

Deterministic Hashing to Elliptic and Hyperelliptic Curves

Mehdi Tibouchi

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Elliptic curve cryptography

- F finite field of characteristic > 3 (for simplicity's sake).
- Recall that an elliptic curve over F is the set of points $(x, y) \in F^2$ such that:

$$y^2 = x^3 + ax + b$$

(with $a, b \in F$ fixed parameters), together with a point at infinity.

- This set of points forms an abelian group where the Discrete Logarithm Problem and Diffie-Hellman-type problems are believed to be hard (no attack better than the generic ones).
- Interesting for cryptography: for k bits of security, one can use elliptic curve groups of order $\approx 2^{2k}$, keys of length $\approx 2k$. Also come with rich structures such as pairings.

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Hashing to elliptic curves is a problem

- Many cryptographic protocols (schemes for encryption, signature, PAKE, IBE, etc.) involve representing a certain numeric value, often a hash value, as an element of the group \mathbb{G} where the computations occur.
- For $\mathbb{G} = \mathbb{Z}_n^*$, simply taking the numeric value itself mod n is usually appropriate.
- However, if \mathbb{G} is an elliptic curve group, this technique has no obvious counterpart; e.g. one cannot put the value in the x -coordinate of a curve point, because only about $1/2$ of possible x -values correspond to actual points.
- Elliptic curve-specific protocols have been developed to circumvent this problem (ECDSA for signature, Menezes-Vanstone for encryption, ECMQV for key agreement, etc.), but doing so with all imaginable protocols is unrealistic.

The traditional solution

- For k bits of security:
 1. concatenate the hash value with a counter from 0 to $k - 1$;
 2. initialize the counter as 0;
 3. if the concatenated value is a valid x -coordinate on the curve, i.e. $x^3 + ax + b$ is a square in F , return one of the two corresponding points; otherwise increment the counter and try again.
- Heuristically, the probability of a concatenated value being valid is $1/2$, so k iterations ensure k bits of security.

Problems with this solution

- A natural implementation does not run in constant time: possible timing attacks (especially for PAKE).
- A constant time implementation (always do k steps, compute the Legendre symbol in constant time) is very inefficient, $O(n^4)$.
- Security is difficult to analyze.

Remark: hashing as $H(m) = h(m)G$ where G is a generator of the elliptic curve group is *not* a good idea.

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Supersingular curves

An elliptic curve shape of particular interest is:

$$y^2 = x^3 + b$$

over a field with q elements, with $q \equiv 2 \pmod{3}$.

Admits the following deterministic encoding:

$$f : u \mapsto ((u^2 - b)^{1/3}, u)$$

Such a curve is supersingular. Convenient for pairings, but much less secure than ordinary curves for the same key size (because of the MOV attack).

Shallue-Woestijne-Ulas

First deterministic point construction algorithm on ordinary elliptic curves due to Shallue and Woestijne (ANTS 2006). Later generalized and simplified by Ulas (2007).

Based on Skatba's identity: if $g(x) = x^3 + ax + b$, there are rational functions $X_i(t)$ such that

$$g(X_1(t)) \cdot g(X_2(t)) \cdot g(X_3(t)) = X_4(t)^2$$

Hence, on a finite field, at least one of $g(X_1(t)), g(X_2(t)), g(X_3(t))$ is a square.

Gives a deterministic point construction algorithm, which is efficient if $q \equiv 3 \pmod{4}$. Considered for implementation in European e-passports.

Icart

Particularly simple deterministic encoding on ordinary elliptic curves when $q \equiv 2 \pmod{3}$, presented by Icart at CRYPTO last year. Generalization of the supersingular case.

Defined as $f: u \mapsto (x, y)$ with

$$x = \left(v^2 - b - \frac{u^6}{27} \right)^{1/3} + \frac{u^2}{3} \quad y = ux + v \quad v = \frac{3a - u^4}{6u}$$

This simple idea sparked new research into the subject of deterministic hashing into elliptic curves.

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Questions we solved

The previous constructions do not completely address the problem of constructing “good hash functions” to elliptic curves, and open up a series of related questions.

We solved some of them.

- Icart’s conjecture: Icart observed that his function did not map to the whole elliptic curve, and conjectured that the image comprised only about $5/8$ of all points. Is this true? What about the SWU function?
- In particular if f is Icart’s function and h is a random oracle into the base field, $m \mapsto f(h(m))$ is easily distinguished from a random oracle. Can f still be used to construct a random oracle to the curve?
- Extension to hyperelliptic curves: can we construct good hash functions? Note that we should map to the Jacobian variety, not the curve itself!

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Statement

E elliptic curve over \mathbb{F}_q , with $q \equiv 2 \pmod{3}$, and $f : \mathbb{F}_q \rightarrow E(\mathbb{F}_q)$ Icart's deterministic encoding.

Conjecture (Icart)

There exists a universal constant C such that:

$$|\#f(\mathbb{F}_q) - \frac{5}{8}\#E(\mathbb{F}_q)| \leq C\sqrt{q}$$

Icart's paper presented a heuristic argument to justify the constant $5/8$. The conjecture was proved independently by Farahashi, Shparlinski and Voloch, and by Fouque and T.

A consequence of this conjecture is that f is neither injective nor surjective. However, $(u, v) \mapsto f(u) + f(v)$ is a surjective encoding function for q large enough.

Proof idea I

- A key fact is that u maps to (x, y) under f if and only if:

$$u^4 - 6xu^2 + 6yu - 3a = 0$$

- Hence, the problem is to count the points (x, y) on the curve such that the polynomial $P(u) = u^4 - 6xu^2 + 6yu - 3a$ has at least one root in \mathbb{F}_q .
- P can be seen as a polynomial over the function field $\mathbb{F}_q(x, y)$ of E , and the problem is to count places of degree 1 in this function field where the reduction of P has a root.
- Mathematicians have a powerful tool to tackle this kind of problems: the Chebotarev density theorem, which says that the “density” of places at which P reduces into a product of factors of given degrees is determined by the number of permutations with the corresponding cycle decomposition in the Galois group of P .

Proof idea II

At this point, completing the proof is a technical exercise:

- Show that P is an irreducible polynomial with Galois group S_4 (hard part).
- Count the number of permutations in S_4 with a fixed point (there are $1 + 6 + 8 = 15$ of them).
- Deduce that the density of places in $\mathbb{F}_q(x, y)$ at which P has a root is $15/24 = 5/8$.
- Apply an effective version of Chebotarev's density theorem to get the same result with a $O(\sqrt{q})$ error term for places of degree 1 (this gives Icart's conjecture).

In the paper with Fouque, we also show how the technique generalizes to other encoding functions with different Galois groups such as a simplified version of SWU (Galois group D_8 , constant $3/8$).

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Statement

Since Icart's function f (or SWU, etc.) only covers a limited fraction of points on the curve, $m \mapsto f(h(m))$ is not a well-behaved hash function: easy to distinguish from a random oracle.

While some schemes may not require randomness or collision resistance, it is desirable in general to have a construction indistinguishable from a random oracle, in the ROM for some \mathbb{F}_q -valued hash function h .

Coron and Icart showed it suffices to have an encoding function $F : S \rightarrow E(\mathbb{F}_q)$ from some set S , such that F^{-1} is efficiently computable, and that if s is uniformly distributed in S , the distribution of $F(s)$ is *statistically indistinguishable* from uniform in $E(\mathbb{F}_q)$.

Admissible encodings

- An encoding verifying the statistical indistinguishability property is called *admissible* by Coron and Icart (generalization of a previous definition by Boneh-Franklin).
- Using Maurer's indifferentiability framework, they show that if F is admissible, then $m \mapsto F(h(m))$ can be used as a random oracle in the ROM for h .
- An example of such an admissible encoding is $F(u, v) = f(u) + v \cdot G$ with G a generator of the elliptic curve group. The addition of vG acts as a “one-time pad” to mask the irregularities of f , and ensure statistical indistinguishability. Hence

$$H(m) = f(h_1(m)) + h_2(m) \cdot G$$

is a “good” hash function. Also works with SWU, with characteristic 2 counterparts, etc. However, the multiplication makes it slow.

Efficient indifferentiable hashing with Icart

- Since the “easy” admissible encoding is slow, we proposed the following much more efficient solution:

$$F(u, v) = f(u) + f(v)$$

- We know as a corollary of Icart’s conjecture that this is surjective, but we can also prove statistical indistinguishability with some algebraic geometry machinery.
- Basic idea: for some given point ϖ on E , the set of (u, v) in the affine plane such that $F(u, v) = \varpi$ forms an algebraic curve of bounded genus, that will usually be irreducible.
- In that case, the Hasse-Weil bound ensures that:

$$F^{-1}(\varpi) = q + O(\sqrt{q})$$

giving admissibility.

- Making the idea work involves beautiful algebraic geometry (such as intersection theory on the surface $C \times C$, where C is the quartic covering of E defined by the polynomial P from the previous section).

Efficient indifferentiable hashing, general case

- Previous geometric method: works well for Lcart's function, but difficult to generalize (for SWU, multiple components with complicated interplay; in higher genus, simply horrible).
- We recently proposed a much simpler technique based on character sums. We call an encoding $f : \mathbb{F}_q \rightarrow E(\mathbb{F}_q)$ **well-distributed** when for any nontrivial character χ of $E(\mathbb{F}_q)$:

$$\left| \sum_{u \in \mathbb{F}_q} \chi(f(u)) \right| \leq B\sqrt{q}$$

- Completely formal to show that if f is well-distributed, $(u, v) \mapsto f(u) + f(v)$ is admissible: write down the statistical distance.
- Relatively easy to show that a given deterministic encoding is well-distributed: the character sum can be interpreted as an Artin character sum on the covering curve C , which is bounded by $(2g_C + 2)\sqrt{q}$ according to a theorem by Weil (corollary of the Riemann hypothesis for curves).

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A simple encoding to hyperelliptic curves

- The first deterministic point-encoding function to hyperelliptic curves of a very special shape, $y^2 = x^{2g+1} + ax + b$ was proposed by Ulas, as a generalization of the Shallue-van de Woestijne technique.
- More recently, Kammerer, Lercier and Renault proposed several Icart-like encoding functions to hyperelliptic curves of somewhat complicated but more general shape.
- We proposed a much simpler encoding function to the family of **odd** hyperelliptic curves $H : y^2 = g(x)$ where g is an odd polynomial, over \mathbb{F}_q , $q \equiv 3 \pmod{4}$. This encoding has many nice properties.
- Easy to describe: for any $t \in \mathbb{F}_q$, one of $g(t)$ or $g(-t)$ is a square; define the point $f(t)$ as $y^2 = g(\pm t)$ accordingly, and set x such that $f(-t) = -f(t)$.
- This encoding is very simple to compute, and is (almost) a bijection $f : \mathbb{F}_q \rightarrow H(\mathbb{F}_q)$. In particular, it is admissible.

Encoding and hashing to the Jacobian

- The group used in hyperelliptic curve cryptography is the Jacobian J of the curve: it is this group that we should seek to encode or hash to.
- Hashing at least is easy. All previously mentioned encodings to hyperelliptic curves H are also well-distributed, in the sense that for all nontrivial characters χ of $J(\mathbb{F}_q)$:

$$\left| \sum_{u \in \mathbb{F}_q} \chi(f(u)) \right| \leq B\sqrt{q}$$

- Admissibility of $(u_1, \dots, u_s) \mapsto f(u_1) + \dots + f(u_s)$ again follows formally, as soon as s is greater than the genus g of H .
- Our encoding to odd hyperelliptic curves allows a different construction: an injective encoding to the Jacobian. Take $(u_1, \dots, u_g) \mapsto f(u_1) + \dots + f(u_g)$, from the set of tuples such that $u_1 < \dots < u_g$ and $u_i + u_j \neq 0$. This is injective and reaches a fraction of about $1/g!$ points of $J(\mathbb{F}_q)$. Necessary for e.g. El Gamal encryption.

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Some open problems

- Encoding to some missing types of curves: Baretto-Naehrig elliptic curves, more hyperelliptic curves...
- Bounded leakage. It is easy to distinguish the output of the whole lcart's function from a uniform distribution. And the same is true with just the x -coordinate. However, if one only has the top half bits of x , the output is uniform. At which point between these two extremes can a distinguisher still work?
- Injective deterministic encodings: they are probably even more useful than hash functions, but have only been constructed on a few curves. Extend this to at least ordinary elliptic curves. A proper formalization of desired properties would be desirable.
- Impossibility results in generic groups.

Summary

- Hashing and encoding to (hyper)elliptic curves are problems worth looking into.
- Some good candidates are known, but there is still a lot of work to do.
- Plenty of nice problems, from pure mathematics to applied crypto.



Thank you!