

# THE NUMBER OF MAXIMAL INDEPENDENT SETS OF SEQUENTIALLY COHEN-MACAULAY BIPARTITE GRAPHS

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**Abstract:** We determine the maximum number of maximal independent sets of sequentially bipartite graphs and we give a completed characterization of the extremal graphs.

**Keywords:** Graph; independent set; sequentially Cohen-Macaulay.

## 1 Introduction and results

Let  $m(G)$  be the number of maximal independent sets of a simple graph  $G$ . Around 1960, Erdős and Moser raised the problem of determining the largest number of  $m(G)$  in terms of its order, say  $n$  in this paper, and determining the extremal graphs. In 1965, Moon and Moser [11] solved this problem for any simple graph.

This problem now has been focused on various classes of graphs (see e.g. [3, 9, 10, 15]). For the simplest case, Wilf [15] was the first to prove that if  $T$  is tree with  $n$  vertices, then

$$m(T) \leq \begin{cases} 2^{s-1} + 1 & \text{if } n = 2s, \\ 2^s & \text{if } n = 2s + 1 \end{cases}$$

and he also characterize those trees achieving the maximum value.

The goal of this paper is to extend this result to sequentially Cohen-Macaulay bipartite graphs. Let  $G$  be a simple (no loops or multiple edges) undirected graph on the vertex set  $V(G) = \{1, \dots, n\}$ . Let  $K$  be a field and  $R = K[x_1, \dots, x_n]$  the polynomial ring over  $K$ . Then, we can associate to  $G$  a quadratic square-free monomial ideal

$$I(G) = (x_i x_j \mid \{i, j\} \in E(G)) \subset R,$$

where  $E(G)$  is the edge set of  $G$ . The ideal  $I(G)$  is called the *edge ideal* of  $G$ . Using the Stanley-Reisner correspondence, we can associate to  $G$  the simplicial complex  $\Delta(G)$  where  $I_{\Delta(G)} = I(G)$ .

Notice that the faces of  $\Delta(G)$  are the independent sets or stable sets of  $G$ , i.e.  $S$  is a face of  $\Delta(G)$  if and only if there is no edge of  $G$  joining any two vertices of  $S$ . Thus,  $m(G)$  is just the number of maximal sets of  $\Delta(G)$  (with respect to inclusion).

Note that the property of being sequentially Cohen-Macaulay, a condition weaker than being Cohen-Macaulay, was introduced by Stanley [13] in connection with the theory of nonpure shellability. A graded  $R$ -module  $M$  is called sequentially Cohen-Macaulay (over  $k$ ) if there exists a finite filtration of graded  $R$ -modules

$$0 = M_0 \subset M_1 \subset \dots \subset M_r = M$$

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such that each  $M_i/M_{i-1}$  is Cohen-Macaulay, and the Krull dimensions of the quotients are increasing:

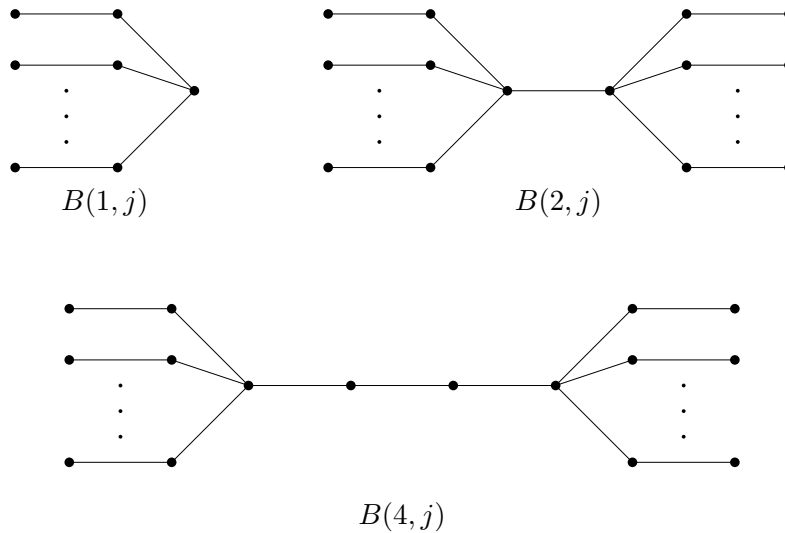
$$\dim(M_1/M_0) < \dim(M_2/M_1) < \dots < \dim(M_r/M_{r-1}).$$

We say that a graph  $G$  *sequentially Cohen-Macaulay* if  $R/I(G)$  is sequentially Cohen-Macaulay. The class of sequentially Cohen-Macaulay graphs have been interested by many authors (see [4, 5, 6, 14]).

The main result of this paper is to extend the result of Wilf to the sequentially Cohen-Macaulay bipartite graphs. Recall that a graph  $G$  is bipartite if the vertex set  $V(G)$  can be partitioned into two disjoint sets  $V(G) = V_1 \cup V_2$  such that every edge of  $G$  contains one vertex in  $V_1$  and the other in  $V_2$ . The couple  $(V_1, V_2)$  is called a bipartition of  $G$ .

**Example 1.1.** All trees are sequentially Cohen-Macaulay (see [14, Theorems 2.13 and 3.10]).

For integers  $i \geq 1$  and  $j \geq 0$ , we define the *baton*  $B(i, j)$  to be the graph obtained from a basic path  $P$  of  $i$  vertices by attaching  $j$  paths of length two to the endpoints of  $P$  (see Figure 1 below).



**Fig. 1:** *Batons.*

Then, the main result of the paper is the following theorem.

**Theorem 3.2.** Let  $G$  a connected sequentially Cohen-Macaulay bipartite graph with  $n$  vertices. Then,

$$m(G) \leq f(n) = \begin{cases} 2^s & \text{if } n = 2s + 1, \\ 2^{s-1} + 1 & \text{if } n = 2s. \end{cases}$$

Furthermore,  $m(G) = f(n)$  if and only if

$$G \cong \begin{cases} B(1, s) & \text{if } n = 2s + 1, \\ B(2, s - 1) \text{ or } B(4, s - 2) & \text{if } n = 2s. \end{cases}$$

## 2 Preliminaries

Let  $G$  be a simple graph with vertex set  $V(G)$  and edge set  $E(G)$ . An edge  $e \in E(G)$  connecting two vertices  $x$  and  $y$  will be also written as  $xy$  (or  $yx$ ). In this case, it is said that  $x$  and  $y$  are adjacent. A set of vertices of  $G$  is *independent* if every pair of its vertices is not adjacent.

A path  $P$  of  $G$  is a sequence of vertices

$$P: v_0, v_1, \dots, v_k$$

such that  $v_{i-1}v_i$  is an edge of  $G$  for  $i = 1, \dots, k$ . Then, we say that  $P$  connects two vertices  $u$  and  $v$ ; and  $k$  is the length of  $P$ .

A cycle in the graph  $G$  is a non-empty path in which the only repeated vertices are the first and last vertices. The length of a cycle is the number of edges involved

A connected graph without cycles is called a tree.

A graph  $G$  is *connected* whenever there is a path between every pair of vertices. A graph is called *totally disconnected* if it is either a null graph or it contains no edge. If  $G$  is totally disconnected graph, then  $m(G) = 1$ .

Let  $v$  be a vertex of  $G$ . The neighborhood of  $v$  in  $G$  is the set

$$N_G(v) = \{u \in V(G) \mid uv \in E(G)\}.$$

The number  $\deg_G(x) = |N_G(x)|$  is called the *degree* of  $x$  in  $G$ . If  $\deg_G(v) = 0$ , then  $v$  is called an *isolated vertex* of  $G$ ; and if  $\deg_G(v) = 1$ , then  $v$  is called a *leaf* of  $G$ .

For a subset  $S$  of  $V(G)$ , the subgraph of  $G$  obtained from  $G$  by removing all vertices in  $S$  and their incident edges, denoted by  $G \setminus S$ . The graph  $G \setminus (V(G) \setminus S)$  is called the *induced subgraph* of  $G$  on the vertex  $S$ , and denoted by  $G[S]$ .

For a vertex  $v$  of  $G$ , we denote  $G \setminus v = G \setminus \{v\}$  and  $G_v = G \setminus (\{v\} \cup N_G(v))$ .

**Lemma 2.1.** [15] *If  $\mathcal{H}$  is an induced subgraph of  $G$ , then*

$$m(\mathcal{H}) \leq m(G).$$

**Lemma 2.2.** [9, Lemma 1] *Let  $G$  be a graph. Then*

1.  $m(G) \leq m(G_v) + m(G \setminus v)$ , for any vertex  $v$  of  $G$ .
2. If  $v$  is a leaf adjacent to  $u$ , then  $m(G) = m(G_v) + m(G_u)$ .

**Lemma 2.3.** [14, Lemma 2.8] *If  $G$  is a sequentially Cohen-Macaulay bipartite graph, then there is  $v \in V(G)$  with  $\deg_G(v) = 1$ .*

A *matching* in  $G$  is a set  $M$  of edges so that no two of which meet a common vertex. The *matching number*  $\nu(G)$  of  $G$  is the maximum size of matchings of  $G$ . If every vertex of  $G$  is incident to an edge of  $M$ , then  $M$  is called a perfect matching. Note that  $|V(G)| \geq 2\nu(G)$  and the equality occurs if and only if  $G$  has a perfect matching.

An *induced matching*  $M$  in a graph  $G$  is a matching where no two edges of  $M$  are joined by an edge of  $G$ . The *induced matching number*  $\nu_0(G)$  of  $G$  is the maximum size of induced matchings of  $G$ . We always have  $\nu_0(G) \leq \nu(G)$ ; and if  $\nu_0(G) = \nu(G)$  then  $G$  is called a *Cameron-Walker graph* after Hibi et al. [7].

Cameron and Walker [2] gave a classification of the simple graphs  $G$  with  $\nu(G) = \nu_0(G)$ ; such graphs now are the so-called Cameron-Walker graphs (see [7]).

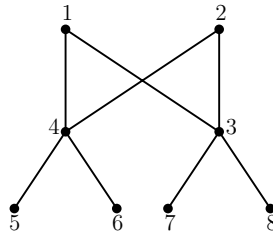
**Lemma 2.4.** ([2, Theorem 1] or [7, p. 258]) *A graph  $G$  is Cameron-Walker if and only if it is one of the following graphs:*

1. a star;
2. a star triangle;
3. a finite graph consisting of a connected bipartite graph with bipartition  $(A, B)$  such that there is at least one leaf edge attached to each vertex  $i \in A$  and that there may be possibly some pendant triangles attached to each vertex  $j \in B$ .

**Example 2.5.** *Let  $G$  be Cameron-Walker graph with 8 vertices in Figure 1. Then  $\nu(G) = \nu_0(G) = 2$  and the maximal independent sets of  $G$  are*

$$\{1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8\}; \{3, 4\}; \{3, 5, 6\}; \{4, 7, 8\}$$

Hence,  $m(G) = 4$ .



**Fig. 2:** Cameron-Walker bipartite graph.

**Lemma 2.6.** *Let  $G$  be a bipartite graph. Then  $m(G) \leq 2^{\nu(G)}$ . Furthermore, the equality occurs if and only if  $G$  is a Cameron-Walker bipartite graph.*

*Proof.* Follows from [8, Corollary 3.4]. □

### 3 The proof of the main result

We begin with the following lemma.

**Lemma 3.1.** *Let  $r, s_1, \dots, s_r$  be positive integers. Then*

$$\prod_{i=1}^r (2^{s_i-1} + 1) + \prod_{i=1}^r 2^{s_i-1} \leq 2^{\sum_{i=1}^r s_i} + 1$$

and the equality only when  $s_1 = \dots = s_r = 1$  or  $r = 1$ .

*Proof.* We prove by the induction on  $r$ . If  $r = 1$ , then it is obvious.

If  $r > 1$ , then we assume that  $s \leq s_i$  for all  $i = 1, \dots, r$ . We will show that

$$(2^{s-1} + 1) \prod_{i=1}^r (2^{s_i-1} + 1) + 2^{s-1} \prod_{i=1}^r 2^{s_i-1} \leq 2^{s+\sum_{i=1}^r s_i} + 1.$$

We have

$$\begin{aligned} & (2^{s-1} + 1) \prod_{i=1}^r (2^{s_i-1} + 1) + 2^{s-1} \prod_{i=1}^r 2^{s_i-1} \\ = & (2^{s-1} + 1) \left[ \prod_{i=1}^r (2^{s_i-1} + 1) + \prod_{i=1}^r 2^{s_i-1} \right] - \prod_{i=1}^r 2^{s_i-1} \\ \leq & (2^{s-1} + 1)(2^{\sum_{i=1}^r s_i} + 1) - \prod_{i=1}^r 2^{s_i-1} \\ \leq & \left[ 2^{s+\sum_{i=1}^r s_i} + 1 \right] + 2^{\sum_{i=1}^r s_i} (1 - 2^{s-1}) + (2^{s-1} - 2^{\sum_{i=1}^r s_i-r}). \end{aligned}$$

Since  $1 \leq s \leq s_i$  for all  $i$  and  $(s - 1) \leq r(s - 1) \leq \sum_{i=1}^r s_i - r$ , we have  $1 - 2^{s-1} \leq 0$  and  $2^{s-1} \leq 2^{\sum_{i=1}^r s_i-r}$ . Thus, inequality is proved.

Now the equality holds only when  $r = 1$  or  $s_1 = \dots = s_r = 1$ . This completes the proof of the lemma.  $\square$

The main result of this paper is to establish the maximum value of  $m(G)$  for a connected sequentially Cohen-Macaulay bipartite graph  $G$ .

**Theorem 3.2.** *Let  $G$  a connected sequentially Cohen-Macaulay bipartite graph with  $n$  vertices. Then,*

$$m(G) \leq f(n) = \begin{cases} 2^s & \text{if } n = 2s + 1, \\ 2^{s-1} + 1 & \text{if } n = 2s. \end{cases}$$

Furthermore,  $m(G) = f(n)$  if and only if

$$G \cong \begin{cases} B(1, s) & \text{if } n = 2s + 1, \\ B(2, s - 1) \text{ or } B(4, s - 2) & \text{if } n = 2s. \end{cases}$$

*Proof.* We first consider the case  $n$  is odd, i.e.  $n = 2s + 1$  for some  $s \geq 0$ . Note that  $\nu(G) \leq s$ , so that  $m(G) \leq 2^s$  by Lemma 2.6. Furthermore, the inequality occurs if and

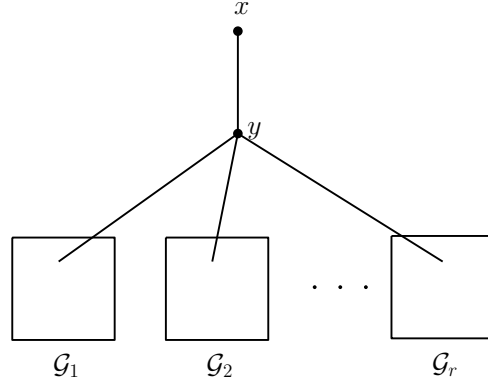
only if  $\nu(G) = \nu_0(G) = s$ . It follows that  $G$  has an induced matching with  $s$  edges, say  $M = \{a_1b_1, \dots, a_sb_s\}$ .

Since  $|V(G)| = 2s + 1$ , there is another vertex  $v$  which is not incident to any edge in  $M$ . Note that  $G$  is connected, we may assume that  $v$  is adjacent to  $a_i$  for all  $i$ . Since  $G$  is bipartite,  $v$  is not adjacent to  $b_i$  for all  $i$ . This means that  $G = B(1, s)$ , and the theorem is proved for this case.

Assume that  $n$  is even, i.e.  $n = 2s$  for some  $s \geq 1$ . Note that  $\nu(G) \leq s$ . If  $\nu(G) < s$ , then  $m(G) \leq 2^{\nu(G)} \leq 2^{s-1}$ , and the theorem holds for this case.

Therefore we may assume that  $\nu(G) = s$ , i.e.  $G$  has a perfect matching. We prove the theorem by the induction on  $\nu(G)$ . If  $\nu(G) = 1$ , then  $G$  is a graph with one edge, and then the assertion is trivial.

Assume that  $\nu(G) > 1$ . By Lemma 2.3, there is a vertex  $x \in V(G)$  such that  $\deg_G(x) = 1$ . Set  $xy \in E(G)$  (see Figure 3). Then,  $G_x$  has a perfect matching and  $\nu(G_x) = \nu(G) - 1$ .



**Fig. 3:**  $x$  is a leaf of  $G$

Let  $G_1, \dots, G_r$  be connected components of  $G_x$ . Then, they are sequentially Cohen-Macaulay by [14, Theorem 3.3]. Observe that each  $G_i$  has a perfect matching, bipartite and  $s_i := \nu(G_i) \leq \nu(G_x) = \nu(G) - 1$ . Then  $\sum_{i=1}^r s_i = \nu(G_x) = \nu(G) - 1$ . By the induction hypothesis,  $m(G_i) \leq 2^{\nu(G_i)-1} + 1$  for all  $i$ . We have

$$m(G_x) = \prod_{i=1}^r m(G_i) \leq \prod_{i=1}^r (2^{s_i-1} + 1). \tag{3.1}$$

Let  $G'_i := G_i \setminus N_G(y)$ . Since  $G$  is connected,  $N_{G_i}(y) \neq \emptyset$ . Hence,  $\nu(G'_i) \leq \nu(G_i) - 1 = s_i - 1$  because  $G_i$  has a perfect matching. Together with Lemma 2.6, it yields

$$m(G_y) \leq \prod_{i=1}^r m(G'_i) \leq \prod_{i=1}^r 2^{\nu(G'_i)} \leq \prod_{i=1}^r 2^{s_i-1}. \tag{3.2}$$

By Lemma 2.2(2) and inequations (3.1) and (3.2), we have

$$m(G) = m(G_x) + m(G_y) \leq \prod_{i=1}^r (2^{s_i-1} + 1) + \prod_{i=1}^r 2^{s_i-1}.$$

By Lemma 3.1,  $m(G) \leq 2^{\sum_{i=1}^r s_i} + 1 = 2^{\nu(G)-1} + 1$ .

Now, we prove the last assertion. If the equality holds,  $r = 1$  or  $\nu(G'_1) = \dots = \nu(G'_r) = s_1 = \dots = s_r = 1$ . We next divide the rest of the proof into two cases:

**Case 1:**  $\nu(G'_1) = \dots = \nu(G'_r) = s_1 = \dots = s_r = 1$ .

Since  $s_i = 1$ , so  $G_i$  is one edge  $x_i y_i$  for all  $i$ . If  $y x_i, y y_i \in E(G)$  for some  $i$ , then  $G'_i = \emptyset$ , a contradiction to  $\nu(G'_i) = 1$ . Since  $G$  is connected, we may assume that  $y x_i \in E(G)$  and  $y y_i \notin E(G)$  for all  $i$ . Therefore,  $G \cong B(2, s - 1)$  (see Figure 4).

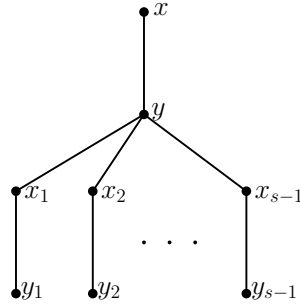


Fig. 4:  $G$  Baton  $B(2, s - 1)$

**Case 2:**  $r = 1$ .

Note that  $G'_1 = G_y$ . We have  $m(G_y) = m(G'_1) = 2^{\nu(G'_1)}$  and  $\nu(G_y) = \nu(G'_1) = s_1 - 1$ . Thus,  $m(G_y) = 2^{\nu(G_y)}$ . By Lemma 2.6,  $G_y$  is a Cameron-Walker bipartite graph. Let  $\mathcal{H}_1, \dots, \mathcal{H}_t$  be connected components of  $G_y$ . Then  $\mathcal{H}_i$  is Cameron-Walker bipartite graphs for all  $i$  with partition  $(K_i; T_i)$  such that there is at least one leaf edge attached to vertex in  $T_i$ . Let  $\mathcal{H}_i$  is a star  $(\{a_i\}; \{b_{i,1}, \dots, b_{i,v_i}\})$  where  $v_i \geq 1$  and  $1 \leq i \leq s_1 - 1$ . Let  $K := \cup_{i=1}^t K_i$  and  $T := \cup_{i=1}^t T_i$ . Since  $G_y$  is a Cameron-Walker graph,  $|T| = \nu(G_y) = s_1 - 1$ .

Since  $G_1$  has a perfect matching,  $|V(G_1)| = 2s_1$ . Then  $n = 2s_1 + 2$ . Let  $N_G[y] = \{x, y, y_1, \dots, y_u\}$ . We have

$$\begin{aligned} |V(G_y)| \geq |K| + 2|T| &\Leftrightarrow n - |N_G[y]| \geq |K| + 2(s_1 - 1) \\ &\Leftrightarrow (2s_1 + 2) - (2 + u) \geq |K| + 2(s_1 - 1) \\ &\Leftrightarrow |K| + u \leq 2. \end{aligned}$$

**Subcase 2.1.**  $|K| = 0$  and  $u = 2$ .

Indeed, we have

$$2s_1 = |V(G_1)| = 2 + (s_1 - 1) + \sum_{i=1}^{s_1-1} v_i \geq 2 + (s_1 - 1) + (s_1 - 1).$$

Hence,  $v_1 = \dots = v_{s_1-1} = 1$ . Since  $G$  is a bipartite connected graph, we may assume that  $y_1 a_1 \in E(G)$  and  $y_1 b_{1,1} \notin E(G)$ . Since  $N_G(b_{1,1}) = \{a_1\}$  and  $\{b_{1,1}, y_1\} \subseteq N_G(a_1)$ , we have  $m(G) = m(G_{a_1}) + m(G_{b_{1,1}}) = 2^{s_1-1} + m(G_{b_{1,1}}) \leq 2^{s_1-1} + 2^{s_1-1} = 2^{s_1}$ , a contradiction.

**Subcase 2.2.**  $|K| = 0$  and  $u = 1$ .

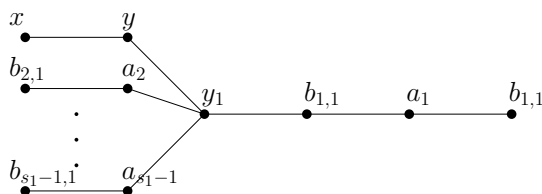
Indeed, if  $v_1 = \dots = v_{s_1-1} = 1$ , then  $m(G) = m(G_x) + m(G_y) = 2^{s_1-1} + 2^{s_1-1} = 2^{s_1}$ , a contradiction. Therefore, without loss of generality, we may assume  $v_1 \geq 2$ . We have

$$2s_1 = |V(G_1)| = 1 + (s_1 - 1) + \sum_{i=1}^t v_i \geq 1 + (s_1 - 1) + s_1.$$

Hence,  $v_1 = 2$  and  $v_2 = \dots = v_{s_1-1} = 1$ . Since  $G$  is a bipartite connected graph, we may assume  $y_1 a_i \in E(G)$  and  $y_1 b_i \notin E(G)$  for all  $2 \leq i \leq s_1 - 1$ .

If  $y_1 a_1 \in E(G)$ , then  $y_1 b_{1,1}, y_1 b_{1,2} \notin E(G)$ , a contradiction to the fact that  $G_x$  has a perfect matching. Thus,  $y_1 a_1 \notin E(G)$ .

If  $y_1 b_{1,1}, y_1 b_{1,2} \in E(G)$ , then  $m(G) = m(G_x) + m(G_y) = m(G_x) + 2^{s_1-1} = 2^{s_1}$ , a contradiction. Therefore, we assume that  $y_1 b_{1,1} \in E(G)$  and  $y_1 b_{1,2} \notin E(G)$ . Hence,  $G \cong B(4, s - 1)$ .



**Fig. 5:** Baton  $B(4, s - 1)$

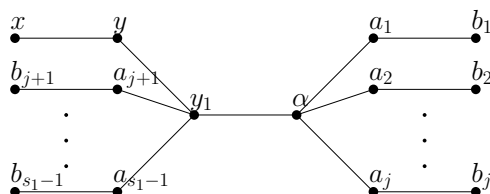
**Subcase 2.3.**  $|K| = 1$  and  $u = 1$ .

Assume  $\alpha \in K$  and  $\alpha a_i \in E(G)$  for all  $i = 1, \dots, j$  and  $\alpha a_i \notin E(G)$  for all  $i = j + 1, \dots, s_1 - 1$ . We have

$$2s_1 = |V(G_1)| = 1 + 1 + (s_1 - 1) + \sum_{i=1}^{s_1-1} v_i \geq s_1 + 1 + (s_1 - 1) = 2s_1$$

Hence,  $v_1 = \dots = v_{s_1-1} = 1$ . Since  $G$  is a bipartite connected graph,  $y_1 a_i \in E(G)$  and  $y_1 b_i \notin E(G)$  for all  $i = 1, \dots, j$ .

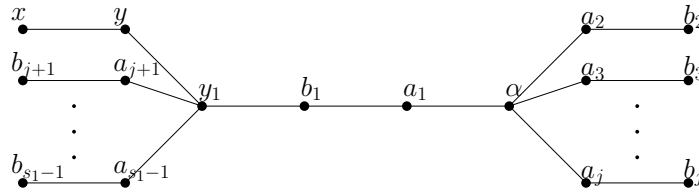
If  $y_1 \alpha \in E(G)$ , then  $y_1 a_i \notin E(G)$  for all  $i = 1, \dots, j$ . This implies that  $y_1 b_i \notin E(G)$  for all  $i = 1, \dots, j$ . Hence  $G \cong B(2, s - 1)$ .



**Fig. 6:** Baton  $B(2, s - 1)$

If  $y_1 \alpha \notin E(G)$ , then  $y_1 b_1 \in E(G)$ . Thus,  $y_1 a_1 \notin E(G)$ . Then  $y_1 a_i \notin E(G)$  for all  $2 \leq i \leq j$ . Therefore,  $G \cong B(4, s - 2)$ .



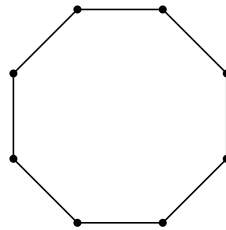


**Fig.7:** Baton  $B(4, s-2)$

□

If the graph  $G$  is not sequentially Cohen-Macaulay, the theorem is not true as the following example.

**Example 3.3.** Let  $G$  be a cycle graph of length 8. Then  $G$  is bipartite and  $|V(G)| = 8 = 2 \cdot 4$ . In this case,  $m(G) = 10 > 2^{4-1} + 1 = 9$ .



**Fig. 8:** The cycle graph of length 8.

If  $G$  be a tree, then

$$m(G) \leq f(n) = \begin{cases} 2^s & \text{if } n = 2s + 1, \\ 2^{s-1} + 1 & \text{if } n = 2s. \end{cases}$$

Furthermore,  $m(G) = f(n)$  if and only if

$$G \cong \begin{cases} B(1, s) & \text{if } n = 2s + 1, \\ B(2, s - 1) \text{ or } B(4, s - 2) & \text{if } n = 2s. \end{cases}$$

*Proof.* Since  $G$  is sequentially Cohen-Macaulay by [14, Theorem 2.13], so that the corollary follows from Theorem 3.2. □

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## TÓM TẮT

### SỐ CÁC MẶT CỰC ĐẠI THUỘC CÁC ĐỒ THỊ COHEN-MACAULAY DÂY HAI PHẦN

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Chúng tôi chặn số các tập độc lập cực đại thuộc các đồ thị Cohen-Macaulay dây hai phần và đặc trưng hoàn toàn được các đồ thị giúp có chặn đúng.

**Từ khóa:** Đồ thị; tập độc lập; Cohen-Macaulay dây.