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Infiltration in soils with a saturated surface

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9 **Abstract:** An earlier infiltration equation relied on curve fitting of infiltration data for the
10 determination of one of the parameters, which limits its usefulness in practice. This handicap is
11 removed here and the parameter is now evaluated by linking it directly to soil-water properties.
12 The new predictions of infiltration using this evaluation are quite accurate. Positions and shapes
13 of soil-water profiles are also examined in detail and found to be predicted analytically with
14 great precision.

15 **Keywords:** Infiltration in soils, water profiles, constant surface water, Richards equation.

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17 **Running title:** Infiltration and water profiles.

18 **Introduction and Theoretical Background**

19 The infiltration process of soil enters into most hydrological problems, e.g., irrigation,
20 erosion, and weather forecasting, among many. Physically based infiltration equations go back
21 at least to Green and Ampt (1911) with greater understanding being obtained with Richards
22 equation (1931). Two very thorough reviews of most of the existing infiltration equations based
23 on Richards equation can be found in Basha (2011) and in Triadis and Broadbridge (2010).
24 Those discussions will not be repeated here except when they impact this paper directly.

25 The present paper continues an approach which is based on Green and Ampt (1911) and
26 Richards equation (1931). Parlange, et al. (1982) introduced a three parameter infiltration
27 equation valid for a saturated soil surface. Those parameters are sorptivity, saturated
28 conductivity and an interpolation parameter δ , which goes from 0, when the equation reduces to
29 Green and Ampt (1911), to 1 when the equation reduces to one obtained earlier by Talsma and
30 Parlange (1972), see also Smith and Parlange (1978). This three parameter equation is discussed
31 in detail by Basha (2011) and Triadis and Broadbridge (2010) following new interpretations. A
32 fourth parameter was introduced by Haverkamp, et al. (1990) to represent ponding on the
33 surface. Barry, et al. (1995) used this fourth parameter, γ , as a curve fitting parameter, but
34 simplified the equation by taking $\delta=1$.

35 As in Barry, et al. (1995), we keep $\delta=1$ even though values of δ less than one can be used
36 to improve the agreement with numerical results for infiltration (Parlange, et al., 1985;
37 Haverkamp, et al., 1988; Basha, 2011). As this paper concentrates on a discussion of γ , we keep
38 $\delta=1$. In addition, for capillary rise $\delta=1$ (Kunze, et al., 1985), and if δ is a true physical parameter,

39 then the same value should hold for infiltration. However, it is quite easy to reintroduce δ in the
 40 equations if so desired.

41 In a recent paper on time compression approximations (TCA) by Hogarth, et al. (2011),
 42 relationships between the cumulative infiltration, I , and the surface flux, q , were examined in
 43 details based on an expansion procedure started by Parlange et al. (1997). For the purpose of
 44 TCA, it was sufficient to consider the cases when either the surface flux or the surface water
 45 content is constant, even though the method can be applied for arbitrary surface conditions. In
 46 this paper, we are primarily concerned with infiltration and the profile determination following
 47 the same basic procedure (Parlange et al. 1997). The profiles are given by Eq. (1) below, e.g. see
 48 Eq. (2) in Hogarth et al. (2011).

$$49 \int_{\theta}^{\theta_s} \frac{Dd\bar{\theta}}{q\bar{\theta} / \theta_s - k(\bar{\theta})} = z + Mz^2. \quad (1)$$

50 Where θ is the water content at vertical position, z , $z = 0$ at the surface with θ_s being the water
 51 content at $z = 0$ and time, t . $D(\theta)$ and $k(\theta)$ are the soil-water diffusivity and conductivity,
 52 respectively. When $\theta_s = \theta_{sat}$ (the saturated value), M is taken as

$$53 2 \int_0^{\theta_{sat}} Dd\theta M / q = \int_0^{\theta_{sat}} (\theta_{sat} - \theta) Dd\theta / \int_0^{\theta_{sat}} \theta Dd\theta. \quad (2)$$

54 For q constant, the M - term is negligible (Hogarth et al. 2011, see also Sivapalan and Milly,
 55 1989). For simplicity, we assume that the initial water content, θ_i , can be taken as constant. As
 56 a result, θ stands for the water content minus θ_i . Similarly, k and q stand for the conductivity
 57 and flux minus the conductivity at θ_i . Taking a non-uniform initial water content introduces

58 complications in writing the equations but with no theoretical difficulties, following the approach
59 of Boulier et al. (1984).

60 It is important to note that neglecting M for q constant is necessarily approximate as
61 $M = 0$ is exact only when q / θ_s is independent of time (Fleming et al. 1984). There have been
62 many papers exploring the accuracy of Eq. (1) with $M = 0$ for q constant, and possible
63 alternatives to the use of $q\bar{\theta} / \theta_s$ in the integral, e.g., see Kutilek (1980); Boulier et al. (1984); Si
64 and Kachanoski (2000); Evanselides et al. (2005). The conclusion is that in practice, the use of
65 $q\bar{\theta} / \theta_s$ is very accurate, in agreement with the suggestion originally made in Eq. (8) of Parlange
66 (1972), as long as the initial water content is not too large (Boulier et al. 1984).

67 Fig. 1 summarizes the case considered by Boulier et al. (1984) and Parlange et al. (1985)
68 for q constant using a Grenoble sand whose properties are given in those two papers. The
69 numerical and analytical results are essentially undistinguishable on the figures. This was not
70 the case with Boulier et al. (1984) and Parlange et al. (1985) where numerical results showed
71 dispersion near the wetting front. Here the numerical results were obtained using COMSOL
72 finite element numerical software. This software eliminated the numerical dispersion and thus
73 can be trusted to provide accurate solutions at the wetting front. Note that using Eq. (1) with
74 $M = 0$ requires the knowledge of $\theta_s(t)$ which is obtained by conservation of mass, integrating
75 Eq. (1) to obtain

$$76 \int_0^{\theta_s} \frac{D\theta d\theta}{q\theta / \theta_s - k} = qt. \quad (3)$$

77 Note also that the measured profiles differ slightly from the predicted profiles simply reflecting
 78 that the properties, obtained from many experiments, were not exactly those of the particular soil
 79 sample used for the experiment in Fig. 1. Experimental scatter of this nature is not unexpected
 80 and is sometimes used, wrongly, to justify poor approximate analytical solutions. Rather,
 81 analytical approximations should be as accurate as possible so that differences with observations
 82 are unambiguously linked to experimental uncertainties and not to inaccurate models. The
 83 solution for q constant and $M = 0$ will be used later for comparison to the solution with $M \neq 0$.

84 **Cumulative Infiltration and Flux with Surface Saturation:**

85 We are now using the profiles with $M \neq 0$, given by Eq. (2) and $\theta_s = \theta_{sat}$. The first step
 86 is to derive the equivalent to Eq. (3) to obtain $q(t)$. Several expressions have been used in the
 87 past that related I and q . Eq. (20) of Hogarth et al. (2011) gave

$$88 \int_0^{\theta_{sat}} \frac{D\theta d\theta}{q\theta / \theta_{sat} - k} = I + \int_0^{\theta_{sat}} (\theta_{sat} - \theta) D d\theta / 2q. \quad (4)$$

89 The last term is an approximation of $M \int_0^{\theta_{sat}} z^2 d\theta$ for short times, such that $Iq \approx S^2 / 2$, where S
 90 is the sorptivity approximated by

$$91 S^2 \approx \int_0^{\theta_{sat}} D(\theta_{sat} + \theta) d\theta. \quad (5)$$

92 Eq. (4) is identical, with minor notation differences, with Eq. (9) of Parlange et al. (1982). If one
 93 ignored the M – term altogether, then the first term in Eq. (4) would have to be corrected for the
 94 resulting equation to hold in the short time to obtain Eq. (18) of Barry et al. (2008)

$$95 \left(S^2 / 2\theta_{sat} \int_0^{\theta_{sat}} D d\theta \right) \int_0^{\theta_{sat}} \frac{D\theta d\theta}{q\theta / \theta_{sat} - k} = I. \quad (6)$$

96 Finally, Eq. (6) can be modified to take into account a small negative potential h_{str} , with
 97 the soil remaining saturated for $h > -|h_{str}|$. Conceptually, $|h_{str}|$ can be associated with the largest
 98 pores in the soil (Haverkamp, et al. 1990). In practice, the value of $|h_{str}|$ cannot be measured
 99 independently and instead was obtained by curvefitting infiltration data (Barry et al. 1995). Eq.
 100 (6) then becomes

$$101 \frac{S^2}{2\theta_{sat} \int_0^{\theta_{sat}} D d\theta} (1-\gamma) \int_0^{\theta_{sat}} \frac{D\theta d\theta}{q\theta/\theta_{sat} - k} = I - \frac{\gamma S^2 / 2}{q - k_{sat}} \quad (7)$$

102 where

$$103 \gamma = -2k_{sat} h_{str} \theta_{sat} / S^2. \quad (8)$$

104 Note that in Eq. (7) of Barry et al. (1995) and Eq. (16) of Haverkamp et al. (1990), the equations
 105 were further simplified by assuming

$$106 D / \theta_{sat} \int_0^{\theta_{sat}} D d\theta = d(k/\theta) / d\theta / k_{sat}. \quad (9)$$

107 Since k increases rapidly with θ , k/θ is hardly different from k/θ_s . Making that substitution in
 108 Eq. (9) and combining it with $D = kd h / d\theta$, where h is the potential, leads to an exponential
 109 dependence of k on h , i.e., the standard Gardner relation. Thus, in our case, Eq. (9) implies a
 110 soil hardly different from a Gardner soil. It is clear that eliminating D from the integral of Eq.
 111 (7), using Eq. (9), results in an integral, where k/θ is the variable, which can be integrated
 112 explicitly as done by Barry et al. (1995) and Haverkamp et al. (1990). This simplification will be
 113 discussed further later on.

114 In the present paper, the soil surface is taken at a zero potential. There is no difficulty to
 115 include a ponding term $h_{surf} > 0$ which is simply added to $|h_{str}|$ as done in Haverkamp et al.
 116 (1990) and Barry et al. (1995). It is not considered here as it corresponds only to changing the
 117 value of γ .

118 Altogether, we consider two possible relations between I and q , Eqs. (4) and (7), which
 119 could be simplified using Eq. (9). Eq. (6) is, of course, just Eq. (7) with $\gamma = 0$. Obviously, for
 120 the Grenoble sand used for our illustration, $|h_{str}|$ and γ are physically equal to zero. However,
 121 Barry et al. (1995) took a non-zero, and hence non-physical, value to improve infiltration
 122 prediction keeping γ only as a curve fitting parameter. In the following, we first discuss the
 123 results obtained from Eq. (4). Then we follow the same approach starting with Eq. (7) and
 124 compare the results.

125 Since we paid special attention to short time infiltration to obtain Eq. (4), we are first
 126 considering the Taylor expansion of the equation for q large, keeping the first two terms only.
 127 Eq. (4) yields

$$128 \quad Iq \approx S^2 / 2 + \theta_{sat}^2 \int_0^{\theta_{sat}} k(D/\theta) d\theta / q. \quad (10)$$

129 Finally, we can simplify Eq. (4) using Eq. (9) to obtain

$$130 \quad I = \frac{\theta_{sat} \int_0^{\theta_{sat}} D d\theta}{k_{sat}} \ln \frac{q}{q - k_{sat}} - \int_0^{\theta_{sat}} (\theta_{sat} - \theta) D d\theta / 2q. \quad (11)$$

131 To obtain the relationships between q and t , we differentiate Eq. (4) with respect to time,
 132 replacing dI/dt by q , to obtain a differential equation for q which is easily integrated to obtain

$$133 \quad t = \int_0^{\theta_{sat}} \frac{D\theta^2}{k^2\theta_{sat}} \ln\left(\frac{q\theta/\theta_{sat} - k}{q\theta/\theta_{sat}}\right) d\theta + \int_0^{\theta_{sat}} \frac{D\theta^2 d\theta}{k\theta_{sat}(q\theta/\theta_{sat} - k)} - \frac{1}{4q^2} \int_0^{\theta_{sat}} (\theta_{sat} - \theta) Dd\theta \quad (12)$$

134 and using Eq. (9) in the two integrals so that only k/θ enters as variable we obtain

$$135 \quad t = \frac{\theta_{sat} \int_0^{\theta_{sat}} Dd\theta}{k_{sat}^2} \left(\ln \frac{q}{q - k_{sat}} - \frac{k_{sat}}{q} \right) - \frac{1}{4q^2} \int_0^{\theta_{sat}} (\theta_{sat} - \theta) Dd\theta. \quad (13)$$

136 Starting now with Eq. (7), we proceed as before; the Taylor expansion for large q ,

137 keeping the first two terms only, or

$$138 \quad Iq \approx S^2/2 + \left[\left(S^2/2\theta_{sat} \int_0^{\theta_{sat}} Dd\theta \right) \theta_{sat}^2 \int_0^{\theta_{sat}} k(D/\theta) d\theta (1-\gamma) + \gamma S^2 k_{sat}/2 \right] / q. \quad (14)$$

139 Note that for $\gamma = 0$, Eqs. (10) and (14) differ by the term

$$140 \quad 1 - \left(S^2/2\theta_{sat} \int_0^{\theta_{sat}} Dd\theta \right) \approx \int_0^{\theta_{sat}} (\theta_{sat} - \theta) Dd\theta / 2 \int_0^{\theta_{sat}} \theta_{sat} Dd\theta, \quad (15)$$

141 which is small. In all our estimates, we keep terms up to that small order and ignore terms of

142 higher order, i.e., square terms.

143 If we use Eq. (9) to estimate the I/q terms in Eq. (14), then Eq. (14) reduces to Eq. (10)

144 if we take

$$145 \quad \gamma = \gamma_0 = \int_0^{\theta_{sat}} (\theta_{sat} - \theta) Dd\theta / 2\theta_{sat} \int_0^{\theta_{sat}} Dd\theta. \quad (16)$$

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147 Finally, we simplify Eq. (7) when Eq. (9) holds and obtain

$$148 \quad I = \frac{S^2}{2k_{sat}} (1-\gamma) \ln \frac{q}{q - k_{sat}} + \frac{\gamma S^2}{2(q - k_{sat})}. \quad (17)$$

149 We now differentiate Eq. (7) with respect to time, and integrate the resulting differential
 150 equation to obtain

$$151 \quad t = \frac{S^2(1-\gamma)}{2\theta_{sat} \int_0^{\theta_{sat}} D d\theta} \left[\int_0^{\theta_{sat}} \frac{D\theta^2}{k^2\theta_{sat}} \ln\left(\frac{q\theta/\theta_{sat}-k}{q\theta/\theta_{sat}}\right) d\theta + \int_0^{\theta_{sat}} \frac{D\theta^2 d\theta}{k\theta_{sat}(q\theta/\theta_{sat}-k)} \right] \quad (18)$$

$$- \frac{\gamma S^2}{2k_{sat}^2} \left(\ln \frac{q}{q-k_{sat}} - \frac{k_{sat}}{q-k_{sat}} \right),$$

152 and with Eq. (9)

$$153 \quad t = \frac{S^2}{2k_{sat}^2} \left[(1-2\gamma) \ln \frac{q}{q-k_{sat}} - (1-\gamma) \frac{k_{sat}}{q} \right] + \frac{\gamma S^2}{2k_{sat}(q-k_{sat})}. \quad (19)$$

154 Fig. (2) compares $q(t)$ given by Eqs. (12, 13, 18 and 19) with γ from Eq. (16) equal to 0.05, with
 155 the numerical results.

156 Several results are apparent. First, Eq. (12) provides an excellent approximation for $q(t)$
 157 when compared to the numerical results. The results predicted by Eq. (18) are equally good if
 158 we take $\gamma = \gamma_0 = 0.05$ as given by Eq. (16). Interestingly, Eqs. (13) and (19) are still in basic
 159 agreement with each other, with $\gamma=0.05$, but they differ significantly from the numerical results.
 160 This discrepancy simply shows that the Gardner-type relation of Eq. (9) is not exact for the
 161 Grenoble sand and, not surprisingly, this assumption affects Eqs. (18) and (18) in a similar
 162 manner.

163 We know (Barry, et al., 1995) that Eq. (19) can be curve fitted accurately, but only by
 164 using a γ differently from γ_0 . Of course, Eq. (19) is easy to use in practice once γ is known as it
 165 relies only on the knowledge of two additional parameters, S and k_{sat} (besides γ), whereas Eq.
 166 (12) requires the estimations of two integrals (based on knowing D and k of θ) for each value of

167 the flux q . Furthermore, Eq. (19) can be used easily in the case of infiltration with ponding
 168 (Barry, et al., 1995).

169 The main inconvenience of using Eq. (19) as in Barry, et al. (1995) is that γ in that paper
 170 had to be obtained by curve fitting as the theoretical value of Eq. (16) shows poor accuracy, see
 171 Fig. (2). Instead, we are now going to estimate a constant value of γ , i.e., independent of the flux,
 172 based on soil properties. For that purpose, we first remember that, as shown in Fig. 2, Eq. (7) is
 173 in good agreement with both the numeric and Eq. (4) for $\gamma = \gamma_0 = 0.05$. Then, the result for q
 174 large, i.e., Eq. (11) with $\gamma = \gamma_0 (= 0.05)$, is taken as equal to the result for $\gamma \neq \gamma_0$ but obtained
 175 when Eq. (9) is used. This straightforward calculation gives

$$176 \quad \gamma = \frac{2\theta_{sat}}{k_{sat} \int_0^{\theta_{sat}} D d\theta} \int_0^{\theta_{sat}} \frac{kD}{\theta} d\theta (1 - \gamma_0) + 2\gamma_0 - 1. \quad (20)$$

177 Of course, if Eq. (9) truly holds, Eq. (20) yields $\gamma = \gamma_0$. For our particular example, this
 178 gives instead $\gamma = 0.39$ and, as shown in Fig. 3, this value, when used in Eq. (19), gives a very
 179 good estimate of $q(t)$ as expected.

180 To estimate the sensitivity of the results to the value of γ , a slightly different value,
 181 $\gamma = 0.33$, is also considered. This value was chosen by curve fitting Eq. (19) to the numerical
 182 results for $t \gg 1000s$, when $\gamma = 0.39$ is not quite as good. However, $\gamma = 0.39$ is clearly better on
 183 the average, if we combine Eqs. (17) and (19) to predict $I(t)$, then, as shown in Fig. 4, the
 184 choice of $\gamma = 0.39$ is neatly superior to that of $\gamma = 0.33$. Altogether, then, Eq. (20) gives an
 185 adequate physical estimate of γ , requiring no curve fitting to predict either $I(t)$ or $q(t)$ with the
 186 very simple equations given in Eqs. (17) and (19).

187 **Water Content Profiles:**

188 We are primarily interested in assessing the impact of the z^2 – term on the profile given
189 by Eq. (1). The use of Eq. (1) means that at the difference of our results for I or q , we do not
190 attempt to obtain $\theta(z)$ in terms of a few simple physical parameters. Instead, we require to
191 integrate the LHS of Eq. (1) for each value of q , i.e., time. Our estimates of I and q were based
192 on Eq. (1); hence it is important to check the accuracy of Eq. (1) in predicting $\theta(z, t)$. In this
193 paper, we carried out the calculation of the I and q estimates first, since applying Eq. (1)
194 requires knowing $q(t)$. This section is more of theoretical interest like Eq. (1), whereas I and q
195 as given by Eqs. (17) and (19), using Eqs. (16) and (20) for γ_0 and γ , are simple and of greater
196 practical interest.

197 For the illustration, we consider a flux $q=50$ cm/hr with either Eqs. (12) or (19) giving
198 $t=51.1$ sec. Note that our illustration is for a short time, i.e., a large q . As shown by Eq. (2), this
199 enhances the M – value and hence the impact of the z^2 term on the profile, which we try to
200 assess. This means that without the z^2 – term, we can also compare with the profile obtained at
201 ponding with a constant flux of $q=50$ cm/hr, since the chosen flux is larger than k_{sat} .

202 Using Eq. (3) with $\theta_s = \theta_{sat}$, gives the time at ponding, $t_p = 97.56$ sec., i.e., about twice
203 the time, 51.1 sec., when $q=50$ cm/hr for $\theta_s = \theta_{sat}$ for all times. This, of course, is because when
204 $\theta_s = \theta_{sat}$, q is larger than $q=50$ cm/hr for $t < 51.1$ sec. and for infiltration with $q=50$ cm/hr, a
205 longer time is required to accumulate a similar amount of water. At 97.6 sec., this amount of
206 water is $I = q t_p = 1.355$ cm, whereas Eq. (4), for $\theta_s = \theta_{sat}$, gives $I = 1.297$ cm, which is 4.5% less

207 than 1.355cm due to the last small term in Eq. (4). The results are shown in Fig. 5a and with
 208 more details near the wetting front in Fig. 5b. On Fig. 5b, the slight differences between the
 209 analytical results and the numerics are visible (they are not on Fig. 5a).

210 If we now look at the profile, with the z^2 – term, but for $I = 1.355cm$, then the time is
 211 obviously longer, 55.3 sec., and the flux smaller, 48.52 cm/hr. The two profiles for $I = 1.355cm$,
 212 one with z^2 for $\theta_s = \theta_{sat}$, and one without z^2 for constant flux, $q=50$ cm/hr, are very close in
 213 shape. Hence, the presence of the z^2 – term affects the position of the profiles significantly, by
 214 4.5%, but not their shape. We note that the z^2 – term reduces the estimate of z , and the more so
 215 as z is larger making the profile more “square” as shown in the figures.

216 As also shown in Fig. 5a and Fig 5b, there is an excellent agreement between analytical
 217 and numerical results. The analytical results are somewhat complex and to get some physical
 218 insight in the infiltration process, we are going to use some simplifications which make the
 219 results more transparent and are still quantitatively appropriate. The constant flux profile is
 220 given subscript 1, the profiles for $\theta_s = \theta_{sat}$ are assigned 2 and * for $q=50$ cm/hr and for
 221 $I = 1.355cm$, respectively. To be specific, we consider the front positions, denoted with subscript
 222 f, and we see on the figure that z_{1f} , z_{2f} , and z_{*f} are close and $(z_{1f} - z_{2f})$ is an order of
 223 magnitude smaller and $(z_{1f} - z_{*f})$ is another order of magnitude smaller.

224 To the lowest order, as long as $q\theta/\theta_s$ is not too close to k , Eq. (1) shows that the fronts
 225 locations are in the vicinity of

$$226 \quad z_f \approx \int_0^{\theta_{sat}} Dd\theta / (q - k_s), \quad (21)$$

227 which, for the present example, equals 6.2 cm, which is roughly correct. Then,

$$228 \quad z_{1f} - z_{2f} \approx Mz_f^2 \quad (22)$$

229 or, from Eqs. (2) and (21),

$$230 \quad z_{1f} - z_{2f} \approx \frac{q/2}{(q - k_s)^2} \int_0^{\theta_{sat}} (1 - \theta/\theta_{sat}) D d\theta \quad (23)$$

231 which is basically smaller than z_f by an order of $\gamma_0 q / (q - k_s) \approx .073$ so that $z_{1f} - z_{2f} \approx 0.45cm$,

232 which is roughly correct (slightly too large).

233 The value of $(z_{1f} - z_{*f})$, as shown in Fig. 5b, is very small. Using order of magnitude
234 estimates (calculations available upon request) we obtain

$$235 \quad (z_{1f} - z_{*f}) \approx (z_{1f} - z_{2f}) 2\gamma. \quad (24)$$

236 This shows that $(z_{1f} - z_{*f})$ is an order of magnitude less than $(z_{1f} - z_{2f})$ as obtained

237 numerically. For the case of Fig. 5b, Eq. (24) yields $(z_{1f} - z_{*f}) \approx .045cm$ which is basically

238 correct, only very slightly too small.

239 **Conclusion:**

240 In practice, i.e., in the field, one is primarily interested in knowing I and q as a function
241 of time, which is why this paper is primarily devoted to finding an appropriate γ to be used in
242 Eqs. (17) and (19). Originally (Barry et al., 1995), this third parameter was obtained by curve
243 fitting to infiltration data. Here, we derived instead a theoretical relation in Eq. (20) giving γ in
244 terms of soil properties so that no empirical curve fitting is necessary. Analytical and numerical
245 results were found to be in excellent agreement using a Grenoble sand for illustration.

246 The method is based on Eq. (1) giving the water content, θ , as a two-term expansion in z ,
247 and z^2 . For the Grenoble sand illustration, we checked that the profiles, numerical and analytical,
248 are in excellent agreement using $q(t)$ as determined in Eq. (19). We found that the z^2 – term
249 affects primarily the position of the profile rather than its shape. Finally, we derived some very
250 simple expressions showing the relative positions of the wetting fronts, which provide a good
251 physical insight in the infiltration process, either under constant flux or constant water content at
252 the surface. An interesting result is that the shapes remain very similar for both cases but
253 positions have to be assessed carefully.

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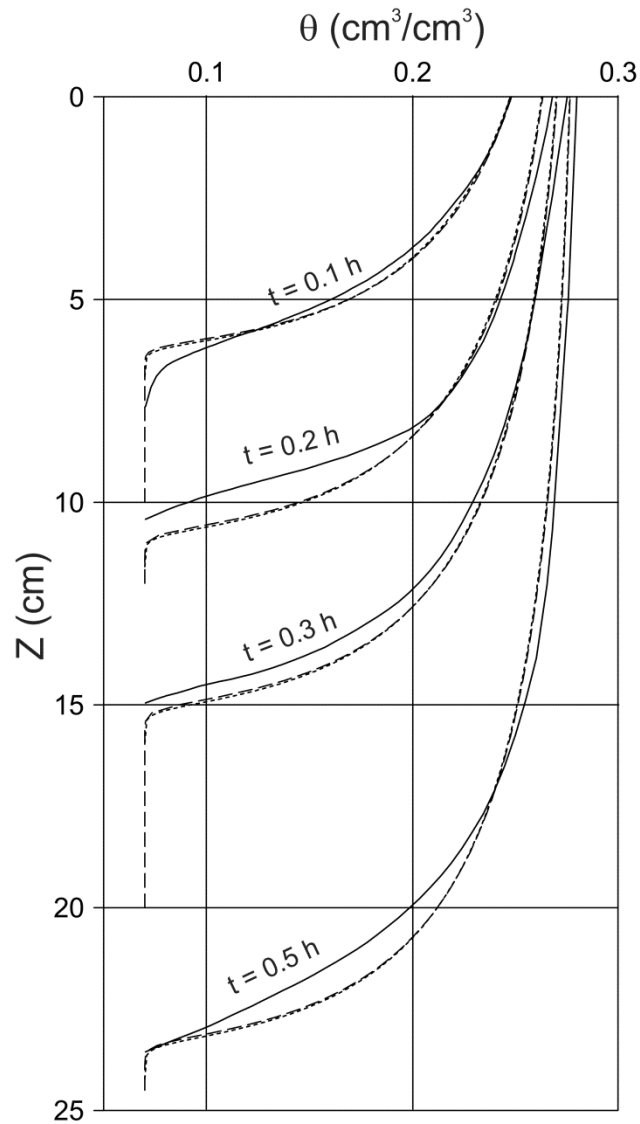
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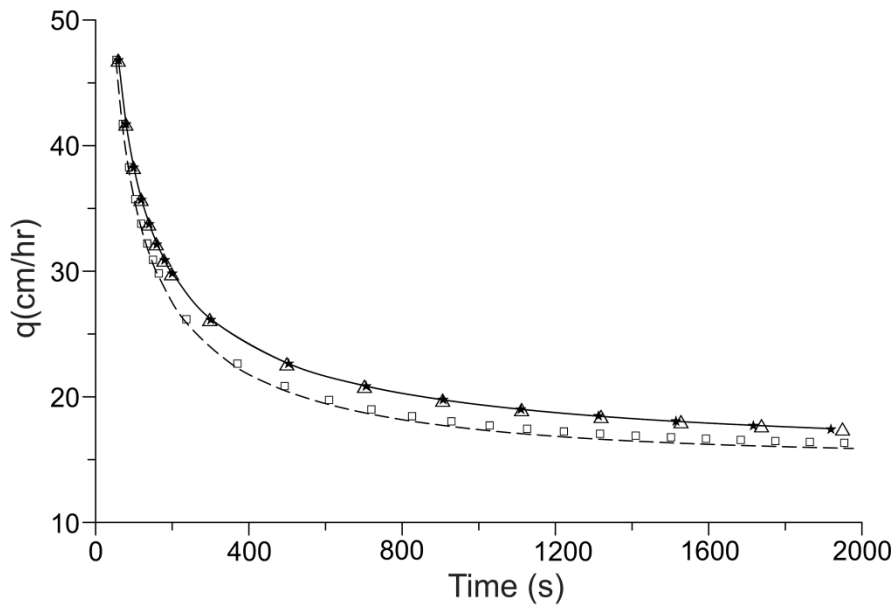
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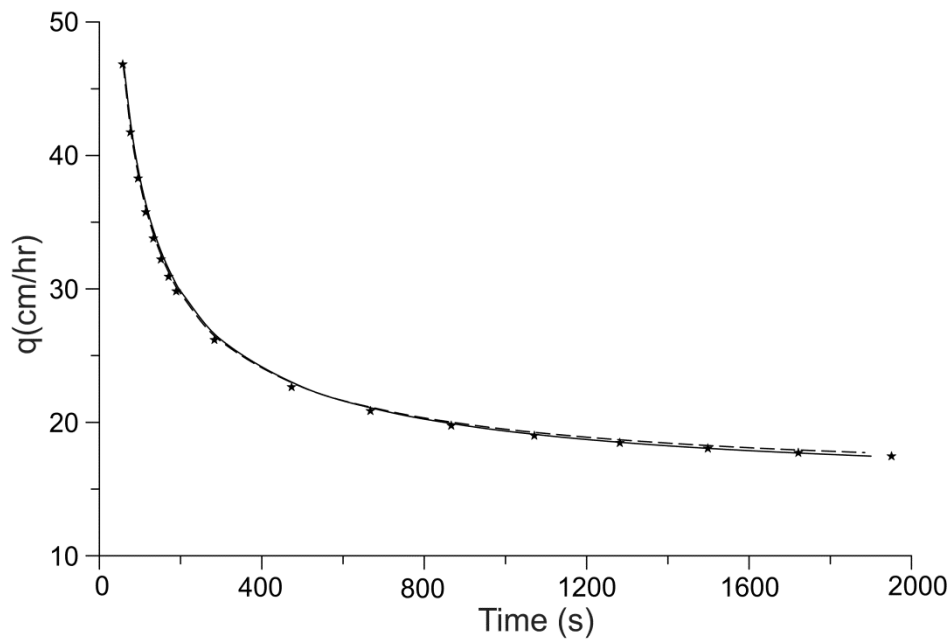
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Fig. 1. Water profiles in a Grenoble sand for constant flux at the surface. The solid lines represent experimental observations (Boulier et al. 1984). The numerical predictions, dotted lines, and the analytical results from Eqs. (1) and (3) with $M = 0$, dashed lines, are essentially identical.



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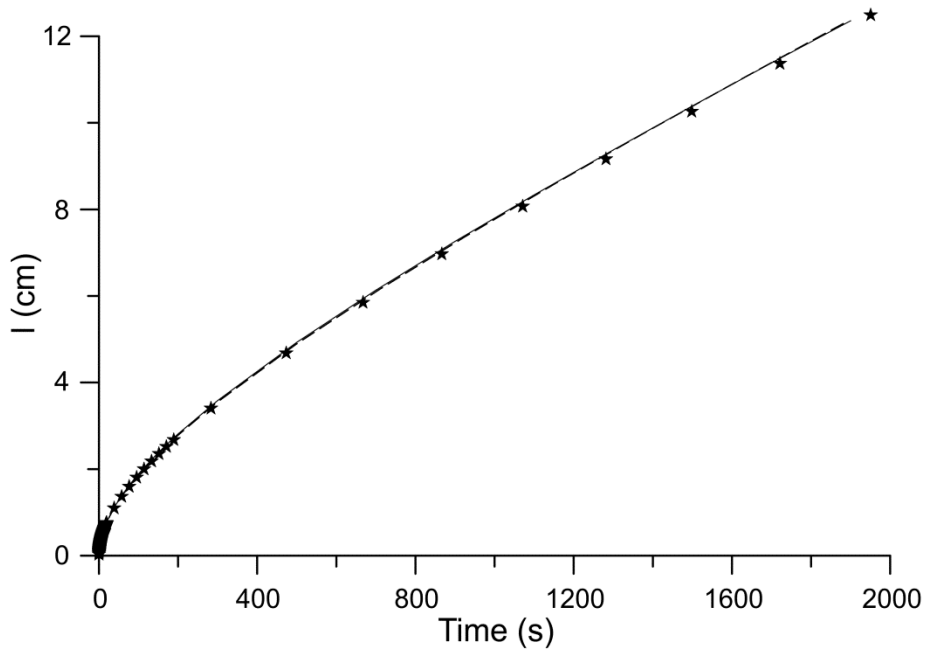
Fig. 2. Fluxes for a saturated soil surface. Numerical results (solid line) and analytical approximations: stars with Eq. (12), squares with Eq. (13), triangles with Eq. (18) and dashed line with Eq. (19). In both Eqs. (18) and (19), $\gamma = \gamma_0 = 0.05$ from Eq. (16).



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Fig. 3. Fluxes obtained numerically (solid line) and from Eq. (19): dashed line with $\gamma = 0.39$ from Eq. (20), stars with $\gamma = 0.33$ obtained by curve fitting for long times.

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Fig. 4. Infiltration I as a function of time obtained numerically (solid line) or analytically, combining Eqs. (17) and (19) for $\gamma = 0.33$ (stars) and $\gamma = 0.39$ (dashed line).

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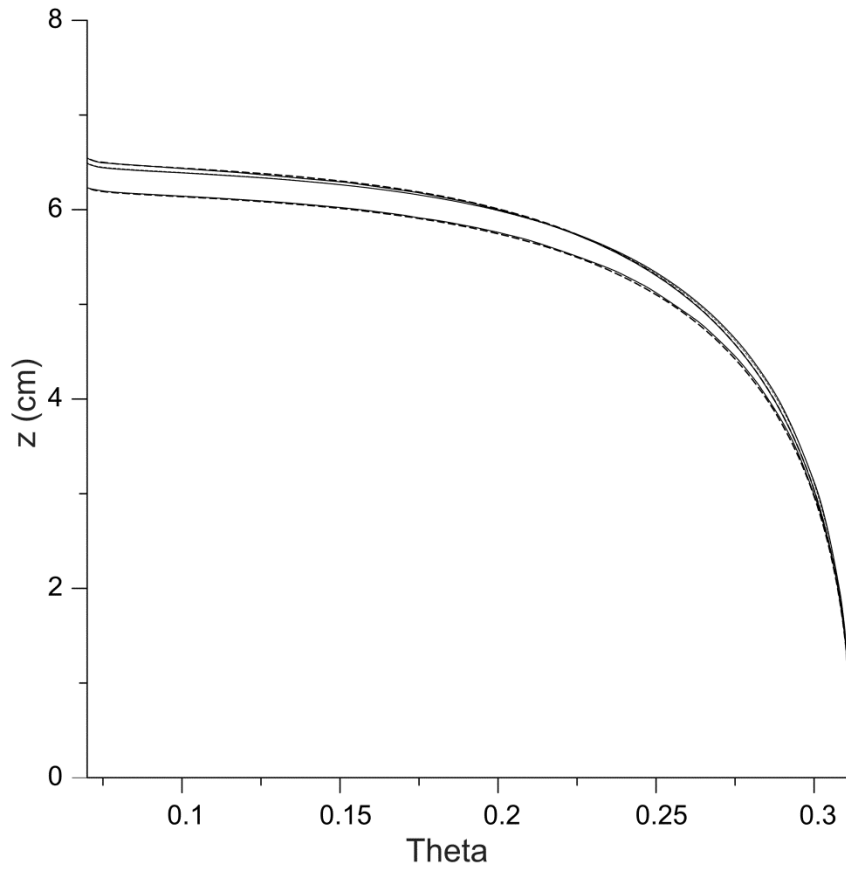
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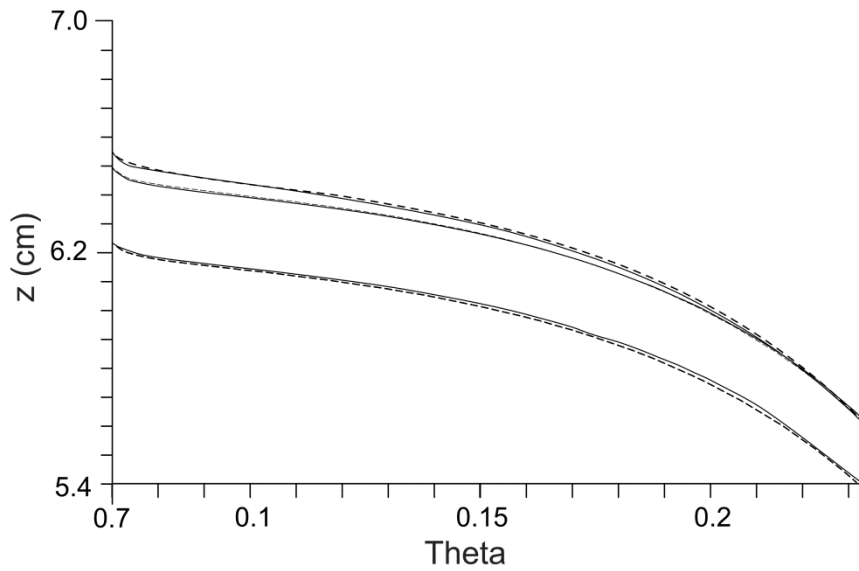
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Fig. 5. Comparison of profiles $z(\theta)$ for saturated surface and constant flux.



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5a. Profiles over the whole range of θ , showing little difference between the numerics (solid lines) and analysis (dashed lines).



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5b. Details of the profiles near the fronts. In descending order, from the top: 1. Profiles for q constant, i.e., without the z^2 -term, when $q = 50\text{cm/hr}$ and $I = 1.355\text{cm}$ at ponding; 2. Profiles when $\theta_s = \theta_{sat}$ at all times when $I = 1.355\text{cm}$, with the z^2 -term; and 3. Profiles when $\theta_s = \theta_{sat}$ at all times when $q = 50\text{cm/hr}$, with the z^2 -term.