

DR. ZA-CHIEH MOH (Milton E Bender Lecture Introduction)

Dr. Za-Chieh Moh, born in 1931, had his undergraduate education at National Taiwan University in 1953, and then moved to the United States to join Iowa State University where he received his Master's degree in 1955. The opportunity then arose for him to go to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to carry out doctoral studies under Prof. T.W. Lambe. Dr. Moh graduated with the Sc.D. degree from MIT in 1961, and since has maintained a continuing relationship with Prof. Lambe and other eminent geotechnical engineers in all parts of the world.

After practicing as a consulting engineer and as an academic in the United States, Dr. Za-Chieh Moh joined the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) in 1965 and was given the special task of establishing a field of study in Soil Mechanics and Foundation Engineering at this regional post-graduate institution to complement the existing fields of hydraulics, structures, environmental and transportation engineering. This he was able to accomplish within a year. The period that followed constituted the formative years for geotechnical engineering in Asia; through the Asian Institute of Technology, Dr. Za-Chieh Moh played a key role in the training of post-graduate geotechnical engineers to serve the major development projects in most of the countries of Asia. From the outset, Dr. Moh stressed to the Institute the importance of close cooperation and exchange of information with universities and institutions abroad. Over the years, several leading geotechnical engineering professors have joined the Institute, and the Institute is now well known in geotechnical engineering circles all over the world. Nearly 1000 graduates of AIT with post-graduate education in geotechnical engineering are working in many parts of Asia and elsewhere; many of these graduates hold key positions in universities, government, and the private sectors.

The research conducted by Dr. Za-Chieh has always been directed toward an understanding of engineering problem; much of this has been concerned with the local behaviour of soils, in-situ and large-scale testing, the performance of earth structures, and the stabilization of soil for foundations, highways, airfields and earth dams. He has also conducted extensive research and had much practical experience with problems related to soft clays and lateritic soils.

Dr. Za-Chieh Moh is not only a strong and gifted leader, but a capable administrator as well. At the Asian Institute of Technology, Dr. Za-Chieh Moh's capability was well-recognized and he was appointed to the position of Vice-President and Provost. It was a time when the Institute had only one Vice-President. In early 1976, Dr. Za-Chieh Moh moved to consulting practice, and soon established himself as a leading geotechnical consultant in Southeast Asia, including Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Hong Kong, China and Taiwan. Dr. Moh's creation of this consulting organization was an achievement remarkable for its farsightedness. Some of the important projects carried out by him include: geotechnical and seismic study of the Kaohsiung Cross Harbour Tunnel; geotechnical study for the reclamation of an abandoned river channel for development in Taipei; design and instrumentation of a 30-m retaining structure; and instrumentation for deep excavations and geotechnical studies for mass rapid transit systems. The past twenty-two years, since he moved to consulting from AIT, have seen no reduction in his activity nor in his contributions to the profession. On the contrary, these have both broadened and become intensified.

Dr. Za-Chieh Moh founded the Southeast Asian Geotechnical Society (SEAGS) in 1967 and was its founder-President until 1973. The year 1967 was a time when lifelong friendships

were being forged with members of geotechnical societies and institutions in many parts of the world. Soon, the Asian Information Center for Geotechnical Engineering (AGE) was established at AIT. Both, through SEAGS and AIG. Dr. Za-Chieh Moh made tremendous contributions to the development of the profession of geotechnical engineering, not only in Asia, but engendering close cooperation among other geographic regions in the entire geotechnical community. In the international field, Dr. Moh made notable contributions when he served as the Vice-President for Asia of the International Society for Soil Mechanics and Foundation Engineering (ISSMFE) in 1973 to 1977. Additionally, he has served as a panelist, a general reporter and session chairman in many international and regional conferences. To be able to contribute significantly in geotechnics demands the virtues of good sense and sound judgement, both possessed abundantly by Dr. Moh. In consequence, he has been called upon to serve on a very large number of technical committees of ISSMFE and its national societies.

Dr. Za-Chieh Moh has received several awards and honours. He is listed in the International Scholars Directory, American Men and Women of Science, the Directory of Selected Scholars and Researchers in Southeast Asia, and in 5,000 Personalities of the World. Recently, he received the award of “Men of the Year” from the China Road Federation and the “Gold Medal Award for Academic Achievement” from the Chinese Institute of Civil and Hydraulic Engineering.

Dr. Za-Chieh Moh’s contribution to the advancement of the field of soil mechanics and foundation engineering, particularly in Asia as well as the world in general, is worthy of praise. Dr. Moh belongs to that rare cohort of men who combine intense enthusiasm with good intelligence and an infinite capacity for hard work.