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PREVIEW

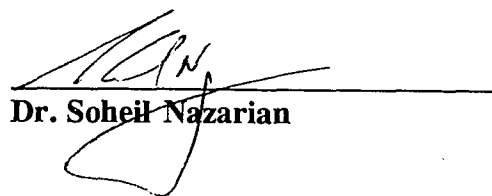
BEHAVIOR OF UNSATURATED CLAYEY SOILS
AT HIGH STRAIN RATES

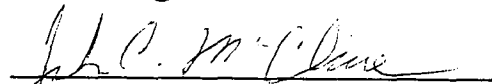
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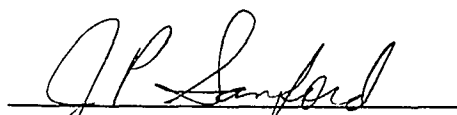
Civil Engineering

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**BEHAVIOR OF UNSATURATED CLAYEY SOILS
AT HIGH STRAIN RATES**

by

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THESIS

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ABSTRACT

A sample of soil from the flood plain of the Rio Grande was collected and subjected to engineering and physicochemical characterization tests. The soil was cleaned of soluble components and organic matter. Then a soil suspension stock was prepared with a precisely known and controlled chemistry of the pore solution. This soil suspension was used as a stock to provide soil to prepare specimens for testing.

The first step in specimen preparation consisted of the centrifugation of the soil suspension to reduce water content and reduce the volume changes that the suspension would have to experience during consolidation. For this purpose, the soil cake recovered from the centrifuge bottle was placed on a glass plate and was thoroughly mixed. Then the mixed soil cake was placed in a rubber membrane and consolidated in a triaxial cell under 50 psi confining pressure, at constant temperature, and for a fixed length of time.

The test specimens were trimmed from the consolidated material to cylindrical specimens 1.4 in. in diameter. These in turn were placed in a triaxial cell over a high air entry porous stone to equilibrate the specimen to predetermined soil suction levels. Upon reaching the equilibration point some specimens were destined to perform creep/recovery tests, while the rest were used for dynamic tests at high strain rates.

The creep tests were performed on specimens equilibrated at three soil

suction levels and several deviatoric stress levels. The results of these tests were used to find viscoelastic models that could explain the observed behavior. The test matrix was selected to provide information on how the model parameters depended on deviatoric stress and soil suction levels.

The specimens destined for the dynamic tests were prepared following the same procedure and under conditions that duplicated the creep tests. The specimen was placed in a dynamic triaxial test system and was subjected to successive load pulses of increasing peak load intensity. During the test, the load-time and the strain-time histories were recorded for each load pulse.

The load-time history recorded was used in conjunction with non-linear viscoelastic models developed from the creep tests to predict the strain-time history of the specimens tested in the dynamic triaxial test. The best model was found to be a power law of time with the coefficient and the exponent being functions of the deviatoric stress and soil suction levels.

The predictions using this power law in conjunction with a modified superposition principle compare favorably with the recorded data at low deviatoric stress levels. However, at the peak loads, the predictions consistently are larger than the measured strain levels by factors from two to three. Although some of these discrepancies might be due to limitations of the viscoelastic model, the results of the present study suggest that a large part of the discrepancies might be due to inaccurate records of the load-time history applied on the specimen. The major concern being the friction between the push rod and the bushing of the triaxial cell.

In summary, the results of the present study suggests that the long term creep records do not provide the best models to predict the high strain rate behavior of unsaturated clayey soils. Nevertheless, it appears that the records of the transient creep phase can be advantageously used to model the soil behavior at high strain rates; although further research is necessary to further investigate this point.

PREVIEW

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE NO.</u>
ABSTRACT	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xiii

CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

1.1 Problem Statement	1
1.2 Objectives and Approach	2
1.3 Organization	2

CHAPTER TWO - BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction	4
2.2 Basic Unsaturated Soil Concepts	4
2.3 General Stress-Strain-Time Behavior of Soil	11
2.4 Soil Deformation as a Rate Process	14
2.5 Linear Viscoelastic Models	18
2.6 Non-Linear Viscoelastic Models	30
2.7 Review of Existing Literature	42

CHAPTER THREE

SPECIMEN PREPARATION AND CREEP RECOVERY TESTING

3.1	Introduction	56
3.2	Preparation of Specimens	56
3.3	Test Set-Up	65
3.4	Specimen Equilibration to Predetermined Soil Suction	70
3.5	Creep and Recovery Tests	79
3.6	Repeatability of Creep/Recovery Tests	82

CHAPTER FOUR

INDEX PROPERTIES OF THE SOIL STOCK AND SPECIMENS

4.1	Introduction	89
4.2	Specific Gravity of the Solids	89
4.3	Grain Size Distribution	89
4.4	Soil Plasticity Characteristics	93
4.5	Cation Exchange Capacity	96
4.6	Clay Mineral Identification	98
4.7	Water Contents of the Specimens	101

CHAPTER FIVE

SELECTION OF CREEP AND RECOVERY MODELS

5.1	Introduction	107
5.2	Four-Parameter Exponential Model	111

5.3 Initial Power Law 121

5.4 Recovery Power Law 130

CHAPTER SIX

HIGH STRAIN RATE EQUIPMENT AND TEST PROGRAM

6.1 Introduction 139

6.2 Specimen Preparation 139

6.3 Test Equipment 140

6.4 Testing Methodology 142

6.5 Data Reduction 143

6.6 Test Program and Results 146

CHAPTER SEVEN

COMPARISON OF PREDICTED AND MEASURED DYNAMIC BEHAVIOR

7.1 Introduction 156

7.2 Prediction Methodology 156

7.3 Results and Discussion 160

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Summary 184

8.2 Conclusions 185

8.3 Recommendations 188

REFERENCES 191

APPENDICES:	195
"A" RECORDS OF SPECIMEN CONSOLIDATION	195
"B" CALIBRATION DATA OF THE LOAD TRANSMITTED TO THE SPECIMEN IN THE TRIAXIAL TEST SET UP	244
"C" RECORDS OF SPECIMEN EQUILIBRATION TO PREDETERMINED SOIL SUCTIONS	249
"D" RECORDS OF CREEP AND RECOVERY TESTS AT CONSTANT SUCTION	296
"E" RESULTS OF GRAIN SIZE ANALYSES	330
"F" X-RAY DIFFRACTION PATTERS FOR CLAY MINERAL IDENTIFICATION	339
"G" PREDICTION OF CREEP WITH THE FOUR-PARAMETER EXPONENTIAL MODEL	349
"H" PREDICTION OF CREEP WITH THE INITIAL POWER LAW ...	358
"I" PREDICTION OF RECOVERY WITH THE UNLOADING POWER LAW	368
"J" FORTRAN LISTING OF PROGRAM "HSTRAIN"	376
"K" SELECTED RESULTS OF DYNAMIC TESTS ON SPECIMENS AT 15 PSI SOIL SUCTION	385
"L" SELECTED RESULTS OF DYNAMIC TESTS ON SPECIMENS AT 40 PSI SOIL SUCTION	399
"M" SELECTED RESULTS OF DYNAMIC TESTS ON SPECIMENS AT 70 PSI SOIL SUCTION	422
VITA	434

LIST OF TABLES

<u>TABLE NO.</u>	<u>PAGE NO.</u>
3.1 Records of the Electrical Conductivity of the Supernatant During Cleaning of Soil Stock	60
3.2 Conditions and Results of Specimen Consolidation	64
3.3 Characteristics of High Air Entry Porous Disks Used in This Study	67
3.4 Regression Equation to Calculate the Load Necessary To Balance Cell Pressure and Friction	69
3.5 Conditions During the Specimen Equilibration Phase to a Constant Soil Suction	73
3.6 Conditions of the Creep/Recovery Tests	80
4.1 Specific Gravity of the Solids	90
4.2 Atterberg Limits of The Soil Stock Saturated with Lithium Chloride	95
4.3 Atterberg Limits of The Soil Stock Saturated with Aluminum Chloride	95
4.4 Cation Exchange Capacity Measurements	98
4.5 Specimen Conditions Before and After Tests	103
5.2 Values of Parameters a_1 and a_2 for Different Soil Suction Levels	113
5.1 Regression Values of Parameters A,B,C,and D and The Corresponding Test Conditions	114
5.3 Values of Parameters for Different Soil Suction Levels	116

5.4	Values of Parameters C_1 and C_2 for Different Soil Suction Levels	118
5.5	Parameters Selected for the Four-Parameter Exponential Model	120
5.6	Values of Parameter α and β with the Corresponding Test Conditions	126
5.7	Values of Parameters α_1 and α_2 for Different Soil Suction Levels	127
5.8	Variation of Average Values for Parameter β	127
5.9	Regression Values of Recovery Phase	133
5.10	Values of α_{R1} and α_{R2} for Different Soil Suction Levels	137
6.1	Load Pulses Applied to the Specimens	144
6.2	Results of Dynamic Tests for Specimens Equilibrated at 15 psi	147
6.3	Results of Dynamic Tests for Specimens Equilibrated at 40 psi	148
6.4	Results of Dynamic Tests for Specimens Equilibrated at 70 psi	159

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>FIGURE NO.</u>		<u>PAGE NO.</u>
2.1	Variations of Total, Matric, and Osmotic Suction with Water content for Regina Clay	7
2.2	An Element of Unsaturated Soil	10
2.3	Extended Mohr-Coulomb Strength Relationship for Unsaturated Soil	12
2.4	General Creep Development Stages	13
2.5	Energy Barriers and Activation Energy	15
2.6	Illustration of the Behavior of Linear Viscoelastic Materials, Equation (2.15)	19
2.7	Illustration of the behavior of Linear Viscoelastic Materials, Equation (2.16)	20
2.8	Behavior of Linear Spring	22
2.9	Behavior of Linear Dashpot	23
2.10	Behavior of Maxwell Model	25
2.11	Behavior of Kelvin Model	26
2.12	Behavior of Burger's Model	29
2.13	Idealized Creep Curve	31
2.14	Illustration of Modified Superposition Principle for Recovery	34
2.15	Rheological Model for Clays (Murayama and Shibata, 1956)	43
2.16	Relationship Between Flow Strain and Time	44

2.17	Rheological Model (Christiensen and Wu, 1964)	45
2.18	Rheological Model (Abdel, Hady and Herrin, 1966)	47
2.19	Rheological Model (Komamura and Huang, 1974)	51
2.20	Visco-Elastic Model for Small Levels (Komamura and Huang, 1974)	53
2.21	Visco-Plastic Model for Water Content Above the Visco-Plastic Limit	54
2.22	Viscous Model for Water Contents Higher Than the Liquid Limit	55
3.1	A Photographic View of Mixed Soil Slurry	61
3.2	A Photographic View of the Specimen Consolidation Set- up	63
3.3	Test Set-up for Creep and Recovery Testing	66
3.4	Specimen Before the Trimming	71
3.5	Specimen After Trimming	72
3.6	Volume of Pore-Water Movement During Equilibration at 15 psi Soil Suction	76
3.7	Volume of Pore-Water Movement During Equilibration at 40 psi Soil Suction	77
3.8	Volume of Pore-Water Movement During Equilibration at 70 psi Soil Suction	78
3.9	Comparison of Creep/Recovery Tests at 40 psi Soil Suction and 5.76 psi Deviatoric Stress	83
3.10	Comparison of Creep/Recovery Tests at 40 psi Soil Suction 11.46 psi Deviatoric Stress	84
3.11	Comparison of Creep/Recovery Tests at 40 psi Soil Suction and 17.19 psi Deviatoric Stress	85
3.12	Comparison of Creep/Recovery Tests at 40 psi Soil	

Suction and 22.92 psi Deviatoric Stress	86
3.13 Comparison of Creep/Recovery Tests at 40 psi Soil Suction and 28.65 psi Deviatoric Stress	87
4.1 Hydrometer Tests Results on the Soil Stock	92
4.2 Illustration of the Scatter Measured in the Grain Size Distribution of the Specimen	94
4.3 Plasticity Characteristics of the Soil Stock with the Exchange Complex Saturated with Lithium and Aluminum	97
4.4 Distribution of Water Contents of the Specimens Before the Equilibration Phase	105
4.5 Water Content of the Specimens After Testing	106
5.1 Creep/Recovery Tests on Specimens Equilibrated at 15 psi Soil Suction	108
5.2 Creep/Recovery Tests on Specimens Equilibrated at 40 psi Soil Suction	109
5.3 Cree/Recovery Tests on Specimens Equilibrated at 70 psi Soil Suction	110
5.4 Relationship Between Parameter A and Deviatoric Stress for Three Soil Suction Levels	115
5.5 Relationship Between Parameter B and Deviatoric Stress for Three Soil Suction Levels	117
5.6 Relationship Between Parameter C and Deviatoric Stress for Three Soil Suction Levels	119
5.7 Initial Creep Phase for the Specimens Equilibrated at 70 psi	123
5.8 Power Relationship Between Parameter α and the Deviatoric Stress for Three Soil Suction Levels	124
5.9 Exponential Relationship Between Parameter α and the	

Deviatoric Stress for Three Soil Suction Levels	125
5.10 Variation of Parameter β with the Deviatoric Stress Level	129
5.11 Recovery Phase for Specimens Equilibrated at 70 psi	131
5.12 Exponential Regression between Parameter α_R and Deviatoric Stress	134
5.13 Power Law Regression Between Parameter α_R and Deviatoric Stress	135
6.1 Dynamic Test Results for Specimens at 15 psi Soil Suction	151
6.2 Dynamic Test Results for Specimens at 40 psi Soil Suction	152
6.3 Dynamic Test Results for Specimens at 70 psi Soil Suction	153
6.4 Comparison of Stress and Strain Time Histories for Specimens at 15 psi	155
7.1 Example of the Approximation of the Load Pulse Used in The Predictions	158
7.2 Predicted (power law with power stress function) vs Measured Strain Histories, Soil Suction 15 psi and Peak Deviatoric Stresses 5.73 and 11.46 psi	162
7.3 Predicted (power law with power stress function) vs Measured Strain Histories, Soil Suction 15 psi and Peak Deviatoric Stress 17.19 and 22.92 psi	163
7.4 Predicted (power law with power stress function) vs Measured Strain Histories, Soil Suction 70 psi and Peak Deviatoric Stresses 5.73 and 11.46 psi	164
7.5 Predicted (power law with power stress function) vs Measured Strain Histories, Soil Suction 70 psi and peak Deviatoric Stresses 17.19 and 22.92 psi	165
7.6 Predicted (power law with power stress function) vs Measured Strain Histories, Soil Suction 40 psi and peak Deviatoric Stresses 5.73 and 11.46 psi	166

7.7	Predicted (power law with power stress function) vs Measured Strain Histories, Soil Suction 40 psi and peak Deviatoric Stresses 17.19 and 22.92 psi	167
7.8	Predicted (power law with exponential stress function) vs Measured Strain Histories, Soil Suction 15 psi and peak Deviatoric Stresses 5.73 and 11.46 psi	172
7.9	Predicted (power law with exponential stress function) vs Measured Strain Histories, Soil Suction 15 psi and peak Deviatoric Stresses 17.19 and 22.92 psi	173
7.10	Predicted (power law with exponential stress function) vs Measured Strain Histories, Soil Suction 40 psi and peak Deviatoric Stresses 5.73 and 11.46 psi	174
7.11	Predicted (power law with exponential stress function) vs Measured Strain Histories, Soil Suction 40 psi and peak Deviatoric Stresses 17.19 and 22.92 psi	175
7.12	Predicted (power law with exponential stress function) vs Measured Strain Histories, Soil Suction 70 psi and peak Deviatoric Stresses 5.73 and 11.46 psi	176
7.13	Predicted (power law with exponential stress function) vs Measured Strain Histories, Soil Suction 70 psi and peak Deviatoric Stresses 17.19 and 22.92 psi	177
7.14	Predicted (four-parameter exponential law) vs Measured Strain Histories, Soil Suction 15 psi and peak Deviatoric Stresses 5.73 and 11.46 psi	178
7.15	Predicted (four-parameter exponential law) vs Measured Strain Histories, Soil Suction 15 psi and peak Deviatoric Stresses 17.19 and 22.92 psi	179
7.16	Predicted (four-parameter exponential law) vs Measured Strain Histories, Soil Suction 40 psi and peak Deviatoric Stresses 5.73 and 11.46 psi	180
7.17	Predicted (four-parameter exponential law) vs Measured Strain Histories, Soil Suction 40 psi and peak Deviatoric Stresses 17.19 and 22.92 psi	181

7.18	Predicted (four-parameter exponential law) vs Measured Strain Histories, Soil Suction 70 psi and peak Deviatoric Stresses 5.73 and 11.46 psi	182
7.19	Predicted (four-parameter exponential law) vs Measured Strain Histories, Soil Suction 70 psi and peak Deviatoric Stresses 17.19 and 22.92 psi	183

PREVIEW

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In order to properly analyze the survivability of military or security sensitive structures, the soil-structure interaction under extreme loading conditions, such as those caused by a conventional or nuclear attack, should be understood and accurately modeled. Under these conditions, the strain levels as well as strain rates experienced by the soil are extremely high. Furthermore, many of these structures rest on or is surrounded by soils that are in the unsaturated state. For a realistic prediction of the soil response, it is necessary to develop appropriate constitutive equations that account for the high strain rates imposed on the soil and should include the effects of the soil suction.

Strength and constitutive behavior of soils are known to be strain-rate dependent. This dependency is more pronounced for clayey soils than for granular soils. In the existing technical literature, the bulk of research has been directed towards the study of the strength and constitutive behavior of saturated clayey soils. However, most of those investigations have been performed at small strain-rates. Further more, a very limited amount of work has been performed to elucidate the effect of soil suction on the constitutive behavior of unsaturated clayey soils.

1.2 OBJECTIVES AND APPROACHES

The main focus of this thesis has been to evaluate the possibility of using low-strain rate test results and models to predict the behavior of unsaturated clayey soils at high-strain-rates. The study consisted of performing creep/recovery test on soil specimens equilibrated to these preselected soil suction levels. These results are then used to develop constituting models to explain the soil behavior at low strain rates. In a second phase, specimens of "identical" characteristics were subjected to high strain rates with a concurrent variation of the deviatoric stress in a MTS dynamic soil testing facility. Finally, the constitutive models developed from the creep-recovery tests were used to predict the behavior of the tests performed at high strain rates. The validity of the existing models were investigated by comparing the predictions to the actual measurements.

1.3 ORGANIZATION

This section provides a brief overview of the organization of this thesis that includes eight chapters. Chapter Two contains a review of the mechanics of unsaturated soils and the basis for the analysis of the creep and recovery tests. A detailed description of the test set-up, specimen preparation, creep and recovery test and data reduction are presented in Chapter Three. In Chapter Four, the static properties and index properties of the materials are described. The constitutive models at constant loading conditions are proposed in Chapter Five. Chapter Six describes the MTS dynamic testing facility, and the dynamic testing procedure. The

predictions of the behavior at high strain rates using the proposed models as well as the evaluation are contained in Chapter Seven. Chapter Eight is the closure, which contains a summary of the thesis, conclusions and recommendations for future studies. The results of individual tests are presented in the appendices.

PREVIEW

CHAPTER TWO

BACKGROUND

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the present study is to predict the dynamic behavior of unsaturated clayey soils. Accordingly, the basic considerations on the mechanics of unsaturated soils, and the time-dependent stress-strain behavior of soils and existing rheological models are described and discussed in this chapter.

2.2 BASIC UNSATURATED SOIL CONCEPTS

Unsaturated soils are composed of three phases, i.e. solid, liquid, and gaseous. When the pore pressure in the liquid phase is positive, any gaseous phase present in the soil can only exist as trapped gas at a higher pressure than the ambient air pressure on the soil. This gas will tend to diffuse out of the soil system and the soil will tend to reach a fully saturated condition with all the pore spaces completely filled with water. On the other hand, when the water table is drawn below the ground surface, decreasing pore water pressure and evapo-transpiration result in larger air bubbles in the pore space. Under these conditions, the pore pressure becomes negative, that is, below atmospheric pressure. A measure of the affinity of soil for water is the magnitude of the negative pressure or soil suction of the pore water.