

UNIRATIONALITY AND GEOMETRIC UNIRATIONALITY FOR HYPERSURFACES IN POSITIVE CHARACTERISTICS

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3. February 2020

ABSTRACT. Building on work of Segre and Kollár on cubic hypersurfaces, we construct over imperfect fields of characteristic $p \geq 3$ particular hypersurfaces of degree p , which show that geometrically rational schemes that are regular and whose rational points are Zariski dense are not necessarily unirational. A likewise behaviour holds for certain cubic surfaces in characteristic $p = 2$.

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INTRODUCTION

Let F be a ground field of arbitrary characteristic $p \geq 0$, and X be a geometrically integral scheme of dimension $n \geq 0$. One says that X is *rational* or *unirational* if there is a rational map $\mathbb{P}^n \dashrightarrow X$ that is birational or dominant, respectively. If this condition holds after base-change with respect to some finite field extension $F \subset E$, one says that X is *geometrically rational* or *geometrically unirational*.

Let $X \subset \mathbb{P}^{n+1}$ be an integral cubic hypersurface of dimension $n \geq 2$ that is not a cone. Generalizing earlier results of Segre [15], Manin [11] and Colliot-Thélène, Sansuc and Swinnerton-Dyer [2], Kollár showed over perfect fields F that the following three conditions are equivalent [8]:

- (i) The scheme X is unirational.
- (ii) The set of rational points $X(F)$ is non-empty.
- (iii) There is a rational point $a \in X$ whose local ring $\mathcal{O}_{X,a}$ is regular.

For smooth cubic hypersurfaces $X \subset \mathbb{P}^{n+1}$, this actually holds over arbitrary ground fields F . Furthermore, the result carries over to imperfect fields of characteristic

2010 *Mathematics Subject Classification*. 14M20, 14J70, 14G05, 14J26, 14G17.

The first named author is supported by JSPS Grant-in-Aid (S) 15H05738, JSPS Grant-in-Aid (B) 15H03611, and by NCTS Scholar Program.

$p \geq 5$, and it is asserted that the same holds for the remaining primes under certain technical conditions.

Indeed, Kollár gave the explicit equation $y^3 - yz^2 + \sum t_i x_i^3 = 0$ over the function field $F = k(t_1, \dots, t_n)$ in characteristic three, which yields a cubic hypersurface that is regular, geometrically rational and contains exactly three rational points, and is thus not unirational. He asks whether a similar equation exists for characteristic two, and raises for geometrically unirational schemes X the question in what situations the implications

$$X \text{ is unirational} \implies X(F) \text{ is Zariski dense} \implies X(F) \text{ is non-empty}$$

might admit reverse implications, say with X smooth and F infinite.

The goal of this paper is to analyze certain hypersurfaces $X \subset \mathbb{P}^{n+1}$ of degree p over imperfect fields F that show that *none of these reverse implications hold, at least with X regular*. Generalizing Kollár's equation to arbitrary $p \geq 3$, we study

$$y^p - yz^{p-1} + \sum_{i=1}^n t_i x_i^p = 0,$$

where x_1, \dots, x_n, y, z are indeterminates and $t_1, \dots, t_n \in F$ are scalars, with $n \geq 1$. Here our main result is:

Theorem. (see Thm. 2.7) *Suppose the scalars $t_1, \dots, t_n \in F$ are algebraically independent over some subfield k of characteristic $p \geq 3$, and that F is separable over the rational function field $k(t_1, \dots, t_n)$. Let $F \subset E$ be the extension obtained by adjoining the roots $t_1^{1/p}, \dots, t_n^{1/p}$. Then our hypersurface $X \subset \mathbb{P}^{n+1}$ has the following properties:*

- (i) *The scheme X is regular.*
- (ii) *There is no dominant rational map $\mathbb{P}^n \dashrightarrow X$ over F .*
- (iii) *The base-change $X \otimes_F E$ is birational to $\mathbb{P}^n \otimes_F E$.*
- (iv) *The set of rational points $X(F)$ is non-empty.*
- (v) *If the field F is separably closed, the rational points are Zariski dense.*
- (vi) *If F is contained in the field $k((t_1, \dots, t_n))$, then $X(F)$ is finite.*

Properties (i) and (ii) already hold if the differentials dt_1, \dots, dt_n in the F -vector space of absolute Kähler differentials Ω_F^1 are linearly independent, in other words, if the scalars $t_1, \dots, t_n \in F$ are *p-independent*, a notion going back to Teichmüller [16]. Apparently, this is the correct framework to treat questions of regularity and unirationality over imperfect fields.

In characteristic $p = 2$, we consider the cubic surface $X \subset \mathbb{P}^3$ defined by the equation

$$y_1^3 + t_1 x_1^2 y_1 + y_2^3 + t_2 x_2^2 y_2 = 0$$

and obtain in Theorem 4.4 analogous results. Here the set of rational points $X(F)$ is always infinite, because the cubic surface contains a line, but we could not determine whether or not $X(F)$ is Zariski dense. As remarked after Proposition 4.5, this cubic surface also shows that, for regular cubic hypersurfaces over of characteristic two, the implication

$$\begin{aligned} \exists a \in X(F) \text{ with } \mathcal{O}_{X,a} \text{ regular} \\ \text{and } \pi_a : X \dashrightarrow \mathbb{P}^n \text{ separable} \end{aligned} \implies X \text{ is unirational}$$

formulated in the remark on imperfect ground fields in [8], page 468, does not hold without an additional assumption. The problem seems to be that all tangent plane intersections $C_a = X \cap T_a(X)$, which are non-regular cubic curves, are actually non-integral. Note that for rational points $a \in X$, the local ring $\mathcal{O}_{X,a}$ is regular if and only if the scheme X is smooth at the point.

The non-unirationality of our cubic surface depends on the following criterion, which is of independent interest:

Theorem. (see Thm. 3.1) *Let X be unirational over some infinite ground field F of characteristic $p > 0$. Suppose there a fibration $f : X \rightarrow \mathbb{P}^1$ such that the fibers over almost all rational points $a \in \mathbb{P}^1$ contain no rational curve. Then the reduced base-change along the relative Frobenius map $\mathbb{P}^1 \rightarrow \mathbb{P}^1$ remains unirational.*

The paper is organized as follows: In Section 1 we recall basic facts on p -independence of scalars $t_1, \dots, t_n \in F$, and discuss some implications concerning regularity of schemes and Zariski density of rational points. In Section 2 we study hypersurfaces $X \subset \mathbb{P}^{n+1}$ defined by the equation $y^p - yz^{p-1} + \sum t_i x_i^p = 0$ at odd primes. In Section 3 we relate unirationality with Frobenius base-change. This is used in Section 4 for the analysis of the cubic surface $X \subset \mathbb{P}^3$ defined by the equation $x_1^3 + t_1 x_1 y_1^2 + x_2^3 + t_2 x_2 y_2^2 = 0$ in characteristic two.

Acknowledgement. This research was starting during our stay at the *National Center for Theoretical Sciences*, Taipei. We would like to thank Jungkai Chen for the invitation and the NCTS for its hospitality. The research was also conducted in the framework of the research training group *GRK 2240: Algebro-geometric Methods in Algebra, Arithmetic and Topology*, which is funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. We also like to thank János Kollár for helpful comments.

1. GENERALITIES

Here we recall some general facts that will be used throughout, concerning Kähler differentials, p -independence, regularity, and Zariski density of rational points. Let F be a field of characteristic $p > 0$, and $\Omega_F^1 = \Omega_{F/\mathbb{Z}}^1 = \Omega_{F/F^p}^1$ be the F -vector space of absolute Kähler differentials. The scalars $t \in F$ yield differentials $dt \in \Omega_F^1$, which form a generating set. Let us say that a family of scalars $t_i \in F$, $i \in I$ is p -independent if the vectors $dt_i \in \Omega_F^1$ are linearly independent. We need the following facts:

Proposition 1.1. *Consider the following conditions:*

- (i) *The $t_i \in F$ form a separable transcendence basis over a subfield k .*
- (ii) *The $t_i \in F$ are p -independent.*
- (iii) *The $t_i \in F$ are linearly independent over the subfield F^p .*

Then the implications (i) \Rightarrow (ii) \Rightarrow (iii) hold. Moreover, for each $t \in F$ the condition $dt = 0$ is equivalent to $t \in F^p$.

Proof. The first implication follows from [10], Lemma 3 on page 382. The second is a consequence of the characterization of p -independence ([12], Theorem 86 or [13], Theorem 26.5), which is frequently taken as a definition: The monomials $\prod_{i \in I} t_i^{d_i} \in$

F are linearly independent over the subfield F^p , where the exponents satisfy $0 \leq d_i \leq p-1$ and almost all vanish. In particular, the $t_i \in F$ are linearly independent.

Clearly, each $t \in F^p$ has $dt = 0$. Conversely, suppose that $t \in F$ is not a p -th power. The extension $F^p \subset F$ is purely inseparable of height one, so the minimal polynomial of t must be of the form $T^p - \lambda$ for some $\lambda \in F^p$. In turn, the powers $1, t, \dots, t^{p-1} \in F$ are linearly independent over the subfield F^p , and the above characterization shows $dt \neq 0$. \square

Let us list several elementary but useful permanence properties for p -independent scalars:

Proposition 1.2. *Let $F \subset E$ be a separable extension. If $t_i \in F$, $i \in I$ are p -independent, so are the $t_i \in E$.*

Proof. According to [12], Theorem 88 or [13], Theorem 26.6, the canonical map $\Omega_F^1 \otimes_F E \rightarrow \Omega_E^1$ given by $dt \otimes \lambda \mapsto \lambda dt$ is injective. It follows that F -linearly independent subsets are mapped to E -linearly independent subsets. \square

Proposition 1.3. *If $t_1, \dots, t_n \in F$ are p -independent, then the same holds for the $t_1, \dots, t_{n-1}, t'_n \in F$ with the new element $t'_n = t_n/t_{n-1}$.*

Proof. First note that all scalars t_i are non-zero. Set $f = t_{n-1}$ and $g = t_n$. Inside the vector space Ω_F^1 , the product rule gives $g^2 d(f/g) = gdf - fdg$, and the assertion follows from the exchange property for linear independent sets. \square

Proposition 1.4. *Suppose that $t_1, \dots, t_n \in F$ are p -independent. Then the purely inseparable extension $E = F(t_n^{1/p})$ has degree p , and the $t_1, \dots, t_{n-1} \in E$ remain p -independent.*

Proof. We have $t_n \notin F^p$, and whence $[E : F] = p$. Clearly, the monomials $t_n^{j/p}$, $0 \leq j \leq p-1$ are linearly independent over the subfield F , hence also over $E^p \subset F$, and we infer that $\Omega_{E/F}^1$ is one-dimensional, with basis $dt_n^{1/p}$. The field extensions $F^p \subset F \subset E$ gives an exact sequence

$$(1) \quad 0 \longrightarrow \Upsilon_{E/F/F^p} \longrightarrow \Omega_F^1 \otimes_F E \longrightarrow \Omega_E^1 \longrightarrow \Omega_{E/F}^1 \longrightarrow 0$$

Here the term on the left is called the *module of imperfection*, and is defined by the above exact sequence; here we follow the notation from [5], Definition 20.6.1. Cartier's Equality ([12], Theorem 92 or [13], Theorem 26.10)

$$\dim_E(\Omega_{E/F}^1) = \text{trdeg}_F(E) + \dim_E(\Upsilon_{E/F/F^p})$$

for the finitely generated field extension $F \subset E$ shows that our module of imperfection is one-dimensional. The non-zero vector $dt_n \otimes 1$ clearly belongs to the kernel, whence can be regarded as a basis for $\Upsilon_{E/F/F^p}$. It follows that the remaining vectors dt_1, \dots, dt_{n-1} remain linearly independent in Ω_E^1 . \square

Now let x_0, \dots, x_n be indeterminates for some $n \geq 0$, and regard \mathbb{P}^n as the homogeneous spectrum of the polynomial ring $F[x_0, \dots, x_n]$. Given a sequence of scalars $t_0, \dots, t_n \in F$, not all of which vanish, we consider the Fermat hypersurface $D \subset \mathbb{P}^n$ defined by the equation $t_0 x_0^p + \dots + t_n x_n^p = 0$. Note that D is irreducible but geometrically non-reduced, and becomes a p -fold hyperplane after base-changing to the perfect closure.

Proposition 1.5. *Suppose $t_0 = 1$. Then the scheme D is regular if and only if the $t_1, \dots, t_n \in F$ are p -independent.*

Proof. The extension $F' = F^p(t_1, \dots, t_n)$ defines an intermediate field $F^p \subset F' \subset F$. The p -degree $d = \text{pdeg}(F'/F^p)$ is defined as the vector space dimension of Ω_{F'/F^p}^1 , and is also characterized by the degree formula $[F' : F^p] = p^d$. We have $d \leq n$, because the differentials $dt_1, \dots, dt_n \in \Omega_{F'/F^p}^1$ form a generating set. According to [14], Theorem 3.3 the scheme D is regular if and only if $d = n$. Hence we have to show the equality

$$(2) \quad \dim_{F'}(\Omega_{F'/F^p}^1) = \dim_F(Fdt_1 + \dots + Fdt_n)$$

of vector space dimensions. Taking p -th roots, we see that the left hand side equals the dimension of $\Omega_{E/F}^1$. Here $F \subset E$ denotes the extension generated by $t_1^{1/p}, \dots, t_n^{1/p}$, to avoid confusion with F' . Using induction on $n \geq 0$ with Proposition 1.4, one sees that the right hand side $r = \dim_F(Fdt_1 + \dots + Fdt_n)$ obeys the formula $[E : F] = p^r$, hence also coincides with the dimension of $\Omega_{E/F}^1$. This gives the desired equality (2). \square

Now suppose that X is an F -scheme of finite type. One says that X is *geometrically reduced* if for some algebraically closed field extension E , the base-change $X' = X \otimes_F E$ is reduced.

Lemma 1.6. *If the scheme X is geometrically reduced and the field F is separably closed, then the set of rational points $X(F)$ is Zariski dense.*

Proof. We have to verify that each non-empty open set contains a rational point, so it suffices to check that $X(F)$ is non-empty, and we may assume that X is affine. By Bertini's Theorem ([6], Theorem 6.3) there is a hyperplane $H \subset X$ that remains geometrically reduced. By induction on the dimension, this reduces us to the case $\dim(X) = 0$. Hence our scheme is the spectrum of a product $E_1 \times \dots \times E_r$ of $r \geq 1$ separable field extensions. Since F is separably closed, we must have $E_i = F$.

The following more direct argument was suggested to us by János Kollár: According to [10], Theorem 15 the function field of X has a separating transcendence basis over F . In turn, we may assume that X is étale over \mathbb{A}^n . For each rational point $a \in \mathbb{A}^n$ lying in the image of X , the preimage is the spectrum of a product $E_1 \times \dots \times E_r$ as above. \square

Suppose now that X is equidimensional of dimension $n \geq 0$. Then the *locus of non-smoothness* $\text{Sing}(X/F)$ is the set of points $a \in X$ where $\Omega_{X/F}^1 \otimes \kappa(a)$ has vector space dimension $d > n$. It has a natural scheme structure, defined via Fitting ideals for the coherent sheaf $\Omega_{X/F}^1$, compare the discussion in [4], Section 2. Depending on the context, we also call $\text{Sing}(X/F)$ the *scheme of non-smoothness*.

Lemma 1.7. *Suppose that $\text{Sing}(X/F)$ and some effective Cartier divisor $D \subset X$ have the same support, and that X contains no embedded components. Then X is geometrically reduced but geometrically non-normal. Furthermore, the scheme X is regular provided that D is regular.*

Proof. The open set $X \setminus D$ is smooth. The base-change $X' = X \otimes_F E$ to the perfect closure $E = F^{\text{perf}}$ also contains no embedded component, and is generically

smooth. In turn, the structure sheaf $\mathcal{O}_{X'}$ has no non-zero nilpotent elements, so X is geometrically reduced. Let ζ be some generic point in $D' = D \otimes_F E$. Then the local ring $\mathcal{O}_{X',\zeta}$ is one-dimensional and not regular. By Serre's Characterization, the scheme X is not geometrically normal.

Suppose now that the scheme D is regular. Fix a point $a \in D$, and let $f \in \mathcal{O}_{X,a}$ be an element defining the Cartier divisor in some neighborhood. This element is regular and contained in the maximal ideal. Since the local ring $\mathcal{O}_{D,a} = \mathcal{O}_{X,a}/(f)$ is regular, the same must hold for $\mathcal{O}_{X,a}$. \square

2. HYPERSURFACES OF p -DEGREE

Let F be a ground field of characteristic $p \geq 3$. Fix some integer $n \geq 1$ and scalars $t_1, \dots, t_n \in F$, only subject to the condition $t_1 \neq 0$. Regard \mathbb{P}^{n+1} as the homogeneous spectrum of the polynomial ring $F[x_1, \dots, x_n, y, z]$. We now consider the hypersurface $X \subset \mathbb{P}^{n+1}$ of dimension $\dim(X) = n$ and degree $\deg(X) = p$ defined by the equation

$$(3) \quad y^p - yz^{p-1} + \sum_{i=1}^n t_i x_i^p = 0.$$

For function fields $F = k(t_1, \dots, t_n)$ in characteristic three, this is the cubic hypersurface studied by Kollár in [8], Section 4. Here we work over arbitrary characteristics $p \geq 3$ and more general ground fields F .

Proposition 2.1. *The scheme X is geometrically integral.*

Proof. Replacing F by some algebraic closure, we have to show that the left-hand side of (3) is an irreducible polynomial. Set $x = \sum t_i^{1/p} x_i$ and $v = x + y$. Now our task is to verify that $P(v) = v^p - yz^{p-1}$ is irreducible as polynomial over $R = k[y, z]$. This follows immediately with the Eisenstein Criterion with the prime element $y \in R$. \square

Proposition 2.2. *If $t_1, \dots, t_n \in F^p$, then the scheme X is birational to \mathbb{P}^n .*

Proof. As in the previous proof, we may assume that our hypersurface $X \subset \mathbb{P}^{n+1}$ is given by the equation $y^p - yz^{p-1} + x_1^p = 0$. This does not involve the variables x_2, \dots, x_n , hence X is a cone with respect to the $(n-2)$ -dimensional linear subspace $V \subset \mathbb{P}^{n+1}$ given by $x_1 = y = z = 0$ as apex, over the plane curve $C \subset \mathbb{P}^2$ defined by the equation $x^p - yz^{p-1} = 0$, where we have made the substitution $x = y + x_1$.

Geometrically, this means that X is birational to $C \times \mathbb{P}^{n-1}$, and it remains to check that the integral curve C is rational. On the affine chart given by $z \neq 0$, the coordinate ring for the curve becomes the polynomial ring $F[x/z]$, hence C must be rational. \square

Proposition 2.3. *The scheme of non-smoothness $\text{Sing}(X/F) \subset X$ and the effective Cartier divisor $D \subset X$ defined by the equation $z = 0$ have the same support. Moreover, X is regular provided that $t_1, \dots, t_n \in F$ are p -independent.*

Proof. For our hypersurface $X \subset \mathbb{P}^{n+1}$, the scheme of non-smoothness $\text{Sing}(X/F)$ is defined by the additional equations coming from the partial derivatives of (3). These partial derivatives are z^{p-1} and $-yz^{p-2}$. It follows that D and $\text{Sing}(X/F)$ have the same support.

Now suppose that $t_1, \dots, t_n \in F$ are p -independent. We may regard D as the divisor in \mathbb{P}^n defined by the Fermat equation $y^p + t_1x^p + \dots + t_nx_n^p$. According to Proposition 1.5, the hypersurface D is regular. By Lemma 1.7, the scheme X is regular as well. \square

In order to apply induction, we will relate our hypersurface in dimension n with one in dimension $n - 1$. This is based on the following observation:

Lemma 2.4. *Suppose $n \geq 2$, that $t_{n-1} \neq 0$ and that $t_n/t_{n-1} \in F^p$. Then the hypersurface $X \subset \mathbb{P}^{n+1}$ is projectively equivalent to the hypersurface $X' \subset \mathbb{P}^{n+1}$ defined by another equation of the form (3), with coefficients $t'_i = t_i$ for $i \leq n - 1$ and $t'_n = 0$.*

Proof. Let $\lambda \in F$ be the scalar with $\lambda^p = t_n/t_{n-1}$, rewrite the equation (3) as

$$y^p - yz^{p-1} + t_1x_1^p + \dots + t_{n-2}x_{n-2}^p + t_{n-1}(x_{n-1} + \lambda x_n)^p = 0,$$

and use the coordinate change $x'_{n-1} = x_{n-1} + \lambda x_n$. \square

Proposition 2.5. *If $t_1, \dots, t_n \in F$ are p -independent, then the scheme X is not unirational.*

Proof. We proceed by induction on $n = \dim(X)$. Suppose first that $n = 1$. Seeking a contradiction, we assume that there is a rational dominant map $\mathbb{P}^1 \dashrightarrow X$. By Lüroth's Theorem, X is birational to \mathbb{P}^1 . According to Proposition 2.3, the curve X is regular, so we actually have an isomorphism $X \simeq \mathbb{P}^1$, in particular X is smooth. On the other hand, the scheme of non-smoothness $\text{Sing}(X/F)$ is non-empty, contradiction.

Suppose now that $n \geq 2$, and that the assertion is true for $n - 1$. Seeking a contradiction, we assume that there is a rational dominant map $\mathbb{P}^n \dashrightarrow X$. Let us write $X = X_F(t_1, \dots, t_n)$ to indicate the dependence of our hypersurface $X \subset \mathbb{P}^n$ on the ground field F and the scalars $t_1, \dots, t_n \in F$. Consider its base-change $\mathbb{P}_E^n \dashrightarrow X_E(t_1, \dots, t_n)$ for the field extension $E = F(t_n^{1/p})$. According to Lemma 2.4 there is linear isomorphism $X_E(t_1, \dots, t_n) \rightarrow X_E(t_1, \dots, t_{n-1}, 0)$. The latter becomes a cone in \mathbb{P}_E^{n+1} , because its equation no longer involves the indeterminate x_n , whence there is a dominant rational map

$$X \otimes_F E = X_E(t_1, \dots, t_{n-1}, 0) \dashrightarrow X_E(t_1, \dots, t_{n-1}) = X'.$$

Composing these maps we get a dominant rational map $\mathbb{P}_E^n \dashrightarrow X'$. According to [8], Lemma 2.3 the hypersurface Y is unirational. On the other hand, the scalars $t_1, \dots, t_{n-1} \in E$ are p -independent according to Proposition 1.4. By induction hypothesis, the hypersurface $X' \subset \mathbb{P}_E^n$ is not unirational, contradiction. \square

The hypersurface $X \subset \mathbb{P}^{n+1}$ contains the obvious rational points

$$(4) \quad (0 : \dots : 0 : \lambda : 1), \quad \lambda \in \mathbb{F}_p.$$

Under suitable assumptions on the ground field F , there are no further rational points:

Proposition 2.6. *Suppose that F is contained in the field $k((t_1, \dots, t_n))$ of formal Laurent series with respect to indeterminates t_1, \dots, t_n and some subfield k . Then $X(F)$ consists of the p rational points listed in (4).*

Proof. This is essentially Kollár's argument from [8], Section 4, which we repeat for the convenience of the reader. It suffices to treat the case that F equals the field of formal Laurent series over an infinite field k . This means $F = \text{Frac}(R)$ for the ring $R = k[[t_1, \dots, t_n]]$. Let $a \in X(F)$ be a rational point, and write it as $a = (h_1 : \dots : h_n : f : g)$ with some relatively prime power series $h_i, f, g \in R$. This is indeed possible because the ring R is factorial by [13], Theorem 20.8. Our task is to show that the h_i vanish. Seeking a contradiction, we assume that this is not the case. Given some exponents $u_i \geq 1$, we obtain a homomorphism $\varphi : R \rightarrow k[[t]]$ defined by $t_i \mapsto t^{u_i}$, inducing an equation $f^p - fg^{p-1} + th^p = 0$, now with $f, g, h \in k[[t]]$. According to [1], §3, No. 7, Lemma 2 we may choose the exponents so that $h \neq 0$. Then also $f \neq 0$.

Dividing by some common factor, we may assume that $\gcd(f, g, h) = 1$. Each irreducible factor d of $\gcd(f, g)$ has the property $d^p | th^p$. Since t is a prime element, we must have $d|h$, contradiction. Thus $\gcd(f, g) = 1$. Rewrite our equation as $th^p = \prod_{j=0}^{p-1} (f - jg)$. The factors $P_j = f - jg$ on the right are pairwise coprime, because this holds for f, g . Hence we can write $f - jg = Q_j^p$ for all j with one exception i , which has $f - ig = tQ_i^p$. Then

$$tQ_i^p + \left(\sum_{j \neq i} Q_j \right)^p = \sum_{j=0}^{p-1} (f - jg) = pf - p \frac{p-1}{2} g = 0.$$

We conclude that in the prime factorization of tQ_i^p , all exponents are divisible by p . This contradicts the fact that t is a prime element in the ring $k[[t]]$. \square

We now summarize our results in the following form:

Theorem 2.7. *Suppose the scalars $t_1, \dots, t_n \in F$ are algebraically independent over some subfield k of characteristic $p \geq 3$, and that F is separable over the rational function field $k(t_1, \dots, t_n)$. Let $F \subset E$ be the extension obtained by adjoining the roots $t_1^{1/p}, \dots, t_n^{1/p}$. Then the hypersurface $X \subset \mathbb{P}^{n+1}$ that is defined by the equation $y^p - yz^{p-1} + \sum_{i=1}^n t_i x_i^p = 0$ has the following properties:*

- (i) *The scheme X is regular.*
- (ii) *There is no dominant rational map $\mathbb{P}^n \dashrightarrow X$ over F .*
- (iii) *The base-change $X \otimes_F E$ is birational to $\mathbb{P}^n \otimes_F E$.*
- (iv) *The set of rational points $X(F)$ is non-empty.*
- (v) *If the field F is separably closed, the rational points are Zariski dense.*
- (vi) *If F is contained in the field $k((t_1, \dots, t_n))$, then $X(F)$ is finite.*

Proof. According to Proposition 1.1, the scalars $t_1, \dots, t_n \in F$ are p -independent, so the scheme X must be regular by Proposition 2.3. Furthermore, it is not unirational according to Proposition 2.5. The base-change $X \otimes_F E$ becomes rational, in light of Proposition 2.2. If F is separably closed, the rational points must be dense by Lemma 1.6. If F is contained in the field of formal Laurent series, we saw in Proposition 2.6 that there are only p rational points. \square

With the setting of the above theorem, our regular scheme X is geometrically unirational but not unirational. Furthermore, no separable extension achieves unirationality. Moreover, we see that the reverse implications

$$X \text{ is unirational} \implies X(F) \text{ is Zariski dense} \implies X(F) \text{ is non-empty}$$

for geometrically unirational schemes X over infinite fields F discussed by Kollár in [8], Question 1.3 do not hold for regular schemes.

3. UNIRATIONALITY AND FROBENIUS BASE-CHANGE

Let F be an infinite ground field of characteristic $p > 0$. Suppose X is an integral proper scheme endowed with a surjective morphism $f : X \rightarrow \mathbb{P}^1$. Write the projective line as the homogeneous spectrum of $F[T_0, T_1]$, and regard the indeterminates T_i as global sections of the ample sheaf $\mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{P}^1}(1)$. Fix an integer $\nu \geq 1$. The resulting global sections $T_i^{p^\nu}$ of $\mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{P}^1}(p^\nu)$ define a purely inseparable morphism $h : \mathbb{P}^1 \rightarrow \mathbb{P}^1$ of degree p^ν . This map can also be described by the inclusion of coordinate rings $F[s^{p^\nu}] \subset F[s]$, where we set $s = T_1/T_0$. This reveals that $h : \mathbb{P}^1 \rightarrow \mathbb{P}^1$ coincides with the iterated relative Frobenius map for the projective line. Let us write $X' = (X \times_{\mathbb{P}^1} \mathbb{P}^1)_{\text{red}}$ for the ensuing base-change, endowed with the reduced scheme structure.

Theorem 3.1. *Suppose the scheme X is unirational, and that for almost every rational point $a \in \mathbb{P}^1$, the fiber $f^{-1}(a)$ contains no rational curve. Then the reduced base-change $X' = (X \times_{\mathbb{P}^1} \mathbb{P}^1)_{\text{red}}$ is unirational as well.*

Proof. Set $n = \dim(X)$, and choose a dominant rational map $\mathbb{P}^1 \times \mathbb{P}^{n-1} \dashrightarrow X$. By the Valuative Criterion for properness, the domain of definition contains $\mathbb{P}_U^1 = \mathbb{P}^1 \times U$ for some open dense set $U \subset \mathbb{P}^{n-1}$, so we have a dominant morphism $g : \mathbb{P}_U^1 \rightarrow X$.

We now write $B = \mathbb{P}^1$ for the base of the given surjection $f : X \rightarrow \mathbb{P}^1 = B$. Let $b_1, \dots, b_r \in B$ be the finitely many rational points whose fibers contain rational curves. The preimages of $f^{-1}(b_i)$ on \mathbb{P}_U^1 are closed sets not containing the generic point. Since the projection $\mathbb{P}_U^1 \rightarrow U$ is proper, we may shrink U and suppose that the image of $g : \mathbb{P}_U^1 \rightarrow X$ is disjoint from the fibers $f^{-1}(b_i)$. This means that for every rational point $u \in U$, the image $g(\mathbb{P}_u^1) \subset X$ is not contained in any of the fibers of $f : X \rightarrow B$, and thus dominates B . It follows that for the generic point $\eta \in U$, the induced projection $\mathbb{P}_E^1 = \mathbb{P}_\eta^1 \rightarrow B = \mathbb{P}^1$ is surjective, where $E = \kappa(\eta)$ denotes the function field of the open set $U \subset \mathbb{P}^{n-1}$.

Consider the composite morphism $\mathbb{P}_U^1 \rightarrow B$ and the ensuing base-change $(\mathbb{P}_U^1) \times_B B$ with respect to the purely inseparable morphism $h : B = \mathbb{P}^1 \rightarrow \mathbb{P}^1 = B$ of degree $\deg(h) = p^\nu$. It comes with a projection $\text{pr} : (\mathbb{P}_U^1) \times_B B \rightarrow U$ and a dominant morphism $(\mathbb{P}_U^1) \times_B B \rightarrow X \times_B B$. To check that X' is unirational, it thus suffices to verify that the reduction of the generic fiber $\text{pr}^{-1}(\eta)$ is a rational curve over the function field $E = \kappa(\eta)$ of the open set $U \subset \mathbb{P}^{n-1}$.

This is a consequence of the following property of the iterated relative Frobenius map $h : \mathbb{P}^1 \rightarrow \mathbb{P}^1$: We claim that for each field extension $F \subset E$ and each surjective F -morphism $\varphi : \mathbb{P}_E^1 \rightarrow \mathbb{P}_F^1$, there is a commutative diagram

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \mathbb{P}_E^1 & \xleftarrow{h_E} & \mathbb{P}_E^1 \\ \varphi \downarrow & & \downarrow \psi \\ \mathbb{P}_F^1 & \xleftarrow{h} & \mathbb{P}_F^1 \end{array}$$

for some ψ . Indeed, the morphism φ is defined via some invertible sheaf $\mathcal{L} = \mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{P}_E^1}(n)$ and two global sections without common zeros, which can be viewed as homogeneous

polynomials $Q_0, Q_1 \in E[T_0, T_1]$ of degree n that are relatively prime. Set $q = p^\nu$. Then the morphism ψ defined by the polynomials $Q_0^q, Q_1^q \in E[T_0^q, T_1^q]$ makes the diagram commutative.

The above diagram yields a surjection $\mathbb{P}_E^1 \rightarrow \mathbb{P}_E^1 \times_{\mathbb{P}_F^1} \mathbb{P}_F^1$. This is an E -morphism, because the iterated relative Frobenius map h_E is an E -morphism. Lüroth's Theorem (see for example [9], Proposition 1.10) ensures that the reduction of the fiber product is a rational curve over E . \square

The following consequence will later play an important role:

Corollary 3.2. *Suppose that for almost every rational point $a \in \mathbb{P}^1$, the fiber $f^{-1}(a)$ contains no rational curves, and that X' is birational to $Z \times \mathbb{P}^{n-1}$, where Z is not a rational curve. Then X is not unirational.*

Proof. Seeking a contradiction, we assume that X is unirational. By the theorem, X' is unirational and hence Z are rational, contradiction. \square

4. A CUBIC SURFACE IN CHARACTERISTIC TWO

Let F be a ground field of characteristic $p = 2$. Regard \mathbb{P}^3 as the homogeneous spectrum of the polynomial ring $F[x_1, x_2, y_1, y_2]$, and let $t_1, t_2 \in F$ be scalars, subject only to the condition $t_1 \neq 0$ and $t_2 \neq 0$. The goal of this section is to study the cubic surface $X \subset \mathbb{P}^3$ defined by the equation

$$(5) \quad y_1^3 + t_1 x_1^2 y_1 + y_2^3 + t_2 x_2^2 y_2 = 0.$$

The defining polynomial is irreducible, which can be seen by setting $x_2 = 0$ and observing that $y_1(y_1^2 + t_1 x_1^2)$ is not a cube in $F[x_1, y_1]$. Thus our del Pezzo surface X is a geometrically integral.

In what follows we shall see that if the scalars are p -independent, the scheme X is regular and geometrically rational, yet not unirational. Moreover, it has Picard number $\rho = 2$ and contains exactly one (-1) -curve L . We do not now whether or not $X(F)$ is Zariski dense.

Proposition 4.1. *The scheme of non-smoothness $D = \text{Sing}(X/F)$ is an irreducible curve defined inside \mathbb{P}^3 by the two equations $y_1^2 + t_1 x_1^2 = 0$ and $y_2^2 + t_2 x_2^2 = 0$. Moreover, the inclusion $D \subset X$ is Cartier.*

Proof. The partial derivatives of the defining polynomial $P = y_1^3 + t_1 x_1^2 y_1 + y_2^3 + t_2 x_2^2 y_2$ with respect to y_i are $P_i = y_i^2 + t_i x_i^2$, whereas $\partial P / \partial x_i = 0$. Moreover, the jacobian ideal $\mathfrak{a} = (P, P_1, P_2)$ is already generated by the two partial derivatives, which yields the assertion on the embedding $D \subset \mathbb{P}^3$. If $t_i \in F$ are squares, a change of coordinate reveals that D is the intersection of two double planes, which shows that D is an irreducible curve.

From (5), one sees that on the open set given by $y_2 \neq 0$, the inclusion $D \subset X$ is already defined by the single equation $y_1^2 + t_1 x_1^2 = 0$. An analogous statement holds on the open set given by $y_1 \neq 0$. It follows that $D \subset X$ is Cartier outside the closed set $L \subset X$ defined by $y_1 = 0$ and $y_2 = 0$. From the equations for $D \subset \mathbb{P}^3$ one sees it is disjoint from L , hence $D \subset X$ must be Cartier. \square

The line $L \subset \mathbb{P}^3$ given by the equations $y_1 = 0$ and $y_2 = 0$ is contained in X and lies in the smooth locus. The adjunction formula for the inclusions $X \subset \mathbb{P}^3$ and $L \subset X$ gives $\omega_X = \mathcal{O}_X(-1)$ and $-2 = (L + K_X) \cdot L = L^2 - 1$. Hence:

Proposition 4.2. *The selfintersection number of the line L on the cubic surface X is given by $L^2 = -1$. In other words, $L \subset X$ is a (-1) -curve.*

Now consider the plane $H_1 \subset \mathbb{P}^3$ given by the equation $y_1 = 0$. Then the plane section $H_1 \cap X$ is defined by $y_1 = 0$ and $y_2(y_2^2 + t_2x_2^2) = 0$, thus decomposes as $L + C_1$, where C_1 is the irreducible conic defined by $y_1 = 0$ and $y_2^2 + t_2x_2^2 = 0$. Likewise, the plane $H_2 \subset \mathbb{P}^3$ defined by $y_2 = 0$ has $H_2 \cap X = L + C_2$, where the irreducible conic C_2 is defined by $y_2 = 0$ and $y_1^2 + t_1x_1^2 = 0$.

The equations reveal that $C_1 \cap C_2 = \emptyset$. Moreover, the curves $C_i \subset X$ are Cartier, because the intersections $C_i \cap L$ lies in the smooth locus. Since $H_1, H_2 \subset \mathbb{P}^2$ are linearly equivalent, the same holds for $C_1, C_2 \subset X$. In turn, the invertible sheaf $\mathcal{L} = \mathcal{O}_X(C_1)$ is globally generated, and the two-dimensional linear system inside $H^0(X, \mathcal{L})$ generated by global sections defining $C_i \subset X$ yield a morphism $f : X \rightarrow \mathbb{P}^1$ with $\mathcal{L} = f^* \mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{P}^1}(1)$.

Now it is convenient to use the term *double line* for a curve isomorphic to the first infinitesimal neighborhood of a line \mathbb{P}^1 in \mathbb{P}^2 . Note that the *twisted forms of the double line* are precisely the conics that are geometrically non-reduced.

Proposition 4.3. *The morphism $f : X \rightarrow \mathbb{P}^1$ extends the rational map $X \dashrightarrow \mathbb{P}^1$ given by $(x_1 : y_1 : x_2 : y_2) \mapsto (y_1 : y_2)$. All fibers are twisted forms of the double line. The induced finite morphisms*

$$f : L \longrightarrow \mathbb{P}^1 \quad \text{and} \quad f : D = \text{Sing}(X/F) \longrightarrow \mathbb{P}^1$$

are purely inseparable of degree two and four, respectively.

Proof. Let s_1, s_2 be sections of \mathcal{L} defining $C_1, C_2 \subset X$, and $E \subset H^0(X, \mathcal{L})$ the resulting linear system. By construction, we have $\mathcal{L} = \mathcal{O}_X(1) \otimes \mathcal{O}_X(-L)$. Under the canonical inclusion $\mathcal{L} \subset \mathcal{O}_X(1)$ and up to scalars, the sections s_i become the restrictions of $y_i \in H^0(\mathbb{P}^3, \mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{P}^3}(1))$, and L is the fixed part of the y_1, y_2 . The rational map $\varphi : \mathbb{P}^3 \dashrightarrow \mathbb{P}^1$ given by $(x_1 : y_1 : x_2 : y_2) \mapsto (y_1 : y_2)$ has the open set $U = \mathbb{P}^3 \setminus L$ as domain of definition, and it also can be described by the two-dimensional linear system generated by $y_1, y_2 \in H^0(\mathbb{P}^3, \mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{P}^3}(1))$. Thus the map $\varphi|_X$ coincides with the morphism $f : X \rightarrow \mathbb{P}^1$ on the open set $X \cap U$.

Now let $a \in \mathbb{P}^1$ be a point. To check that the fiber is a twisted form of the double line, it suffices to treat the case that $a = (\lambda_1 : \lambda_2)$ is a rational point. Then the fiber $Z = f^{-1}(a)$ is the zero-scheme for $\lambda_1 s_1 + \lambda_2 s_2$, and is contained in the zero-scheme $Z' \subset X$ for $\lambda_1 y_1 + \lambda_2 y_2$, which is a plane section. In turn, $Z' = Z \cup L$ is a reducible cubic curve, thus decomposes into the union of a conic Z and a line L . This shows that the fiber $Z = f^{-1}(a)$ is isomorphic to a conic. To proceed, it suffices by symmetry to treat the case that $\lambda_2 = 1$, and we write $\lambda = \lambda_1$. Then $f^{-1}(a) \subset X$ is defined inside \mathbb{P}^3 by the homogeneous equations

$$(6) \quad \lambda y_1 + y_2 = 0 \quad \text{and} \quad (1 + \lambda^3)y_1^2 + t_1x_1^2 + \lambda t_2x_2^2 = 0,$$

which indeed is a twisted form of the double line. Taking intersections with L and $D = \text{Sing}(X/F)$, one sees that the induced projections are purely inseparable of degree $d = 2$ and $d = 4$, respectively. \square

We now come to the main result on our cubic surface:

Theorem 4.4. *Suppose the scalars $t_1, t_2 \in F$ are p -independent. Let $F \subset E$ be the field extension obtained by adjoining the root $\sqrt{t_1}$. Then the cubic surface $X \subset \mathbb{P}^3$ defined by the equation $y_1^3 + t_1 x_1^2 y_1 + y_2^3 + t_2 x_2^2 y_2 = 0$ has the following properties:*

- (i) *The scheme X is regular.*
- (ii) *There is no dominant rational map $\mathbb{P}^2 \dashrightarrow X$ over F .*
- (iii) *The base-change $X \otimes_F E$ is birational to $\mathbb{P}^2 \otimes_F E$.*
- (iv) *The set of rational points $X(F)$ is infinite.*
- (v) *If F is separably closed, the rational points are Zariski dense.*

Proof. The assertion (iv) is a consequence of Proposition 1.6, and (iv) follows from the existence of the line $L \subset X$. Over the field extension E , we set $x'_1 = y_1 + \sqrt{t_1} x_1$. In the new indeterminates x'_1, y_1, x_2, y_2 our cubic surface is given by the equation $y_1 x_1^2 + y_2^3 + t_2 x_2^2 y_2 = 0$. Localizing with respect to x_1 we see that y_1 can be expressed by the other three indeterminates. This ensures that the base-change $X \otimes_F E$ is a rational surface, hence (iii).

We next verify that the scheme X is regular. Recall that the scheme of non-smoothness $D = \text{Sing}(X/F)$ was described in Proposition 4.1. Consider first the non-rational closed point $a = (1 : 0 : \sqrt{t_1} : 0) \in D$. On the open set given by $x_1 \neq 0$, the cubic surface is defined by the inhomogeneous equation

$$\frac{y_1}{x_1} \left(\left(\frac{y_1}{x_1} \right)^2 + t_1 \right) + \left(\frac{y_2}{x_1} \right)^3 + t_2 \left(\frac{x_2}{x_1} \right)^2 \frac{y_2}{x_1} = 0,$$

and the polynomial on the left lies in the maximal ideal of \mathfrak{m}_R of the local ring $R = \mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{A}^3, a}$, but not in \mathfrak{m}_R^2 . In turn, $\mathcal{O}_{X, a}$ is regular. By symmetry, the same holds at the closed point $b = (0 : 1 : 0 : \sqrt{t_2})$. According to Lemma 1.7, it suffices to verify that the scheme $D \setminus \{a, b\}$ is regular. This lies in the open set given by $y_1, y_2 \neq 0$, hence equals the spectrum of the ring

$$F[u, v, w^{\pm 1}] / (1 + t_1 u_1^2, 1 + t_2 u_2^2)$$

where we set $u_1 = x_1/y_1$ and $u_2 = x_2/y_2$ and $w = y_1/y_2$. Clearly, this ring is isomorphic to the ring of Laurent polynomials in w over the tensor product $A = F(\sqrt{t_1}) \otimes_F F(\sqrt{t_2})$. The latter is a field, because $t_1, t_2 \in F$ are p -independent, hence $D \setminus \{a, b\}$ is indeed regular. This establishes (i).

It remains to verify (ii), which is the most interesting part. For this we apply Corollary 3.2 to our fibration $f : X \rightarrow \mathbb{P}^1$. Let us examine the fiber $f^{-1}(a)$ over the rational points $a = (\lambda : 1)$ with $\lambda^3 \neq 1$, which means $a \notin \mathbb{P}^1(\mathbb{F}_4)$. According to (6) this is a conic $C \subset \mathbb{P}_F^2$ given by the equation

$$(7) \quad (1 + \lambda^3)u_0^2 + t_1 u_1^2 + \lambda t_2 u_2^2 = 0$$

in some indeterminates u_0, u_1, u_2 . Base-changing to the field extension $F' = F(\sqrt{\lambda})$, and making a linear change of variables, the equation can be rewritten as

$$(8) \quad v_0^2 + t_1 v_1^2 + t_2 v_2^2 = 0.$$

The short exact sequence (1) and Cartier's Equality ([12], Theorem 92 or [13], Theorem 26.10) reveal that the kernel for $\Omega_F^1 \otimes F' \rightarrow \Omega_{F'}^1$ is at most one-dimensional. So without restriction, we may assume that $dt_1 \in \Omega_{F'}^1$ remains non-zero. According

to [14], Theorem 3.3 the conic $C \otimes_F F'$ is reduced, hence the same holds for C . Since the latter is geometrically non-reduced, it is not rational. Summing up, for almost all rational points $a \in \mathbb{P}^1$, the fiber $f^{-1}(a)$ is not rational.

We proceed with a similar computation for the generic fiber of $f : X \rightarrow \mathbb{P}^1$ and its Frobenius base-change. Regard \mathbb{P}^1 as the homogeneous spectrum of $F[y_1, y_2]$, and now write $\lambda = y_2/y_1$ for the transcendental generator of the function field. Then the generic fiber for $f : X \rightarrow \mathbb{P}^1$ is the conic given by (7) over $F(\lambda)$, and the generic fiber of the Frobenius base-change is given by the same equation over $F(\sqrt{\lambda})$. This is already defined over the subfield F , and we conclude that the Frobenius base-change $X \times_{\mathbb{P}^1} \mathbb{P}^1$ is birational to $C \times \mathbb{P}^1$, where $C \subset \mathbb{P}_F^2$ is the conic defined by the above equation. According to Proposition 1.5, the curve C is regular. Being geometrically non-reduced, it is not rational. Thus Corollary 3.2 applies, and we conclude that X is not unirational. \square

Each rational point $a \in X \subset \mathbb{P}^3$ comes from a linear surjection $\varphi : F^4 \rightarrow F$. Choosing $\text{Ker}(\varphi) \simeq F^3$ we obtain a rational map $\pi_a : X \dashrightarrow \mathbb{P}^2$. If moreover $\mathcal{O}_{X,a}$ is regular, the intersection $C_a = X \cap T_a(X)$ is a singular cubic curve in the tangent plane $T_a(X) \subset \mathbb{P}^3$. Note that these $C_a \subset T_a(X)$ are crucial in the work of Segre [15], Manin [11] and Kollár [8].

Proposition 4.5. *The rational map $\pi_a : X \dashrightarrow \mathbb{P}^2$ is purely inseparable if and only if $a \in L$. Moreover, the intersection C_a is not integral for every $a \in \text{Reg}(X)$.*

Proof. Clearly each rational point $a \in L$ yields a purely inseparable map. Let $V \subset \mathbb{P}^3$ be the linear span of all rational points $a \in X$ with purely inseparable projection $\pi_a : X \dashrightarrow \mathbb{P}^2$. Seeking a contradiction, we assume $L \subsetneq V$. According to [8], Lemma 5.1 our cubic surface $X \subset \mathbb{P}^3$ can be described after some change of coordinates by an equation $\lambda y^3 + \sum_{i=1}^3 \lambda_i y x_i^2 = 0$ in certain new variables x_i, y for some scalars $\lambda_i, \lambda \in F$. It follows that the scheme X is reducible, contradiction. This proves the first assertion.

Now suppose that $\mathcal{O}_{X,a}$ is regular, and write $a = (\alpha_1 : \beta_1 : \alpha_2 : \beta_2)$. Taking partial derivatives in (5), we see that the tangent plane $T_a(X) \subset \mathbb{P}^3$ is given by the equation $(\alpha_1^2 + t_1 \beta_1^2) y_1 + (\alpha_2^2 + t_2 \beta_2^2) y_2 = 0$. Without restriction, we may assume that the second coefficient does not vanish. In turn, the cubic curve $C_a \subset \mathbb{P}^2$ becomes the zero-locus of a polynomial $P(x_1, y_1, x_2)$ divisible by y_1 . Thus C_a is not integral. \square

The $a = (0 : 0 : 1 : \lambda) \in X$ with $\lambda \in \mathbb{F}_4^\times$ show that there are indeed rational points with $\mathcal{O}_{X,a}$ regular and $\pi_a : X \dashrightarrow \mathbb{P}^2$ separable. This reveals that, for regular cubic hypersurfaces in characteristic two, the implication

$$\begin{aligned} \exists a \in X(F) \text{ with } \mathcal{O}_{X,a} \text{ regular} \\ \text{and } \pi_a : X \dashrightarrow \mathbb{P}^n \text{ separable} \end{aligned} \implies X \text{ is unirational}$$

formulated in the remark on imperfect ground fields in [8], page 468, does not hold without an additional assumption. The problem seems to be that all C_a fail to be integral.

Let us close the paper with the following observations: Our cubic surface $X \subset \mathbb{P}^3$ is Gorenstein, with $\omega_X = \mathcal{O}_X(-1)$ and furthermore $h^0(\mathcal{O}_X) = 1$ and $h^1(\mathcal{O}_X) = h^2(\mathcal{O}_X) = 0$. In particular, X is a *del Pezzo surface* of degree $K_X^2 = 3$.

Proposition 4.6. *The Picard group $\text{Pic}(X)$ is freely generated by the classes of the invertible sheaves $\mathcal{O}_X(C_1)$ and $\mathcal{O}_X(L)$, The resulting Gram matrix is $\begin{pmatrix} 0 & 2 \\ 2 & -1 \end{pmatrix}$, and the anticanonical class is given by $-K_X = L + C_1$.*

Proof. Let $S \subset \text{Pic}(X)$ be the subgroup generated by the effective Cartier divisors $C_1, L \subset X$. From the intersection numbers $L^2 = -1$, $C_1^2 = 0$ and $(C_1 \cdot L) = 2$ we see that $C_1, L \in S$ form a basis, with the Gram matrix from the assertion. Furthermore, we have $-K_X = L + C_1$. Our task is to show that $S \subset \text{Pic}(X)$ is an equality.

Recall that we have a fibration $f : X \rightarrow \mathbb{P}^1$. The generic fiber is a twisted form of the double line, and its Picard group is generated by $\mathcal{O}_{X_\eta}(L)$. Likewise, all closed fibers are irreducible, and we conclude that $S \subset \text{Pic}(X)$ has finite index.

Using $\text{disc}(S) = -4$, we see that the discriminant group S^*/S has order four. Write $e_1, e_2 \in S$ for the basis corresponding to the Cartier divisors $C_1, L \subset X$, and $e_1^*, e_2^* \in S^*$ be the dual basis. One easily checks that $e_2^* = \frac{1}{2}e_1$ generates the discriminant group. Seeking a contradiction, we assume that this generator comes from an invertible sheaf \mathcal{N} . Then $(\mathcal{N} \cdot \mathcal{N}) - (\mathcal{N} \cdot \omega_X) = \frac{1}{2}(L \cdot C_1) = 1$ is odd. However, this number must be even by Riemann–Roch, contradiction. Thus $S = \text{Pic}(X)$. \square

The scheme of non-smoothness $D = \text{Sing}(X/F)$ is disjoint from L and has $\text{deg}(D/\mathbb{P}^1)$, hence D is linearly equivalent to $C_1 + 2L$. Using this information, we can clarify the occurrence of singularities:

Proposition 4.7. *Let $0 \leq n \leq 2$ be the dimension of the subvector space generated by the $dt_1, dt_2 \in \Omega_F^1$. Then the scheme X satisfies the regularity condition (R_n) , and we have the following implications:*

- (i) *If $n = 2$ then the cubic surface X is regular.*
- (ii) *If $n = 1$ then X is normal, and $\mathcal{O}_{X,b}$ is singular for some closed $b \in D$.*
- (iii) *If $n = 0$ then the scheme X is non-normal, with singular locus $\text{Sing}(X) = D$.*

Proof. Assertion (i) already appeared in Theorem 4.4. Now suppose that $n = 0$, such that both $t_1, t_2 \in F$ are squares. After a change of coordinates, we may assume that $t_1 = t_2 = 1$. Then for each rational point of the form $a = (\lambda : \lambda : \mu : \mu)$ the defining polynomial $P = x_1(x_1 - y_1)^2 + x_2(x_2 - y_2)^2$ lies in the square of the maximal ideal in $\mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{P}^3,a}$ and it follows that all the local rings $\mathcal{O}_{X,a}$, $a \in D$ are singular. Thus X is singular in codimension one, hence non-normal. This gives (iii).

Finally, assume that $n = 1$. Without restriction, we may assume that $dt_1 \neq 0$. Then $t_1 \in F$ is not a square, so the closed point $a = (\sqrt{t_1} : 0 : 1 : 0) \in X$ is non-rational. Consider the resulting local ring $R = \mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{P}^3,a}$. The defining polynomial (5) for the cubic surface obviously lies in \mathfrak{m}_R but not in \mathfrak{m}_R^2 , hence $\mathcal{O}_{X,a}$ is regular. It follows that the localization $\mathcal{O}_{X,\zeta}$ is regular as well, where ζ is the generic point of the scheme of non-smoothness $D = \text{Sing}(X/F)$. Hence X satisfies (R_1) , thus our cubic surface is normal.

It remains to verify that $\mathcal{O}_{X,b}$ is singular for some closed point $b \in X$. Suppose for a moment that $D = \text{Sing}(X/F)$ is non-reduced. Since $D \subset X$ is Cartier, the reduction $E = D_{\text{red}}$ is another effective Cartier divisor, and we have $D = nE$ for some integer $n \geq 2$. However, D is linearly equivalent to $C_1 + 2E$. This is primitive in the Picard group, contradiction. Thus we merely have to check that D

is non-reduced. Its homogeneous coordinate ring is the tensor product $A = A_1 \otimes_F A_2$ with factors

$$A_i = F[x_i, y_i]/(x_i^2 - t_i y_i^2),$$

according to Proposition 4.1. Consider the field extension $E_1 = F(\sqrt{t_1})$. Then the map $A_1 \subset E_1[x_1]$ given by $y_1 \mapsto t_1 x_1$ is a finite ring extension inside the field of fractions. Since dt_2 is a multiple of dt_1 , the scalar $t_2 \in E_1$ becomes a square, and we conclude that the rings $A \subset E_1[x_1, x_2, y_2]/(x_2 - \sqrt{t_2} y_2)^2$ are non-reduced. In turn, the scheme $D = \text{Proj}(A)$ is non-reduced. \square

Suppose that $t_1, t_2 \in F$ are p -independent, such that X is a *regular del Pezzo surface that is not geometrically normal*. The cone of curves $\text{Eff}(X)$ is the real cone generated by the irreducible curves in the real vector space $N^1(X)_{\mathbb{R}} = \text{Num}(X) \otimes \mathbb{R}$. In our situation the vector space has rank $\rho = 2$, and contains two extremal rays, which are generated by the fiber C_1 and the negative-definite curve L , compare [7], Lemma 4.12.

In turn there is precisely one minimal model $X \rightarrow Y$, which is the contraction of L . This is another regular del Pezzo surface that is not geometrically normal. Now the degree is $K_X^2 = 2$, and the anticanonical class generates $\text{Pic}(X) = \mathbb{Z}$. Such examples are interesting, because over fields of p -degree $\text{pdeg}(F) \leq 1$ there are no regular del Pezzo surfaces that are not geometrically normal, according to [4], Theorem 14.1. For more information on del Pezzo surfaces of degree two, we refer to the monographs of Manin [11], Dolgachev [3] and Kollár, Smith and Corti [9].

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