

## Obituary (Con't)

### Professor Dr. Ir. Djoko Soelarnosidji

Prof. Dr. Ir. Djoko Soelarnosidji, MCE  
(5 June 1942 - 27 March 2017)

The first Indonesian doctorate in Geotechnical Engineering,  
The first Geotechnical Professor in Indonesia



Thursday, March 27, 2017, at about 18.16, we heard the sad news, one of the pioneers of Indonesian geotechnical engineer cum educator, Prof. Djoko Soelarnosidji, had left us forever while taking his afternoon nap. It is a great loss for us, his students, advisees, colleagues, at Universitas Katolik Parahyangan (UNPAR) and fellow engineers at the Indonesian Society of Geotechnical Engineering (HATTI).

75 years ago, So Tjhing Swie, who was later better known as Djoko Soelarnosidji, was born in Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia. Upon graduation from Solo's Saint Joseph high school, young Djoko started his higher education as a student at Universitas Gajah Mada, Yogyakarta, learning nuclear physics, until the day he met reverend Wignyo. Reverend Wignyo, knowing Indonesia needs many civil engineers to help development of the country, offered him to study civil engineering at Universitas Katolik Parahyangan, Bandung. He took the offer and embarked on his civil engineering education in 1962. Attracted by his excellent performance, the then head of civil engineering division, Ir. Tjan Kwie Njoo, appointed him as assistant lecturer of Ir. F.X Zanusi, who later in the 1980s-90s became a well-known geotechnical engineering consultant. As early as 1965, he actively helped to establish the university's soil investigation team, which three years later became what is now known as UNPAR Geotechnical Laboratory. Upon his graduation, as civil engineer in 1968, he took the offer to become one of the university's faculty teaching foundation engineering and leading the newly formed university's geotechnical laboratory.

In 1970, while preparing for his marriage in Solo, the rector of UNPAR, Mgr. Paternus Nicholas Joannes Cornelius Geise, O.F.M., called upon him to prepare for a further study in Japan under the Monbusho's scholarship scheme. After some perseverance to master Japanese language, on October 1970, he started his geotechnical engineering education at Kyoto University. Not long after, he realized that his awarded scholarship was only a non-degree scholarship. Hard work and perseverance finally led him to obtain a full scholarship for master and PhD degree. Under the guidance of Prof. Shibata Toru at the Disaster Prevention Research Institute, Kyoto University, he carried out research on behavior of sands under cyclic loading, it was a soil dynamic research involving stress strain behaviour, liquefaction, and dynamic constitutive equation. Tokyo's 1977 geotechnical engineering conference became an important milestone in his career, together with Shibata and Sato, he published a paper on soil dynamic which was then known as *Shibata, Soelarno and Sato constitutive equation for sand and clay under cyclic loading*. Six months later, in 1978, he became the first Indonesian to be awarded a doctorate degree in geotechnical engineering.

## Obituary (Con't)

### Professor Dr. Ir. Djoko Soelarnosidji

Immediately upon his graduation, he returned to UNPAR, Bandung, Indonesia. He then developed *UNPAR Geotechnical Research Center*. Leading UNPAR's geotechnical team with Messrs S. Sastraatmadja, H. Wibowo, AP. Widjaja, Reverend H. Yudianto, PP Rahadjo and other member lecturers. In enhancing and expanding UNPAR's role as an education institution, between 1987 to 1995, while acting as dean of engineering faculty, he challenged, encouraged and supported young lecturers to go on further study to attain master and doctorate degree. The year 1992 was another important milestone for him and for Indonesian geotechnical engineers. That year, he attained full professorship awarded by Indonesian government (note: in Indonesia, until today a professorship can only be awarded by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesian government). At the age of 50, he became the first professor in geotechnical engineering. Being the first geotechnical professor, he also gave lectures at ITB (Institut Teknologi Bandung) and at Universitas Tarumanegara, Jakarta.



Prof. Djoko at ARC, Bangkok, 1991



A couple of weeks before his passing, in a meeting, discussing the plan to have an honorary seminar to celebrate his coming 75<sup>th</sup> birthday, on June 5, 2017



A ceremony honouring Prof. Djoko at Parahyangan Catholic University, Bandung, Indonesia, before his body was cremated, March 30, 2017.

Ever since his return from Japan, he was actively involved in disseminating geotechnical engineering knowledge through Indonesian Society of Geotechnical Engineering (locally known as HATTI) which was officially founded in 1978. He encouraged his graduating students to become the member of HATTI, sharing and exchanging geotechnical knowledge and experiences through HATTI's seminars and conferences. Many of the current active members of HATTI were once his students. Coming to publishing papers, he was never selfish, when we put his name as the first author in the papers, very often, he insisted to put the research student's as first author and his name as second author. He said it was the student's work and not his work, he was only guiding, therefore, the student's name must come first. Not

## Obituary (Con't)

**Professor Dr. Ir. Djoko Soelarnosidji**

only that, he also gave his students the chance to present the paper with him sitting in the presenter table, encouraging the first public speaking of the students as an author of a paper!

In geotechnical practices, as early as 1981, he started introducing geotextiles, soil stabilization, and soil mixing technology in Indonesia, not only in academic field, but also put it into practice. In mid-80s, together with Mr. K. Oetomo, he was the first to implement high strength geotextile over a swampy land under the toll road heading to Jakarta international airport. He became advisor of many geotechnical firms in handling soil liquefaction potential; soil stabilization problems with geosynthetics, soil mixing, vacuum preloading, stabilization of expansive soils, and many others.

Apart from laying the first path for many of his students' in geotechnical engineering careers, we also learned a lot from his humility. In many of his advisee, he never appeared arrogant. He never let his advisees to wait for him for long hours, when one reason or another we had to wait for him; he would come out of the meeting room, apologized, and told us to have our lunch first. Over the years of interaction with him, though indirectly, he taught us to handle things one at a time and not to worry about life, no matter how difficult the situation is. He said: "Time will solve anything, take it easy, and just handle and face the problems one at a time!". Until that afternoon before he took his afternoon nap, he was still showing his relentless enthusiastic attitude as a geotechnical GURU for us all. Pak Djoko, our guru, rest in peace, your dedication shall not be forgotten.

Jakarta, March 31, 2017.

On behalf of Indonesian Society for Geotechnical Engineering (HATTI)

Gouw Tjie-Liong (Prof. Djoko's student cum advisee)