several results at the group level, first summarizing previous work using Cartan decompositions involving all 5 real forms of  $E_6$  to identify chains of real subgroups of the particular real form  $SL(3, \mathbb{O})$ , and a new description of Freudenthal triples in terms of “cubies”, the components of an antisymmetric rank-3 representation of (generalized) symplectic groups, thus providing a unified, geometric interpretation of Freudenthal triples as a single object, and a new description of the minimal representation of  $E_7$ .

We then provide a complete description of the corresponding “ $2 \times 2$ ” magic square as  $SU(2, \mathbb{K}' \otimes \mathbb{K})$ , leading ultimately to a similar description of the Tits-Freudenthal magic square as  $SU(3, \mathbb{K}' \otimes \mathbb{K})$ , including a new description of the adjoint representation of  $E_8$ . (Received August 18, 2013)