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THE a -NUMBER OF JACOBIANS OF CERTAIN MAXIMAL CURVES

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ABSTRACT. In this paper, we compute a formula for the a -number of certain maximal curves given by the equation $y^q + y = x^{\frac{q+1}{2}}$ over the finite field \mathbb{F}_{q^2} . The same problem is studied for the maximal curve corresponding to $\sum_{t=1}^s y^{q/2^t} = x^{q+1}$ with $q = 2^s$, over the finite field \mathbb{F}_{q^2} .

1. Introduction

Let \mathcal{C} be a geometrically irreducible, projective, and non-singular algebraic curve defined over the finite field \mathbb{F}_ℓ of order ℓ . Let $\mathcal{C}(\mathbb{F}_\ell)$ denotes the set of \mathbb{F}_ℓ -rational points of \mathcal{C} . In the study of curves over finite fields, a fundamental problem is on the size of $\mathcal{C}(\mathbb{F}_\ell)$. The very basic result here is the Hasse-Weil bound which asserts that

$$| \#\mathcal{C}(\mathbb{F}_\ell) - (\ell + 1) | \leq 2g\sqrt{\ell},$$

where $g = g(\mathcal{C})$ is the genus of \mathcal{C} .

The curve \mathcal{C} is called maximal over \mathbb{F}_ℓ if the number of elements of $\mathcal{C}(\mathbb{F}_\ell)$ satisfies

$$\#\mathcal{C}(\mathbb{F}_\ell) = \ell + 1 + 2g\sqrt{\ell}.$$

We only consider maximal curves of positive genus and hence ℓ will always be a square, say $\ell = q^2$.

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In [10], Ihara showed that if a curve \mathcal{C} is maximal over \mathbb{F}_{q^2} , then

$$g \leq g_1 := \frac{q(q-1)}{2}.$$

In [6] authors showed that

$$\text{either } g \leq g_2 := \lfloor \frac{(q-1)^2}{4} \rfloor \quad \text{or} \quad g_1 = \frac{q(q-1)}{2}.$$

Rück and Stichtenoth [16] showed that, up to \mathbb{F}_{q^2} -isomorphism, there is just one maximal curve over \mathbb{F}_{q^2} of genus $\frac{q(q-1)}{2}$, namely the so-called Hermitian curve over \mathbb{F}_{q^2} which can be defined by the affine equation

$$y^q + y = x^{q+1}.$$

If q is odd, from [5] there is a unique maximal curve \mathcal{X} over \mathbb{F}_{q^2} of genus $g = \frac{(q-1)^2}{4}$ which can be defined by the affine equation

$$(1.1) \quad y^q + y = x^{\frac{q+1}{2}}.$$

For q even, from [1] there is a unique maximal curve \mathcal{Y} over \mathbb{F}_{q^2} of genus $g = \lfloor \frac{(q-1)^2}{4} \rfloor = \frac{q(q-2)}{4}$ which can be defined by the affine equation

$$(1.2) \quad \sum_{t=1}^s y^{q/2^t} = x^{q+1} \text{ with } q = 2^s,$$

provided that $q/2$ is a Weierstrass non-gap at some point of the curve. It is easy to see that a maximal curve \mathcal{C} is supersingular, since all slopes of its Newton polygon are equal $1/2$. This fact implies that the Jacobian $X := \text{Jac}(\mathcal{C})$ has no p -torsion points over $\bar{\mathbb{F}}_p$. A relevant invariant of the p -torsion group scheme of the Jacobian of the curve is the a -number.

Consider the multiplication by p -morphism $[p] : X \rightarrow X$ which is a finite flat morphism of degree p^{2g} . It factors as $[p] = V \circ F$. Here, $F : X \rightarrow X^{(p)}$ is the relative Frobenius morphism coming from the p -power map on the structure sheaf; and the Verschiebung morphism $V : X^{(p)} \rightarrow X$ is the dual of F . The kernel of multiplication-by- p on X , is defined by the group of $X[p]$. The important invariant is the a -number $a(\mathcal{C})$ of curve \mathcal{C} defined by

$$a(\mathcal{C}) = \dim_{\bar{\mathbb{F}}_p} \text{Hom}(\alpha_p, X[p]),$$

where α_p is the kernel of the Frobenius endomorphism on the group scheme $\text{Spec}(k[X]/(X^p))$. Another definition for the a -number is

$$a(\mathcal{C}) = \dim_{\bar{\mathbb{F}}_p} (\text{Ker}(F) \cap \text{Ker}(V)).$$

A few results on the rank of the Cartier operator (especially a -number) of curves is introduced by Kodama and Washio [11], Gonzlez [8], Pries and Weir [15], Yui [19] and Montanucci and Speziali [13].

In this paper, we determine the a -number of certain maximal curves. In the case $g = g_1$, the a -number of the Hermitian curves is computed by Gross in [9]. Here we compute the a -number of maximal curves over \mathbb{F}_{q^2} with genus $g = g_2$ for infinitely many values of q .

In Section 3, we prove that the a -number of the curve \mathcal{X} with Equation (1.1) is $a(\mathcal{X}) = \frac{p-1}{8}(p^{s-1} + 1)(q - 1)$, see Theorem 3.2. In Section 4, we prove that the a -number of the curve \mathcal{Y} with Equation (1.2) is $\frac{q^2}{16}$, see Theorem 4.1. The proofs use directly the action of the Cartier operator on $H^0(\mathcal{C}, \Omega^1)$.

2. The Cartier operator

Let k be an algebraically closed field of characteristic $p > 0$. Let \mathcal{C} be a curve defined over k . The Cartier operator is a $1/p$ -linear operator acting on the sheaf $\Omega^1 := \Omega_{\mathcal{C}}^1$ of differential forms on \mathcal{C} in positive characteristic $p > 0$.

Let $K = k(\mathcal{C})$ be the function field of the curve \mathcal{C} of genus g defined over k . A separating variable for K is an element $x \in K \setminus K^p$.

Definition 2.1. (The Cartier operator). Let $\omega \in \Omega_{K/K^q}$. There exist f_0, \dots, f_{p-1} such that $\omega = (f_0^p + f_1^p x + \dots + f_{p-1}^p x^{p-1})dx$. The Cartier operator \mathfrak{C} is defined by

$$\mathfrak{C}(\omega) := f_{p-1}dx.$$

The definition does not depend on the choice of x (see [17, Proposition 1]).

We refer the reader to [17, 2, 3, 18] for the proofs of the following statements.

Proposition 2.2. (Global Properties of \mathfrak{C}). For all $\omega \in \Omega_{K/K^q}$ and all $f \in K$,

- $\mathfrak{C}(f^p\omega) = f\mathfrak{C}(\omega)$;
- $\mathfrak{C}(\omega) = 0 \Leftrightarrow \exists h \in K, \omega = dh$;
- $\mathfrak{C}(\omega) = \omega \Leftrightarrow \exists h \in K, \omega = dh/h$.

If $\text{div}(\omega)$ is effective then differential ω is holomorphic. The set $H^0(\mathcal{C}, \Omega^1)$ of holomorphic differentials is a g -dimensional k -vector subspace of Ω^1 such that $\mathfrak{C}(H^0(\mathcal{C}, \Omega^1)) \subseteq H^0(\mathcal{C}, \Omega^1)$. If \mathcal{C} is a curve, then the a -number of \mathcal{C} equals the dimension of the kernel of the Cartier operator $H^0(\mathcal{C}, \Omega^1)$ (or equivalently, the dimension of the space of exact holomorphic differentials on \mathcal{C}) (see [12, 5.2.8]).

The following theorem is due to Gorenstein; see [4, Theorem 12].

Theorem 2.3. A differential $\omega \in \Omega^1$ is holomorphic if and only if it is of the form $(h(x, y)/F_y)dx$, where $H : h(X, Y) = 0$ is a canonical adjoint.

Theorem 2.4. [13] With the above assumptions,

$$\mathfrak{C}\left(h \frac{dx}{F_y}\right) = \left(\frac{\partial^{2p-2}}{\partial x^{p-1} \partial y^{p-1}}(F^{p-1}h)\right)^{\frac{1}{p}} \frac{dx}{F_y}$$

for any $h \in K(\mathcal{X})$.

The differential operator ∇ is defined by

$$\nabla = \frac{\partial^{2p-2}}{\partial x^{p-1} \partial y^{p-1}},$$

has the property

$$(2.1) \quad \nabla\left(\sum_{i,j} c_{i,j} X^i Y^j\right) = \sum_{i,j} c_{ip+p-1, jp+p-1} X^{ip} Y^{jp}.$$

3. The a -number of Curve \mathcal{X}

In this section, we consider the curve \mathcal{X} is given by the equation $y^q + y = x^{\frac{q+1}{2}}$ of genus $g(\mathcal{X}) = \frac{(q-1)^2}{4}$, with $q = p^s$ and $p > 2$ over \mathbb{F}_{q^2} . From Theorem 2.3, one can find a basis for the space $H^0(\mathcal{X}, \Omega^1)$ of holomorphic differentials on \mathcal{X} , namely

$$\mathcal{B} = \{x^i y^j dx \mid 1 \leq \frac{q+1}{2}i + qj \leq g\}.$$

Proposition 3.1. *The rank of the Cartier operator \mathfrak{C} on the curve \mathcal{X} equals the number of pairs (i, j) with $\frac{q+1}{2}i + qj \leq g$ such that the system of congruences mod p*

$$(3.1) \quad \begin{cases} kq + h - k + j \equiv 0, \\ (p - 1 - h)\left(\frac{q+1}{2}\right) + i \equiv p - 1, \end{cases}$$

has a solution (h, k) for $0 \leq h \leq \frac{p-1}{2}, 0 \leq k \leq h$.

Proof. By Theorem 2.4, $\mathfrak{C}((x^i y^j / F_y) dx) = (\nabla(F^{p-1} x^i y^j))^{1/p} dx / F_y$. So, we apply the differential operator ∇ to

$$(3.2) \quad (y^q + y - x^{\frac{q+1}{2}})^{p-1} x^i y^j = \sum_{h=0}^{p-1} \sum_{k=0}^h \binom{p-1}{h} \binom{h}{k} (-1)^{h-k} x^{(p-1-h)\left(\frac{q+1}{2}\right)+i} y^{kq+h-k+j}$$

for each i, j such that $\frac{q+1}{2}i + qj \leq g$.

From the Formula (2.1), $\nabla(y^q + y + x^{\frac{q+1}{2}})^{p-1} x^i y^j \neq 0$ if and only if for some (h, k) , with $0 \leq h \leq \frac{p-1}{2}$ and $0 \leq k \leq h$, satisfies both the following congruences mod p :

$$(3.3) \quad \begin{cases} kq + h - k + j \equiv 0, \\ (p - 1 - h)\left(\frac{q+1}{2}\right) + i \equiv p - 1. \end{cases}$$

Take $(i, j) \neq (i_0, j_0)$ in this situation both $\nabla(y^q + y + x^{\frac{q+1}{2}})^{p-1} x^i y^j$ and $\nabla(y^q + y + x^{\frac{q+1}{2}})^{p-1} x^{i_0} y^{j_0}$ are nonzero. We claim that they are linearly independent over k . To show independence, we prove that, for each (h, k) with $0 \leq h \leq p - 1$ and $0 \leq k \leq h$ there is no (h_0, k_0) with $0 \leq h_0 \leq p - 1$ and $0 \leq k_0 \leq h_0$ such that

$$(3.4) \quad \begin{cases} kq + h - k + j = k_0q + h_0 - k_0 + j_0, \\ (p - 1 - h)\left(\frac{q+1}{2}\right) + i = (p - 1 - h_0)\left(\frac{q+1}{2}\right) + i_0. \end{cases}$$

If $h = h_0$, then $j \neq j_0$ by $i = i_0$ from the second equation, therefore $k \neq k_0$. We may assume $k > k_0$. Then $j - j_0 = (q - 1)(k - k_0) > q - 1$, a contradiction as $j - j_0 \leq \frac{(q-1)^2}{4q}$. Similarly, if $k = k_0$, then

$h \neq h_0$ by $(i, j) \neq (i_0, j_0)$. We assume that $h > h_0$. Then $i - i_0 = \frac{q+1}{2}(h - h_0) > \frac{q+1}{2}$, a contradiction as $i - i_0 \leq \frac{(q-1)^2}{2(q+1)}$. □

For the rest in this Section, $A_s := A(\mathcal{X})$ denotes the matrix representing the p -th power of the Cartier operator \mathfrak{C} on the curve \mathcal{X} with respect to the basis \mathcal{B} , where $q = p^s$. Now we are able to compute the a -number of curve \mathcal{X} .

Theorem 3.2. *If $q = p^s$ for $s \geq 1$ and $p > 2$, then the a -number of the curve \mathcal{X} equals*

$$\frac{p-1}{8}(p^{s-1} + 1)(q - 1).$$

Proof. First we prove that, if $q = p^s, s \geq 1$, then $\text{rank}(A_s) = \frac{p+1}{8}(p^s - 1)(p^{s-1} - 1)$. In this case, $\frac{q+1}{2}i + qj \leq g$ and System (3.1) mod p reads

$$(3.5) \quad \begin{cases} h - k + j \equiv 0, \\ -\frac{h}{2} - \frac{1}{2} + i \equiv p - 1. \end{cases}$$

First assume that $s = 1$, for $q = p$, we have $\frac{p+1}{2}i + pj \leq g$ and System (3.5) becomes

$$\begin{cases} j = k - h, \\ i = p + \frac{h}{2} - \frac{1}{2}, \end{cases}$$

in this case $\frac{p+1}{2}i + pj \leq g$ that is, $\frac{h(1-3p)}{4} + kp \leq \frac{-p^2-3p+2}{4}$ then $h \geq \frac{-p^2-3p+2}{1-3p}$, thus $h \geq \frac{3p+10}{9}$ a contradiction by Proposition 3.1. As a consequence, there is no pair (i, j) for which the above system admits a solution (h, k) . Thus, $\text{rank}(A_1) = 0$.

Let $s = 2$, so $q = p^2$. For $\frac{p^2+1}{2}i + p^2j \leq g$, the above argument still works. Therefore, $\frac{(p-1)^2}{4} + 1 \leq \frac{p^2+1}{2}i + p^2j \leq \frac{(p^2-1)^2}{4}$ and our goal is to determine for which (i, j) there is a solution (h, k) of the system mod p

$$\begin{cases} h - k + j \equiv 0, \\ -\frac{h}{2} - \frac{1}{2} + i \equiv p - 1. \end{cases}$$

Take $l, m \in \mathbb{Z}_0^+$ so that

$$\begin{cases} j = lp + k - h, \\ i = mp + p + \frac{h}{2} - \frac{1}{2}. \end{cases}$$

In this situation, $i < \frac{2g}{p^2+1} = \frac{(p^2-1)^2}{2(p^2+1)}$, so $mp + p + \frac{h}{2} - \frac{1}{2} \leq \frac{(p^2-1)^2}{2(p^2+1)}$. Then $m \leq \frac{(p^2-1)^2}{2(p^2+1)}$. And $j < \frac{(p^2-1)^2}{4p^2}$, so $lp + k - h < \frac{(p^2-1)^2}{4p^2}$, Then $l < \frac{(p^2-1)^2}{4p^2}$. From this we can say that $\frac{p^2-1}{4} - 1 \leq l \leq \frac{p^2-1}{4}$, and $\frac{p^2-1}{2} \leq m \leq \frac{p^2-1}{2}$. In this way, $\frac{(p^2-1)^2}{8}$ suitable values for (i, j) are obtained, whence

$$\text{rank}(A_2) = \frac{(p^2-1)^2}{8}.$$

For $s \geq 3$, $\text{rank}(A_s)$ equals $\text{rank}(A_{s-1})$ plus the number of pairs (i, j) with $\frac{(p^{s-1}-1)^2}{4} + 1 \leq \frac{q+1}{2}i + qj \leq \frac{(p^s-1)^2}{4}$ such that the system mod p

$$\begin{cases} h - k + j \equiv 0, \\ -\frac{h}{2} - \frac{1}{2} + i \equiv p - 1, \end{cases}$$

has a solution. With our usual conventions on l, m , a computation shows that such pairs (i, j) are obtained for $0 \leq l \leq \frac{(p^s-1)^2}{4p^{s+1}}$ from this we have $\frac{p^{s-2}(p^2-1)}{4} - 1 \leq l \leq \frac{p^{s-2}(p^2-1)}{4}$, and $0 \leq m \leq \frac{(p^s-1)^2}{2(p^s+1)}$ from this we have $\frac{(p^{s-1}-1)(p+1)}{2} - 1 \leq m \leq \frac{(p^{s-1}-1)(p+1)}{2}$. In this case we have

$$\frac{(p^{s-1} - 1)(p + 1)p^{s-2}(p^2 - 1)}{8}$$

choices for (h, k) . Therefore we get

$$\text{rank}(A_s) = \text{rank}(A_{s-1}) + \frac{(p^{s-1} - 1)(p + 1)p^{s-2}(p^2 - 1)}{8}.$$

Now our claim on the rank of A_s follows by induction on s . Hence

$$\begin{aligned} a(\mathcal{X}) &= \frac{(p^s - 1)^2}{4} - \frac{(p + 1)(p^s - 1)(p^{s-1} - 1)}{8} \\ &= \frac{(p^s - 1)}{8}(p^s + p - p^{s-1} - 1) \\ &= \frac{(p^s - 1)}{8}(p(p^{s-1} + 1) - (p^{s-1} + 1)) \\ &= \frac{(p^s - 1)}{8}((p^{s-1} + 1)(p - 1)) \\ &= \frac{(p - 1)}{8}((p^{s-1} + 1)(q - 1)). \end{aligned}$$

□

For the finite feild \mathbb{F}_{q^2} let m be an integer number, such that m divides $(q + 1)$. In this case the curve $y^q + y = x^m$ is maximal over \mathbb{F}_{q^2} . From this fact we are led to the following problem.

Problem 3.3. *What is the dimension of the space of exact holomorphic differentials of $y^q + y = x^m$ where $m \mid (q + 1)$*

4. The a -number of Curve \mathcal{Y}

In this section, we consider the curve \mathcal{Y} given by the equation $\sum_{t=1}^s y^{q/2^t} = x^{q+1}$ of genus $g(\mathcal{Y}) = \frac{q(q-2)}{4}$, with $q = 2^s$ and $p = 2$ over \mathbb{F}_{q^2} . With the simple computation, we have $\text{div}_\infty(x) = q/2P_1$ and $\text{div}_\infty(y) = (q + 1)P_1$, so one can find a basis for the space $H^0(\mathcal{Y}, \Omega^1)$ of holomorphic differentials on \mathcal{Y} , namely

$$(4.1) \quad \mathcal{B}' = \{x^i y^j dx \mid (q + 1)i + \frac{q}{2}j \leq 2g - 2\}.$$

Theorem 4.1. *If $q = 2^s$ for $s \geq 1$, then the a -number of the curve \mathcal{Y} equals*

$$\frac{q^2}{16}.$$

Proof. In characteristic two, every 1-form $\omega \in H^0(\mathcal{Y}, \Omega^1)$ can be written as $\omega = (f^2 + g^2x)dx$. So we have

$$(4.2) \quad \mathfrak{C}((f^2 + g^2x)dx) = gdx$$

in characteristic two. By Equation (4.2), a -number of \mathcal{Y} is the dimensional vector space of regular 1-forms of the form f^2dx . For each even integers i, j , we have $\mathfrak{C}(x^i y^j dx) = 0$. So we want to find (i, j) , where i is an odd number and j is an even number. We know that $0 \leq i \leq \frac{2g-2}{2(q+1)}$ and $0 \leq j \leq \frac{2g-2}{2q}$. Therefore this follows from the fact that

$$\frac{q}{4} - 1 < \frac{2g-2}{2(q+1)} < \frac{q}{4}$$

there are $\frac{q}{4}$ choices of i and from the fact that

$$\frac{q}{4} - 1 < \frac{2g-2}{2q} < \frac{q}{4}$$

there are $\frac{q}{4}$ choices of j . Hence

$$a(\mathcal{Y}) = \frac{q^2}{16}$$

□

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