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PROOF OF THE BARKER ARRAY CONJECTURE

JAMES A. DAVIS, JONATHAN JEDWAB, AND KEN W. SMITH

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ABSTRACT. Using only elementary methods, we prove Alquaddoomi and Scholtz’s conjecture of 1989, that no $s \times t$ Barker array having $s, t > 1$ exists except when $s = t = 2$.

1. INTRODUCTION

Binary sequences and arrays whose out-of-phase aperiodic autocorrelations are collectively small are particularly useful in digital communication systems, especially synchronisation and radar. The search for such sequences and arrays dates from the 1950s [2], [16] and continues to the present day [7], [9], [13], [14]. We define an $s \times t$ array to be a two-dimensional array $(a_{ij})$ of complex-valued elements satisfying

\[ a_{ij} = 0 \quad \text{unless} \quad 0 < i < s \quad \text{and} \quad 0 < j < t. \]

The array is binary if all nonzero elements $a_{ij}$ take values in $\{1, -1\}$. The aperiodic autocorrelation function of an $s \times t$ array $A = (a_{ij})$ is given by

\[ C_A(u, v) = \sum_i \sum_j a_{ij} \overline{a_{i+u,j+v}} \quad \text{for integer} \quad u, v \quad \text{satisfying} \quad |u| < s \quad \text{and} \quad |v| < t. \]

We refer to an $s \times 1$ array as a sequence of length $s$, abbreviating the array $(a_{io})$ to $(a_i)$ and its aperiodic autocorrelation function $C_A(u, 0)$ to $C_A(u)$.

Alquaddoomi and Scholtz [1] defined an $s \times t$ Barker array to be an $s \times t$ binary array $A$ for which

\[ |C_A(u, v)| \leq 1 \quad \text{for all} \quad (u, v) \neq (0, 0). \]

This generalises the notion of a Barker sequence from one dimension (the case $s = 1$ or $t = 1$) to two dimensions; see [10] and [11] for recent nonexistence results for Barker sequences. The $2 \times 2$ array $\begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 \\ -1 & -1 \end{pmatrix}$ is a Barker array, but it is conjectured that there are no other sizes for a (truly two-dimensional) Barker array.

Conjecture 1.1 (Alquaddoomi and Scholtz [1]). If an $s \times t$ Barker array exists for $s, t > 1$, then $s = t = 2$. 

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In this paper we prove Conjecture 1.1 using only elementary methods. We include short proofs of key auxiliary results obtained elsewhere, in order to make the paper self-contained. Theorem 1.2 summarises the previous state of knowledge regarding Conjecture 1.1.

**Theorem 1.2** (Jedwab [6], Jedwab, Lloyd and Mowbray [8]). Let \( A \) be an \( s \times t \) Barker array with \( s, t > 1 \). Then

1. **Case 1.** \( s, t \) even: \( s = t \). If \( t > 2 \), then \( t \equiv 0 \pmod{4} \) and \( t \geq 12 \).
2. **Case 2.** \( s \) even, \( t > 1 \) odd: \( s > t \). \( s = 4S^2 \) and \( t = T^2 \) for integers \( S, T \).
3. **Case 3.** \( s, t > 1 \) odd: \( st \geq 31^1 \). Write \( t = \prod_j p_j^{\alpha_j} \), where the \( \{p_j\} \) are distinct primes and \( \alpha_j \geq 1 \) for all \( j \). Then \( \alpha_j \geq 2 \) for all \( j \) and \( \alpha_k > 2 \) for some \( k \). If \( st \equiv 1 \pmod{4} \), then \( p_j \equiv 1 \pmod{4} \) for all \( j \).

Following [1], define the following function for an \( s \times t \) array \( A = (a_{ij}) \):

\[
P_A(u, v) = C_A(u, v) + C_A(u, v-t) \quad \text{for } -s < u < s \text{ and } 0 < v < t.
\]

Any expression involving \( P_A(u, v) \) or \( C_A(u, v) \) will implicitly refer only to values of \( (u, v) \) for which the function is defined. In terms of the array elements \( a_{ij} \) we have

\[
P_A(u, v) = \sum_{i} \sum_{j=0}^{t-1} a_{ij} a_{i+u,(j+v) \mod t} \mod t.
\]

**Lemma 1.3** (Alquaddoomi and Scholtz [1]). Let \( A \) be an \( s \times t \) binary array. Then \( P_A(u, v) \equiv P_A(u, v') \pmod{4} \) for all \( (u, v, v') \).

**Proof.** Let \( u, v, v' \) satisfy \(-s < u < s \) and \( 0 \leq v, v' < t \). From (1.2), \( P_A(u, v) \) is the sum of \((s - |u|)t\) nonzero terms, of which exactly \([(s - |u|)t - P_A(u, v)]/2 \) are \(-1\) and \([(s - |u|)t + P_A(u, v)]/2 \) are \(+1\). But from (1.2), the product of these nonzero terms is independent of \( v \). Therefore

\[
(-1)^{[(s-|u|)t-P_A(u,v)]/2}
\]

is independent of \( v \), which implies \( P_A(u, v) \equiv P_A(u, v') \pmod{4} \).

**Proposition 1.4** (Alquaddoomi and Scholtz [1]). Let \( A \) be an \( s \times t \) Barker array with \( st > 2 \). Then

1. **Case 1.** \( s, t \) even:
   \[
P_A(u, v) = 0 \quad \text{for } (u, v) \neq (0, 0).
   \]
2. **Case 2.** \( s \) even and \( t \) odd:
   \[
   P_A(u, v) = \begin{cases} 
   0 & \text{for } (u, v) \neq (0, 0), \\
   k(u) & \text{for } u \text{ even and } (u, v) \neq (0, 0), \\
   & \text{for } u \text{ odd},
   \end{cases}
   \]
   where \( k(u) = 1 \) or \(-1\).
Case 3. $s, t$ odd:

$$P_A(u, v) = \begin{cases} 
  k & \text{for } u \text{ even and } (u, v) \neq (0, 0), \\
  0 & \text{for } u \text{ odd}, 
\end{cases}$$

where $k = 1$ or $-1$.

Proof. For all $u, v$ satisfying $|u| < s$ and $|v| < t$, $C_A(u, v)$ is the sum of $(s - |u|) \times (t - |v|)$ nonzero terms, each of which is $\pm 1$. Therefore $C_A(u, v) \equiv (s + |u|)(t + |v|)$ (mod 2). The Barker array property then implies

$$C_A(u, v) = \pm((s + u)(t + v)) \pmod 2 \quad \text{for } (u, v) \neq (0, 0). \quad (1.3)$$

Case 1. $s, t$ even: From (1.3) we have

$$C_A(u, v) = 0 \quad \text{for } u \text{ or } v \text{ even and } (u, v) \neq (0, 0).$$

Then by (1.1),

$$P_A(u, v) = 0 \quad \text{for } u \text{ or } v \text{ even and } (u, v) \neq (0, 0).$$

Lemma 1.3 then implies that

$$P_A(u, v) = 0 \quad \text{for } (u, v) \neq (0, 0). \quad (1.3)$$

Case 2. $s$ even, $t$ odd: From (1.3) we have

$$C_A(u, v) = \pm((u(1 + v)) \pmod 2 \quad \text{for } (u, v) \neq (0, 0). \quad (1.4)$$

It follows from (1.1) that

$$P_A(u, v) = \begin{cases} 
  0 & \text{for } u \text{ even and } (u, v) \neq (0, 0), \\
  \pm 1 & \text{for } u \text{ odd}, 
\end{cases}$$

Lemma 1.3 then implies that

$$P_A(u, v) = \begin{cases} 
  0 & \text{for } u \text{ even and } (u, v) \neq (0, 0), \\
  k(u) & \text{for } u \text{ odd}, 
\end{cases}$$

where $k(u) = 1$ or $-1$, as required.

We next consider the function

$$P_{AT}(v, u) = C_A(u, v) + C_A(u - s, v). \quad (1.6)$$

From (1.4),

$$P_{AT}(v, u) = 0 \quad \text{for } u \text{ even and } (u, v) \neq (0, 0). \quad (1.7)$$

Lemma 1.3 applied to $AT$ states that

$$P_{AT}(v, u) \equiv P_{AT}(v, u') \pmod 4 \quad \text{for all } (u, u', v),$$

giving

$$P_{AT}(v, u) = 0 \quad \text{for } (u, v) \neq (0, 0), \quad \text{except when } s = 2 \text{ and } (u, v) = (1, 0) \quad (1.8)$$

(since, when $s = 2$ and $v = 0$, there is no value of $u$ satisfying the conditions of (1.7)).

To complete the proof of Case 2, we now derive a contradiction for the case $s = 2$, so that (1.8) holds without exception. By assumption $st > 2$ and $s = 2$, so $t > 1$ and we can choose an even value of $v$ satisfying $0 < v < t$. From (1.5),

$$k(1) = P_A(1, v) = P_A(1, t - v),$$
and so from (1.1) and (1.4),
\[
\pm 1 = C_A(1, v) = C_A(1, -v).
\]
But by (1.8), \( P_{A^T}(v, 1) = 0 \), and so from (1.6) we get
\[
0 = C_A(1, v) + C_A(-1, v) = C_A(1, v) + C_A(1, -v)
\]
since \( C_A(u, v) = C_A(-u, -v) \) for all \( u, v \). This contradicts (1.9).

Case 3. \( s, t \) odd: From (1.3) we have
\[
C_A(u, v) = \pm ((1 + u)(1 + v)) \mod 2 \quad \text{for} \ (u, v) \neq (0, 0).
\]
Then by (1.1),
\[
P_A(u, v) = \begin{cases} 
\pm 1 & \text{for } u \text{ even and } (u, v) \neq (0, 0), \\
0 & \text{for } u \text{ odd.}
\end{cases}
\]
Lemma 1.3 then implies that
\[
P_A(u, v) = \begin{cases} 
k(u) & \text{for } u \text{ even and } (u, v) \neq (0, 0), \\
0 & \text{for } u \text{ odd,}
\end{cases}
\]
where \( k(u) = 1 \) or \(-1\). By symmetry in \( s \) and \( t \) we also obtain
\[
P_{A^T}(v, u) = \begin{cases} 
k'(v) & \text{for } v \text{ even and } (u, v) \neq (0, 0), \\
0 & \text{for } v \text{ odd,}
\end{cases}
\]
where \( k'(v) = 1 \) or \(-1\). But, for \( u, v \) even and \( (u, v) \neq (0, 0) \), by (1.3) the single nonzero contribution to \( P_A(u, v) = C_A(u, v) + C_A(u, v - t) \) and to \( P_{A^T}(v, u) = C_A(u, v) + C_A(u - s, v) \) is the same term \( C(u, v) \), and so
\[
k(u) = k'(v) = k.
\]
Proposition 1.4 is implied by Theorem 2 and (21)–(23) of [1]. Lemma 3.5 of [6] shows that an \( s \times t \) binary array \( A \) having \( P_A(u, v) = 0 \) for all \( (u, v) \neq (0, 0) \) is equivalent to \( A \) being simultaneously a perfect binary array and a “quasiperfect” binary array. This in turn is equivalent to the \(-1\) elements of \( A \) corresponding to a \((4N^2, 2N^2 - N, N^2 - N)\)-difference set in \( \mathbb{Z}_s \times \mathbb{Z}_t \), where \( st = 4N^2 \) (see [4], for example), and the \(-1\) elements of \([-A]_A\) corresponding to an \((st, 2, st, st/2)\) relative difference set in \( \mathbb{Z}_{2s} \times \mathbb{Z}_t = (x) \times (y) \), where \( x^{2s} = y^t = 1 \), relative to \((x^s)\) (see [17]). See [3] or [12] for a background on difference sets and relative difference sets.

2. PROOF OF THE CONJECTURE

We begin with two lemmas.

Lemma 2.1. Let \( A = (a_{ij}) \) be an \( s \times t \) binary array and let \( \zeta \) be a \((not necessarily primitive) t^{th}\) root of unity. Let \( X = (x_i) \) be the complex-valued sequence of length \( s \) given by
\[
x_i = \sum_j a_{ij} \zeta^j.
\]
Then
\[
C_X(u) = \sum_{v=0}^{t-1} P_A(u, v) \zeta^{-v} \quad \text{for all } u.
\]
Proof. From (1.2), for all $u$,

$$
\sum_{v=0}^{t-1} P_A(u, v) \zeta^{-v} = \sum_{v=0}^{t-1} \sum_{i} \sum_{j} a_{ij} a_{i+u, (j+v) \mod t} \zeta^{-v}
$$

writing $k = (j + v) \mod t$ and using $\zeta^t = 1$. Hence, for all $u$,

$$
\sum_{v=0}^{t-1} P_A(u, v) \zeta^{-v} = \sum_{i} \sum_{j} a_{ij} \sum_{k=0}^{t-1} a_{i+u, k} \zeta^{j-k}
$$

as required. \(\Box\)

**Lemma 2.2.** Let $X = (x_i)$ be a complex-valued sequence of length $s$ for which

$$
C_X(u) = 0 \text{ for } u \neq 0.
$$

Then, for some $I$ satisfying $0 \leq I < s$,

$$
|x_i|^2 = \begin{cases} 
0 & \text{for } i \neq I, \\
C_X(0) & \text{for } i = I.
\end{cases}
$$

Proof. By the definition of aperiodic autocorrelation, we are given that

$$
\sum_i x_i \overline{x_{i+u}} = 0 \text{ for } 0 < u < s.
$$

We prove by induction on $s$ that, for some $I$ satisfying $0 \leq I < s$,

$$
|x_i|^2 = 0 \text{ for } i \neq I.
$$

The case $s = 1$ is immediate (take $I = 0$). Assume case $s - 1$ to be true. Put $u = s - 1$ in (2.2) to give $x_0 \overline{x_{s-1}} = 0$. This implies, without loss of generality, that $x_{s-1} = 0$. Then from (2.2) we have

$$
\sum_{i=0}^{s-u-2} x_i \overline{x_{i+u}} = 0 \text{ for } 0 < u < s - 1.
$$

By the inductive hypothesis it follows that, for some $I$ satisfying $0 \leq I < s - 1$, $|x_i|^2 = 0$ for $i \neq I$. Combining this with $x_{s-1} = 0$ gives the case $s$, completing the induction.

Furthermore, by the definition of aperiodic autocorrelation, $C_X(0) = \sum_i |x_i|^2$, and so $C_X(0) = |x_I|^2$, as required. \(\Box\)

The case $\zeta = 1$ of Lemma 2.1 was used as a starting point in [5], [6] and [8] to derive equations in the row sums $\sum_j a_{ij}$ of an $s \times t$ Barker array from Proposition 1.4, eventually leading to Theorem 1.2. We will now use the case where $\zeta$ is a primitive $t^{th}$ root of unity to prove Conjecture 1.1.

**Theorem 2.3.** If an $s \times t$ Barker array $A = (a_{ij})$ exists for $s, t > 1$, then $s = t = 2$. 

Proof. Let \( \zeta \) be a primitive \( t^{th} \) root of unity and define \( X = (x_i) \) as in (2.1). We will show that the case \( s, t \) even forces the result \( s = t = 2 \), whereas the case \( s \) even, \( t \) odd and the case \( s, t \) odd both result in a contradiction. These three cases are exhaustive, because the transpose of a Barker array is also a Barker array.

Case 1. \( s, t \) even: Proposition 1.4 and Lemma 2.1 together give

\[
C_X(u) = \begin{cases} 
0 & \text{for } u \neq 0, \\
st & \text{for } u = 0,
\end{cases}
\]

using \( P_A(0,0) = C(0,0) = st \). Then by Lemma 2.2 there is some \( I \) satisfying \( 0 < I < s \) for which

\[
|x_I|^2 = st.
\]

But by (2.1),

\[
|x_I|^2 = \left| \sum_{j=0}^{t-1} a_{ij} \zeta^j \right|^2 \\
\leq \left( \sum_{j=0}^{t-1} |a_{ij} \zeta^j| \right)^2 \\
= t^2.
\]

It follows from (2.3) that

\[
(2.4) s \leq t, \text{ with equality } \iff \arg(a_{ij} \zeta^j) \text{ is constant for all } j \text{ satisfying } 0 \leq j < t.
\]

Since \( s \) is even, by symmetry in \( s \) and \( t \) (or equivalently by applying the same procedure to \( A^T \)) we have \( t \leq s \), forcing equality. Therefore \( s = t \) and, since \( t > 1 \), by (2.4) we have \( t = 2 \).

Case 2. \( s \) even, \( t > 1 \) odd: By Proposition 1.4, the \( t \times s \) array \( A^T \) satisfies

\[
P_{A^T}(v,u) = 0 \text{ for } (u,v) \neq (0,0).
\]

The argument of Case 1 that led to (2.4), when applied to \( A^T \), gives \( t \leq s \). Furthermore the expression for \( P_A \) in Proposition 1.4, together with Lemma 2.1, gives

\[
C_X(u) = \begin{cases} 
0 & \text{for } u \text{ even and } u \neq 0, \\
k(u) \sum_{v=0}^{t-1} \zeta^{-v} & \text{for } u \text{ odd,} \\
st & \text{for } u = 0
\end{cases}
\]

since \( \zeta^{-1} \) is a primitive \( t^{th} \) root of unity and \( t > 1 \). By Lemma 2.2 we then obtain \( s \leq t \), by the same argument as in Case 1. Since we already have \( t \leq s \) this implies \( s = t \), which contradicts the assumption that \( s \) is even and \( t \) is odd.
Case 3. $s, t > 1$ odd: Proposition 1.4 and Lemma 2.1 together give

\[
C_X(u) = \begin{cases} 
  k \sum_{v=0}^{t-1} \zeta^{-v} & \text{for } u \text{ even and } u \neq 0, \\
  0 & \text{for } u \text{ odd,} \\
  st + k \sum_{v=1}^{t-1} \zeta^{-v} & \text{for } u = 0 
\end{cases}
\]

where $k = 1$ or $-1$. Then by Lemma 2.2 there is some $I$ satisfying $0 < I < s$ for which

\[
|x_I|^2 = st - k.
\]

But, as in Case 1, $|x_I|^2 \leq t^2$ and so

\[
st - k \leq t^2.
\]

By symmetry in $s$ and $t$ we then have

\[
st - k \leq \min\{s^2, t^2\}.
\]

Suppose, for a contradiction, that $s \neq t$ and without loss of generality that $s \geq t + 1$. Then $st - k \geq t(t + 1) - k > t^2$, since $k = 1$ or $-1$ and $t > 1$. This contradicts (2.6), and so $s = t$.

Then (2.6) forces $k = 1$, and from (2.1) and (2.5) we have

\[
\left| \sum_{j=0}^{t-1} a_{ij} \zeta^j \right|^2 = t^2 - 1.
\]

Since $t$ is odd, one of the sets $\{j : a_{ij} = 1\}$ and $\{j : a_{ij} = -1\}$ contains at most $(t - 1)/2$ elements; without loss of generality, suppose it is the former. This implies that

\[
\left| \sum_{j=0}^{t-1} a_{ij} \zeta^j \right|^2 = \left| \sum_{j=0}^{t-1} a_{ij} \zeta^j + \sum_{j=0}^{t-1} \zeta^j \right|^2 \\
\leq 4 \left( \sum_{j : a_{ij} = 1} |\zeta^j| \right)^2 \\
\leq 4 \left( \frac{t - 1}{2} \right)^2 \\
< t^2 - 1,
\]

since $t > 1$. This contradicts (2.7).

\[\Box\]

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