



PLATE 1: The Naga Hills, in Northeast India, take on a golden hue as the sun begins to set.

Farmer Innovations and Best Practices by Shifting Cultivators in Asia-Pacific

BOOK ANNOUNCEMENT AND CALL FOR PAPERS

Do you work with or study shifting cultivation in the Asia-Pacific region? We all know that swidden farmers are capable innovators, and you may have encountered some who have found ingenious ways of improving their swidden systems. These may be technical innovations such as a system of improved fallow management, barrier technologies to reduce soil erosion in steep swidden fields, new cropping patterns, or just about anything that qualifies as “an improvement”. Alternatively, they may be social innovations, such as more effective methods of social fencing, labour arrangements or land tenure. Some of these innovations may be responses to quite recent pressures – such as climate change or land shortages. Others may have been refined over centuries of experimentation, as farmers continuously search for better ways to manage their land and forests – so it is not surprising that some have discovered decidedly better ways of doing things. We are intensely interested in learning what these better ways are!

The discovery of such innovations or best practices raises obvious questions as to whether they are very site-specific to the conditions under which they have evolved – or if they might be flexible enough to be adopted by shifting cultivators elsewhere. Are there opportunities for farmer-to-farmer transfer of these innovations? Could wider dissemination of these innovations help to improve the living standards of shifting cultivators elsewhere? Other questions quickly follow: What are the basic mechanisms by which these innovations offer an improvement over standard swidden practices? What were the historical triggers that led farmers to develop these innovations in these particular locations? Do we have data showing the improved performance offered by these innovations over standard swidden practices? What are the costs of these innovations, in terms of labour, land or materials? Are similar types of innovations being used by shifting cultivators in other areas? If these innovations really work so well, why isn't everybody using them? These are all questions that could usefully be addressed in your paper.

We are issuing a call for papers documenting and analyzing such farmer innovations and best practices within shifting cultivation systems in the Asia-Pacific region.

ACCEPTED papers will be published as the third volume of a trilogy of books about shifting cultivation in the Asia-Pacific region. You can find the first volume of this series available online at <https://www.amazon.com/Shifting-Cultivation-Environmental-Change-Conservation/dp/0415746051> and the second (*“Shifting Cultivation Policies: Balancing Environmental and Social Sustainability”*) has just been delivered to CABI Publishing and is expected off-press in early to mid- 2017. This trilogy of books has been designed as a sequel to the highly-acclaimed *“Voices from the Forest”* volume (https://www.amazon.com/dp/1891853929/ref=rdr_ext_tmb), that brought scientific attention to indigenous innovations in improved fallow management. All of these past volumes offer reassurance of the high quality that you can expect from this present volume... in which we are inviting your participation. We have worked hard to ensure that all of these volumes are attractively illustrated and edited for popular and educational appeal.

The thematic focus of each of these volumes in the trilogy follow a logical sequence. Volume I began by presenting an overwhelming tsunami of evidence that shifting cultivation is not nearly the environmental threat that its detractors would have you believe. Volume II built on this more favourable assessment by asking, *“Given that shifting cultivation is not the dire threat that many had thought – and that it is of immense importance to the livelihoods of hundreds of millions of indigenous peoples, – what does this mean in terms of the need for policy reform?”* The third volume of the trilogy acknowledges that shifting cultivation supports an important sector of the rural population in Asia-Pacific, and says, *“Okay, shifting cultivation is immensely important and the adversarial attitude towards its practitioners needs to be reversed to an attitude of support. Given that, are there ways that the system can be improved? Rather than try to impose top-down interventions on shifting cultivators, have some pockets of shifting cultivators themselves developed useful innovations that have potential for wider dissemination?”* Taken together, the three volumes will guide the reader through an odyssey of learning about shifting cultivation in the Asia-Pacific region that attempts to correct a century of misunderstanding.

We are seeking contributions of both papers and photographs for publication in this third volume:

Paper contributions:

- should be about 6000 words in length;
- should be of high quality;
- do not require an abstract – but definitely do require careful references;
- should be written in Microsoft Word, with image files (e.g., maps, graphs, photographs) submitted separately as .jpg files; (But the author’s intended location of these image files should be indicated within the paper.)
- should focus sharply on the theme of farmer innovations and best practices;

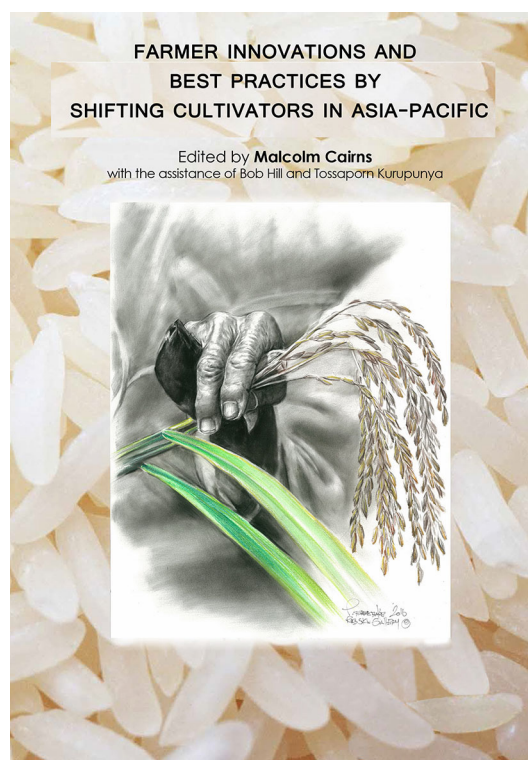


PLATE 2: An early draft of the front-cover design for the forthcoming swidden volume.

- should focus on or within the Asia-Pacific region;
- should include a professionally-drawn map of the research area;
- may include several photos that effectively illustrate the paper's topic, and that look good printed in grey-scale; and
- should be submitted to the Editor at mfcairns@gmail.com by December 31st, 2017.

Photographic contributions:

Besides written contributions, we also seek high-quality, coloured photographs of farmer innovations and best practices in shifting cultivation in Asia-Pacific to help illustrate the volume. We plan that the volume will include a section of coloured plates, just as previous volumes had. Or, if your high-quality photos are of shifting cultivation more generally, they would also be very welcome. We particularly appreciate close-up shots of farmers bent over their work in their fields, the closer the better. If we can see the sweat dripping down his or her weathered face, that will be all the better! Shots of empty fields are less interesting. There really needs to be a human component. But given this volume's sharp focus on the farmer innovations and best practices in shifting cultivation ... if you have any photos that speak directly to this theme, then we would particularly encourage you to share those!

Photographic contributions:

- should be scanned at a high resolution (at a minimum of 300 dpi);
- both portrait and landscape-oriented photos are acceptable;
- should be coloured (exceptional black and white photos will be considered);
- should have good composition, be sharply focused and not faded;
- casual photos – in which the subject may not even be aware that a photo is being taken – are far preferred over posed photos;
- should be saved in .jpg format;
- should be sent as a direct e-mail attachment to the Editor, at mfcairns@gmail.com;
- should *not* be embedded in Word, pdf, Powerpoint, or any other type of software file;
- should clearly show farmers at work in their fields, the closer, the better;



PLATE 3: In Nagaland, Khonoma village's system of managing alder trees in its jhum fields is a prime example of the type of farmer innovation that this volume hopes to document.

- should probably not show empty fields;
- photos illustrating farmer innovations are particularly encouraged;
- should be accompanied by a short note, telling us: the photographer, location, a short explanation of what the photo shows, and the year that it was taken.



PLATE 4: An Angami shifting cultivator deftly harvests her swidden rice and deposits it in the basket on her back.

With your collective wide experience in this field, I suspect that there must be some really interesting shots amongst your personal photo archives, and we'd love to include a few of them in this next volume! I emphasize that we are extremely careful in making sure that the contributing photographer is properly accredited! If any of your photos are selected for publication, then we will get back to you later to seek your help in developing an appropriate caption to accompany it.

We urge the entire community of researchers and workers working with shifting cultivation in Asia-Pacific to make this volume their own by using it as a powerful platform to publish their research findings and photographs. This 'common property' approach will create a much richer volume, of which we can all be proud!

Alternatively, if you know of colleagues working in this field whose work deserves publication, please let us know or pass on an invitation for them to contact us. We believe that the publication platform we offer is a very exciting opportunity.

We've had very robust participation in the first and second books – and would like to see the same happen in volume III. The more ideas that we have on the table, the better! Even if you don't have a paper to contribute, you may have an exceptional photo to share, suggestions of others who should be invited to participate, or ideas on how the volume can be improved. All suggestions will be warmly welcomed! This book will become better from a joint effort by us all!

To find out more or participate in this volume, please contact the Editor, Malcolm Cairns, at: mfcairns@gmail.com. We look forward to working with you!

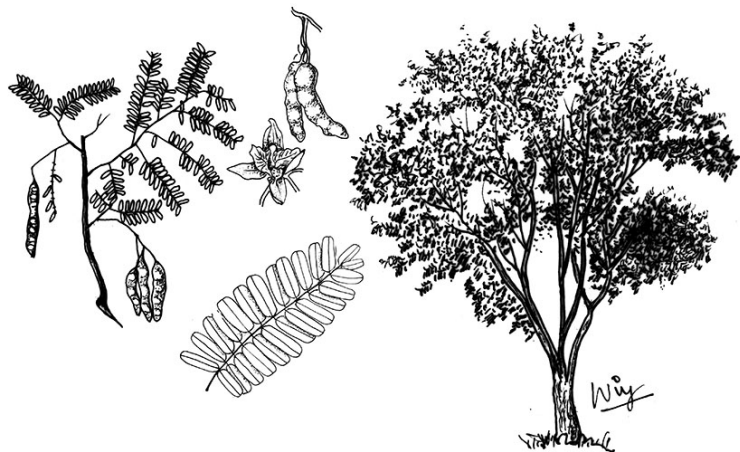


PLATE 4: This sketch of *Tamarindus indica* illustrates the type of botanical sketches that our Indonesian artist has been contributing to the volume.

