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James A. Davis
University of Richmond, jdavis@richmond.edu

Jonathan Jedwab

Ken W. Smith

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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

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

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

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

We refer to an \( s \times 1 \) array as a sequence of length \( s \), abbreviating the array \((a_{i0})\) to \((a_i)\) and its aperiodic autocorrelation function \(C_A(u, 0) = C_A(u)\).

Alquaddoomi and Scholtz [1] defined an \( s \times t \) Barker array to be an \( s \times t \) binary array \(A = (a_{ij})\) for which

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

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 \([\pm \pm] \) 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 \( s = t = 2 \).
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

- **Case 1.** \( s, t \) even: \( s = t \). If \( t > 2 \), then \( t \equiv 0 \pmod{4} \) and \( t \geq 12 \).
- **Case 2.** \( s \) even, \( t > 1 \) odd: \( s > t \). \( s = 4S^2 \) and \( t = T^2 \) for integers \( S, T \).
- **Case 3.** \( s, t > 1 \) odd: \( st \geq 311 \). 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

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

Alquaddoomi and Scholtz [1] established Lemma 1.3 for binary arrays, and then used it to prove Proposition 1.4 for Barker arrays. This generalised the approach taken by Tuyrn and Storer in their classical paper [15] on the one-dimensional (sequence) case.

**Lemma 1.3** (Alquaddoomi and Scholtz [1]). Let \( A \) be an \( s \times t \) binary array. Then

\[
P_A(u, v) \equiv P_A(u, v') \pmod{4} \quad \text{for all } (u, v, v').
\]

**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

- **Case 1.** \( s, t \) even:
  \[
P_A(u, v) = 0 \quad \text{for } (u, v) \neq (0,0).
\]
- **Case 2.** \( s \) even and \( t \) odd:
  \[
P_A(u, v) = \begin{cases} 
0 & \text{for } (u, v) \neq (0,0), \\
k(u) & \text{for } u \text{ even and } (u, v) \neq (0,0),
\end{cases}
\]
  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 $C_A(u, v) \equiv (s + u)(t + v) \pmod{2}$. The Barker array property then implies

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

\[
P_{AT}(v, u) = C_A(u, v) + C_A(u - s, v).
\]

From (1.4),

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

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

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

(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),
\begin{equation}
(1.9) \quad \pm 1 = C_A(1, v) = C_A(1, -v).
\end{equation}
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
\[ C_A(u, v) = \pm(((1 + u)(1 + v)) \mod 2) \quad \text{for} \quad (u, v) \neq (0, 0). \]

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
\[ P_{A^T}(u, v) = \begin{cases} 
k(u) & \text{for } u \text{ even and } (u, v) \neq (0, 0), \\
0 & \text{for } u \text{ odd,}
\end{cases} \]
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 \( \begin{bmatrix} -A \end{bmatrix} \) corresponding to an \((st, 2, st, st/2)\) relative difference set in \( \mathbb{Z}_{2s} \times \mathbb{Z}_t = \langle x \rangle \times \langle y \rangle \), where \( x^{2s} = y^t = 1 \), relative to \( \langle x^s \rangle \) (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
\begin{equation}
(2.1) \quad x_i = \sum_j a_{ij} \zeta^j.
\end{equation}

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 \( u \),

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

\[
= \sum_{i} \sum_{j} a_{ij} \sum_{k=0}^{t-1} a_{i+u,k} \zeta^{j-k},
\]

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

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

\[
= \sum_{i} x_i \overline{x_{i+u}}
\]

\[
= C_X(u),
\]

as required. \(\square\)

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

\[
C_X(u) = 0 \quad \text{for} \quad u \neq 0.
\]

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

\[
(2.2) \sum_i x_i \overline{x_{i+u}} = 0 \quad \text{for} \quad 0 < u < s.
\]

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

\[
|x_i|^2 = 0 \quad \text{for} \quad i \neq I.
\]

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

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

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. \(\square\)

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

$$|x_I|^2 = st. \tag{2.3}$$

But by (2.1),

$$|x_I|^2 = \left| \sum_{j=0}^{t-1} a_{Ij} \zeta^j \right|^2 \leq \left( \sum_{j=0}^{t-1} |a_{Ij} \zeta^j| \right)^2 = t^2. \tag{2.4}$$

It follows from (2.3) that

$$s \leq t, \text{ with equality } \Leftrightarrow \arg(a_{Ij} \zeta^j) \text{ is constant for all } j \text{ satisfying } 0 \leq j < t. \tag{2.4}$$

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

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

$$= \begin{cases} 0 & \text{for } u \neq 0, \\ st & \text{for } u = 0, \end{cases}$$

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
\[
C_X(u) = \begin{cases} 
  k \sum_{v=0}^{t-1} \zeta^{u-v} & \text{for } u \text{ even and } u \neq 0, \\
  0 & \text{for } u \text{ odd,} \\
  st + k \sum_{v=1}^{t-1} \zeta^{v} & \text{for } u = 0 
\end{cases}
\]
where \( k = 1 \) or \(-1\). Then by Lemma 2.2 there is some \( I \) satisfying \( 0 < I < s \) for which
\[
|x_I|^2 = st - k. \tag{2.5}
\]
But, as in Case 1, \(|x_I|^2 \leq t^2\) and so
\[
st - k \leq t^2. \tag{2.6}
\]
By symmetry in \( s \) and \( t \) we then have
\[
st - k \leq \min\{s^2, t^2\}. \tag{2.6}
\]
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
\[
\left| \sum_{j=0}^{t-1} a_{Ij} \zeta^j \right|^2 = t^2 - 1. \tag{2.7}
\]
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).

\[\square\]

Acknowledgments

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Department of Mathematics and Computer Science, University of Richmond, Richmond, Virginia 23173
E-mail address: jdavis@richmond.edu

Department of Mathematics, Simon Fraser University, 8888 University Drive, Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada V5A 1S6
E-mail address: jed@sfu.ca

Department of Mathematics, Central Michigan University, Mount Pleasant, Michigan 48859
E-mail address: Ken.W.Smith@cmich.edu