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## A NOTE ON SQUARE-FREE FACTORIZATIONS

PIOTR JĘDRZEJEWICZ, ŁUKASZ MATYSIAK, AND JANUSZ ZIELIŃSKI

ABSTRACT. We analyze properties of various square-free factorizations in greatest common divisor domains (GCD-domains) and domains satisfying the ascending chain condition for principal ideals (ACCP-domains).

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout this article by a ring we mean a commutative ring with unity. By a domain we mean a ring without zero divisors. By  $R^*$  we denote the set of all invertible elements of a ring  $R$ . Given elements  $a, b \in R$ , we write  $a \sim b$  if  $a$  and  $b$  are associated, and  $a \mid b$  if  $b$  is divisible by  $a$ . Furthermore, we write  $a \text{ rpr } b$  if  $a$  and  $b$  are relatively prime, that is, have no common non-invertible divisors. If  $R$  is a ring, then by  $\text{Sqf } R$  we denote the set of all square-free elements of  $R$ , where an element  $a \in R$  is called square-free if it can not be presented in the form  $a = b^2c$  with  $b \in R \setminus R^*$ ,  $c \in R$ .

In [4] we discuss many factorial properties of subrings, in particular involving square-free elements. The aim of this paper is to collect various ways to present an element as a product of square-free elements and to study the existence and uniqueness questions in larger classes than the class of unique factorization domains. In Proposition 1 we obtain the equivalence of factorizations (ii) – (vii) for GCD-domains. We also prove the existence of factorizations (i) – (iii) in Proposition 1 for ACCP-domains, but their uniqueness we obtain in Proposition 2 for GCD-domains. Recall that a domain  $R$  is called a GCD-domain if the intersection of any two principal ideals is a principal ideal. Recall also that a domain  $R$  is called an ACCP-domain if it satisfies the ascending chain condition for principal ideals.

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We refer to Clark's survey article [1] for more information about GCD-domains and ACCP-domains.

It turns out that some preparatory properties (Lemma 2) hold in a larger class than GCD-domains, namely pre-Schreier domains. A domain  $R$  is called pre-Schreier if every non-zero element  $a \in R$  is primal, that is, for every  $b, c \in R$  such that  $a \mid bc$  there exist  $a_1, a_2 \in R$  such that  $a = a_1 a_2$ ,  $a_1 \mid b$  and  $a_2 \mid c$ . Integrally closed pre-Schreier domains are called Schreier domains. The notion of Schreier domain was introduced by Cohn in [2]. The notion of pre-Schreier domain was introduced by Zafrullah in [6], but this property had featured already in [2], as well as in [3] and [5]. The reason why we consider pre-Schreier domains in Lemma 2 is that we were looking for a minimal condition under which a product of pairwise relatively prime square-free elements is square-free. For further information on pre-Schreier domains we refer the reader to [6].

## 2. PRELIMINARY LEMMAS

Note the following easy lemma.

**Lemma 1.** *Let  $R$  be a ring. If  $a \in \text{Sqf } R$  and  $a = b_1 b_2 \dots b_n$ , then  $b_1, b_2, \dots, b_n \in \text{Sqf } R$  and  $b_i \text{ rpr } b_j$  for  $i \neq j$ .*

In the next lemma we obtain the properties we will use in the proofs of Propositions 1 b) and 2 (i). Recall that every GCD-domain is pre-Schreier ([2], Theorem 2.4).

**Lemma 2.** *Let  $R$  be a pre-Schreier domain.*

- a) *Let  $a, b, c \in R$ ,  $a \neq 0$ . If  $a \mid bc$  and  $a \text{ rpr } b$ , then  $a \mid c$ .*
- b) *Let  $a, b, c, d \in R$ . If  $ab = cd$ ,  $a \text{ rpr } c$  and  $b \text{ rpr } d$ , then  $a \sim d$  and  $b \sim c$ .*
- c) *Let  $a, b, c \in R$ . If  $ab = c^2$  and  $a \text{ rpr } b$ , then there exist  $c_1, c_2 \in R$  such that  $a \sim c_1^2$ ,  $b \sim c_2^2$  and  $c = c_1 c_2$ .*
- d) *Let  $a_1, \dots, a_n, b \in R$ . If  $a_i \text{ rpr } b$  for  $i = 1, \dots, n$ , then  $a_1 \dots a_n \text{ rpr } b$ .*
- e) *Let  $a_1, \dots, a_n \in R$ . If  $a_1, \dots, a_n \in \text{Sqf } R$  and  $a_i \text{ rpr } a_j$  for all  $i \neq j$ , then  $a_1 \dots a_n \in \text{Sqf } R$ .*

*Proof.* a) If  $a \mid bc$ , then  $a = a_1 a_2$  for some  $a_1, a_2 \in R \setminus \{0\}$  such that  $a_1 \mid b$  and  $a_2 \mid c$ . If, moreover,  $a \text{ rpr } b$ , then  $a_1 \in R^*$ . Hence,  $a \sim a_2$ , so  $a \mid c$ .

b) Assume that  $ab = cd$ ,  $a \text{ rpr } c$  and  $b \text{ rpr } d$ . If  $a = 0$  and  $R$  is not a field, then  $c \in R^*$ , so  $d = 0$  and then  $b \in R^*$ . Now, let  $a, d \neq 0$ .

Since  $a \mid cd$  and  $a \text{ rpr } c$ , we have  $a \mid d$  by a). Similarly, since  $d \mid ab$  and  $d \text{ rpr } b$ , we obtain  $d \mid a$ . Hence,  $a \sim d$ , and then  $b \sim c$ .

c) Let  $ab = c^2$  and  $a \text{ rpr } b$ . Since  $c \mid ab$ , there exist  $c_1, c_2 \in R \setminus \{0\}$  such that  $c_1 \mid a$ ,  $c_2 \mid b$  and  $c = c_1 c_2$ . Hence,  $a = c_1 d$  and  $b = c_2 e$  for some  $d, e \in R$ , and we obtain  $de = c_1 c_2$ . We have  $d \text{ rpr } c_2$ , because  $d \mid a$  and  $c_2 \mid b$ , analogously  $e \text{ rpr } c_1$ , so  $d \sim c_1$  and  $e \sim c_2$ , by b). Finally,  $a \sim c_1^2$ ,  $b \sim c_2^2$ .

d) Induction. Let  $a_i \text{ rpr } b$  for  $i = 1, \dots, n+1$ . Put  $a = a_1 \dots a_n$ . Assume that  $a \text{ rpr } b$ . Let  $c \in R \setminus \{0\}$  be a common divisor of  $aa_{n+1}$  and  $b$ . Since  $c \mid aa_{n+1}$ , there exist  $c_1, c_2 \in R \setminus \{0\}$  such that  $c_1 \mid a$ ,  $c_2 \mid a_{n+1}$  and  $c = c_1c_2$ . We see that  $c_1, c_2 \mid b$ , so  $c_1, c_2 \in R^*$ , and then  $c \in R^*$ .

e) Induction. Take  $a_1, \dots, a_{n+1} \in \text{Sqf } R$  such that  $a_i \text{ rpr } a_j$  for  $i \neq j$ . Put  $a = a_1 \dots a_n$ . Assume that  $a \in \text{Sqf } R$ . Let  $aa_{n+1} = b^2c$  for some  $b, c \in R \setminus \{0\}$ .

Since  $c \mid aa_{n+1}$ , there exist  $c_1, c_2 \in R \setminus \{0\}$  such that  $c = c_1c_2$ ,  $c_1 \mid a$  and  $c_2 \mid a_{n+1}$ , so  $a = c_1d$  and  $a_{n+1} = c_2e$ , where  $d, e \in R$ . We obtain  $de = b^2$ . By d) we have  $a \text{ rpr } a_{n+1}$ , so  $d \text{ rpr } e$ . And then by c), there exist  $b_1, b_2 \in R$  such that  $d \sim b_1^2$ ,  $e \sim b_2^2$  and  $b = b_1b_2$ . Since  $a, a_{n+1} \in \text{Sqf } R$ , we infer  $b_1, b_2 \in R^*$ , so  $b \in R^*$ .  $\square$

### 3. SQUARE-FREE FACTORIZATIONS

In Proposition 1 below we collect possible presentations of an element as a product of square-free elements or their powers. We distinct presentations (ii) and (iii), presentations (iv) and (v), and presentations (vi) and (vii), because (ii), (iv) and (vi) are of a simpler form, but in (iii), (v) and (vii) the uniqueness will be more natural (in Proposition 2).

**Proposition 1.** *Let  $R$  be a ring. Given a non-zero element  $a \in R \setminus R^*$ , consider the following conditions:*

- (i) *there exist  $b \in R$  and  $c \in \text{Sqf } R$  such that  $a = b^2c$ ,*
- (ii) *there exist  $n \geq 0$  and  $s_0, s_1, \dots, s_n \in \text{Sqf } R$  such that  $a = s_n^{2^n} s_{n-1}^{2^{n-1}} \dots s_1^2 s_0$ ,*
- (iii) *there exist  $n \geq 1$ ,  $s_1, s_2, \dots, s_n \in (\text{Sqf } R) \setminus R^*$ ,  $k_1 < k_2 < \dots < k_n$ ,  $k_1 \geq 0$ , and  $c \in R^*$  such that  $a = cs_n^{2^{k_n}} s_{n-1}^{2^{k_{n-1}}} \dots s_2^{2^{k_2}} s_1^{2^{k_1}}$ ,*
- (iv) *there exist  $n \geq 1$  and  $s_1, s_2, \dots, s_n \in \text{Sqf } R$  such that  $s_i \mid s_{i+1}$  for  $i = 1, \dots, n-1$ , and  $a = s_1s_2 \dots s_n$ ,*
- (v) *there exist  $n \geq 1$ ,  $s_1, s_2, \dots, s_n \in (\text{Sqf } R) \setminus R^*$ ,  $k_1, k_2, \dots, k_n \geq 1$ , and  $c \in R^*$  such that  $s_i \mid s_{i+1}$  and  $s_i \not\sim s_{i+1}$  for  $i = 1, \dots, n-1$ , and  $a = cs_1^{k_1} s_2^{k_2} \dots s_n^{k_n}$ ,*
- (vi) *there exist  $n \geq 1$  and  $s_1, s_2, \dots, s_n \in \text{Sqf } R$  such that  $s_i \text{ rpr } s_j$  for  $i \neq j$ , and  $a = s_1s_2^2s_3^3 \dots s_n^n$ ,*
- (vii) *there exist  $n \geq 1$ ,  $s_1, s_2, \dots, s_n \in (\text{Sqf } R) \setminus R^*$ ,  $k_1 < k_2 < \dots < k_n$ ,  $k_1 \geq 1$ , and  $c \in R^*$  such that  $s_i \text{ rpr } s_j$  for  $i \neq j$ , and  $a = cs_1^{k_1} s_2^{k_2} \dots s_n^{k_n}$ .*

a) *In every ring  $R$  the following holds:*

$$(i) \Leftarrow (ii) \Leftrightarrow (iii), \quad (iv) \Leftrightarrow (v) \Rightarrow (vi) \Leftrightarrow (vii).$$

b) *If  $R$  is a GCD-domain, then all conditions (ii) – (vii) are equivalent.*

c) *If  $R$  is an ACCP-domain, then conditions (i) – (iii) hold.*

d) *If  $R$  is a UFD, then all conditions (i) – (vii) hold.*

*Proof.* **a)** Implication (i)  $\Leftarrow$  (ii) and equivalencies (ii)  $\Leftrightarrow$  (iii), (iv)  $\Leftrightarrow$  (v), (vi)  $\Leftrightarrow$  (vii) are obvious, so it is enough to prove implication (iv)  $\Rightarrow$  (vi).

Assume that  $a = s_1 s_2 \dots s_n$ , where  $s_1, s_2, \dots, s_n \in \text{Sqf } R$  and  $s_i \mid s_{i+1}$  for  $i = 1, \dots, n-1$ . Let  $s_{i+1} = s_i t_{i+1}$ , where  $t_{i+1} \in R$ , for  $i = 1, \dots, n-1$ . Put also  $t_1 = s_1$ . Then  $s_i = t_1 t_2 \dots t_i$  for each  $i$ . Since  $s_n \in \text{Sqf } R$ , by Lemma 1 we obtain that  $t_1, t_2, \dots, t_n \in \text{Sqf } R$  and  $t_i \text{ rpr } t_j$  for  $i \neq j$ . Moreover, we have  $s_1 s_2 \dots s_n = t_1^n t_2^{n-1} \dots t_n$ .

**b)** Let  $R$  be a GCD-domain.

(vi)  $\Rightarrow$  (iv) Assume that  $a = s_1 s_2^2 s_3^3 \dots s_n^n$ , where  $s_1, s_2, \dots, s_n \in \text{Sqf } R$  and  $s_i \text{ rpr } s_j$  for  $i \neq j$ . We see that

$$s_1 s_2^2 s_3^3 \dots s_n^n = s_n (s_n s_{n-1}) (s_n s_{n-1} s_{n-2}) \dots (s_n s_{n-1} \dots s_2) (s_n s_{n-1} \dots s_2 s_1).$$

Since  $R$  is a GCD-domain,  $s_n s_{n-1} \dots s_i \in \text{Sqf } R$  for each  $i$  by Lemma 2 e).

(vi)  $\Rightarrow$  (ii) Let  $a = s_1 s_2^2 s_3^3 \dots s_n^n$ , where  $s_1, s_2, \dots, s_n \in \text{Sqf } R$ , and  $s_i \text{ rpr } s_j$  for  $i \neq j$ . For every  $k \in \{1, 2, \dots, n\}$  put  $k = \sum_{i=0}^r c_i^{(k)} 2^i$ , where  $c_i^{(k)} \in \{0, 1\}$ . Then

$$a = \prod_{k=1}^n s_k^k = \prod_{k=1}^n s_k^{\sum_{i=0}^r c_i^{(k)} 2^i} = \prod_{k=1}^n \prod_{i=0}^r s_k^{c_i^{(k)} 2^i} = \prod_{i=0}^r \left( \prod_{k=1}^n s_k^{c_i^{(k)}} \right)^{2^i},$$

where  $\prod_{k=1}^n s_k^{c_i^{(k)}} \in \text{Sqf } R$  for each  $i$  by Lemma 2 e).

(ii)  $\Rightarrow$  (vi) Let  $a = s_n^{2^n} s_{n-1}^{2^{n-1}} \dots s_1^2 s_0$ , where  $s_0, s_1, \dots, s_n \in \text{Sqf } R$ . For every  $k \in \{1, 2, \dots, 2^{n+1} - 1\}$  put  $k = \sum_{i=0}^n c_i^{(k)} 2^i$ , where  $c_i^{(k)} \in \{0, 1\}$ . Let  $t'_k = \gcd(s_i : c_i^{(k)} = 1)$ ,  $t''_k = \text{lcm}(s_i : c_i^{(k)} = 0)$  and  $t_k = \gcd(t'_k, t''_k) \cdot t_k$ , where  $t_k \in R$  (by [2], Theorem 2.1, in a GCD-domain least common multiples exist). Then  $t_k$  is the greatest among these common divisors of all  $s_i$  such that  $c_i^{(k)} = 1$ , which are relatively prime to all  $s_i$  such that  $c_i^{(k)} = 0$ . In particular,  $t_k \mid s_i$  for every  $k, i$  such that  $c_i^{(k)} = 1$ , and  $t_k \text{ rpr } s_i$  for every  $k, i$  such that  $c_i^{(k)} = 0$ . In each case,  $\gcd(s_i, t_k) = t_k^{c_i^{(k)}}$ . Moreover,  $t_k \text{ rpr } t_l$  for every  $k \neq l$ .

Since  $s_i \mid t_1 t_2 \dots t_{2^{n+1}-1}$ , we obtain

$$s_i = \gcd(s_i, \prod_{k=1}^{2^{n+1}-1} t_k) = \prod_{k=1}^{2^{n+1}-1} \gcd(s_i, t_k) = \prod_{k=1}^{2^{n+1}-1} t_k^{c_i^{(k)}},$$

so

$$\prod_{i=0}^n (s_i)^{2^i} = \prod_{i=0}^n \prod_{k=1}^{2^{n+1}-1} (t_k^{c_i^{(k)}})^{2^i} = \prod_{k=1}^{2^{n+1}-1} \prod_{i=0}^n t_k^{c_i^{(k)} 2^i} = \prod_{k=1}^{2^{n+1}-1} t_k^{\sum_{i=0}^n c_i^{(k)} 2^i} = \prod_{k=1}^{2^{n+1}-1} t_k^k.$$

Moreover,  $t_k \in \text{Sqf } R$ , because for  $k \in \{1, 2, \dots, 2^{n+1} - 1\}$  there exists  $i$  such that  $c_i^{(k)} = 1$ , and then  $t_k \mid s_i$ .

**c)** Let  $R$  be an ACCP-domain. In this proof we follow the idea of the second proof of Proposition 9 from [1], p. 7, 8.

(i) If  $a \notin \text{Sqf } R$ , then  $a = b_1^2 c_1$ , where  $b_1 \in R \setminus R^*$ ,  $c_1 \in R$ . If  $c_1 \notin \text{Sqf } R$ , then  $c_1 = b_2^2 c_2$ , where  $b_2 \in R \setminus R^*$ ,  $c_2 \in R$ . Repeating this process, we obtain a strongly ascending chain of principal ideals  $Ra \subsetneq Rc_1 \subsetneq Rc_2 \subsetneq \dots$ , so for some  $k$  we will have  $c_{k-1} = b_k^2 c_k$ ,  $b_k \in R \setminus R^*$ , and  $c_k \in \text{Sqf } R$ . Then  $a = (b_1 \dots b_k)^2 c_k$ .

(iii) If  $a \notin \text{Sqf } R$ , then by (i) there exist  $a_1 \in R \setminus R^*$  and  $s_0 \in \text{Sqf } R$  such that  $a = a_1^2 s_0$ . If  $a_1 \notin \text{Sqf } R$ , then again, by (i) there exist  $a_2 \in R \setminus R^*$  and  $s_1 \in \text{Sqf } R$  such that  $a_1 = a_2^2 s_1$ . Repeating this process, we obtain a strongly ascending chain of principal ideals  $Ra \subsetneq Ra_1 \subsetneq Ra_2 \subsetneq \dots$ , so for some  $k$  we will have  $a_{k-1} = a_k^2 s_{k-1}$ ,  $a_k \in (\text{Sqf } R) \setminus R^*$ ,  $s_{k-1} \in \text{Sqf } R$ . Putting  $s_k = a_k$  we obtain:

$$a = a_1^2 s_0 = a_2^2 s_1^2 s_0 = \dots = s_n^{2^n} \dots s_2^2 s_1^2 s_0.$$

d) This is a standard fact following from the irreducible decomposition. □

#### 4. THE UNIQUENESS OF FACTORIZATIONS

The following proposition concerns the uniqueness of square-free decompositions from Proposition 1. In (i) – (iii) we assume that  $R$  is a GCD-domain, in (iv) – (vii)  $R$  is a UFD.

**Proposition 2.** (i) *Let  $b, d \in R$  and  $c, e \in \text{Sqf } R$ . If*

$$b^2 c = d^2 e,$$

*then  $b \sim d$  and  $c \sim e$ .*

(ii) *Let  $s_0, s_1, \dots, s_n \in \text{Sqf } R$  and  $t_0, t_1, \dots, t_m \in \text{Sqf } R$ ,  $n \leq m$ . If*

$$s_n^{2^n} s_{n-1}^{2^{n-1}} \dots s_1^2 s_0 = t_m^{2^m} t_{m-1}^{2^{m-1}} \dots t_1^2 t_0,$$

*then  $s_i \sim t_i$  for  $i = 0, \dots, n$  and, if  $m > n$ , then  $t_i \in R^*$  for  $i = n + 1, \dots, m$ .*

(iii) *Let  $s_1, s_2, \dots, s_n \in (\text{Sqf } R) \setminus R^*$ ,  $t_1, t_2, \dots, t_m \in (\text{Sqf } R) \setminus R^*$ ,  $k_1 < k_2 < \dots < k_n$ ,  $l_1 < l_2 < \dots < l_m$  and  $c, d \in R^*$ . If*

$$cs_n^{2^{k_n}} s_{n-1}^{2^{k_{n-1}}} \dots s_2^{2^{k_2}} s_1^{2^{k_1}} = dt_m^{2^{l_m}} t_{m-1}^{2^{l_{m-1}}} \dots t_2^{2^{l_2}} t_1^{2^{l_1}},$$

*then  $n = m$ ,  $s_i \sim t_i$  and  $k_i = l_i$  for  $i = 1, \dots, n$ .*

(iv) *Let  $s_1, s_2, \dots, s_n \in \text{Sqf } R$ ,  $t_1, t_2, \dots, t_m \in \text{Sqf } R$ ,  $n \leq m$ ,  $s_i \mid s_{i+1}$  for  $i = 1, \dots, n - 1$ , and  $t_i \mid t_{i+1}$  for  $i = 1, \dots, m - 1$ . If*

$$s_1 s_2 \dots s_n = t_1 t_2 \dots t_m,$$

*then  $s_i \sim t_{i+m-n}$  for  $i = 1, \dots, n$  and, if  $m > n$ , then  $t_i \in R^*$  for  $i = 1, \dots, m - n$ .*

(v) *Let  $s_1, s_2, \dots, s_n \in (\text{Sqf } R) \setminus R^*$ ,  $t_1, t_2, \dots, t_m \in (\text{Sqf } R) \setminus R^*$ ,  $k_1, k_2, \dots, k_n \geq 1$ ,  $l_1, l_2, \dots, l_m \geq 1$ ,  $c, d \in R^*$ ,  $s_i \mid s_{i+1}$  and  $s_i \not\sim s_{i+1}$  for  $i = 1, \dots, n - 1$ ,  $t_i \mid t_{i+1}$  and  $t_i \not\sim t_{i+1}$  for  $i = 1, \dots, m - 1$ . If*

$$cs_1^{k_1} s_2^{k_2} \dots s_n^{k_n} = dt_1^{l_1} t_2^{l_2} \dots t_m^{l_m},$$

*then  $n = m$ ,  $s_i \sim t_i$  and  $k_i = l_i$  for  $i = 1, \dots, n$ .*

(vi) Let  $s_1, s_2, \dots, s_n \in \text{Sqf } R$ ,  $t_1, t_2, \dots, t_m \in \text{Sqf } R$ ,  $n \leq m$ ,  $s_i$  rpr  $s_j$  for  $i \neq j$  and  $t_i$  rpr  $t_j$  for  $i \neq j$ . If

$$s_1 s_2^2 s_3^3 \dots s_n^n = t_1 t_2^2 t_3^3 \dots t_m^m,$$

then  $s_i \sim t_i$  for  $i = 1, \dots, n$  and, if  $m > n$ , then  $t_i \in R^*$  for  $i = n + 1, \dots, m$ .

(vii) Let  $s_1, s_2, \dots, s_n \in (\text{Sqf } R) \setminus R^*$ ,  $t_1, t_2, \dots, t_m \in (\text{Sqf } R) \setminus R^*$ ,  $1 \leq k_1 < k_2 < \dots < k_n$ ,  $1 \leq l_1 < l_2 < \dots < l_m$ ,  $c, d \in R^*$ ,  $s_i$  rpr  $s_j$  for  $i \neq j$ , and  $t_i$  rpr  $t_j$  for  $i \neq j$ . If

$$c s_1^{k_1} s_2^{k_2} \dots s_n^{k_n} = d t_1^{l_1} t_2^{l_2} \dots t_m^{l_m},$$

then  $n = m$ ,  $s_i \sim t_i$  and  $k_i = l_i$  for  $i = 1, \dots, n$ .

*Proof.* (i) Assume that  $b^2c = d^2e$ . Put  $f = \gcd(b, d)$ ,  $g = \gcd(c, e)$ ,  $b = fb_0$ ,  $d = fd_0$ ,  $c = gc_0$ , and  $e = ge_0$ , where  $b_0, c_0, d_0, e_0 \in R$ . We obtain  $b_0^2c_0 = d_0^2e_0$ ,  $\gcd(c_0, e_0) = 1$  and  $\gcd(b_0, d_0) = 1$ , so also  $\gcd(b_0^2, d_0^2) = 1$ . By Lemma 2 b), we infer  $b_0^2 \sim e_0$  and  $c_0 \sim d_0^2$ , but  $c_0, e_0 \in \text{Sqf } R$  by Lemma 1, so  $b_0, d_0 \in R^*$ , and then  $c_0, e_0 \in R^*$ .

Statements (ii), (iii) follow from (i).

Statements (iv) – (vii) are straightforward using the irreducible decomposition.  $\square$

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NICOLAUS COPERNICUS UNIVERSITY, FACULTY OF MATHEMATICS AND COMPUTER SCIENCE,  
87-100 TORUŃ, POLAND

*E-mail address*, Piotr Jędrzejewicz: [pjdrzej@mat.uni.torun.pl](mailto:pjdrzej@mat.uni.torun.pl)

*E-mail address*, Łukasz Matysiak: [lmatusiak@mat.uni.torun.pl](mailto:lmatusiak@mat.uni.torun.pl)

*E-mail address*, Janusz Zieliński: [ubukrool@mat.uni.torun.pl](mailto:ubukrool@mat.uni.torun.pl)