

## Depopulation and Abandoning Farming Problem as a Global Issue: Bhutanese Scholars' Comparative Experience in Japan, Summer 2016.

Kazuo Ando<sup>1</sup>, Yoshio Akamatsu<sup>1</sup>, Haruo Uchida<sup>1</sup>, Sumjay Tshering<sup>2</sup>, Pema Choden<sup>2</sup>, Tenzin Wangchuk<sup>2</sup> (1 : CSEAS, Kyoto University, 2 : Sherubtse College, Royal University of Bhutan)

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グローバルイシューとしての過疎と離農問題

安藤和雄・赤松芳郎・内田晴夫・スムジェ ツェリン・ペマ チョデン・テンジン ワンチュク：  
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### Introduction

The problem of depopulation and abandoning farming is a serious issue in rural Japan, particularly, in the villages located in mountainous areas and islands. This problem has first surfaced in 1960s when rapid economic growth and industrial development had occurred, and this problem has been gradually recognized as an un-avoidable socio-economic phenomenon with economic development of a nation. It has been generally believed that an appropriate approach for depopulation and abandoning farming is to minimize unbalanced economic development between urban and rural areas. However, the attempt aiming to minimize the gap of economic development is, even at present, not successful at the national

**Tab 1 PRA Schedule from Jul 23 to Aug 6, 2016 by Bhutanese Scholars**

Date	Activities
23-Jul	Arrival at Japan(Kansai) and meeting at CSEAS, Kyoto Univ.
24-Jul	Field excursion to Miyazu City, Kyoto Pref.
25-Jul	Fieldwork in Shimoseya, Kamiseya and Kigo village, Miyazu City
26-Jul	Fieldwork in Shimoseya and secondary data collection at city office
27-Jul	Fieldwork in Kamiseya village
28-Jul	Field excursion to Tango peninsula
29-Jul	Courtesy call on Miyazu city office
30-Jul	Field excursion to Miyama, Nantan City, Kyoto Pref.
31-Jul	Field observation in Miyama and participation in orientation of Chii Community Development Association
1-Aug	Visiting folk museum in Kita village and field excursion to Nara
2-Aug	Participation in cultural exchange program in Misaki community, Moriyama City, Shiga Pref.
3-Aug	Field excursion to Hiroshima
4-Aug	Participation in International Workshop "International Workshop on Area Studies on Himalaya and Bhutan" and Wrap-Up Meeting of PRA at CSEAS, Kyoto Univ.
5-Aug	Participation in Joint study seminar at CSEAS, Kyoto Univ.
6-Aug	Departure from Japan(Kansai)

level. The same recognition and approach for the problem is also becoming common in other developing Asian countries facing depopulation and abandoning farming with "an epidemic" market globalization, such as Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar and Laos. Is it really un-avoidable phenomenon and un-overcoming problem by human kind? As increasing CO<sub>2</sub> emission has resulted in global warming problem before human kind knew it, the problem of depopulation and abandoning farming has a potential to become serious threat to sustainable

existence of human kind. We do not have any confirmed approach in spite of socio-economic approach and thus we expect individual practical device of people understanding this problem as own problem by "awareness of the person concerned". When this problem becomes global issue like global warming, not all but some people would try to challenge to break the common sense such as an un-avoidable problem. For this purpose, we have conducted the mutual enlightenment practice-oriented area studies since 2013 particularly between Bhutan and Japan. In the summer of 2016, the five Bhutanese scholars of Sherubtse College including the co-presenters of this paper were invited to conduct the comparative study between Bhutan and Japan. This study program is supported by Kyoto Prefectural Govt. and Miyazu-City gov't. with "HITO MACHI HITO CAMPUS" program, Kyoto Univ. CHINOKYOTEN Program, JSPS KAKEN (Type A, headed by ANDO), "the Future Development Funding Program of

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### Methodology

The survey was conducted from July 23 to Aug 6, 2016 using PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) by five members from Sherubtse College: Dr. Tenzin Wangchuk, Mr. Sumjay Tshering, Ms. Pema Choden, Mr. Ngawang Tenzin and Ms. Rinchen Kelzang Wangmo. The schedule of PRA is given in Tab 1. Ando and Akamatsu participated in the survey as a facilitator and a translator. Ms. Mihoko Watanabe, Doshisha Univ. escorted Bhutanese members to the study sites and supported their survey. The daily impressed experiences were recorded as three key words by each participant with ranking: first, second and third (if necessary, more). Each key word was explained by one fact or experience through that day’s PRA. Three ranks were used for easy identification by a participant with a key word. At presentation of each key word at the wrap-up meeting of PRA, each participant explained a ranked key word by their own experience or fact at the site. One time appearance of each key word scored one point. To integrate their experiences, each key word were summed up and the final rank was given on the basis of gained score (Tab 2). The analysis of experience through PRA was done by the “Social Software” developed for mutual understanding between practitioner and aid-organization in international aid program or Ranking Score Method (Modified KJ methods).

### Result and Discussion

The result of the wrap-up meeting is given in Tab 2. The problem of depopulation and abandoning farming was very serious in Kamiseya, Miyazu. Only four houses existed in the Kigo community and all families was migrant from urban to rural (I-turn). The original villagers have already migrated to the

Tab 2 Score of key word of impression at visited places by Bhutanese scholars in 2016 Summer

Place Name [score]	Miyazu	Miyama	Moriyama	Nara	Hiroshima	Total Impression
Rank 1st	Depopulation[6]	Culture[4]	Interaction among People (Happy kids)[6]	World Heritage[5]	Museum[6]	GNH[6]
Rank 2nd	Abandoned House/Land[4]	CHII Development Association[4]	Cultural Exchange[5]	Women’s University [4]	Dome[4]	Depopulation[4]
Rank 3rd	Japanese Manner and Etiquette[4]	Tourism[3]		Tourism[4]	International Community People[2]	Japanese Manner and Etiquette[4]
Rank 4th	Stress of Urban Life[1]	Heritage[3]		Urban City[1]		Stress of Urban Life[1]
Rank 5th	Festival[1]	I-turn[1]				

Note of Key Word)GNH:Gross National Happiness, World Heritage:TODAIJI Temple, Museum: HIROSHIMA Peace Museum, Dome:HIROSHIMA Atomic Bomb Dome, I-turn:Migrant from Urban to Rural

urban areas, mostly to Yosano-cho. The most farmland have been found abandoned, with very few people living, who

are mostly elderly, despite availability of modern facilities in the village. The Kita community of Miyama was a successful in green tourism, famous for traditional thatched roof farmhouses. The members participated in the re-vitalizing village communities program, focusing on primary school level students such as “overseas studies program” from urban to rural of Chii Development Association and Okawa River Summer Free Research Laboratory Program of Misaki autonomous resident association of Misaki community, Moriyama. It may be noted that The GNH approach is conceptually excellent but practically difficult in Bhutan. In conclusion, through PRA in Kyoto and Shiga, the Bhutanese members observed practical GNH programs being implemented in rural areas of Japan, while recognizing that problem of depopulation and abandoning farming existed in Japan, similar to Bhutan. The “awareness of the person concerned” has hopefully emerged among the members.