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# On Vertex Partitions of Hypercubes by Isometric Trees

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## Abstract

When  $n = 2^m - 1$  M.Ramras proved, by a counting argument, that for any isometrically embedded tree  $T$  on  $n$  edges in  $Q_n$  there exists a group of translations  $G$  such that  $\{g(T); g \in G\}$  is a vertex partition of  $Q_n$ . Considering a more general context we are able to give an explicit construction of  $G$  and can construct non group vertex partitions by isometric trees. We extend also this problem to vertex partition of  $Q_{n'}$  by translates of an isometrically embedded tree on  $n = 2^m - 1$  edges for any  $n' \geq n$ .

**Keywords:** Graph, Perfect code, Hypercube, Vertex Partition, Tiling.

## 1 Introduction

Twenty years ago M.Ramras [5] published a paper where he answered the following question of D. Rogers: If  $n = 2^m - 1$  does the hypercube  $Q_n$  have a vertex partition into antipodal paths? M.Ramras gave an explicit construction of such a partition. For this purpose he exhibited a set of generators of a subgroup  $G$  of the group of translations  $\Sigma(Q_n) \subset \text{Aut}(Q_n)$ , such that the set of translates  $\{g(P); g \in G\}$  of the vertex set of  $P$  of an antipodal path is the desired vertex partition.

He extended this result, proving, via a counting argument, that for any tree on  $n = 2^m - 1$  edges isometrically embedded in  $Q_n$  with vertex set  $P$  there exists a subgroup  $G$  of  $\Sigma(Q_n)$  such that the set of translates  $\{g(P); g \in G\}$  is a vertex partition. Notice that, in the general case, the author's method does not give an explicit construction of  $G$ .

This nice result generalizes the existence of perfect single-error-correcting codes constructed first by R.W.Hamming [3]. In this case, we take as tree the star  $K_{1,n}$ .

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29 Notice that J.L.Vasiliev [6] constructed, for  $n = 2^m - 1, n \geq 15$ , perfect codes which  
 30 are not equivalent to linear codes, i.e. vertex partitions by stars such that the set  
 31 of translations  $G$  is not a subgroup, or the translate of a subgroup, of the group of  
 32 translations  $\Sigma(Q_n)$ .

33 In another series of papers M.Ramras considers edges partitions of  $Q_n$  into iso-  
 34 morphic trees. More recent work have been done of this subject but it seems that  
 35 this is not the case for vertex partitions. Both problems arise in the context of  
 36 parallel computing at thus it will be interesting to improve our knowledge of vertex  
 37 partitions.

38 Our goal at the beginning of this work was to prove the existence of non group  
 39 partitions into antipodal paths. It seems also interesting, for the general case of  
 40 trees, to give an explicit construction of a group, or more generally a set, of trans-  
 41 lations  $G$ . It would be also nice, for the case of the path  $P_n$  to understand how the  
 42 group proposed by M.Ramras can be derived from the Hamming code. In fact we  
 43 found that all these problems can be easily solved, using elementary linear algebra.  
 44 We arrive at the conclusion that looking for a vertex partition of  $Q_n$  by translates  
 45 of an isometrically embedded tree on  $n$  edges is a problem independent, in some  
 46 sense, of the choice of the tree, thus is equivalent to looking for a perfect code.

## 47 2 Definitions and main result

48 Let  $\mathbb{F}^n$  be the vector space of dimension  $n$  over the finite field  $\mathbb{Z}_2$ . The *hypercube*  
 49 of dimension  $n$  is the graph  $Q_n$  whose vertices are the vectors of  $\mathbb{F}^n$ , and where two  
 50 vertices are adjacent if they differ in exactly one coordinate.

51 The *Hamming distance* between two vectors  $x, y \in \mathbb{F}^n$ ,  $d(x, y)$  is the number of  
 52 coordinates in which they differ. Notice that Hamming distance is the usual graph  
 53 distance on  $Q_n$ .

54 The *support* of a vector  $x$  is the set  $\{i \in \{1, 2, \dots, n\}; x_i \neq 0\}$ . The *parity function*  
 55 is the function from  $\mathbb{F}^n$  to  $\mathbb{Z}_2$  defined by  $\pi(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n) = x_1 + x_2 + \dots + x_n$ .

56 A *perfect code*, or more precisely a *perfect single-error-correcting code of length*  
 57  $n$  is a set  $C$  of vertices of  $Q_n$  such that every vertex  $x \in V(Q_n)$  is at distance at  
 58 most 1 of exactly one element of  $C$ .

59 Two codes  $C$  and  $C'$  are called *equivalent* if  $C'$  can be obtained from  $C$  by an  
 60 automorphism of  $Q_n$  thus by applying a translation from a fixed vector and a fixed  
 61 permutation of the coordinates. Using a translation of all the perfect code vectors  
 62 by one of them we can always assume that the zero vector  $\mathbf{0}$  belongs to the code.

63 Let  $e_1, e_2, \dots, e_n$  be the standard basis of  $\mathbb{F}^n$ , thus  $e_i$  denote the vector with just  
 64 one single non zero coordinate position  $i$ . Let  $e_0 = \mathbf{0}$  be the zero vector and let  
 65  $\mathbf{1} = (11 \dots 1)$ . Denote by  $B_n$  the set  $\{e_0, e_1, e_2, \dots, e_n\}$ . The *direction* of an edge  
 66  $xy$  of  $Q_n$  is the integer  $i \in \{1, 2, \dots, n, \}$  such that  $y = x + e_i$ .

67 For a subset  $A$  of vectors of  $\mathbb{F}^n$  and a vertex  $x$ , let  $x+A$  be the set  $\{x+a; a \in A\}$ .  
 68 By definition of a perfect code  $C = \{c_1, c_2, \dots, c_k\}$  is a perfect code if and only if  
 69 the sets  $c_1 + B_n, c_2 + B_n, \dots, c_k + B_n$  define a partition of  $\mathbb{F}^n$  i.e.

- 70 •  $\mathbb{F}^n = c_1 + B_n \cup c_2 + B_n \cup \dots \cup c_k + B_n$
- 71 •  $\forall i, j \in \{1, 2, \dots, k\} \quad c_i + B_n \cap c_j + B_n = \emptyset$

This immediately leads to a necessary condition for the existence of  $C$ , the so-called packing condition,  $2^n = |C|(n + 1)$  thus  $n = 2^m - 1$  for some  $m$ .

By analogy G.Cohen, S.Litsyn, A.Vardy and G.Zémor [2] define a set  $S$  as a *tile* of  $\mathbb{F}^n$  if there exists a set  $C = \{c_1, c_2, \dots, c_k\}$  such that the sets  $c_1 + S, c_2 + S, \dots, c_k + S$  define a partition of  $\mathbb{F}^n$ . Notice that the definition is symmetric,  $C$  is also a tile of  $\mathbb{F}^n$ , and they call the pair  $(C, S)$  a tiling of  $\mathbb{F}^n$ .

R.W.Hamming [3] constructed, for any integer  $m$ , a linear subspace of  $\mathbb{F}^n$ , where  $n = 2^m - 1$ , which is a perfect code. It is easy to prove that all linear perfect codes are Hamming codes. In 1961 J.L.Vasiliev [6], and later many authors ([1, 4] for a survey) constructed perfect codes which are not linear codes.

Let  $W = (v_1, v_2, \dots, v_n)$  be a basis of  $\mathbb{F}^n$ . We will denote by  $\theta_W$  be the automorphism of  $\mathbb{F}^n$  defined by  $\theta_W(\sum_{i=1}^n \lambda_i e_i) = (\sum_{i=1}^n \lambda_i v_i)$ .

**Lemma 1** *Let  $V = \{v_0, v_1, \dots, v_n\}$  where  $W = (v_1, v_2, \dots, v_n)$  is a basis of  $\mathbb{F}^n$  and  $v_0 = \mathbf{0}$ . Then if  $C = \{c_1, c_2, \dots, c_k\}$  is a perfect code  $\theta_W(c_1) + V, \theta_W(c_2) + V, \dots, \theta_W(c_k) + V$  is a partition of  $\mathbb{F}^n$ .*

**Proof :** Notice that for any  $j \in \{0, 1, \dots, n\}$  we have  $\theta_W(e_j) = v_j$ . By linearity for any  $i, j$  we have  $\theta_W(c_i) + v_j = \theta_W(c_i) + \theta_W(e_j) = \theta_W(c_i + e_j)$ . Therefore  $\theta_W(c_i) + v_j = \theta_W(c_{i'}) + v_{j'}$  implies, because  $\theta_W$  is an automorphism,  $c_i + e_j = c_{i'} + e_{j'}$ . The  $\theta_W(c_i) + V$  are thus disjoint. Furthermore for any  $x$  of  $\mathbb{F}^n$  we know that there exist  $i \in \{1, 2, \dots, k\}$  and  $j \in \{0, 1, \dots, n\}$  such that  $\theta_W^{-1}(x) = c_i + e_j$  and thus  $x = \theta_W(c_i) + v_j$ . □

For two graphs  $G$  and  $H$  an *isometric embedding* of  $G$  in  $H$  is a map  $\alpha : V(G) \mapsto V(H)$  which preserve distance. By extension we will denote by  $\alpha(G)$  the subgraph of  $H$  induced by  $\alpha(V(G))$ . If  $G$  is injectively embedded in  $Q_n$  we will say that there exists a *vertex partition of  $Q_n$  by  $G$*  if there exists a tiling of  $V(Q_n)$  by  $\alpha(V(G))$ . It is immediate to check, as noticed by M.Ramras [5], that a tree  $T$  is isometrically embedded in  $Q_n$  if and only if no edges of  $\alpha(T)$  use the same direction. If  $\alpha$  is an isometric embedding in  $Q_n$  then for any translation  $t$  the map  $\alpha' = \alpha + t$  is also an isometric embedding. Therefore, if a graph  $G$  is isometrically embeddable in  $Q_n$  then, for any vertex  $x$  of  $G$  there exists an isometric embedding such that  $\alpha(x) = \mathbf{0}$ .

**Lemma 2** *Let  $T$  be any tree on  $p \leq n$  edges, and let  $\alpha$  be an isometric embedding of  $T$  in  $Q_n$ . Assume  $\alpha(T) = \{\mathbf{0}, v_1, v_2, \dots, v_p\}$  then the vectors  $v_1, v_2, \dots, v_p$  are linearly independent.*

**Proof :** The proof is by induction on  $p$ . The result is clearly true when  $p = 1$  and assume it holds for any tree on  $p - 1$  edges. Let  $x$  be a terminal vertex of  $T$  and let  $xy$  be the edge of  $T$  incident to  $x$ . Consider the tree  $T'$  obtained by deletion of  $x$  from  $T$ . We can always assume that  $\alpha(x) \neq \mathbf{0}$  thus  $\alpha(x) = v_i$  for some  $i \in \{1, 2, \dots, p\}$ . Let  $j \in \{1, 2, \dots, n\}$  such that  $\alpha(x) = \alpha(y) + e_j$ . The restriction to  $T'$  of  $\alpha$  is an isometric embedding thus the vectors  $\{v_k; k \in \{1, 2, \dots, p\}, k \neq i\}$  are independent by induction hypothesis. Notice that  $e_j$  does not appear in the basis decomposition of the  $\{v_k; k \in \{1, 2, \dots, p\}, k \neq i\}$ . But  $\alpha(y)$  belongs to this set and because  $v_i = \alpha(y) + e_j$  the vector  $v_i$  is also linearly independent of them. □

116 **Theorem 3** Let  $T$  be any tree on  $n = 2^m - 1$  edges, and let  $\alpha$  be an isometric embed-  
117 ding of  $T$  in  $Q_n$ . Assume  $\alpha(T) = \{\mathbf{0}, v_1, v_2, \dots, v_n\}$ . Then the vectors  $v_1, v_2, \dots, v_n$   
118 form a basis  $W$  of  $\mathbb{F}^n$ . Furthermore if  $C = \{c_1, c_2, \dots, c_k\}$  is a perfect code of  $Q_n$   
119 then  $\{\theta_W(c_1), \theta_W(c_2), \dots, \theta_W(c_k)\}$  define a vertex partition of  $Q_n$  by the embedded  
120 tree  $T$ . All vertex partitions of  $Q_n$  by  $\alpha(T)$  can be obtained by this way.

121 **Proof :** By lemma 2  $W$  is a basis of  $\mathbb{F}^n$  and the result follows by lemma 1.

122 Conversely if  $S = \{s_1, s_2, \dots, s_k\}$  define a vertex partition of  $Q_n$  by  $T$  then  
123  $\{\theta_W^{-1}(s_1), \theta_W^{-1}(s_2), \dots, \theta_W^{-1}(s_k)\}$  is a perfect code and thus all vertex partition of  $Q_n$   
124 by  $T$  are obtained by theorem 3. □

125  
126 Notice that the set  $D = \{\theta_W(c_1), \theta_W(c_2), \dots, \theta_W(c_k)\}$  is a linear subspace if and  
127 only if  $C$  is linear. Furthermore if  $b_1, b_2, \dots, b_p$  is a basis of  $C$  then  $\theta_W(b_1), \theta_W(b_2), \dots, \theta_W(b_p)$   
128 will be a basis of  $D$ .

129 Consider now a vertex partition of  $Q_{n'}$  by translates of an isometrically embed-  
130 ded tree on  $n$  edges for some  $n' \geq n$ . By the packing condition,  $2^{n'} = (n + 1)|D|$ ,  
131 thus  $n = 2^m - 1$  for some  $m$ .

132 **Corollary 4** Let  $T$  be any tree on  $n = 2^m - 1$  edges, and let  $\alpha$  be an isometric  
133 embedding of  $T$  in  $Q_{n'}$ ,  $n' \geq n$ . Then there exists a vertex partition of  $Q_{n'}$  by  
134 translates of the embedded tree  $\alpha(T)$ .

135 **Proof :** The vertices of  $\alpha(T) = \{\mathbf{0}, v_1, v_2, \dots, v_n\}$  define a subspace of di-  
136 mension  $n$ . By a permutation of coordinates we can assume that this subspace is  
137  $\text{Vect}(e_1, e_2, \dots, e_n)$  thus there exist a vertex partition of  $Q_n$  with set of translation  
138 say  $D$ . Then  $D \cup \{e_{n+1}, e_{n+2}, \dots, e_{n'}\}$  define a vertex partition of  $Q_{n'}$  by translates  
139 of  $\alpha(T)$ . □

### 140 3 An example: antipodal paths

141 The *antipodal vertex* of a vertex  $x$  in  $Q_n$  is the unique vertex  $\bar{x}$  at distance  $n$  of  
142  $x$ . Notice that  $\bar{x} = x + \mathbf{1}$ . An *antipodal path* is a path in  $Q_n$  of  $n$  edges connecting  
143 some pair of antipodal vertices. We will say that an isometric embedding  $\alpha(P)$  of an  
144 antipodal path in  $Q_n$  is *canonical* if  $v_0 = \mathbf{0}$  and along the path the directions used  
145 are  $1, 2, \dots, n$  in this order. We have thus, for any  $i \in \{0, 1, \dots, n\}$ ,  $v_i = \sum_{j=0}^i e_j$   
146 and  $\theta_W(\sum_{i=1}^n \lambda_i e_i) = (\sum_{i=1}^n \lambda_i \sum_{j=1}^i e_j)$ . By a translation and a permutation of the  
147 coordinates we can always assume that an isometric embedding of  $P$  is canonical.

148 A vector  $u \in \mathbb{F}^n$  is of *type 01*, respectively of *type 10*, if there exists  $i_0 \in$   
149  $\{0, 1, \dots, n\}$  such that  $u = \sum_{i=i_0+1}^n e_i$ , respectively  $u = \sum_{i=1}^{i_0} e_i$ . Notice that  $\mathbf{1}$  and  
150  $\mathbf{0}$  are the only vectors of both types.

151 **Lemma 5** If  $u$  and  $v$  are two distinct vectors both of type 10, or both of type 01,  
152 then  $u$  and  $v$  differ by a set of consecutive coordinates.

153 **Proof :** Assume first  $u = \sum_{i=1}^{i_0} e_i$  and  $v = \sum_{i=1}^{j_0} e_i$  for some  $i_0, j_0 \in \{0, 1, \dots, n\}$   
154 Assume w.l.o.g. that  $i_0 < j_0$  we have thus  $v = u + \sum_{i=i_0+1}^{j_0} e_i$ . For the second case  
155 notice that if  $u$  is a vector of type 01 then  $u + \mathbf{1}$  is of type 10. □

156 **Lemma 6** Let  $\alpha(P)$  be an isometrically embedded antipodal path in  $Q_n$  such that  
 157  $\forall i \in \{0, 1, \dots, n\} v_i = \sum_{j=0}^i e_j$ . Then a subset  $C$  of  $Q_n$  define a vertex partition by  
 158 translates of  $\alpha(P)$  if and only if

159 (i)  $2^n = |C|(n+1)$  and

160 (ii) No pair of elements of  $C$  differ by a set of consecutive coordinates.

161 **Proof :** Consider two translates of the embedded path say,  $x + \alpha(P)$  and  $y + \alpha(P)$ .  
 162 If  $z$  is a common vertex of the two paths then for some  $i, j \in \{0, 1, \dots, n\}$  we have  
 163  $z = x + \sum_{k=1}^i e_k$  and  $z = y + \sum_{k=1}^j e_k$ . Thus by lemma 5 condition (ii) implies that  
 164 the paths  $x + \alpha(P)$  and  $y + \alpha(P)$  are disjoint. By condition (i) every vertex belongs  
 165 to some path. □

166  
 167 If we assume that  $C$  is a linear subspace, the last condition is equivalent to the  
 168 condition used by Ramras:

169 (ii') No element of  $C$  have as support a not empty set of consecutive integers.

170 Let us recall Vasiliev construction of perfect codes.

171 **Theorem 7** (Vasiliev [6]) Let  $C_n$  be a perfect code of length  $n$ . Assume  $\mathbf{0} \in C_n$   
 172 and let  $\lambda$  be a function from  $C_n$  to  $\mathbb{Z}_2$  such that  $\lambda(\mathbf{0}) = 0$ . Then the set  $C_{2n+1} =$   
 173  $\{(x, \pi(x) + \lambda(c), x + c); x \in \mathbb{F}^n, c \in C_n\}$  is a perfect code of length  $2n + 1$ .

174 Notice that if there exists  $u, v \in C_n$  such that  $\lambda(u + v) \neq \lambda(u) + \lambda(v)$  then  $C_{2n+1}$   
 175 is not equivalent to any linear code. Such a function  $\lambda$  exists when  $|C_n| > 2$  thus  
 176 there exists non linear codes when  $n = 2^m - 1, n \geq 15$ . If  $\lambda(u) = 0$  for any  $u \in C$   
 177 we obtain the classical inductive construction of Hamming codes.

178 **Theorem 8** Let  $\alpha(P)$  be a canonical isometric embedding of an antipodal path in  
 179  $Q_n$  and assume that  $D_n$  defines a vertex partition by translates of  $\alpha(P)$ . Let  $\gamma$   
 180 be a function from  $D_n$  to  $\mathbb{Z}_2$  such that  $\gamma(\mathbf{0}) = 0$ . Let  $\Gamma$  be the function from  
 181  $D_n$  to  $\mathbb{F}^n$  defined by  $\Gamma(d) = \mathbf{0}$  if  $\gamma(d) = 0$  and  $\Gamma(d) = \mathbf{1}$  otherwise. Then the set  
 182  $D_{2n+1} = \{(y, \gamma(d), y + d + \Gamma(d)); y \in \mathbb{F}^n, d \in D_n\}$  defines a vertex partition of  $\mathbb{F}^{2n+1}$   
 183 by isometrically embedded antipodal paths.

184 **Proof :** Let us start by a direct proof using lemma 6. Notice first that  $|D_{2n+1}|(2n+2) =$   
 185  $|D_n|2^n(2n+2) = |D_n|(n+1)2^{n+1} = 2^{2n+1}$ . Consider two vectors of  $D_{2n+1}$  say  
 186  $u = (y, \gamma(d), y + d + \Gamma(d))$  and  $u' = (y', \gamma(d'), y' + d' + \Gamma(d'))$ . Assume that  $u$  and  $u'$   
 187 differ by a set of consecutive coordinates.

- 188 •  $\gamma(d) = \gamma(d')$ . We have  $y = y'$  or  $y + d = y' + d'$ .
  - 189 – If  $y = y'$  then  $u + u' = (\mathbf{0}, 0, d + d')$ . But  $d, d' \in D_n$  thus by lemma 6  
 190  $d = d'$  and  $u = u'$ .
  - 191 – If  $y + d = y' + d'$  then  $u + u' = (y + y', 0, \mathbf{0})$ . But  $y + y' = d + d'$  and again  
 192 by lemma 6  $d = d'$ ,  $y = y'$  and  $u = u'$ .
- 193 •  $\gamma(d) \neq \gamma(d')$  thus  $u + u' = (y + y', 1, d + y + d' + y' + \mathbf{1})$ . Therefore  $y + y'$  is  
 194 of type 01 and  $d + y + d' + y' + \mathbf{1}$  must be of type 10, thus  $d + y + d' + y'$   
 195 of type 01. But  $d + d' = (y + y') + (d + y + d' + y')$  then by lemma 5  $d$  and  $d'$   
 196 must differ by a set of consecutive coordinates; a contradiction with lemma 6.

197 □

198 We will now deduce theorem 8 from theorem 7 showing that this construction  
 199 is in fact the analogous of Vasiliev construction.

200  
 201 **Alternative proof :** Let  $W = (v_1, v_2, \dots, v_n)$  and  $W' = (v_1, v_2, \dots, v_{2n+1})$ ,  
 202 where  $v_i = \sum_{j=1}^i e_j$ . By theorem 3  $D_n$  is obtained from a perfect code of length  $n$   
 203  $C_n = \{\theta_W^{-1}(d); d \in D_n\}$ . Let  $\lambda : C_n \mapsto \mathbb{Z}_2$  defined by  $\lambda(c) = \gamma(\theta_W(c))$ .  
 204 Consider  $C_{2n+1} = \{(\theta_W^{-1}(y), \pi(\theta_W^{-1}(y)) + \lambda(\theta_W^{-1}(d)), \theta_W^{-1}(y) + \theta_W^{-1}(d)); y \in \mathbb{F}^n, d \in D_n\}$ .  
 205 By theorem 7  $C_{2n+1}$  is a perfect code of length  $2n+1$  and thus by theorem 3  $D_{2n+1}$   
 206 defines a vertex partition of  $\mathbb{F}^{2n+1}$  by isometrically embedded antipodal paths where  
 207  $D_{2n+1} = \{\theta_{W'}(c); c \in C_{2n+1}\}$ .

208 Notice that, for any  $x \in \mathbb{F}^n$  and any  $a \in \mathbb{Z}_2$  we have:

$$\begin{aligned} 209 \theta_{W'}(x, 0, \mathbf{0}) &= (\theta_W(x), 0, \mathbf{0}) + \pi(x) \cdot (\mathbf{0}, 1, \mathbf{1}) \\ 210 \theta_{W'}(\mathbf{0}, 0, x) &= (\mathbf{0}, 0, \theta_W(x)) \\ 211 \theta_{W'}(\mathbf{0}, a, \mathbf{0}) &= a \cdot (\mathbf{0}, 1, \mathbf{1}). \end{aligned}$$

212 Therefore:

$$\begin{aligned} 213 \theta_{W'}(\theta_W^{-1}(y), 0, \mathbf{0}) &= (y, 0, \mathbf{0}) + \pi(\theta_W^{-1}(y)) \cdot (\mathbf{0}, 1, \mathbf{1}), \\ 214 \theta_{W'}(\theta_W^{-1}(\mathbf{0}, \pi(\theta_W^{-1}(y)) + \lambda(\theta_W^{-1}(d))), \mathbf{0}) &= [\pi(\theta_W^{-1}(y)) + \gamma(d)] \cdot (\mathbf{0}, 1, \mathbf{1}) \\ 215 \text{and } \theta_{W'}(\mathbf{0}, 0, \theta_W^{-1}(y) + \theta_W^{-1}(d)) &= (\mathbf{0}, 0, y + d). \end{aligned}$$

216 By linearity of  $\theta_{W'}$  we obtain the expression of  $D_{2n+1}$ .

217 □

218 Here also, if there exists  $u, v \in D_n$  such that  $\gamma(u+v) \neq \gamma(u) + \gamma(v)$  then  $D_{2n+1}$   
 219 is not a linear subspace. Notice that, if we set  $\gamma(u) = 0$  for any  $u \in D_n$ , we obtain  
 220 a recursive construction of the linear subspace proposed by M.Ramras [5].

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