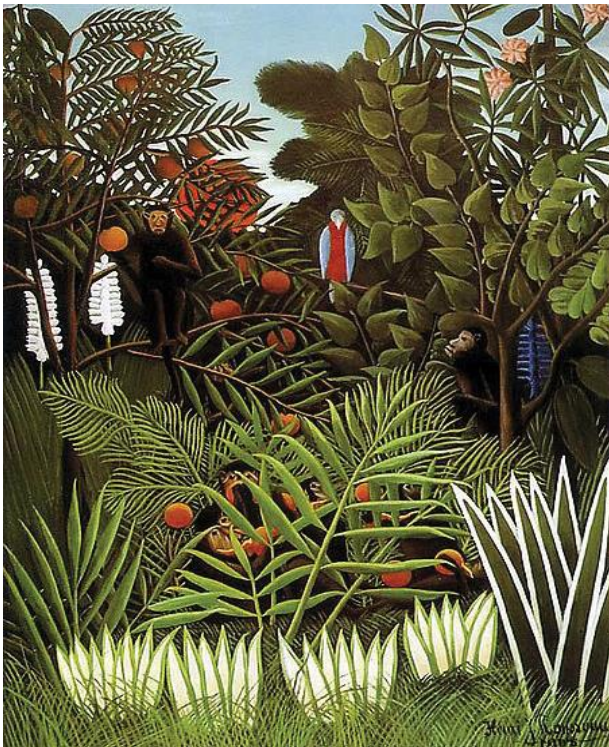




UPPSALA
UNIVERSITET

Mind & Nature and Forum for Africa Studies

DARK EARTHS IN AFRICA?



James Fairhead

Monday 28 April 2014

13:15-15:00

**Ekmansalen, EBC (Evolutionary
Biology Centre)**

The dark earths of the Amazon (Terra Pretas) has received much attention in recent years. The high concentration of charcoal in these soils, created through the combination of infield burning, fallow burning, composting, and mulching, makes them highly suitable for agriculture thus they are often used intensively in traditional agroforestry today. Similar dark soils has been reported in West Africa, however, the history and potential of these West African black earths have so far been neglected. In the lecture James Fairhead reviews the evidence for black earths in Africa. He also discusses the context of the customary practices of fire management that can be linked to these soils, based on his own field studies carried out together with Melissa Leach. These practices and the soils they produce have great potential for sustainable agriculture and resource management as will be discussed.

James Fairhead is based in Department of Anthropology, University of Sussex. He has together with Melissa Leach pioneered revisionist environmental research in the Kissidougou savanna region in Guinea. Explanations of landscape transformations in the tropical forest regions of West Africa have been dominated by the deforestation-savannisation hypothesis. Through archive studies, aerial photographs and interviews with local residents James Fairhead and Melissa Leach could show that contrary to a deforestation consensus in both science literature and policy, forests islands had actually expanded in this landscape in the 20th century. Lately Fairhead and Leach have pursued the intertextuality between science and society through examples from West Africa and the Caribbean.

The lecture is co-arranged between the **Forum for Africa Studies** and **Mind & Nature**. For more information contact Anneli Ekblom anneli.ekblom@arkeologi.uu.se.