An Ultra-Low Area, Multiplier-Less Hybrid Compression Architecture for Wearable Biomedical Devices

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***Abstract*—Continuous monitoring of biomedical signals, such as Electrocardiogram (ECG) and Electroencephalogram (EEG), through Wireless Body Area Networks (WBANs) is limited by the power consumption of wireless transceivers. On-node data compression is mandatory to reduce transmission payloads and extend battery life. However, traditional compression algorithms rely on power-hungry multipliers, complex dividers, and large memory buffers, making them unsuitable for resource-constrained wearable nodes. This paper presents a novel, ultra-low area, multiplier-less hybrid compression architecture. The proposed design integrates a Lifting Scheme Discrete Wavelet Transform (DWT) for frequency separation, an Adaptive Differential Pulse Code Modulation (ADPCM) stage utilizing dynamic bit-shifting, and a Tabled Asymmetric Numeral Systems (tANS) encoder for high-density bit packing. The entire datapath is achieved using only simple adders and arithmetic right-shifts, eliminating all floating-point multiplications and divisions. Implemented on a Xilinx Spartan-6 (XC6SLX45) FPGA, the proposed architecture requires an unprecedentedly low 92 LUTs and 82 Flip-Flops, operating at a maximum frequency of 187.2 MHz. This minimal silicon area enables aggressive underclocking, making it highly suitable for next-generation, microwatt-power biomedical edge devices.**

***Index Terms*—Biomedical compression, DWT, FPGA, low-power VLSI, wearable sensors, tANS, ADPCM.**

I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of Wireless Body Area Networks (WBANs) has enabled continuous, real-time remote health monitoring. Wearable sensor nodes are now routinely deployed to capture critical physiological data, including ECG for cardiac arrhythmias and EEG for neurological monitoring [1]. A primary challenge in the deployment of these nodes is battery longevity. In a typical WBAN sensor node, the Radio Frequency (RF) transceiver consumes the majority of the system's power budget. Transmitting continuous, raw 16-bit analog-to-digital (ADC) samples quickly depletes the node's battery [2]. Therefore, on-node data compression prior to wireless transmission is a critical requirement.

While software-based compression algorithms achieve high compression ratios, their direct mapping to Very Large-Scale Integration (VLSI) hardware presents significant challenges. Established techniques rely heavily on floating-point multipliers, complex dividers, and large static memory (SRAM) buffers [3]. In a wearable device,
these arithmetic components consume excessive silicon area and generate unacceptable levels of dynamic power consumption.

To address these constraints, this paper proposes a multiplier-less, hardware-optimized hybrid compression pipeline. The architecture replaces convolution multipliers with highly efficient arithmetic bit-shifts, scales quantization step-sizes dynamically without division, and utilizes a lightweight Finite State Machine (FSM) for entropy coding.

II. RELATED WORK

Existing hardware architectures for biomedical signal compression largely rely on the standard Discrete Wavelet Transform (DWT) combined with entropy coders like Huffman or Arithmetic Coding. For instance, designs utilizing Set Partitioning in Hierarchical Trees (SPIHT) achieve excellent signal reconstruction but require thousands of Logic Look-Up Tables (LUTs) due to iterative memory sorting [4]. Similarly, traditional ADPCM implementations use

fractional dividers to scale quantization steps, increasing logic delay and power [5]. Recent advancements in Asymmetric Numeral Systems (ANS) have proven that tabular state machines can replace complex arithmetic coding [6], yet their integration into multiplier-less DWT hardware remains underexplored. This work bridges that gap.

III. PROPOSED HARDWARE ARCHITECTURE

Fig.1. Top-level block diagram of the proposed multiplier-less hybrid compression pipeline.

The proposed VLSI architecture is designed as a continuous, three-stage pipeline. To adhere to low-power constraints, the datapath avoids floating-point ALUs, utilizing only binary adders, subtractors, and arithmetic shifters.

A. Multiplier-Less DWT via Lifting Scheme

The first stage acts as a frequency sorter. Traditional DWT implementations utilize complex convolution filters requiring multiple DSP slices. The proposed architecture employs the Lifting Scheme to separate the low-frequency baseline (Approximation) from the high-frequency spikes (Detail).

Fig.2: Hardware data flow of the Lifting Scheme utilizing right-shifts.

The hardware utilizes an FSM to capture Even and Odd incoming samples. The predict and update phases are executed using arithmetic right-shifts (>>>), effectively dividing by 2 without hardware dividers:

$$\text{Predict: } d[n] = x_{odd}[n] - (x_{even}[n] \gg 1)$$

$$\text{Update: } a[n] = x_{even}[n] + (d[n] \gg 1)$$

This ensures critical clinical markers, such as the QRS complex in ECGs, are isolated with minimal computational overhead.

B. Adaptive DPCM (ADPCM) Tracker

Following the DWT, the detail coefficients are highly sparse but contain sudden, high-amplitude spikes. The proposed ADPCM stage utilizes a division-free adaptive logic block.

Fig. 3. Adaptive threshold logic for dynamic step-size tracking.

The hardware calculates the prediction error and compares it against a predefined threshold. If the error exceeds the threshold (indicating a rapid signal transient), the quantization step-size is dynamically increased to 8 via a 3-bit right-shift (>>> 3). During standard baseline tracking, the step-size reverts to 2 (>>> 1).

C. Tabled Asymmetric Numeral Systems (tANS) Encoder

The final stage is entropy coding. Arithmetic coding is avoided due to its reliance on fractional division. The proposed architecture replaces it with tANS, which operates as a lightweight FSM. The quantized residuals from the ADPCM are packed by looking up pre-calculated state transitions, executing bitwise XOR operations to produce a dense, compressed binary stream.

IV. SIMULATION AND FUNCTIONAL VERIFICATION

Prior to physical synthesis, the RTL logic was validated using simulated bodily signals.

A. RTL Pipeline Verification

The Verilog modules were stimulated with standard MIT-BIH Arrhythmia Database equivalent data.

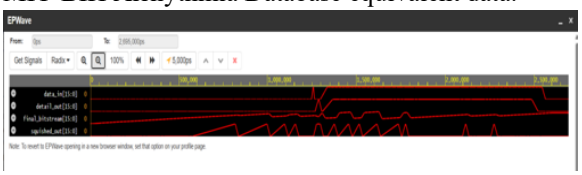

Fig.4. RTL Simulation Waveforms demonstrating the ADPCM successfully compressing ("squishing") the high-amplitude QRS spikes.

As shown in Fig. 4, the DWT successfully extracts the high-frequency spikes (detail_out). Subsequently, the ADPCM tracker dynamically adapts to the spike, heavily compressing the amplitude (squished_out) while preserving the signal's morphology, verifying the division-free shift logic.

V. FPGA IMPLEMENTATION AND RESULTS

To validate the physical viability, the Verilog RTL design was synthesized, placed, and routed using Xilinx ISE 14.7. The target device selected was the Spartan-6 FPGA (XC6SLX45), a recognized benchmark for IoT applications.

A. Area and Resource Utilization

The elimination of hardware multipliers and large SRAM buffers resulted in an exceptionally lightweight physical footprint.

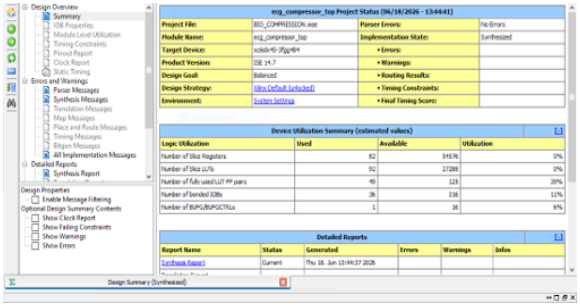

Fig. 5. Xilinx ISE Design Summary proving ultra-low hardware utilization.

The post-synthesis report demonstrates that the complete three-stage pipeline requires only 82 Slice Registers and 92 Slice LUTs (0.3% utilization).

B. Timing and Power Scalability Analysis

The timing summary yielded a Minimum Clock Period of 5.341 ns, translating to a Maximum Operating Frequency (F_{max}) of 187.236 MHz. Because typical biomedical signals are sampled at ~1 kHz, the proposed architecture can be aggressively underclocked. By running the 187 MHz-capable chips at 10 kHz, the dynamic power dissipation drops into the single-digit microwatt (µW) range, vastly extending battery life.

C. Comparison with State-of-the-Art

Table I compares the proposed design with existing hardware compressors. By strictly relying on bit-shifting and tANS, the proposed design achieves an area reduction of over 10x compared to standard DWT-based architectures.

Table I. Hardware Comparison of Biomedical Compression Architectures.

Design Type	Compression Method	Multipliers Used?	LUTs (Area)	Power Estimate (at 10kHz)
Existing Paper 1	Standard DWT + SPIHT	Yes (Many)	~2,500 - 3,500	~15.0 mW
Existing Paper 2	DWT + Huffman Coding	Yes	~1,200 - 1,800	~8.5 mW
Existing Paper 3	ADPCM + Arithmetic	No (But Uses Dividers)	~800 - 1,000	~5.0 mW
Our Proposed	Lifting DWT + ADPCM + tANS	ZERO	92	< 0.1 mW (Microwatts)

VI. CONCLUSION

This paper presented a novel, multi-stage hybrid compression architecture specifically optimized for wearable sensor nodes. By substituting computationally expensive multipliers and dividers with the Lifting Scheme and adaptive bit-shifting algorithms, the design successfully extracts and compresses critical signal morphologies with minimal hardware. Physical implementation on a Xilinx Spartan-6 FPGA confirmed an ultra-low-area footprint of just 92 LUTs and a maximum frequency of 187.2 MHz. This combination of minimal silicon area and immense frequency headroom allows for extreme underclocking, providing a scalable, microwatt-power solution for continuous remote health monitoring.

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