

Improved Reversible and Quantum Circuits for Karatsuba-Based Integer Multiplication

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Abstract

Integer arithmetic is the underpinning of many quantum algorithms, with applications ranging from Shor’s algorithm over HHL for matrix inversion to Hamiltonian simulation algorithms. A basic objective is to keep the required resources to implement arithmetic as low as possible. This applies in particular to the number of qubits required in the implementation as for the foreseeable future this number is expected to be small. We present a reversible circuit for integer multiplication that is inspired by Karatsuba’s recursive method. The main improvement over circuits that have been previously reported in the literature is an asymptotic reduction of the amount of space required from $O(n^{1.585})$ to $O(n^{1.427})$. This improvement is obtained in exchange for a small constant increase in the number of operations by a factor less than 2 and a small asymptotic increase in depth for the parallel version. The asymptotic improvement are obtained from analyzing pebble games on complete ternary trees.

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1 Introduction

Multiplication of integers is a fundamental operation on a classical computer. In quantum computing, integer multiplication is also an important operation and indeed is at the core of what needs to be performed in order to carry out Shor’s algorithm for factoring integers [30]. While much effort has been spent on optimizing the arithmetic needed to implement Shor’s algorithm—e.g., via constant optimization [26], see also [27]—the basic underlying method for multiplication considered in most works is the simple school method for multiplying integers that runs in time $O(n^2)$ elementary operations. Elementary operations are here counted e.g. as the total number of Toffoli gates, which form a universal gate set. Significantly less effort has been spent on leveraging methods for fast multiplication which are well known classically, e.g., Karatsuba’s method and other recursive methods.

Shor’s factoring algorithm is special in that only multiplication by constants are required, which leads to significant simplifications in the circuits to implement Shor’s algorithm [30]. For more general period finding problems, e.g., Hallgren’s algorithm [15] and generalizations



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to computing the unit group in number fields of arbitrary degree [14] and to computing class numbers and the principal ideal problem [6], more advanced arithmetic is required. This includes polynomial arithmetic which as a primitive building block requires integer multiplication $|x, y, 0\rangle \mapsto |x, y, xy\rangle$ where inputs x and y can *both* be in superposition.

Another example is the quantum algorithm for nonlinear structures [10]: a full circuit level implementation of this algorithm will require the implementation of polynomial arithmetic over a finite field, which typically is reduced to integer arithmetic. Further examples where integer multiplication is a useful primitive is to implement a fast quantum Fourier transform: it was shown in [12] that the computation of the Fourier transform can be reduced to integer multiplication, i.e., any fast algorithm for this problem gives rise to a quantum circuit for computing a Fourier transform on a quantum computer with the same time complexity.

Finally, the implementation of arithmetic functions such as integer multiplication is an important primitive for quantum simulation algorithms [5, 4, 23]. Once a full gate level implementation of the quantum simulation algorithms is performed, arguably arithmetic operations are useful to implement the indexing functions of row- and column-computable matrices that appear in the decomposition of the Hamiltonian that is to be simulated. A similar reasoning applies to HHL type algorithms for matrix inversion [16, 11], where the implementation of the underlying matrix may involve arithmetic operations such as integer multiplication for the computation of the entries.

A simple approach to integer multiplication is to reduce it to addition in a straightforward way by using n adders as in the familiar school method. If we let $Size(n)$ denotes the total size of a circuit—measured as the total number of Toffoli gates—where n is the bit-size of the numbers to be multiplied. $Depth(n)$ denotes the depth of the circuit, allowing gates to be applied in parallel, and $Space(n)$ denotes the total space requirements including input qubits, output qubits, and ancillas (i.e., qubits needed for intermediate scratch space), then the school method requires $Size(n) = Depth(n) = O(n^2)$ and $Space(n) = O(n)$.

Classically, Karatsuba’s algorithm allows to reduce the circuit size from $O(n^2)$ to $O(n^{\log_2 3})$ by recursively decomposing the problem for size n into 3 subproblems of size $n/2$. However, there is an issue with applying this algorithm to the quantum case: while it is still possible to obtain a size reduction to $Size(n) = O(n^{\log_2 3})$, in the straightforward way of circuitizing the recursion also the space complexity increases, so that overall $O(n^{\log_2 3})$ qubit are required. This was observed in the earlier work [21], where also an improvement of the total depth to $O(n)$ was obtained, however, the number of qubits still scaled as $O(n^{\log_2 3})$.

As quantum memory is a very scarce commodity and indeed early quantum computers are expected to only support a few hundred or perhaps thousands of logical qubits, it is paramount to save space as much as possible. This leads to the question:

Can recursions be leveraged on a quantum computer in such a way that the space overhead does not grow as the total size of the circuit?

Or in a small variation of the above question: when considering the *volume* of a quantum circuit computing the integer product of two n bit numbers, where volume is defined as the circuit depth \times circuit width, is it possible to compute this product in a volume that is strictly smaller than $O(n^{1+\log_2 3})$ which was the previously best volume?

Our results. The results of [21] and the results derived in this paper can be compared as in the following table. Here “parallel” and “sequential” refer to different ways the recursion was unraveled in [21], namely whether each of the 3 circuits for subroutine calls to problems of half size are arranged in parallel or are executed in sequence.

Sequential [21]	Parallel [21]	This paper
$Size(n) = O(n^{\log_2 3})$	$Size(n) = O(n^{\log_2 3})$	$Size(n) = O(n^{\log_2 3})$
$Depth(n) = O(n^{\log_2 3})$	$Depth(n) = O(n)$	$Depth(n) = O(n^{1.158})$
$Space(n) = O(n^{\log_2 3})$	$Space(n) = O(n^{\log_2 3})$	$Space(n) = O(n^{1.427})$

Our main result is to give an affirmative answer to the question whether it is possible to implement recursions in less space than the circuit size dictates. More precisely, our implementation requires $O(n^{1.427})$ qubits which improves slightly over $O(n^{\log_2 3}) = O(n^{1.585})$, as recorded up to 3 digits to the right of the decimal point in the last column of the table. For the total volume, defined as $Depth(n) \times Space(n)$, there is actually no advantage over [21] as it turns out that this quantity is asymptotically equal to $O(n^{1+\log_2 3})$.

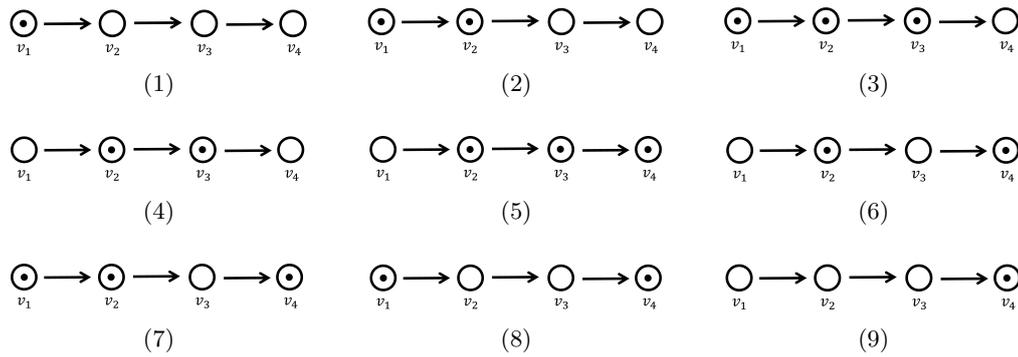
To achieve the bounds shown in the table, we apply a pebble game analysis of the recurrence structure of the Karatsuba algorithm. In this case the underlying graph that needs to be pebbled with as few pebbles as possible is a complete ternary tree. Perhaps surprisingly, even for seemingly simple graphs such as the complete k -ary trees, where $k = 2$ or $k = 3$, the optimal pebble game for a fixed number of pebbles seems not to be known. We provide a heuristic which allows to pebble the ternary tree corresponding to a bitsize of n using $O(n \frac{3}{2}^{(\log_2 3)/(2 \log_2 3 - 1) \log_2(n)}) = O(n^{1.427})$ pebbles. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first work that achieves an asymptotic improvement of the space complexity for integer multiplication while maintaining the $O(n^{\log_2 3})$ bound on the size of the quantum circuit.

Besides the mentioned work [21] which investigated Karatsuba-like circuits for integer multiplication, along similar lines there is also work for the case of binary multiplication, i.e., multiplication over the finite field \mathbb{F}_{2^n} . To analyze our algorithm we use the framework of pebble games as introduced by Bennett [3] to study space-time tradeoffs for reversible computations. The pebble games we study are played on directed acyclic graphs that have the structure of ternary trees. In related work [20] pebbling of other classes of trees has been considered, in particular that of complete binary trees.

2 Preliminaries

The underlying gate model. As with classical circuits, reversible functions can be constructed from universal gate sets. It is known [24] that the Toffoli gate which maps $(x, y, z) \mapsto (x, y, z \oplus xy)$, together with the controlled-NOT gate (CNOT) which maps $(x, y) \mapsto (x, x \oplus y)$ and the NOT gate which maps $x \mapsto x \oplus 1$, is universal for reversible computation. When moving from reversible to quantum computations, gate sets go beyond the set of classical gates in that they allow to create so-called superposition of inputs. For instance, popular choices of universal quantum gate sets are the so-called Clifford+ T gate set and the Toffoli+Hadamard gate set. Universality in this case means that it is possible to approximate any given target unitary operation that we intend to execute on a quantum computer by a finite-length sequence of operations over the given gate set. Herein the length of the sequence typically scales as a polynomial in $\log(1/\varepsilon)$ where ε is the target accuracy of the approximation, a result which has been established for the Clifford+ T gate set [18, 29, 25] as well as probabilistic variants thereof [7, 8].

We point out that it is known that the Toffoli gate has an exact realization over Clifford+ T [24], so all circuits for integer multiplication presented in this paper can be exactly implemented over this gate set as well. Furthermore, we refer the reader to [1] for more information



■ **Figure 1** A pebble game played on a directed graph on 4 vertices. If 4 pebbles are available, one can simply proceed from left to right, pebbling one vertex at a time until the rightmost vertex is reached. After these 4 steps, all pebbles except the one on the right are removed, requiring a total of 7 steps. If only 3 pebbles are available, the optimal strategy for this game requires 9 moves which are shown in the subfigures (1) until (9).



■ **Figure 2** Visualization of three different pebble strategies. (a) Bennett's strategy; (b) middle-ground heuristic strategy; (c) Lange-McKenzie-Tapp method.

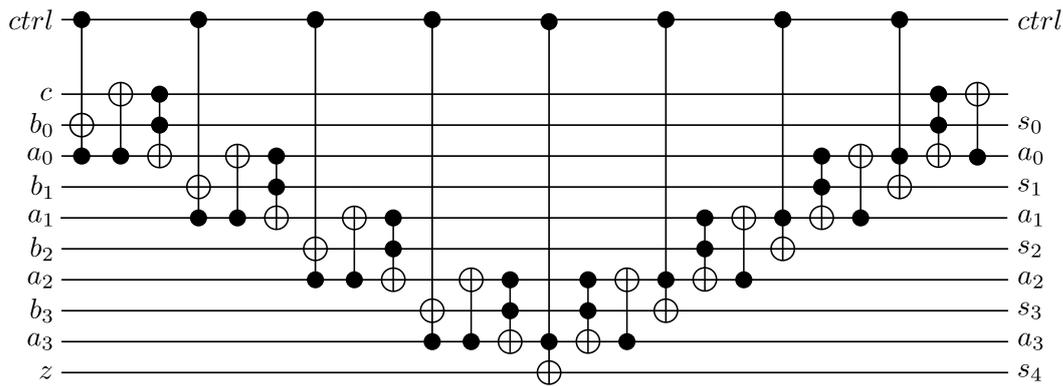
about the definition of T -depth and possible time-space tradeoffs for implementing Toffoli gates and other reversible gates over the Clifford+ T gate set.

Pebble games. To study space-time tradeoffs in reversible circuit synthesis, Bennett [3] introduced reversible pebble games. This allow to explore ways to save on scratch space at the expense of recomputing intermediate results.

A pebble game is defined on a directed acyclic graph $G = (V, E)$, where $V_{in} \subseteq V$ is a special subset of vertices of in-degree 0, and $V_{out} \subseteq V$ is a subset of vertices of out-degree 0. In each step of the game, a pebble can either be put or be removed on a vertex v , provided that for all $w \in V$ such that $(w, v) \in E$ already a pebble has been placed on w . Typically, a total bound $S \geq 0$ on the number of available pebbles is given. Vertices in V_{in} can be pebbled at any time, provided enough pebbles remain. The task is to put a pebble on all vertices of V_{out} and to do so in the minimal number of moves possible. An example is given in Figure 1. Here $V = \{v_1, v_2, v_3, v_4\}$, $V_{in} = \{v_1\}$, $V_{out} = \{v_4\}$. It turns out that the optimal strategy for $S = 3$ requires 9 steps and the corresponding moves are shown in subfigures (1) until (9).

For a more formal treatment and further background information about pebble games we refer to [9]. If the graph on which the pebble game is played is a line, then the optimal pebbling strategies for a given space bound S can be computed in practice quite well using dynamical programming [19]. For general graphs, finding the optimal strategy is PSPACE complete [9], i.e., it is unlikely to be solvable efficiently.

In Figure 2 we display three different pebbling strategies that all succeed in computing a pebble game for the special case of linear graph, similar to one shown in Figure 1, but for much larger number of vertices. In Figure 2 time is displayed from left to right, vertices are



■ **Figure 3** Controlled ripple adder based on Cuccaro et al. [13].

displayed vertically, with the vertex in V_{in} on the bottom and the vertex in V_{out} on top. The strategy shown in (a) corresponds to Bennett’s compute-copy-uncompute method [2] where the time cost is linear. The strategy shown in (c) corresponds to the Lange-McKenzie-Tapp method [22] that resembles a fractal. In (b), a possible middle ground is shown, namely an incremental heuristic that first uses up as many pebbles as possible, then aggressively cleans up all bits except for the last bit, and the repeats the process until it ultimately runs out of pebbles.

For a line graph with $|V| = n$, the Lange-McKenzie-Tapp strategy requires only $O(\log(n))$ pebbles and has an overall number of $O(n \log(n))$ steps, i.e., it is known that the line can be optimally pebbled in a number of steps that scales polynomially with the number of vertices.

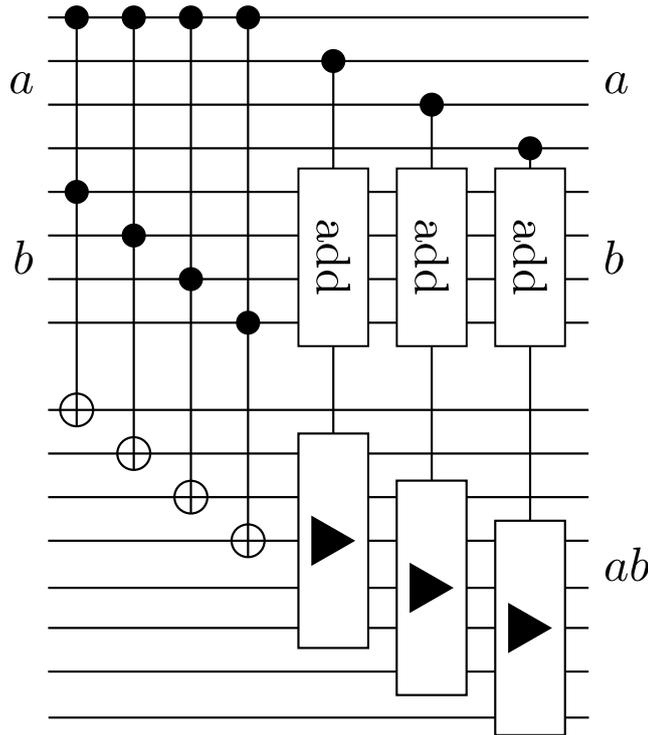
If the underlying graph G is a complete binary tree on n vertices such a polynomial bound is unfortunately not known. While it is known that the smallest number of pebbles required to pebble a binary tree of height h is given by $S = \log(h) + \Theta(\log^*(h))$, where \log^* denotes the iterated logarithm, to our knowledge the best upper bound on the number of steps is $n^{O(\log \log(n))}$, given in [20]. It is an open problem if a binary tree on n vertices can be pebbled with a polynomial number of steps provided that only S pebbles are available, where S is as above. In this paper, we consider complete ternary trees as they arise naturally from the Karatsuba recursion. However, we do not strive for the optimal strategy and are content with a strategy that is good enough to give an asymptotic improvement.

3 Addition

Circuits for multiplication of integers naturally rely on circuits to add integers as subroutines, hence we first discuss circuits to perform addition. The adder shown in Fig. 3 is a circuit described in Cuccaro et al. [13] and forms the basis of simple multiplication circuits.

Note that not all the optimizations described in [13] are desirable in our context as we wish to minimize T gates when adding controls to the overall circuit. It can be observed that that every Toffoli gate in the basic circuit given in [13] shares its controls with another. We can therefore use “directional” Toffoli gates [28]. Each directional Toffoli uses four T -gates, requires one ancilla and has a T -depth of one. This circuit contains a total of $2n$ Toffoli gates and they are all in series. The adder therefore has $8n$ T -Gates and a total T -depth of $2n$.

To implement a controlled adder we further note that not all gates in this circuit need be controlled: controlling a set of gates which if removed would transform the circuit into the identity is sufficient. In the case of the in-place adder the MAJ and UMA subcircuits that



■ **Figure 4** Controlled addition multiplier. In the above circuit notation the triangle designates the modified bits in the adder. The circuit consists of a sequence of controlled additions as in Fig. 3 with the exception of the first block which can be replaced by a cascade of Toffoli gates as the ancilla qubits at the bottom are initialized in the zero state. The total gate count scales asymptotically as $O(n^2)$.

were introduced in [13] can be made to cancel by removing one gate each. Figure 3 shows the resulting circuit. The circuit has a total number of $4n$ Toffoli gates, all of which are in series. Therefore, the total T -count of the controlled adder is $16n$ and the total T -depth is $4n$.

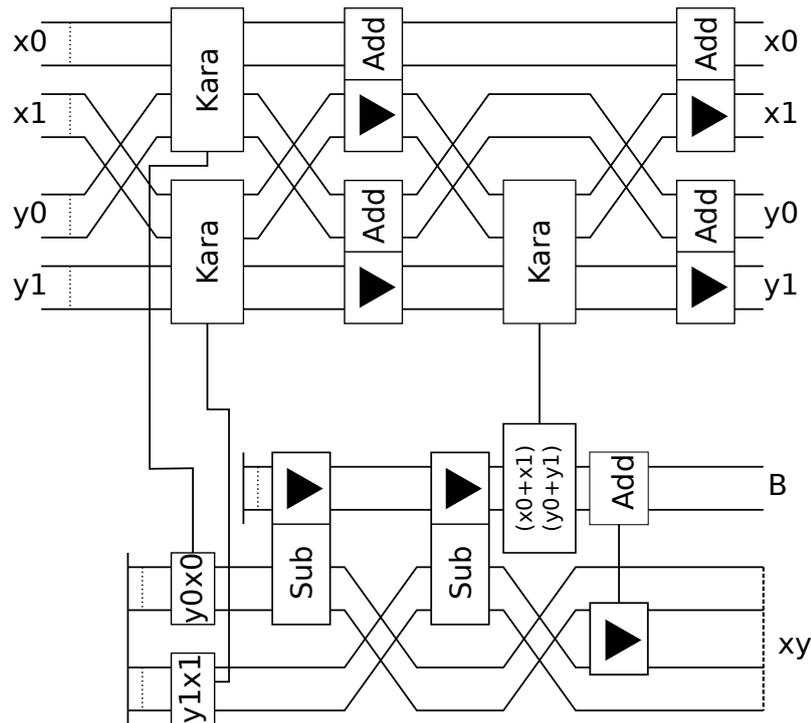
A simple $O(n^2)$ implementation of multiplication as a controlled addition circuit is shown in Fig. 4. Given two numbers as bit strings a and b their product can be found by repeatedly shifting forward by one and adding b to the result controlled on the next bit in a . The overall circuit is an out-of-place multiplier that uses only 1 additional ancilla for the adder circuits.

This circuit takes n Toffoli gates to copy down the initial value. It then uses $n - 1$ controlled in place addition circuits to produce the final value. If we define A_n^{ctrl} to be the Toffoli count for a controlled adder of size n we get $M_n = n + (n - 1)A_n^{ctrl}$, where M_n is the gate count for a controlled addition based multiplication circuit of size n . We know from the above discussion that the controlled addition circuit uses $4n$ Toffoli gates. This yields a total Toffoli count of the integer multiplication of

$$M_n = 4n^2 - 3n, \quad (1)$$

and a space complexity that scales linear with the number of qubits.

The rest of the paper will consider methods to reduce this total gate count to $O(n^{\log_2 3})$ while improving the amount of ancillas that are required to do so when compared to prior approaches.



■ **Figure 5** Karatsuba multiplication circuit. Besides the output (denoted “ xy ”) this circuit outputs also the intermediate result “ B ” as in the Karatsuba recursion $xy = 2^n A + 2^{\lfloor n/2 \rfloor} B + C$ mentioned in the text. In order to remove B , we copy out the result “ xy ” and run the circuit backward. The main contribution of this paper is an analysis on when to perform this uncomputation as a function of the level of the recursion. Note that the final two adders return the inputs to their original state in order to save space. These adders can be removed at the cost of additional garbage bits.

4 Reversible Karatsuba multiplier

The following reversible algorithm for Karatsuba improves upon previous work [21]. It does this primarily by using in place addition to minimize garbage growth at each level. It also attempts to choose optimal splits instead of dividing the number in half at each step, This is helpful when the integer size is not a power of 2. Further an asymptotic improvement in space use (yielding as well an asymptotic improvement in the space-time product), is shown by using pebble games in the analysis.

Let $n \geq 1$ and let x and y be n -bit integers. The well-known Karatsuba [17] algorithm is based on the observation that by writing $x = x_1 2^{\lfloor n/2 \rfloor} + x_0$ and $y = y_1 2^{\lfloor n/2 \rfloor} + y_0$ the product xy can be evaluated as $xy = 2^n A + 2^{\lfloor n/2 \rfloor} B + C$, where

$$\begin{aligned} A &= x_1 y_1, \\ B &= (x_0 + x_1)(y_0 + y_1) - x_0 y_0 - x_1 y_1, \\ C &= x_0 y_0. \end{aligned}$$

Note that computation of A , B , and C only requires multiplication of integers that have bits size $n/2$, i.e., half the bit size of x and y . The final addition is carried out as the addition of n bit integers.

4.1 Analysis

Note that the cost for the computation of A , B , and C are 3 multiplications and four additions. Note further that the additions to compose the final result do not have to be carried out as the bit representation of xy is the concatenation of the bit representations of A , B , and C . For $m \geq 1$, let M_m^g denote the Toffoli cost of a circuit that multiplies m -bit inputs x and y using ancillas, i.e., a circuit that maps $(x, y, 0, 0) \mapsto (x, y, g(x, y), xy)$, where xy is a $2m$ -bit output, and $g(x, y)$ is an garbage output on $k \geq 1$ bits. Furthermore, denote by A_m the cost for an (in-place) adder of two m -bit numbers. It is known that A_m can be bounded by at most $2m$ Toffoli gates. Let K_n denote the number of Toffoli gates that arise in the quantum Karatsuba algorithm (See Fig. 5). The outputs of one step of the recursion are $x_0, x_1, y_0, y_1, x_0y_0, x_1y_1$, and xy . It is easy to see that allowing garbage, K_n^g can be implemented using 3 multipliers of half the bit size, 4 in-place adders of size n and 4 in place adders of size $n/2$ (note the subtracters are just reversed adders). The base case is a multiplier for two one-bit numbers which can be done with one Toffoli gate, i.e., $K_1^g = 1$. We obtain the following recursion:

$$K_n^g = 3K_{n/2}^g + 4(A_n + A_{n/2}); \quad K_1^g = 1. \quad (2)$$

For the overall clean implementation of the Karatsuba algorithm we first run this circuit forward, copy out the final result using n CNOTs, and then run the whole circuit backward. This leads to an overall cost of $K_n = 2K_n^g$ and n CNOTs. For the moment we focus on the Toffoli cost only. By expansion we obtain that:

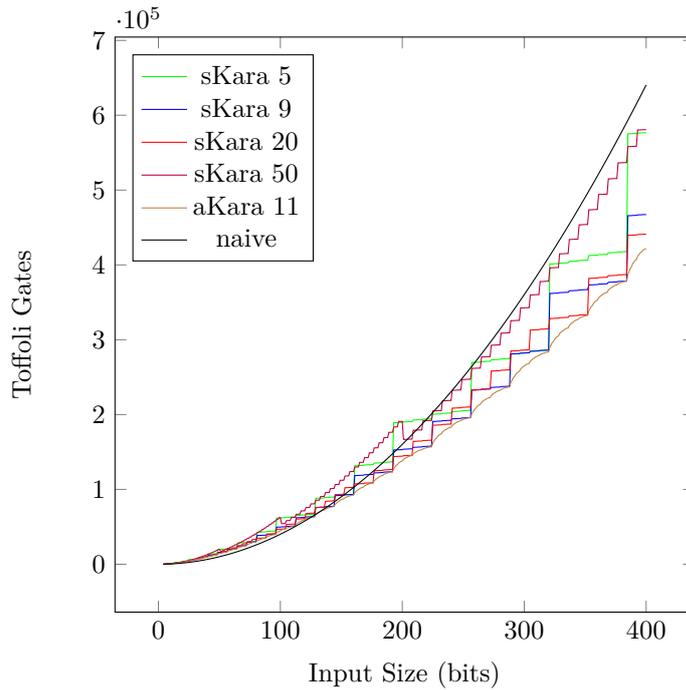
$$\begin{aligned} K_n^g &= 3^{\log_2(n)} K_1^g + 4(A_n + A_{n/2}) + 12(A_{n/2} + A_{n/4}) \\ &\quad + \dots + 4 \cdot 3^{\log_2(n)-1} (A_2 + A_1). \end{aligned} \quad (3)$$

Using that the Toffoli cost of $A_{n/2^i}$ is $2(n/2^i)$, we obtain for the overall Toffoli cost the following bound:

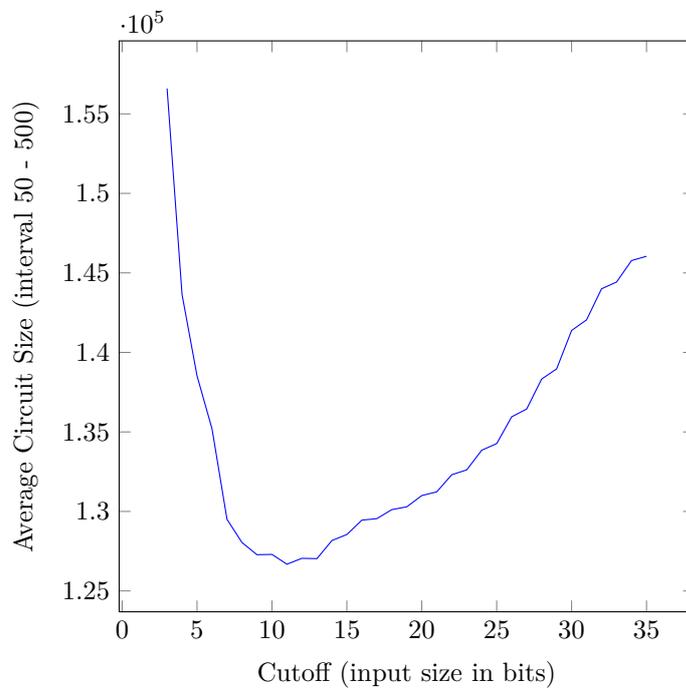
$$\begin{aligned} K_n &= 2 \left(3^{\log_2 n} + 4 \sum_{i=0}^{\log_2 n - 1} 3^i 2(3n/2^i) \right) \\ &= 2n^{\log_2 3} + 48n \left(\frac{1 - (3/2)^{\log_2 n}}{1 - 3/2} \right) \\ &= 2n^{\log_2 3} + 96n \left((3/2)^{\log_2 n} - 1 \right) \leq 98n^{\log_2 3}. \end{aligned} \quad (4)$$

This bound can be improved by replacing the recursive call to Karatsuba with naive multiplication once a certain cutoff has been reached. In Fig. 6 we provide a comparison of various cutoff values (the naive method based on eq. (1) is also plotted for reference).

Another way to improve this algorithm is to attempt to choose more intelligent splits rather than always splitting the inputs in half at each level. This is important because the bit length of the numbers we are adding together may not be a power of two so dividing the input in two at each level might not be optimal. In Fig. 6 the line plotted as **aKara11** shows the result of using the optimal splits at each level. These were found by a simple dynamic program which evaluated the total gate size for every possible split at every level and chose the optimal ones. Using these methods we find an optimal cutoff value of 11 (see Fig. 7).



■ **Figure 6** Plot of circuit sizes versus input size for various various Karatsuba cutoffs. The Legend shows the implementation (skara for the simple version and aKara for the adaptive cutoff) as well as a number indicating the cutoff size. For instance for a bit-size of $n = 400$ the naive method requires about $400n^2 = 640,000$ Toffoli gates, whereas the best strategy **aKara11** found by our search requires only about 422,000 Toffoli gates.



■ **Figure 7** Average circuit size over the interval 50-500 for various cutoff values.

4.2 Time-space tradeoffs

We see in Figs. 6 and 9 that there are trade-offs available between circuits size and gate count available by changing the cutoff value. A higher cutoff value results in a larger naive multiplication circuits which are much more space efficient.

The reversible pebble game may be used to gain an asymptotic improvement in the space required to implement this algorithm. Note the tree structure of the recursive dependencies shown in Fig. 11. We find a level such that the size of each node's subtree is approximately equal to the size of the sum of all nodes at that level and above. Then for each node at that level in sequence compute the node and uncompute all nodes below it.

For the Karatsuba circuit on input of size n at a level x in the tree there are 3^x nodes of size $2^{-x}n$ for a total cost of

$$n \left(\frac{3}{2}\right)^x.$$

So the total cost of the full tree is given by

$$n \sum_{i=0}^N \left(\frac{3}{2}\right)^i,$$

where $N = \log_2 n$. To pebble the underlying ternary tree, we would like to break the tree into approximately equal sized subtrees at some level. Each tree at that level will be computed then uncomputed leaving only the top node. To minimize space we will choose the size of these subtrees to be approximately equal to the remaining size of the tree above them. In order to find the height k of such a tree we set:

$$\sum_{i=0}^{N-k-1} \left(\frac{3}{2}\right)^i = \frac{1}{2^{N-k}} \sum_{i=0}^{k-1} \left(\frac{3}{2}\right)^i.$$

Since this is a geometric series we can use the identity $\sum_{k=0}^{n-1} r^k = \frac{1-r^n}{1-r}$ which holds for all r and obtain

$$\frac{1 - 3/2^{N-k}}{1 - 3/2} = \frac{1}{2^{N-k}} \frac{1 - 3/2^k}{1 - 3/2}.$$

Rearranging terms, we obtain

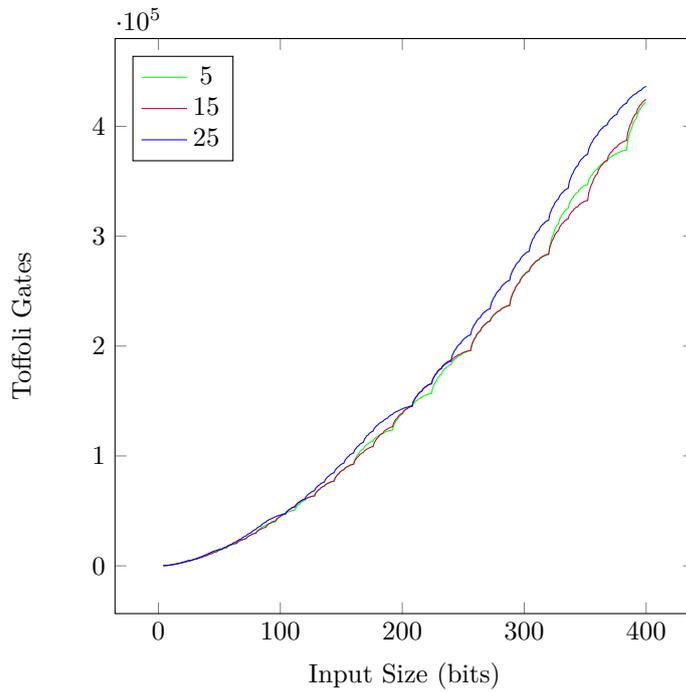
$$1 - 3/2^{N-k} = 2^{k-N} - \frac{3^k}{2^N}.$$

Since $k \leq N$ and since we want that $3/2^{N-k} \geq \frac{3^k}{2^N}$ a simple calculation shows that this will be the case for $k \leq \frac{N}{2 - \frac{\log 2}{\log 3}} = 0.731N$. The total space use without this optimization can be calculated as

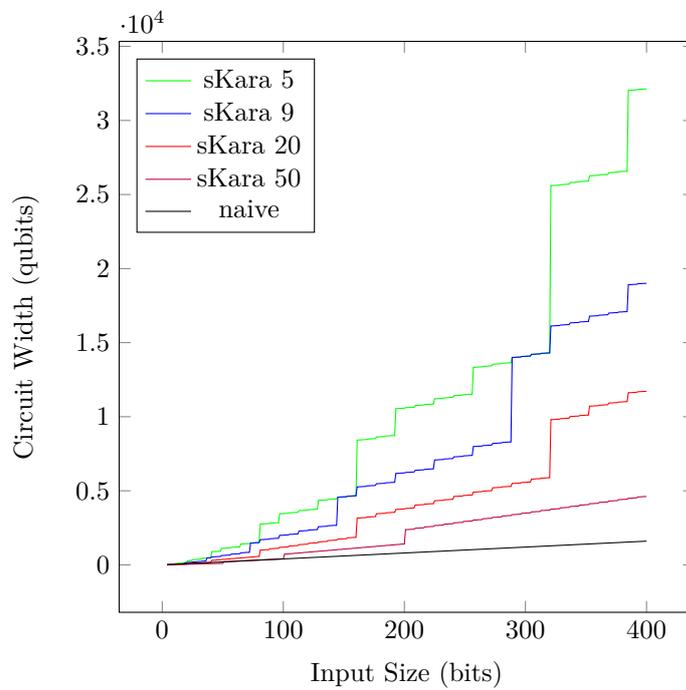
$$n \sum_{k=0}^{\log_2 n - 1} \left(\frac{3}{2}\right)^k = n \frac{1 - (3/2)^{\log_2 n}}{1 - 3/2}.$$

This gives space use of $O(n(3/2)^{\log_2 n})$ which is equivalent to $O(n^{\log_2 3})$ or approximately $O(n^{1.585})$. Using the above optimization we get space usage that can be bounded by

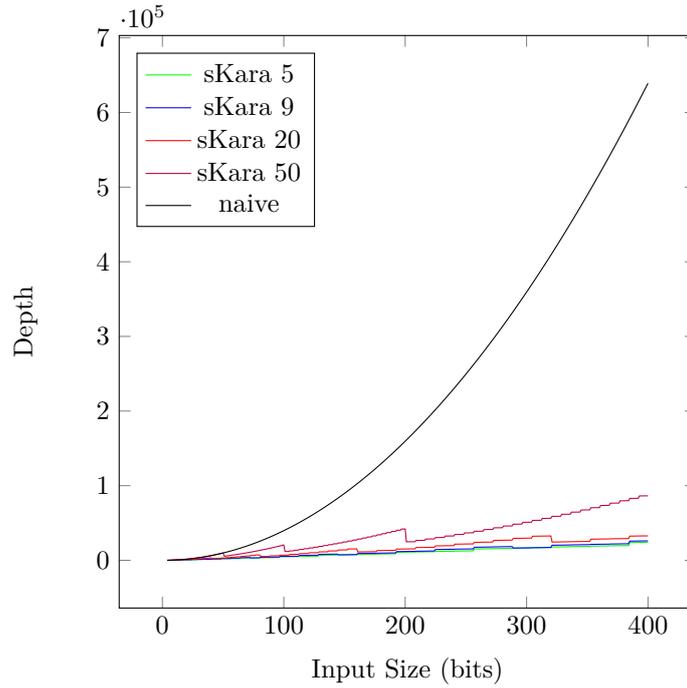
$$O\left(n \left(\frac{3}{2}\right)^{\left(\frac{\log 3}{2 \log 3 - \log 2} \log_2 n\right)}\right) \approx O(n^{1.427}).$$



■ **Figure 8** Comparison of various choices for adaptive cutoffs.



■ **Figure 9** Qubits used versus input size for various Karatsuba cutoffs.



■ **Figure 10** Toffoli depth versus input size for various Karatsuba cutoffs.

To find the depth of the circuit note that each node at level k must be computed sequentially. At level k the number of trees is

$$3^{\left(1 - \frac{\log 3}{2 \log 3 - \log 2}\right) \log_2 n}.$$

Each tree is of depth

$$\frac{n}{2^{1 - \frac{\log 3}{2 \log 3 - \log 2}}}.$$

This gives an overall depth for computing the k level of

$$n \left(\frac{3}{2}\right)^{\left(1 - \frac{\log 3}{2 \log 3 - \log 2}\right) \log_2 n} \approx n^{1.158}.$$

Overall, we get a space-depth volume of our circuit that scales as $n^{1+\log_2 3}$.

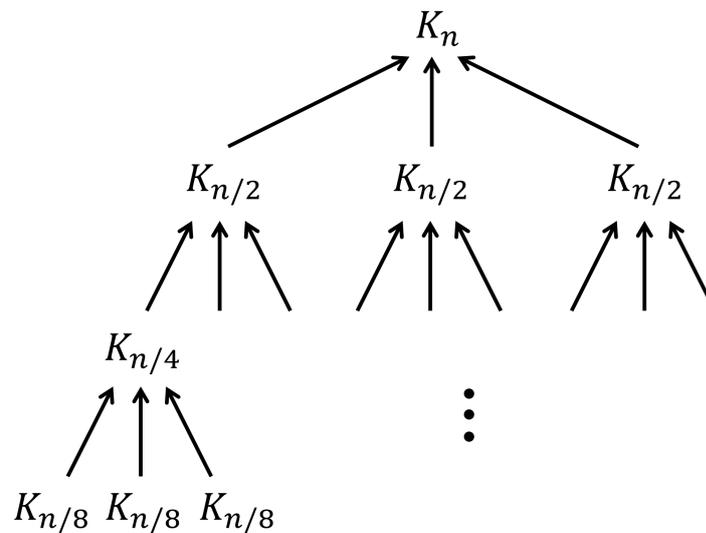
4.3 Generalization to other recursions

Assume that we are given a function with input size n which splits a problem into a total of a subproblems of size n/b where the total cost to subdivide and recombine is $O(n)$. Then the overall work to compute the function for a problem of size n is given by:

$$n \sum_{i=0}^N \left(\frac{a}{b}\right)^i.$$

Solving as above we have:

$$k \leq \frac{\log_b n}{2 - \frac{\log b}{\log a}}.$$



■ **Figure 11** Structure of a pebble game for recursively implementing the Karatsuba circuit. Here K_i for $i = 1, 2, \dots, n$ stands for the problem at level i , i.e., a problem with input-size i bits.

This means that our method is effective for recursive functions where the number of sub-problems is greater than the problem size reduction factor. This is intuitive since if the problem size reduction factor is equal to or greater than the number of sub-problems then adding up the total size of all nodes in levels above a given node will always result in a sum greater than or equal to the sum for that node's subtree.

By setting b in $\log b / \log a$ equal to 1 we get a square root reduction in space. This should be compared with a pebble game for complete binary graphs that was reported on in [20] in which a similar recursive structure was considered.

5 Conclusions and outlook

We considered the problem of optimizing the implementation of integer arithmetic on a quantum computer. Prior to our work, the state of the art was that in order to get a subquadratic overall gate count for a reversible multiplier a quite significant price had to be paid in that $O(n^{\log_2 3})$ qubits of memory were needed. By using pebble games played on the recursion tree, we find an improved number of ancillas needed for Karatsuba's recursion, which turns out to be upper bounded by $O(n^{1.427})$, while maintaining the asymptotic overall gate count of $O(n^{\log_2 3})$ for the number of gates. An interesting open problem is to apply these ideas to other recursions, which leads to the question of finding good pebbling strategies for trees of higher valency. Another open problem relates to the volume of the circuits for integer multiplication, specifically, whether it is possible to reduce the volume asymptotically below $O(n^{1+\log_2 3})$ and whether non-trivial space-time lower bounds for reversible integer multiplication can be shown that improve over the trivial $\Omega(n^2)$ lower bound for the volume.

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