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A REFINEMENT OF H. C. WILLIAMS' qth ROOT ALGORITHM

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Dedicated to the memory of D. H. Lehmer

ABSTRACT. Let p and q be primes such that $p \equiv 1 \pmod q$. Let a be an integer such that $a^{(p-1)/q} \equiv 1 \pmod p$. In 1972, H. C. Williams gave an algorithm which determines a solution of the congruence $x^q \equiv a \pmod p$ in $O(q^3 \log p)$ steps, once an integer b has been found such that $(b^q - a)^{(p-1)/q} \not\equiv 0, 1 \pmod p$. A step is an arithmetic operation $\pmod p$ or an arithmetic operation on q-bit integers. We present a refinement of this algorithm which determines a solution in $O(q^4)+O(q^2 \log p)$ steps, once b has been determined. Thus the new algorithm is better when q is small compared with p.

1. INTRODUCTION

Let p and q be primes and let a be an integer not divisible by p. If $p \not\equiv 1 \pmod q$, the congruence

$$x^q \equiv a \pmod p \tag{1.1}$$

has one solution $x = a^u$, where u and v are integers such that $qu-(p-1)v = 1$. The integer u is easily found by applying the Euclidean algorithm to q and $p-1$. If $p \equiv 1 \pmod q$ and $a^{(p-1)/q} \not\equiv 1 \pmod p$, the congruence (1.1) has no solutions. If $p \equiv 1 \pmod q$ and $a^{(p-1)/q} \equiv 1 \pmod p$, (1.1) has q solutions. H. C. Williams [14] has given an algorithm for finding a solution x of (1.1) when q is odd. Briefly, his algorithm may be described as follows: first determine by trial an integer b such that $b^q - a$ is not a qth power residue of p; then use the formula

$$U_{j,m+n} \equiv \sum_{i=0}^{j} U_{i,n} U_{j-i,m} + (a-b^q) \sum_{i=1}^{q-1-j} U_{j+i,n} U_{q-i,m} \pmod p$$
$$(j = 0, 1, \ldots, q-1;\ m = 1, 2, \ldots;\ n = 1, 2, \ldots)$$

recursively, starting with the initial values

$$U_{0,1} = b, \quad U_{1,1} = 1, \quad U_{j,1} = 0 \quad (j = 2, \ldots, q-1),$$

to compute $x = U_{0,(p^q-1)/((p-1)q)}$. Then x is a solution of (1.1). Once b has been determined, Williams' algorithm requires $O(q^3 \log p)$ steps to solve (1.1),

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where by a step we mean an arithmetic operation in $GF(p)$ or an arithmetic operation on q-bit integers. All q solutions of the congruence (1.1) are given by

$$x(b^q - a)^{j(p-1)/q}, \qquad j = 0, 1, \ldots, q-1.$$

In this paper we present a refinement of Williams' algorithm which determines a solution of (1.1) in $O(q^4) + O(q^2 \log p)$ steps, once the integer b has been found. Thus, our algorithm is better when q is small compared with p, roughly when $q = O_\varepsilon((\log p)^{1-\varepsilon})$, where $0 < \varepsilon < \frac{1}{2}$.

We remark that Williams' algorithm is a qth power version of an algorithm for computing square roots in $GF(p)$, which was published by Cipolla [5] in 1903 (see also [2], [9, pp. 132–134]). Shanks [12] has also given an algorithm for determining qth roots in $GF(p)$. His algorithm is an extension of an algorithm of Tonelli [13]. Adleman, Manders, and Miller [1] have shown, *assuming the extended Riemann hypothesis*, that there is a deterministic algorithm running in time $O(n \log^c(p+a))$ for some $c > 0$ such that on inputs a, p, n, where p is prime, it outputs the least positive integer x such that $x^n \equiv a \pmod p$ or "no" if no such x exists. It is an open problem to find a polynomial-time algorithm—polynomial in $\log q$ and $\log p$—for qth roots in $GF(p)$.

Algorithms for the more general problem of factoring polynomials over finite fields have been given by a number of authors, notably, Berlekamp [3], Moenck [10], Rabin [11], and Cantor and Zassenhaus [4] (see also [8, Chapter 4]). Cantor and Zassenhaus give a heuristic argument to suggest that the expected running time of their algorithm to factor a polynomial of degree n in $GF(p^m)$ is $O(n^3 + n^2 \log(p^m))$.

2. Idea of algorithm

Let p and q be primes with $q | p-1$. Let a be a nonzero element of $k = GF(p)$ which is the qth power of an element in k. We wish to determine a qth root of a. The algorithm constructs an extension field $K = k[\theta] \simeq GF(p^q)$ together with an element $\alpha \in K$ which, when raised to the power $(p^q-1)/(p-1)$, gives a. It then follows that $\alpha^{(p^q-1)/(q(p-1))} \in k$ is the desired qth root of a. This strategy, in rather disguised form, is used by Williams [14]. The contribution of this paper is a way to compute the high power of α somewhat more quickly than the usual repeated squaring algorithm does. The idea is to write the exponent in base p and use automorphisms of K/k to get the effect of raising elements to p^eth powers.

3. The algorithm

Let p and q be primes satisfying $p \equiv 1 \pmod q$. Let $a \in k \backslash \{0\}$ be such that $a^{(p-1)/q} = 1$. We first show that there exists $b \in k$ with $(b^q - a)^{(p-1)/q} \neq 0, 1$. Clearly, we can identify k with the residues $\{1, 1-a, 1-2a, \ldots, 1-(p-1)a\}$ modulo p. As k contains $(p-1)(q-1)/q \geq q-1 \geq 1$ elements which are not qth powers, we can let l be the smallest nonnegative integer such that $1 - la$ is not a qth power of an element of k. Clearly, we have $l \geq 1$ and $1-(l-1)a = b^q$ for some $b \in k$. Then we have $b^q - a = 1 - la$, and so, as $1 - la$ is not a qth power, we have $(b^q - a)^{(p-1)/q} \neq 0, 1$. We set

$$c = (b^q - a)^{(p-1)/q}. \tag{3.1}$$

Clearly, c is a primitive qth root of unity in k. Since $b^q - a$ is not a qth power in k, we can adjoin a qth root θ of this quantity to k and obtain an extension field

$$K = k[\theta] = GF(p)[\theta] \simeq GF(p^q), \quad \text{where } \theta^q = b^q - a. \tag{3.2}$$

In K we have $\theta^p = (\theta^q)^{(p-1)/q}\theta = (b^q - a)^{(p-1)/q}\theta = c\theta$, so that

$$\theta^{p^n} = c^n\theta, \qquad n = 0, 1, 2, \ldots. \tag{3.3}$$

Now define $x \in K$ by

$$x = (b - \theta)^{(p^q-1)/((p-1)q)}. \tag{3.4}$$

As $(p^q - 1)/(p - 1) = 1 + p + p^2 + \cdots + p^{q-1}$, we have

$$x^q = \prod_{j=0}^{q-1}(b - \theta)^{p^j}. \tag{3.5}$$

Next we observe that $(b - \theta)^p = b^p - \theta^p = b - c\theta$, so that

$$(b - \theta)^{p^j} = b - c^j\theta, \qquad j = 0, 1, 2, \ldots. \tag{3.6}$$

As c is a primitive qth root of unity in k, we have

$$\prod_{j=0}^{q-1}(b - c^j\theta) = b^q - \theta^q = a, \tag{3.7}$$

so that by (3.5), (3.6), and (3.7), we see that $x^q = a$. Since the equation $y^q = c$ has at most q solutions in the field K, and since it has exactly q solutions in the subfield k, every solution must belong to k. Thus, in particular, we have $x \in k$. We have thus shown that $x = (b - \theta)^{((p^q-1)/((p-1)q))}$ is a qth root of a in k. We remark that H. C. Williams' algorithm is equivalent to computing $\frac{1}{q}\mathrm{tr}_{K/k}((b - \theta)^{(p^q-1)/(p-1)q})$, which is also a qth root of a. Note also that $N_{K/k}(b - \theta) = a$.

In order to compute x, we write it in the form

$$x = E_1^{(p-1)/q}E_2, \tag{3.8}$$

where

$$E_1 = (b - \theta)^{(p-1)^{q-2}}, \qquad E_2 = (b - \theta)^{(p^q-1)/q(p-1)-(p-1)^{q-1}/q}. \tag{3.9}$$

First we consider E_1. Applying the binomial theorem to $(p - 1)^{q-2}$, and appealing to (3.6), we obtain

$$E_1 = \prod_{\iota=0}^{q-2}(b - c^\iota\theta)^{(-1)^{q-\iota}\binom{q-2}{\iota}}, \tag{3.10}$$

say

$$E_1 = \sum_{\iota=0}^{q-1} a_\iota\theta^\iota, \tag{3.11}$$

where $a_i \in k$, $i = 0, 1, \ldots, q-1$. Now define $a_i(j) \in k$ for $i = 0, 1, \ldots, q-1$ and $j = 1, 2, 3, \ldots$ by

$$\sum_{i=0}^{q-1} a_i(j)\theta^i = \left(\sum_{i=0}^{q-1} a_i\theta^i\right)^j, \tag{3.12}$$

so that

$$a_i(1) = a_i, \qquad i = 0, 1, \ldots, q-1, \tag{3.13}$$

and

$$E_1^{(p-1)/q} = \sum_{i=0}^{q-1} a_i((p-1)/q)\theta^i. \tag{3.14}$$

Next we consider E_2. Again, by the binomial theorem and (3.6), we obtain

$$E_2 = \prod_{i=1}^{q-1} (b - c^{q-i-1}\theta)^{(1-(-1)^i\binom{q-1}{i})/q}. \tag{3.15}$$

It is easily proved by induction on i that the exponent $(1-(-1)^i\binom{q-1}{i})/q$ is an integer. Thus we have

$$E_2 = \sum_{i=0}^{q-1} b_i\theta^i, \tag{3.16}$$

where $b_i \in k$, $i = 0, 1, \ldots, q-1$. From (3.8), (3.14), and (3.16), we deduce

$$x = \left(\sum_{i=0}^{q-1} a_i((p-1)/q)\theta^i\right)\left(\sum_{j=0}^{q-1} b_j\theta^j\right),$$

that is

$$x = a_0((p-1)/q)b_0 + (b^q - a)\sum_{i=1}^{q-1} a_i((p-1)/q)b_{q-i}. \tag{3.17}$$

Formula (3.17) is the expression we use to calculate x. We can now give the algorithm.

Algorithm to determine all solutions x of the congruence $x^q \equiv a \pmod p$.

Input. p, q primes satisfying $p \equiv 1 \pmod q$. a an integer not divisible by p.

Step 1. Compute $a^{(p-1)/q}$ in $k = GF(p)$. If $a^{(p-1)/q} \neq 1$, then $x^q = a$ has no solutions in k and the algorithm terminates. Otherwise, $x^q = a$ has q solutions in k and the algorithm continues with Step 2.

Step 2. Try $b = 1, 2, 3 \ldots$ until the first integer b is found such that $(b^q - a)^{(p-1)/q} \neq 0, 1$, and set $c = (b^q - a)^{(p-1)/q}$.

Step 3. In $K = k[\theta] = \{c_0 + c_1\theta + \cdots + c_{q-1}\theta^{q-1} | c_0, c_1, \ldots, c_{q-1} \in k\}$, where $\theta^q = b^q - a$, compute the quantities $X_i = (b - c^i\theta)^{(-1)^{q-i}\binom{q-1}{i}}$ for $i = 0, 1, \ldots, q-2$ and $Y_i = (b - c^{q-i-1}\theta)^{(1-(-1)^i\binom{q-1}{i})/q}$ for $i = 1, \ldots, q-1$. Then compute the products $E_1 = \prod_{i=0}^{q-2} X_i = \sum_{i=0}^{q-1} a_i\theta^i$ and $E_2 = \prod_{i=1}^{q-1} Y_i = \sum_{i=0}^{q-1} b_i\theta^i$ to obtain $a_0, a_1, \ldots, a_{q-1}, b_0, b_1, \ldots, b_{q-1} \in k$.

Step 4. Use the recurrence relation in k,

$$a_i(m+n) = \sum_{j=0}^{i} a_j(m)a_{i-j}(n) + (b^q - a)\sum_{j=i+1}^{q-1} a_j(m)a_{q+i-j}(n) \qquad (m, n = 1, 2, \dots), \tag{3.18}$$

subject to the initial conditions

$$a_i(1) = a_i \qquad (i = 0, 1, \dots, q-1), \tag{3.19}$$

to calculate $a_i((p-1)/q)$ $(i = 0, 1, \dots, q-1)$.

Output. A solution x of the congruence $x^q \equiv a \pmod p$ is given by

$$x = a_0((p-1)/q)b_0 + (b^q - a)\sum_{i=1}^{q-1} a_i((p-1)/q)b_{q-i}. \tag{3.20}$$

All solutions are given by $x_j = c^j x$, $j = 0, 1, \dots, q-1$.

We conclude this section by determining the running time of the algorithm. Recall that a step is an arithmetic operation in $k = GF(p)$ or an arithmetic operation on q-bit integers. Note that arithmetic operations in $K = GF(p^q)$ take $O(q^2)$ steps.

Step 1. The calculation of $a^{(p-1)/q}$ can be carried out in $O(\log p)$ steps in k by the repeated squaring technique.

Step 2. Let N denote the number of $(x, y) \in k \times k$ with $x^q - y^q = a$ and B the number of values of $b \in k$ for which $(b^q - a)^{(p-1)/q} = 0$ or 1. Then we have

$$N = \sum_{\substack{x\in k\\ x^q - y^q = a}} \sum_{y \in k} 1 = \sum_{\substack{x \in k\\ x^q = a}} 1 + \sum_{x\in k} \sum_{\substack{y\in k\\ y \neq 0\\ y^q = x^q - a}} 1 = q + q \sum_{\substack{x\in k\\ (x^q - a)^{(p-1)/q} = 1}} 1 = q + q(B - q).$$

From the work of Davenport and Hasse [6, p. 174] we have

$$|N - p| \le q - 1 + ((q-1)^2 - (q-1))\sqrt{p},$$

so that

$$|qB - q(q-1) - p| \le q - 1 + (q-1)(q-2)\sqrt{p}.$$

Hence, we have

$$\begin{aligned} B &\le \frac{p}{q} + \frac{(q^2-1)}{q} + \frac{(q-1)(q-2)}{q}\sqrt{p} \\ &\le \frac{p}{q} + \frac{(2q^2 - 3q + 1)}{q}\sqrt{p} \le \frac{p}{q} + 2q\sqrt{p} \end{aligned}$$

and

$$B \ge \frac{p}{q} + \frac{(q-1)^2}{q} - \frac{(q-1)(q-2)}{q}\sqrt{p} \ge \frac{p}{q} - q\sqrt{p},$$

so that

$$\left|\frac{B}{p} - \frac{1}{q}\right| \le \frac{2q}{\sqrt{p}}.$$

Thus, for q small compared with p, say for example $q \leq p^{1/4}$, a random value of b does not satisfy $(b^q - a)^{(p-1)/q} \neq 0, 1$ with probability

$$\frac{B}{p} = \frac{1}{q} + O\left(\frac{q}{\sqrt{p}}\right) = \frac{1}{q} + O(p^{-1/4}).$$

Thus finding an appropriate value of b is usually quite fast in practice.

Step 3. First we observe that all of the values of b^i $(i = 0, 1, \ldots, q-1)$ and c^i $(i = 0, 1, \ldots, (q-1)^2)$ can be computed in $O(q^2)$ arithmetic operations in k.

Next we remark that as

$$\binom{q-2}{i} \leq 2^{q-2} < 2^q < 10^q$$

for $i = 0, 1, \ldots, q-2$, each entry in the first $q-2$ rows of Pascal's triangle can be represented as a q-bit integer, and so $O(q^2)$ additions of q-bit integers are required to compute all the binomial coefficients $\binom{q-2}{i}$ $(i = 0, 1, \ldots, q-2)$ from Pascal's triangle.

Knowing the values of c^i $(i = 0, 1, \ldots, q-2)$ and $\binom{q-2}{i}$ $(i = 0, 1, \ldots, q-2)$, we can, when $q-i$ is even, compute each quantity $(b - c^i\theta)^{(-1)^{q-i}\binom{q-2}{i}} = (b - c^i\theta)^{\binom{q-2}{i}}$ by repeated squarings in K in $O(q^2 \log\binom{q-2}{i})$ steps. Knowing the values of b^i $(i = 0, 1, \ldots, q-1)$, $(c^i)^j$ $(i = 0, 1, \ldots, q-1;\ j = 0, 1, \ldots, q-1)$ and $\binom{q-2}{i}$ $(i = 0, 1, \ldots, q-2)$, as

$$(3.21) \qquad (b - c^i\theta)^{-1} = a^{p-2}(b^{q-1} + b^{q-2}c^i\theta + \cdots + (c^i)^{q-1}\theta^{q-1}),$$

we can, when $q-i$ is odd, compute each quantity

$$\begin{aligned}(b - c^i\theta)^{(-1)^{q-i}\binom{q-2}{i}} &= (b - c^i\theta)^{-\binom{q-2}{i}} \\ &= (a^{p-2}(b^{q-1} + b^{q-2}c^i\theta + \cdots + (c^i)^{q-1}\theta^{q-1}))^{\binom{q-2}{i}}\end{aligned}$$

by repeated squarings in K in

$$O(\log p) + O(q) + O\left(q^2 \log\binom{q-2}{i}\right)$$

steps. Hence, all of

$$X_i = (b - c^i\theta)^{(-1)^{q-2-i}\binom{q-2}{i}} \qquad (i = 0, 1, \ldots, q-2)$$

can be computed in

$$O(q^2) + \sum_{i=0}^{q-2}\left(O(\log p) + O(q) + O\left(q^2 \log\binom{q-2}{i}\right)\right) = O(q\log p) + O(q^4)$$

steps, as

$$\sum_{i=0}^{n} \log\binom{n}{i} \sim \frac{1}{2}n^2, \quad \text{as } n \to \infty,$$

see [7]. Multiplying the X_i together in K to obtain $E_1 = \prod_{i=0}^{q-2} X_i = \sum_{i=0}^{q-1} a_i\theta^i$ takes a further $O(q)$ multiplications in K, that is, $O(q^3)$ steps. Hence, $a_0, a_1, \ldots, a_{q-1}$ can be computed in $O(q\log p) + O(q^4)$ steps. A similar calculation shows that $b_0, b_1, \ldots, b_{q-1}$ can also be computed in $O(q\log p) + O(q^4)$ steps.

Step 4. The quantities $a_i((p-1)/q)$ $(i = 0, 1, \dots, q-1)$ can be computed from the values of the a_i $(i = 0, 1, \dots, q-1)$ using (3.18) in $O(q^2 \log p)$ steps, since each use of the recurrence relation (3.18) requires $O(q)$ operations and each of the q recurrence relations must be applied $O(\log(p-1)/q)$ times in the repeated doubling technique.

The calculation of the solution x of (1.1) from the values of the $a_i((p-1)/q)$ $(i = 0, 1, \dots, q-1)$ and b_i $(i = 0, 1, \dots, q-1)$ using (3.20) takes $O(q)$ steps, and the calculation of the other solutions xc^j $(j = 1, 2, \dots, q-1)$ can be done in $O(q)$ steps. Hence the algorithm determines all the solutions of (1.1) in $O(q^4) + O(q^2 \log p)$ steps, once a suitable b has been determined in Step 2.

We remark that this algorithm (suitably modified) can be used to compute qth roots in $GF(p^n)$, when q divides $p^n - 1$.

4. Example

Following the suggestion of the referee, we present a small example to illustrate our algorithm, which the interested reader can easily check by hand. The algorithm is easily programmed to solve (1.1) for large values of p and values of q small compared with p.

We determine all the solutions x of the congruence

$$x^3 \equiv 2 \pmod{31}, \tag{4.1}$$

using our refinement to the algorithm of H. C. Williams. Here, $p = 31$, $q = 3$, $a = 2$, $(p-1)/q = 10$, $(p-1)^{q-2} = 30$ and $(p^q-1)/q(p-1)-(p-1)^{q-1}/q = 31$. As

$$a^{(p-1)/q} = 2^{10} \equiv 32^2 \equiv 1^2 \equiv 1 \pmod{p},$$

the congruence (4.1) is solvable. We can take $b = 2$, $c = 25$, as

$$(b^q - a)^{(p-1)/q} = (2^3 - 2)^{10} = 6^{10} = 36^5 \equiv 5^5 \equiv 3125 \equiv 25 \pmod{p}.$$

Also, θ is a root of $\theta^q = b^q - a$, that is, $\theta^3 = 6$. We perform calculations in $k = GF(31)$ and $K = GF(31)[\theta] \simeq GF(31^3)$.

Appealing to (3.9), (3.10), and (3.21), we have

$$E_1 = (2-\theta)^{30} = (2-\theta)^{-1}(2-25\theta) = (2+\theta+16\theta^2)(2+6\theta) = 22 + 14\theta + 7\theta^2,$$

so that $a_0 = 22$, $a_1 = 14$, $a_2 = 7$. Making use of the recurrence relations

$$\begin{cases} a_i(m+n) = \sum_{j=0}^{i} a_j(m)a_{i-j}(n) + 6\sum_{j=i+1}^{2} a_j(m)a_{3+i-j}(n), \\ \qquad\qquad\qquad\qquad\qquad\qquad\qquad\qquad m, n = 1, 2, \dots, \\ a_i(1) = a_i, \qquad i = 0, 1, 2, 3, \end{cases}$$

we obtain the values in Table 1 (next page).

Next, from (3.9) and (3.15), we have $E_2 = 2 - 25\theta$, so that $b_0 = 2$, $b_1 = 6$, $b_2 = 0$. Finally, appealing to (3.20), we obtain

$$x = a_0(10)b_0 + 6(a_1(10)b_2 + a_2(10)b_1) = 9 \times 2 + 6 \times 19 \times 6 = 20.$$

TABLE 1

j	$a_0(j)$	$a_1(j)$	$a_2(j)$
1	22	14	7
2	17	11	8
4	12	14	21
8	14	6	18
10	9	4	19

We note that $x = 20$ is indeed a solution of (4.1), as $20^3 \equiv (-11)^3 \equiv (-121)11 \equiv 3 \times 11 = 33 \equiv 2 \pmod{31}$. All solutions of (4.1) are given by $x \equiv 20 \cdot 25^j \pmod{31}$, $j = 0, 1, 2$, that is, $x \equiv 20, 4, 7 \pmod{31}$.

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