An existence result related to two-phase flows with dynamical capillary pressure

MAMERN11: 4^{th} International Conference on Approximation Methods
and Numerical Modelling in Environment and Natural Resources
Saidia (Morocco), May 23-26, 2011

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Keywords: Immiscible two-phase flows, dynamic capillary pressure, degenerate pseudo-parabolic equation

Abstract. *We consider a nonlinear degenerate pseudo-parabolic equation arising in the modeling of immiscible two-phase flows within porous media when the dynamic capillary pressure $p_c = \pi(s) + \tau\partial_t s$ is a function of both the saturation s and its time derivative $\partial_t s$. We show the existence of a weak solution to the problem using the compactness of a sequence of regularizations of the problem.*

1 The problem and main result

We consider the nonlinear degenerate pseudo-parabolic equation arising in the modeling of an incompressible immiscible two-phase flow within a porous medium:

$$\partial_t s + \nabla \cdot (\mathbf{F}(x,t;s) - H(s)\nabla p_c) = 0. \tag{1}$$

The capillary pressure p_c includes dynamic effects [6], [3], i.e.

$$p_c = \pi(u) + \tau \partial_t s, \tag{2}$$

where $\tau > 0$. The function H is supposed to be Lipschitz continuous, satisfying

$$H(0) = H(1) = 0, \quad H(u) > 0 \text{ if } u \in (0,1). \tag{3}$$

The convective term $\mathbf{F}(x,t,s)$, taking both the gravity and total flow rate into account, is supposed to satisfy

$$\text{for a.e. } (x,t), \quad \mathbf{F}(x,t;\cdot) \text{ is Lipschitz continuous}, \tag{4}$$

and, for all $t \geq 0$,

$$\text{for all } u \in [0,1], \quad \nabla \cdot \mathbf{F}(x,t;u) = 0. \tag{5}$$

The function π is supposed to be increasing on $(0,1)$, and such that

$$H(\cdot)\pi'(\cdot) \in L^\infty(0,1), \text{ and } \sqrt{\pi'} \in L^1(0,1). \tag{6}$$

It is worth noticing that the assumptions (3)-(6)are satisfied in the commonly used models from oil-engineering.

We consider the flow in an open bounded subset of $\mathbb{R}^d$, with a Lipschitz boundary $\partial\Omega$ and on a time interval $[0,T]$. We denote by $Q = \Omega \times [0,T]$. We prescribe a boundary condition s_D defined on $\partial\Omega \times [0,T]$ admitting an extension, still denoted by s_D, belonging to $C^1([0,T]; H^1(\Omega))$, that is supposed to be essentially bounded far from 0 and 1: there exists $\eta \in (0,1)$ such that

$$\text{for a.e. } (x,t) \in Q, \quad s_D(x,t) \in [\eta, 1-\eta]. \tag{7}$$

We also prescribe an initial condition $s_0 \in H^1(\Omega)$, satisfying the *finite entropy condition*

$$\int_\Omega \Gamma(s_0(x))dx < \infty, \tag{8}$$

where Γ is the convex function defined by

$$\Gamma(u) = \int_{s_D}^{u} \int_{s_D}^{v} \frac{1}{H(a)} da dv.$$

Note that the condition (8) in particular implies that $s_0 \in L^\infty(\Omega; [0,1])$. As a last tool to introduce, we denote by ζ a primitive form of $\sqrt{\pi'}$. We now give the definition of a weak solution to the problem.

Definition A function s is said to be a weak solution to the problem if

1. $s \in L^\infty(Q;[0,1]) \cap H^1(Q)$, $(s - s_D) \in L^\infty((0,T);H_0^1(\Omega))$, $s_{|t=0} = s_0$,
2. $\zeta(s) \in L^2((0,T);H^1(\Omega))$ and $\sqrt{H(s)}\partial_t \nabla s \in L^2(Q)$,
3. for all $\phi \in C_c^\infty(Q)$,

$$\iint_Q \partial_t s \phi dxdt - \iint_Q \mathbf{F}(x,t;s) \cdot \nabla \phi dxdt + \iint_Q H(s) \left(\nabla \pi(s) + \tau \partial_t \nabla s\right) \cdot \nabla \phi dxdt = 0. \quad (9)$$

The main result of our contribution [1], mixed with some of those presented in [4], is the following:

Theorem Under assumptions (3)–(8), there exists a weak solution.

2 Key ideas of the proof

The proof of the above theorem relies on compactness properties of a sequence of approximate solutions $(s_n)_n$ obtained by a regularization of the problem, by approximating the function H by the functions H_n, given by $H_n(u) = H(u) + \dfrac{1}{n}$. By a choice of convenient test functions (see [1] and [4]), uniform estimates with respect to n are derived. In particular, one has

$$\|\partial_t s_n\|_{L^2(Q)} \le C, \qquad \|\nabla s\|_{L^\infty((0,T);L^2(\Omega))} \le C, \quad (10)$$

$$\|\sqrt{H(s_n)}\partial_t \nabla s_n\|_{L^2(Q)} \le C, \quad (11)$$

and

$$\|\Gamma_n(s_n)\|_{L^\infty((0,T);L^1(\Omega))} \le C, \quad (12)$$

where $\Gamma_n(u) = \int_{s_D}^u \int_{s_D}^v \frac{1}{H_n(a)} da dv$, and where C denotes a generic finite quantity independent on n. Hence it follows from (10) that there exists $s \in H^1(Q)$ such that, up to a subsequence, s_n tends to s almost everywhere in Q and weakly in $H^1(Q)$. From (12), we deduce that $s \in L^\infty(Q;[0,1])$. From (11), we can claim that there exists $\xi \in L^2(Q)$ such that, up to a new subsequence,

$$\sqrt{H(s_n)}\partial_t \nabla s_n \rightharpoonup \xi \quad \text{weakly in } L^2(Q).$$

The major difficulty consists in identifying ξ as $\sqrt{H(s)}\partial_t \nabla s$. This has been performed in [1] by a tricky use of the *div-curl lemma* [5] and of Vitali convergence theorem [2].

Aknowledgment

The first and second author are partially supported by GNR MoMaS, CNRS-2439 (PACEN/CNRS, ANDRA, BRGM, CEA, EDF, IRSN). Part of the work of YF and ISP was supported by the International Research Training Group NUPUS funded by the German Research Foundation DFG (GRK 1398) and The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research NWO (DN 81-754).

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