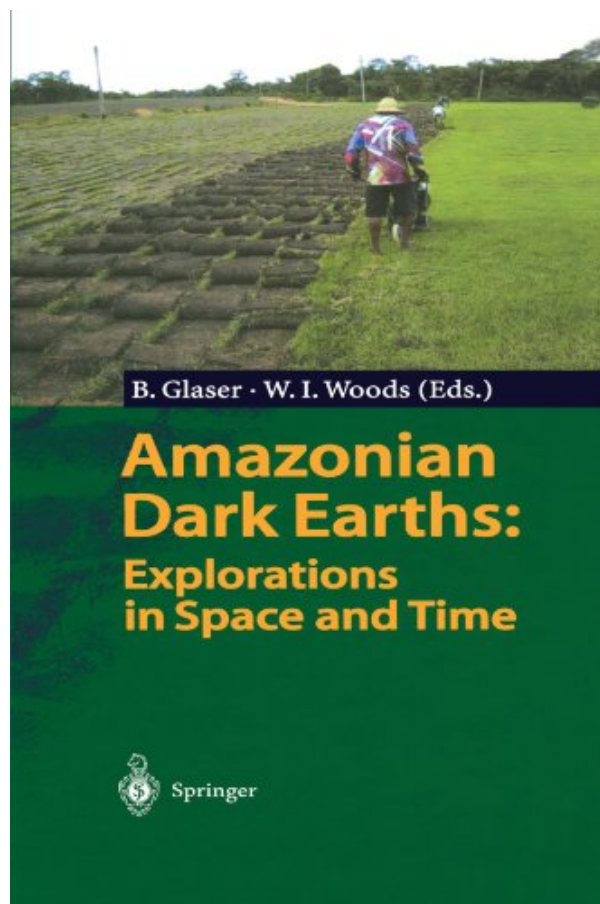
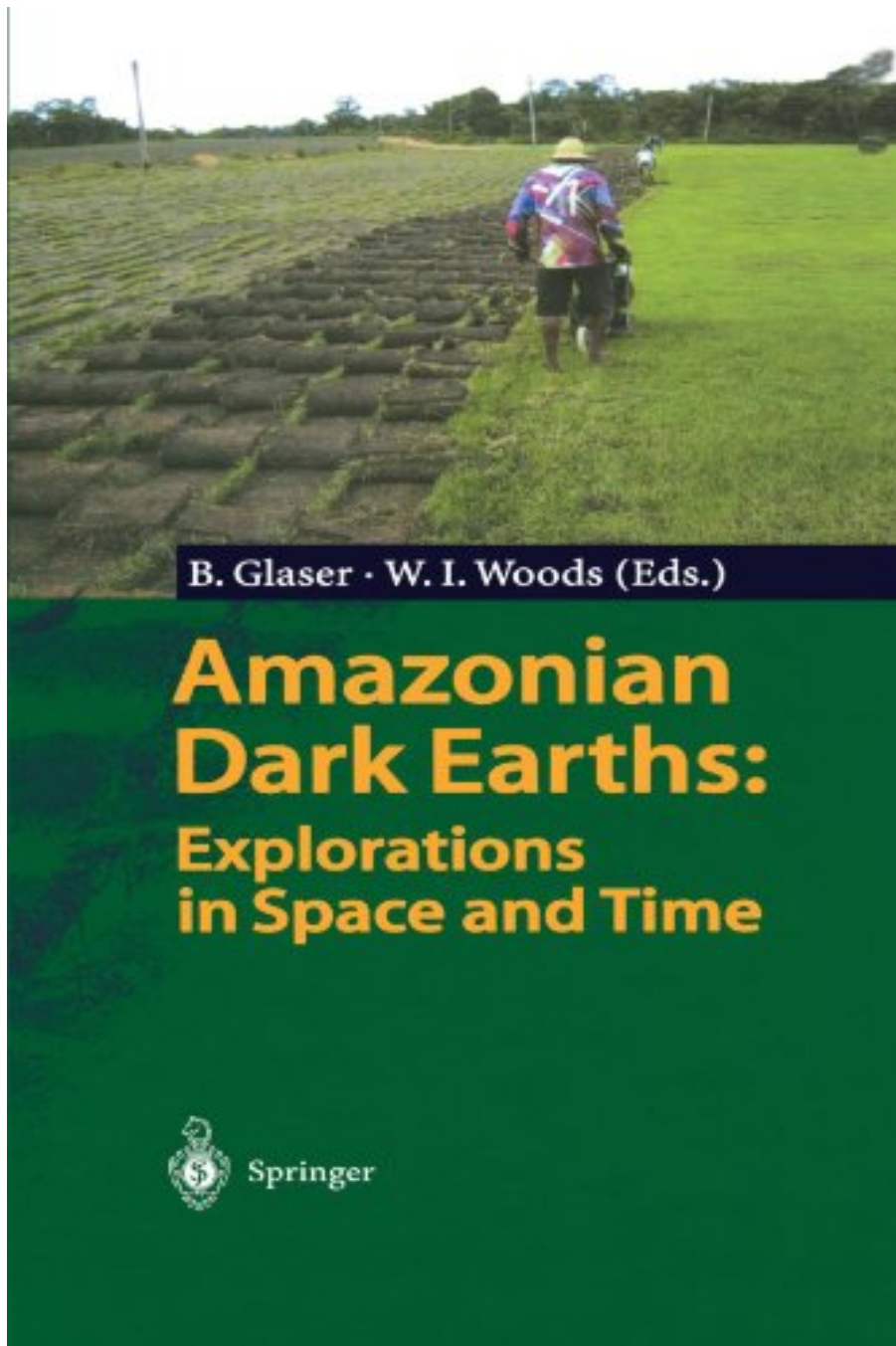


AMAZONIAN DARK EARTHS: EXPLORATIONS IN SPACE AND TIME FROM SPRINGER



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B. Glaser · W. I. Woods (Eds.)

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Review

From the reviews:

"Concern for the environmental health of Amazonia is at the forefront of current international environmental issues. ... Even more uncommonly discussed is the existence of 'dark earths,' the subject of this book. ... Coverage ranges from a review of the literature to discussion of appropriate methodology. ... the book is well written and an excellent resource on this topic. ... it will be valuable for all academic libraries and useful to a wide range of readers in natural resources and even in anthropology. Summing Up: Recommended." (M.G. Messina, CHOICE, Vol. 42 (5), January, 2005)

From the Back Cover

The regenerative qualities identified in prehistoric, anthropogenic Amazonian dark earths suggest that notoriously infertile tropical soils can be greatly improved. Soil enhancement practices by ancient Amerindians allowed them to cultivate the land intensively, without needing to continually clear new fields from forest. As increasing populations place ever greater pressure on tropical forests, this legacy of rich, 'living' soils warrants further study in the search for high-yield, land-intensive, yet sustainable forms of management. The international group of contributors to this volume provides a variety of stances centering on aspects of the origin, distribution, variability, persistence, and use of Amazonian dark earths.

About the Author

Dr. Bruno Glaser is Assistant Professor at the Institute of Soil Science and Soil Geography at the University of Bayreuth. For over seven years he has been conducting Amazonian dark earth research from a soil science perspective including soil fertility, sustainability, and archaeology aspects.

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The idea for the volume first came about through a conversation the editors had at the Sustainable Management of Soil Organic Matter Conference in Edinburgh in September 1999. It developed with two symposia on Amazonian dark earths that were held in 2001 in conjunction with the Conference of Latin Americanist Geographers in Benicassim, Spain, and the Congress of the Brazilian Archaeological Society in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, respectively, and culminated at the First International Workshop on Terra Preta Soils held in Manaus and Santarem, Brazil, in July 2002. As a comprehensive treatment of these distinctive anthropogenic soils has never been published, we decided to select papers from these symposia and develop an edited volume. The result contains the efforts of an international group of distinguished scholars from the disciplines of anthropology, archaeology, biology, geography, and soil science. The 15 chapters of this volume provide an array of interesting and complementary interpretative stances developed from a diverse body of investigative methodologies. The reader will note that there are some inconsistencies in terminology and differences in interpretation among the chapter presentations. However, the editors purposely allowed these to remain and retained as much as possible of the authors' own words, since we felt that it was important to maintain the flavor of the symposium atmosphere in this volume and consequently did not intentionally force standardization upon the authors."

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SCHOLARLY INTRODUCTION TO AMAZONIAN DARK EARTHS

By Denis Benchimol Minev

Amazonian dark earths are a type of soil that has long been known in the Amazon but whose origins have been disputed for many years. Over the last 10-15 years there has been a consensus that these are anthropogenic soils created by agricultural and social methods of old indian cultures in the Amazon.

This book is a compilation of significant academic articles on amazonian dark earths. The most active academics in dark earth study are represented, as well as a good array for sites are studies, from the Tapajós, Negro, Solimoes, and Napo river basins. Also studies are done on the composition of these soils and their anti fungicidal and fertile properties. The most interesting feature of these soils is their continued extraordinary fertility even many centuries after they were formed.

Dark earths are an interesting phenomenon that may hold the key to productive agriculture in the Amazon basin, as opposed to common slash and burn techniques that are so devastating to the region.

This book is not a lively account of dark earths, but a scholarly text. For someone interested in dark earths from a less technical background, I recommend "1491" by Charles Mann, in which there is a significant portion on dark earths. This book is for those seeking a deeper knowledge of the subject.

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