

TREE-INDUCED DEFORMATION IN UNSATURATED SOILS

MU'AZU MOHAMMED ABDULLAHI

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I dedicated this thesis to my late father and beloved mother and my family for their support, encouragement and understanding.

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ABSTRACT

Settlements of lightly loaded structures are frequently caused by changes in matric suction causing shrinkage or swelling of soils. These structures are often not designed to deal with influences of these changes. This study explores issues related to ground displacement due to changes in matric suctions induced by root water-uptake by tree. Numerical simulations of moisture migration patterns in the unsaturated zone and in the vicinity of established tree were performed. The moisture flow model used is based on Richard's equation with incorporated sink term and integrated with appropriate water-uptake models in $2D$ and $2D$ axi-symmetric form. The numerical solution was derived from a finite element approach for spatial discretisation along with a finite difference time-marching scheme. A series of numerical simulations have been performed by the model to assess functionality of stress-deformation analysis partially coupled to flow equation. The model is capable of estimating matric suction changes and accompanying volume change profiles due to water-uptake over a full-annual cycle. Time dependent boundary conditions based on rainfall data effects have also been explored. Results of sensitivity and parametric analyses shows that the predicted ground displacements are sensitive to all the parameters tested. On the other hand, all initial time step sizes used for testing the convergence criterion on the simulation works was found to converge and the simulated results shows difference of not more than $\pm 5\%$, which is considered satisfactory. The research also provides an assessment of the significance of trees induced suction changes on unsaturated soil slopes. The model is capable of estimating ground displacements due to matric suction changes on sloping ground. The magnitude of the ground displacement on the sloping surface depends on the relative position of trees on the slope. A relatively straight forward simple approach to model the matric suction changes and accompanying volume change profiles beneath tree as a result of water-uptake has been developed. The resulting model is potentially valuable for a range of geotechnical engineering problems situated on the vadose zones containing trees.

ABSTRAK

Enapan yang dialami struktur ringan selalunya disebabkan oleh sedutan matrik yang menyebabkan pengembangan dan pengecutan tanah. Pengaruh perubahan ini biasanya tidak diambilkira dalam rekabentuk struktur. Penyelidikan ini dilakukan untuk mengkaji isu yang berkaitan dengan pergerakan tanah disebabkan penyerapan air oleh tumbuh-tumbuhan. Simulasi berangka corak pergerakan lembapan dalam zon tak tepu dan kawasan berhampiran tumbuhan matang telah dilakukan. Model yang digunakan adalah berasaskan persamaan Richard yang digabungkan dengan '*sink term*' dan model penyerapan air yang sesuai dalam bentuk dua-dimensi dan dua dimensi paksi-simetri. Penyelesaian berangka dicapai menggunakan kaedah unsur terhingga untuk pemisahan ruang di samping kaedah unsur kebezaan bagi skema '*time marching*'. Satu siri simulasi berangka telah dijalankan untuk menilai fungsi analisis tegasan-ubahbentuk yang sebahagiannya digandingkan dengan persamaan aliran. Model ini berupaya untuk menganggar perubahan sedutan matrik dan profil perubahan isipadu akibat dari pengambilan air oleh tumbuhan bagi satu kitaran lengkap setahun. Keadaan sempadan yang bergantung kepada masa dan data hujan juga dikaji. Keputusan analisis kepekaan dan parametrik menunjukkan pergerakan tanah yang diramal adalah peka terhadap semua parameter yang diuji. Kesemua saiz langkau masa awalan yang digunakan untuk menguji kriteria penumpuan simulasi menunjukkan perbezaan hasil simulasi kurang dari 5%, satu nilai yang memuaskan. Kajian ini juga memberikan penilaian terhadap kepentingan perubahan sedutan oleh tumbuhan di kawasan tanah lereng tak tepu. Di samping itu, model yang dibangunkan berkeupayaan menganggar enapan disebabkan perubahan sedutan matrik di kawasan bercerun. Magnitud anjakan tanah didapati bergantung kepada kedudukan relatif tumbuhan di sesuatu cerun. Satu pendekatan mudah ke arah permodelan perubahan sedutan matrik dan profil perubahan isipadu tanah yang berlaku di bawah tumbuhan akibat penyerapan air oleh tumbuhan tersebut juga telah dibangunkan. Model yang dihasilkan berpotensi untuk digunakan bagi menyelesaikan permasalahan berkaitan kejuruteraan-geoteknik yang terletak dalam zon vados yang terdapat tumbuhan.

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LIST OF SYMBOLS

$C(\psi)$	-	Specific moisture capacity
CI	-	Compression Index
C_r	-	Re-compression index
C_s	-	The swelling index
c_1^s	-	Coefficient of volume change solid phase
c_2^s	-	Coefficient of volume change solid phase
c_1^w	-	Coefficient of volume change of the water phase
c_2^w	-	Coefficient of volume change of the water phase
de	-	The change of void ratio in the element
E	-	Elasticity parameter
E_g	-	Gravitational potential energy
E_w	-	Water volumetric modulus
FE	-	Finite element
FD	-	Finite difference
g	-	Acceleration due to gravity = (9.81m/s ²)
G_j, g_j	-	Prescribe known functions or operators
h, h_p	-	Equivalent head of water
H	-	Elasticity parameter
H_w	-	Water volumetric modulus
i	-	Hydraulic gradient
IVR	-	Initial void ratio
K, K_s	-	Saturated hydraulic conductivity
$K(\phi), K(\psi)$	-	Unsaturated hydraulic conductivity
K_0	-	Coefficient of earth pressure at rest
LWP	-	Leaf water potential

m	-	Mass
n	-	Porosity of soil
N_i, N_r, N_s	-	Shape function
OCR	-	Over consolidation ratio
PR	-	Poissons' ratio
R, R_Ω	-	The residual or error introduced by the approximation
r_{rj}, r_r	-	Maximum rooting radial distance
S_r	-	Degree of saturation
S	-	Matric suction
$SWAT$	-	Soil-Plant-Atmosphere
SMD	-	Soil moisture deficient
$SWCC$	-	Soil water characteristic curve
$SWRC$	-	Soil water retention curve
S_{max}	-	Sink term
$S(\psi)$	-	Sink term
$S(\psi, z, r)$	-	Sink term
$S(\psi, x, z)$	-	Sink term
T, T_j, T_p	-	Potential transpiration rate
t	-	Time
UW	-	Unit weight
u	-	Functions in Ω
u_a	-	The pore-air pressure
u_w	-	The pore-water pressures
\hat{u}	-	The approximation to the function u
V_T	-	Total volume
V_w	-	Volume of water
V_v	-	Volume of void.
V, V_w	-	Volume of water
v_x, v_y, v_z	-	Velocity of water flow
W_l	-	The weighting functions
χ	-	Effective stress parameter
x, r, z	-	Cartesian co-ordinates
z_{rj}, z_r	-	Maximum rooting depth

$\alpha(\psi)$	-	Pressure head dependent reduction factor
σ_{ij}	-	Components of the total stress tensor
σ_m	-	Mean stress
σ_r	-	The horizontal stress
σ_z	-	Vertical net normal stress
δ_{ij}	-	Kronecker delta
ϵ_v	-	Volumetric strain.
α, l, m, n	-	Soil specific parameter
ΔV_a	-	Change volume of air
ΔV_v	-	Change volume of void
ΔV_w	-	Change volume of water
γ	-	Density
θ	-	Volumetric moisture content
θ_r	-	Residual water content
θ_s	-	Saturated water content
ρ, ρ_w	-	Density
σ	-	Total stress
π	-	Osmotic suction
μ	-	Poissons' ratio
σ'	-	Effective stress
ψ	-	Capillary potential
$\hat{\psi}$	-	The approximation to the ψ
$\hat{\phi}$	-	The approximation to the ϕ
Ω	-	Domain
Γ	-	Boundary
λ	-	Water flux at the boundary
∇	-	Divergent vector

LIST OF APPENDICES

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Buildings and the environment are key elements of quality of life. Trees are an integral and critical part of urban landscapes providing important aesthetic and environmental contributions that makes towns and cities more pleasant, safer and healthier to live in. Many trees are situated close to structures; such as buildings, road pavements and footways. These trees give shelter from noise and wind, reduce chemical and particulate air pollution, provide shade and add value to nearby property (Building Research Establishment (BRE), 2004). Trees also benefit urban ecosystems, by sustaining biodiversity and in addition, they reduce storm water run-off and prevent soil erosion.

Justifiably, trees contribute so much to our environment however, trees and buildings in close proximity can lead to problems, either restricting light or causing damage due to their root activities and matric suction changes (BRE, 2004). These suction variations occur in the presence of tree and indeed also can occur on removal of tree. The planting of trees close to infrastructures needs to be planned and undertaken from a sound science based research (BRE, 2004). One the other hand, removal of city trees will lead to a decline in the quality of urban landscapes and large-scale felling of trees would not be acceptable to the public at large.

Structural damage is frequently associated with the close proximity of trees to especially low-rise buildings. Trees can extract water from below the foundations causing some particular clay sub-soils to shrink, ultimately leading to failure of the foundations and cracks in superstructure (BRE, 2004). It is known that trees add to the drying of soil at depth and only few geo-structures are design to deal with their influences. These suction changes have an important role in the analysis of a number of geotechnical engineering problems. Meanwhile, trees are becoming increasingly recognized as a vital factor causing a substantial moisture migration through evapotranspiration (Ali, 2007).

Cycles of shrinkage and swelling can also have significant effects on the properties and behavior of soils. The volume changes that result from both shrinkage and swelling of fine-grained soils are often large enough to cause damage to small buildings and highway pavements. Jones and Holtz (1973) estimated that shrinking and swelling soils caused about \$2.3 billion in damages annually in the United States (US) alone. This is more than twice the annual cost from floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, and earthquakes combined together. A more recent estimate is about \$9 billion in damages annually to buildings, roads, airports, pipelines and other facilities (Jones and Jones, 1987). Proper functionality of clay barriers may also be affected negatively by swelling or shrinkage. A clay barrier that has swollen may lose its integrity upon heaving, or it may shrink and crack later when the water is removed (Goldman, 1988).

In United Kingdom (UK) the cost of repairing the damage caused by the failure of domestic house foundations, due to subsidence, was in order of £300-£400 million annually (Building Research Establishment (BRE), 2004; BRE, 1999). Not all of this can be attributed to the presence of tree roots. However, most of the subsidence incidents in the UK are found to occur in areas with clay soils. In these areas, tree roots are claimed to have an effect on subsidence incidents in 73% of cases (Loss Prevention Council, 1995). Currently, no existing methods that would reliably predict which trees may cause damage and not all trees near buildings are implicated. Decreasing water uptake by trees may lessen subsidence risk by conserving soil moisture and reducing clay soil shrinkage (BRE, 2004).

The effect of stresses induced due to transpiration driven root water-uptake by vegetation was incorporated in the current research. It is worthwhile to investigate the safe distance between geotechnical structures in terms of $L: H$ ratios. These can be used to predict soil movements and thereby improving the future designs of geotechnical structures. In the same vein, Geotechnical Engineers will be better informed on potential effects of trees in geotechnical structures.

Rees and Thomas (1991) explored experimental and numerical one-dimensional moisture transfer and volume change behavior of a partially saturated soil. The investigation constitutes a component of seasonal ground movement effects on buried services. A seasonal water variation as a result of root water-uptake was measured by Biddle (1998). This prompted a two-dimensional simulation of seasonal variation of moisture migration due to root water-uptake to be carried out by Rees and Ali (2006) which was in good agreement with the measured variation by Biddle (1998). A treatise moisture variation was carried out by Rees and Ali (2006) without coupling the effect of stresses induced as a result of vegetative moisture variation. This forms the basis of this current research; moisture variation as a result of root water-uptake was simulated and then partially coupled to stress-deformation to evaluate vertical ground displacements.

1.2 Problems Statement

Shallow seated geotechnical structures are often constructed on unsaturated soil and have to resist deformation associated with external loads as well as matric suction changes in the soils. Some of these types of structure are lightly loaded and therefore, displacements are mostly resulted from changes in matric suction. Moreover, they are often not designed to deal with influence of these matric suction changes. Changes in matric suction can occur as a result of variation in climatic conditions, depth of water table, water uptake by tree, removal of tree or infiltration as result of rainfall. Therefore, a predictive capability that will enable the extent and

magnitude to which vegetation causes matric suction changes, ground displacements and how it affects geotechnical structure is clearly of great importance.

1.3 Aim and Objectives

The work is aimed at determining tree-induced deformation in unsaturated soils through the application of numerical techniques. In line with the major aim of the research, the following are the objectives the study:

1. To develop stress–deformation model for two-dimensional axi-symmetric water uptake processes associated with an established tree with finite element formulation.
2. To develop partial coupled 2-*D* axi-symmetric root water-uptake and stress-deformation analysis for unsaturated soil due to vegetative induced matric suction changes.
3. To verify and validate the proposed model using simulations results published in this area and comparison with site data respectively.
4. To demonstrate the effects of changing the soil types, trees and climatic parameters on the numerical predictions and assess and determine the key parameters that influence ground displacements due to root water uptake by tree.
5. To provide an assessment of the role of tree on slope settlement due to ground water-uptake by tree.

1.4 Scope and Limitations of the Research

The underlying principle of maintaining simple acceptable approach would be adopted. The research will be limited to:

- i. Simulation of tree induced vertical ground displacements as a result of water-uptake within a vicinity of matured tree, so root growth are not to be considered.
- ii. Two-dimensional axi-symmetric formulation and radial symmetry is assumed to exist, since a single isolated tree would be considered, with no adjacent trees within the vicinity. More complex behaviour will occur when adjacent trees interact.
- iii. Non-deformable unsaturated flow would be considered and non-deformable soil fabrics exist with deformation due to change in pore water pressure only.
- iv. The stress deformation would be partially coupled to the flow equation through appropriate theoretical formulation and FORTRAN subroutines.
- v. Oxygen diffusion can only occur in a non-saturated soil, which is necessary for most root growth. Therefore, moisture flow in an unsaturated soil is considered.
- vi. Unsaturated flow is described by a partial differential equation and shall be solve by numerical methods, finite element for spatial discretization and finite difference for time discretization shall be used.
- vii. The temperature dependent flow parameters, which is second order partial differential equation are not considered, therefore isothermal conditions are assumed to exist.
- viii. Field soil often exhibit heterogeneity, however, isotropic and homogenous conditions are assumed to exist throughout the depth of the soil profile.
- ix. Grasses are not given separate attention, since tree use more water than most other types of tree.
- x. In the current research, the primary interest is to relate the predicted matric suctions to ground displacements. The predicted matric suction variation as a result soil water-uptake by tree root is used as an input for stress-deformation analysis.
- xi. Macroscopic approach for root water-uptake model was used.

- xii. The model was verified and validated with field data from Canada, Australia and United Kingdom respectively.

1.5 Significance of Research

Many trees are located close to geotechnical structure such as foundation, earth dam, slopes, retaining wall, levees and structure such as building and road pavement. Trees influences the moisture migration in the soil, hence causes changes in matric suction. The ability to predict the influence of tree induced moisture movement which causes structural deformation as a result of shrinkage and/or heaving is a potentially important planning and management tools in geotechnical engineering design and analysis.

1.6 Framework of the Research

The research explored tree-induced deformation pattern in the unsaturated soils zone due tree root water-uptake. This study focuses on issues related to vertical ground displacements due to root water-uptake by plant. The numerical simulation of moisture migration patterns in the unsaturated zone as well as accompanying ground displacements within the vicinity of established tree was analyzed. The flow model is based on Richard's equation and Darcy's law of conservation of mass. The moisture flow model used is incorporated with sink term and integrated with appropriate water-uptake models; $2D$, and $2D$ axi-symmetric form. A numerical solution was achieved by the finite element method for spatial discretisation along with a finite difference time-marching scheme for time discretization.

The current research required significant development and extension of this in-house FORTRAN code which was set-up for two-dimensional, cartesian flow problems to incorporate deformation and partial coupling of the water-uptake and the

deformation. A stress-deformation formulation is included by adopting groundwater field concept with two stress state variables for unsaturated soils. The stress-deformation is partial coupled to 2-*D* axi-symmetric root water-uptake for unsaturated soil through the stress state variables and effective stress concept. At the start of this research programme an existing finite element solution of the Richard's equation for unsaturated soil was made available (Ali, 2007 and Rees and Ali, 2006).

1.7 Thesis Organization

An overview of related research work to the analysis of root water uptake, suction, effective stress and deformation in unsaturated soil is presented in Chapter 2. The review provides a commentary on the general significance of the water-uptake process. It then provides a summary of the key mechanisms involved and aims to provide some background information that can be utilized in subsequent simulation work. The review also summarizes developments in modelling the stress-deformation analysis.

The theoretical basis for describing moisture flow in an unsaturated soil is presented in Chapter 3. Some of the fundamental concepts used to describe moisture flow due to water uptake plant by roots are also introduced. This chapter is divided into two main parts. The first part describes the derivation of the moisture flow equation from referential element of soil from conservation of mass. A relationship between flows and the appropriate driving force or potential for moisture flow was established through Darcy's Law and incorporating root water-uptake extraction function, the sink term. The second part describes the derivation and theoretical formulation of stress-deformation development considering unsaturated soil mechanics concept in ground water field concept. The stress-deformation is partial coupled to 2-*D* axi-symmetric root water-uptake for unsaturated soil through the stress state variables and effective stress concept. The elastic moduli and constitutive relationships are required are also described.

Chapter 4 presents an approximate numerical solution of the theoretical model framework presented in Chapter 3. The problem addressed is one in which both spatial and time variations of the unknown variable, capillary potential in this case, are required. A numerical solution is then described to achieve discretisation of a two-dimensional axi-symmetric space domain and the time domain. An assessment of the theoretical formulation in the context of stress-deformation analysis was carried out to assess the robustness of the stress-deformation formulation. This chapter considers stress-deformation model by carrying verification exercise. The aim is to provide confidence in the implementation of the new stress-deformation formulation. The performance of the model is checked against independent results for a range of test problems.

Chapter 5 then moves on to explore the numerical simulation of patterns in the vicinity of mature trees and the accompanying ground displacement using the developed stress-deformation formulation. In particular the axi-symmetric form and stress-deformation model presented in Chapter 3 and 4 is explored here. The model is applied to simulate site measurements recorded by others for a mature Lime tree located on a Boulder Clay sub-soil. Non-linear hydraulic properties are obtained from independent published data. This first application of the full model aims to simulate only a spring/summer drying period and does not include a full seasonal wetting/drying cycle for Leyland Cypress tree. This second application of the full model aims to simulate only a spring/summer drying period UK case study and does not include a full seasonal wetting/drying cycle for Lime tree but, in more details than the first simulation. The third simulation presented covers a full annual cycle starting from field capacity in winter, extending through a full spring/summer drying period and including the subsequent autumn recharge for also a Lime tree. The simulation attempts to include time dependent variations in boundary conditions based on daily rainfall patterns.

Chapter 6 develops the work presented in Chapter 5 with the aim of exploring the sensitivity and parametric analysis of some of the variables involved in the simulation. Sensitivity and parametric analysis was carried to check the effect of elapse time on matric suctions and ground displacements, effect elapse time on

capillary potential and effect elapse time on volumetric moisture content. Initial time step size of six hours initial time step size, twelve hours initial time step size and twenty four hours initial time step size are also investigated. Effect of actual transpiration rates, unit weights of the soils, soil initial void ratios and soil re-compression indexes are simulated and evaluated.

Chapter 7 considers how the stress-deformation formulation may be employed to provide an assessment of the significance suction changes on the stability of unsaturated soil slopes and subsequent slope settlement due vegetative ground water-uptake. Typical slope geometry and a range of initial conditions and tree locations are considered. The corresponding variation of slope settlement as the location of the tree is changed is simulated.

Overall conclusions and recommendations for further research are presented in Chapter 8.

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