

Design and Implementation of ECC-Based RFID Tag for Wireless Communications on FPGAs

Neelappa and N.G. Kurahatti

Abstract This paper proposes an elliptic curve cryptography (ECC) and direct spread spectrum (DSS) to implement Radio-Frequency Identification (RFID) tag chip for highly secure wireless communication. Digital baseband controller (DBC) and nonlinear feedback shift register (NLFSR) have been used to generate control signal, data transfer, and random number sequences for ECC processor and DSS compatible with ISO/IEC 14443. In order to achieve optimized resources in field programmable gate array (FPGA) for ECC, point multiplication, reusable registers, and asynchronous counter are adopted. The proposed work has been implemented on two Spartan 6 FPGAs. Wireless communication between them has been established via Zigbee modules. Single-user DS-SS system using pseudo-chaotic sequence as spreading sequence and RFID transmitter and receiver in FPGA development kit targeted to Xilinx's Spartan 6 device XC6S45-2tq324 has been implemented. The proposed elliptic curve processor (ECP) in digital baseband controller (DBC) needs only 8.58 K gate area and has a delay of 7.509 ns. The synthesis results show that the power consumption of DBC including ECP and other units in transmitter and receiver is only 381.58 μ W at 35,810 kHz. Considerable improvement in power dissipation, area, and delay has been achieved. Security of the data has been ensured by using ECC.

Keywords Elliptic curve cryptography • Direct spread spectrum
Nonlinear feedback shift register • Digital baseband controller • Protocol and detector • Radio-frequency identification tag

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1 Introduction

One of the features of improvements of RFID is an auto proof of identity expertise. It is widely used for proof of identity, control chain organization, wireless sensor networks (WSNs), ad hoc wireless communication, and other applications. With the development of the Internet of Things (IOT) and WSN, the demand on security-related RFID systems has expanded [1]. RFID applications require low-power and low-cost implementation with high data security. To satisfy security, a suitable public key cryptography scheme is required. RFID passive tags obtain energy from radio frequency signals transmitted from the reader and have limited power supply. Therefore, these tags cannot use the energy-demanding algorithms such Revert-Shamir-Adleman (RSA) cryptography. Elliptic curve cryptography (ECC), proposed by Koblitz [2], has been employed, the main advantages being by employing ECC are smaller key sizes and offers comparable security level as RSA [3]. This feature has been incorporated in the implementation of RFID tag chips. The essential operation in the elliptic curve cryptosystems is scalar point multiplication. The point multiplication is achieved by finite field arithmetic computations such as field addition, field multiplication, field squaring, and inversion. Tawallebh et al. [4] proposed processor architecture for elliptic curves over prime fields. The speed of point multiplication is increased by proper selection of the coordinate system [5]. A number of hardware implementations for elliptic curve cryptography have been proposed in the literature, but only a few of them are aimed for low-end devices. The proposed implementation is emphasis on speed, area, and power which are based on FPGA technology [6].

In this paper, we propose an ECC algorithm based on projective coordinates, which can be adopted for both binary and prime fields for resource limited RFID tags. The data is encoded and decoded by chaos-based direct spread spectrum/binary phase shift keying (DSS/BPSK) modulation. The proposed RFID system with DSS/ECC offers improved security feature and makes analysis of the RFID tag in terms of area, speed, and power. The proposed work has been implemented and tested on Spartan-6 FPGA boards.

The paper proceeds as follows: Sect. 2 describes mathematical foundation. Section 3 describes RFID transmitter, and Sect. 4 describes RFID receiver. Section 5 describes experimental results and comparison and conclusion.

2 Mathematical Foundation

In cryptography, two of the most studied fields are finite fields of characteristic two, denoted by $GF(2^m)$ and prime fields. Advantage of $GF(2^m)$ fields is the simple hardware required for computation of commonly used arithmetic operations such as addition and squaring. Addition and squaring in $GF(2^m)$ can be performed by a

simple XOR operation. These operations are simpler than the addition and squaring circuits of a $GF(P)$ field. In the proposed paper, ECC operations are performed on binary field.

2.1 Finite Field Operations (2^m)

EC over field $F(2^m)$ includes arithmetic of integer with length m bits. The binary string can be declared as polynomial:

Binary string: $(b_{m-1} \dots b_1 b_0)$

Polynomial: $b_{m-1}y^{m-1} + b_{m-2}y^{m-2} + \dots + b_2y^2 + b_1y + b_0$ where $b_i = 0$. For example, $y^3 + y^2 + y$ is polynomial for a four-bit binary number 1110.

In addition

If $A = y^3 + x^2 + 1$ and $B = y^2 + y$ are two polynomial, then $A + B$ is called polynomial addition that returns $y^3 + 2y^2 + y + 1$ after taking mod 2 over coefficients as $A + B = y^3 + y + 1$. On binary representation, polynomial addition can be achieved by simple XOR of two numbers. If $A = 1101$ and $B = 0110$, then $A + B = A \text{ XOR } B = 1011_2$.

In multiplication

If $A = y^3 + y^2 + 1$ and $B = y^2 + x$ are two polynomials, then $A * B$ is called polynomial multiplication that returns $y^5 + y^3 + y^2 + y$, $m = 4$. The result should be reduced to a degree less than 4 by irreducible polynomial $y^4 + y + 1$.

$$y^5 + y^3 + y^2 + y \pmod{f(y)} = (y^4 + y + 1)(y + y^5 + y^3 + y^2 + y) = 2y^5 + y^3 + 2y^2 + 2y = y^3 \pmod{2}$$

If $A = (1101)_2$ and $B = (0110)_2$, then $A * B = (1000)_2$.

3 Methodology

In this proposed work, the approach is divided into two sections: (i) block diagrams of DSS and ECC-based RFID tag chip at transmitter and (ii) block diagram of DSS and ECC-based RFID tag chip at receiver.

3.1 Transmitter

Figure 1 shows the block diagram of DSS and ECC-based RFID tag at transmitter section. A typical transmitter-embedded RFID tag chip can be divided into six parts: analog front end (AFE), NLFSR, EEPROM, ECC processor, wireless Zigbee transmitter, and digital baseband controller. AFE realizes the comprehensive functions of physical layer according to the RFID protocol, tag id stored in reuse register. NLFSR generates sequences of numbers for pseudo-chaotic sequence

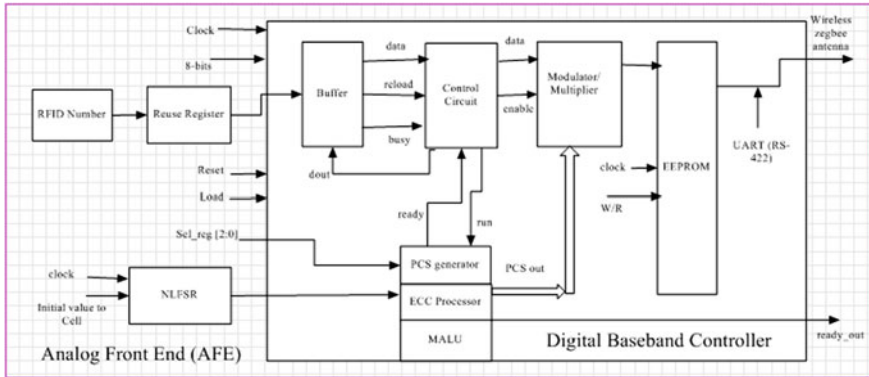


Fig. 1 Proposed block diagram of DSS and ECC-based RFID tag chip at transmitter section

(PCS) generator and ECC processor, AFE including carrier signal, clock generation, and reset signal generation. PCS creates randomness for each authentication so that the data in the authentication is highly secure. EEPROM is used for storing private or public information, such as the private key, base point of elliptic curve (EC), and the EC equation parameters. Utilizing the stream line bus structure, baseband controller integrates system controller, memory interface, buffer, multiplier, PCS, and ECC processor into one unit.

3.2 Direct Spread Spectrum (DSS)

In DSS system, the data bits are generated using PCS generator are spread. To generate PCS sequence, initially all 8-bit registers from R_1 to R_8 have to be initialized based on two sets of initial values. To load eight registers of the PCS generator, set load = 1 and using three signal pins of sel_reg registers R_1 – R_8 are selected. The 8-bit initial values to each of these eight registers are loaded using eight signal pin reg_init internally [5]. After loading the initial values to all the eight registers, ready out signal pin gives an indication to the user. At the same time, signal ready is set to high and gives an indication to the control circuit to start its operation. Prior to loading the initial values to the registers R_1 – R_8 , the busy and done signal should be high and low, respectively. After receiving the 8-bit tag id data frame from RFID tag, the control circuit permits the PCS generator to generate PCS sequence by setting signal run = 1. It also enables the multiplier by setting enable = 1 and indicates the buffer that it is busy by setting the signal busy = 1. During this time, the PCS generator starts generating the 64 bits of PCS sequence. The control circuit then transfers one bit at a time serially to the multiplier, where it is multiplied by the 64 bits of generated PCS sequence resulting in a 64 bits of spread sequence, and the same is transmitted. After the first RFID number is

serialized into bit spread by 64 bits of PCS sequence, the second data bit is received in the multiplier and is multiplied by the next 64 bits of the PCS sequence. Thus, the PCS generator generates a total of 512 bits to spread all the 8 bits of RFID data. After transmitting all the 512 bits with respect to one data (8 bits), the control circuit makes signal done = 1 and busy = 0 and then it accepts next frame of 8 bits of RFID id data.

The transmitter operation is carried out using direct spectrum sequence by multiplying the RFID tag number $b(t)$ with PCS sequence $p(t)$ which acts as a carrier signal for modulator. The spreading signal $s(t)$ is then modulated with $p(t)$ by means of BPSK, and the resultant of DSS/BPSK signal is given by

$$e(t) = Ap(t)b(t)\sqrt{2p}\cos(2\pi f_0 t) \quad (1)$$

where A and f_0 are the amplitude and frequency of the carrier. The modulated signal $e(t)$ is transmitted through wireless Zigbee via serial communication protocol universal asynchronous receiver/transmitter (UART) shown in Fig. 1.

3.3 ECC Processor

Prime field-based ECC processor with high-speed operating frequency of 50 MHz and scalar multiplication to perform both point addition and point doubling in affine coordination is adopted in this work. Figure 2 shows the overall ECC dual-field architecture with input/output buffers, control unit, data selector, register file, and ECC scalar multiplication. The data is fed into an input buffer and read the output buffer through I/O interfacing. ECC parameters are written into the buffer before the computation. All operations are controlled by the control unit. The control instructions are stored in the control register and decoded by the main controller architecture of ECC arithmetic unit. The Karatsuba multiplier [7] is used to perform point addition and doubling for both fields. Results are stored in the register files.

3.3.1 Scalar Multiplication

The ECC scheme requires the point and scalar multiplication defined as follows:

$$Q = kP = P + P + \dots + P (k \text{ times})$$

Here, P denotes a point on the elliptic curve and k is a random integer. Point addition and point doubling play a key role in scalar multiplication.

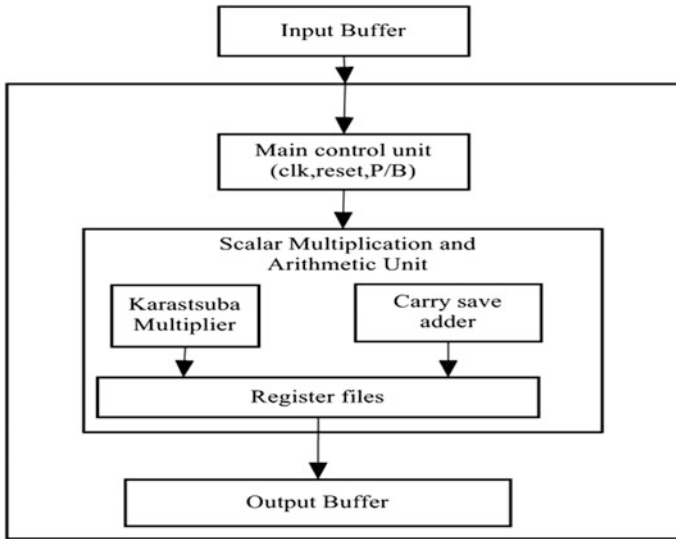


Fig. 2 Proposed architecture of the ECC processor (GF^{163})

The scalar multiplication algorithm is as follows:

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Input :  $k = (k_{n-1}, k_{n-2}, \dots, k_1, k_0), P;$ 
Output =  $[k]P;$ 
 $R_0 = 0; R_1 = P;$ 
For  $i = n - 1$  down to 0
do
 $b = k_i; R_{1-b} = R_{1-b} + R_b;$ 
 $R_b = 2R_b;$ 
end for;
return  $R_0$ 
    
```

An elliptic curve equation over prime field is given by

$$y^2 \text{ mod } p = (x^3 + ax^2 + b) \text{ mod } P \tag{2}$$

where a and b are the parameters and x and y are the points on curves.

Binary field equation is given by

$$y^2 + xy = x^3 + ax^2 + b \tag{3}$$

ECC over binary field achieves high performance without considering carry and modular reduction. These fields are optimal for the use in hardware in terms of area and speed.

3.3.2 Binary Field

The most important elliptic curve equation is: $y^2 + xy = x^3 + ax^2 + b$ [8].

In binary field, addition is performed by an EX-OR operation and multiplication is polynomial based. The result is reduced by using the irreducible polynomial. Squaring is achieved by shift operation.

Point Addition Over Binary Field

In this work, one point is in projective coordinate and another point is an affine coordinate. The resulting point will be in projective coordinate which avoids the inversion operation.

Algorithm for addition is as follows:

Inputs: $A(x_2, y_2), Q(X_4, Y_4, Z_4)$.

Outputs: $R(X_3, Y_3, Z_3)$.

$$\begin{aligned}
 A &= Y_4 + y_2 * Z_4^2; \\
 B &= X_4 + x_2 * Z_4; \\
 C &= B * Z_4; \\
 Z_3 &= C * C; \\
 D &= x_2 * Z_3; \\
 E &= A + B * B + aC; \\
 X_3 &= A * A + C * E; \\
 I &= D + X_3; \\
 J &= A * C + Z_3; \\
 F &= I * J; \\
 K &= Z_3 * Z_3; \\
 Y_3 &= F + x_2 * K + y_2 * K
 \end{aligned}$$

The point doubling operation is to add a point on the elliptic curve with itself. In these equations, 'a' and 'b' are considered as parameters of an elliptic curve.

Algorithm for point doubling is as follows:

Inputs: (x_1, y_1, z_1) ;

Outputs: (x_4, y_4, z_4) ;

$$\begin{aligned}
 z_4 &= z_1^2 * x_1^2, \\
 x_4 &= x_1^4 + bz_1^4, \\
 y_4 &= (y_1^2 + az_4 + bz_1^4) * x_4 + z_4 * bz_1^4.
 \end{aligned}$$

3.3.3 Prime Field

In prime field, each elliptic curve addition and doubling requires a fixed number of modular multiplications, square, additions, shifts, and similar basic arithmetic operations. The actual number of these operations depends on the progression of the curve. The operation of the multiplication and square operations that dominate the running time, which scales exactly as the number of arithmetic operations to be performed.

Point Addition Over Prime Field

For an elliptic curve defined over $GF(P)$, the normal elliptic point (x, y) is projected to (X_1, Y_1, Z_1) , where $x = X/Z^2$, and $y = Y/Z^3$, and the second point considered is affine point that is (x_2, y_2) .

Algorithm for a point addition is as follows:

Inputs: $Q = (X_4, Y_4, Z_4)$, $A = (x_2, y_2)$

Output: $R = (X_3, Y_3, Z_3) = P + Q$;

$$A = X_4;$$

$$B = x_2 * Z_1^2;$$

$$C = A - B;$$

$$D = Y_1;$$

$$E = y_2 * Z_1^3;$$

$$F = D - E;$$

$$G = A + B;$$

$$H = D + E;$$

$$Z_3 = Z_1 * C;$$

$$X_3 = F^2 - G * C^2;$$

$$I = G * C^2 - 2 * X_3;$$

$$Y_3 = (I * F - H * C^2)/2;$$

In the $GF(P)$, the point doubling algorithm is as follows:

Inputs: $P = (X_1, Y_1, Z_1)$, a ;

Output: $Q = (X_4, Y_4, Z_4) = 2P$;

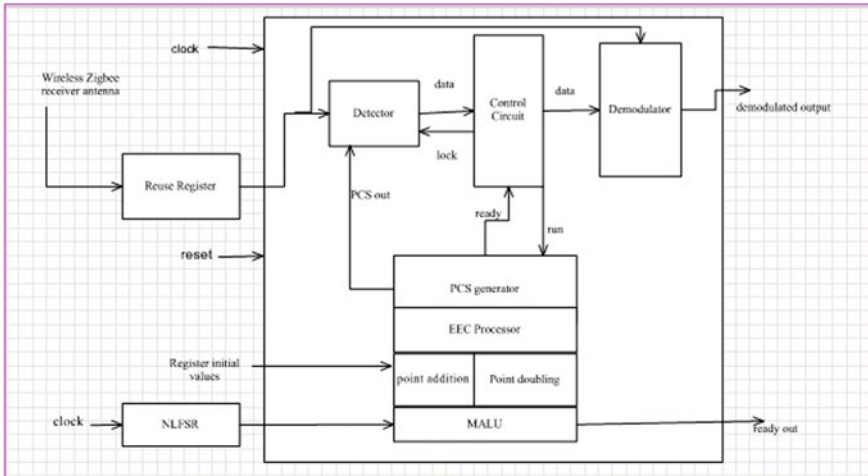


Fig. 4 Proposed block diagram of the DSS and ECC-based RFID tag chip at receiver

block multiplies each bit with shift register 1 and shift register 2 and sums up the output of the bit-wise multiplier, if the sum exceeds the selected threshold value, detector block decides the received bit is logic 1 or 0. The mathematical analysis of the receiver is as follows.

The received signal $r(t)$ at the input of the receiver is the sum of the transmitted signal $e(t)$ and channel noise $n(t)$. Firstly, the received signal is multiplied with the pseudorandom number (PN) sequence and resulting signal $g(t)$ is given as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}
 g(t) &= r(t) \cdot p(t) = (e(t) + n(t))p(t) \\
 &= Ab(t) \cdot p^2(t) \cos(2\pi f_0 t) + n(t)p(t) \\
 &= Ab(t) \cdot \cos(2\pi f_0 t) + n(t) \cdot p(t).
 \end{aligned}
 \tag{4}$$

Signal (t) is multiplied with the sinusoidal carrier, and resulting signal $s(t)$ is given is as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}
 s(t) &= Ag(t) \cos(2\pi f_0 t) \\
 &= Ab(t) \cos^2(2\pi f_0 t) + An(t) p(t) \cos(2\pi f_0 t) \\
 &= A^2/b(t) + A^2/b(t) \cos(4\pi f_0 t) + An(t) p(t) \cos(2\pi f_0 t).
 \end{aligned}
 \tag{5}$$

The signal $s(t)$ is fed to the integrator whose output is reset to zero by the trigger of each pulse of the train $p(t)$. It means that the integration period of each bit is equal to the corresponding interpulse interval which is also the corresponding bit duration. Before each reset instance, the output signal of the integrator $i(t)$ is sampled. The output value of the sampler at the instance t_{n+1} is given by.

$$\begin{aligned}
 i(t_{n+1}) &= \int_{t_n}^{t_{n+1}} s(t) dt \\
 &= \int_0^{T_{bn}} \frac{A^2}{2} b(t) dt + \int_0^{T_{bn}} \frac{A^2}{2} b(t) \cos(4\pi f_0 t) dt + \int_0^{T_{bn}} An(t)p(t) \cos(2\pi f_0 t) dt \\
 &= \frac{A^2}{2} b_n T_{bn} + 0 + \int_0^{T_{bn}} An(t)p(t) \cos(2\pi f_0 t) dt
 \end{aligned}
 \tag{6}$$

where $(A^2/2bn)$ is the energy of the desired signal. $\int_0^{T_{bn}} \frac{A^2}{2} b(t) \cos(4\pi f_0 t) dt$ equal to zero because the period T_{bn} is a multiple of the carrier cycle. $\int_0^{T_{bn}} An(t)c(t) \cos(2\pi f_0 t) dt$ is the energy produced by the channel noise. It is noted that the correlation between $p(t)$ and $An(t) \cos(2\pi f_0 t)$ is very low, and hence the noise energy is much less than the signal energy. The resulting sample is fed to the decision device to recover the binary value of the n th bit as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}
 b_n &= \{1, i(t_{n+1}) \geq 0, \\
 &= \{0, i(t_{n+1}) < 0.
 \end{aligned}
 \tag{7}$$

5 Results and Comparison with Methods Proposed in the Literature

In the proposed work, the results obtained from simulation are verified on two Spartan 6 FPGAs (XCS6LX45). At the transmitter section, one FPGA along with Zigbee module and RFID tag has been used to process and transmit the modulated signal. At the receiver section, another FPGA along with Zigbee module and RFID tag has been used to retrieve the RFID tag number which is displayed on LCD of receiver FPGA. The 163-bit ECC processor using scalar multiplication (both binary and prime fields) has been incorporated in transmitter section to secure tag number. Figure 5 shows loading of initial values into eight registers from R_1 to R_8 using `sel_reg` control signal.

Before transmitting and after modulation, all 64-bit data is concatenated to get 512 bits and transmitted along with RFID tag number, The output of multiplier with 512 bits at RFID transmitter is shown in Fig. 6.

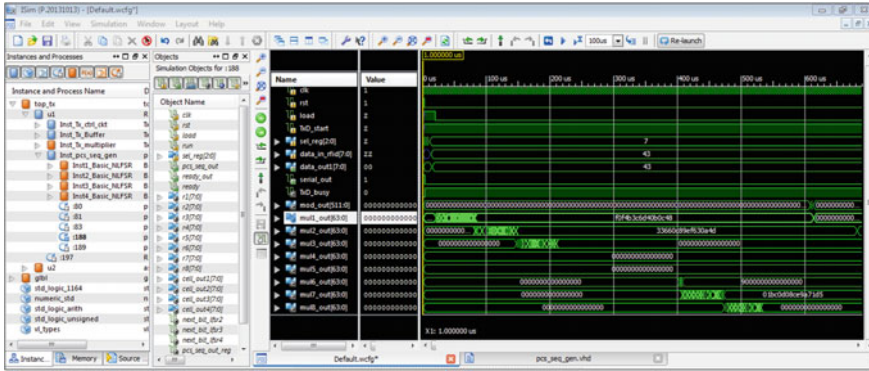


Fig. 7 RFID tag number and 64-bit multiplier outputs at RFID transmitter

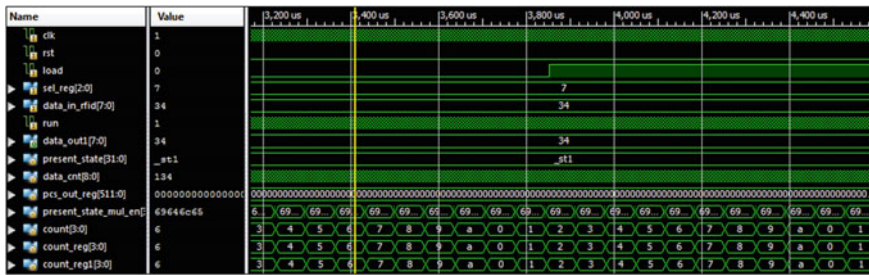


Fig. 8 Demodulated tag number at receiver section

Table 1 Comparison of performance characteristics of power consumption, frequency, delay, and area

Ref. No.	Digit size	Field size	Frequency (kHz)	Power (μ W)	ECP area (gates) K	Delay (ns)	Technology
This work	8	$GF(2^{163})$	35,810	383.17	8.58	7.50	FPGA
01	8	$GF(2^{163})$	13,536	253	14.1	13.2	Um c 0.13 μ m
06	8	$GF(2^{163})$	2454	320.3	12.5	13.1	Um c 0.13 μ m
07	8	$GF(2^{163})$	13560	NA	12.5	244	Um c 0.13 μ m
08	8	$GF(2^{163})$	400	7.3	56.7	31.8	Um c 0.13 μ m
10	8	$GF(2^{163})$	1059	148.5	13.2	547.8	Um c 0.13 μ m
15	8	$GF(2^{163})$	13,536	208.4	21.8	12.5	Um c 0.13 μ m
16	8	$GF(2^{100})$	500	400	18.7	NA	TSMC 0.18 μ m
17	8	$GF(2^{163})$	200	15	6.1	NA	TSMC 0.18 μ m
18	8	$GF(2^{163})$	76	4.88	13.78	NA	65 nm CMOS

delay of 7.50 ns. The synthesis results show that the power consumption of DBC including ECP and other units in transmitter and receiver is only 381.58 μ W at 35,810 kHz.

5.1 Hardware Implemented Results

The proposed work has been implemented and tested on two FPGA boards, one for transmission is shown in Fig. 9 and other for receiver is shown in Fig. 10. The receiver module receives tag number and displays on LCD and LED.

Fig. 9 Hardware implementation for transmission

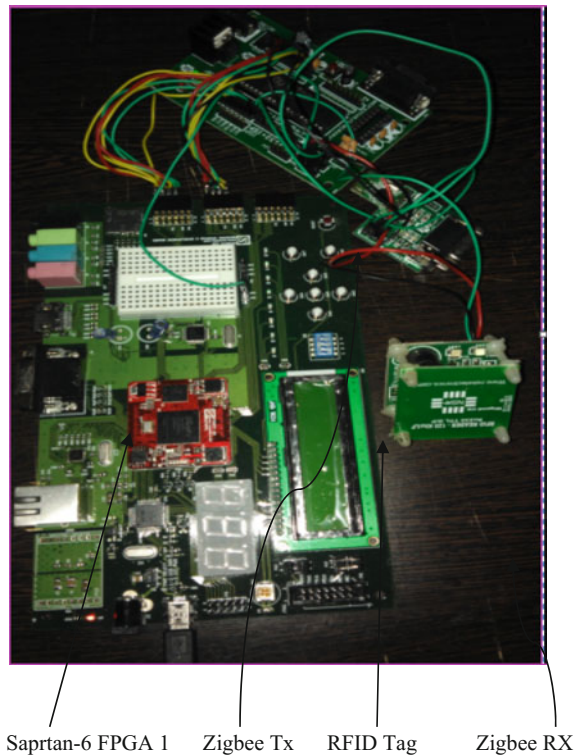
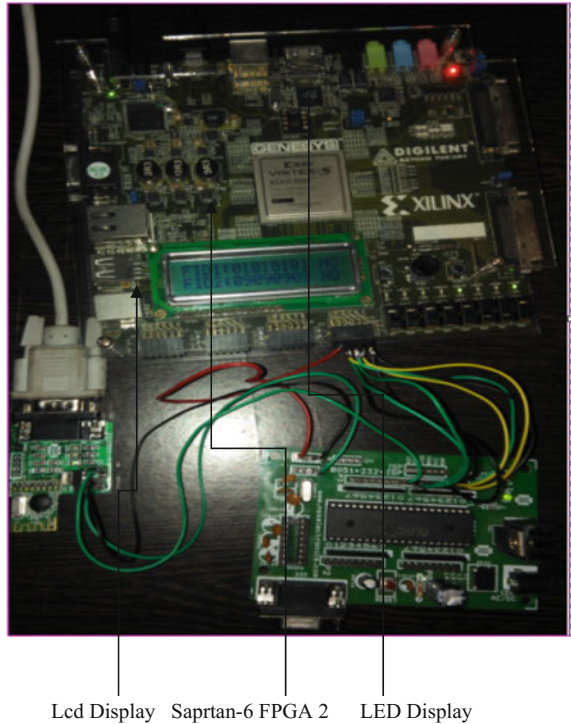


Fig. 10 Hardware implementation for receiver



5.2 Conclusion

Single-user DS-SS system using pseudo-chaotic sequence as spreading sequence and RFID transmitter and receiver in FPGA development kit targeted to Xilinx's Spartan 6 device XC6S45-2tq324 has been implemented. Transmission has been achieved through Zigbee. Considerable improvement in power dissipation, area, and delay has been achieved. Security of the data has been assured using ECC.

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