

## UNSATURATED-ZONE WATER

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## Basic Research: Rigid Soils

The present theoretical base for mass transport in porous media rests mainly on empirical observations and resultant mathematical descriptions made at the macroscopic [pore size or above] level. Recently, several attempts have been made to extend the theoretical base to the molecular domain. Laroussi and De Backer [1975] derived the diffusion equation for soil moisture flow by considering the displacement of a fluid particle through an unsaturated porous medium as a Markov's stochastic process. However, Bhattacharya, Gupta and Sposito [1976a] point out that the Laroussi-De Backer interpretation of the diffusivity is invalid because their analysis does not allow for Markovian coefficients that are space and time dependent. Using the assumption that the trajectory of a water molecule is a non-homogeneous Markov process characterized by space- and time-dependent coefficients of drift and diffusion, Bhattacharya, Gupta and Sposito [1976 a,b,c; Gupta, Sposito and Bhattacharya, 1977] developed a number of interesting results. The Buckingham-Darcy flux law was derived without relying directly on experiment, a new molecular interpretation of soil water conductivity and diffusivity was presented and a proof resulted that the diffusivity for anisotropic soil is a symmetric tensor of the second rank. Results relating to the properties of the vector matrix flux potential were discussed also.

The branch of theoretical physics that deals most fundamentally with the description of transport processes at the molecular level is non-equilibrium statistical mechanics. In a noteworthy paper, Sposito [1978a] used non-equilibrium statistical mechanical methods to derive the macroscopic differential equations of mass and momentum balance for water in a rigid, unsaturated soil. The Buckingham-Darcy flux law was derived in a second paper [Sposito, 1978b]. Such derivations offer interesting possibilities in addition to the obvious intellectual satisfaction. In particular, the hydraulic conductivity is expressed in terms of an integral over time of the correlation function for the velocities of the water molecules. Thus, if one could develop a molecular model of the velocity correlations among water molecules in a soil, the hydraulic conductivity could be calculated.

The possibility of predicting the hydraulic conductivity tensor [and other hydraulic properties] on the basis of molecular measurements and models is intriguing. During the next several years, the attempt to establish firmly the microscopic foundations of the macroscopic soil water flow equations could prove fruitful. However, results of practical value will, most likely,

require quite a lot of research. Increasingly general derivations of macroscopic energy, mass and momentum conservation equations are needed, along with rigorous flux laws and expressions for transport coefficients such as the soil water diffusivity and hydraulic conductivity.

## Basic Research: Swelling Soils

It was first emphasized by Philip [1971], and now generally recognized, that water movement in swelling soils is qualitatively as well as quantitatively different from that in rigid soils. Talsma [1974b] used laboratory data to illustrate the difference in the behavior of swelling and nonswelling materials. Results were also reproduced in the field where the equilibrium moisture profiles were compared in two clay soils and one loam soil with permanent shallow water tables. The clays displayed "hydraulic" profiles as predicted, with water moving upward against the moisture gradient. Parlange [1975a] showed that relations between sorptivity and diffusivity derived for nonswelling materials cannot be applied to swelling materials. Relations specific to swelling materials must be used.

Sposito [1975a,b,c] used a thermodynamic approach to describe vertical equilibrium moisture profiles and flows in a swelling soil. The correct differential equation for the moisture profile was found and discrepancies with previous results were shown to have been caused either by introduction of extraneous thermodynamic variables or by incorrect consideration of overburden pressure. These theoretical advances have set the stage for the development of solutions to the differential equations governing swelling soils for a wide variety of special cases of importance in hydrology, such as infiltration, evaporation, capillary rise, redistribution, and drainage. Some of this work has already begun. Sposito, Giráldez and Reginato [1976] describe the use of a material coordinate transformation which they believe will prove useful for field applications since it requires only the measurement of bulk density. Giráldez and Sposito [1978] derived practical working equations for describing steady-state, vertical moisture profiles in homogeneous swelling soils. The equations were solved on a computer, and many interesting profiles were calculated depending on whether the soil was saturated or unsaturated and whether the flows were upward or downward. In practically all cases, the overburden potential was of major importance.

The ongoing theoretical effort being applied to swelling soils must be accompanied by sound experimental work. In this regard, interesting papers were published by Wong and Yong [1975], Talsma and van der Leij [1976], and Mustafa and Hamid [1977]. Complicating factors which the theory may have to consider could include the

effect of solutes on hydraulic properties [Dane and Klute, 1977], the possibility of hysteresis in the relationship between void ratio and moisture ratio [Towner, 1976] and the influence of macropores and pore-size distribution on the flow process [Bouma et al., 1977].

#### Non-Hysteretic Soil Hydraulic Properties

Theoretical advances in our understanding of transport processes in porous media are often based upon improvements in experimental procedures for measuring soil properties. Techniques to determine the hydraulic properties of natural soil systems using *in situ* measurements and undisturbed soil cores are needed and have continued to be developed. Alemi et al. [1976] used two centrifuge-based methods to determine the hydraulic conductivity of natural soil cores. Ahuja [1975] and Ahuja and El-Swaify [1976] describe a procedure for obtaining both the soil-water characteristic and hydraulic conductivity relationship from data measured during the wetting of a natural soil core. The above techniques agree with published data obtained using other methods. Rawls et al. [1975] present a numerical model for describing axisymmetric infiltration problems and fit the model to field data to define the hydraulic properties of field soils. Close agreement was found between the numerical model solution and independent field measurements for two sites. Baker [1977] evaluated several factors thought to influence hydraulic conductivity values obtained using the artificial crust test described by Hillel and Gardner [1970]. Diameter and height of the soil pedestal were shown to strongly affect hydraulic conductivity measurements when these parameters were small, and operator errors were small compared to other sources of error. Relative errors associated with hydraulic conductivity measurements obtained from a transient drainage field experiment were analyzed by Fluhler et al. [1976]. They found that for the wet range of the hydraulic conductivity relationship, errors could be 20-30 percent of the actual value. When hydraulic conductivity values were small, the relative errors could easily be greater than 100 percent.

The spatial variability of *in situ* unsaturated hydraulic conductivity measurements is considered by Carvallo et al. [1976], Baker and Bouma [1976], Baker [1978], and Keisling et al. [1977]. Significant variability in hydraulic conductivity measurements was noted both in the vertical and lateral direction for a given soil series. A simple procedure involving a Taylor-series expansion for estimating the spatial variability of such soil properties is discussed by Rao et al. [1977]. Warrick et al. [1977b] used the concept of similar media to develop techniques for describing water flow in spatially varying soils. Field data involving soil water characteristic relations and unsaturated hydraulic conductivity were collected. Comparisons made between curves fitting the data and those fitting the scaled data show that scaling reduces the squared deviations by amounts varying from 34 percent to 90 percent. The similar media concept is promising and should be pursued by other investigators using different soils.

Dirksen [1975] has developed a new method for determining the dependence of soil-water diffusivity on water content in the tensiometer range. A weighted mean diffusivity is used to linearize the one-dimensional absorption problem. To use this procedure, sorptivities must be measured *in situ* for a series of step-function increases in soil-water content. A procedure for measuring the unsaturated soil-water diffusivity of an anisotropic soil was developed by Sawhney et al. [1976]. The method makes use of a two-dimensional similarity solution derived for an isotropic medium.

Remote sensing of surface soil temperature appears to be a practical means of assessing soil water status in the upper 2 to 4 cm of bare soil [Idos et al., 1975; Engleman and Lin, 1976; Schmutge et al., 1977; Skidmore, 1975]. A composite relationship between the radiometric temperature and soil moisture content (correlation index of -0.96) was determined from five data sets obtained over Kansas and Texas. Other methods being evaluated for measuring soil-water content involve nuclear magnetic resonance [Matzkanin and Gardner, 1975], dielectric properties [Selig and Mansukhani, 1975], and electrical capacitance [Selig et al., 1975].

New and/or modified procedures for measuring soil-water potential more efficiently are described by Anderson and Burt [1977a,b], Savvides et al. [1977] and Brown and Johnston [1976]. The latter authors describe a screen-covered thermocouple psychrometer for *in situ* measurements of soil-water potential which is less subject to microorganism contamination than previously used psychrometer systems.

#### Hysteretic Soil Hydraulic Properties

Results of several studies confirmed the importance of hysteresis in the hydrology of field soils. Beese and van der Ploeg [1976] studied water transport in an undisturbed soil monolith and concluded that soil suction predictions were marginally successful if one used only the sorption and desorption curves without scanning between them. Other studies verify the idea that hysteresis is too important to be neglected in the hydrology of field soils [Royer and Vachaud, 1975; Watson, Reginato and Jackson, 1975].

If hysteresis is to be included in the modeling of field soil water processes, efficient techniques must be developed for representing the hysteretic relationship between water content, potential, and possibly other variables. Parlange [1976] proposed a simple microscopic model which predicts the wetting and drying scanning curves from only one boundary of the main hysteresis loop. Such approaches which require a minimum of experimental measurement are attractive. However, further study of the Parlange [1976] model by Mualem and Morel-Seytoux [1978] indicated that his approach was unreliable since it often yielded badly distorted shapes of hysteresis curves.

Mualem and Dagan [1975] built upon previous work to develop a dependent domain model of capillary hysteresis which takes into account the phenomenon of blockage against air and water entry. The model works especially well for soils having a major portion of their hysteretic loop in the range of air entry value. Mualem [1976b]

further generalized this approach to predict the hysteretic relationship between hydraulic conductivity and potential and between hydraulic conductivity and water content. Very good agreement was found between theory and experiment. Mualem [1977] summarizes some of his previous work and extends the similarity hypothesis used for the modeling of soil water characteristics. The object here is to derive simplified models of hysteresis which require a reduced amount of experimental data for calibration.

As discussed by Mualem and Morel-Seytoux [1978], studies of hysteresis have three major and sometimes incompatible objectives: 1) to improve our understanding of the physical mechanism of the observed phenomena of capillary hysteresis, 2) to improve the accuracy of the prediction of the capillary head versus water content relationship, and 3) to reduce the amount of experimental data required for calibration of the models. An appropriate weighted average of the above objectives will aid in the numerical modeling of field and laboratory systems [Cary, 1975; Lees and Watson, 1975; Gillham, Klute and Heermann, 1976; Hoa, Gaudu and Thirriot, 1977].

#### Single-Phase Infiltration and Redistribution

During the past four years, interest in simplified formulas for predicting infiltration has continued to be strong. This has been motivated, in part, by an increasing need to describe hydrologic processes on a watershed scale and by concern for the quality of water originated from non-point sources. A relatively simple infiltration equation was used by Swartzendruber and Hillel [1975] to develop a family of infiltration vs. time curves for a constant intensity rainfall. The curves become applicable when excess water first appears at the soil surface. Brutsaert [1977] derived a simple infiltration equation [required parameters are saturated hydraulic conductivity and sorptivity] that is quite accurate in a mathematical sense. The equation behaves properly for very small times and very large times. For these reasons, and others, the procedure is superior to that of Swartzendruber and Hillel [1975]. Reeves and Miller [1975] developed a procedure for estimating infiltration under erratic rainfall conditions. Morin and Benyamini [1977] tested a model developed by Seginer and Morin [1970] to describe soil crust formation under raindrop impact and its influence on infiltration.

Perturbation methods were employed by Babu [1976a,b,c] and Liu [1976] to analyze the horizontal and vertical infiltration of water into unsaturated soils. The solution emerges as a series of terms that can be explicitly calculated from integrals involving diffusivity functions. Diffusivity was assumed to be an exponential function of the soil-water content. Parlange and Babu [1976b] have shown that the perturbation solution is identical to the iterative results when Cislser's correction is used.

Use of the Green and Ampt [1911] model for describing infiltration has continued to be elaborated and expanded. Neuman [1976] and Mein and Farrell [1974] present theoretical justification for relating the wetting front pressure head in the infiltration model to soil characteristics.

Fok [1975] has shown that the Philip two-term equation for vertical infiltration can be derived from the Green-Ampt equation. A similar comparison of these two models was made by Ahuja and Tsuji [1976]. Efficient methods for solving the Green-Ampt one-dimensional infiltration model were presented by Li et al. [1976]. A simple explicit solution resulted in a maximum error of 8 percent while an implicit solution was associated with negligible error. Necessary calculations can be performed on a desk calculator.

The Green and Ampt [1911] model was also used by Youngs and Aggelides [1976] and Chu [1977] to describe the redistribution of water following the cessation of infiltration. Good agreement between calculated and measured water table heights and drainage flux with time were obtained from field and laboratory experiments. Chugla [1974] developed a simple mathematical, multi-layer model using the diffusion equation to calculate vertical water movement in unsaturated soil. The multi-layer model is suitable for calculating the annual course of natural groundwater recharge, and was tested using data from a weighing lysimeter.

Non-Darcy flow during infiltration was detected by Poulouvasilis [1977] and Gill [1976]. Experimental profiles for small times were retarded and thus became more pronounced as the soil-water content increased. For infiltration into horizontal columns, a unique relationship between water content and distance divided by the square root of time was not found. These two studies support the need for basic research on flow processes in complex soil materials.

#### Two-Phase Infiltration and Redistribution

Experimental and theoretical work has continued on the problem of understanding and describing the simultaneous transport of air and water in the unsaturated zone, and a general review of multi-phase fluid flow through porous media was published by Wooding and Morel-Seytoux [1976]. Experimental studies [Vachaud, Gaudet and Kuraz, 1974; Linden and Dixon, 1976] further substantiated the importance of air pressure in determining the rate of infiltration in many situations. An interesting paper by Linden and Dixon [1975] showed experimentally that air pressure under border irrigation caused significant groundwater redistribution. It appears that the effect of soil air pressure on water table position should be investigated more thoroughly for small, intermediate, and large scale (watershed-size) systems.

It is now evident that any serious attempt to predict infiltration rate must begin with a determination of whether air transport effects are important. If they are, one may be able to make use of several of the advances made in recent years aimed at incorporating the effects of air and water movement during imbibition, infiltration and drainage [Brustkern and Morel-Seytoux, 1975; Morel-Seytoux, 1975; Morel-Seytoux and Kanji, 1975a,b; Morel-Seytoux, 1976; Sonu and Morel-Seytoux, 1976; Morel-Seytoux, 1977; Morel-Seytoux, 1978]. Most of the above papers developed approximate analytical solutions or formulas for calculating imbibition, infiltration, etc. Other more numerical-analysis oriented approaches were

developed also [Watson and Curtis, 1975; McWhorter, 1976].

From a theoretical viewpoint, the paper by Morel-Seytoux [1975] is of particular interest because it establishes for the first time the complete symmetry between infiltration and drainage when treated as a two-phase (air-water) flow process. Earlier work at Colorado State University culminated in the paper by Morel-Seytoux [1978] which is significant from a practical viewpoint. This work provides a simple means of predicting infiltration for any complex pattern of rainfall, a physically-based tool that has eluded hydrologists for a long time. It is likely that this or related formulas will play an important future role in watershed simulation models where they will replace techniques for predicting infiltration, such as the  $\phi$  index method, Horton's formulae and other purely empirical techniques.

#### Water Flow From Point and Line Sources and to Sinks

In recent years, the use of trickle irrigation systems has expanded. Jury and Earl [1977], Earl and Jury [1977] and Hachum et al. [1976] studied the influence of water application rate and irrigation frequency on movement and distribution of water within the soil profile. Water movement in the horizontal and vertical directions was described by an exponential equation, and two-dimensional wetting patterns in the soil profile were approximated by a semiellipse without a significant loss of accuracy [Hachum et al., 1976].

Analytical solutions for line water sources were developed by Warrick and Lomen [1977], Thomas et al. [1976], and Philip and Forrester [1975]. In general, these solutions assume steady-state conditions and a hydraulic conductivity exponentially related to the pressure head. The solutions provide a method for selecting lateral depth and spacing of line irrigation systems. Experimental evaluations of the analytical solutions for line sources have been conducted by Batu [1977] and Sawhney and Parlange [1974].

A paper by Hansen and Harris [1975] called attention to some of the problems inherent in the use of porous ceramic cup soil-water samplers. Variables which affected the measured concentrations of extracted nitrate and phosphate solutions included sampler intake rate, plugging, sampler depth, and sampler sizes. Theoretical papers which followed shed further light on the transient and steady-state conditions surrounding a soil-moisture sampler. Among other things a numerical solution of the radial flow equation by van der Ploeg and Beese [1977] indicated that for continuous water extraction the radius of influence of the sampler can be quite large (several feet) and therefore not representative of point quantities. Warrick and Amozegar-Fard [1977] present analytical and numerical steady-state solutions for various flow situations. From their results, sampling volumes and regions of influence can be calculated.

#### Saturated-Unsaturated Flow

Many interesting problems in hydrology involve the interaction of the saturated zone and the

unsaturated zone. Drawdown of a water table, recharge to groundwater and drainage of a saturated column are but a few examples. The transport processes that occur are often called saturated-unsaturated flows and have constituted an area of active quantitative research for the past decade.

Luthin, Orhun and Taylor [1975] obtained experimental data from a sector tank for transient flow toward a well. The data, which included both the saturated and unsaturated flow region, are available for testing existing and proposed numerical models. An implicit finite-difference model tested by the authors agreed well with the data. However, this study, and others, indicates that the influence of the unsaturated zone is negligible for the most common cases encountered in practice. The approximate analytical solution of Kroszynski and Dagan [1975] suggests that when unsaturated zone effects are significant, they will be felt at relatively short times, close to the pumping well, and close to the free surface. Skaggs and Tang [1976] [Tang and Skaggs, 1977] reached similar conclusions for saturated-unsaturated flow to drains, and McWhorter and Duke [1976] developed a relatively simple method for considering capillary storage and flow above the water table in drainage design. Watson and Whisler [1978] considered unsaturated-zone effects in their analysis of the decay of a perched water-table.

A more general and detailed discussion of vertical flow components in the unsaturated zone and their inclusion in the general flow equation for unconfined formations was presented by Streltsova [1976]. Hoa, Gaudu and Thirriot [1977] studied experimentally and theoretically the influence of hysteresis on transient flows in saturated-unsaturated porous media. A finite element model of two-dimensional flow in a wedge of soil with time-dependent boundary conditions did not agree well with experiment unless hysteresis was considered.

Narasimhan and Witherspoon [1977] developed an elaborate theoretical model and numerical algorithm [Narasimhan, Witherspoon and Edwards, 1978] which applies to multi-dimensional saturated-unsaturated flow in deformable porous media. The model couples a 3-D flow field with a 1-D vertical deformation field. Conservation of fluid mass is expressed using an elemental volume which contains a constant volume of solids. The theory is quite general and allows for nonelastic deformation. Permeability and compressibility coefficients can be nonlinear functions of effective stress, hysteresis is considered in the unsaturated zone, and the relation between pore pressure change and effective stress change may be a function of saturation. The model and algorithm should yield some interesting insights when applied to systems of hydrologic interest.

Since the water table normally moves in saturated-unsaturated flow situations, such phenomena can be considered as members of the broader class of problems involving moving boundaries. Nakano [1978] developed a fundamental analysis of moving boundary problems as related to the hydrodynamics of porous media. The author states that earlier studies of the conditions at a saturated-unsaturated boundary are correct as far as they go, but are not complete because no consideration was

given to discontinuities in certain variables such as the change in water content with respect to time. Nakano [1978] derives the complete boundary condition and then goes on to justify theoretically the introduction of a thin but finite transition zone around the moving boundary. Such a device increases computational simplicity because detailed tracking of the boundary position is no longer required. Other numerical approaches for solving saturated-unsaturated flow problems were developed by Hornung [1977] and by Cushman and Kirkham [1978].

#### Coupled Transport of Water and Solutes

Efforts to describe nonsigmoidal and asymmetrical solute distributions commonly observed in disturbed and undisturbed soil systems have increased in recent years. Van Genuchten and Wierenga [1976, 1977] and Van Genuchten et al. [1977] used a conceptual mathematical model similar to that described by Coats and Smith [1964] to divide soil water into mobile and immobile liquid phases. Their approach explained asymmetrical solute distributions and early solute breakthrough in effluents from unsaturated [Gaudet et al., 1977], sandy soils. The role of soil structure in enhancing hydrodynamic dispersion was illustrated by Anderson and Bouma [1977 a,b]. These authors observed more dispersion in subangular blocky structures than prismatic structures, which they attributed to flow along structural units.

The spatial variability of water flow in natural field soils was shown to be a major cause of the larger hydrodynamic dispersion coefficient observed in natural systems. Biggar and Nielsen [1976], using data from a large field study, showed that estimates of the pore-water velocity and dispersion coefficient from measured solute displacement data were log-normally distributed. Similar results were obtained by van De Pol et al. [1977] using a steady-state field experiment. Extremes in solute displacement were measured at different soil depths within the plot. Such measurements were also reported by Quisenberry and Phillips [1976].

Selim et al. [1977] and De Smedt and Wierenga [1978] have shown that effluent data from soil columns with nonuniform water content and adsorption characteristics may be described with a mathematical model for a uniform soil. The coefficients used in the model were the arithmetic averages of the water contents, adsorption coefficients, flow velocities, and dispersion coefficients from each soil layer. Thus, the use of statistically-valid data in mathematical models for uniform soils can serve as a first approximation for describing flow processes in nonuniform soils.

The importance of hydrodynamic stability in producing asymmetrical solute distributions in the soil profile and log-normally distributed mean pore-water velocities and dispersion coefficients should be given consideration in the future. Parlange and Hill [1976], Philip [1975a,b] and White et al. [1976] have pointed out that when vertical infiltration is perturbed by sharp changes in the pressure gradient behind the wetting front, "fingers" are developed.

Several efforts were made to describe the mobility and distribution of solutes which are

adsorbed on colloidal surfaces or are transformed within the soil-water phase. Enfield and Bledsoe [1975], Helyar and Munns [1975] and Mansell et al. [1977] attempted to quantify various phosphorus reactions and the transport of specific phosphorus species through soils. Phosphorus effluent concentrations were described best using an irreversible sink for chemical immobilization, or precipitation with a nonlinear reversible kinetic adsorption-desorption equation. Kirda et al. [1974] and Watts and Hanks [1978] assumed first order kinetic reactions to describe nitrogen transformation processes in a soil. The calculated total mass of individual nitrogen species and their concentration distributions with depth were in reasonable agreement with measured data. Wierenga et al. [1975], combining a transient water flow model with a chemical plate theory model, obtained good agreement between measured and predicted depth distribution profiles for  $\text{SO}_4^{2-}$ ,  $\text{Cl}^-$ ,  $\text{Na}^+$  and  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$ .

#### Transport in Freezing Soil-Water Systems

Expanding interest in arctic and near-arctic regions is continuing to provide motivation for research on transport processes in frozen and partially frozen soils. As discussed by Amerman et al. [1975] and Guymon [1975, 1976], water transport in frozen soil is fundamentally involved with heat transport and with thermal processes such as heat of vaporization and heat of fusion which accompany phase changes. Therefore the overall process is quite complex and additional basic research is needed before an acceptable understanding of the various phenomena emerges. There is still some controversy as to the driving forces that cause water flux in a frozen soil and their relative importance. It is difficult to measure transport coefficients in frozen systems, especially in the field, and their variations are complicated by phase changes. Salt effects are also significant.

Papers of fundamental importance were published by Miller et al. [1975] and by Loch and Miller [1975]. A key contention of the Miller et al. [1975] paper is that the ice phase in frozen soil is not immobile under conditions of steady-state liquid transport. Ice grains surrounded by liquid films can migrate through noncolloidal soil by melting at the "upstream" end and freezing at the "downstream" end. This effect has potentially important implications for coupling between liquid movement in the solid and liquid phases and between water and heat transport. The paper lays the foundation for a pore model of mass and heat transport in frozen soils and introduces concepts ignored by many previous authors. Loch and Miller [1975] apply some of these concepts to the problem of frost heaving.

Groenevelt and Kay [1977] continued their nonequilibrium thermodynamic study of transport processes in frozen soils with a paper devoted to water and ice potentials. What the authors call envelope pressure potentials of the liquid water and ice in a frozen soil are defined. The envelope pressure potential of liquid water is a generalization of the concept of overburden potential in an unfrozen swelling soil. Loch and Kay [1978] studied experimentally water redistribution in partially frozen, saturated silt soils. They

concluded that existing theories could not be used to predict location of an ice lens relative to a freezing front because they do not consider the important effects of overburden pressure.

Using a conventional hydrodynamic approach, Guymon and Luthin [1974] developed a one-dimensional, finite-element model of coupled heat and moisture transport for arctic soils. Their model was based on the Richards equation and the heat conduction equation. As our understanding of frozen systems improves, more rigorous and general models should be forthcoming.

The infiltration of meltwater and the upward movement of soil moisture beneath a snowpack are fundamental to the prediction of runoff during a spring thaw. Presently, research in these areas appears to be occurring primarily in the Soviet Union. Komarov and Makarova [1973] studied the effect of ice content, temperature, cementation, and freezing depth of a soil on meltwater infiltration. They conclude that permeability depends primarily on ice content and freezing depth, with very large variations in these quantities existing over a basin. Kasansky [1974] presented a statistically-based model for describing infiltration into frozen ground, and Romanov, Paulova and Kalyuzhnyy [1974] discuss meltwater infiltration into frozen podzolic and chernozem soils and the effect on the spring runoff coefficient in wooded drainage basins. Peck [1974] notes that the maximum prethaw soil moisture content is often observed immediately prior to the spring melt. The primary mechanism for this accumulation of soil moisture appears to be the upward movement of water in both the liquid and vapor phases induced by a temperature gradient.

There is no fundamental reason why a snowpack should not be considered as an extension of the unsaturated zone. Colbeck [1975, 1976] presents a theory for water flow through a layered snowpack and derives equations describing water movement in dry snow. This, and additional work pertaining to water transport in snow, is discussed in detail by Colbeck [1978]. In general, rain-on-snow events can produce anything from serious floods to no runoff, depending on many variable factors such as the transport properties of the snow itself, the temperature, and the meltwater infiltration discussed previously. Obviously, complex interactions exist among soil, snowpack, vegetation and atmosphere. This fundamentally important area which intimately involves the unsaturated zone is wide open for research at many levels.

#### Coupled Water, Heat, and Vapor Transport in Non-Frozen Soil

The simultaneous transport of water and heat in non-frozen soils is not as complicated as in the frozen case and has a better grounding in theory. However, there is still considerable disagreement between experiment and theoretical predictions. Kimball et al. [1976] intensively sampled a field plot at 0.5-hour intervals and tested the ability of the theory of Philip and de Vries [1957] [de Vries, 1958] to predict soil-heat fluxes. Unmodified, they found the theory predictive only over a small range of water content. The authors conclude that their data and the data of others indicate that an individual "calibration" of the

theory for a particular soil is required before reliable predictions of soil-heat flux can be obtained. In an earlier work, Jackson et al. [1974] performed a rigorous field test of the Philip-de Vries theory with respect to prediction of water flux. Their data indicated that the theory predicts water fluxes reasonably well only for an intermediate water content range when the diffusivities are known precisely.

Jury and Bellatuoni [1976a,b] studied water and heat movement under surface rocks in a field soil. The rocks did not completely cover the soil but were scattered about on the surface. The authors consistently observed, and were able to predict, a net lateral movement of heat toward the soil under the rocks over a 24-hour period. Based on this observation, it was reasoned that due to the thermal gradients, water vapor would move under the rocks where it would then be insulated from evaporative loss. Ultimately, the accompanying vapor flux was detected and explained theoretically. Although the amount of moisture transferred to the rock-covered soil was not large, this interesting phenomenon might well make a significant contribution to the water balance of a drought-tolerant desert plant.

Hadas [1977a,b] performed additional experimental tests of the Philip-de Vries theory. He found that the theory accurately predicted the transfer of heat by vapor under steady-state conditions, but underestimated it under transient conditions. Hadas suggests that the discrepancy is due mainly to phenomena such as movement by pressure and density gradients that are not considered in the Philip-de Vries development. Such effects are dependent on soil aggregate size.

An important study of heat and vapor movement during infiltration into dry soils by Perrier and Prakash [1977] illustrated the relationship between heat, water vapor and liquid water as a wetting front advances. Upon wetting a dry soil, a large amount of heat is evolved. Resulting evaporation supplies a vapor phase. As liquid continually moves into dry soil, the vapor phase moves as a front immediately ahead of the wetting front. In addition, a large fraction of the heat evolved moves as a heat front in advance of both the vapor and liquid fronts. A final phenomenon detected was a cooling of the soil-water mixture immediately behind the wetting front. Thus, the passing of a wetting front is accompanied by first a rise and then an abrupt fall in temperature.

As the above discussions indicate, many good experimental studies were performed during the past four years. Theoretical studies were not as abundant although Raats [1975b] presented an enlightening discussion which related to both the Philip-de Vries approach and to the non-equilibrium thermodynamic approach to water and heat transport in unfrozen soils. Future research is needed to make existing theories more applicable to field conditions. This concept was advocated by both Jackson et al. [1974], Kimball et al. [1976] and Hadas [1977a]. Additional basic research is required in order to completely understand the phenomena described by Perrier and Prakash which amounts to water, heat, and vapor transport in the presence of a chemical reaction.

An interesting paper was published by Aston and Gill [1976]. These authors developed a numerical model of coupled vapor, heat and liquid water

transport in a soil with simulated fire conditions on the surface. The model was tested with experimental grass fire data and with moist soil in a tube with its surface heated by a radiant heater. The agreement between theory and experiment was reported to be good.

#### Water Transport in Soil Containing Roots

A large amount of water in the unsaturated zone flows from soil to roots and a surprisingly small amount from roots to soil [Molz and Peterson, 1976]. In recent years, water transport in the soil-root system has received an increasing amount of study. A number of studies dealt with one- and two-dimensional models of water transport which were based on the Richards equation containing a spatially distributed sink term to represent water extraction by roots. Feddes, Bresler and Neuman [1974] performed a field test of a one-dimensional model of vertical water transport in a soil containing roots. Over a period of seven weeks, the authors obtained good agreement between calculated and measured soil moisture profiles. In a later study [Neuman, Feddes and Bresler, 1975], the authors developed a two-dimensional finite element model of water flow in soil with water uptake by roots. One- and two-dimensional field tests of the model agree well with measured data and illustrate the flexibility of the finite element approach in treating complex field conditions. Feddes et al. [1976a] elaborate further concerning the use of a water-dependent root extraction function.

Raats [1975a, 1976] presented several analytical solutions to special cases of the flow equation with water extraction. Lomen and Warrick [1976] developed analytical solutions for the one-dimensional steady-state case with several different functions modeling water uptake. Other authors [Hillel, van Beek and Talpaz, 1975; Hillel, Talpaz and van Keulen, 1976] presented CSMP simulations of water and solute flow in soil-root systems.

In order to apply models of water transport in soils containing roots, methods must be developed for measuring the hydraulic properties of such soils and for determining rooting characteristics and water extraction patterns. In a series of papers, Arya, Farrell and Blake [1975] [Arya, Blake and Farrell, 1975a,b] considered these problems. Field and laboratory methods were used to measure the moisture characteristic, hydraulic conductivity and diffusivity of undisturbed soil cores. Then a detailed study was made in the presence of growing soybean roots. Among other things, the authors conclude that the resistance to flow in the immediate vicinity of a root (rhizosphere) is relatively small and that two-dimensional water flow and extraction patterns are associated with row crops. In another study, Rice [1975] made *in situ* measurements of the relations of pressure head to water content and to hydraulic conductivity in a soil containing roots. Flux and water content changes were calculated over two-hour intervals which allowed a detailed picture of the water transport-extraction process to be developed.

A rather fundamental unknown which relates to the derivation of realistic root water extraction functions is the location of the principal resis-

tance(s) to flow in the soil-root cortex-root xylem pathway. Several studies suggest that a major resistance is presented by the root cortex. Using a recently-developed theory [Molz and Ikenberry, 1974], Molz [1975, 1976] studied radial water flow in concentric cylinders of soil and root tissue. Numerical results suggested that in many cases, there will be small water potential gradients in the soil relative to those in the root in the upper 90 percent of the water availability range. Taylor and Klepper [1975] came to a similar conclusion based on experiments performed with soil containing cotton roots. However, experiments and calculations by So, Aylmore and Quirk [1976] indicated that rhizosphere resistance was of the same order of magnitude as the root resistance in the -1 to -2 bar potential range.

In two recent papers, Herkelrath, Miller and Gardner [1977a,b] investigated the influence of soil water content and soil water potential on water uptake by the roots of winter wheat. The experiments were performed in a carefully-controlled laboratory environment, and many interesting effects were observed. The authors interpret their data as indicating that soil-root contact played a major role in determining water uptake rate.

Further research is needed to understand fully the various resistances in the soil-root pathway and the effect they have on water absorption. Little is known concerning the mechanism(s) which seems to prevent water loss from relatively moist roots to dry soil. It is also possible that coupling between water flows and solute flows could play a significant role in water uptake [Dalton, Raats, and Gardner, 1974].

#### Numerical Methods and Simulation

Techniques for the numerical solution of differential equations describing unsaturated-zone processes continue to be developed and refined. Many studies [Jeppson, 1974a,b; Amerman and Monke, 1977; Haverkamp, et al., 1977; Perrens and Watson, 1977; Hayhoe, 1978a; Zaradny, 1978], while quite informative, dealt primarily with refinements to existing techniques and applications or with comparisons of different methods for solving the same problem. Finite element methods [Gray and Pinder, 1976; Zyvoloski, Bruch and Sloss, 1976; Hayhoe, 1978b] were applied successfully to several transport processes. For many problems, either finite element or finite difference methods are acceptable [Hayhoe, 1978b] although the finite element method appears to have the edge in solving the diffusion-convection equation [Gray and Pinder, 1976]. Of course the advantages of finite element procedures for irregularly-shaped domains are generally recognized.

A series of papers were published dealing with solutions of the non-linear diffusion equation using perturbation, iterative and optimization techniques [Parlange, 1975b,c,d; Brutsaert, 1976; Parlange and Babu, 1976a,b; Liu, 1976; Parlange and Babu, 1977]. These methods are semi-analytical in nature and generally yield highly accurate approximate solutions with relatively little computation. Brutsaert's [1976] method appears to be superior, both with respect to accuracy (error < 0.1 percent) and ease of computation. A serious

limitation for hydrologic applications is that such solution methods apply only to homogeneous media. Krishnamurthi, Sunada and Longenbauch [1978] discuss oscillation of a numerical solution to a modified Richards equation and develop criteria for non-oscillatory solutions.

#### Closing Comments

During the past four years notable advances were made in many areas of unsaturated zone hydrology. These included attempts to extend the theoretical basis for describing transport processes in rigid soils to the molecular scale, advances in our understanding of water transport in swelling soils, and development of conceptual models for solid and liquid phase transport in frozen soils. Existing theory was further elaborated and applied to single-phase infiltration, two-phase infiltration, flow involving sources and sinks, saturated-unsaturated flow, and flow in soil containing roots. Many worthwhile studies were devoted to coupling phenomena involving liquid water, solutes, heat and water vapor.

In much of this work, it is evident that the most universal problem facing modern unsaturated-zone hydrologists is the measurement and representation of soil hydraulic properties on a scale useful for application. This problem is made even more acute by the small- and large-scale heterogeneity of natural systems. While new instruments and methods have been devised for making *in situ* measurements of soil hydraulic properties, and improved techniques have been developed for representing the effects of hysteresis, nothing approaching a "breakthrough" can be claimed. It is not even known if the ultimate solution to this problem will be conceptual or technological in nature. Will increasingly sophisticated measurements and measurement devices enable us to gradually apply our conceptual models in a truly predictive manner, or will the resulting measurements be so ambiguous that they ultimately force the development of a radically different theory? This is the central question of modern unsaturated-zone hydrology, and a great deal of future effort will be devoted to obtaining an answer.

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