

New theorems concerning the diophantine equation

$$x^2 + D = 4y^q$$

by

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1. Introduction. Let D denote a positive integer $\equiv 3 \pmod{4}$, without any square factor > 1 . Let further q denote any odd prime. It is the purpose of this paper to prove some new theorems concerning the solvability in positive rational integers x , y and q of the equation

$$(1) \quad x^2 + D = 4y^q$$

for given values of D .

Putting $x = 2z + 1$ the equation (1) can also be written

$$(1') \quad z^2 + z + \frac{1}{4}(D + 1) = y^q.$$

For $D = 3$ and $q \neq 3$ T. Nagell [8] showed that (1') has no solutions with $y \neq 1$. In case $D = 3$ and $q = 3$ Ljunggren [4] proved that $y = 1$ and $y = 7$ are the only solutions.

Let $h(\sqrt{-D}) = h$ be the number of classes of ideals in the algebraic number field $Q(\sqrt{-D})$. B. Persson [9] proved the following theorem:

The equation (1') with $D > 3$ is solvable in integers x and y only for a finite number of integers D for a given q with $(h, q) = 1$, and the integral solutions y of (1') are less than the number $\frac{1}{4} D \operatorname{cosec}^2 \frac{\pi}{q} + 1$. The equation has at most $\frac{1}{2}(q - 1)$ solutions y when D and q are given.

The last part of this theorem was improved by B. Stolt [11] showing that there is at most one solution, except for the case $D \equiv 3 \pmod{8}$ with $q \equiv 1 \pmod{6}$, where there are at most three solutions.

In a recent paper [3] I investigated the equation (1) in case $D \equiv 7 \pmod{8}$, and proved the following two theorems:

THEOREM 1. *Let $D \equiv 7 \pmod{24}$, and let at the same time one of the following two conditions be satisfied*

$$1^\circ \quad q \equiv 3 \pmod{8},$$

$$2^\circ \quad q \equiv 5 \pmod{8}, \quad D - 4 = 3^{2m+1} D_1, \quad D_1 \not\equiv 0 \pmod{3}.$$

Then the equation (1) has only a finite number of solutions in positive integers x and y and odd primes q , provided $(h, q) = 1$. If there are solutions these can be effectively found.

THEOREM 2. Let $D \equiv 15 \pmod{72}$. Then the equation (1) has only a finite number of solutions in positive integers x and y and odd primes q , provided $(h, q) = 1$. If there are solutions these can be effectively found.

As to the case $D \equiv 3 \pmod{8}$ we proceed proving the following new theorems:

THEOREM 3. The equation (1) has only a finite number of solutions in positive integers x, y and odd primes $q \not\equiv \pm 1 \pmod{24}$, provided $(h, q) = 1$. If there are solutions these can be effectively found.

THEOREM 4. Let $D \equiv 51 \pmod{72}$. Then the equation (1) has only a finite number of solutions in positive integers x, y and odd primes $q \not\equiv -1 \pmod{24}$. If there are solutions these can be effectively found.

In the proof use is made of the following lemma due to J. W. S. Cassels [2]: Let Π be a finite set of rational primes and let P be the set of positive integers all of whose prime factors are in Π . Let $F > 0$ and $E \neq 0$ be rational integers and suppose that no prime factors of E is in Π . Then there are only a finite number of solutions Z, Y of the equation

$$Z^2 - FY^2 = E,$$

where Z is a rational integer and $Y \in P$. These can all be obtained in a finite number of steps.

2. If $(h, q) = 1$ it is easily proved that (1) implies

$$(2) \quad \frac{1}{2}(x + \sqrt{-D}) = \left(\frac{1}{2}(a + b\sqrt{-D})\right)^q,$$

a, b denoting rational integers, $a \equiv b \pmod{2}$. See for instance Ljunggren [3]. Here is also proved that

$$b = \left(\frac{-D}{q}\right) = \pm 1$$

(equation (2) impossible for $D \equiv 0 \pmod{q}$).

From (2) it then follows

$$(3) \quad 2^{q-1}b = qa^{q-1} - \binom{q}{3}a^{q-3}D + \dots + (-D)^{\frac{1}{2}(q-1)}.$$

Putting

$$\lambda = \frac{1}{2}(a + \sqrt{-D}), \quad \lambda' = \frac{1}{2}(a - \sqrt{-D}), \quad a > 0$$

(2) may be written

$$(2') \quad \frac{\lambda^q - \lambda'^q}{\lambda - \lambda'} = b = \pm 1.$$

For brevity we introduce the notations

$$(4) \quad T_m = \frac{\lambda^m - \lambda'^m}{\lambda - \lambda'}, \quad S_m = \lambda^m + \lambda'^m, \quad R_m = \frac{\lambda^m + \lambda'^m}{\lambda + \lambda'},$$

where m denotes any positive integer in the expressions for T_m and S_m , and any odd positive integer in R_m .

The following formulas are easily verified

$$(5) \quad T_{\frac{1}{2}(q+1)}^2 - \lambda\lambda' T_{\frac{1}{2}(q-1)} = b,$$

$$(6) \quad T_{\frac{1}{2}(q+1)} \cdot S_{\frac{1}{2}(q-1)} = b + (\lambda\lambda')^{\frac{1}{2}(q-1)},$$

$$(7) \quad T_{\frac{1}{2}(q-1)} \cdot S_{\frac{1}{2}(q+1)} = b - (\lambda\lambda')^{\frac{1}{2}(q-1)}.$$

These three identities have proved to be very useful in dealing with problems of the type investigated in this paper. See for instance Ljunggren [4], [5], [6] and Aigner [1].

In case $D \equiv 3 \pmod{8}$ we have $\lambda\lambda' \equiv 1 \pmod{2}$. From the formulas

$$T_m = (a^2 - \lambda\lambda')T_{m-2} - a\lambda\lambda'T_{m-3},$$

$$S_m = (a^2 - \lambda\lambda')S_{m-2} - a\lambda\lambda'S_{m-3}$$

we conclude that all T_m (S_m) are odd integers for $m \not\equiv 0 \pmod{3}$ and even integers for $m \equiv 0 \pmod{3}$. Making use of the identities

$$T_6 = aT_3R_3, \quad T_{6h+3} = T_{6h}S_3 - (\lambda\lambda')^3 T_{6h-3},$$

and noticing $R_3 \equiv T_3 \equiv 0 \pmod{2}$, we find

$$(8) \quad T_m \equiv 0 \pmod{4} \text{ if } m \equiv 0 \pmod{6}, \quad T_m \equiv \pm T_3 \text{ if } m \equiv 3 \pmod{6}.$$

For later use we note

$$(9) \quad T_3 = \frac{1}{4}(3a^2 - D), \quad S_3 = \frac{1}{2}(a^2 - D), \\ R_3 = \frac{1}{4}(3a^2 - D), \quad T_3 + R_3 = a^2 - D.$$

In case $D \equiv 3 \pmod{8}$, $D > 3$ we have

$$\left(\frac{a + b\sqrt{-D}}{2}\right)^3 \in Z[\sqrt{-D}], \quad a, b \text{ odd integers.}$$

Consequently, there are no solutions of (1) for $q = 3$ and $(h, 3) = 1$.

3. In this section we prove some lemmas with $b = \pm 1$.

LEMMA 1. If the equation (3) is satisfied with $a \equiv 0 \pmod{3}$, then either

$$(i) \quad q \equiv 1 \pmod{4}, \quad b = 1, \quad D^2 - 16 = 3^{2m_1}D_2, \quad (D_2, 3) = 1$$

and $q \equiv 2DD_2 \pmod{3}$

or

$$(ii) \quad q \equiv 3 \pmod{4}, \quad b \equiv -D \pmod{3}, \quad D + 4b = 3^{2m_2} D_3, \\ (D_3, 3) = 1 \text{ and } q \equiv DD_3 \pmod{3}.$$

Proof. The equation (1) implies

$$(10) \quad D^{k(a-1)} - b(-4)^{k(a-1)} = \sum_{i=1}^{k(a-1)} (-1)^{i-1} \binom{q}{2i} D^{k(a-1)-i} a^{2i}.$$

Putting $a = 3^s a_1$, $(a_1, 3) = 1$, $s \geq 1$ we observe that the first term on the right-hand side of (10) is exactly divisible by $3^{\delta+2s}$, $q-1 = 2q_1 3^\delta$, $(q_1, 3) = 1$, $\delta \geq 0$. The general term in the sum in (10) may be written in the form

$$\binom{q}{2} a^2 \binom{q-2}{2i-2} \frac{a^{2i-2}}{i(2i-1)} D^{k(a-1)-i}.$$

Here we have

$$3^{2i-2} > i(2i-1) \quad \text{for } i \geq 2,$$

and consequently this term is divisible by a power of 3 with exponent greater than $\delta + 2s$. Hence the right-hand side of (10) is exactly divisible by $3^{\delta+2s}$. In case $q \equiv 1 \pmod{4}$ it is easily seen that the condition $a \equiv 0 \pmod{3}$ implies $b = 1$. Putting further $D^2 - 16 = 3^m D'$, $(D', 3) = 1$, $m \geq 1$, we find that the quantity on the left-hand side of (10) is exactly divisible by $3^{\delta+m}$. Hence $m = 2s$. As to the case $D^2 - 16 = 3^{2s} D_2$, we easily find, when both sides of (11) are divided by $3^{\delta+2s}$ that $q \equiv 2DD_2 \pmod{3}$. We have then proved the first part of the lemma.

In case $q \equiv 3 \pmod{4}$ the left-hand side of (10) may be written

$$D^{k(a-1)} + (4b)^{k(a-1)},$$

which implies $b \equiv -D \pmod{3}$. The remainder of the proof is similar to the proof of the first part of the lemma.

LEMMA 2. If $a^2 \equiv D \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$, then the equation (1) has no solutions in rational integers x, y and odd primes q, q satisfying the condition that the Legendre symbol $(2/q) = -b$.

Proof. We note that $S_2 = \lambda^2 + \lambda'^2 \equiv 0 \pmod{3}$ and $\lambda\lambda' \equiv -1 \pmod{3}$. By means of the recurrence formula

$$T_m = T_{m-2} \cdot S_2 - (\lambda\lambda')^2 T_{m-4}$$

we deduce that $T_m \equiv -T_{m-4} \equiv T_{m-8} \pmod{3}$. Hence $T_m \equiv 0 \pmod{3}$ if and only if $m \equiv 0 \pmod{4}$. By (5) the lemma then follows since $\frac{1}{2}(q \pm 1) \equiv 0 \pmod{4}$ for $b = 1$ and $\not\equiv 0 \pmod{4}$ for $b = -1$.

4. In this section we prove some lemmas, assuming $b = -1$.

LEMMA 3. If $D \equiv -1 \pmod{3}$, then the equation (10) has no solutions in case $b = -1$.

Proof. If $a \equiv 0 \pmod{3}$, then (10) gives $b \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$, contrary to the assumption. If $a^2 \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$, then $\lambda\lambda' \equiv 0 \pmod{3}$, but this contradicts (5).

LEMMA 4. Necessary conditions for the solvability of (3) with $b = -1$ are $q \equiv -1 \pmod{3}$ and

$$(i) \quad a^2 \leq D - 2 \quad \text{for } q \equiv 1 \pmod{8} \text{ or } q \equiv 3 \pmod{8}, \\ (ii) \quad a^2 \leq 3D - 8 \quad \text{for } q \equiv 5 \pmod{8}.$$

Proof. Treating (5) as a congruence mod 4 we conclude by (8) that $q \equiv -1 \pmod{3}$. In the remainder of the proof we distinguish three cases and let p denote any odd prime.

1° $q = 8r + 1$. Using formula (7) we obtain

$$(11) \quad S_{4r+1} \cdot T_{4r} = -1 - (\lambda\lambda')^{4r}.$$

S_2 is a divisor of T_{4r} . Let $p | S_2$, $S_2 > 0$. Since $S_2 \equiv -1 \pmod{8}$ this number contains at least one prime factor not of the form $p \equiv 1 \pmod{4}$, which contradicts (11), where the right-hand side only has odd prime factors $p \equiv 1 \pmod{8}$. Consequently, $S_2 \leq -1$ since $S_2 = 1$ cannot occur, i.e.

$$a^2 \leq D - 2.$$

2° $q = 8r + 3$. Using (7) we obtain

$$(12) \quad S_{4r+2} \cdot T_{4r+1} = -1 - (\lambda\lambda')^{4r+1}.$$

Assume $p | S_2$. Then (12) implies

$$\left(\frac{-\lambda\lambda'}{p} \right) = \left(\frac{-a^2 - D}{p} \right) = 1 = \left(\frac{-2}{p} \right)$$

since $D \equiv a^2 \pmod{p}$, i.e. $p = 8h + 1$ or $8h + 3$. As in 1° we conclude

$$a^2 \leq D - 2.$$

3° $q = 8r + 5$. By (6) we find $T_{\frac{1}{2}(q+1)} \equiv 0 \pmod{8}$, implying $T_3 \equiv 0 \pmod{8}$. Hence $R_3 \equiv -2 \pmod{8}$. Now making use of (7) we get

$$(13) \quad S_{4r+3} \cdot T_{4r+2} = -1 - (\lambda\lambda')^{4r+2}.$$

$\frac{1}{2}R_3$ is an odd divisor of T_{4r+2} . Let $p | \frac{1}{2}R_3$, $R_3 > 0$. By (13) we deduce $p \equiv 1 \pmod{4}$, which contradicts the fact that $\frac{1}{2}R_3 \equiv -1 \pmod{4}$. Hence, as before, $\frac{1}{2}R_3 \leq -1$, i.e.

$$a^2 \leq 3D - 8.$$

Remark. I have not succeeded in proving a similar theorem for $q = 8r + 7$.

LEMMA 5. *The equation (3) has no solutions if*

$$D \equiv b \equiv -1 \pmod{3}.$$

Proof. If $a \equiv 0 \pmod{3}$, then (10) gives $b = 1$, contrary to the assumption. If $a^2 \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$, then $\lambda\lambda' \equiv 0 \pmod{3}$, but this is impossible on account of (5).

LEMMA 6. *A necessary condition for the solvability of (3) for $b = -1$ and $q = 8r + 7$ is that $q \equiv -1 \pmod{3}$ and either*

$$(i) \quad D \equiv 0 \pmod{3}$$

or

$$(ii) \quad a \equiv 0 \pmod{3}, \quad D \equiv 1 \pmod{3}.$$

Proof. In virtue of Lemma 2 we can not have $D \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$ and $a \not\equiv 0 \pmod{3}$. The assumption $D \equiv -1 \pmod{3}$ contradicts Lemma 5. As in Lemma 4 it is shown that $q \equiv -1 \pmod{3}$, i.e. $q \equiv -1 \pmod{24}$.

5. In this section we prove some further lemmas assuming $b = 1$.

LEMMA 7. *Let $p > 3$ be a prime dividing D , and assume that $q - 1 \equiv 0 \pmod{p - 1}$. Then the equation (3) is not satisfied with $b = 1$.*

For a proof see T. Nagell [7] or Ljunggren [3].

LEMMA 8. *If $D \equiv 6 \pmod{9}$ then the equation (3) is not satisfied with $b = 1$.*

For a proof see Ljunggren [3].

The next lemma is partly similar to Lemma 4.

LEMMA 9. *Necessary conditions for the solvability of (3) with $b = 1$ and $q \equiv \pm 3 \pmod{8}$ are*

$$(i) \quad a^2 \leq 3D + 8 \quad \text{for} \quad q \equiv 3 \pmod{8},$$

$$(ii) \quad a^2 \leq D - 2 \quad \text{for} \quad q \equiv -3 \pmod{8}.$$

Proof. 1° $q = 8r + 3$. At first we prove that $\lambda\lambda' \equiv 1 \pmod{4}$. If $\lambda\lambda' \equiv -1 \pmod{4}$ we would have $S_2 = 2\lambda\lambda' - D \equiv 3 \pmod{8}$. By (7) we obtain

$$S_{4r+2} \cdot T_{4r+1} = 1 - (\lambda\lambda')^{4r+1}.$$

S_2 is a divisor of S_{4r+2} . Let p be an odd prime dividing S_2 . This implies

$$\left(\frac{\lambda\lambda'}{p}\right) = \left(\frac{a^2 + D}{p}\right) = \left(\frac{2}{p}\right) = 1,$$

i.e. $p = 8t \pm 1$, contradicting $S_2 \equiv 3 \pmod{8}$.

We proceed now by assuming $\lambda\lambda' \equiv 1 \pmod{4}$. Treating (5) as a congruence mod 4 we obtain $T_{4r+1} \equiv 0 \pmod{2}$, and hence $q \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$. By (6) we have further

$$T_{4r+2} \cdot S_{4r+1} = 1 + (\lambda\lambda')^{4r+1}.$$

Now $\frac{1}{2}R_3$ is an odd divisor of S_{4r+1} . If $p \mid \frac{1}{2}R_3$, $R_3 > 0$, we get

$$\left(\frac{-\lambda\lambda'}{p}\right) = \left(\frac{-a^2 - D}{p}\right) = \left(\frac{-D}{p}\right) = 1,$$

since $a^2 \equiv 3D \pmod{p}$. This implies $\left(\frac{-3}{p}\right) = 1$, i.e. $p = 6k + 1$. Consequently $a^2 - 3D = 8(6k_1 + 1)$, a contradiction mod 3, and then

$$a^2 \leq 3D + 8.$$

Remark. The congruences $q \equiv 3 \pmod{8}$ and $q \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$ give $q \equiv 19 \pmod{24}$.

2° $q = 8r + 5$. By (6) we obtain

$$(14) \quad T_{4r+3} \cdot S_{4r+2} = 1 + (\lambda\lambda')^{4r+2}.$$

S_2 is a divisor of S_{4r+2} . Let the odd prime $p \mid S_2$, $S_2 > 0$. Then by (14) $p \equiv 1 \pmod{4}$. But $S_2 \equiv -1 \pmod{4}$, and hence

$$a^2 \leq D - 2.$$

Remark. It is possible to obtain a somewhat better result in case $q \equiv -1 \pmod{3}$. By (5) we then conclude $\lambda\lambda' \equiv 3 \pmod{8}$, giving $\frac{1}{2}T_3 = \frac{1}{8}(3a^2 - D) \equiv -1 \pmod{4}$. Now $\frac{1}{2}T_3$ is a divisor of T_{4r+3} , and therefore $\frac{1}{2}T_3 \equiv 1 \pmod{4}$ in virtue of (14). Consequently,

$$a^2 \leq \frac{1}{2}(D + 8) \quad \text{for} \quad q \equiv 5 \pmod{24}.$$

LEMMA 10. *A necessary condition for the solvability of (3) with $b = 1$ and $q \equiv \pm 7 \pmod{24}$ is*

$$a^2 < \frac{1}{2}(D - 4) \quad \text{for} \quad q \equiv -7 \pmod{8},$$

$$a^2 \leq D - 2 \quad \text{for} \quad q \equiv 7 \pmod{8}.$$

Proof. 1° $q = 24h + 17$. By (6) we have $T_3 \equiv 2 \pmod{4}$, which by (5) implies $\lambda\lambda' \equiv 3 \pmod{8}$. Hence $\frac{1}{2}T_3 \equiv -1 \pmod{4}$. Let the odd prime $p \mid T_3$, $T_3 > 0$. On account of (6) we get further $\frac{1}{2}T_3 \equiv 1 \pmod{4}$. Consequently, $a^2 < \frac{1}{2}(D - 4)$.

2° $q = 24h + 7$. Treating (5) as a congruence mod 8, we get by (9) that $T_{12h+3} \equiv T_3 \equiv 0 \pmod{4}$. Equation (6) may be written

$$(15) \quad T_{12h+4} \cdot S_{12h+3} = 1 - (\lambda\lambda')^{12h+3}.$$

S_2 is a divisor of T_{12h+4} . By (15) we get, putting $p | S_2, S_2 > 0$

$$1 = \left(\frac{-\lambda\lambda'}{p} \right) = \left(\frac{-a^2 - D}{p} \right) = \left(\frac{-2}{p} \right),$$

i.e.

$$p = 8t+1 \quad \text{or} \quad 8t+3.$$

However, from $T_2 \equiv 0 \pmod{4}$, we find $S_2 = \frac{1}{2}(a^2 - D) \equiv -1 \pmod{8}$. Consequently, $a^2 \leq D - 2$, since $a^2 - D = 2$ contradicts $D \equiv 3 \pmod{8}$.

6. Proof of the two theorems. At first we prove Theorem 1. There are only a finite number of possibilities for a if $q \equiv \pm 1 \pmod{24}$. In case $b = -1$ this fact follows from Lemmas 4 and 6, and in case $b = 1$ from Lemmas 9 and 10. If there are any solutions these can be effectively found by use of Cassels' theorem mentioned in the introduction. We have only to write (1) in the form

$$x^2 - (a^2 + D) \left(\frac{a^2 + D}{4} \right)^{q-1} = -D.$$

In order to prove Theorem 2 we note that $D \equiv 51 \pmod{72}$ implies $D \equiv 6 \pmod{9}$. Lemma 8 then shows that (3) cannot be satisfied for $b = 1$. In case $b = -1$ Lemmas 6 and 4 show that $q \equiv -1 \pmod{24}$ is the only possibility. Then we may use Cassels' lemma. Our two theorems are proved.

EXAMPLE. $x^2 + 11 = 4y^2$. Here $h = 1$. Since $D \equiv -1 \pmod{3}$ Lemma 3 shows that $b = 1$. Utilizing Lemma 9 we obtain the following bounds for a^2 : $a^2 \leq 25$ for $q \equiv 3 \pmod{8}$ and $a^2 \leq 9$ for $q \equiv 5 \pmod{8}$. Here $a = 3$ is excluded by Lemma 1. The value $a^2 = 25$ gives $\lambda\lambda' = 9$, i.e. $x^2 + 11 = 4 \cdot 3^{2q}$, an equation with $q = 1$ as the only integer solution. It then remains $a^2 = 1$ with $\lambda\lambda' = 3$, i.e. $x^2 + 11 = 4 \cdot 3^q$. In order to avoid the laborious calculations in using Cassels' lemma, we prefer an application of Skolem's p -adic method. Here we have

$$\lambda^4 = \left(\frac{1}{2}(1 + \sqrt{-11}) \right)^4 = 1 + 5\xi, \quad \xi = \frac{1}{2}(1 - \sqrt{-11}).$$

Then we must solve the equation

$$(16) \quad \frac{1}{2}(x + \sqrt{-11}) = \left(\frac{1}{2}(1 + \sqrt{-11}) \right)^{4z+r}, \quad r = 1 \text{ or } 3.$$

By (16) we get

$$\frac{1}{2}(x + \sqrt{-11}) = (1 + 5\xi)^z \left(\frac{1}{2}(1 + \sqrt{-11}) \right)^r.$$

It is easily seen that $r = 3$ can be excluded mod 5. In case $r = 1$ we obtain the following 5-adic development:

$$(17) \quad 0 = z(z-1) + 5(\quad) + 5^2(\quad) + \dots$$

According to a theorem due to Th. Skolem [10] this equation (17) has at most two solutions in rational integers z . Now $z = 0$ and $z = 1$ are solutions. For $z = 1$ we get $y = 5$ and

$$31^2 + 11 = 4 \cdot 3^5$$

as the only solution in case $q \equiv \pm 3 \pmod{8}$. Lemma 10 gives no further solutions. Hence:

The equation $x^2 + 11 = 4y^2$ has no solutions in rational integers x and y and primes $q \not\equiv \pm 1 \pmod{24}$, with the exception of $q = 5$, where $y = 3$ is the only solution.

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