



Tǔ (CHI) = Do (JPN) = Soil (ENG) = Tanah (MAL)

The Sinking Earth

Revenge of the SOILS: How do we survive?



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Chee-Ming Chan



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First Published 2012
Second Published 2016
Third Published 2018

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Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia Cataloguing—in—Publication Data

Chan, Chee-Ming
The sinking earth : revenge of the soil : how do we survive?
Chee-Ming Chan.
Bibliography: p.
ISBN 978-967-5457-78-4
1. Soil—Social aspects. 2. Soil mechanics. I. Title.
624.151

Published by:
Penerbit UTHM
Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia
86400 Parit Raja,
Batu Pahat, Johor
Tel: 07-453 7051 / 7454
Fax: 07-453 6145

Website: <http://penerbit.uthm.edu.my>
E-mail: pt@uthm.edu.my

Penerbit UTHM is a member of
Majlis Penerbitan Ilmiah Malaysia
(MAPIM)

Printed by:
SEVEN COLOUR SYNERGY ENTERPRISE
NO 4 JALAN KENCANA 1A/1
PURA KENCANA
83300 SERI GADING
JOHOR

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Revenge of the SOILS: How do we survive?

Chee-Ming Chan

(A *wonderer* in the *wondrous* world of soil engineering...
still, and will always be *wondering* the *wonders*!)



To all my SOIL's teachers, past and present...

whom I pray are not overwhelmed by the **'sinking'** feeling
that their dimmest protégé has been bold enough
to pen this gibberish on **'sinking'** soils!



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The Sinking Earth: PROLOGUE

Much has been done on the advancement of soil engineering for the purpose of infrastructure development. There is no doubt about that. Nevertheless, not as much has been done to disseminate the knowledge to people outside the technical league. Perhaps it is simply because the experts do not want to burden people with dry technicalities and to overload them with unnecessary information for daily subsistence. Or is it?

Whatever the reason may be, it is my personal views that if something supposedly complicated cannot be explained in layman's terms, then we are in jeopardy of abusing the trust put on us by the general public, where we intentionally maintain distance and distinction between the so-called 'experts' and 'layman'. Knowledge is for sharing, and it should be explicable and understood at different levels for the comprehension of anyone who wants to learn or know.

I recall my own learning experience with soil mechanics and foundation engineering, the core subjects in soil engineering. Understanding did not come easy with hard facts and cold numbers, but lively analogies and interesting examples effectively prodded along the enlightening process for a rather dim student like me. Fortunate enough to have undergone tutelage with great teachers, I thought that the least I could do to make them not feel too embarrassed to have had me as a student is (*to make an attempt*) to explain the principles and mechanisms of soil engineering in a way that I had enjoyed as a student: in layman's terms!

With all due respect, we are all laymen, and that we learn best when a seemingly difficult matter is explained in simple words and illustrated with clear examples. Everyone is put off by lengthy equations with funny squiggles, charts with a cluttered assortment of lines and symbols, or text strung together with nothing but bombastic, or even worse, technical jargons. Let's face it, we are not all Einstein, and not all of us are capable of putting up a good pretension of that either!