The Golden Code: A 2×2 Full-Rate Space-Time Code with Non-Vanishing Determinants

Jean-Claude Belfiore, *Member IEEE*, Ghaya Rekaya, *Student Member IEEE*
and Emanuele Viterbo, *Member IEEE*

Abstract— In this paper, we present the Golden code for a 2×2 MIMO system. This is a full-rate 2×2 linear dispersion algebraic space-time code with unprecedented performance based on the Golden number $\frac{1+\sqrt{5}}{2}$.

Index Terms— Number fields, Cyclic Division Algebras, Space-Time Lattices

I. INTRODUCTION

FUll rate and full diversity codes for the 2×2 coherent MIMO systems, were first constructed in [1], using number theoretical methods. This approach was later generalized for any number of transmit antennas M [2], [3], [4]. The above constructions satisfy the *rank criterion* and attempt to maximize, for a fixed signal set S, the *coding advantage*, [5]. A general family of 2×2 full-rank and full-rate linear dispersion space-time block codes (LD-STBC) is given in [6], [7], based on cyclic division algebras.

Let $\mathbb{K} = \mathbb{Q}(\theta)$ be a quadratic extension of $\mathbb{Q}(i)$, we define the *infinite code* $\mathcal{C}_\infty$ as the set of matrices of the form

$$\mathcal{C}_\infty = \left\{ \mathbf{X} = \begin{bmatrix} a + b\theta & c + d\theta \\ \gamma(c + d\overline{\theta}) & a + b\overline{\theta} \end{bmatrix} : a, b, c, d \in \mathbb{Z}[i] \right\}.$$

where $\gamma \in \mathbb{Z}[i]$ is a number carefully chosen [6], [7]. $\mathcal{C}_\infty$ is clearly a linear code, i.e., $\mathbf{X_1} + \mathbf{X_2} \in \mathcal{C}_\infty$ for all $\mathbf{X_1}, \mathbf{X_2} \in \mathcal{C}_\infty$. The *finite code* $\mathcal{C}$ is obtained by limiting the *information symbols* to $a, b, c, d \in S \subset \mathbb{Z}[i]$, where we assume the signal constellation S to be a 2^b–QAM, with in-phase and quadrature components equal to $\pm 1, \pm 3, \dots$ and b bits per symbol.

The code $\mathcal{C}_\infty$ is a discrete subset of a *cyclic division algebra over* $\mathbb{Q}(i)$, obtained by selecting $\gamma \in \mathbb{Z}[i]$ and $\gamma \neq N_{\mathbb{K}/\mathbb{Q}(i)}(x)$ for any $x \in \mathbb{K}$ [6], [7]. A division algebra naturally yields a structured set of invertible matrices that can be used to construct square LD-STBC, since for any codeword $\mathbf{X} \in \mathcal{C}_\infty$ the rank criterion is satisfied as $\det(\mathbf{X}) \neq 0$.

We define the *minimum determinant* of $\mathcal{C}_\infty$ as

$$\delta_{\min}(\mathcal{C}_\infty) = \min_{\mathbf{X} \in \mathcal{C}_\infty, \mathbf{X} \neq 0} |\det(\mathbf{X})|^2 \qquad (1)$$

and the minimum determinant of the finite code $\mathcal{C}$ as

$$\begin{aligned} \delta_{\min}(\mathcal{C}) &\triangleq \min_{\mathbf{X_1}, \mathbf{X_2} \in \mathcal{C}, \mathbf{X_1} \neq \mathbf{X_2}} |\det(\mathbf{X_1} - \mathbf{X_2})|^2 \\ &\geq 16\delta_{\min}(\mathcal{C}_\infty) \end{aligned} \qquad (2)$$

Jean-Claude Belfiore and Ghaya Rekaya are with École Nationale Supérieure des Télécommunications, 46 rue Barrault, 75013 Paris, FRANCE
Emanuele Viterbo is with Politecnico di Torino, C.so Duca degli Abruzzi 24, 10129 Torino, ITALY
Emails: `belfiore,rekaya@enst.fr,viterbo@polito.it`

Minimum determinants of $\mathcal{C}_\infty$ in all previous constructions [1], [2], [3], [4], [7] are non-zero, but vanish as the spectral efficiency b of the signal constellation S is increased. This problem appears because transcendental elements or algebraic elements with a too high degree are used to construct the division algebras. Non-vanishing determinants may be of interest, whenever we want to apply some outer block coded modulation scheme, which usually entails a signal set expansion, if the spectral efficiency has to be preserved.

As explained in the following, in order to obtain *energy efficient* codes we need to construct a lattice $M\mathbb{Z}[i]^2$, a rotated version of the complex lattice $\mathbb{Z}[i]^2$, where M is a complex unitary matrix, so that there is no shaping loss in the signal constellation emitted by the transmit antennas. This additional property was never considered before and is the key to the improved performance of our code.

Here we find the Golden Code, a code with non-vanishing $\delta_{\min}$ outperforming all previous constructions. It is interesting to notice that, for this code, $\delta_{\min}$ does not depend on the size of the signal constellation.

After paper submission, the authors became aware that a code isomorphic to the Golden code was independently found by [8] and [9] by analytical optimization. In [8], it is shown that this code achieves the diversity-multiplexing gain tradeoff [10]. The algebraic approach given here sheds a totally new light over such a code and opens the way to extension to MIMO systems with a higher number of antennas [11].

II. THE GOLDEN CODE

We first illustrate the construction of the Golden Code, which is related to the Golden number $\theta = \frac{1+\sqrt{5}}{2}$ and yields the best performance. We assume the reader is familiar with the basic definitions in algebraic number theory, for which we suggest [12], [13], [14].

Consider $\mathbb{K} = \mathbb{Q}(i, \sqrt{5}) = \{a + b\theta \, | \, a, b \in \mathbb{Q}(i)\}$ as a relative quadratic extension of $\mathbb{Q}(i)$, with minimal polynomial $\mu_\theta(X) = X^2 - X - 1$. Denote by θ and $\overline{\theta} = 1 - \theta = \frac{1-\sqrt{5}}{2}$, the two roots of the minimal polynomial. Let $\mathcal{O}_\mathbb{K} = \mathbb{Z}[i][\theta]$ denote the ring of integers of $\mathbb{K}$, with integral basis $B_\mathbb{K} = \{1, \theta\}$. We recall that for any algebraic integer $z = a + b\theta \in \mathcal{O}_\mathbb{K}$, with $a, b \in \mathbb{Z}[i]$ (Gaussian integers), the relative norm is

$$N_{\mathbb{K}/\mathbb{Q}(i)}(z) = (a + b\theta)(a + b\overline{\theta}) = a^2 + ab - b^2 \in \mathbb{Z}[i] \quad (3)$$

Let $\mathbb{L} = \{a + bi + c\theta + di\theta \, | \, a, b, c, d \in \mathbb{Q}\}$ be the corresponding absolute extension of $\mathbb{K}$ over $\mathbb{Q}$, with signature

$(r_1, r_2) = (0, 2)$, ring of integers $\mathcal{O}_\mathbb{L}$ and integral basis $B_\mathbb{L} = \{1, i, \theta, i\theta\}$.[1] The relative discriminant of $\mathbb{K}$ is $d_\mathbb{K} = 5$, while the absolute discriminant of $\mathbb{L}$ is $d_\mathbb{L} = 2^4 \cdot 5^2$.

In order to obtain energy efficient codes we need to construct a complex lattice $M\mathbb{Z}[i]^2$, where M is a complex unitary matrix, so that there is no shaping loss in the signal constellation. This lattice will derive as an algebraic lattice from an appropriate relative ideal of the ring of integers $\mathcal{O}_\mathbb{K}$. The complex lattice $M\mathbb{Z}[i]^2$ can equivalently be seen as a rotated $\mathbb{Z}^4$–lattice: $R\mathbb{Z}^4$, R being an orthogonal matrix, obtained from an ideal of $\mathcal{O}_\mathbb{L}$ [13].

A necessary condition to obtain $R\mathbb{Z}^4$ is that there exists an ideal $\mathcal{I}_\mathbb{L} \subseteq \mathcal{O}_\mathbb{L}$ of norm 5. In fact, the lattice $\Lambda(\mathcal{O}_\mathbb{L})$ has fundamental volume equal to $2^{-r_2}\sqrt{|d_\mathbb{L}|} = 5$ and the sublattice $\Lambda(\mathcal{I}_\mathbb{L})$ has fundamental volume equal to $2^{-r_2}\sqrt{|d_\mathbb{L}|}N(\mathcal{I}_\mathbb{L}) = 25$, where the norm of the ideal $N(\mathcal{I}_\mathbb{L})$ is equal to the sublattice index. This suggests that the fundamental parallelotope of $\Lambda(\mathcal{I}_\mathbb{L})$ could be a hypercube of edge length equal to $\sqrt{5}$, but this needs to be checked explicitly.

An ideal $\mathcal{I}_\mathbb{L}$ of norm 5 can be found from the following ideal factorization

$$5 \cdot \mathcal{O}_\mathbb{L} = \mathcal{I}^2 \cdot \overline{\mathcal{I}}^2 = (1 + i - i\theta)^2 \cdot (1 - i + i\theta)^2 \quad (4)$$

Let us take the principal ideal $\mathcal{I}_\mathbb{L} = \mathcal{I} = (\alpha)$, where $\alpha = 1 + i - i\theta$.

Following [12], let the canonical embedding of $\mathbb{L}$ be defined by

$$\sigma : \mathbb{L} \mapsto \mathbb{R}^4$$
$$\sigma(x) = [\Re(\sigma_1(x)), \Im(\sigma_1(x)), \Re(\sigma_2(x)), \Im(\sigma_2(x))] \quad (5)$$

where

$$\begin{aligned} \sigma_1(i\theta) &= i\theta & \sigma_2(i\theta) &= i\bar{\theta} \\ \sigma_3(i\theta) &= -i\theta = \overline{\sigma_1}(i\theta) & \sigma_4(i\theta) &= -i\bar{\theta} = \overline{\sigma_2}(i\bar{\theta}) \end{aligned} \quad (6)$$

are the four field homomorphisms. The bi-quadratic nature of $\mathbb{L}$ is reflected by its Galois group

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Gal}(\mathbb{L}/\mathbb{Q}) &= \{\sigma_1, \sigma_2, \sigma_3, \sigma_4\} \\ &= \text{Gal}(\mathbb{Q}(i)/\mathbb{Q}) \times \text{Gal}(\mathbb{Q}(\theta)/\mathbb{Q}) = \mathcal{C}_2 \times \mathcal{C}_2 \end{aligned} \quad (7)$$

The real lattice generator matrix of $\Lambda(\mathcal{O}_\mathbb{L})$ is obtained by applying the canonical embedding to the integral basis $B_\mathbb{L}$, while the real lattice generator matrix R of the sublattice $\Lambda(\mathcal{I}_\mathbb{L})$ is obtained by applying the canonical embedding to the integral basis of the principal ideal $\mathcal{I}_\mathbb{L} = (\alpha)$, which is given by $\{\alpha, i\alpha, \alpha\theta, i\alpha\theta\}$. Hence,

$$R = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & -1+\theta & \theta & 1 \\ 1-\theta & 1 & -1 & \theta \\ 1 & -1+\bar{\theta} & \bar{\theta} & 1 \\ 1-\bar{\theta} & 1 & -1 & \bar{\theta} \end{bmatrix}$$

By straightforward calculations we may verify that $R^T R = 5I$, which corresponds to the $\sqrt{5}\,\mathbb{Z}^4$–lattice.

The corresponding complex lattice $\Lambda(\mathcal{I}_\mathbb{K})$ can be obtained by applying the complex canonical embedding

$$\sigma : \mathbb{K} \mapsto \mathbb{C}^2$$
$$\sigma(x) = [\sigma_1(x), \sigma_2(x)] \quad (8)$$

to the relative basis $\{\alpha, \alpha\theta\}$ of $\mathcal{I}_\mathbb{K}$:

$$M = \begin{bmatrix} \sigma_1(\alpha) & \sigma_1(\alpha\theta) \\ \sigma_2(\alpha) & \sigma_2(\alpha\theta) \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 1+i(1-\theta) & \theta-i \\ 1+i(1-\bar{\theta}) & \bar{\theta}-i \end{bmatrix}$$

If we consider the cyclic division algebra $\mathcal{A} = (\mathbb{K}/\mathbb{Q}(i), \sigma, \gamma)$ over $\mathbb{K}$, we can represent all its elements by 2×2 matrices:

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{X} &= \begin{bmatrix} x_1 & 0 \\ 0 & x_2 \end{bmatrix} + \begin{bmatrix} x_3 & 0 \\ 0 & x_4 \end{bmatrix} \cdot \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 1 \\ \gamma & 0 \end{bmatrix} \\ &= \begin{bmatrix} x_1 & x_3 \\ \gamma x_4 & x_2 \end{bmatrix} \end{aligned} \quad (9)$$

where $x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4 \in \mathbb{K}$ and $\gamma \in \mathbb{Q}(i)$ is not an algebraic norm of any element of $\mathbb{K}$ (see [6], [7]).

In our case, we define $\mathcal{C}_\infty = (\mathcal{A}, \mathcal{I}_\mathbb{K})$ as an order of $\mathcal{A}$, obtained by restricting $x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4 \in \mathcal{I}_\mathbb{K}$. Codewords of $\mathcal{C}_\infty$ are given by

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{X} &= \text{diag}\left(\frac{1}{\sqrt{5}}M\begin{bmatrix} a \\ b \end{bmatrix}\right) + \text{diag}\left(\frac{1}{\sqrt{5}}M\begin{bmatrix} c \\ d \end{bmatrix}\right)\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 1 \\ \gamma & 0 \end{bmatrix} \\ &= \frac{1}{\sqrt{5}}\begin{bmatrix} \alpha(a+b\theta) & \alpha(c+d\theta) \\ \gamma\bar{\alpha}(c+d\bar{\theta}) & \bar{\alpha}(a+b\bar{\theta}) \end{bmatrix} \end{aligned} \quad (10)$$

where $a, b, c, d \in \mathbb{Z}[i]$, $\bar{\alpha} = 1 + i(1 - \bar{\theta})$ and the factor $\frac{1}{\sqrt{5}}$ is necessary to normalize M in order to obtain a unitary matrix.

Division algebras guarantee that $\det(\mathbf{X}) \neq 0$ for all codewords. But how can we choose γ to avoid vanishing determinants and preserve energy efficiency?

The numerically optimized codes in [1] take $\gamma = e^{i\phi} \in \mathbb{C}$, such that it is transcendental over $\mathbb{K}$. The fact that γ is transcendental guarantees non-zero determinants. From (10), we have

$$\det(\mathbf{X}) = \frac{1}{5}\left(N_{\mathbb{K}/\mathbb{Q}(i)}(z_1) - \gamma N_{\mathbb{K}/\mathbb{Q}(i)}(z_2)\right) \neq 0$$
$$\forall\, z_1 = \alpha(a+b\theta) \in \mathcal{I}_\mathbb{K}, \quad z_2 = \bar{\alpha}(c+d\bar{\theta}) \in \mathcal{I}_\mathbb{K} \quad (11)$$

The idea is to choose a $\gamma \in \mathbb{Z}(i)$ (hence not transcendental) which is not a norm of elements of $\mathcal{I}_\mathbb{K}$ as proposed in [6] and also such that $|\gamma| = 1$, which guarantees that the same average energy is transmitted from each antenna at each channel use. This limits the choice to $\gamma = \pm 1, \pm i$.

In order to satisfy the non vanishing determinant condition in (11), we choose $\gamma = i$ and verify that it is never a norm of an element of $\mathbb{K}$ (see Appendix). Hence, by choosing $\gamma = i$, we ensure that the determinants in (11) only take values in the discrete set $\frac{1}{5}\mathbb{Z}[i]$. In Fig. 1 we plot the first few terms of the *determinant spectrum* in the complex plane. In this plot, we can see an empty disk around the origin whose radius is exactly $\delta_{\min}(\mathcal{C}_\infty)$. Let us relate this to the algebraic structure of the code. From (11) we have

$$\det(\mathbf{X}) = \frac{1}{5}N_{\mathbb{K}/\mathbb{Q}(i)}(\alpha)\left(N_{\mathbb{K}/\mathbb{Q}(i)}(a+b\theta) - \gamma N_{\mathbb{K}/\mathbb{Q}(i)}(c+d\theta)\right)$$
$$\forall\, a, b, c, d \in \mathbb{Z}[i] \quad (12)$$

As the second term in (12) only takes values in $\mathbb{Z}[i]$ and its minimum modulus is equal to 1 (take $a = 1$ and $b = c = d = 0$), we conclude that

$$\delta_{\min}(\mathcal{C}_\infty) = \frac{1}{25}|N_{\mathbb{K}/\mathbb{Q}(i)}(\alpha)|^2 = \frac{1}{25}|2+i|^2 = \frac{1}{5} \quad (13)$$
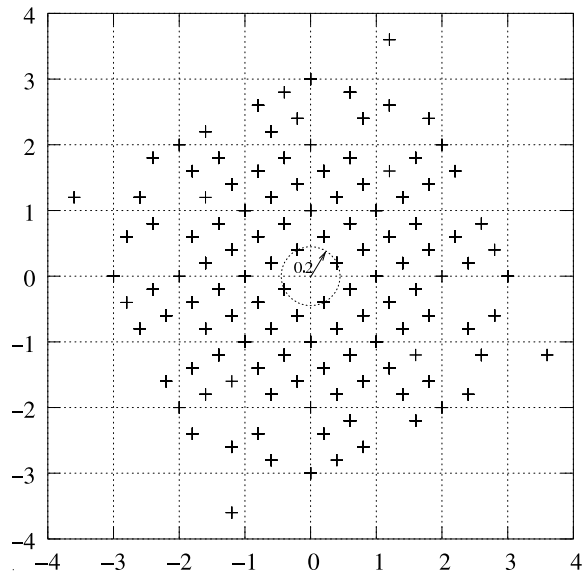
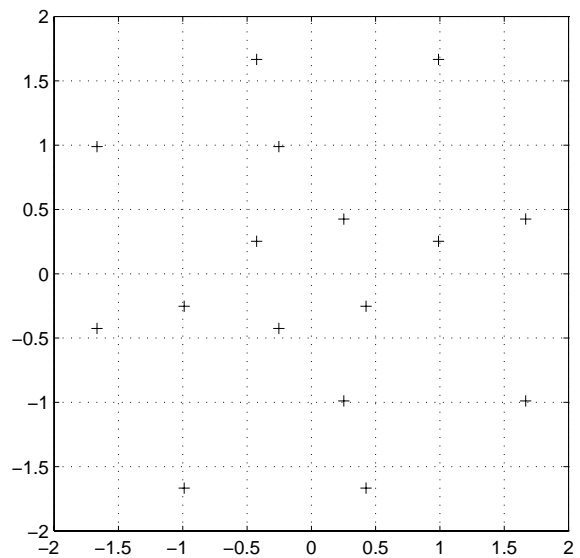Fig. 1. Some determinants for the codewords of $\mathcal{C}_\infty$ (see (13))

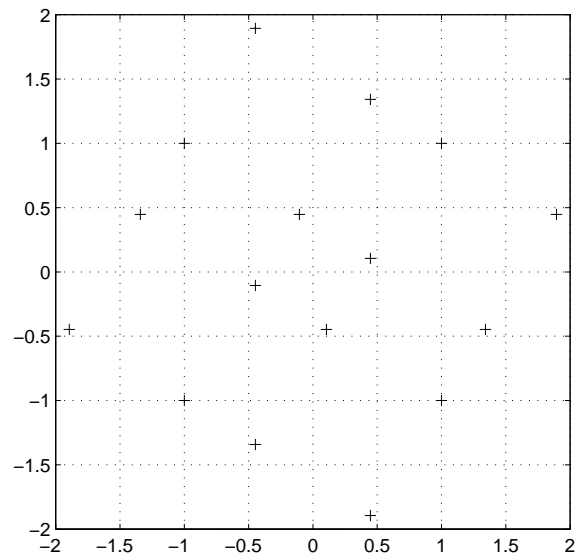Fig. 3. Transmitted constellation for 4–QAM (Best previously known code)

γ	$\sqrt{\delta_{\min}}$ 4–QAM	$\sqrt{\delta_{\min}}$ 16–QAM	$\sqrt{\delta_{\min}}$ 64–QAM
$\gamma = e^{i\pi/4}$	0.0858	0.0272	0.0147
$\gamma = e^{i/2}$	0.2369	0.0137	0.0137
$\gamma = e^{i\pi/6}$	0.1895	0.0508	0.0186
$\gamma = i$	1.7889	1.7889	1.7889

TABLE I

COMPARISON OF $\sqrt{\delta_{\min}}$

Fig. 2. Transmitted constellation for 4–QAM (Golden code)

III. SIMULATION RESULTS

The numerically optimized 2×2 full-rate codes in [1] have vanishing determinants and are equivalent to:

$$\left\{ \mathbf{X} = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}} \begin{bmatrix} a+b\theta & c+d\theta \\ \gamma(c-d\theta) & a-b\theta \end{bmatrix} a,b,c,d \in \mathbb{Z}[i] \right\}$$

with $\gamma = \theta = e^{i\phi}$.

The first 2×2 code proposed in [1] falls in the general scheme of (10), where we take the cyclotomic field $\mathbb{K} = \mathbb{Q}(i,\theta) = \mathbb{Q}(\theta)$ with $\theta = e^{i\pi/4}$, $\alpha = 1$ and $\gamma = \theta = \sqrt{i} \notin \mathbb{Z}[i]$. We will denote this code by $\mathcal{C}_a$.

Further optimization of $\delta_{\min}$ yields different codes with a similar structure to $\mathcal{C}_a$ with $\gamma = \theta$ transcendental or algebraic.

In the case γ is transcendental, as explained in [7, Proposition 12], $\mathbb{K} = \mathbb{Q}(i,\gamma)$ is not necessarily a finite extension [15].

We will denote these codes for the 4–QAM by $\mathcal{C}_{b4}$, where $\gamma = e^{i/2}$, and for the 16–QAM by $\mathcal{C}_{b16}$, where $\gamma = e^{i\pi/6}$. The Golden code $\mathcal{C}_g$ has $\delta_{\min}(\mathcal{C}_g) = 16/5$, for any size of the constellation S and is always larger than the previous ones (see Table I).

The symbols per transmit antenna (i.e., the elements of the matrix codewords) are drawn from a "coded" constellation S_c plotted in Figs. 2 and 3 and for the Golden code and the best previously known one [1], respectively. We can observe that, for the Golden code, S_c is almost a rotated regularly spaced QAM constellation with 2^{2b} distinct points with same average energy as S, whereas it is the union of 3 PSK constellations for the other code. We conjecture that this property of the S_c constellation along with the minimum value of $\delta_{\min}$ are the key factors to explain the good performance of the Golden code in the medium SNR range.

In Fig. 4 we show the bit error rates for the codes $\mathcal{C}_{b4}, \mathcal{C}_{b16}$ and the Golden code $\mathcal{C}_g$ as a function of E_b/N_0 for the standard block fading 2×2 MIMO channel. The maximum likelihood sphere decoder [16], [17] is used at the receiver. We can observe that the Golden code gains 0.9dB in the 16–QAM case and 1.2dB in the 4–QAM case with respect to the best previously known codes.
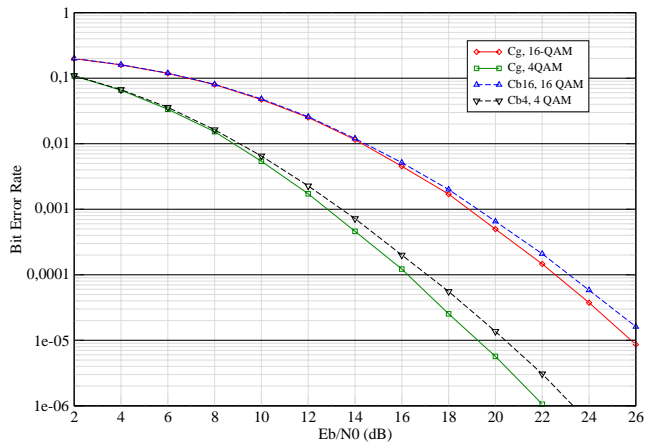
Fig. 4. Performance comparison of the new codes vs. those of [1] and [15]

IV. CONCLUSION

We presented a new 2×2 LD-STBC with full rate and full diversity, energy efficient and with non vanishing determinants. This outperforms all previously known codes. Moreover, it is possible to show that a family of codes similar to the Golden Code can be generated using $\mathbb{K} = \mathbb{Q}\left(i, \sqrt{p}\right)$ for all primes $p \equiv 5 \bmod 8$ [18]. For these codes, $\delta_{\min} = 1/p$. Hence, the Golden code gives the largest $\delta_{\min}$ within this family.

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APPENDIX

We show, in this appendix, that the cyclic algebra $\mathcal{A}$ defined in eq. (9) is a division algebra.

Proposition 1: Let $\mathbb{K} = \mathbb{Q}\left(i, \sqrt{5}\right)$, then the element $\gamma = i$ is not a relative norm of any $x \in \mathbb{K}$, i.e., $N_{\mathbb{K}/\mathbb{Q}(i)}(x) \neq i, \forall x \in \mathbb{K}$.

Proof: Let $\mathbf{Q}_5$ denote the field of 5-adic numbers, and $\mathbf{Z}_5 = \{x \in \mathbf{Q}_5 | \nu_5(x) \geq 0\}$ its valuation ring [19]. The complex rationals $\mathbb{Q}(i)$ can be embedded in $\mathbf{Q}_5$ by

$$i \mapsto 2 + 5\mathbf{Z}_5$$

Let $x = a + b\sqrt{5} \in \mathbb{K}$ with $a, b \in \mathbb{Q}(i)$ then we must show that

$$N_{\mathbb{K}/\mathbb{Q}(i)}(x) = a^2 - 5b^2 = i$$

has no solution for $a, b \in \mathbb{Q}(i)$. We can lift this equation in the 5-adic field $\mathbf{Q}_5$

$$a^2 - 5b^2 = 2 + 5x \quad a, b \in \mathbb{Q}(i), \ x \in \mathbf{Z}_5 \qquad (14)$$

and show that it has no solution there. We take the valuations of both sides of (14)

$$\nu_5(a^2 - 5b^2) = \nu_5(2 + 5x)$$

to show that a and b must be in $\mathbf{Z}_5$. In fact, since $x \in \mathbf{Z}_5$, $\nu_5(2 + 5x) \geq \min\{\nu_5(2), \nu_5(x) + 1\} = 0$, and we have equality as both valuations are distinct. Now, $\nu_5(a^2 - 5b^2) = \min\{2\nu_5(a), 2\nu_5(b) + 1\}$ must be 0, hence $\nu_5(a) = 0$ which implies $a \in \mathbf{Z}_5$ and consequently $b \in \mathbf{Z}_5$.

We conclude by showing that

$$a^2 - 5b^2 = 2 + 5x \quad a, b, x \in \mathbf{Z}_5$$

has no solution. Reducing modulo $5\mathbf{Z}_5$ we find that 2 should be a square in $GF(5)$, which is a contradiction. ∎

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BIOGRAPHIES

Jean-Claude Belfiore (M'91) was born in Nice, France, in 1962. He received his Engineer degree in Electrical Engineering in 1985 from Supelec, France and his Ph.D. in 1989

from ENST, Paris, France. From 1985 to 1988 he was also with Alcatel, France. He then became assistant professor at ENST where he is now a professor in the Communications and Electronics Department. His current research interests are in lattice coding for fading channels, space-time coding, joint source-channel coding and wireless communications systems.

Ghaya Rekaya was born in Tunis, Tunisia, in 1977. She received her degree in Electrical Engineering from ENIT, Tunisia and her Ph.D. in 2004 from ENST, Paris, France. Her research interests are in space-time coding and lattice decoding.

Emanuele Viterbo (M'95) was born in Torino, Italy, in 1966. He received his degree (Laurea) in Electrical Engineering in 1989 and his Ph.D. in 1995 in Electrical Engineering, both from the Politecnico of Torino, Torino, Italy. From 1990 to 1992 he was with the European Patent Office, The Hague, The Netherlands, as a patent examiner in the field of dynamic recording and in particular in the field of error-control coding. Between 1995 and 1997 he held a post-doctoral position in the Dipartimento di Elettronica of the Politecnico di Torino in Communications Techniques over Fading Channels. Between 1997 and 1998 he was visting researcher in the Information Sciences Research Center of AT&T Research, Florham Park, NJ. Since 1998, he is assistant professor at Politecnico di Torino, Dipartimento di Elettronica. Dr. Emanuele Viterbo was awarded a NATO Advanced Fellowship in 1997 from the Italian National Research Council. His current research interests are in lattice codes for the Gaussian and fading channels, algebraic coding theory, digital terrestrial television broadcasting, and digital magnetic recording.