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## On the probability that two elements of a finite semigroup have the same right matrix

ATTILA NAGY, CSABA TÓTH

*Abstract.* We study the probability that two elements which are selected at random with replacement from a finite semigroup  $S$  have the same right matrix.

*Keywords:* congruence; equivalence relation; probability; semigroup

*Classification:* 20M10, 60B99

### 1. Introduction and motivation

There are many papers in the mathematical literature which use probabilistic methods to study special algebraic structures. Only the papers [1], [3]–[6] and [8] are cited here, because we refer only to them. All of these papers deal with special cases of the following problem. For a given finite algebraic structure  $A$  and a given binary relation  $\sigma$  on  $A$ , find the probability  $P_\sigma(A)$  that  $(a, b) \in \sigma$  is satisfied for two elements  $a$  and  $b$  of  $A$  which are selected at random with replacement. We note that random elements are chosen independently with the uniform distribution on  $A$ . Thus every couple  $(a, b) \in A \times A$  has the same probability  $1/|A|^2$  of being chosen and so

$$P_\sigma(A) = \frac{|\{(a, b) \in A \times A : (a, b) \in \sigma\}|}{|A|^2}.$$

In [1], [6] and [8] the probability  $P_\sigma(A)$  is examined in the cases, when  $A$  is a finite noncommutative semigroup, a noncommutative group and a noncommutative ring, respectively. In all three cases  $\sigma$  is defined by  $(x, y) \in \sigma$  for  $x, y \in A$  if and only if  $xy = yx$ . In [4], the probability  $P_\sigma(A)$  is investigated in that case when  $A$  is a finite simple group and  $\sigma$  is defined by  $(x, y) \in \sigma$  for  $x, y \in A$  if and only if  $w(x, y) = e$ , where  $w$  is a given nontrivial element of the free group  $F_2$  and  $e$  is the identity element of the group  $A$ . In both [3] and [5], the probability  $P_\sigma(A)$  is examined in that case when  $A$  is the symmetric group  $S_n$  of degree  $n$ . In [3],  $\sigma$  is defined by  $(x, y) \in \sigma$  for  $x, y \in A$  if and only if  $x$  and  $y$  generate the group  $S_n$ .

In [5],  $\sigma$  is defined by  $(x, y) \in \sigma$  for  $x, y \in A$  if and only if  $x$  and  $y$  generate the alternating group  $A_n$  or the group  $S_n$ .

In the theory of semigroups the right regular matrix representation plays a very important role. The above investigations motivate us to examine the probability  $P_{\theta_S}(S)$ , where  $S$  is a finite semigroup and  $\theta_S$  is the kernel of the right regular matrix representation of  $S$ . In other words, we examine the following problem. Two elements  $a$  and  $b$  are selected at random with replacement from a finite semigroup  $S$ . What is the probability that  $a$  and  $b$  have the same right matrix? We show that  $P_{\theta_S}(S) \geq 1/|S/\theta_S|$  for every finite semigroup  $S$ , where  $S/\theta_S$  denotes the factor semigroup of  $S$  modulo  $\theta_S$ . In the paper we also deal with the following question. How does the structure of a finite semigroup  $S$  depend on the probability  $P_{\theta_S}(S)$ . This question is very general to answer. For example, if  $G$  is a group of order 3 and  $S$  is a semigroup defined by the Cayley table then  $P_{\theta_G}(G) =$

	$e$	$a$	$b$	$x$	$x^2$	$x^3$
$e$	$e$	$e$	$e$	$x$	$x^2$	$x^3$
$a$	$e$	$e$	$e$	$x$	$x^2$	$x^3$
$b$	$e$	$e$	$e$	$x$	$x^2$	$x^3$
$x$	$x$	$x$	$x$	$x^2$	$x^3$	$e$
$x^2$	$x^2$	$x^2$	$x^2$	$x^3$	$e$	$x$
$x^3$	$x^3$	$x^3$	$x^3$	$e$	$x$	$x^2$

TABLE 1.

$P_{\theta_S}(S) = 1/3$ , but the structures of  $G$  and  $S$  are very different. In this paper we deal with a special case of the above question. Our main goal is to describe the structure of a finite semigroup  $S$  if  $P_{\theta_S}(S) = 1/|S/\theta_S|$ . In this paper we give solutions in two cases. In the first case  $S$  is an arbitrary finite semigroup with  $|S/\theta_S| = 1$ ; in the second case  $S$  is a finite commutative semigroup with  $|S/\theta_S| = 2$ .

## 2. Preliminaries

By a semigroup we mean a nonempty set together with an associative multiplication. Let  $S$  be a semigroup and  $G^0$  be a semigroup arising from a one-element group  $G = \{1\}$  by the adjunction of a zero element 0. By an  $S \times S$  matrix over  $G^0$ , we mean a mapping of  $S \times S$  into  $G^0$ . Let  $A$  be an  $S \times S$  matrix over  $G^0$ . For an element  $s \in S$ , the set  $\{A(s, x) : x \in S\}$  is called a row (the  $s$ -row) of  $A$ . An

$S \times S$  matrix  $A$  over  $G^0$  is called *strictly row-monomial* if each row of  $A$  contains exactly one nonzero element of  $G^0$ .

For an element  $a$  of a semigroup  $S$ , let  $R^{(a)}$  denote the strictly row-monomial  $S$ -matrix over  $G^0$  defined by

$$R^{(a)}((x, y)) = \begin{cases} 1, & \text{if } xa = y, \\ 0, & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

This matrix is called the *right matrix over  $G^0$  defined by  $a$* . (The right matrices were investigated, for example, in [11] and [14], in the case when 1 is the identity element and 0 is the zero element of a field.) It is known that

$$a \mapsto R^{(a)}$$

is a homomorphism of a semigroup  $S$  into the multiplicative semigroup of all strictly row-monomial  $S$ -matrices over  $G^0$ , see [2, Exercise 4 (b) for Section 3.5]. This homomorphism is called the *right regular matrix representation* of the semigroup  $S$ .

A semigroup  $S$  is said to be *left reductive*, see [10], if the following condition is satisfied for arbitrary elements  $a$  and  $b$  of  $S$ :  $sa = sb$  for all  $s \in S$  implies  $a = b$ . The right regular matrix representation of a semigroup  $S$  is *faithful (injective)* if and only if  $S$  is left reductive.

Let  $\theta_S$  denote the kernel of the right regular matrix representation of a semigroup  $S$ . It is obvious that

$$\theta_S = \{(a, b) \in S \times S : \forall x \in S \quad xa = xb\}.$$

In this paper, we investigate the probability

$$P_{\theta_S}(S) = \frac{|\{(a, b) \in S \times S : (a, b) \in \theta_S\}|}{|S|^2}.$$

In our investigation, the following construction (which is a special case of the construction defined in part (a) of [12, Theorem 2]) plays an important role.

**Construction 2.1** ([13, Construction 1]). Let  $T$  be a left cancellative semigroup (that is, a semigroup with the property that  $xa = xb$  implies  $a = b$  for every  $x, a, b \in T$ ). For each  $t \in T$ , associate a nonempty set  $S_t$  such that  $S_x \cap S_y = \emptyset$  for all  $x, y \in T$  with  $x \neq y$ .

For an arbitrary couple  $(t, x) \in T \times T$ , let  $(\cdot)\varphi_{t,tx}$  be a mapping of  $S_t$  into  $S_{tx}$  acting on the right. For all  $t, x, y \in T$ , and  $a \in S_t$ , assume

$$(a)(\varphi_{t,tx} \circ \varphi_{tx,txy}) = (a)\varphi_{t,txy}.$$

On the set  $S = \bigcup_{t \in T} S_t$  define an operation “ $\star$ ” as follows: for arbitrary  $a \in S_t$  and  $b \in S_x$  let

$$a \star b = (a)\varphi_{t,tx}.$$

As every left cancellative semigroup is left reductive, [12, Theorem 2] implies that  $(S; \star)$  is a semigroup such that the sets  $S_t$ ,  $t \in T$ , are the  $\theta_S$ -classes of  $S$ .

### 3. Results

Let  $A$  be a nonempty set and  $\sigma$  be a binary relation on  $A$ . Let  $P_\sigma(A)$  denote the probability that  $(a, b) \in \sigma$ , where  $a$  and  $b$  are selected at random with replacement from the set  $A$ .

**Theorem 3.1.** *Let  $p$  be an arbitrary rational number with  $0 \leq p \leq 1$ . Then the following assertions are equivalent:*

- (i) *There is a finite semigroup  $S$  such that  $P_{\theta_S}(S) = p$ .*
- (ii) *There is a nonempty finite set  $A$  and an equivalence relation  $\sigma$  on  $A$  such that  $P_\sigma(A) = p$ .*

PROOF: It is sufficient to show that (ii) implies (i). Assume (ii). We use Construction 2.1. Let  $T$  be a commutative group of order  $|A/\sigma|$ . Such group always exists. Let  $S_t$ ,  $t \in T$ , denote the  $\sigma$ -classes of  $A$ . For every  $t \in T$  fix an element  $s_t$  in  $S_t$ . For every  $t, x \in T$  let  $(\cdot)\varphi_{t,tx}$  be the mapping of  $S_t$  into  $S_{tx}$  which maps the elements of  $S_t$  to  $s_{tx}$ . It is easy to see that the family  $\{\varphi_{t,tx} : t, x \in T\}$  of mappings satisfies the following condition: for every  $t, x, y \in T$  and every  $a \in S_t$

$$(a)(\varphi_{t,tx} \circ \varphi_{tx,txy}) = (a)\varphi_{t,txy}.$$

Thus  $S = \bigcup_{t \in T} S_t$  forms a semigroup under the operation “ $\star$ ” defined by the following way: for every  $t, x \in T$  and  $a \in S_t$ ,  $b \in S_x$

$$a \star b = (a)\varphi_{t,tx} = s_{tx}.$$

As  $T$  is left reductive, [12, Theorem 2] implies that the  $\theta_S$ -classes of the semigroup  $S$  are the sets  $S_t$  ( $t \in T$ ). Consequently  $P_{\theta_S}(S) = P_\sigma(A) = p$ .  $\square$

We note that the semigroup  $S$  defined in the proof of Theorem 3.1 is commutative, because

$$a \star b = (a)\varphi_{t,tx} = s_{tx} = s_{xt} = (b)\varphi_{x,xt} = b \star a$$

is satisfied for every  $t, x \in T$  and  $a \in S_t$ ,  $b \in S_x$ .

Let  $A$  be a nonempty finite set and  $\sigma$  be an equivalence relation on  $A$ . If  $m$  denotes the cardinality of the factor set  $A/\sigma$  (which is called the index of  $\sigma$ ) and

$t_1, \dots, t_m$  are the cardinalities of the  $\sigma$ -classes of  $A$ , then

$$P_\sigma(A) = \frac{t_1^2 + \dots + t_m^2}{(t_1 + \dots + t_m)^2}.$$

By the well known connection between the root mean square and the arithmetic mean, we have

$$\sqrt{\frac{t_1^2 + \dots + t_m^2}{m}} \geq \frac{t_1 + \dots + t_m}{m},$$

that is,

$$\frac{t_1^2 + \dots + t_m^2}{m} \geq \frac{(t_1 + \dots + t_m)^2}{m^2}$$

from which we get

$$P_\sigma(A) = \frac{t_1^2 + \dots + t_m^2}{(t_1 + \dots + t_m)^2} \geq \frac{1}{m} = \frac{1}{|A/\sigma|}.$$

The equation  $P_\sigma(A) = 1/|A/\sigma|$  holds if and only if

$$t_1 = \dots = t_m.$$

In particular,  $P_{\theta_S}(S) \geq 1/|S/\theta_S|$  for every finite semigroup  $S$ . In addition,  $P_{\theta_S}(S) = 1/|S/\theta_S|$  if and only if each  $\theta_S$ -class contains the same number of elements.

In the next part of the paper, we deal with a special case of the following problem: How does the structure of a finite semigroup  $S$  depend on the probability  $P_{\theta_S}(S)$ ? Our question is the following: What can we say about the structure of a finite semigroup  $S$ , if the index of  $\theta_S$  is  $m$  and  $P_{\theta_S}(S) = 1/m$ ?

We deal with this question for  $m = 1, 2$ . In the case of  $m = 1$ , we give a solution to the question in the class of all semigroups. For  $m = 2$ , we answer the question in the class of all commutative semigroups.

**3.1 Case  $m = 1$ .** For a finite semigroup  $S$ , the assumption  $P_{\theta_S}(S) = 1$  is satisfied if and only if the index of  $\theta_S$  is 1, that is,  $\theta_S$  is the universal relation on  $S$ . The next theorem characterizes not necessarily finite semigroups  $S$  in which  $\theta_S$  is the universal relation on  $S$ . We shall use the following notions.

A homomorphism  $\varphi$  of a semigroup  $S$  onto an ideal  $I \subseteq S$  is called a *retract homomorphism* [9, Definition 1.44] if  $\varphi$  leaves the elements of  $I$  fixed. An ideal  $I$  of a semigroup  $S$  is called a *retract ideal* if there is a retract homomorphism of  $S$  onto  $I$ . In this case, we say that  $S$  is a *retract (ideal) extension of  $I$  by the Rees factor semigroup  $S/I$* .

A semigroup satisfying the identity  $ab = a$  is called a *left zero semigroup*, see [7]. A semigroup with a zero element 0 is called a *zero semigroup* if it satisfies the identity  $ab = 0$ .

**Theorem 3.2.** *For a semigroup  $S$ ,  $\theta_S$  is the universal relation on  $S$  if and only if  $S$  is a retract extension of a left zero semigroup by a zero semigroup.*

PROOF: Let  $S$  be a semigroup in which  $\theta_S$  is the universal relation on  $S$ . Then  $xa = xb$  holds for every  $x, a, b \in S$ . Let  $a \in S$  be an arbitrary element. Then

$$a^2 = aa = aa^2 = a^3,$$

and so

$$(a^2)^2 = aa^3 = aa^2 = a^3 = a^2,$$

that is,  $a^2$  is an idempotent element. Let  $E(S)$  denote the set of all idempotent elements of  $S$ . As  $ab = a^2 \in E(S)$  for every  $a, b \in S$ , the set  $E(S)$  is an ideal of  $S$ , and the Rees factor semigroup  $Q = S/E(S)$  is a zero semigroup. For arbitrary  $e, f \in E(S)$ ,

$$ef = ee = e.$$

Hence  $E(S)$  is a left zero semigroup. For every  $a \in S$ , we have  $aS \subseteq E(S)$  and  $|aS| = 1$ . For every  $a \in S$ , let  $(a)\varphi$  denote the element of  $aS$ . By the above,

$$(a)\varphi \in E(S)$$

for every  $a \in S$ . Moreover,  $(e)\varphi = e$  for every idempotent element  $e$  of  $S$ . Let  $x^* \in S$  be an arbitrary fixed element. Then, for every  $a, b \in S$  we have

$$(ab)\varphi = abx^* = ax^*bx^* = (a)\varphi(b)\varphi.$$

Hence  $\varphi$  is a homomorphism of  $S$  onto  $E(S)$ . As  $\varphi$  leaves the elements of  $E(S)$  fixed, it is a retract homomorphism of  $S$  onto  $E(S)$ . Thus  $S$  is a retract extension of the left zero semigroup  $E(S)$  by the zero semigroup  $Q = S/E(S)$ .

Conversely, let  $S$  be a semigroup and  $I$  be an ideal of  $S$  such that  $I$  is a left zero semigroup, the Rees factor semigroup  $S/I$  is a zero semigroup, and there is a retract homomorphism  $\varphi$  of  $S$  onto  $I$ . Then, for arbitrary  $x, a, b \in S$ , we have  $xa, xb \in I$  and so

$$xa = (xa)\varphi = (x)\varphi(a)\varphi = (x)\varphi = (x)\varphi(b)\varphi = (xb)\varphi = xb.$$

Hence  $\theta_S$  is the universal relation on  $S$ . Thus the theorem is proved.  $\square$

In the next part of this subsection, we show how to construct semigroups  $S$  in which  $\theta_S$  is the universal relation.

**Construction 3.3.** Let  $S$  be a nonempty set and  $L$  be a nonempty subset of  $S$ . Let  $(\cdot)\varphi$  be an arbitrary mapping of  $S$  onto  $L$  which leaves the elements of  $L$  fixed. Define an operation “ $\star$ ” on  $S$  as follows: for arbitrary  $a, b \in S$ , let

$a \star b = (a)\varphi$ . For every  $a, b, c \in S$ ,

$$a \star (b \star c) = a \star (b)\varphi = (a)\varphi = ((a)\varphi)\varphi = (a \star b)\varphi = (a \star b) \star c,$$

that is,  $S$  is a semigroup with the operation “ $\star$ ”. This semigroup is denoted by  $(S, L, \varphi, \star)$ .

**Theorem 3.4.** *In the semigroup  $S = (S, L, \varphi, \star)$ , the equation  $\theta_S = \omega_S$  is satisfied. Conversely, every semigroup  $S$  in which  $\theta_S = \omega_S$  is satisfied is isomorphic to a semigroup defined in Construction 3.3.*

PROOF: For every  $a, b \in (S, L, \varphi, \star)$ , we have  $a \star b \in L$ . Thus  $L$  is an ideal of  $S$  and the Rees factor semigroup  $S/L$  is a zero semigroup. For every  $a, b \in L$ , we have

$$a \star b = (a)\varphi = a.$$

Thus  $L$  is a left zero semigroup. As

$$(a \star b)\varphi = ((a)\varphi)\varphi = (a)\varphi = ((a)\varphi)((b)\varphi),$$

$\varphi$  is a retract homomorphism of  $S$  onto  $L$ . Thus  $S = (S, L, \varphi, \star)$  is a retract extension of the left zero semigroup  $L$  by the zero semigroup  $S/L$ . Consequently  $\theta_S = \omega_S$  by Theorem 3.2.

Conversely, assume that  $S$  is a semigroup in which  $\theta_S = \omega_S$ . By Theorem 3.2, there is an ideal  $L$  of  $S$  such that  $L$  is a left zero semigroup, the Rees factor semigroup  $S/L$  is a zero semigroup, and there is a retract homomorphism  $\varphi$  of  $S$  onto  $L$ . Consider the semigroup  $(S, L, \varphi, \star)$  defined as in Construction 3.3. As

$$ab = (ab)\varphi = (a)\varphi(b)\varphi = (a)\varphi = a \star b$$

for every  $a, b \in S$ , the semigroups  $S$  and  $(S, L, \varphi, \star)$  are isomorphic.  $\square$

**3.2 Case  $m = 2$ .** In our investigation, the following three examples play an important role.

**Example 3.5.** Let  $A$  and  $B$  be zero semigroups such that  $A \cap B = \emptyset$ . Let  $e$  and  $f$  denote the zero elements of  $A$  and  $B$ , respectively. Let  $S = A \cup B$ . We define an operation on  $S$  as follows:

$$xy = \begin{cases} e, & \text{if } x, y \in A; \\ f, & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

It is easy to see that  $S$  is a commutative semigroup whose  $\theta_S$ -classes are  $A$  and  $B$ . The factor semigroup  $S/\theta_S$  is a two-element semilattice, see [15], (that is, a two-element commutative semigroup in which every element is an idempotent element).



**Example 3.6.** Let  $A$  be a zero semigroup with a zero element  $e$ . Let  $B$  be a nonempty set with  $A \cap B = \emptyset$ . Let  $S = A \cup B$ . We define an operation on  $S$  as follows: fix an element  $b^*$  in  $B$ , and let

$$xy = \begin{cases} e, & \text{if } x, y \in A \text{ or } x, y \in B; \\ b^*, & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

It is a matter of checking to see that  $S$  is a commutative semigroup whose  $\theta_S$ -classes are  $A$  and  $B$ . The factor semigroup  $S/\theta_S$  is a two-element group.

**Example 3.7.** Let  $A$  be a zero semigroup with a zero element  $e$ . Let  $B$  be a nonempty set with  $A \cap B = \emptyset$ . Let  $S = A \cup B$ . We define an operation on  $S$  as follows: fix an element  $a^* \in A$  with  $e \neq a^*$ , and let

$$xy = \begin{cases} a^*, & \text{if } x, y \in B; \\ e, & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

It is a matter of checking to see that  $S$  is a commutative semigroup whose  $\theta_S$ -classes are  $A$  and  $B$ . The factor semigroup  $S/\theta_S$  is a two-element zero semigroup.

**Theorem 3.8.** *On an arbitrary semigroup  $S$ , the following conditions are equivalent:*

- (1)  $S$  is a commutative semigroup such that the index of  $\theta_S$  is 2.
- (2)  $S$  is isomorphic to one of the semigroups defined in Example 3.5, Example 3.6, and Example 3.7.

**PROOF:** As the semigroups  $S$  defined in Example 3.5, Example 3.6 and Example 3.7 are commutative such that the index of  $\theta_S$  is 2, it is sufficient to show that (1) implies (2). Let  $S$  be a commutative semigroup such that the index of  $\theta_S$  is 2. Then the factor semigroup  $S/\theta_S$  is a two-element commutative semigroup. Thus  $S/\theta_S$  is either a two-element semilattice or a two-element group or a two-element zero semigroup. Let  $A$  and  $B$  denote the  $\theta_S$ -classes of  $S$ .

First we consider the case when  $S/\theta_S$  is a two-element semilattice. Then  $A$  and  $B$  are subsemigroups of  $S$  such that one of  $A$  and  $B$ , say  $B$ , is an ideal of  $S$ . It is easy to see that  $\theta_A = \omega_A$  and  $\theta_B = \omega_B$ . Then, by Theorem 3.2,  $A$  and  $B$  are zero semigroups. Let  $e$  and  $f$  denote the zero element of  $A$  and  $B$ , respectively. For every  $x, y \in A$ , we have  $xy = e$ . For every  $x, y \in B$ , we have  $xy = f$ . For every  $x \in A$  and  $y \in B$ , we have

$$yx = xy = xf = xff = f,$$

because  $(y, f) \in \theta_S$ ,  $xf \in B$  and  $f$  is the zero element of  $B$ .

Summarizing our results, we have

$$xy = \begin{cases} e, & \text{if } x, y \in A; \\ f, & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

Thus  $S$  is isomorphic to a semigroup defined in Example 3.5.

In the next part of the proof, we consider the case when  $S/\theta_S$  is a two-element group. Let  $A$  be the  $\theta_S$ -class corresponding to the identity element of  $S/\theta_S$ . Then  $A$  is a subsemigroup of  $S$ . Since  $\theta_A = \omega_A$ , Theorem 3.2 implies that  $A$  is a zero semigroup. Let  $e$  denote the zero element of  $A$ . As  $B$  is a  $\theta_S$ -class, we have that  $eB \subseteq B$  is a singleton. Let  $b^*$  denote the element of  $eB$ . Then, for every  $x \in A$  and  $y \in B$ , we have

$$xy = yx = ye = ey = b^*,$$

because  $(x, e) \in \theta_S$ . For every  $x, y \in B$ , we get  $ex \in B$  and  $x^2 \in A$ , hence

$$xy = xex = x^2e = e.$$

Summarizing our results, we have

$$xy = \begin{cases} e, & \text{if } x, y \in A \text{ or } x, y \in B; \\ b^*, & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

Thus  $S$  is isomorphic to a semigroup defined in Example 3.6.

Consider the case when  $S/\theta_S$  is a two-element zero semigroup. Let  $A$  be the  $\theta_S$ -class corresponding to the zero element of  $S/\theta_S$ . Then, by Theorem 3.2,  $A$  is a zero semigroup. Let  $e$  denote the zero element of  $A$ . Then  $xy = e$  for every  $x, y \in A$ . For an arbitrary  $y \in B$ ,

$$ey = eey = e,$$

because  $ey \in A$  and  $e$  is the zero element of  $A$ . Thus, for every  $x \in A$  and  $y \in B$ , we have

$$xy = yx = ye = ey = e,$$

because  $(x, e) \in \theta_S$ . Let  $x_0, y_0 \in B$  be fixed arbitrary elements, and let

$$a^* = x_0y_0 = y_0x_0.$$

Then, for every  $x, y \in B$ , we have

$$xy = xy_0 = y_0x = y_0x_0 = a^*,$$

because  $B$  is a  $\theta_S$ -class.

Summarizing our results, we have

$$xy = \begin{cases} a^*, & \text{if } x, y \in B; \\ e, & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

If  $a^*$  was the zero element of  $A$ , then we would have

$$xa = xb = e$$

for every  $a \in A$ ,  $b \in B$  and  $x \in S$ , which would imply that  $\theta_S = \omega_S$ . It would be a contradiction. Hence  $a^* \neq e$ . Thus  $S$  is isomorphic to a semigroup defined in Example 3.7.

In a finite semigroup  $S$ , both of the conditions that the index of  $\theta_S$  is  $m$  and  $P_{\theta_S}(S) = 1/m$  are satisfied if and only if each  $\theta_S$ -class contains the same number of elements. Thus the following result is a consequence of Theorem 3.8.  $\square$

**Theorem 3.9.** *On an arbitrary semigroup  $S$ , the following conditions are equivalent:*

- (1)  $S$  is a finite commutative semigroup such that the index of  $\theta_S$  is 2 and  $P_{\theta_S}(S) = 1/2$ .
- (2)  $S$  is isomorphic to one of the semigroups defined in Example 3.5, Example 3.6 and Example 3.7 in which  $|A| = |B| < \infty$ .

**Remark 3.10.** Commutative semigroups defined in Example 3.5, Example 3.6, and Example 3.7 can also be obtained by using the construction defined in part (a) of [12, Theorem 2]. It seems to be that this construction would also be a useful tool to investigate our problem in other cases.

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