

A quadratic divisor problem

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1. Introduction

A great many problems in analytic number theory lead indirectly to counting 2×2 matrices having fixed determinant and integral entries over various ranges. More explicitly, one often encounters sums of the type

$$\sum_{uv \,\mp\, brs\,=\,h} f(u,\,v,\,r,\,s)$$

where a, b, h are fixed positive integers and f is a smooth function whose partial derivatives are under control. This may be viewed as counting the representations by a quadratic form Q(u, v, r, s), a study initiated by H. Kloostermann [K1]. A special case of the above sum, known as the additive divisor problem

$$\sum_{n\leq x}\tau(n)\tau(n+h),$$

where $\tau(n)$ stands for the number of positive divisors of *n* was investigated by A. Ingham [In] who first gave an asymptotic formula and then by T. Estermann [Es] who established the asymptotic expansion

$$\sum_{n \leq x} \tau(n)\tau(n+h) = xP_h(\log x) + O(x^{11/12}\log^3 x),$$

where $P_h(T)$ is a quadratic polynomial with leading coefficient $6\pi^{-2}\sigma_{-1}(h)$. The key ingredient in Estermann's paper is an estimate for Kloostermann sums

$$S(m, n; q) = \sum_{d \pmod{q}}^{*} e\left(\frac{dm + \bar{d}n}{q}\right),$$

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where, as usual, the asterisk restricts the summation to reduced classes. After A. Weil established the best bound

$$S(m, n; q) \ll (m, n, q)^{1/2} q^{1/2} \tau(q)$$

substantial improvements on the error term of Estermann became possible, cf. [HB], [Wi]. Further advances have been made by J.-M. Deshouillers and H. Iwaniec [DeI₁] by exploring the spectral theory of automorphic forms; see also N.V. Kuznetsov [Ku]. The state of the art of this approach is reached in works of M. Jutila [Ju₂] and Y. Motohashi [Mo].

As usual in practice one needs asymptotic formulas with a good error term which are valid uniformly in the parameters a, b, h of considerable size. These can be very difficult problems indeed. Motohashi's result [Mo] is very strong with respect to h, but unfortunately for us he considers only the case a = b = 1. For other relevant results see [He], [Sm].

Motivated by specific applications in mind [DFI₂] in this paper we investigate sums of type

$$D_f(a, b; h) = \sum_{am + bn = h} \tau(m) \tau(n) f(am, bn),$$
(1)

where f is nice smooth function on $R^+ \times R^+$. Not only do we allow the coefficients a, b to be large but also f to oscillate mildly. In fact all the properties of f to be used are expressed in the following estimate for partial derivatives

$$x^{i}y^{j}f^{(ij)}(x,y) \ll \left(1+\frac{x}{X}\right)^{-1}\left(1+\frac{y}{Y}\right)^{-1}P^{i+j},$$
 (2)

with some $P, X, Y \ge 1$ for all $i, j \ge 0$, the implied constant depending on i, j alone. We shall use Weil's bound for Kloosterman sums rather than the spectral theory of automorphic forms since the latter approach would require us to deal with the congruence group $\Gamma_0(ab)$ facing intrinsic difficulties with small eigenvalues. The results obtained this way would not be good enough for large a, b. However, if an averaging over a, b was included then the density theorems for small eigenvalues might help (see [DeI₂]). Such a result is given by N. Watt [Wa].

Our objective here is to quickly get results useful for applications without straining for the best from available technologies. As in $[DFI_1]$, [DuI] we have chosen to use the δ -method which is a simple alternative for the circle method. A direct approach starting from the definition of the divisor function is also a possibility, however it could not generalize to the corresponding problem with $\tau(m)$ replaced by the Fourier coefficients of cusp forms. We anticipate applying the δ -method for the latter problem elsewhere. Yet, in this case the results of J. Hafner [Ha] can be used as well.

2. Statement of results

The main term in our asymptotic formula will be expressed in terms of the series

$$\Lambda_{abh}(x, y) = \frac{1}{ab} \sum_{q=1}^{\infty} q^{-2}(ab, q) c_q(h) (\log x - \lambda_{aq}) (\log y - \lambda_{bq}), \tag{3}$$

where $c_q(h) = S(h, 0; q)$ denotes the Ramanujan sum and λ_{aq} , λ_{bq} are constants given by

$$\lambda_{aq} = 2\gamma + \log \frac{aq^2}{(a,q)^2}.$$
(4)

Theorem 1. Suppose $a, b \ge 1$, (a, b) = 1, $h \ne 0$ and f satisfies (2). Then we have

$$D_f(a, b; h) = \int_0^\infty g(x, \pm x \mp h) \,\mathrm{d}x + O\left(P^{5/4}(X + Y)^{1/4}(XY)^{1/4+\epsilon}\right), \tag{5}$$

where $g(x, y) = f(x, y) \Lambda_{abh}(x, y)$ and the implied constant depends on ε only.

Remarks. Since the main term has the order of magnitude of $(ab)^{-1} \min(X, Y)$ the result is valuable only if

$$ab < P^{-5/4}(X+Y)^{-5/4}(XY)^{3/4-\varepsilon}.$$

Notice that the error term in (5) does not depend on h but it is a trivial result whenever $|h| > (ab)^{-2}(X + Y)^{3/2}$.

The exponent 5/4 in (5) can be replaced by 3/4 by refining the argument and, we expect, by 1/2 with more elaborate refinements.

Corollary. For $a, h, M \ge 1$ we have

$$\sum_{m \le M} \tau(m)\tau(am+h) = \int_{0}^{M} \lambda(x, ax+h) dx + O(a^{1/9}(aM+h)^{2/9}M^{2/3+\varepsilon}), \quad (6)$$

where

$$\lambda(x, y) = \sum_{q=1}^{\infty} q^{-2}(a, q) c_q(h) \left(\log x - 2\gamma - 2 \log \frac{q}{(a, q)} \right) (\log y - 2\gamma - 2 \log q).$$
(7)

Remark. The error term in (6) is smaller than the main term provided $a < M^{1/3-\varepsilon}$ and $h < a^{-1/2}M^{3/2-\varepsilon}$.

Proof. Apply Theorem 1 for the test function $f(x, y) = f_1(x)f_2(y)$ where f_1, f_2 are single variable functions, smooth, non-negative, supported on $[0, X + XP^{-1}]$, [0, 2Y] respectively, such that

$$f_1(x) = 1$$
 if $0 \le x \le X$, $f_1^{(j)} \ll P^j X^{-j}$

and

$$f_2(y) = 1$$
 if $0 \le y \le Y$, $f_2^{(j)} \ll Y^{-j}$. (8)

We take X = aM and Y = aM + h, so the sum (6) is majorized by $D_f(a, 1; h)$. Since f satisfies the hypothesis (2), by (5) we get

$$D_f(a, 1; h) = \int + O(P^{5/4}(aM + h)^{1/2}(aM)^{1/4 + \varepsilon}).$$

Here the integral differs from that in (6) by $\ll P^{-1}M \log^2 M$. We make the optimal choice $P = a^{-1/9}M^{1/3}(aM + h)^{-2/9}$. This yields the upper bound in (6). The proof of the lower bound is similar.

3. The δ -symbol

Take a smooth, compactly supported function w(u) on R such that w(u) = w(-u)and w(0) = 0. Normalize w(u) by requiring

$$\sum_{q=1}^{\infty} w(q) = 1.$$
 (9)

Then for any $n \in \mathbb{Z}$ we have

$$\delta(n) = \sum_{q|n} \left(w(q) - w\left(\frac{n}{q}\right) \right) = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } n = 0, \\ 0 & \text{if } n \neq 0. \end{cases}$$

Using additive characters to detect the divisibility q|n we get

$$\delta(n) \sum_{q=1}^{\infty} \sum_{d \pmod{q}}^{*} e\left(\frac{dn}{q}\right) \Delta_q(n), \tag{10}$$

where

$$\Delta_q(u) = \sum_{r=1}^{\infty} (qr)^{-1} \left(w(qr) - w\left(\frac{u}{qr}\right) \right). \tag{11}$$

Lemma 1. For any $f \in C_0^{\infty}(R)$ we have

$$\int_{-\infty}^{\infty} f(u) \Delta_q(u) \, \mathrm{d}u = f(0) \int_{0}^{\infty} w(r) \, \mathrm{d}r$$
$$- q^j \int_{0}^{\infty} \psi_j\left(\frac{r}{q}\right) \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \left(f(u)\left(\frac{w(r)}{r}\right)^{(j)} - w(u)u^j f^{(j)}(ru)\right) \mathrm{d}u \, \mathrm{d}r \quad (12)$$

where $j \ge 1$ and

$$\psi_j(z) = -\sum_{m=1}^{\infty} (2\pi i m)^{-j} (e(mz) + (-1)^j e(-mz)).$$

Proof. We split into two parts and change the variable in the second one getting

$$\int_{-\infty}^{\infty} f(u) \Delta q(u) \, \mathrm{d}u = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} f(u) \left(\sum_{r=1}^{\infty} (qr)^{-1} w(qr) \right) \mathrm{d}u - \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} w(u) \left(\sum_{r=1}^{\infty} f(qru) \right) \mathrm{d}u.$$

Then we evaluate the sums over r by the Euler-Maclaurin formula (cf. [Ra, p. 14]). For the first sum it gives

$$\sum_{r=1}^{\infty} (qr)^{-1} w(qr) = \int_{0}^{\infty} \frac{w(qr)}{qr} dr + \int_{0}^{\infty} \psi_{j}(r) \frac{\partial^{j}}{\partial r^{j}} \left(\frac{w(qr)}{qr} \right) dr.$$

Since w(u) is even we can write the second part as follows

$$f(0)\int_{0}^{\infty}w(u)\,\mathrm{d}u-\int_{0}^{\infty}w(u)\left(\sum_{r=-\infty}^{\infty}f(qru)\right)\mathrm{d}u.$$

Next by the Euler-Maclaurin formula we get

$$\sum_{r=\infty}^{\infty} f(qru) = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} f(qru) \, \mathrm{d}r + \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \psi_j(r) \, \frac{\partial^j}{\partial r^j} f(qru) \, \mathrm{d}r.$$

Combining these formulas we arrive at (12) after an obvious change of variables and observation of the cancellation of the leading integrals.

Now, suppose w(u) is supported in $Q \leq |u| \leq 2Q$ and it has derivatives bounded by

$$w^{(j)} \ll Q^{-j-1}, \quad j \ge 0.$$
 (13)

Since $|\psi_i(z)| \leq 1$ the terms on the right side of (12) are bounded by

$$f(0)(1 + O(Q^{-j-1})), (14)$$

$$q^{j}Q^{-j-1}|\int f(u)\,\mathrm{d}u|,\tag{15}$$

$$q^{j}Q^{j-1}\int |f^{(j)}(u)|\,\mathrm{d}u,\tag{16}$$

respectively. We also have

$$f(0) \ll \int (|f(u)| + |f^{(j)}(u)|) \,\mathrm{d}u. \tag{17}$$

Then there follows from (12)-(17) the following

Corollary. Let $j \ge 1$. We have

$$\int_{-\infty}^{\infty} f(u) \Delta_q(u) \, \mathrm{d}u = f(0) + O\left(Q^{-1} q^j \int (Q^{-j} |f(u)| + Q^j |f^{(j)}(u)|) \, \mathrm{d}u\right).$$
(18)

If $q < Q^{1-\epsilon}$ this shows that $\Delta_q(u)$ approximates to the Dirac distribution very well on test functions such that $f^{(j)} \leq (qQ^{1+\epsilon})^{-j}$.

Lemma 2. We have

$$\Delta_q(u) \ll (qQ + Q^2)^{-1} + (qQ + |u|)^{-1}.$$
(19)

Proof. By the Euler-Maclaurin formula we get

$$\Delta_q(u) = \int_0^\infty \left\{ \frac{r}{q} \right\} d \frac{w(r) - w(u/r)}{r}, \qquad (20)$$

where $\{x\}$ denotes the fractional part of x. Hence we infer by (17) that

$$\begin{aligned} |\Delta_q(u)| &\leq \int_0^\infty \min\left(1, \frac{r}{q}\right) \left| d \frac{w(r) - w(u/r)}{r} \right| \\ &\leq \int_0^\infty \min\left(1, \frac{2Q}{q}\right) \left| d \frac{w(r)}{r} \right| + \int_0^\infty \min\left(\frac{1}{|u|}, \frac{1}{qQ}\right) |dr w(r)| \\ &\ll \min\left(\frac{1}{Q^2}, \frac{1}{qQ}\right) + \min\left(\frac{1}{|u|}, \frac{1}{qQ}\right) \end{aligned}$$

which gives (19).

4. Applying the δ -symbol

We shall present only the case am - bn = h since the other one of am + bn = h is obtained by changing signs in relevant places of our arguments.

Using a smooth partition of unity for the proof of Theorem 1 we may assume that f(x, y) is supported in the box $[X, 2X] \times [Y, 2Y]$. We may also attach to

f(x, y) a redundant factor $\varphi(x - y - h)$, where $\varphi(u)$ is a smooth function supported on |u| < U such that $\varphi(0) = 1$ and $\varphi^{(i)} \ll U^{-i}$. This, of course, does not alter $D_f(a, b; h)$ nevertheless it will help to improve the forthcoming performance by taking U optimally. The new function $F(x, y) = f(x, y)\varphi(x - y - h)$ has partial derivatives bounded by

$$F^{(ij)} \ll \left(\frac{1}{U} + \frac{P}{X}\right)^{l} \left(\frac{1}{U} + \frac{P}{Y}\right)^{j} \ll U^{-i-j}$$

$$\tag{21}$$

provided $U \leq P^{-1} \min(X, Y)$ which condition we henceforth assume to hold. Next we apply (10) to detect the equation am - bn = h. For the test function w(u) we choose $Q = U^{1/2}$, so $\Delta_q(u)$ vanishes if $|u| \leq U$ and $q \geq 2Q$. Therefore we get

$$D_f(a, b; h) = D_F(a, b; h)$$

$$= \sum_{1 \le q \le 2Q} \sum_{d \pmod{q}}^{*} e\left(\frac{-dh}{q}\right) \sum_{m} \sum_{n} \tau(m) \tau(n) e\left(\frac{dam - dbn}{q}\right) E(m, n), \quad (22)$$

where $E(x, y) = F(ax, by)\Delta_q(ax - by - h)$.

5. Applying poisson summation

We shall execute the summation over m, n in (22) by means of the following Poisson type formula (cf. Jutila [Ju₁], Theorem 1.7)

Proposition 1. Let g(x) be a smooth, compactly supported function on R^+ and let (d, q) = 1. Then we have

$$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \tau(n) e\left(\frac{dn}{q}\right) g(n) = \frac{1}{q} \int \log x + 2\gamma - 2\log q) g(x) \, \mathrm{d}x$$
$$+ \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \tau(n) e\left(\frac{\pm dn}{q}\right) g^{\pm}(n),$$

where

$$g^{-}(y) = -\frac{2\pi}{q} \int g(x) Y_0\left(\frac{4\pi\sqrt{xy}}{q}\right) dx,$$

$$g^{+}(y) = \frac{4}{q} \int g(x) K_0\left(\frac{4\pi\sqrt{xy}}{q}\right) dx,$$

and $Y_0(z)$, $K_0(z)$ are the Bessel functions.

By Proposition 1 applied once to each variable, we get

$$\frac{q^2}{(ab, q)} \sum_m \sum_n = I + \sum_{m=1}^{\infty} \tau(m) e\left(-m\frac{\overline{ad}}{q}\right) I_a(m) + \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \tau(n) e\left(n\frac{\overline{bd}}{q}\right) I_b(n) + \sum_{m=1}^{\infty} \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \tau(m) \tau(n) e\left(-m\frac{\overline{ad}}{q} + n\frac{\overline{bd}}{q}\right) I_{ab}(m, n) + *****, \quad (23)$$

where a/q, b/q have to be put in reduced forms before taking the inverses, and

$$I = \iint (\log ax - \lambda_{aq}) ((\log by - \lambda_{bq}) E(x, y) \, dx \, dy,$$

$$I_a(m) = -2\pi \iint Y_0 \left(\frac{4\pi(a, q)\sqrt{mx}}{q}\right) (\log by - \lambda_{bq}) E(x, y) \, dx \, dy,$$

$$I_b(n) = -2\pi \iint (\log ax - \lambda_{aq}) Y_0 \left(\frac{4\pi(b, q)\sqrt{ny}}{q}\right) E(x, y) \, dx \, dy,$$

$$I_{ab}(m, n) = 4\pi^2 \iint Y_0 \left(\frac{4\pi(a, q)\sqrt{mx}}{q}\right) Y_0 \left(\frac{4\pi(b, q)\sqrt{ny}}{q}\right) E(x, y) \, dx \, dy.$$

As it is evident from Proposition 1 there are five more terms ***** in (23) involving the K_0 -Bessel function. These can be estimated by the same method as we use for the ones displayed.

Inserting (23) into (22) we get from the summation in $d \pmod{q}$ complete Kloosterman sums. We obtain the following formula:

$$D(a, b; h) = \sum_{q < 2Q} q^{-2}(ab, q) \left\{ S(h, 0; q)I + \sum_{m=1}^{\infty} \tau(m) S(h, \bar{a}m; q)I_a(m) + \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \tau(n)S(h, -\bar{b}n; q)I_b(n) + \sum_{m=1}^{\infty} \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \tau(m)\tau(n)S(h, \bar{a}m - \bar{b}n; q)I_{ab}(m, n) + **** \right\}.$$
(24)

To the Kloosterman sums in this formula we shall apply Weil's bound

$$S(h, \bar{a}m - \bar{b}n; q) \ll (h, q)^{1/2} q^{1/2} \tau(q).$$
(25)

In case m = n = 0 we get the Ramanujan sum for which we have a simple formula and a better bound

$$S(h, 0; q) = \sum_{\nu \mid (h, q)} \nu \mu \left(\frac{q}{\nu}\right) \ll (h, q).$$
(26)

6. Evaluating the main term

First we evaluate the integral I. We have

$$abI = \iint C(x, y) \Delta_q(x - y - h) dx dy$$
$$= \iint C(x, x - h + u) \Delta_q(u) du dx$$

where $C(x, y) = (\log x - \lambda_{aq})(\log y - \lambda_{bq})F(x, y)$. By (18) and (21) we get

$$\int C(x, x - h + u) \Delta_q(u) \, \mathrm{d}u = C(x, x - h) + O\left(\left(\frac{q}{Q}\right)^j\right).$$

Assuming $q < Q^{1-\varepsilon}$ we make the error term above very small by taking *j* large. Hence we obtain

$$abI = \int C(x, x-h) \,\mathrm{d}x + O(Q^{-A}).$$

We also have the bound $abI \ll (X + Y)^{-1}XY \log Q$, which is valid for all q, see (30). Therefore the first part of (24) yields

$$(ab)^{-1}\sum_{q=1}^{\infty} q^{-2}(ab,q)c_q(h)\int C(x,x-h)\,\mathrm{d}x + O\left((ab)^{-1}\frac{XY}{X+Y}Q^{-1+\varepsilon}\right)$$
(27)

where the error term takes care of the tail $q > Q^{1-\epsilon}$.

7. Estimating the error term

We need estimates for I_a , I_b , I_{ab} . To this end we integrate by parts in x, y using the bound

$$E^{(ij)} \ll \frac{1}{qQ} \left(\frac{ab}{qQ}\right)^{i+j}$$
(28)

and the recurrence formula $(z^{\nu}Y_{\nu}(z))' = z^{\nu}Y_{\nu-1}(z)$. In this way we show that these integrals are very small unless

$$m < aXQ^{-2+\varepsilon}, \qquad n < bYQ^{-2+\varepsilon}.$$
 (29)

For m, n in this range we estimate the integrals trivially using the bound $Y_0(z) \ll z^{-1/2}$, which gives

$$\begin{split} I_{a}(m) &\leqslant \left(\frac{aq^{2}}{mX}\right)^{1/4} (\log Q) \int \int, \\ I_{b}(n) &\leqslant \left(\frac{bq^{2}}{nY}\right)^{1/4} (\log Q) \int \int, \\ I_{ab}(m, n) &\leqslant \left(\frac{abq^{4}}{mnXY}\right)^{1/4} (\log Q) \int \int, \end{split}$$

where

$$\begin{split} \int \int &= \int \int |F(ax, by) \Delta_q(ax - by - h)| \, dx \, dy \\ &= (ab)^{-1} \int \int |F(x, x - h - u) \Delta_q(u)| \, dx \, du \\ &\ll (ab)^{-1} \min(X, Y) \int_{-U}^{U} |\Delta_q(u)| \, du \ll (ab)^{-1} (X + Y)^{-1} \, X \, Y \log Q \end{split}$$
(30)

by (19). Next summing over m, n in the range (29) we obtain

$$\sum_{m} \tau(m) |I_{a}(m)| \ll \frac{q^{1/2}}{b} \frac{X^{3/2} Y}{X + Y} Q^{-3/2 + \varepsilon},$$
$$\sum_{n} \tau(n) |I_{b}(n)| \ll \frac{q^{1/2}}{a} \frac{X Y^{3/2}}{X + Y} Q^{-3/2 + \varepsilon},$$
$$\sum_{m} \sum_{n} \tau(m) \tau(n) |I_{ab}(m, n)| \ll q \frac{(XY)^{3/2}}{X + Y} Q^{-3 + \varepsilon}.$$

Introducing these bounds into (24) we get (5) with the error term

$$(ab)^{-1}\frac{XY}{X+Y}Q^{-1+\varepsilon}+\frac{(XY)^{3/2}}{X+Y}Q^{-5/2+\varepsilon}.$$

On taking $U = Q^2 = P^{-1}(X + Y)^{-1}XY$ the above error term becomes that of (5). This completes the proof of Theorem 1 in case f(x, y) is supported in a dyadic box.

Finally Theorem 1 in its general form is derived from the dyadic version by breaking smoothly the summation in (1) into boxes $[X', 2X'] \times [Y', 2Y']$ and using (2) to determine that the worst case is $X' \sim X$, $Y' \sim Y$.

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