

Explicit modularity of K3 surfaces with complex multiplication of large degree

Edgar Costa, Andreas-Stephan Elsenhans, Jörg Jahnel, and John Voight

ABSTRACT. We consider the transcendental motives of three K3 surfaces X conjectured to have complex multiplication (CM). Under this assumption, we match these to explicit algebraic Hecke quasi-characters ψ_X , and CM abelian threefolds A . This provides substantial evidence that a power of A corresponds to X under the Kuga–Satake correspondence.

1. Introduction

K3 surfaces provide a rich class of objects to study in number theory and the Langlands program, testing conjectures that connect arithmetic geometry and automorphic forms through Galois representations and L -functions.

The case where the Picard number ρ achieves its maximum $\rho = 20$ has been well-studied. Potential modularity was established through their association with algebraic Hecke quasi-characters (also called Hecke Grossencharacters or just Hecke characters) by Shioda–Inose [SI77, §6, Theorem 6] (see also Livné [Liv95]): the transcendental cohomology has complex multiplication (CM) by an imaginary quadratic field. Over \mathbb{Q} , an explicit correspondence with classical modular forms of weight 3 was worked out by Elkies–Schütt [ES13].

Recent efforts towards incorporating K3 surfaces into the *L-functions and Modular Forms Database (LMFDB)* [LMFDB] has renewed questions of explicit modularity for K3 surfaces, but less is known about modularity for K3 surfaces of lower Picard number. In general, a complex K3 surface X with $\rho(X) \leq 16$ does not admit a Shioda–Inose structure. Piatetski-Shapiro–Shafarevich [PŠ73] expressed the L -function of a K3 surfaces with complex multiplication as a product of Hecke L -functions over some finite extension via the Kuga–Satake correspondence and applying the corresponding statement for abelian varieties. The theory of complex multiplication for K3 surfaces was further developed by Rizov [Riz05]. Building on this work, Valloni [Val23] considers K3 surfaces with CM by the full ring of integers and studied their fields of definition; and more recently, Ito [Ito25] is more explicit about the properties of the Hecke quasi-characters that appear in the equality of L -series. Livné–Schütt–Yui [LSY10] established modularity for the finitely many K3 Delsarte surfaces (up to twist): they are (CM) quotients of Fermat surfaces.

This paper advances these efforts in a new direction, through computation. We remain focused on explicit examples of K3 surfaces with apparent CM of large degree. Indeed, there has been recently renewed interest [BGS24] in moduli of K3

surfaces with extra Hodge endomorphisms. Our main result matches the transcendental cohomology of certain K3 surfaces with algebraic Hecke quasi-characters, as follows. For a complex surface X , we let $T(X)_{\mathbb{Q}} \subseteq H^2(X, \mathbb{Q})$ be the transcendental subspace (see [section 2](#)). If moreover X is defined over a number field $F \subset \mathbb{C}$, then for ℓ prime, we have via comparison $T(X) \otimes \mathbb{Q}_{\ell} \hookrightarrow H_{\text{ét}}^2(X, \mathbb{Q}_{\ell})$ and we let $\rho_{T(X), \ell}: \text{Gal}_F \curvearrowright (T(X) \otimes \mathbb{Q}_{\ell})$ be the associated Galois representation.

Let $X = X_i$ for $i = 1, 2, 3$ be one of the three K3 surfaces obtained from the following affine models:

$$(1.1) \quad \begin{aligned} X_1: w^2 &= xyz(x^3 - 3xy^2 + y^3 - 3x^2z - 3xyz + 9y^2z + 6yz^2 + z^3) \\ X_2: w^2 &= xyz(7x^3 - 7x^2y + y^3 + 49x^2z - 21xyz - 7y^2z + 98xz^2 + 49z^3) \\ X_3: w^2 &= xyz \left(\begin{aligned} &49x^3 - 304x^2y + 361xy^2 + 361y^3 + 570x^2z - 2793xyz \\ &+ 2888y^2z + 2033xz^2 - 5415yz^2 + 2299z^3 \end{aligned} \right). \end{aligned}$$

More precisely, we take X_i to be the smooth projective surface obtained from the taking branched double cover of \mathbb{P}^2 defined by (1.1) and blowing up the $15 = \binom{6}{2}$ double points in the branch locus of 6 lines. Then $\dim_{\mathbb{Q}_{\ell}} T(X_i) = 22 - 16 = 6$, and there is substantial numerical evidence that in each case, $T(X_i)_{\mathbb{Q}}$ has CM by K_i , where $K_i = F_i(\sqrt{-1})$ is the cyclic sextic field defined in [Table 1](#) by their LMFDB label. For this evidence, see Elsenhans–Jahnel [\[EJ16, §5\]](#) and the end of [section 2](#).

Theorem 1.2. *For $i = 1, 2, 3$ and $X = X_i$, the following statements hold.*

(a) *Suppose $T(X)_{\mathbb{Q}}$ has CM by K . Then for all primes ℓ ,*

$$(1.3) \quad \rho_{T(X), \ell} \simeq \text{Ind}_{\text{Gal}_K}^{\text{Gal}_{\mathbb{Q}}} \psi_X$$

where ψ_X is of ∞ -type $\{(0, 2), (1, 1), (1, 1)\}$ defined in [Table 2](#). In particular, we have

$$(1.4) \quad L(T(X), s) = L(s, \psi_X).$$

(b) *Let $A = A_i = \text{Jac}(C_i)$ be the Jacobian defined in [Table 1](#). Then*

$$(1.5) \quad \begin{aligned} \rho_{H^1(A), \ell} &\simeq \text{Ind}_{\text{Gal}_K}^{\text{Gal}_{\mathbb{Q}}} \psi_A \\ L(H^1(A), s) &= L(s, \psi_A) \end{aligned}$$

where ψ_A is of ∞ -type $\{(0, 1), (0, 1), (0, 1)\}$ defined in [Table 3](#).

(c) *We have*

$$(1.6) \quad \begin{aligned} \rho_{H^2(A), \ell} &\simeq \text{Ind}_{\text{Gal}_F}^{\text{Gal}_{\mathbb{Q}}} \mathbb{Q}_{\ell}(1) \oplus \text{Ind}_{\text{Gal}_K}^{\text{Gal}_{\mathbb{Q}}} (\psi_X \oplus \psi') \\ L(H^2(A), s) &= \zeta_F(s+1) L(s, \psi_X) L(s, \psi'), \end{aligned}$$

where $\mathbb{Q}_{\ell}(1)$ is the Tate twist, $F \subseteq K$ is the unique cubic subfield, and ψ' is of ∞ -type $\{(0, 2), (0, 2), (1, 1)\}$ defined in [Table 4](#).

This provides substantial evidence that a power of A corresponds to X under the Kuga–Satake correspondence [\[KS67\]](#): for more, see [Remark 3.2](#). Our computations are performed in Magma [\[BCP97\]](#); the code is available at <https://github.com/edgarcosta/K3withCM/>. There is a natural Galois action on algebraic Hecke quasi-characters by $\psi^{\sigma} = \psi \circ \sigma$ for $\sigma \in \text{Gal}(K | \mathbb{Q})$, with $L(s, \psi^{\sigma}) = L(s, \psi)$. Up to this Galois action, the characters ψ_X , ψ_A , and ψ' in [Theorem 1.2](#) are unique.

i	K_i	F_i	Defining equation for C_i
1	6.0.419904.1	3.3.81.1	$y^2 = x^7 + 6x^5 + 9x^3 + x$
2	6.0.153664.1	3.3.49.1	$y^2 = x^7 + 7x^5 + 14x^3 + 7x$
3	6.0.8340544.1	3.3.361.1	$y^2 = x^7 + 1786x^5 + 44441x^3 + 278179x$
4	6.0.59105344.1	3.3.961.1	$y^2 = x^7 + 961x^5 - 3694084x^3 + 1832265664x$

TABLE 1. Polynomials defining CM fields and genus 3 curves.

i	$\text{cond}(\psi_{X_i})$	p	$L_p(\psi_{X_i}, T)$
1	64.1	17	$1 - 6T + 15pT^2 + 12p^2T^3 + 15p^3T^4 - 6p^4T^5 + p^6T^6$
2	3136.1	13	$1 - 2T + 19pT^2 + 4p^2T^3 + 19p^3T^4 - 2p^4T^5 + p^6T^6$
3	23104.1	37	$1 + 14T - 5pT^2 - 28p^2T^3 - 5p^3T^4 + 14p^4T^5 + p^6T^6$
4	61504.13	29	$1 - 38T - 9pT^2 + 52p^2T^3 - 9p^3T^4 - 38p^4T^5 + p^6T^6$

TABLE 2. Uniquely defining properties of ψ_X , up to $\text{Gal}(K|\mathbb{Q})$.

i	$\text{cond}(\psi_{A_i})$	p	$L_p(\psi_{A_i}, T)$
1	4096.1	17	$1 - 6T + 15T^2 - 52T^3 + 15pT^4 - 6p^2T^5 + p^3T^6$
2	25088.1	13	$1 + 4T + 7T^2 + 40T^3 + 7pT^4 + 4p^2T^5 + p^3T^6$
3	184832.1	37	$1 + 4T + 15T^2 - 152T^3 + 15pT^4 + 4p^2T^5 + p^3T^6$
4	3936256.41	29	$1 + 4T + 51T^2 + 216T^3 + 51pT^4 + 4p^2T^5 + p^3T^6$

TABLE 3. Uniquely defining properties of ψ_A , up to $\text{Gal}(K|\mathbb{Q})$.

Remark 1.7. To each Hecke quasi-character ψ for a CM extension $K \supseteq F$, by restriction of the automorphic representation we can also associate a Hilbert modular form f over F with matching Galois representation and L -function. As such forms f have nontrivial character (and in parts (a) and (c), weights $(3, 3, 1)$ and $(3, 1, 1)$, respectively), they currently fall outside the database of Hilbert modular forms in the LMFDB. We hope to see them in a future expansion of the database.

Table 1 comes from Weng [Wen01, §6] and is certified correct [CMSV19]. For the fourth row ($i = 4$), we were not able to find a matching K3 surface (among double covers of \mathbb{P}^2 branched along 6 lines, possibly due to the nontrivial class group), but part (b) still holds; it would be interesting to produce a K3 surface in this case (not necessarily a degree 2 model).

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2. Setup

Let X be a polarized K3 surface over a number field F . We denote by X^{al} its base change to F^{al} , an algebraic closure of F . We are interested in studying the Galois representations that arise from $H_{\text{et}}^2(X^{\text{al}}, \mathbb{Q}_\ell)$, for a prime ℓ . Let $\text{NS}(X)$ denote the Néron–Severi group of X . Under the canonical isomorphism $\text{NS}(X) \cong \text{Pic}(X)$, we may identify $\text{NS}(X^{\text{al}}) \cong H^2(X_{\mathbb{C}}, \mathbb{Z}) \cap H^{1,1}(X, \mathbb{C}) \subsetneq H^2(X_{\mathbb{C}}, \mathbb{Z})$. Let $\rho(X) := \text{rk NS}(X)$ be the Picard number.

i	$\text{cond}(\psi'_i)$	p	$L_p(\psi'_i, T)$
1	1.1	17	$1 + 42T + 1023T^2 + 1132pT^3 + 1023p^2T^4 + 42p^4T^5 + p^6T^6$
2	1.1	13	$1 + 34T + 631T^2 + 652pT^3 + 631p^2T^4 + 34p^4T^5 + p^6T^6$
3	1.1	37	$1 + 82T + 4423T^2 + 5452pT^3 + 4423p^2T^4 + 82p^4T^5 + p^6T^6$
4	1.1	29	$1 + 74T + 3067T^2 + 3268pT^3 + 3067p^2T^4 + 74p^4T^5 + p^6T^6$

TABLE 4. Uniquely defining properties of ψ' , up to $\text{Gal}(K|\mathbb{Q})$.

Let $T(X)$ be the transcendental lattice of X , the orthogonal complement of $\text{NS}(X_{\mathbb{C}})$ in $H^2(X, \mathbb{Z})$. The space $T(X)$ is a sub-Hodge structure of $H^2(X_{\mathbb{C}}, \mathbb{Z})$ with Hodge numbers $(1, 20 - \rho(X), 1)$. Let $E = E(X)$ be the algebra of endomorphisms of $T(X)$ that respect the Hodge structure. Zarhin [Zar83, Theorems 1.5.1, 1.6] has shown that E is either a totally real field or a CM field.

The Galois representation $\rho_{H^2, \ell}: \text{Gal}(F^{\text{al}}|F) \rightarrow \text{GO}(H^2(X_{\mathbb{C}}, \mathbb{Z}) \otimes \mathbb{Q}_{\ell})$ decomposes as $\rho_{H^2, \ell} = \rho_{\text{NS}, \ell} \oplus \rho_{T, \ell}$, and we focus on

$$\rho_{T, \ell}: \text{Gal}(F^{\text{al}}|F) \rightarrow \text{GO}(T(X) \otimes \mathbb{Q}_{\ell}).$$

and its associated [Ser70] L -function $L(T(X), s)$. In the case that $\dim_E T(X) = 1$, in fact E is necessarily a CM field, and by class field theory we have $L(T(X), s) = L(s, \psi)$ for some algebraic Hecke quasi-character ψ over E .

We consider K3 surfaces $X \rightarrow \mathbb{P}^2$ as (resolutions of) branched over 6 lines in general (and in particular in good) position. In this case, $\rho(X) \geq 16$, with equality when the lines are in very general position. We restrict to the K3 surfaces identified in (1.1). As mentioned in the introduction, there is strong numerical evidence [EJ16, §5] that these K3 surfaces have complex multiplication (CM). We further computed 100 digit approximations to the period lattices using the method of Elsenhans–Jahnel [EJ24, §6]. In fact, this CM is apparently by the maximal order \mathbb{Z}_{K_i} in each case. More precisely, for each surface we found numerical approximations of six period integrals τ_1, \dots, τ_6 that form a basis of the period lattice such that the ratios τ_i/τ_1 for $i = 1, \dots, 6$ coincide with a \mathbb{Z} -basis of the maximal order of the conjectural endomorphism field. For the surface X_1 and for chosen cycles,

$$(\tau_1, \dots, \tau_6) \approx (2.6402, 11.6474, 7.60232, -7.6023i, -4.96206i, -6.68537i);$$

with respect to the eigenvalues 0.467911 and i , the period vector is an eigenvector of

$$\begin{pmatrix} 2 & -1 & 1 \\ -1 & 2 & -2 \\ 0 & -1 & 2 \end{pmatrix}, \begin{pmatrix} -1 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & -1 & -1 \\ -1 & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix} \text{ and the cup form is } \begin{pmatrix} -1 & 0 & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \\ 1 & 1 & -1 \end{pmatrix}.$$

The data for the other examples are very similar. Computing periods to a precision of 100 decimal places took about half an hour on a standard desktop.

3. Proof of main result

Under the assumption that the L -function matches an algebraic Hecke quasi-character, to find the correct one we need to bound its conductor. It seems difficult in general to obtain such a bound by computing the conductor of the L -function of the K3 surface. We can however produce a finite list of possibilities as follows. We start with the list of bad primes of the K3 surface and the primes above them in K . To bound the exponents of these primes, recall that (by the \mathfrak{p} -adic logarithm)

the unit groups $(\mathbb{Z}_{K,\mathfrak{p}}/\mathfrak{p}^e)^\times$ as $e \rightarrow \infty$ have a bounded number of invariant factors. So to show that the exponent is bounded, we just need to show that the order of the finite part of the Hecke quasi-character is bounded, using the following lemma.

Lemma 3.1. *Let ψ be an algebraic Hecke quasi-character over K of modulus \mathfrak{N} and let $M \subset \mathbb{C}$ be the field generated by the values of ψ . Let $\chi: (\mathbb{Z}_K/\mathfrak{N})^\times \rightarrow \mathbb{C}^\times$ be the Dirichlet character defined by $\chi(a) = \psi(a\mathbb{Z}_K)\psi_\infty(a)$. Then $\mathbb{Q}(\chi) \subseteq M$.*

PROOF. By definition, an algebraic Hecke quasi-character takes values in a number field. From the idelic formulation, we conclude that the subfield generated by the restriction of ψ to the infinite places is contained in M , hence also $\mathbb{Q}(\chi)$. \square

PROOF OF THEOREM 1.2. We first prove (a). We compute the bad primes for X by checking if the reduction no longer leads to 15 distinct intersection points of the 6 lines. We bound the exponents of the primes using Lemma 3.1. Following Watkins [Wat11, § 5.2], using Magma we compute the full list of algebraic Hecke quasi-characters ψ with the required ∞ -type, conductor bounded as above, and $\mathbb{Q}(\psi) \subseteq K_i$. More precisely, we start with the principal character ψ_0 of the chosen ∞ -type and its associated Dirichlet character χ_0 (see Lemma 3.1). Next, we enumerate the Dirichlet characters χ whose lifts to Hecke characters twist ψ_0 to give a primitive character ψ with $\mathbb{Q}(\psi) \subseteq K_i$. Concretely, we require that $\chi' := \chi/\chi_0$ be primitive, trivial on units, and satisfy $\mathbb{Q}(\chi) \subseteq K_i$. Because all these conditions can be phrased on the abstract character group, we apply the filters there rather than iterating over every element, a task that would be impractical for large levels. For example, for X_3 we consider characters of conductor $\mathfrak{N} = \mathfrak{p}_2^7 \cdot 7 \cdot 11 \cdot \mathfrak{p}_{19}$, where $\text{Nm}(\mathfrak{p}_p) = p$. The Dirichlet character group modulo \mathfrak{N} is isomorphic to

$$(\mathbb{Z}/4\mathbb{Z})^5 \oplus (\mathbb{Z}/8\mathbb{Z})^2 \oplus (\mathbb{Z}/24\mathbb{Z})^2 \oplus \mathbb{Z}/48\mathbb{Z} \oplus (\mathbb{Z}/240\mathbb{Z})^3 \oplus \mathbb{Z}/5040\mathbb{Z}$$

which contains over 10^{20} elements; of these, only 279 936 satisfy our requirements.

We then compute $L_p(T(X), T)$ using a method of Elsenhans–Jahnel [EJ16] based on a trace formula involving a matrix expansion. In the style of Sherlock Holmes, we eliminate all but one (up to the action of $\text{Gal}(K|\mathbb{Q})$) by finding primes p uniquely identifying $L_p(T(X), T) = L_p(\psi, T)$. It was enough to consider good primes $p < 250$ totally split in K_i to obtain a unique match for each example in a single pass. After a match was found, we identified a prime p which, together with the conductor, uniquely identifies the character (up to the Galois action).

Part (b) is proven in the same way as part (a). For part (c), we note that $H^2(A) \simeq \bigwedge^2 H^1(A)$, so applying (b) and identifying characters we find that $H^2(A) \simeq V_1 \oplus V_2 \oplus V_3$ as representations of $\text{Gal}_{\mathbb{Q}}$, where $V_1 \simeq \text{Ind}_{\text{Gal}_F}^{\text{Gal}_{\mathbb{Q}}} \mathbb{Q}_\ell(1)$ and $\dim_K V_2 = \dim_K V_3 = 1$. The relationship between the two characters ψ_A and ψ_X can be further encoded by the equality $\psi_X(\mathfrak{p}) = \psi_A(\sigma_1(\mathfrak{p}))\psi_A(\sigma_2(\mathfrak{p}))$ for all unramified primes \mathfrak{p} of degree 1 and where $\sigma_1, \sigma_2 \in \text{Gal}(K|\mathbb{Q})$ are the two elements of order 3. We finish as in (a), checking on distinguishing primes. \square

Remark 3.2. The Kuga–Satake construction [KS67] (see also van Geemen [Gee08, §5]) attaches to a complex polarized K3 surface X a complex abelian variety such that there is an embedding $T(X)(1) \hookrightarrow H^1(A) \otimes H^1(A)$ of Hodge structures. In our case, this relationship is made explicit in Theorem 1.2(c) via comparison, in the sense that X and A have associated to Hecke characters ψ_X and ψ_A , with ψ_X appearing as a symmetric product of ψ_A . This strongly suggests that X and A are connected via the Kuga–Satake construction, at least up to isogeny and powers.

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DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS, MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, 77 MASSACHUSETTS AVE., MA 02139, USA

Email address: edgarc@mit.edu

URL: <https://edgarcosta.org>

SCHOOL OF MATHEMATICS AND STATISTICS, CARSLAW BUILDING (F07), UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY, NSW 2006, AUSTRALIA

INSTITUT FÜR MATHEMATIK, EMIL-FISCHER STRASSE 30, D-97074 WÜRZBURG, GERMANY

Email address: Stephan.Elsenhans@uni-wuerzburg.de

URL: <https://www.mathematik.uni-wuerzburg.de/computeralgebra/team/elsenhans-stephan-prof-dr/>

DEPARTMENT MATHEMATIK, UNIV. SIEGEN, WALTER-FLEX-STR. 3, D-57068 SIEGEN, GERMANY

Email address: jahnel@mathematik.uni-siegen.de

URL: <http://www.uni-math.gwdg.de/jahnel>

DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS, DARTMOUTH COLLEGE, 6188 KEMENY HALL, HANOVER, NH 03755, USA

SCHOOL OF MATHEMATICS AND STATISTICS, CARSLAW BUILDING (F07), UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY, NSW 2006, AUSTRALIA

Email address: jvoight@gmail.com

URL: <https://jvoight.github.io/>