Evolution of the Text
Soil Genesis and Classification

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To the best of my recollection the beginning of the text *Soil Genesis and Classification* was one summer afternoon in either 1963 or 1964. At that time I was on the faculty at the University of Arizona and each summer visited family and friends in Wisconsin. These visits routinely included a visit with my major professor, Dr. Francis Hole, and others in the Soils Department at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. During one of those visits Francis and I lamented that we had no up-to-date text from which to teach our respective graduate courses in soil genesis and classification. We both used Dr. Hans Jenny’s 1941 book *Factors of Soil Formation*, but many exciting things had taken place since that time and were available only as journal articles and government publications. Some of the major contributions were the “Outline of a Generalized Theory of Soil Genesis” by Dr. Roy Simonson and several papers translated from Russian relating concepts of soil genesis. Perhaps the most significant innovation was the new system of soil classification in the United States. Beginning in about 1950 a series of six approximations were made available for review and comment to members of the national cooperative soil survey. At the International Soil Science Society meeting in Madison Wisconsin in the summer of 1960 Dr. Guy Smith, primary architect of the system distributed copies of “Soil Classification, a Comprehensive System—Seventh Approximation.” It became known simply as the “Seventh Approximation,” or affectionately the “Brown Book” and was the first international publication of what is now known as “Soil Taxonomy.”

The Seventh Approximation caused a flurry of activity among soil scientists. Both worldwide and in the United States opinions ranged from high praise to outright condemnation. However, it was becoming apparent that the system of soil classification presented in the Seventh Approximation was to become the official soil classification system in the United States. Therefore, there was a need to teach the system to students of soil science.

During our discussion Francis and I both lamented that teaching the Seventh Approximation was cumbersome when the complete text was used in our classes, and there was no available text that presented the processes of soil formation. We ended our visit with a mutual desire that someone should write a text. As I started to leave his office Francis, in his always upbeat and enthusiastic manner said, “Why don’t you and I do it?” We then agreed to exchange various materials each of us had independently prepared for our students. We did this for a couple of years with no clear outline or format for a book.

In 1966 I made an institutional move when Dr. Ralph McCracken invited me to join the soil science faculty at North Carolina State University as a replacement in the position he vacated on becoming department head. Although he had fulltime administrative responsibilities, Ralph maintained a strong interest in soil genesis and classification. During our frequent informal discussions, the subject of a need for a text came up and Ralph intimated that he had made a preliminary outline of a text but had not been able to pursue the effort as department head. I showed him some of the material Francis and I had been exchanging and that I was now using in the graduate class at North Carolina State. It was clear that all three of us had similar objectives, and after sharing Ralph’s outline with Francis we agreed to join forces and attempt to write a text. We each agreed to tackle certain chapters and exchange draft manuscripts for review. This went on for a couple of years during which time Ralph contacted Iowa State University Press as a possible publisher. They reviewed our draft material, and we agreed to the contract they offered. Now there were deadlines.

Although we circulated drafts for mutual review we agreed that it would be best if we could all get together for a week or so to prepare the final draft. That week took place in the summer of 1972 at the University of Wisconsin where Francis reserved a room in the library. The week went fast, but with diligent work, and Francis and my wife Joan typing revisions, we completed the manuscript. Until then the work had progressed without any discussion of authorship. On the last day Ralph and Francis announced that the authors should be alphabetical. I recall responding that a seniority of Francis, Ralph, and Stan was a good choice—to which both laughed and said they meant Buol, Hole, and McCracken. Outnumbered by my department head and former major professor I was in no position to protest, and the final draft was on the way to Iowa State University Press for publication in 1973.

After seven printings of the first edition and translations into Russian, Japanese, and Spanish, Iowa State University Press asked us to prepare a second edition for publication in 1980. That edition underwent four printings and a translation into Chinese. A third edition was requested for publication in 1989. After three printings of that edition the press requested a fourth edition for publication in 1997. As we started to prepare that edition both Francis and Ralph were retired and suggested that some “young blood” be recruited as an author. Dr. Randall Southard, a professor at the University of California–Davis accepted and joined the “old” team of authors. By the time a fifth edition was requested for publication in 2003 both Francis and Ralph were incapacitated by failing health and the Iowa State University Press had been acquired by Blackwell Publishing Company. Randy and I recruited Dr. Robert Graham, University of California–Riverside, and Dr. Paul McDaniel, University of Idaho, to join us as authors for that edition.

During the interval of time from the first through the fifth editions, several profound events were taking place in the subject area of soil genesis and classification. The international testing of *Soil Taxonomy* propagated the most extensive changes. During that time several International Committees on Classification (ICOM’s) were formed, and under...