

# When File Synchronization Meets Number Theory

Antoine Amarilli, Fabrice Ben Hamouda, Florian Bourse,  
Robin Morisset, David Naccache, and Pablo Rauzy

École normale supérieure, Département d’informatique  
45, rue d’Ulm, F-75230, Paris Cedex 05, France.  
`surname.name@ens.fr` (except for `fabrice.ben.hamouda@ens.fr`)

**Abstract.** This work revisits *set reconciliation*, a problem consisting in synchronizing two multisets while minimizing communication. We propose a new number theoretic reconciliation protocol called “Divide & Factor”. In terms of asymptotic transmission complexity, Divide & Factor is comparable to prior proposals (that anyhow reached optimality). Nonetheless, this new protocol offers interesting parameter trade-offs resulting in experimentally measured *constant-factor* transmission gains over the popular software `rsync`.

Reconciliation experiments show that the new protocol usually transmits less data than `rsync` but requires lengthier calculations.

## 1 Introduction

This work revisits *set reconciliation*, a problem consisting in synchronizing two multisets while minimizing communication complexity. Set reconciliation is necessary in many practical situations, the most typical of which is certainly incremental information backup.

Set reconciliation has already several efficient and elegant solutions. For instance, [3] presents a particularly interesting reconciliation protocol whose computational and communication complexities are linear in the number of differences between the reconciled multisets.

We refer the reader to [3,4,5] (to quote a few references) for more on the problem’s history and its existing solutions.

This article proposes a new reconciliation protocol based on number theory. In terms of asymptotic transmission complexity, the proposed procedure is comparable to prior proposals (that anyhow reached optimality). Nonetheless, the new protocols offer interesting parameter trade-offs resulting in experimentally measured *constant-factor* gains over the popular software `rsync`.

We observed during most of our reconciliation experiments that the new protocol transmitted less bytes than `rsync` but required lengthier calculations.

Beyond these practical concerns the mathematical ideas underlying this work seem new and interesting as such.

## 2 “Divide & Factor” Set Reconciliation

### 2.1 Problem Definition and Notations

Oscar possesses an old version of a directory  $\mathfrak{D}$  that he wishes to update. Neil has the up-to-date version  $\mathfrak{D}'$ . The challenge faced by Oscar and Neil<sup>1</sup> is that of *exchanging as little data as*

---

<sup>1</sup> Oscar and Neil will respectively stand for *old* and *new*.

possible during the synchronization process. In practice  $\mathfrak{D}$  and  $\mathfrak{D}'$  usually differ both in their files and in their tree structure.

In tackling this problem we separate the “what” from the “where” and disregard the relative position of files in subdirectories<sup>2</sup>. Let  $\mathfrak{F}$  and  $\mathfrak{F}'$  denote the multisets of files contained in  $\mathfrak{D}$  and  $\mathfrak{D}'$ . We denote  $\mathfrak{F} = \{F_0, \dots, F_n\}$  and  $\mathfrak{F}' = \{F'_0, \dots, F'_{n'}\}$ .

Let  $t$  be the number of discrepancies between  $\mathfrak{F}$  and  $\mathfrak{F}'$  that Oscar wishes to learn, i.e.:

$$t = \#\mathfrak{F} + \#\mathfrak{F}' - 2\#(\mathfrak{F} \cap \mathfrak{F}') = \#(\mathfrak{F} \cup \mathfrak{F}') - \#(\mathfrak{F} \cap \mathfrak{F}')$$

Let  $\text{Hash}(F)$  be a collision-resistant hash function<sup>3</sup> where  $F$  is a file. Let  $\text{HashPrime}(F)$  be a function hashing files (uniformly) into primes smaller than  $2^u$ . Define the shorthand notations:  $h_i = \text{HashPrime}(F_i)$  and  $h'_i = \text{HashPrime}(F'_i)$ .

## 2.2 Description of the Basic Exchanges

We generate a prime  $p$  such that:

$$2^{2ut+1} \leq p < 2^{2ut+2} \quad (1)$$

Given  $\mathfrak{F}$ , Oscar generates and sends to Neil the redundancy:

$$c = \prod_{F_i \in \mathfrak{F}} \text{HashPrime}(F_i) = \prod_{i=1}^n h_i \bmod p$$

Neil computes:

$$c' = \prod_{F'_i \in \mathfrak{F}'} \text{HashPrime}(F'_i) = \prod_{i=1}^{n'} h'_i \bmod p \quad \text{and} \quad s = \frac{c'}{c} \bmod p$$

Using [7] the integer  $s$  can be written as:

$$s = \frac{a}{b} \bmod p \text{ where the } G_i \text{ denote files and } \begin{cases} a = \prod_{G_i \in \mathfrak{F}' \wedge G_i \notin \mathfrak{F}} \text{HashPrime}(G_i) \\ b = \prod_{G_i \notin \mathfrak{F}' \wedge G_i \in \mathfrak{F}} \text{HashPrime}(G_i) \end{cases}$$

Note that since  $\mathfrak{F}$  and  $\mathfrak{F}'$  differ by at most  $t$  elements,  $a$  and  $b$  are strictly lesser than  $2^{ut}$ . Theorem 1 (see [2]) guarantees  $a$  and  $b$  can be efficiently recovered from  $s$  (A problem known as the *Rational Number Reconstruction* [4,8]). This is typically done using Gauss’ algorithm for finding the shortest vector in a bi-dimensional lattice [7].

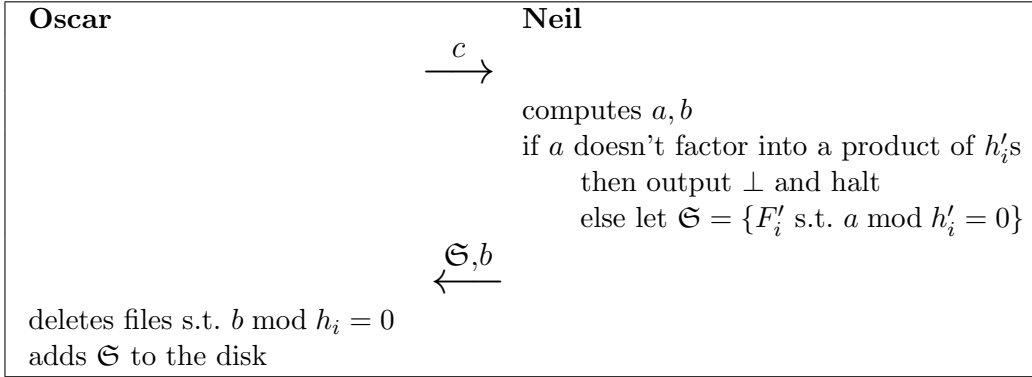
**Theorem 1.** *Let  $a, b \in \mathbb{Z}$  such that  $-A \leq a \leq A$  and  $0 < b \leq B$ . Let  $p > 2AB$  be a prime and  $s = ab^{-1} \bmod p$ . Then  $a, b$  can be recovered from  $A, B, s, p$  in polynomial time.*

<sup>2</sup> i.e. view directories as multisets of files.

<sup>3</sup> e.g. SHA-1

Taking  $A = B = 2^{ut} - 1$ , (1) implies that  $2AB < p$ . Moreover,  $0 \leq a \leq A$  and  $0 < b \leq B$ . Thus Oscar can recover  $a$  and  $b$  from  $s$  in polynomial time. By testing the divisibility of  $a$  and  $b$  by the  $h_i$  and the  $h'_i$ , Neil and Oscar can deterministically identify the discrepancies between  $\mathfrak{F}$  and  $\mathfrak{F}'$  and settle them.

Formally, this is done as follows:



As we have just seen, the “output  $\perp$  and halt” protocol interruption should never occur if bounds on parameters are respected. However, a file synchronization procedure that works *only* for a limited number of differences is not really useful in practice. Section 2.3 explains how to extend the protocol even when the number of differences exceeds  $t$ , the informational capacity of the modulus  $p$ .

### 2.3 The Case of Insufficient Information

To extend the protocol to an arbitrary  $t$ , Oscar and Neil agree on an infinite set of primes  $p_1, p_2, \dots$ . As long as the protocol fails, Neil will keep accumulating information about the difference between  $\mathfrak{F}$  and  $\mathfrak{F}'$  as shown in appendix A. Note that no information is lost and that the transmitted modular knowledge about the difference adds-up until it reaches a threshold sufficient to reconcile  $\mathfrak{F}$  and  $\mathfrak{F}'$ .

## 3 Transmission Complexity

This section explores two strategies to reduce the size of  $p$  and hence improve transmission by *constant factors* (from an asymptotic communication standpoint, improvements cannot be expected as the protocol already transmits information proportional to  $t$ , the difference to settle).

### 3.1 Probabilistic Decoding: Reducing $p$

Generate a prime  $p$  about twice shorter than the  $p$  recommended in section 2.2, namely:

$$2^{ut+w-1} < p \leq 2^{ut+w} \quad (2)$$

where  $w \geq 1$  is some small integer (say  $w = 50$ ). Let  $\eta = \max(n, n')$ . The new redundancy  $c$  is calculated as previously and is hence also approximately twice smaller. Namely:

$$s = \frac{a}{b} \bmod p \text{ and } \begin{cases} a = \prod_{G_i \in \mathfrak{F}' \wedge G_i \notin \mathfrak{F}} \text{HashPrime}(G_i) \\ b = \prod_{G_i \notin \mathfrak{F}' \wedge G_i \in \mathfrak{F}} \text{HashPrime}(G_i) \end{cases}$$

and since there are at most  $t$  differences, we must have:

$$ab \leq 2^{ut} \quad (3)$$

By opposition to section 2.2 we do not have a fixed bound for  $a$  and  $b$  anymore; equation (3) only provides a bound for the *product*  $ab$ . Therefore, we define a sequence of at most  $\lceil ut/w \rceil + 1$  couples of bounds:

$$(A_i, B_i) = \left( 2^{wi}, \left\lfloor \frac{p-1}{2^{wi+1}} \right\rfloor \right) \text{ where } B_i > 1 \text{ and } \forall i > 0, 2A_iB_i < p$$

Equations (2) and (3) imply that there must exist at least one index  $i$  such that  $0 \leq a \leq A_i$  and  $0 < b \leq B_i$ . Then using Theorem 1, given  $(A_i, B_i, p, s)$  one can recover  $(a, b)$ , and hence the difference between  $\mathfrak{F}$  and  $\mathfrak{F}'$ .

The problem is that (unlike section 2.2) we have no guarantee that such an  $(a, b)$  is unique. Namely, we could (in theory) stumble over an  $(a', b') \neq (a, b)$  satisfying (3) for some index  $i' \neq i$ . We expect this to happen with negligible probability (that we do not try to estimate here) when  $w$  is large enough, but this makes the modified protocol heuristic only.

### 3.2 The File Laundry: Reducing $u$

What happens if we brutally shorten  $u$  in the basic Divide & Factor protocol?

As expected by the birthday paradox, we should start seeing collisions. Let us analyze the statistics governing the appearance of collisions.

Consider **HashPrime** as a random function from  $\{0, 1\}^*$  to  $\{0, \dots, 2^u - 1\}$ . Let  $X_i$  be the random variable:

$$X_i = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if file } F_i \text{ collides with another file.} \\ 0 & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

Clearly, we have  $\Pr[X_i = 1] \leq \frac{\eta-1}{2^u}$ . The average number of colliding files is hence:

$$\mathbb{E} \left[ \sum_{i=0}^{\eta-1} X_i \right] \leq \sum_{i=0}^{\eta-1} \frac{\eta-1}{2^u} = \frac{\eta(\eta-1)}{2^u}$$

For instance, for  $\eta = 10^6$  files and 32-bit digests, the expected number of colliding files is less than 233.

However, it is important to note that a collision can only yield a *false positive*, and never a *false negative*. In other words, while a collision may obviate a difference<sup>4</sup> a collision will never create a nonexistent difference *ex nihilo*.

<sup>4</sup> e.g. make the parties blind to the difference between `index.htm` and `iexplore.exe`.

Thus, it suffices to replace  $\text{HashPrime}(F)$  by a diversified  $\text{HashPrime}(k|F)$  to quickly filter-out file differences by repeating the protocol for  $k = 1, 2, \dots$ . At each iteration the parties will detect new files and new deletions, fix these and “launder” again the remaining multisets.

Assume that the diversified  $\text{HashPrime}(k|F)$ ’s are random and independent. To understand why the probability that a stubborn file persists colliding decreases exponentially with the number of iterations  $k$ , assume that  $\eta$  remains invariant between iterations and define the following random variables:

$$X_i^\ell = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if file } F_i \text{ collides with another file during iteration } \ell. \\ 0 & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

$$Y_i = \prod_{\ell=1}^k X_i^\ell = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if file } F_i \text{ collides with another file during the } k \text{ first protocol iterations.} \\ 0 & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

By independence, we have:

$$\Pr[Y_i = 1] = \prod_{\ell=1}^k \Pr[X_i^\ell = 1] = \Pr[X_i^1 = 1] \dots \Pr[X_i^k = 1] \leq \left(\frac{\eta-1}{2^u}\right)^k$$

Therefore the average number of colliding files is:

$$\mathbb{E}\left[\sum_{i=0}^{\eta-1} Y_i\right] \leq \sum_{i=0}^{\eta-1} \left(\frac{\eta-1}{2^u}\right)^k = \eta \left(\frac{\eta-1}{2^u}\right)^k$$

And the probability that at least one false positive will survive  $k$  rounds is:

$$\epsilon_k \leq \eta \left(\frac{\eta-1}{2^u}\right)^k$$

For the previously considered instance<sup>5</sup> we get  $\epsilon_2 \leq 5.43\%$  and  $\epsilon_3 \leq 2 \cdot 10^{-3}\%$ .

**A more refined (but somewhat technical) analysis.** As mentioned previously, the parties can remove the files confirmed as different during iteration  $k$  and work during iteration  $k+1$  only with common and colliding files. Now, the only collisions that can fool round  $k$ , are the collisions of file-pairs  $(F_i, F_j)$  such that  $F_i$  and  $F_j$  have both already collided during *all the previous iterations*<sup>6</sup>. We call such collisions “masquerade balls”. Define the two random variables:

<sup>5</sup>  $\eta = 10^6, u = 32$ .

<sup>6</sup> Note that we do not require that  $F_i$  and  $F_j$  repeatedly collide *which each other*. e.g. we may witness during the first round  $h_{1,u}(F_1) = h_{1,u}(F_2)$  and  $h_{1,u}(F_3) = h_{1,u}(F_4)$  while during the second round  $h_{2,u}(F_1) = h_{2,u}(F_4)$  and  $h_{2,u}(F_2) = h_{2,u}(F_3)$ .

$$Z_i^\ell = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } F_i \text{ participated in masquerade balls during all } \ell \text{ first protocol iterations.} \\ 0 & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

$$X_{i,j}^\ell = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if files } F_i \text{ and } F_j \text{ collide during iteration } \ell. \\ 0 & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

---

*Inclure ici image du bal masque*

---

Set  $Z_i^0 = 1$  and write  $p_\ell = \Pr \left[ Z_i^{\ell-1} = 1 \text{ and } Z_j^{\ell-1} = 1 \right]$  for all  $\ell$  and  $i \neq j$ . For  $k \geq 1$ , we have:

$$\begin{aligned} \Pr \left[ Z_i^k = 1 \right] &= \Pr \left[ \exists j \neq i, X_{i,j}^k = 1, Z_i^{k-1} = 1 \text{ and } Z_j^{k-1} = 1 \right] \\ &\leq \sum_{j=0, j \neq i}^{\eta-1} \Pr \left[ X_{i,j}^{k-1} = 1 \right] \Pr \left[ Z_i^{k-1} = 1 \text{ and } Z_j^{k-1} = 1 \right] \\ &\leq \frac{\eta-1}{2^u} p_{k-1} \end{aligned}$$

Furthermore  $p_0 = 1$  and

$$\begin{aligned} p_\ell &= \Pr \left[ X_0^\ell = X_1^\ell, Z_0^\ell = 1 \text{ and } Z_1^\ell = 1 \right] + \Pr \left[ X_0^\ell \neq X_1^\ell, Z_0^\ell = 1 \text{ and } Z_1^\ell = 1 \right] \\ &\leq \Pr \left[ X_0^\ell = X_1^\ell, Z_0^{\ell-1} = 1 \text{ and } Z_1^{\ell-1} = 1 \right] \\ &\quad + \sum_{i \geq 2, j \geq 2} \Pr \left[ X_{0,i}^\ell = 1, X_{1,j}^\ell = 1, Z_0^{\ell-1} = 1 \text{ and } Z_1^{\ell-1} = 1 \right] \\ &= \Pr \left[ X_0^\ell = X_1^\ell \right] \Pr \left[ Z_0^{\ell-1} = 1 \text{ and } Z_1^{\ell-1} = 1 \right] \\ &\quad + \sum_{i \geq 2, j \geq 2} \Pr \left[ X_{0,i}^\ell = 1 \right] \Pr \left[ X_{1,j}^\ell = 1 \right] \Pr \left[ Z_0^{\ell-1} = 1 \text{ and } Z_1^{\ell-1} = 1 \right] \\ &\leq \frac{1}{2^u} p_{\ell-1} + \frac{(\eta-2)^2}{2^{2u}} p_{\ell-1} = p_{\ell-1} \left( \frac{1}{2^u} + \frac{(\eta-2)^2}{2^{2u}} \right) \end{aligned}$$

hence:

$$p_\ell \leq \left( \frac{1}{2^u} + \frac{(\eta-2)^2}{2^{2u}} \right)^\ell,$$

and

$$\Pr \left[ Z_i^\ell = 1 \right] \leq \left( \frac{1}{2^u} + \frac{(\eta-2)^2}{2^{2u}} \right)^{k-1}$$

And finally, the survival probability of at least one false positive after  $k$  iterations satisfies:

$$\epsilon'_k \leq \frac{\eta(\eta-1)}{2^u} \left( \frac{1}{2^u} + \frac{(\eta-2)^2}{2^{2u}} \right)^{k-1}$$

For  $(\eta = 10^6, u = 32, k = 2)$ , we get  $\epsilon'_2 \leq 0.013\%$ .

**How to select  $u$ ?** For a fixed  $k$ ,  $\epsilon'_k$  decreases as  $u$  grows. For a fixed  $u$ ,  $\epsilon'_k$  also decreases as  $k$  grows. Transmission, however, grows with both  $u$  (bigger digests) and  $k$  (more iterations). We write for the sake of clarity:  $\epsilon'_k = \epsilon'_{k,u,\eta}$ .

Fix  $\eta$ . Note that the number of bits transmitted per iteration ( $\simeq 3ut$ ), is proportional to  $u$ . This yields an expected transmission complexity bound  $T_{u,\eta}$  such that:

$$T_{u,\eta} \propto u \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} k \cdot \epsilon'_{k,u,\eta} = \frac{u\eta(\eta-1)}{2^u} \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} k \left( \frac{1}{2^u} + \frac{(\eta-2)^2}{2^{2u}} \right)^{k-1} = \frac{u\eta(\eta-1)8^u}{(2^u - 4^u + (\eta-2)^2)^2}$$

Dropping the proportionality factor  $\eta(\eta-1)$ , neglecting  $2^u \ll 2^{2u}$  and approximating  $(\eta-2) \simeq \eta$ , we can optimize the function:

$$\phi_{\eta}(u) = \frac{u \cdot 8^u}{(4^u - \eta^2)^2}$$

$\phi_{106}(u)$  admits an optimum for  $u = 19$ .

**Note:** The previous analysis is a rough approximation, in particular:

- We consider  $u$ -bit prime digests while  $u$ -bit strings contain only about  $2^u/u$  primes.
- In all our probability calculations  $\eta$  can be replaced by the total number of differences  $t$ . It is reasonable to assume that in most *practical* settings  $t \ll \eta$ , but extreme instances where  $t \sim \eta$  can sometimes be encountered as well.
- We used a fixed  $u$  in all rounds. Nothing forbids using a different  $u_k$  at each iteration<sup>7</sup>.
- Our analysis treated  $t$  as a constant, but large  $t$  values increase  $p$  and hence the number of potential files detected as different per iteration - an effect disregarded in our analysis.

Given that, after all, optimization may only result in constant-factor improvements, we suggest to optimize  $t$  and  $u$  experimentally, e.g. using the open source program `btrsync` developed by the authors (cf. section 5).

### 3.3 How to Stop a Probabilistic Washing Machine?

We now combine both optimizations and assume that  $\ell$  laundry rounds are necessary for completing some given reconciliation task using a half-sized  $p$ . By opposition to section 2.2, confirming correct protocol termination is now non-trivial.

Let the round failure probability<sup>8</sup> be some function  $v(w)$  (that we did not estimate). If  $w$  is kept small (for efficiency reasons), the probability  $(1 - v(w))^\ell$  that the protocol will properly terminate may dangerously drift away from one.

If  $v$  of  $\ell + v$  rounds fail, Oscar needs to solve a problem called *Chinese Remaindering With Errors*:

<sup>7</sup> ...or even fine-tuning the  $u_k$ s adaptively, as a function of the laundry's effect on the progressively reconciliated multisets.

<sup>8</sup> i.e. that probability that a round resulted in an  $(a', b') \neq (a, b)$  satisfying equation (3).

*Problem 1. (Chinese Remaindering With Errors Problem: CRWEP [2]).* Given as input integers  $v$ ,  $B$  and  $\ell + v$  points  $(s_1, p_1), \dots, (s_{\ell+v}, p_{\ell+v}) \in \mathbb{N}^2$  where the  $p_i$ 's are coprime, output all numbers  $0 \leq s < B$  such that  $s \equiv s_i \pmod{p_i}$  for at least  $v$  values of  $i$ .

We refer the reader to [2] for more on this problem, which is beyond the scope of this article. Boneh [1] provides a polynomial-time algorithm for solving the CRWEP under certain conditions satisfied by our setting.

To detect that reconciliation succeeded, Neil will send to Oscar  $\text{Hash}(\mathfrak{F}')$  as soon as the interaction starts. As long as Oscar's CRWEP resolution does not result in a state matching  $\text{Hash}(\mathfrak{F}')$ , the parties will continue the interaction.

## 4 Computational Complexity

Let  $\mu(k)$  be the time required to multiply two  $k$ -bit numbers<sup>9</sup>. The modular division of two  $k$ -bit numbers and the reduction of  $2k$ -bit number modulo a  $k$ -bit number are known to cost  $\tilde{O}(\mu(k))$  [1].

For naïve (i.e. convolutive) algorithms  $\mu(k) = O(k^2)$ , but using FFT multiplication strategies [5],  $\mu(k) = \tilde{O}(k)$ . FFT is experimentally faster than convolutive methods for  $k \sim 10^6$  and on. For such sizes, in packages such as **gmp**, division and modular reduction also run in  $\tilde{O}(\mu(k))$ . Given that  $p \sim 2^{ut}$ , we get the following complexity analysis:

---

"reduction  
also run in  
 $\tilde{O}(\mu(k))$ "

| Entity | Computation   | Complexity expressed in $\tilde{O}$ of            |
|--------|---|---|
| Both   | redundancies $c$ and $c'$                               | $n \cdot \mu(ut)$ naïve product $nut$ using FFT   |
| Oscar  | $s = c'/c \pmod{p}$                                     | $\mu(ut)$ naïve inversion $ut$ using FFT          |
| Oscar  | $a, b$ such that $s = a/b \pmod{p}$                     | $(ut)^2$ naïve ext. GCD $\mu(ut)$ using [4,8]     |
| Both   | factorization of $a$ (resp. $b$ ) by modular reductions | $n \cdot \mu(ut)$ naïve reduction $nut$ using FFT |
|        | <b>Overwhelming complexity:</b>                         | $\max((ut)^2, n \cdot \mu(ut))$ $nut$             |

**Fig. 1.** Global Protocol Complexity. In practice  $\max((ut)^2, n \cdot \mu(ut)) = n(ut)^2$  because  $(ut)^2 \ll n \cdot \mu(ut) = n(ut)^2$

### 4.1 Improvements

The overwhelming complexities of the computations of  $(c, c')$  and of the factorizations can be reduced to  $\tilde{O}(\frac{n}{t}\mu(ut))$  using convolutive methods and to  $\tilde{O}(nu)$  with FFT [5]. To simplify explanations, assume that  $t = 2^\tau$  is a power of two dividing  $n$ .

The idea is the following: group  $h_i$ s by subsets of  $t$  elements and compute the product of each such subset in  $\mathbb{N}$ .

$$H_j = \prod_{i=jt}^{jt+t-1} h_i.$$

Each  $H_j$  can be computed in  $\tilde{O}(\mu(ut))$  using the standard product tree method described in Algorithm 1 (for  $j = 0$ ) and illustrated in Figure 2. And all these  $\frac{n}{t}$  products can be computed in  $\tilde{O}(\frac{n}{t}\mu(ut))$ . Then, one can compute  $c$  by multiplying the  $H_j$  modulo  $p$ , which costs  $\tilde{O}(\frac{n}{t}\mu(ut))$ .

---

<sup>9</sup> We suppose that  $\forall k, k', \mu(k + k') \geq \mu(k) + \mu(k')$ .



---

**Algorithm 1** Product Tree Algorithm

---

**Require:** the set  $h_i$

**Ensure:**  $\pi = \pi_1 = \prod_{i=0}^{t-1} h_i$ , and  $\pi_i$  for  $i \in \{1, \dots, 2t-1\}$  as in Figure 2

```

1:  $\pi \leftarrow$  array of size  $t$ 
2: function PRODTREE( $i, \text{start}, \text{end}$ )
3:   if  $\text{start} = \text{end}$  then
4:     return 1
5:   else if  $\text{start} + 1 = \text{end}$  then
6:     return  $h_{\text{start}}$ 
7:   else
8:      $\text{mid} \leftarrow \lfloor \frac{\text{start} + \text{end}}{2} \rfloor$ 
9:      $\pi_{2i} \leftarrow \text{PRODTREE}(2i, \text{start}, \text{mid})$ 
10:     $\pi_{2i+1} \leftarrow \text{PRODTREE}(2i+1, \text{mid}, \text{end})$ 
11:    return  $\pi_{2i} \times \pi_{2i+1}$ 
12:  $\pi_1 \leftarrow \text{PRODTREE}(1, 0, t)$ 

```

---

The same technique applies to factorization<sup>10</sup>, but with a slight *caveat*.

After computing the tree product, we can compute the residues of  $a$  modulo  $H_0$ . Then we can compute the residues of  $a \bmod H_0$  modulo the two children  $\pi_2$  and  $\pi_3$  of  $H_0 = \pi_1$  in the product tree (depicted in Figure 2), and so on. Intuitively, we descend the product tree doing modulo reduction. At the end (i.e., as we reach the leaves), we obtain the residues of  $a$  modulo each of the  $h_i$  ( $i \in \{0, \dots, t-1\}$ ). This is described in Algorithm 3 and illustrated in Figure 3. We can use the same method for the tree product associated to any  $H_j$ , and so we can get the residues of  $a$  modulo each of the  $h_i$  ( $i \in \{jt, \dots, jt+t-1\}$ ) for any  $j$ , i.e.,  $a$  modulo each of the  $h_i$  for any  $i$ . Complexity is  $\tilde{O}(\mu(ut))$  for each  $j$ , summing-up to a total complexity of  $\tilde{O}(\frac{n}{t} \tilde{O}(\mu(ut)))$ .

---

<sup>10</sup> We explain the process with  $a$ , this is applicable *ne variatur* to  $b$  as well.

---

**Algorithm 2** Division Using a Product Tree

---

**Require:**  $a$  an integer,  $\pi$  the product tree of Algorithm 1

**Ensure:**  $A[i] = a \bmod \pi_i$  for  $i \in \{1, \dots, 2t - 1\}$ , computed as in Figure 2

```

1:  $A \leftarrow$  array of size  $t$ 
2: function MODTREE( $i$ )
3:   if  $i < 2t$  then
4:      $A[i] \leftarrow A[\lfloor i/2 \rfloor] \bmod \pi_i$ 
5:     MODTREE( $2i$ )
6:     MODTREE( $2i + 1$ )
7:  $A[1] \leftarrow a \bmod \pi_1$ 
8: MODTREE( $2$ )
9: MODTREE( $3$ )

```

---

## 4.2 Adapting $p$

Let  $\text{Prime}[i]$  denote the  $i$ -th prime<sup>11</sup>. Besides conditions on size, the *only* property required from  $p$  is to be co-prime with all the  $h_i$  and all the  $h'_i$ . We can hence consider the following variants:

**Variant 1:** Use a sequence of smooth  $p_i$ :

$$p_i = \prod_{j=r_i}^{r_{i+1}-1} \text{Prime}[j]$$

Where the bounds  $r_i$  are chosen to ensure that each  $p_i$  has the proper size.

**Variant 2:** Define  $p_i = \text{Prime}[i]^{r_i}$  where the exponents  $r_i$  are chosen to ensure that each  $p_i$  has the proper size.

**Variant 3:** Progressively work modulo a long power of two. This variant, is probably the most efficient of all but somewhat complex to explain. We hence describe it in detail in Appendix B.

This variant is more delicate to explain as Where the exponents  $r_i$  are chosen to ensure that each  $p_i$  has the proper size.

## 5 Implementation

To illustrate the concept, we coded and evaluated the proof of concept described in this section.

The executable and source codes of the program, called **btrsycn**, can be downloaded from [6].

Synchronization is unidirectional (clearer). The program, called **btrsycn**, consist in two sub-programs: a bash script and a python script:

---

<sup>11</sup> with  $\text{Prime}[1] = 2$

## 5.1 The Bash Script

A bash script runs a python script (describe below) on the two computers to be synchronized. If the computer is not the one running the bash script, the python script is executed through ssh. The bash scripts also creates two pipes: one from Neil stdin to Oscar stdout and one from Oscar stdin to Neil stdout. Data exchanged during the protocol transits *via* these two pipes.

## 5.2 The Python Script

The python script uses gmp which implements all the number theory operations required by Oscar and Neil, and does the actual synchronization. This script works in two phases:

### Finding Different Files

1. Compute the hashes of all files concatenated with their paths, type (folder/file), and permissions (not supported yet).
2. Implement the protocol proposed in Section ?? [add here a reference to the appropriate section in the paper] with input data coming from stdin and output data going to stdout.

More precisely:

- Oscar sends it product of hashes modulo a first prime number  $p_1$ .
- Neil receives the product, divides by its own product of hashes, reconstructs the fraction modulo  $p_1$  [can we elaborate more on what happens here? which functions in GMP are used to do the reconstruction?] and checks if he can factor the denominator using his hashes base. If he can, he stops and sends the numerator and the list of tuples (path, type, hash of content of the file) corresponding to the denominator's factors. Otherwise he sends "None" [is this the ASCII string "None"? if not what does he send precisely?].
- If Neil sent "None", Oscar computes the product of hashes modulo another prime  $p_2$ , sends it... CRT mechanism... [can we elaborate more on what happens here? which functions in GMP are used to do the CRT?]
- If Neil sent the numerator and a list of tuples, then Oscar factors the numerator over his own hash values. Now each party (Neil, Oscar) knows precisely the list of files (path + type + hash of content) that differs from the over party.

[please structure the following:]

2. synchronize all the stuff [this is not an expression we can use in a paper...]. This part is not completely optimized.

We just remove all folders Oscar should not have and create new folders.

Then we remove all files Oscar should not have and synchronize using rsync the last files.

We could check for move (since we have the list of hash of contents of files) and do moves locally.

We can even try to detect moves of complete subtrees...

### 5.3 Move Resolution Algorithm

To reproduce the structure of Oscar on Neil, we have a list of file moves to apply. Sadly, it is not straightforward to apply the moves, because, if we take a file to move, its destination might be blocked, either because a file already exists (we want to move  $a$  to  $b$ ,  $b$  already exists), or because a folder cannot be created (we want to move  $a$  to  $b/c$ ,  $b$  already exists but is a file and not a folder). Note that for a move operation  $a \rightarrow b$ , there is at most one file blocking the location  $b$ : we will call it the *blocker*.

If the blocker is not present on Oscar, then we can just delete. However, if it exists, then we might need to move it somewhere else before we solve the move we are interested in. This move itself might have a blocker, and so on. It seems that we just need to continue until we reach a move which has no blocker or where the blocker can be deleted, but we can get caught in a cycle: if we must move  $a$  to  $b$ ,  $b$  to  $c$  and  $c$  to  $a$ , then we will not be able to perform anything without using a temporary location.

How can we perform the moves? A simple way would be to move each file to a unique temporary location and then rearrange files to our liking; however, this performs many unnecessary moves and will result in problems if the program is interrupted. We can do something more clever so by performing a decomposition in strongly connected components of the *move graph* (with one vertex per file and one edge per move operation going from the file to its blocker or to its destination if no blocker exists). The computation of the SCC decomposition is simplified by the observation that because two files being moved to the same destination must be equal, we can only keep one arbitrary in-edge per node, and look at the graph pruned in this fashion: its nodes have in-degree at most one, so the strongly connected components are either single nodes or cycles. Once the SCC decomposition is known, the moves can be applied by applying each SCC in a bottom-up fashion, an SCC's moves being solved either trivially (for single files) or using one intermediate location (for cycles).

The detailed algorithm is implemented as two mutually recursive functions and presented as Algorithm 3.

An optimization implemented by `btrfsync` over the algorithm described here is to move files instead of copying them and then removing the original file, because moves are faster than copies on most filesystems as they don't need to copy the file contents.

### 5.4 Experimental Comparison to rsync

We compared `rsync`<sup>12</sup> and our Divide & Factor implementation called `btrfsync` under the following experimental conditions:

**Test Directories:** The directories used for transmission and time comparisons are described in Figure 4.

**Test Directories:** `rsync` was called with the following options, for the reasons below:

- `--delete` to delete existing files on Oscar which do not exist on Neil.

<sup>12</sup> version 3.0.9, used both as a competitor to benchmark against and for a minor underlying call in our own code.

---

**Algorithm 3** Perform Moves
 

---

**Require:**  $\mathfrak{D}$  is a dictionary where  $\mathfrak{D}[f]$  denotes the intended destinations of  $f$

---

```

1:  $M \leftarrow []$ 
2:  $T \leftarrow []$ 
3: for  $f$  in  $\mathfrak{D}$ 's keys do
4:    $M[f] \leftarrow \text{not\_done}$ 
5: function UNBLOCK_COPY( $f, t$ )
6:   if  $t$  is blocked by some  $b$  then
7:     if  $b$  is not in  $\mathfrak{D}$ 's keys then
8:        $\text{unlink}(b)$  ▷ We don't need  $b$ 
9:     else
10:       $\text{RESOLVE}(b)$  ▷ Take care of  $b$  and make it go away
11:   if  $T[f]$  was set then
12:      $f \leftarrow T[f]$ 
13:    $\text{copy}(f, d)$ 
14: function RESOLVE( $f$ )
15:   if  $M[f] = \text{done}$  then
16:     return ▷ Already managed by another in-edge
17:   if  $M[f] = \text{doing}$  then
18:      $T[f] \leftarrow \text{mktemp}()$ 
19:      $\text{move}(f, T[f])$ 
20:      $M[f] \leftarrow \text{done}$ 
21:     return ▷ We found a loop, moved  $f$  out of the way
22:    $M[f] \leftarrow \text{doing}$ 
23:   for  $d \in \mathfrak{D}[f]$  do
24:     if  $d \neq f$  then
25:        $\text{unblock\_copy}(f, d)$  ▷ Perform all the moves
26:   if  $f \notin \mathfrak{D}[f]$  and  $T[f]$  was not set then
27:      $\text{unlink}(f)$ 
28:   if  $T[f]$  was set then
29:      $\text{unlink}(T[f])$ 
30: for  $f$  in  $\mathfrak{D}$ 's keys do
31:    $\text{RESOLVE}(f)$ 

```

---

► `-I` to ensure that `rsync` did not cheat by looking at file modification times (which `btrsyc` does not do).

► `--chmod="a=rx,u+w"` in an attempt to disable the transfer of file permissions (which `btrsyc` does not transfer). Although these settings ensure that `rsync` does not need to transfer permissions, verbose logging suggests that it does transfer them anyway, so `rsync` must lose a few bytes per file as compared to `btrsyc` for this reason.

► `-v` Transmission accounting was performed by calling `rsync` with the `-v` flag (which reports the number of sent and received bytes). For `btrsyc` we added a piece of code counting the amount of data transmitted during `btrsyc`'s own negotiations.

**Network Configuration:** Experiments were performed between two remote hosts connected by a high-speed link. Time measurements account both for CPU time and for transfer times and are hence only given as a general indication.

## 5.5 Results:

Results are given in table 5. In general, `btrsyc` spent more time than `rsync` on computations (especially when the number of files is large, which is typically seen with our `synthetic` experiments).

Transmission results, however, turn out to be favorable to `btrsyc`:

In the trivial experiments where either Oscar or Neil have no data at all, `rsync` outperforms `btrsyc`. This is especially visible when Neil has no data: `rsync` immediately notices that there is nothing to transfer, but `btrsyc` engages in information transfers to determine the symmetric difference.

On non-trivial tasks, however, `btrsyc` outperforms `rsync`. This is the case of the `synthetic` datasets, where `btrsyc` does not have to transfer information about all unmodified files, and even more so in the case where there are no modifications at all. For Firefox source code datasets, `btrsyc` saves a very small amount of bandwidth, presumably because of unmodified files. For the `btrsyc` source code dataset, we notice that `btrsyc`, unlike `rsync`, was able to detect the move and avoid retransferring the moved folder.

**Code Availability:** Source codes can be downloaded from [6].

## 6 Conclusion and Further Improvements

We strongly encourage the developer community to continue improving our open source software (that we called `btrsyc`).

## 7 Acknowledgment

The authors acknowledge Guillaín Potron for his early involvement in this research work.

## 8 ToDo

- Fix euclidean to Euclidean in reference 5.
- Merge two reference files rsynch and wagner.
- Antoine, je n’arrive pas a comprendre comment tu calcules les pourcentages rel dans la table. Peux-tu stp me donner la formule? c’est le ratio de qui sur qui?
- Antoine, peux tu stp enlever du papier (et du git) toute trace du programme version 1 (ie celui fait par les etudiants en tant que projet du cours d’informatique scientifique par la pratique) car il est moins performant que l’implementation de Fabrice. Ainsi on n’aura pas de confusion possible. Je ne sais plus dans le texte ce qui est relatif au nouveau code et ce qui est relatif a l’ancien.
- @Fabrice: Appendix B (je vais jeter un coup d’oeil la semaine prochaine)
- @Fabrice: Fig. 1 pas clair, je pense qu’il faut mieux créer une notation  $\mu$  gcd car en fait la FFT ne modifie que le  $\mu$ ... Et on pourrait plutôt indiquer dans ce tableau la complexité (avec  $\mu$  et  $\mu$  gcd) en utilisant l’optimisation décrite ou sans utiliser l’optimisation décrite). N’oublions pas de préciser que les temps des expériences d’Antoine comptent aussi le tirage des nombres premiers (qui doit être négligeable peut-être dans notre cas, je ne me rappelle plus...)
- @Fabrice: Pour éviter le cas empty  $\rightarrow$  source trop gros, on pourrait imaginer l’astuce suivante: si jamais Neil la taille de  $c$  est plus petite que la taille du produit des nombres premiers  $p_1 \dots p_n$  utilisés, Neil envoie un message pour l’indiquer, et on arrête là le protocole. Et Oscar peut directement factoriser ce nombre envoyé...
- @Fabrice: il faut discuter de la taille de la taille maximale des “petits” premiers utilisés pour les variantes de  $p$  et montrer que cela n’enlève pas trop d’entropie pour les  $h_i$ . Encore une fois, je m’en occupe la semaine prochaine si besoin.

## References

1. Burnikel, C., Ziegler, J., Im Stadtwald, D., et al.: Fast recursive division (1998)
2. Fouque, P.A., Stern, J., Wackers, J.G.: Cryptocomputing with rationals. In: Blaze, M. (ed.) Financial Cryptography. Lecture Notes in Computer Science, vol. 2357, pp. 136–146. Springer (2002)
3. Hofmann, M., Pierce, B.C., Wagner, D.: Edit lenses. In: Field, J., Hicks, M. (eds.) POPL. pp. 495–508. ACM (2012)
4. Pan, V., Wang, X.: On rational number reconstruction and approximation. SIAM Journal on Computing 33, 502 (2004)
5. Schönhage, A., Strassen, V.: Schnelle multiplikation grosser zahlen. Computing 7(3), 281–292 (1971)
6. Tridgell, A.: Efficient algorithms for sorting and synchronization. Ph.D. thesis, PhD thesis, The Australian National University (1999)
7. Vallée, B.: Gauss’ algorithm revisited. J. Algorithms 12(4), 556–572 (1991)
8. Wang, X., Pan, V.: Acceleration of euclidean algorithm and rational number reconstruction. SIAM Journal on Computing 32(2), 548 (2003)

## References

1. D. Boneh, *Finding Smooth Integers in Short Intervals Using CRT Decoding*, Proceedings of the 32-nd Annual ACM Symposium on Theory of Computing, 2000, pp. 265–272.
2. D. Bleichenbacher and Ph. Nguyen, *Advances in Cryptology – Proceedings of Eurocrypt’00*, vol. 1807 of Lecture Notes in Computer Science, Springer-Verlag, pp. 53–69.

3. Y. Minsky, A. Trachtenberg, *Scalable Set Reconciliation*, 40th Annual Allerton Conference on Communications, Control and Computing, Monticello, IL, October 2002. A full version entitled *Practical Set Reconciliation* can be downloaded from <http://ipsit.bu.edu/documents/BUTR2002-01.ps>
4. Y. Minsky, A. Trachtenberg, R. Zippel, *Set reconciliation with nearly optimal communication complexity*. IEEE Transactions on Information Theory, 49(9), 2003, pp. 2213–2218.
5. D. Eppstein, M. Goodrich, F. Uyeda, G. Varghese What’s the difference?: efficient set reconciliation without prior context ACM SIGCOMM Computer Communication Review - SIGCOMM ’11, 41(4), 2011, pp. 218–229.
6. <https://github.com/RobinMorisset/Btrsycn>

## A Extended Protocol

| First phase during which Neil amasses modular information on the difference |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Oscar</b>  | <b>Neil</b>   |
|   | start the protocol with $p_1$   |
| $\xrightarrow{c_1}$   | computes $a, b$ using $p_1$<br>if $a$ factors properly then go to Final Phase<br>else perform the protocol with $p_2$   |
| $\xrightarrow{c_2}$   | computes $c \bmod p_1 p_2 = \text{CRT}_{p_1, p_2}(c_1, c_2)$<br>computes $a, b$ using $p_1 p_2$<br>if $a$ factors properly then go to Final Phase<br>else perform the protocol with $p_3$                   |
| $\xrightarrow{c_3}$   | computes $c \bmod p_1 p_2 p_3 = \text{CRT}_{p_1, p_2, p_3}(c_1, c_2, c_3)$<br>computes $a, b$ using $p_1 p_2 p_3$<br>if $a$ factors properly then go to Final Phase<br>else perform the protocol with $p_4$ |
| $\vdots$  |   |
| Final Phase   |   |
| Let $\mathfrak{S} = \{F'_i \text{ s.t. } a \bmod h'_i = 0\}$                |   |
| $\xleftarrow{\mathfrak{S}, b}$  |   |
| deletes files s.t. $b \bmod h_i = 0$<br>adds $\mathfrak{S}$ to the disk     |   |

Note that parties do not need to store the  $p_i$ ’s in full. Indeed, the  $p_i$ s could be subsequent primes sharing their most significant bits. This reduces storage per prime to a very small additive constant  $\cong \ln(p_i) \cong \ln(2^{2tu+2}) \cong 1.39(tu + 1)$  of about  $\log_2(tu)$  bits.

## B Power of Two Protocol

In this variant Oscar computes  $c$  in  $\mathbb{N}$ :



$$c = \prod_{F_i \in \mathfrak{F}} \text{HashPrime}(F_i) = \prod_{i=1}^n h_i \in \mathbb{N}$$

and considers  $c = \bar{c}_{n-1} | \dots | \bar{c}_2 | \bar{c}_0$  as the concatenation of  $n$  successive  $u$ -bit strings.

| First phase during which Neil amasses modular information on the difference       |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Oscar</b><br>computes $c \in \mathbb{N}$                                       | <b>Neil</b>   |
|   | $\xrightarrow{\bar{c}_0}$<br>computes $a, b$ modulo $2^u$<br>if $a$ factors properly then go to Final Phase<br>else request next chunk $\bar{c}_1$  |
|   | $\xrightarrow{\bar{c}_1}$<br>construct $c \bmod 2^{2u} = \bar{c}_1   \bar{c}_0$<br>computes $a, b$ modulo $2^{2u}$<br>if $a$ factors properly then go to Final Phase<br>else request next chunk $\bar{c}_2$             |
|   | $\xrightarrow{\bar{c}_2}$<br>construct $c \bmod 2^{3u} = \bar{c}_2   \bar{c}_1   \bar{c}_0$<br>computes $a, b$ modulo $2^{3u}$<br>if $a$ factors properly then go to Final Phase<br>else request next chunk $\bar{c}_3$ |
|   | $\vdots$ ( for $\lambda$ rounds )   |
| Final Phase   |   |
| deletes files s.t. $b \bmod 2^{\lambda u} = 0$<br>adds $\mathfrak{S}$ to the disk | Let $\mathfrak{S} = \{F'_i \text{ s.t. } a \bmod 2^{\lambda u} = 0\}$<br>$\xleftarrow{\mathfrak{S}, b}$   |

## C Hashing Into Primes

Hashing into primes is frequently needed in cryptography. A recommended implementation of  $\text{HashPrime}(F)$  is given in Algorithm 5. If  $u$  is large enough (e.g. 160) one might sacrifice uniformity to avoid repeated file hashings using  $\text{HashPrime}(F) = \text{NextPrime}(\text{Hash}(F))$ . Yet another acceleration option (that further destroys uniformity) consists in replacing  $\text{NextPrime}$  by the faster scanning Algorithm 4 where  $\alpha = 2 \times 3 \times 5 \times \dots \times \text{Prime}[d]$  is the product of the first primes until some rank  $d$ .

---

**Algorithm 4** Fast Nonuniform Hashing Into Primes

---

```

1:  $h = \alpha \left\lfloor \frac{\text{Hash}(F)}{\alpha} \right\rfloor + 1$ 
2: while  $h$  is composite do
3:    $h = h - \alpha$ 
4: return  $h$ 

```

---



---

**Algorithm 5** Possible Implementation of HashPrime( $F$ )

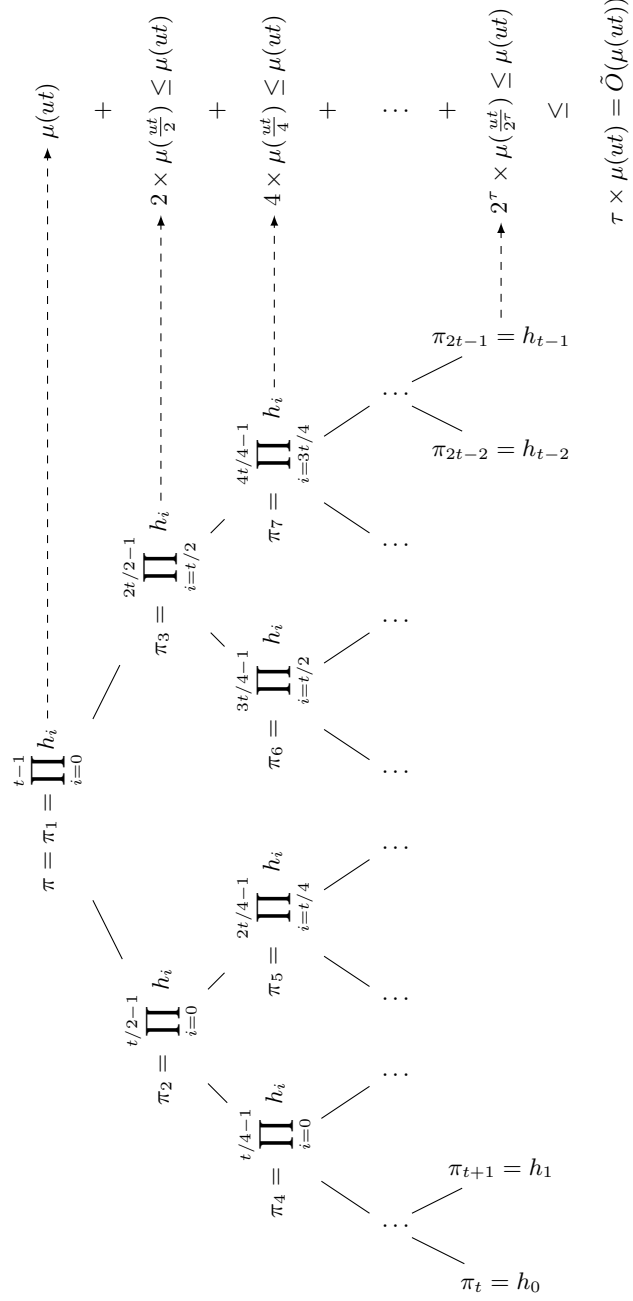
---

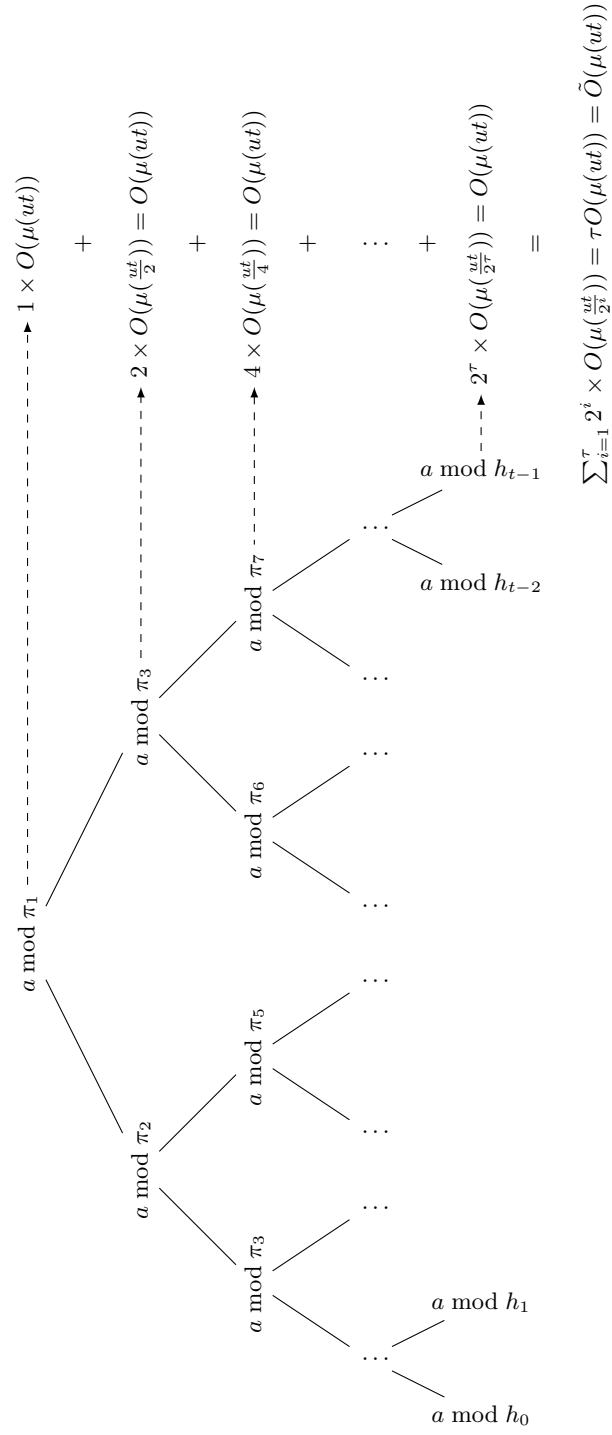
```

1:  $i = 0$ 
2: repeat
3:    $h = 2 \cdot \text{Hash}(F|i) + 1$ 
4:    $i = i + 1$ 
5: until  $h$  is prime
6: return  $h$ 

```

---

**Fig. 2.** Product Tree

**Fig. 3.** Modular Reduction From Product Tree

| Directory          | Description   |
|--------------------|---|
| synthetic          | A directory containing 1000 very small files containing the numbers $1, 2, \dots, 1000$ . |
| synthetic_shuffled | synthetic with:<br>10 deleted files<br>10 renamed files<br>10 modified files              |
| source             | A snapshot of <b>btrsync</b> 's own source tree   |
| source_moved       | <b>source</b> with one big folder (a few megabits) renamed.                               |
| firefox-13.0       | The source archive of Mozilla Firefox 13.0.   |
| firefox-13.0.1     | The source archive of Mozilla Firefox 13.0.1  |
| empty              | An empty folder.  |

Fig. 4. Test Directories.

| Entities and Datasets  |                        | Transmission (Bytes) |                 |                 |                 |         |          | Time (s)       |                |
|------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------|----------|----------------|----------------|
| Neil's $\mathfrak{F}'$ | Oscar's $\mathfrak{F}$ | TX <sub>r</sub>      | RX <sub>r</sub> | TX <sub>b</sub> | RX <sub>b</sub> | abs     | rel      | t <sub>r</sub> | t <sub>b</sub> |
| source                 | empty                  | 1613                 | 778353          | 1846            | 788357          | 10237   | +2 %     | 0.2            | 7.7            |
| empty                  | source                 | 11                   | 29              | 12436           | 6120            | 18516   | +46305 % | 0.1            | 5.5            |
| empty                  | empty                  | 11                   | 29              | 19              | 28              | 7       | +32 %    | 0.1            | 0.3            |
| synthetic              | synthetic_shuffled     | 24891                | 51019           | 3638            | 4147            | -68125  | -57 %    | 0.2            | 26.8           |
| synthetic_shuffled     | synthetic              | 24701                | 50625           | 3443            | 3477            | -68406  | -58 %    | 0.2            | 26.6           |
| synthetic              | synthetic              | 25011                | 50918           | 327             | 28              | -75574  | -67 %    | 0.1            | 25.7           |
| firefox-13.0.1         | firefox-13.0           | 90598                | 28003573        | 80895           | 27995969        | -17307  | +0 %     | 2.6            | 4.2            |
| source_moved           | source                 | 2456                 | 694003          | 1603            | 1974            | -692882 | -99 %    | 0.2            | 2.5            |

**Fig. 5.** Experimental results. The two first columns indicate the datasets, synchronization is performed *from* Neil *to* Oscar. RX and TX are received and sent byte counts, *r* and *b* are **rsync** and **btrsync**, we also provide the absolute difference in exchanged data (positive when **btrsync** transfers more data than **rsync**) and the relative amount of data sent by **btrsync** compared to **rsync** (over 100% when **btrsync** transfers more data than **rsync**). The last two columns show timing results.