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Consolidation Analysis of Sri Lankan Peaty Clay using Elasto-viscoplastic Theory



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<u>624</u> 07 624.131.22 (043)

June 2007

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Abstract

The consolidation of peat is complex due to the resultant large strain associated with the highly compressible nature of natural peat deposits and to the rapid changes in soil properties during the consolidation process. In addition, the consolidation process is further complicated by the occurrence of secondary compression which significantly contributes to the overall settlement of peaty soil. Therefore, it is necessary to take these properties into account in order to obtain better predictions from peat consolidation analyses. In the present study, the consolidation behavior of peaty clay found in Sri Lanka is extensively studied using a model based on the elasto-viscoplastic theory. The model can describe the prominent creep behavior of peaty soil as a continuous process. In addition, the model can accommodate the effect of structural degradation on the consolidation process, namely, finite strain, variable permeability, and the effect of secondary compressibility for stage-constructed embankments which exert high levels of pressure on the peaty subsoil.

The constitutive equations used in the model and the procedure adapted to account for the above-mentioned features of the analysis are described. The constitutive model is based on Perzyna's type viscoplastic theory candithe Cambridge elasto-plastic theory combined with empirical evidence. In the finite element formulations, which are based on the finite deformation theory, an updated Lagrangian method is adopted. A description of the material parameters used in the model and the procedures applied to evaluate them, with standard laboratory and field tests, are explained. In addition, a performance of the model incorporating the original and the modified Cam-clay theory is evaluated by simulating triaxial test results. A comparison shows that with the present definition of the parameters, the original model yields more representative results than the model based on the modified Cam-clay theory.

Initially, the capability of the constitutive model to capture the consolidation behavior is verified using the consolidation model test data on peaty clay found in Sri Lanka. It is confirmed that the constitutive model is able to predict the observed creep characteristics and the effect of sample thickness on settlement predictions for the material under consideration.

The performance of the model in predicting the consolidation behavior under field conditions is studied using field data on instrumented earth fill constructed on peaty clay. One-dimensional compression is assumed for the peaty clay due to the large plane area of the fill. Separate analyses are carried out by the model considering the infinitesimal strain theory, the finite strain theory, and the finite strain theory together with the effect of structural degradation in order to explore how these features describe the observed field behavior. Analyses reveal that it is necessary to consider finite deformation together with the effect of structural degradation in order to successfully simulate the resultant large strain and the stagnated pore water pressure observed in the field.

The construction of road embankments over peat deposits is quite problematic, and thus, it is often done after first improving the properties of the peaty soil through the utilization of appropriate ground-improvement techniques. Understanding the field response of peaty clay during this improvement process is naturally of great importance. A constitutive model is applied to predict the field performance of embankments constructed on peaty clay using different ground-improvement techniques. The back analysis of embankments constructed with the preloading method indicates that the model can be successfully applied to predict both the deformation and the stability of structures constructed on peaty clays. The stability of the embankment during and after construction is verified by investigating the stress-strain characteristics of the subsoil.

The model applications used to predict the consolidation behavior of embankments constructed by the preloading method, combined with other ground-improvement techniques, are then discussed. Embankments constructed with prefabricated vertical drains (PVDs) and sand compaction piles (SCPs) are considered, and finite element analyses are carried out in all cases by converting the actual three-dimensional conditions that exist around the drains into simplified two-dimensional plane strain conditions. The field behavior when PVDs are installed in the peat y clay is simulated using the equivalent vertical permeability for the PVD-improved subsoil. In the case of SCPs, a conversion scheme is used to transform the axisymmetric nature of sand columns into equivalent plane strain conditions. A comparison of the predicted results with the field observations shows a reasonable agreement. An analysis of the PVD-improved foundation indicates that the installation of PVDs not only accelerates the rate of consolidation, but influences the deformation pattern of the subsoil due to embankment loading. The analysis also shows that the use of PVDs can significantly increase embankment stability. The model prediction for the SCP-improved foundation reveals that the stiffness and the area replacement ratio used in the conversion scheme play vital roles in predicting the behavior of SCP-improved soft grounds. The observed improvements in the bearing capacity of the subsoil and in the stability of the embankment, brought about by the installation of SCPs, can be simulated by the model.

Acknowledgements

The research described in this thesis was carried out at the Graduate School of Engineering, Kyoto University, Japan. I wish to express my profound gratitude to the members of the Dissertation Committee, namely, Professor Fusao Oka, Professor Takeshi Tamura, and Associate Professor Sayuri Kimoto, for their discussions, invaluable comments, and constructive suggestions in reviewing this work.

I am extremely grateful to my academic advisor, Professor Fusao Oka, for his enthusiastic guidance and his invaluable help and encouragement in all aspects of this research work. The numerous comments, criticisms, and suggestions he made, based on his deep insight and vast experience in the field of geotechnical engineering, contributed greatly to the success of this work. Also, I am deeply indebted to him for giving me the opportunity to follow the International Doctoral Program in Engineering organized by the Graduate School of Engineering, Kyoto University. I am sure that the confidence I gained being a student of Professor Oka will be a vital asset as I take my career to the next level.

I also owe many thanks to Associate Professor Sayuri Kimoto for her valuable suggestions, constant motivation, and constructive discussions during my doctoral research. Her continuous and ever-present support contributed significantly to my understanding of the constitutive model as well as to the outcome of this research work.

I would like to extend my thanks to Dr. Yosuke Higo, Research Associate in Geomechanics at the Graduate School of Engineering, for his kind help on various occasions. Also, the guidance and the advice on laboratory testing given by Associate Professor Takeshi Kodaka, now at Meji University, Japan is gratefully acknowledged.

I offer my sincere thanks to the all the students who graduated during my period of study. Among them, Dr. Boonlert Siribumrungwong, Dr. Md Rezaul Karim, Mr. Ryosuke Kato, Mr. Hirotaka Suzuki, and Mr. Ryota Asai deserve special recognition. The support given by Mr. Naoaki Takada, who now works for Japan Railways, and Mr. Hideki Kitahara, who now works for Kajima Corporation is highly appreciated and will never be forgotten.

Thanks are also due to Ms Chikako Itou, Secretary of Oka Laboratory, who has been so kind in assisting me with all the official formalities during the research period. I would like to thank all of my friends who are current members of the Oka Laboratory and have helped me in one way or another, including doctor course students Feng Huaiping, Nguen Huy Quoc, and master course students, Tinet Anne-Julie, Mai Sawada , Shinya Yamazaki, Tomohiko Fushita, Hirofumi Ohta , Junya Fukutani and Anna Paula Heitior, who all deserve to be mentioned.

The research presented in this dissertation was financially supported by the MONBUSHO Scholarship Program, provided by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, Government of Japan. This program deserves special acknowledgement.

I wish to express my deepest appreciation and gratitude to my supervisor in the Master Degree Program, Dr. S.A.S. Kulathilaka, Senior Lecturer, University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka, for making arrangements to provide the relevant field and laboratory data used in this research work. Also, I am grateful to the Road Development Authority, University of Moratuwa and the National Building Research Organization of Sri Lanka for providing the necessary data for this research work.

I wish to express my gratitude to the Director General of the National Building Research Organization (NBRO) for granting me a study leave for this research work. The support and the encouragement given by Mr. D.L.C. Welikala, former Director of the Geotechnical Engineering Division of NBRO is highly acknowledged. Special thanks are due to all staff members at NBRO, including Mrs. Karuna De Silva, Mrs. Gayani Samaradiwakara, Mrs.Prashanthi Dissanayake, and Ms Sriyani Munashinghe.

Many thanks go to my friends in Sri Lanka for helping me in various ways to achieve this goal. A special note of sincere appreciation is also extended to Mr. Kishan Sugathapala and his family for their continuing support and good wishes. Electronic Theses & Dissertations

I would like to thank all my Sri Lankan friends studying at Kyoto University for their help in many ways. I would also like to extend a huge thank you to Ms. Ryuko Yamaoka and her family, of Ibaraki City, Osaka, for making me feel at home during my stay in Japan.

I offer my heart-felt gratitude to my late father who passed away five months before I started this study program. I am sure that his principles and teachings contributed a great deal to the person I have become. I am indebted to my two brothers and their wives, namely, Sampath and Lali, and Dumindu and Nirosha, for their ever-loving support, patience, and encouragement during this work. Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to my dearest mother who has always inspired me to challenge myself. Her constant love, trust, understanding, and encouragement follow me everywhere.

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