SMOOTH KUMMER SURFACES
IN PROJECTIVE THREE-SPACE

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(Communicated by Ron Donagi)

ABSTRACT. In this note we prove the existence of smooth Kummer surfaces
in projective three-space containing sixteen mutually disjoint smooth rational
curves of any given degree.

INTRODUCTION

Let $X$ be a smooth quartic surface in projective three-space $\mathbb{P}^3$. As a conse-
quence of Nikulin’s theorem [6] $X$ is a Kummer surface if and only if it contains
sixteen mutually disjoint smooth rational curves. The classical examples of smooth
Kummer surfaces in $\mathbb{P}^3$ are due to Traynard (see [8] and [4]). They were redis-
covered by Barth and Nieto [2] and independently by Naruki [5]. These quartic
surfaces contain sixteen skew lines. In [1] it was shown by different methods that
there also exist smooth quartic surfaces in $\mathbb{P}^3$ containing sixteen mutually disjoint
smooth conics.

Motivated by these results it is then natural to ask if, for any given integer
$d \geq 1$, there exist smooth quartic surfaces in $\mathbb{P}^3$ containing sixteen mutually disjoint
smooth rational curves of degree $d$. The aim of this note is to show that the method
of [1] can be generalized to answer this question in the affirmative. We show:

**Theorem.** For any integer $d \geq 1$ there is a three-dimensional family of smooth
quartic surfaces in $\mathbb{P}^3$ containing sixteen mutually disjoint smooth rational curves
of degree $d$.

We work throughout over the field $\mathbb{C}$ of complex numbers.

1. PRELIMINARIES

Let $(A, L)$ be a polarized abelian surface of type $(1, 2d^2 + 1)$, $d \geq 1$, and let $L$
be symmetric. Denote by $e_1, \ldots, e_{16}$ the halfperiods of $A$. We are going to consider
the non-complete linear system

\[
\left| \mathcal{O}_A (2L) \otimes \bigotimes_{i=1}^{16} m_{e_i}^d \right|_{\pm}
\]

Received by the editors April 6, 1996.
1991 *Mathematics Subject Classification.* Primary 14J28; Secondary 14E25.
The author was supported by DFG contract Ba 423/7-1.

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of even respectively odd sections of $\mathcal{O}_A(2L)$ vanishing in $e_1, \ldots, e_{16}$ to the order $d$. (As for the sign $\pm$ we will always use the following convention: we take $+$ if $d$ is even, and $-$ if $d$ is odd.) A parameter count shows that the expected dimension of this linear system is 4. In fact, we will show that it yields an embedding of the smooth Kummer surface $X$ of $A$ into $\mathbb{P}_3$ in the generic case. The linear system $(*$) corresponds to a line bundle $M_L$ on $X$ such that

$$\pi^* M_L = \mathcal{O}_{\tilde{A}} \left(2\sigma^* L - d \sum_{i=1}^{16} E_i \right)$$

and

$$H^0 (X, M_L) \cong H^0 \left( A, \mathcal{O}_A (2L) \otimes \bigotimes_{i=1}^{16} m_{E_i}^d \right)^\pm .$$

Here $\sigma : \tilde{A} \rightarrow A$ is the blow-up of $A$ in the halfperiods, $E_1, \ldots, E_{16} \subset \tilde{A}$ are the exceptional curves and $\pi : \tilde{A} \rightarrow X$ is the canonical projection. The images of $E_1, \ldots, E_{16}$ under $\pi$ will be denoted by $D_1, \ldots, D_{16}$.

We will need the following lemma:

**Lemma 1.1.** Let the surfaces $A$ and $X$ and the line bundles $L$ and $M_L$ be as above. Further, let $C \subset X$ be an irreducible curve, different from $D_1, \ldots, D_{16}$, and let $F = \sigma \pi^* C$ be the corresponding symmetric curve on $A$. Then

(a) $M_L^2 = 4$ and $M_L D_i = d$ for $1 \leq i \leq 16$,

(b) $F^2 = 2C^2 + \sum_{i=1}^{16} \text{mult}_{e_i} (F)^2$, and

(c) $LF = M_L C + \frac{d}{2} \sum_{i=1}^{16} \text{mult}_{e_i} (F)$.

The proof consists in an obvious calculation.

## 2. Bounding degrees and multiplicities

Here we show two technical statements on the degrees and multiplicities of symmetric curves. We start with a lemma which bounds the degree of a symmetric curve on $A$ in terms of the degree of the corresponding curve on the smooth Kummer surface of $A$:

**Lemma 2.1.** Let $C \subset X$ be an irreducible curve, different from $D_1, \ldots, D_{16}$, and let $F = \sigma \pi^* C$.

(a) If $M_L C = 0$, then $LF \leq 2 \left(1 - C^2 \right) d^2 + 16$.

(b) If $M_L C > 0$, then $LF \leq 4 \left( M_L C - \frac{C^2}{M_L C} \right) d^2 + 9M_L C$.

**Proof.** For $\gamma \geq 0$ apply Hodge index to the line bundle $M_L$ and the divisor $C + \frac{\gamma}{d} D_i$:

$$M_L^2 \left( C + \frac{\gamma}{d} D_i \right)^2 \leq \left( M_L C + \frac{\gamma}{d} M_L D_i \right)^2 .$$

Using Lemma 1.1(a) and the equality $CD_i = \text{mult}_{e_i} (F)$ we get

$$\text{mult}_{e_i} (F) \leq \left( \frac{(M_L C)^2}{8\gamma} + \frac{\gamma}{8} + \frac{M_L C}{4} - \frac{C^2}{2\gamma} \right) d + \frac{\gamma}{d} ;$$
hence by Lemma 1.1(c)

\[ LF \leq \left( \frac{(MLC)^2}{\gamma} + \gamma + 2MLC - \frac{4C^2}{\gamma} \right)d^2 + ML(C - 4C^2) \gamma. \]

Now the assertion follows by setting \( \gamma = 2 \) in case \( MLC = 0 \) and by setting \( \gamma = MLC \) otherwise. \( \square \)

Further, we will need the following inequality on multiplicities of symmetric curves:

**Lemma 2.2.** Let \( F \subset A \) be a symmetric curve such that \( \mathcal{O}_A(F) \) is of type \((1,ε)\) with \( ε \) odd. Then

\[ 16 \sum_{i=1}^{16} \text{mult}_{ε_i}(F)^2 \geq 16 \left( \sum_{i=1}^{16} \text{mult}_{ε_i}(F) \right)^2 + \frac{15}{4}. \]

**Proof.** For \( k \geq 0 \) define the integers \( n_k \) by

\[ n_k = \text{def} \# \{ i \mid m_i = k, \ 1 \leq i \leq 16 \}. \]

Abbreviating \( m_i = \text{mult}_{ε_i}(F) \) we then have

\[ 16 \sum_{i=1}^{16} m_i = \sum_{k=0}^{∞} kn_k \quad \text{and} \quad 16 \sum_{i=1}^{16} m_i^2 = \sum_{k=0}^{∞} k^2n_k. \]

The polarized abelian surface \((A, \mathcal{O}_A(F))\) is the pull-back of a principally polarized abelian surface \((B,P)\) via an isogeny \( φ : A \rightarrow B \) of odd degree. The Theta divisor \( Θ ∈ |P| \) passes through six halfperiods with multiplicity one and through ten halfperiods with even multiplicity. Therefore the symmetric divisor \( F ∈ |φ^*P| \) is of odd multiplicity in six halfperiods and of even multiplicity in ten halfperiods or vice versa. So we have

\[ \sum_{k=0(2)} n_k = a \quad \text{and} \quad \sum_{k=1(2)} n_k = b, \]

where \((a,b) = (6,10)\) or \((a,b) = (10,6)\).

Under the restriction (1) the difference

\[ \sum_{k=0(2)} k^2n_k - \frac{1}{16} \left( \sum_{k=0(2)} kn_k \right)^2 \]

is minimal, if for some integer \( k_0 ≥ 0 \) we have

\[ n_{k_0} = 10, n_{k_0+1} = 6 \text{ or } n_{k_0} = 6, n_{k_0+1} = 10. \]

In this case we get \( \sum k^2n_k - \frac{1}{16} \left( \sum kn_k \right)^2 = \frac{15}{4} \), which implies the assertion of the lemma. \( \square \)

3. **Kummer surfaces with sixteen skew rational curves of given degree**

The aim of this section is to show:

**Theorem 3.1.** Let \((A,L)\) be a polarized abelian surface of type \((1,2d^2 + 1)\), \( d ≥ 1 \). Assume \( ρ(A) = 1 \). Then the map \( φ_{ML} : X \rightarrow \mathbb{P}^3 \) defined by the linear system \(|ML|\) is an embedding. The image surface \( φ_{ML}(X) \) is a smooth quartic surface containing sixteen mutually disjoint smooth rational curves of degree \( d \).

In particular, this implies the theorem stated in the introduction.
Proof. Using Riemann-Roch, Kodaira vanishing and Lemma 1.1(a), we will be done as soon as we can show that $M_L$ is very ample. For $d = 1$ this follows from [3], whereas for $d = 2$ it follows from [1]. So we may assume $d \geq 3$ in the sequel.

(a) First we show that $M_L$ is globally generated. A possible base part $B$ of the system $\big|O_A (2L) \otimes \bigotimes_{i=1}^{16} m_i^d \big|^\pm$ is totally symmetric, so $B$ is algebraically equivalent to some even multiple of $L$, which is impossible for dimensional reasons. It remains the possibility that one – hence all – of the curves $D_i$ is fixed in $|M_L|$. So $M_L - \mu \sum D_i$ is free for some $\mu \geq 1$. But $(M_L - \mu \sum D_i)^2 = 4 - 32\mu d - 32\mu^2 < 0$, a contradiction.

(b) Our next claim is that $M_L$ is ample. Otherwise there is an irreducible $(-2)$-curve $C \subset X$ such that $M_L C = 0$. Lemma 1.1 shows that we have

$$LF = \frac{d}{2} \sum m_i \quad \text{and} \quad F^2 = -4 + \sum m_i^2$$

for the symmetric curve $F = \sigma_* \pi^* C$ with multiplicities $m_i = \text{mult}_{e_i}(F)$. According to Lemma 2.1 the degree of $F$ is bounded by

$$LF \leq 6d^2 + 16.$$  \hfill (2)

Since $L$ is a primitive line bundle, the assumption on the Néron-Severi group of $A$ implies that $O_A (F)$ is algebraically equivalent to some multiple $pL$, $p \geq 1$, thus we have $LF = pL^2 = p(4d^2 + 2)$, and then (2) implies $p = 1$ because of our assumption $d \geq 3$. So we find

$$8d^2 + 4 = 2LF = d \sum m_i$$

and reduction mod $d$ shows that necessarily $d = 4$. But in this case $\sum m_i$ would be odd, which is impossible (cf. [3]).

(c) Finally we prove that $M_L$ is very ample. Suppose the contrary. Saint-Donat’s criterion [7, Theorem 5.2 and Theorem 6.1(iii)] then implies the existence of an irreducible curve $C \subset X$ with $M_L C = 2$ and $C^2 = 0$. So we have

$$LF = 2 + \frac{d}{2} \sum m_i \quad \text{and} \quad F^2 = \sum m_i^2$$

for the corresponding symmetric curve $F = \sigma_* \pi^* C$. Lemma 2.1 yields the estimate

$$LF \leq 8d^2 + 18.$$  \hfill (2)

As above $O_A (F)$ is algebraically equivalent to some multiple $pL$, $p \geq 1$, hence we get

$$p \left(4d^2 + 2\right) = pL^2 \leq 8d^2 + 18,$$

which implies $p \leq 2$. If we had $p = 2$ then reduction mod $d$ of the equation

$$2 \left(4d^2 + 2\right) = 2 + \frac{d}{2} \sum m_i$$

would give $d = 4$. But in this case we have $\sum m_i = 65$, which is impossible.

So the only remaining possibility is $p = 1$, thus

$$4d^2 + 2 = 2 + \frac{d}{2} \sum m_i = \sum m_i^2.$$  \hfill (2)

But a numerical check shows that this contradicts Lemma 2.2. This completes the proof of the theorem. \qed
Remark 3.2. We conclude with a remark on the genericity assumption on the abelian surface $A$. It is certainly not true that the line bundle $M_L$ is very ample for every polarized abelian surface $(A, L)$ of type $(1, 2d^2 + 1)$. Consider for instance the case where $A = E_1 \times E_2$ is a product of elliptic curves and $L = O_A \left( \{0\} \times E_2 + (2d^2 + 1)E_1 \times \{0\} \right)$. Here, taking $C \subset X$ to be curve corresponding to $E_1 \times \{0\}$, we have

$$M_GC = 1 - 2d < 0,$$

so in this case $M_L$ is not even ample or globally generated.

REFERENCES

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