ON SOME PAIRS OF PARTIAL TRIPLE SYSTEMS (*)

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Sommario. - Si costruiscono tutte le coppie di Sistemi Parziali di Terne di Steiner (PTS), disgiunte e mutuamente bilanciate (DMB), aventi m = 8 blocchi e $M_4 = \emptyset$.

SUMMARY. - We make all pairs of Partial Steiner Triple Systems (PTS), disjoint and mutually balanced (DMB), with m=8 blocks and $M_4=\emptyset$.

1. - Introduction

A Partial Triple System (PTS) is a pair (P, t), where P is a finite set and t is a collection of 3-subsets of P, called blocks or triples, such that every 2-subset of P is contained in at most one block of t. Two PTSs (P, t_1) and (P, t_2) are said to be disjoint and mutually balanced (DMB) if $t_1 \cap t_2 = \emptyset$ and every 2-subset of P is contained in a block of t_1 iff it is contained in a block of t_2 .

A Steiner Triple System (STS) is a PTS (S, t) such that every 2-subset of S is contained in exactly one block of t. The number |S| is the order of the triple system and if |S| = v it is well-known that a necessary and sufficient condition for the existence of an STS of order v (STS(v)) is v = 1 or 3 (mod 6). Further, it is

$$t_{\nu}=|t|=\frac{\nu(\nu-1)}{6}.$$

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Let (P, t) be a PTS. Using graph theoretic terminology, we will say that an element $x \in P$ has degree d(x) = h if x belongs to exactly h blocks of t. Clearly $\sum_{x \in P} d(x) = 3 \cdot |t|$. We will call the degree-set (DS) of a PTS (P, t) the n-uple $DS = [d(x), d(y), \ldots]$, where x, y, \ldots are the elements of P. If there are r_i elements of P having degree h_i , for $i = 1, 2, \ldots, s$, we will write $DS = [(h_1)_{r_1}, (h_2)_{r_2}, \ldots, (h_s)_{r_s}]$, where $r_1 + r_2 + \ldots + r_s = |P|$. If $r_i = 1$, for some i, then we will write $(h_i)_1 = h_i$. It is immediate that for any two DMB PTS (P, t_1) and (P, t_2) it is $|t_1| = |t_2|$.

A partial triple system (P, τ) is said to be embedded in a triple system (S, t) provided that $P \subseteq S, \tau \subseteq t$.

Given a PTS (P, t), we can define a partial binary operation \circ on P as follows

- (1) $x \circ x = x$ for all $x \in P$, and
- (2) if $x \neq y$, $x \circ y$ is defined and $x \circ y = z$ if and only if $\{x, y, z\}$ is a triple of t.

It is a routine matter to see that \circ is well defined and that (P, \circ) is a partial idempotent commutative quasigroup; i.e., $x \circ x = x$ for all $x \in P$, and whenever $x \circ y$ is defined then so is $y \circ x$, and furthermore $x \circ y = y \circ x$.

If (P, t_1) and (P, t_2) are two *DMB PTSs*, in what follows we will always indicate by (P, \cdot) and (P, \cdot) the two partial idempotent commutative quasigroup associated with them, respectively.

Two triples (P, t_1, t_2) and (P, t'_1, t'_2) are isomorphic if (P, t_1) is isomorphic to (P, t'_1) [resp. (P, t'_2)] and (P, t_2) is isomorphic to (P, t'_2) [resp. (P, t'_1)].

In what follows (P, t_1) and (P, t_2) will be two *DMB PTSs* with $P = \{0, 1, 2, ..., n-1\}$ and $|t_1| = |t_2| = m$. Further, for i = 1, 2, we will put $\mathbf{L}_i = \bigcup_{b \in t_i} P_2(b)$, where $P_2(b) = \{x : x \in b, |x| = 2\}$. If $x \in P$ then $\mathbf{K}(x, i) = \{b \in t_i : x \in b\}$, and $M_r = \{x \in P : d(x) = r\}$.

In [13] we constructed, to within isomorphism, all *DMB PTSs* with $m \le 7$ blocks and *DMB PTSs* having m = 8 and at least an element of degree 4.

In this paper we complete the construction of *DMB PTS* with m = 8, determining all *DMB PTSs* with m = 8 blocks and $M_4 = \emptyset$.

These results are useful because, by similar constructions, it is possible to study the parameter D(2,3,v,k), which is the maximum number of STS(v) such that any two of them have exactly k blocks in common, there k blocks being moreover in each of the D(2,3,v,k) systems (see J. Doyen [1]).

Further, it is known that an open problem is to determine (if they there exist) a pair of *DMB PQS* (partial quadruple systems) with m=17 blocks. Since, if (Q,q_1) and (Q,q_2) are two *DMB PQSs* with 17 blocks, the maximum degree of an element of Q is 8; it follows that, for $x \in Q$ and $t_i(x) = \{\{a,b,c\}: \{a,b,c,x\} \in q_i\}$ (i=1,2), $(Q-\{x\},t_1(x))$ and $(Q-\{x\},t_2(x))$ are two *DMB PTSs* with $m \le 8$ blocks.

Therefore the constructions of all *DMB PTSs* with $m \le 8$ blocks are useful to study the existence of *DMB PQSs* with m = 17 blocks.

2. - Properties and case $M_4 = M_3 = \emptyset$ for m = 8

Let (P, t_1) and (P, t_2) two DMB PTSs.

In [13] we proved the following properties:

Prop. 1).

It is $|P| \ge 6$, $m \ge 4$ and $d(x) \ge 2$ for every $x \in P$.

Prop. 2).

If $h = max\{d(x) : x \in P\}$, then $m \ge 2h$ and $n \ge 2h + 1$.

Prop. 3).

If $R \subseteq M_2$ for some $R \in t_1 \cup t_2$, then m = 4 or $m \ge 7$; for m = 8 it is $DS = [(4)_t, (2)_{n-t}], t = 0, 1, 2$.

THEOREM 2.1 - There exists exactly one pair of DMB PTSs with m=8 and $M_4=M_3=\varnothing$.

Proof. It is $DS = [(2)_{12}]$. From prop. 3) we have:

$$t_1 = \begin{bmatrix} 1, 2, 3 & 7, 8, 9 \\ 1, 4, 5 & 7, 0, A \\ 2, 4, 6 & 8, 0, B \\ 3, 5, 6 & 9, A, B \end{bmatrix} , t_2 = \begin{bmatrix} 1, 2, 4 & 7, 8, 0 \\ 1, 3, 5 & 7, 9, A \\ 2, 3, 6 & 8, 9, B \\ 4, 5, 6 & 0, A, B \end{bmatrix}$$

3. - DMB PTSs with m = 8 blocks and $M_4 = \emptyset$, $M_3 \neq \emptyset$

LEMMA 1. - Let (P, t_1, t_2) be a pair of DMB PTSs with $M_4 = \emptyset$, $M_3 \neq \emptyset$ and m = 8 blocks. It is $|M_3| = 4$ or 6 or 8. Further, if there exists a block $R \in t_i$ (i = 1 or 2) such that $R \subseteq M_3$, then $|M_3| \geq 6$. If R' is another block belonging to t_i and such that $R' \subseteq M_3$, $R \cap R' = \emptyset$, then $|M_3| = 8$.

Proof. Observe that, from Prop. 3), a DMB PTS (P, t_1, t_2) with

m=8 and $M_3 \neq \emptyset$ does not contain blocks $R \subseteq M_2$. Further, if $M_3 \neq \emptyset$, since $\sum_{x \in P} d(x)$ is an even number (24), then $|M_3|=2$ or 4 or 6 or 8. But $|M_3|=2$ and $M_4=\emptyset$ imply the existence of a block $R \subseteq M_2$. Therefore $|M_3|=4$ or 6 or 8.

Let $R = \{1, 2, 3\} \subseteq M_3$ be a block of a *DMB PTSs* (P, t_1, t_2) with m = 8 and $M_4 = \emptyset$. Suppose $R \in t_1$. If $|M_3| = 4$, necessarily $DS = [(3)_4, (2)_6]$.

Let $\{1,2,4\},\{1,3,5\},\{2,3,6\} \in t_2$. Since $|\{4,5,6\} \cap M_3| \le 1$, we can suppose $\{4,5\} \subseteq M_2$. We have

$$\{1,4,x_1\},\{2,4,x_2\},\{3,5,x_3\} \in t_1, \{1,5,y_1\},\{2,6,y_2\},\{3,6,y_3\} \in t_1, \{1,x_1,y_1\},\{2,x_2,y_2\},\{3,x_3,y_3\} \in t_2,$$

further $\{4,5\} \subseteq M_2$ implies that

$$\{4, x_1, x_2\}, \{5, y_1, x_3\} \in t_2$$
.

Since $3 \notin \{x_1, x_2\}$ and $2 \notin \{y_1, x_3\}$, it follows $6 \in M_3$ (otherwise, $\{6, y_2, y_3\} \in t_2$ and m > 8). But, since for every $b \in t_1 \cup t_2$ $b \not\subset M_2$, we have $6 \notin \{x_1, y_1\}$, and this implies $\{4, 6\}, \{5, 6\} \in \mathbf{L}_2$ with $\{4, 6\}, \{5, 6\} \notin \mathbf{L}_1$.

Therefore, $|M_3| \ge 6$.

Now, suppose that there exists another block $R' \in t_1$, such that $R' \cap R = \emptyset$ and $R' \subseteq M_3$. Further suppose $|M_3| < 8$, hence $|M_3| = 6$, i.e. $DS = [(3)_6, (2)_3]$.

Let $R' = \{4,5,6\}$. It is immediate to see that $\{1,4\},\{1,5\},\{2,4\}$, $\{2,6\},\{3,5\},\{3,6\}$ are contained in exactly six distinct blocks of t_1 , respectively.

Let $\{1,4,7\},\{1,5,8\} \in t_1$. In t_2 there are six blocks containing $\{1,2\},\{1,3\},\{2,3\},\{4,5\},\{4,6\},\{5,6\}$ and other two blocks b_1,b_2 . Since $b_i \not\subset M_2$, for i=1,2, if $b_1=\{x,y,z\}$, we can suppose x=1. Further, it is $y \in \{4,5\}$ (otherwise, $\{y,z\} \in \mathbf{L}_2 - \mathbf{L}_1$). Let y=4 (or, likewise, y=5). Considering that $\{4,5,4:5\} \neq b_1$ (i.e. $4:5 \neq 1$), necessarily $\{1,3,5\} \in t_2$, and further $\{1,4,8\},\{1,2,7\} \in t_2$. It follows $\{2,4,8\} \in t_1$ with $\{2,5\} \in \mathbf{L}_2 - \mathbf{L}_1$.

Therefore, necessarily it is $|M_3| \ge 8$, i.e. $|M_3| = 8$ and $P = M_3 \cdot \Delta$

THEOREM 3.1 - There exists exactly one pair of DMB PTSs with m = 8 blocks and $|M_3| = 8$.

Proof. If (P, t_1, t_2) is a pair of *DMB PTSs* with $|M_3| = 8$, then $P = M_3$ and $DS = [(3)_8]$.

If $R = \{1, 2, 3\} \in t_1$, necessarily there exist a block $R' \in t_1$ such that $R \cap R' = \emptyset$. Let $R' = \{4, 5, 6\}$. It follows that

$$t_1 = \begin{array}{|c|c|c|c|c|}\hline 1, & 2, & 3 & 2, & 4, & 8 \\ 4, & 5, & 6 & 2, & 6, & 7 \\ 1, & 4, & 7 & 3, & 5, & 7 \\ 1, & 5, & 8 & 3, & 6, & 8 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

Since $\{1,2\},\{1,3\},\{2,3\},\{4,5\},\{4,6\},\{5,6\}$ are contained in six distinct blocks of t_2 , necessarily $\{4,5,6\}\cap\{1:2,1:3,2:3\}\neq\emptyset$ and $\{1,2,3\}\cap\{4:5,4:6,5:6\}\neq\emptyset$. Further

$$1:2 \in \{4,7,8\}, 1:3 \in \{5,7,8\}, 2:3 \in \{6,7,8\},$$

with $\{7,8\} \subseteq \{1:2,1:3,2:3\}$ and $\{7,8\} \subseteq \{4:5,4:6,5:6\}$. Suppose $\{1,2,4\} \in t_2$ (or, likewise, $\{1,3,5\} \in t_2$ or $\{2,3,6\} \in t_2$). It follows $\{3,5,6\} \in t_2$, hence

$$t_2 = \begin{bmatrix} 1, 2, 4 & 2, 3, 7 \\ 3, 5, 6 & 2, 6, 8 \\ 1, 3, 8 & 4, 5, 8 \\ 1, 5, 7 & 4, 6, 7 \end{bmatrix}$$

We obtain so two DMB PTSs with $DS = [(3)_8]$. Δ

THEOREM 3.2 - There exists exactly one pair of DMB PTSs with m = 8, $|M_3| = 4$ and $M_4 = \emptyset$.

Proof. Let $M_3 = \{1, 2, 3, 4\}$. Necessarily it is $DS = [(3)_4, (2)_6]$. Since $|M_3| = 4$, from Lemma 1, it follows that $|b \cap M_i| \le 2$ for every $b \in t_1 \cup t_2$ and i = 2, 3. It is easy to verify that there are in t_i (i = 1, 2) four blocks b_{ij} (j = 1, 2, 3, 4) containing exactly one element x_j of M_3 and other four blocks b_{ij} (j = 5, 6, 7, 8) containing two elements of M_3 and one element of M_2 . It is easy to see that (for i = 1 or 2) $w = \begin{pmatrix} 4 \\ 0 \\ 0 \end{pmatrix} (M_3 \cap b_{ij}) \ge 3$. Consider w = 3, with $x_1 = x_2$, and let $b_{11} = \{x_1, a, b\}$, $b_{12} = \{x_1, c, d\}$. We can suppose $\{x_1, b, c\}$, $\{x_3, a, b\}$, $\{x_4, c, d\} \in t_2$. Since $c \in M_2$, it follows $\{c, b, x_4\} \in t_1$, with $\{b, x_4\} \in L_2$, $x_3 \ne x_4$, hence d(b) > 2. Therefore, it is w = 4, with $x_i \ne x_j$ for every $i, j, i \ne j$.

Let $x_i = i$, and let $\{1,2\},\{1,3\},\{2,4\},\{3,4\} \in \mathbf{L}_1 \cap \mathbf{L}_2$.

Suppose $\{1,2,0\},\{1,3,9\} \in t_1$. Observe that for every pair $\{x,y\} \subseteq b_{1j} \cap M_2$, for some j=1,2,3,4, there exists a $j' \in \{1,2,3,4\}$ such that $\{x,y\} \subseteq b_{2,j'}$. Therefore we can suppose that $\{1,3,0\},\{1,2,8\} \in t_2$. Hence $\{3,4,9\} \in t_2$, $\{2,4,8\} \in t_1$, and (since $2,3 \in M_3$) $\{2,4,7\} \in t_2$, $\{3,4,7\} \in t_1$. It follows

$$\{1,8,5\}$$
, $\{3,0,6\}$ $\{2,7,6\}$, $\{4,9,5\}$ $\{4,9,5\}$ and $\{2,0,6\}$, $\{4,8,5\}$ $\{4,8,5\}$

We have so two DMB PTSs with $DS = [(3)_4, (2)_6]$. \triangle

THEOREM 3.3 - There exists exactly two pairs of DMB PTSs with m = 8, $|M_3| = 6$, $M_4 = \emptyset$. They have $DS = [(3)_6, (2)_3]$.

Proof. It is $DS = [(3)_6, (2)_3]$.

Observe that there exist in t_i (i = 1 or 2) at least two blocks $R, R' \subseteq M_3$. From Lemma 1, it is $R \cap R' \neq \emptyset$.

Suppose

$$R = \{1, 2, 3\}$$
 $\{1, 2, 4\}$
 $R' = \{1, 4, 5\} \in t_1$, $\{1, 3, 7\} \in t_2$
 $\{1, 6, 7\}$ $\{1, 5, 6\}$

Further, it is $\{6,7\} \cap M_2 \neq \emptyset$. Let $7 \in M_2$ (or, likewise, $6 \in M_2$). If $\{6,7,x\} \in t_2$, we have $\{3,7,x\} \in t_1$, with x=4 or 8.

First, suppose x = 4. It follows $\{3,4,5\} \in t_2$, and $\{2,3,8\} \in t_2$, necessarily. Hence

$$t_1 = \begin{bmatrix} 1, 2, 3 & 3, 5, 8 \\ 1, 4, 5 & 2, 4, 6 \\ 1, 6, 7 & 5, 6, 9 \\ 3, 7, 4 & 2, 8, 9 \end{bmatrix}, \qquad t_2 = \begin{bmatrix} 1, 2, 4 & 3, 4, 5 \\ 1, 3, 7 & 2, 3, 8 \\ 1, 5, 6 & 5, 8, 9 \\ 6, 7, 4 & 2, 6, 9 \end{bmatrix}$$

We obtain so two DMB PTSs with $DS = [(3)_6, (2)_3]$.

Now, suppose x = 8. It is $2:3 \neq 8$ (otherwise $3 \notin M_3$) and $4:5 \in \{8,9\}$ (observe that $\{3,4,5\} \in t_2$ implies $\{3,4\},\{3,5\} \in \mathbf{L}_1$, hence $3 \notin M_3$). Prove that $4:5 \neq 8$.

If $\{4,5,8\} \in t_2$, then $8 \in M_3$, hence $6 \in M_2$. It follows $\{5,6,8\} \in t_1$, with $5 \notin M_3$.

Necessarily, $\{4,5,9\} \in t_2$. If $\{2,4,y\} \in t_1$, it is $y \in \{6,8,9\}$. Since for y=9 it is $4 \notin M_3$ and for y=6 we have $\{5,6,8\} \in t_1$ (necessarily), hence $\{2,4,6\} \in t_2$, with $\{2,4,6\} \in t_1 \cap t_2$, it follows y=8. It is $8 \in M_3$, $6 \in M_2$. We have

$$t_1 = \begin{bmatrix} 1, 2, 3 & 2, 4, 8 \\ 1, 4, 5 & 5, 6, 8 \\ 1, 6, 7 & 2, 5, 9 \\ 3, 7, 8 & 3, 4, 9 \end{bmatrix}, \qquad t_2 = \begin{bmatrix} 1, 2, 4 & 4, 5, 9 \\ 1, 3, 7 & 3, 4, 8 \\ 1, 5, 6 & 2, 3, 9 \\ 6, 7, 8 & 2, 5, 8 \end{bmatrix}$$

which are two DMB PTSs with $DS = [(3)_6, (2)_3]$. \triangle

4. - Appendix

All DMB PTSs having $m \le 8$ blocks (obtained in [13] and in the previous sections) are the following:

m = 4

$$n = 6 DS = [(2)_6]$$

m = 6

 $n = 7 DS = [(3)_4, (2)_3]$

| 1, 4, 5 | 1, 4, 6 |
|---------|---------|
| 1, 6, 7 | 1, 5, 7 |
| 2, 4, 6 | 2, 4, 7 |
| 2, 5, 7 | 2, 5, 6 |
| 3, 4, 7 | 3, 4, 5 |
| 3, 5, 6 | 3, 6, 7 |

 $n = 8 DS = [(3)_2, (2)_6]$

| 1, 3, 4 | 1, 3, 5 |
|---------|---------|
| 1, 5, 6 | 1, 4, 7 |
| 1, 7, 8 | 1, 6, 8 |
| 2, 3, 5 | 2, 3, 4 |
| 2, 4, 7 | 2, 5, 6 |
| 2, 6, 8 | 2, 7, 8 |

m = 7

$$n = 7 DS = [(3)_7]$$

 $n = 9 DS = [(3)_3, (2)_6]$

| 1, 2, 3 | 1, 2, 4 |
|---------|---------|
| 1, 4, 5 | 1, 3, 5 |
| 2, 4, 6 | 2, 3, 6 |
| 3, 5, 6 | 4, 5, 7 |
| 4, 7, 8 | 4, 6, 8 |
| 5, 7, 9 | 5, 6, 9 |
| 6, 8, 9 | 7, 8, 9 |

m = 8

$$n = 8 DS = [(3)_8]$$

| 1, 4, 7 1, 5, 8 2, 4, 8 2, 6, 7 3, 5, 7 3, 6, 8 |
|--|
|--|

m = 8n = 9

 $DS = [(4)_2, DS (3)_2, (2)_5]$

 $DS = [4, (3)_4, (2)_4]$

 $DS = [(3)_6, (2)_3]$

1, 2, 3 1, 2, 4 1, 4, 5 1, 7, 9 1, 6, 7 1, 3, 6 1, 8, 9 1, 5, 8 2, 6, 7 2, 7, 9 2, 5, 8 2, 8, 9 2, 3, 5 2, 4, 6 3, 5, 6 4, 5, 6

1, 2, 4 1, 2, 3 1, 3, 5 1, 4, 5 1, 6, 7 1, 6, 8 1, 8, 9 1, 7, 9 2, 4, 6 2, 3, 6 3, 5, 9 4, 5, 9 3, 6, 8 4, 6, 7 4, 7, 9 3, 8, 9 1, 2, 4 1, 2, 3 1, 3, 7 1, 4, 5 1, 5, 6 1, 6, 7 4, 6, 7 3, 4, 7 3, 4, 5 3, 5, 8 2, 4, 6 2, 3, 8 5, 8, 9 5, 6, 9 2, 6, 9 2, 8, 9

n = 10

 $DS = [(4)_2, (2)_8]$

 $DS = [(3)_4, (2)_6]$

1, 2, 3 | 1, 2, 4 | 1, 4, 5 | 1, 7, 9 | 1, 6, 7 | 1, 3, 5 | 1, 6, 8 | 0, 2, 4 | 0, 2, 3 | 0, 7, 9 | 0, 4, 5 | 0, 6, 8 | 0, 8, 9 |

1, 2, 3 1, 2, 4 1, 4, 5 1, 7, 9 1, 6, 7 1, 3, 6 1, 8, 9 1, 5, 8 0, 2, 3 0, 2, 4 0, 4, 5 0, 7, 9 0, 3, 6 0, 6, 7 0, 5, 8 0, 8, 9

1, 2, 4 1, 2, 3 1, 7, 9 1, 4, 5 1, 6, 7 1, 3, 5 1, 8, 9 1, 6, 8 2, 7, 9 2, 6, 7 2, 6, 8 2, 8, 9 2, 4, 0 2, 3, 0 3, 5, 0 4, 5, 0

1, 2, 0 1, 3, 0 1, 3, 9 1, 2, 8 2, 4, 8 2, 4, 7 3, 4, 9 3, 4, 7 1, 5, 8 1, 5, 9 2, 6, 7 2, 6, 0 3, 6, 0 3, 6, 7 4, 5, 9 4, 5, 8

n = 11 $DS = [4,(2)_{10}]$

1, 2, 4 1, 2, 3 1, 4, 5 1, 3, 5 1, 6, 8 1, 6, 7 1, 8, 9 1, 7, 9 2, 4, 0 2, 3, 0 4, 5, 0 3, 5, 0 6, 8, A 6, 7, A 7, 9, A 8, 9, A n = 12 $DS = [(2)_{12}]$

1, 2, 4 1, 2, 3 1, 4, 5 1, 3, 5 2, 4, 6 2, 3, 6 3, 5, 6 4, 5, 6 7, 8, 9 7, 8, 0 7, 0, A 7, 9, A 8, 0, B8, 9, B9, A, B 0, A, B

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