

# Binary Edwards Curves for Intrinsically Secure ECC Implementations for the IoT

Antoine Loiseau<sup>1,2</sup> and Jacques J. A. Fournier<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>CEA-Tech, Gardanne, France

<sup>2</sup>Mines Saint Etienne, Gardanne, France

<sup>3</sup>Univ. Grenoble Alpes, CEA Leti, DSYS/LSOSP, F-38000 Grenoble, France

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**Abstract:** Even if recent advances in public key cryptography tend to focus on algorithms able to survive the post quantum era, at present, there is an urgent need to propose fast, low power and securely implemented cryptography to address the immediate security challenges of the IoT. In this document, we present a new set of Binary Edwards Curves which have been defined to achieve the highest security levels (up to 284-bit security level) and whose parameters have been defined to fit IoT devices embedding 32-bit general purpose processors. We optimized the choice of the point generator with the  $w$ -coordinate to save a multiplication in the addition and doubling formulae. We manage to compute one step of the Montgomery Ladder in 4 multiplications and 4 squares. On top of the performance benefits, cryptography over such curves have some intrinsic security properties against physical attacks.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Security and privacy have already been identified as vital issues of the “Internet of Things” (IoT) and as key to its adoption and deployment (Skarmeta and Moreno, 2014) (Rubens, 2014). End-to-end security has to be enforced, which means that the end-nodes of an IoT infrastructure shall also embed security features and applications. Asymmetric cryptography is one of such security tools and given the size, power and performance constraints on IoT end-nodes, Elliptic Curves Cryptography (ECC)(Koblitz, 1987) (Miller, 1986) is by far the best fit for such use cases and this despite the recently growing fear of quantum computers: since the latter are thought to be able one day to efficiently solve the Discrete Logarithm Problem (DLP), post-quantum cryptosystems are currently being studied. However, these cryptosystems as they exist today, cannot be used in the constrained IoT nodes due to the large keys and long computing times. ECC is still, in our opinion, the best short and mid term answer to address the immediate security needs for the IoT.

The main standardization effort for ECC has been through the FIPS 186-4 (Information Technology Laboratory, 2013) by the NIST. Alternative approaches have been proposed like (Brainpool,

2005)(Bernstein et al., 2011). The latter pieces of work open a new vision in the landscape of applied ECC. The so-called “NIST curves” were proposed in 1999 where “low power devices” were not as common as today and hence these curves were not designed for today’s IoT constraints. Elliptic Curves usually used for cryptography are defined by the Weierstrass equation  $y^2 + a_1xy + a_3y = x^3 + a_2x^2 + a_4x + a_6$  and defined over a prime field with large prime characteristic or over binary extension fields of characteristic 2. However, the arithmetics of the Weierstrass form are not adapted to the low resource constraints of IoT devices with the additional constraint of being resistant to side channel attacks and fault attacks (Fan et al., 2010b). Adding countermeasures against these attacks severely downgrade the performance and efficiency of such ECC implementations, which can be a heavy drawback for the IoT end-nodes. This is why it would be more interesting to look for curves that could avoid such weaknesses. For example curves like Curve25519, (Bernstein et al., 2011) (Edwards, 2007) have a complete group law providing one same formula for point addition and point doubling. Another important aspect for an ECC implementation is the choice between curves over  $\mathbb{F}_p$  or  $\mathbb{F}_{2^m}$ . Curves over large prime characteristics are usually preferred to those over binary fields due to claims that there may

be sub-exponential algorithms for solving the discrete logarithm problem for elliptic curves on binary fields. However even if the best optimistic conjectures of the DLP claim to have a complexity of  $L_{2^n}(\frac{2}{3})^1$  or even  $L_{2^n}(\frac{1}{2})$ , (Galbraith and Gaudry, 2016) recalls that they are still “hypotheses” and that recent experiments “raise the doubt about the subexponentiality claims”. One of the main performance and security (Fouque et al., 2008b) advantages of arithmetics in binary fields is the carry-less operation involved.

Our approach consists in investigating about Binary Edwards Curves (BEC) (Bernstein et al., 2008) which, given the constraints of IoT devices, are one of the best choices for implementing ECC resistant to physical attacks: they are fast, have a complete group law and the underlying carry-less arithmetics would require low power and compact dedicated hardware accelerators. So far, only one such BEC has been proposed in the literature, which does not even offer what is the admitted reference of “128-bit security level”. Hence we generated BECs, with higher security levels (112-bit to 284-bit) and with parameters tailored to fit the hardware constraints of IoT devices (working on data paths of 32 bits or 64 bits).

The rest of this paper details each step used for generating those curves. First Section 2 presents the concept of friendly polynomials and the associated advantages. Then Section 3 introduces the BECs with a focus on those curves having efficient arithmetics and fulfilling the security requirements 3.2. Section 4 details how we built the generator of the elliptic curve subgroup used aiming at performance gains. Section 5 provides the performance results and summarizes the expected intrinsic security properties against physical attacks. Some concluding remarks and perspectives are finally provided in the last section of this paper.

## 2 OPTIMAL FINITE BINARY FIELDS

The first step for generating a new set of elliptic curves for cryptography is to build “friendly” (i.e. for which calculations can be done rapidly) finite fields with an optimal arithmetic (i.e. for which some calculation “tricks” can be used for fast and compact implementations) for the targeted IoT devices. Arithmetics over elliptic curves depend on the representation of the base finite field which in turn depends on the choice of the modulus, represented under a polynomial form, used to define the finite field.

<sup>1</sup> $L_q(a) = e^{c \log(q)^a \log \log(q)^{1-a}}$

A choice usually made for polynomials in binary fields  $\mathbb{F}_{2^n}$  is a trinomial or a pentanomial of the type:

$$p(x) = x^n + x^a + 1, \quad n > a > 0$$

$$p(x) = x^n + x^a + x^b + x^c + 1, \quad n > a > b > c > 0$$

As suggested in (Scott, 2007), the construction of the binary field is important for the efficiency of the implementation and this depends on the architecture used. Let  $w$  be the length in terms of bits of the registers of the targeted architecture, Scott then defines a *Lucky Trinomial* with  $n - a \equiv 0 \pmod w$ ; a *Lucky Pentanomial* with  $n - a \equiv 0 \pmod w$ ,  $n - b \equiv 0 \pmod w$  and  $n - c \equiv 0 \pmod w$ ; and a *Fortunate Pentanomial* such that at least two of these equations are verified :  $n - a \equiv 0 \pmod w$ ,  $n - b \equiv 0 \pmod w$  and  $n - c \equiv 0 \pmod w$ .

With a simple script in Sage (The Sage Developers, 2017) we searched all lucky trinomials and pentanomials for fields of bit lengths between 163 and 571: we found only 6 lucky trinomials compliant with a 32-bit architecture (except for  $\mathbb{F}_{2^{257}}$  kept as an intermediate field between  $\mathbb{F}_{2^{223}}$  and  $\mathbb{F}_{2^{313}}$ ). As for pentanomials fitted for 32-bit architectures, we have a larger number of them over several finite fields. We also realised that most of those polynomials would also be compatible with 64-bit platforms, except for the trinomials of  $\mathbb{F}_{2^{479}}$  and  $\mathbb{F}_{2^{521}}$ . So we did the additional effort of looking for polynomials compatible with 64-bit data widths for the latter levels of security, hence the two additional pentanomials in  $\mathbb{F}_{2^{487}}$  and  $\mathbb{F}_{2^{569}}$ . The list of generated polynomials is as follows:

$$\mathbb{F}_{2^{223}} : x^{223} + x^{159} + 1$$

$$\mathbb{F}_{2^{257}} : x^{257} + x^{65} + 1$$

$$\mathbb{F}_{2^{313}} : x^{313} + x^{121} + 1$$

$$\mathbb{F}_{2^{431}} : x^{431} + x^{303} + x^{239} + x^{111} + 1$$

$$\mathbb{F}_{2^{479}} : x^{479} + x^{255} + 1$$

$$\mathbb{F}_{2^{487}} : x^{487} + x^{295} + x^{167} + x^{39} + 1$$

$$\mathbb{F}_{2^{521}} : x^{521} + x^{489} + 1$$

$$\mathbb{F}_{2^{569}} : x^{569} + x^{441} + x^{313} + x^{121} + 1$$

## 3 BINARY EDWARDS CURVES

Among the recently proposed models of elliptic curves for cryptography, Binary Edwards Curves (BEC) exhibit several interesting properties for IoT applications. First, these curves favour implementations that will be intrinsically safe against a set of side channel and fault attacks (see Section 5). Second, these curves allow an efficient arithmetic when

using the correct coordinates' representations and fast arithmetics in binary fields.

In (Edwards, 2007), Harold Edwards introduced a new model for elliptic curves allowing efficient computations with a complete group law. In (Bernstein et al., 2008) (Bernstein, 2009), Bernstein *et al.* constructed an equivalent to Edwards curves onto binary fields.

**Definition 1.** *Binary Edwards Curves (BEC):* Let  $K$  be a field of characteristic 2 and let  $d_1, d_2 \in K$  with  $d_1 \neq 0$  and  $d_2 \neq d_1^2 + d_1$ . The Binary Edwards Curve, with coefficients  $d_1$  and  $d_2$ , is the affine equation:

$$E_{d_1, d_2} : d_1(x+y) + d_2(x^2 + y^2) = xy + xy(x+y) + x^2y^2$$

This curve is symmetric and we have  $\forall P \in E(K), P = (x, y) \Rightarrow -P = (y, x)$ . We define the neutral point of the group law by  $(0, 0)$ .

**Definition 2.** *Projective Closure:* The projective closure of the BEC  $E_{d_1, d_2}$  is:

$$d_1(X+Y)Z^3 + d_2(X^2+Y^2)Z^2 = XYZ^2 + XY(X+Y)Z + X^2Y^2$$

The last important aspect of this construction is that each BEC is birationally equivalent to a Weierstrass form.

### 3.1 Arithmetics on BEC

There are special cases where the arithmetics associated with the BEC can be optimised. For the case where  $d_1 = d_2$  we have the following equation for a BEC:

$$d(x+y+x^2+y^2) = xy + xy(x+y) + x^2y^2 \quad (1)$$

with the condition  $\nexists t \in K \Rightarrow d = t^2 + t$ . In the following sections, we consider this particular case of BECs.

**Addition and Doubling:** Efficient arithmetics on elliptic curves depend on the choice for the coordinates' representation. In the case of BECs, the projective  $w$ -coordinate with differential additions and doublings (Bernstein et al., 2008) is the fastest way for doing points addition and point doubling. The idea of the differential  $w$ -coordinate is to represent a point  $P(x, y)$  of the curve by  $w(P) = x + y$ . This kind of coordinates is well suited for implementing the Montgomery ladder (Joye and Yen, 2002) to compute the exponentiation of a point. The Montgomery ladder computes  $w(kP)$  and  $w(kP + P)$  with an addition and a doubling at each step. For the addition and doubling we use a scalar  $w_1 = w(Q - P)$  which is constant at each step of the ladder. Using the Co-Z trick (Kim et al., 2014)(Koziel et al., 2015) yields Algorithm 1 for adding and doubling operations taking 5 multiplications, 4 squares and 1 multiplication by  $d$ .

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Algorithm 1:  $w$ -coordinates Adding and Doubling revisited with the Co-Z trick.

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**Require:**  $W_2, W_3, Z, \frac{1}{w_1}$

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1:  $C \leftarrow (W_2 + W_3)^2$ 
2:  $D \leftarrow Z^2$ 
3:  $E \leftarrow \frac{1}{w_1} C$ 
4:  $U \leftarrow E + C$ 
5:  $V \leftarrow E + D$ 
6:  $S \leftarrow (W_2(Z + W_2))^2$ 
7:  $T \leftarrow S + dD^2$ 
8:  $W_4 \leftarrow UT$ 
9:  $W_5 \leftarrow VS$ 
10:  $Z' \leftarrow VT$ 
11: return  $W_4, W_5, Z'$ 

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### 3.2 Generating Secure BECs

We implemented methods and tools to generate and propose a set of BECs with different field sizes for different security levels in order to match a targeted device's requirements and the best security/efficiency (power and performance) trade-offs for a minimum security level of 128 bits. In (Bernstein, 2009) the authors also enumerate the following security requirements for a BEC (and ECC in general):

- *Prime degree of the finite field extension:* A large prime degree has to be chosen due to the birthday paradox and has to provide a sufficient level security (Gaudry et al., 2002).
- *Number of points:* The curve  $E$  shall have a cardinal of  $2^c p$  where  $p$  is a large prime and  $c$  shall be small (1, 2 or 3).
- *Number of points on the Twist:* We have the same requirement on the number of points of the twist of the curve  $E$  in order to ensure resistance against some fault attacks on the original curve.
- *$j$ -invariant:* The  $j$ -invariant of the BEC,  $1/d^8$ , shall generate the extension field.
- *Avoiding small discriminants:* The discriminant  $\Delta_E = \text{Tr}(E)^2 - 4q$  shall be divisible by a large prime exactly once.
- *Avoiding pairing attack:* The multiplicative order  $k$  of  $2^m$  modulo the large prime of  $|E|$  shall be large. We have the same condition with the prime of the twist. We used an embedding degree greater than  $\frac{t-1}{100}$  as proposed in (Brainpool, 2005).

Based on these requirements, we can check, for each  $d$ , if a given curve is secure. We implemented the AGM method (Cohen et al., 2006) to perform the point counting. Moreover, to avoid counting the

Table 1: Performances of a  $kP$  operation without countermeasures over new BECs on a RISC-V processor at 100 MHz.

Curves	w-coor., optimal generator	w-coor., random generator	proj. coor., random generator
BEC223	32 ms	39 ms	137 ms
BEC257	46 ms	57 ms	201 ms
BEC313	79 ms	96 ms	342 ms
BEC431	188 ms	231 ms	821 ms
BEC479	242 ms	299 ms	1064 ms
BEC487	264 ms	326 ms	1156 ms
BEC521	316 ms	390 ms	1388 ms
BEC569	396 ms	489 ms	1744 ms

Table 2: SCA and Fault Attacks against BEC-based ECC.

Physical Attacks	Intrinsic Resistance		Remaining vulnerability
	Due to choice of parameters of BEC	Due to implementation done	Additional countermeasure implemented
Timing Attack (Kocher, 1996)	Unified arithmetics	Use of Montgomery ladder Constant time programming	-
SPA (Fan et al., 2010b)			-
DPA (Kocher et al., 1999)			-
Template Attack (Herbst and Medwed, 2008)	-	-	Randomization of coordinates (Coron, 1999)
Relative Doubling Attack (Yen et al., 2005)	-	-	Blinded scalar (Coron, 1999)
RPA/ZPA (Akishita and Takagi, 2003)	w-coordinates arithmetics	Direct implementation of the generator	-
Carry-based Attack (Fouque et al., 2008b)	Binary curves chosen	-	-
Horizontal Attack (Clavier et al., 2010)	-	-	Attack model to be tested
Safe error (Fan et al., 2010b)	-	Use of Montgomery ladder	-
Invalid point analysis (Biehl et al., 2000)	-	-	Verify that point in on the curve
Invalid curve analysis (Ciet and Joye, 2005)	Curves' parameters on Twist for eg	Direct implementation of curve parameter	-
Twist Attack (Fouque et al., 2008a)	Curves' parameter for Twist	-	-
Differential Fault Attack (Biehl et al., 2000)	-	-	Blinded scalar (Coron, 1999)

number of points on the twist, we use the relationship between a curve  $E$  and its twist  $E^{tw}$  such that  $|E| + |E^{tw}| = 2q + 2$  to determine the number of points on the twist. We implemented this curve generation algorithm in C language and based on the FLINT library (FLINT, 2015). Curves with different sizes have been generated as given in Appendix (parameters for  $m = 223$  and  $m = 569$  have been removed due to page limitations).

#### 4 OPTIMAL GROUP GENERATOR

In our case we have curves with a number of points  $n = 2^c p$  with  $c = 1, 2$  or  $3$  and  $p$  a large prime. So, we

look for a point of the curve of order  $p$ . In the “Add and Double” formula of the BEC (Algorithm 1) we have a multiplication by the scalar  $\frac{1}{w_1}$  which is constant due to the property of the Montgomery Ladder. We hence looked for a generator  $G$  with a  $\frac{1}{w(G)}$  having a small Hamming Weight, hence saving 1 multiplication for each addition and doubling step. If we consider  $w = x + y$ , then from the equation 1 we have a new equation of BEC:

$$d(w + w^2) = x^4 + (1 + w + w^2)x^2 + (w + w^2)x \quad (2)$$

So, once we choose an inverse of  $w$  with a small Hamming Weight, we can calculate the  $x$  coordinate of  $G$  from the equation 2 and its  $y$  coordinate from the equation 1.

## 5 PERFORMANCES & SECURITY

We implemented this new set of elliptic curves on a RISC V core running at 100 MHz. No special instruction has been added to the RISC V. We implemented the differential  $w$ -coordinates system with two cases, one with the optimized generator and the other with a random generator. We added the projective coordinates system for an interesting comparison and to show how the  $w$ -coordinates could be useful. For the finite field multiplication in  $GF(2^n)$  we use a López-Dahab multiplication (Aranha et al., 2010). The exponentiation computation is performed by using a Powering Montgomery Ladder (Joye and Yen, 2002). All functions for the finite field arithmetics are written in Assembly Language and functions for ECC arithmetics in C language. The performances are given in Table 1. These performances are for a computation of  $kP$  without additional countermeasures (we are theoretically secure against a set of side channel attacks and fault attacks). We can compare with performances of MbedTLS on an ARM M3 running at 96MHz presented in (Tschofenig et al., 2015) (one of the rare public data available). For a security level of 128 bits, an ECDSA signature (where the main operation is the  $kP$  operation) takes 122 ms with the standard secp256r1 curve, which is to be compared to 46 ms (for the  $kP$  operation) in our case. Note that the performances in (Tschofenig et al., 2015) are given for a sliding window implementation, which is still vulnerable to side channel and fault attacks. Table 2 summarizes the theoretical advantages of the BEC model with respect to Side Channel Attacks (SCA) and Fault Attacks (FA). We hard-coded the  $d$  parameter of the curve and the  $\frac{1}{w}$  parameter of the point generator to avoid any attack of invalid curve analysis and invalid point analysis.

## 6 CONCLUSION

In this paper, we propose a new set of BECs which might be efficient, secure and low power alternatives for implementing ECC in IoT devices. The optimization of the  $w$ -coordinate of the point generator allows a speed up if these coordinates are used with the Montgomery Ladder. This new set of curves covers different security levels to offer the possibility of making the best trade-off between security and execution time, bearing in mind that those BECs have some intrinsic protections against a set of side channel and fault attacks. Future work will consist in validating the expected “physical security” properties in practice. As the BEC model allows a complete

compliance with the Weierstrass model, we shall also study how the use of BEC curves can be compliant, in practice, with already deployed implementations of ECDSA on Weierstrass curves. We shall also work on the implementation of a dedicated hardware accelerator in order to take advantage of the carry-less operations.

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$m = 521; f = x^{521} + x^{489} + 1; d = t^{66} + t^{29} + t^{28} + 1$   
 $G_x = 16b369b497b805e6199a342909aa4608cdcecb10e0988ba73$   
 $eb1f1186039c8b1f6d2a9db39b1302d29d9d449b9aa459cc5$   
 $d6bbb4e33a1eb8fcc056ce724ce5aaa8$   
 $G_y = 16b369b4b7b805e6199a342909aa4608cdcecb10e0988ba73$   
 $eb1f1186039c8b1f6d2a9db39b1302d29d9d449b9aa459cc5$   
 $d6bbb4e33a1eb8fcc056ce724ce5aaa8$   
 $G_{1/w} = 100000001$   
 $n = 686479766013060971498190079908139321726943530014$   
 $330540939446345918554318339765708943950328983162$   
 $243962653943419778613112216264068985797800513224$   
 $0328602782204$   
 $p = 171619941503265242874547519977034830431735882503$   
 $582635234861586479638579584941427235987582245790$   
 $560990663485854944653278054066017246449450128306$   
 $0082150695551$

