ON THE EQUATION $x^2 + 2^a \cdot 3^b = y^n$

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We find all positive integer solutions (x, y, a, b, n) of $x^2 + 2^a \cdot 3^b = y^n$ with $n \ge 3$ and coprime x and y.

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1. Introduction. The Diophantine equation $x^2 + C = y^n$, where x and y are positive integers, $n \ge 3$ and C is a given integer, has received considerable interest. The earliest reference seems to be an assertion by Fermat that he had shown that when C = 2, n = 3, the only solution is given by x = 5, y = 3; a proof was published by Euler in 1770. The first result for general n is due to Lebesgue [9] who proved that there are no solutions for C = 1. Ljunggren [10] solved this equation for C = 2, Nagell [13, 14] solved it for C = 3, 4, and 5 and Chao [5] proved that it has no solutions for C = -1. For an extensive list of references one should consult Cohn's beautiful paper [6] in which he develops a method by which he finds all solutions of the above equation for 77 of the values of $C \le 100$. This equation was later solved for two additional values of $C \le 100$ (namely, C = 74 and C = 86) by Mignotte and de Weger [12]. It is interesting to mention that the equation $x^2 + 7 = y^n$ is still unsolved.

In recent years, a different form of the above equation has been considered, namely, when C is no longer a fixed integer but a power of a fixed prime. Le [8] investigated the equation $x^2 + 2^m = y^n$. Arif and Muriefah solved the equation $x^2 + 3^m = y^n$ when m is odd (see [2]). They also gave partial results in the case when m is even (see [1]) but the general solution in the case m is even was found by Luca in [11].

For any nonzero integer k, let P(k) be the largest prime dividing k. Let C_1 be any fixed positive constant. It follows, from the work of Bugeaud [4] and Turk [15], that if

$$x^2 + z = y^n$$
 with $(x, y) = 1$, $P(z) < C_1$, (1.1)

then $\max(|x|,|y|,n)$ is bounded by a constant computable in terms of C_1 alone.

In this paper, we find all solutions of (1.1) when $C_1 = 5$ and z > 0. More precisely, we find all solutions of the equation

$$x^2 + 2^a \cdot 3^b = y^n$$
 with $a, b \ge 0, n \ge 3, (x, y) = 1.$ (1.2)

The proof uses the new result on the existence of primitive divisors of the Lucas numbers due to Bilu et al. [3] as well as a computational result of de Weger [7].

2. The result

THEOREM 2.1. All positive solutions of the equation

$$x^2 + 2^a \cdot 3^b = y^n$$
 with $a, b \ge 0, n \ge 3, (x, y) = 1$ (2.1)

have n = 4 or n = 3. For n = 4, the solutions are

$$(x, y) = (7,3), (23,5), (7,5), (47,7), (287,17).$$
 (2.2)

For n = 3, the solutions are

$$(x, y) = (5,3), (11,5), (10,7), (17,7), (46,13), (35,13),$$

 $(595,73), (955,97), (2681,193), (39151,1153).$ (2.3)

In the statement of the theorem we have listed only the values of x, y, and n as the values of the parameters a and b that can be determined from the prime factor decomposition of $x^2 - y^n$ once x, y, and n are given.

From Lebesgue's result, we know that the equation $x^2 + 1 = y^n$ has no positive solutions for $n \ge 3$ and from the work of Arif, Muriefah, and Luca, we know that the only positive solutions of the equation $x^2 + 3^m = y^n$ with (x,y) = 1 are (x,y,m,n) = (10,7,5,3) and (46,13,4,3). From now on, we assume that a > 0. In particular, both x and y are odd.

3. The case $n \neq 3$ or 4. In this section, we show that it suffices to assume that $n \in \{3,4\}$. Indeed, assume that $n \neq 4$. We may certainly assume that n is an odd prime. If $n \neq 3$, it follows that $n \geq 5$. Write $2^a \cdot 3^b = dz^2$ where $d \in \{1,2,3,6\}$. Equation (2.1) can be written as

$$(x+i\sqrt{d}z)(x-i\sqrt{d}z) = y^n.$$
(3.1)

Since x is odd and dz^2 is even, it follows that the two ideals $[(x+i\sqrt{d}z)]$ and $[(x-i\sqrt{d}z)]$ are coprime in the ring of integers of $\mathbf{Q}(i\sqrt{d})$. Since the class number of $\mathbf{Q}(i\sqrt{d})$ is 1 or 2 and $n \geq 5$ is prime, it follows that there exists an integer u and a root of unity ε in $\mathbf{Q}(i\sqrt{d})$ such that

$$x + i\sqrt{d}z = \varepsilon u^n, \qquad x - i\sqrt{d}z = \overline{\varepsilon u}^n.$$
 (3.2)

Since ε is a root of unity belonging to a quadratic extension of \mathbf{Q} , it follows that $\varepsilon^k = 1$ for some $k \in \{1, 2, 3, 4, 6\}$. Since $n \ge 5$ is prime, it follows that up to a substitution one may assume that $\varepsilon = 1$ in system (3.2). From (3.2) with $\varepsilon = 1$, it follows that

$$2i\sqrt{d}z = u^n - \bar{u}^n. \tag{3.3}$$

Since certainly

$$\frac{u^n - \bar{u}^n}{u - \bar{u}} \in \mathbf{Z},\tag{3.4}$$

we have that

$$P\left(\frac{u^n - \bar{u}^n}{u - \bar{u}}\right) < 5. \tag{3.5}$$

From (3.5), we find that the Lucas number given by formula (3.4) has no primitive divisor. From [3], it follows that there are at most 10 pairs (u,n) satisfying inequality (3.5) and all of them appear in [3, Table 1]. A quick investigation reveals that none of the u's from [3, Table 1] belongs to $\mathbf{Q}(i\sqrt{d})$ for some $d \in \{1,2,3,6\}$, which is the desired contradiction.

4. The case n = 4. Let $S = \{k \mid P(k) < 5\}$. Then, we have the following preliminary result.

LEMMA 4.1. All solutions of the equation

$$x^2 = k \pm l$$
 with $k, l > 0, k, l \in S, (k, l) = 1$ (4.1)

are

$$(x,k,l) = (1,2,1), (2,3,1), (3,8,1), (5,24,1), (7,48,1), (17,288,1), (1,4,3), (1,9,8), (5,16,9), (5,27,2), (7,81,32).$$

$$(4.2)$$

PROOF OF LEMMA 4.1. This lemma is a particular case of a result of de Weger [7, Chapter 7].

THE PROOF OF THE THEOREM FOR n = 4**.** Rewrite (2.1) as

$$(y^2 - x)(y^2 + x) = 2^a \cdot 3^b. \tag{4.3}$$

Since a > 0 and (x, y) = 1, it follows that $(y^2 - x, y^2 + x) = 2$. Thus,

$$y^2 - x = k$$
, $y^2 + x = l$, with $k, l > 0$, $k, l \in S$, $(k, l) = 2$. (4.4)

Hence,

$$y^2 = \frac{k}{2} + \frac{l}{2},\tag{4.5}$$

where k/2, $l/2 \in S$ are positive and coprime. By Lemma 4.1, we obtain that (4.5) has only 6 solutions. Five of them lead to solutions (2.2) of (2.1). One of the solutions of (4.5) leads to

$$2^2 + 2^2 \cdot 3 = 2^4, \tag{4.6}$$

which is not a convenient solution of (2.1) because x = 2 and y = 2 are not coprime. The case n = 4 is therefore settled.

5. The case n = 3. We begin with another lemma.

LEMMA 5.1. The only solutions of the equation

$$3x^2 = k \pm l$$
 with $k, l > 0, k, l \in S, (k, l) \in \{1, 3\}$ (5.1)

are

$$(x,k,l) = (1,2,1), (1,4,1), (1,6,3), (2,9,3),$$

$$(3,24,3), (5,72,3), (7,144,3), (17,864,3),$$

$$(1,12,9), (1,27,24), (5,48,27), (5,81,6), (7,243,96).$$
(5.2)

PROOF OF LEMMA 5.1. This lemma too is a particular instance of the more general computation of de Weger [7, Chapter 7].

THE PROOF OF THE THEOREM FOR n=3**.** Write again $2^a \cdot 3^b = dz^2$ where $d \in \{1,2,3,6\}$. From arguments employed in Section 3, we know that there exist u and ε in $\mathbf{Q}(i\sqrt{d})$ such that $y=|u|^2$, ε is a root of unity and

$$x + i\sqrt{d}z = \varepsilon u^3, \qquad x - i\sqrt{d}z = \overline{\varepsilon u}^3.$$
 (5.3)

Clearly,

$$2i\sqrt{d}z = \varepsilon u^3 - \overline{\varepsilon u}^3. \tag{5.4}$$

We distinguish two cases.

CASE 1 ($\varepsilon = 1$). Equation (5.4) reads

$$2i\sqrt{d}z = u^3 - \bar{u}^3. \tag{5.5}$$

Assume first that $u = a + ib\sqrt{d}$ with a and b integers. Then, we get

$$2i\sqrt{d}z = (a + ib\sqrt{d})^{3} - (a - ib\sqrt{d})^{3}$$
(5.6)

or

$$2i\sqrt{d}z = 2i\sqrt{d}b(3a^2 - db^2). {(5.7)}$$

Hence, $b \mid z$ and

$$3a^2 = db^2 \pm \frac{z}{b}. (5.8)$$

Let $k=db^2$ and l=z/b. Notice that $k,l\in S$. Moreover, notice that $(k,l)\in\{1,3\}$. Indeed, if $(k,l)\notin\{1,3\}$, it follows that there exists a prime p such that $p\mid (k,l,a)$. In particular, $p\mid db^2$ and $p\mid a$, therefore $p\mid a^2+db^2=y$. Since $p\mid z$ and $2^a\cdot 3^b=dz^2$, we come to $p\mid 2^a\cdot 3^b$. It follows now that $p\mid (y^3-2^a\cdot 3^b)=x^2$ and therefore $p\mid x$. This contradicts the fact that x and y are coprime. Now all solutions of (5.8) are given by Lemma 5.1. For example, the solution

$$3 \cdot 1^2 = 2^1 + 1 \tag{5.9}$$

gives either a = 1, d = 2, b = 1, and z = 1 or a = 1, d = 1, b = 1, and z = 2. The first possibility yields $y = a^2 + db^2 = 1 + 2 = 3$ and $dz^2 = 2$, which leads to the solution $3^3 = 2 + 5^2$ of (2.1). The second possibility gives $y = a^2 + db^2 = 2$ and $dz^2 = 4$, which leads to the solution $2^3 = 2^2 + 2^2$ of (2.1). This is not an acceptable solution, since x = 2 and y = 2 are not coprime.

ON THE EQUATION
$$x^2 + 2a \cdot 3b = y^n$$
 243

All the solutions of (2.1) for the case n = 3 except for (x, y) = (10, 7) are obtained in this way by identifying a, b, d, and z from (5.8) via Lemma 5.1.

When d = 3, we also need to investigate the case in which

$$u = \frac{a + i\sqrt{3}b}{2} \tag{5.10}$$

for some odd integers a and b. From (5.5), we simply get that

$$16i\sqrt{3}z = (a + i\sqrt{3}b)^3 - (a - i\sqrt{3}b)^3$$
 (5.11)

or

$$16i\sqrt{3}z = 2i\sqrt{3}b(3a^2 - 3b^2). \tag{5.12}$$

It follows that *b* divides *z* and

$$3a^2 = 3b^2 \pm \frac{8z}{h}. ag{5.13}$$

From Lemma 5.1, we derive that (5.13) has only two convenient solutions, namely, $3 \cdot 1^2 = 3 \cdot 3^2 - 8 \cdot 3$ and $3 \cdot 7^2 = 3 \cdot 3^4 - 8 \cdot 12$. These lead to the solutions (x, y) = (10, 7) and (595, 73) of (2.1).

CASE 2 ($\varepsilon \neq 1$). It is easy to see that the only case in which one may not be able to set $\varepsilon = 1$ in system (5.4) is when d = 3. In this case, one may assume that $\varepsilon = (1 + i\sqrt{3})/2$ and that $u = (a + i\sqrt{3}b)/2$ for some integers a and b such that $a \equiv b \pmod{2}$. Then (5.4) becomes

$$2i\sqrt{3}z = \left(\frac{1+i\sqrt{3}}{2}\right) \cdot \left(\frac{a+i\sqrt{3}b}{2}\right)^3 - \left(\frac{1-i\sqrt{3}}{2}\right) \cdot \left(\frac{a-i\sqrt{3}b}{2}\right)^3. \tag{5.14}$$

This equation is equivalent to

$$16z = a^3 + 3a^2b - 9ab^2 - 3b^3. (5.15)$$

Assume first that both a and b are odd. Then, from (5.15), it follows that

$$16z = (a^3 - ab^2) + (3a^2b - 3b^3) - 8ab^2 = (a^2 - b^2)(a + 3b) - 8ab^2.$$
 (5.16)

Since a and b are both odd, we obtain that $16 \mid (a^2 - b^2)(a + 3b)$. Equation (5.16) forces $16 \mid 8ab^2$, which is impossible.

Assume now that both a and b are even. Since $y = (a/2)^2 + 3(b/2)^2$ is odd, it follows that exactly one of the numbers a/2 and b/2 is even. Equation (5.15) now implies that

$$2z = \left(\frac{a}{2}\right)^{3} + 3\left(\frac{a}{2}\right)^{2} \left(\frac{b}{2}\right) - 9\left(\frac{a}{2}\right) \left(\frac{b}{2}\right)^{2} - 3\left(\frac{b}{2}\right)^{3}.$$
 (5.17)

However, (5.17) is now impossible, because precisely one of the numbers a/2 and b/2 is even and the other one is odd. Hence, this case can never occur.

The theorem is therefore completely proved.

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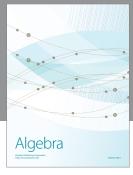
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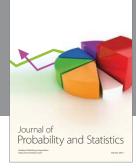
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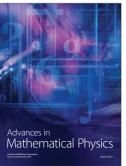






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