

Quadrature Histograms in Maximum Likelihood Quantum State Tomography

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Quantum state tomography (QST) aims to determine the quantum state of a system from measured data and is an essential tool for quantum information. When dealing with quantum states of light, QST is done by measuring quantum noise statistics of the field amplitudes at different optical phases using homodyne detection. The quadrature-phase homodyne measurement outputs a continuous variable, but we can histogram the continuous measurements and make the statistical estimation faster without losing too much information. This paper investigate different ways to determine the quadrature histograms for optical homodyne QST.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Quantum information science and engineering is now at the point where rudimentary quantum computers are available in the laboratory and commercially [1–4]. Consequently, precise reconstruction and diagnostic tools used to estimate quantum states [5–12], processes [13–20], and measurements [21–24] are fundamental.

Quantum tomography techniques for quantum states of light became a subject of major interest in recent years, since quantum light sources are essential for implementations of continuous-variable (CV) quantum computation [25–29]. These source are also extensively exploited in quantum cryptography [30–34], quantum metrology [35, 36], state teleportation [37–39], dense coding [40, 41] and cloning [42, 43].

In quantum state tomography, we perform a large number of experimental measurements on a collection of quantum systems, all prepared in a same unknown state. The goal is to estimate this unknown state from the experimental measurements results. This estimation can be done from the experimental statistical data by different methods. In here we will be dealing with Maximum Likelihood estimation, that finds among all possible states, the one which maximizes the probability of obtaining the experimental data set in hand.

Quantum homodyne tomography is one of the most popular optical tomography techniques available. It rapidly became a versatile tool and has been applied in many different quantum optics experimental settings since it was proposed by Vogel and Risken in 1989 [5] and first implemented by Smithey *et al.* in 1993 [6]. This technique permits to characterize a light quantum state by means of the electric field quantum noise statistics collected through multiple phase-sensitive measurements.

A homodyne measurement generates a continuous value. While no data binning is necessarily needed, we

believe that the loss due to binning may be insignificant. On the other hand, discretization of the data by binning it reduces considerably the number of data, expediting the reconstruction algorithm. But how can we estimate the quadrature bin width, such that the bins are not too small nor too big? Bins should not be too small in order to guarantee a save in calculation time and memory. And bins should not be too large in order to avoid a lack of resolution, making the histogram a poor representation of the underlying distribution shape.

In this paper, we use numerical experiments to simulate optical homodyne tomography of quantum optical states and perform maximum likelihood tomography on the data with and without binning. When choosing a quadrature bin width, we use and compare two different ways: Scott's rule [44] and equation (5.136) from Leonhardt's book [45]. The paper is divide as follow: in Section II we review maximum likelihood in homodyne tomography. In Section III we describe our numerical experiments and present our results. In Section V we discuss the interpretation of our results and make some concluding remarks.

II. MAXIMUM LIKELIHOOD IN HOMODYNE TOMOGRAPHY

Let us consider N quantum systems, each of them prepared in an optical state described by a density matrix ρ_{true} . In each experimental run, we measure the field quadrature at different phases θ of a local oscillator, i.e. a reference system prepared in a high amplitude coherent state. Each measurement is associated with an observable $\hat{X}_\theta = \hat{X} \cos \theta + \hat{P} \sin \theta$, where \hat{X} and \hat{P} are the position and momentum operators, respectively. For a given phase θ , we measure a quadrature value x , resulting on a data set $\{(\theta_i, x_i)\}$.

The outcome of the i -th measurement is described by a positive-operator-valued measure (POVM) element $\Pi(x_i|\theta_i) = \Pi_i$. Given the data set $\{(\theta_i, x_i) : i = 1, \dots, N\}$,

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we can write the likelihood of a candidate density matrix ρ as

$$\mathcal{L}(\rho) = \prod_{i=1}^N \text{Tr}(\Pi_i \rho), \quad (1)$$

where $\text{Tr}(\rho \Pi_i)$ is the probability, when measuring with phase θ_i , to obtain outcome x_i , according to the candidate density matrix ρ .

MLE searches within the density matrix space the one that maximizes the likelihood in (1). Equivalently, it usually is more convenient to maximize the logarithm of the likelihood (the “log-likelihood”):

$$L(\rho) = \ln \mathcal{L}(\rho) = \sum_{i=1}^N \ln[\text{Tr}(\Pi_i \rho)], \quad (2)$$

which is maximized by the same density matrix as the likelihood. The MLE is essentially a function optimization problem, and since the log-likelihood function is concave, the convergence to an unique solution will be achieved by most iterative optimization methods.

In our numerical simulations, we use an algorithm for likelihood maximization that begins with interactions of the $R\rho R$ algorithm [46] followed by iterations of a regularized gradient ascent algorithm (RGA). The main reason to switch from one algorithm to another is the fact that an expressive slow-down is observed in the $R\rho R$ algorithm after about $(n+1)^2/4$ iterations. In the RGA, $\rho^{(k+1)}$ is parametrized as

$$\rho^{(k+1)} = \frac{(\sqrt{\rho^{(k)}} + A)(\sqrt{\rho^{(k)}} + A^\dagger)}{\text{Tr}[(\sqrt{\rho^{(k)}} + A)(\sqrt{\rho^{(k)}} + A^\dagger)]}, \quad (3)$$

where $\rho^{(k)}$ is the density found by the last interaction of $R\rho R$, and A may be any complex matrix of the same dimensions as ρ . Eq. (3) ensures that $\rho^{(k+1)}$ is a physical density matrix for any choosed A . The matrix A should maximize the quadratic approximation of the log-likelihood subject to $\text{Tr}(AA^\dagger) \leq u$, where u is a positive number adjusted by the algorithm to guarantee that the log-likelihood increases with each iteration. To halt the interactions, we use the stopping criterion of [47], $L(\rho_{\text{ML}}) - L(\rho^{(k)}) \leq 0.2$, where $L(\rho_{\text{ML}})$ is the maximum of the log-likelihood.

III. NUMERICAL EXPERIMENTS

Our numerical experiments simulate single mode optical homodyne measurements [48] of Gaussian cat and squeezed vacuum states. Each considered state is represented by a density matrix ρ_{true} in an n photon basis.

In order to calculate the probability to obtain homodyne measurement outcome x , when measuring state ρ_{true} with phase θ , we need to represent $\Pi(x|\theta)$ in the n photon basis considered. If $|x\rangle$ is the photon number

basis representation of the x-quadrature eigenstate with eigenvalue x , and $U(\theta)$ is the phase evolution unitary operator, then for an ideal homodyne measurement, we have $\Pi(x|\theta) = U(\theta)^\dagger |x\rangle\langle x| U(\theta)$. Moreover, it is more realistic to consider that homodyne detectors suffer from photon loss, by including that loss in the POVM elements. In this case, the projector operator is replaced by $\Pi(x|\theta) = \sum_{i=1}^n E_i(\eta)^\dagger U(\theta)^\dagger |x\rangle\langle x| U(\theta) E_i(\eta)$, where $\eta = 0.9$, which is typical for state-of-the-art homodyne detectors, is used in all simulations. Using this strategy, we are able to estimate the state of the system before the occurrence of the regarded loss. We use rejection sampling from the distribution given by $P(x|\theta)$ to guarantee random samples of homodyne measurement results [49].

To choose the phases at which the homodyne measurements are performed, we divide the upper-half-circle evenly among m phases between 0 and π and measure N/m times at each phase, where N is the total number of measurements. In all simulations, we use $m = 20$ and $N = 20,000$. To secure a single maximum of the likelihood function, we need an informationally complete set of measurement operators, which can be obtained if we use $n+1$ different phases to reconstruct a state that contains at most n photons [45].

To quantify how similar a reconstructed state, ρ , is of a true state, ρ_{true} , we use the fidelity, defined by:

$$F = \text{Tr} \sqrt{\rho^{1/2} \rho_{\text{true}} \rho^{1/2}}. \quad (4)$$

The fidelity shown in the graphs are obtained by calculating the arithmetic mean of the 100 fidelities, since we reconstruct each state 100 times, each time obtaining the fidelity between the reconstructed state and the true state. The uncertainty in each fidelity estimate (shown as error bars in the figures) is the standard deviation of the mean of the fidelity.

We calculate and compare the fidelity between the reconstructed state and the true state for three different situations: (i) the state is reconstructed using the continuous values of homodyne measurement results, that is without binning; (ii) the state is reconstructed using homodyne measurement data binning with a bin width given by Scott’s rule [44]; and (iii) the state is reconstructed using homodyne measurement data binning with a bin width suggested by Leonhardt in [45].

In 1979 Scott derived a formula for the asymptotically optimal bin width:

$$h^* = \left[\frac{6}{n \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} f'(x)^2 dx} \right]^{1/3}, \quad (5)$$

where $f(x)$ is a continuous probability density function with two continuous bounded derivatives and n is the sample size. [SG: n was earlier the maximum photon number, but I want to use \hat{n} as the photon number operator below. We need to sort out the notation.] For a Gaussian probability density, we have

$$\int_{-\infty}^{\infty} f'(x)^2 dx = \frac{1}{4\sqrt{\pi}\sigma^3}, \quad (6)$$

where σ is the standard deviation. Combining Eq. (5) and Eq. (6), we obtain the optimal bin width for normal data distribution:

$$h = 3.5 \sigma n^{-1/3}. \quad (7)$$

This formula is known as Scott's rule, and is optimal if the data is close to being normally distributed, but is also appropriate for most other distributions.

IV. ESTIMATING MEAN PHOTON NUMBER

[SG: Here are some quick and rough notes explaining how we can estimate the mean number of photons. They will need a lot of revision before they are really part of the paper. I am only putting them here, because it seemed like a convenient way to share with Hilma and Leonardo.] In order to use Leonhardt's advice for choosing the histogram bin width, we need to estimate the mean number $\langle n \rangle$ of photons in the measured state from the phase-quadrature data set. To find an estimator, we first compute the mean value of $(\hat{X}_\theta)^2$, averaged over θ , treating θ as if it is random and uniformly distributed between 0 and π .

$$\langle (\hat{X}_\theta)^2 \rangle = \langle \hat{X}^2 \cos^2 \theta + (\hat{X} \hat{P} + \hat{P} \hat{X}) \cos \theta \sin \theta + \hat{P}^2 \sin^2 \theta \rangle \quad (8)$$

The phase θ is independent of \hat{X} and \hat{P} , so we can compute the expectation over θ as

$$\langle (\hat{X}_\theta)^2 \rangle = \left\langle \int_0^\pi (\hat{X}^2 \cos^2 \theta + (\hat{X} \hat{P} + \hat{P} \hat{X}) \cos \theta \sin \theta + \hat{P}^2 \sin^2 \theta) \text{Prob}(\theta) d\theta \right\rangle \quad (9)$$

$$\langle (\hat{X}_\theta)^2 \rangle = \left\langle \int_0^\pi (\hat{X}^2 \cos^2 \theta + (\hat{X} \hat{P} + \hat{P} \hat{X}) \cos \theta \sin \theta + \hat{P}^2 \sin^2 \theta) \frac{1}{\pi} d\theta \right\rangle \quad (10)$$

$$= \left\langle \left(\hat{X}^2 \frac{\pi}{2} + \hat{P}^2 \frac{\pi}{2} \right) \frac{1}{\pi} \right\rangle \quad (11)$$

$$= \frac{1}{2} \langle \hat{X}^2 + \hat{P}^2 \rangle \quad (12)$$

Leonardo showed that

$$\hat{n} = \frac{1}{2} (\hat{X}^2 + \hat{P}^2 - 1). \quad (13)$$

Therefore

$$\langle \hat{n} \rangle = \frac{1}{2} (\langle \hat{X}^2 + \hat{P}^2 \rangle - 1) \quad (14)$$

$$\langle \hat{n} \rangle = \langle \hat{X}_\theta^2 \rangle - \frac{1}{2}. \quad (15)$$

Thus calculating the expectation value of \hat{X}_θ^2 gives us the mean number of photons. We can estimate $\langle \hat{n} \rangle$ by computing

$$\overline{\langle \hat{n} \rangle} = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N x_i^2 - \frac{1}{2}. \quad (16)$$

Note that when θ is uniformly distributed over $[0, \pi)$, the values of θ are not needed to compute $\overline{\langle \hat{n} \rangle}$.

To compute this estimate, we need a new Matlab function that takes the quadrature data as input and computes the square of each quadrature. Then we simply average the squares and subtract 1/2. Then, instead of using the true value of $\langle \hat{n} \rangle$ as we have been doing, we should use $\overline{\langle \hat{n} \rangle}$ in Leonhardt's formula to choose bin size.

V. CONCLUSION

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