

VALLEY OF HAPPINESS



BARTSHAM



Center for Southeast Asian Studies
Kyoto University



News Letter



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We are thrilled to inform you that the “JICA Partnership Program, Human Resource Development towards Community Building by the University-Community Engagement in Trashigang, Bhutan” Hybrid kick-off meeting was successfully held by the GNH Community Engagement Center. At the beginning of this month (August 2022), the Kick-Off Meeting was held in the conference room of Sherubtse College.

The event began with the College President, Tshering Wangdi, making wonderful opening remarks. Dr. Ryoto Sakamoto, the project manager, then gave a keynote, and Dr. Yoshio Akamatsu, the project coordinator, displayed a large page of the project.

In a nutshell, the project aims to assist the initiatives of Sherubtse College, the Royal University of Bhutan, and the GNH Community Engagement Center (GNH-CEC). Promote the development of human resources at the GNH-CEC to work on issues of rural development through the implementation of the Social Partnership Program (research and practical activities in collaboration with local communities and relevant institutions) in the field. Institutionalization of Sherubtse College’s Community Engagement System (including its curriculum and modules) through GNH-CEC . Intensify cooperation between the local community and GNH-CEC (Sherubtse College). Additionally, there were a few Q&A sessions in the middle of the occasion.

Eventually, Dr. Kazuo Ando (Project Sub Manager) concluded the conference with an intriguing note. The event ended up with a Photo session.

Bartsham -The Valley of Happiness

Yoshiki Ishiuchi

"In the heart valley (Bartsham) of happiness of Monyul".

- Khenpo Phuntshok Tashi (2015: 166)

If you travel eastwards along the East-West Highway from Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan, you will see Trashigang Town, spread out on the slopes of a steep gorge cut by the Mithri-Drang stream, which is the end point of the journey. Rising to the south of the town as if dominating the valley, Trashigang Dzong overlooks the roaring but slow-flowing Dangme River below its cliffs, sprinkling auspiciousness (Trash) in all directions. Wearing khaki trekking trousers, a long-sleeved white open-collared shirt, and a crocheted hat, which is hot enough to make my forehead with sweat, I sway for about an hour in a Mahindra Bolero (SUV) on an uneven paved road cut through the green mountains from the valley. By the time large clumps of lemon grass, which seemed to have flourished after the forest fires, and huge pine cones began to appear along the road, and the fading mist and the sunlight shining through it ran over my body as if to express my anxiety and anticipation of what lay ahead, I was already in Bartsham.

Bartsham is one of the gewogs belonging to the Trashigang Dzongkhag. The area is home to three settlements (Tsho Sum) that flourished as intermediate points (Barka) on the trade route between India and Tibet, hence the name of the place (Bar Tsho Sum). The valley of Bartsham, facing east, offers an early view of the sunrise and the settlements of Bidung, Radi, Chaling, Changmey and Galing in front of it. During the night, the lights of the scattered settlements can be seen shining in the distance, each forming a constellation.



Image: Sunset/Countryside; Bartsham Trashigang

Chador Lhakhang, built on a small hill overlooking the starry sky on the slopes of the mountains along the Gamri River and Bartsham as a whole, is the symbolic temple of Bartsham. The name Chador is derived from Meme Chador, a statue of Vajrapani, a treasure dedicated to this temple. One says, Meme Chador was inherited from his father, the king of the Dungsam region (now Pema Gatshel) in the past, to the middle son of one of the three sons, who was groomed by the Yangkhar of Bartsham. It is said that when the people of Yangkhar knew that Meme Chador was coming, they abandoned their rice planting work in the middle of summer and celebrated its arrival with celebration in a grand manner. The arrival of Meme Chador is said to have pleased not only the people of Bartsham, but also Monling Jepo, the local deity. Meme Chador was then moved from Yangkhar to the current location of Chador Lhakhang, which later led to the construction of the present temple.



Image: Chodor Lhakhang Bartsham Trashigang

Meme Chador is like the heart of Bhutan. If the heart were to disappear, the person would die, but other organs are usually not so serious even if they disappear. Because it is such an important treasure not only for Bartsham but also for Bhutan, people from all over Bhutan and the world come to receive the blessings of Meme Chador today. The people of Bartsham say that although Bartsham is situated on undulating hills, crops grow well thanks to Meme Chador. As summer draws to a close and the weather turns chilly, maize and paddy can be seen all over Bartsham, with their lush green leaves growing fast and overflowing from the fields. The harvest season will soon be upon us and Bartsham will be filled with the sounds of people's joy. I am very happy to be able to spend a moment of happiness here.

Reference

Khenpo Phuntshok Tashi. 2015. Three Rising Stars: Amazing Life Stories of the Enlightened Masters of Bhutan.

Thimphu: Druk Odiyana Foundation.



Image: Chodor Lhakhang Bartsham Trashigang (Choekhor Time)



Maize Production in Trashigang and local diversified use in Bartsham

Tadahiro Ikoma

Bhutan's outstanding maize-supplying Dzongkhag, Trashigang

Eastern Bhutan is known to produce more maize and millets than the western part of the country. According to Agriculture statistics 2021, Trashigang Dzongkhag's maize production in 2021 was 3493.1 (MT), ranking third among all Dzongkhag after Mongar and Pemagatshel. This value accounts for 11% of the national production. Looking at the productivity of 2.1 (MT/acre) in 2021, it ranked third after Pemagatshel and Trashiyaangtse. Figure. 1 shows recent Trashigang's maize production trend since 2004, in which agriculture statistics began to be taken, and its share of the national total. Figure. 2 clears that maize productivity in Trashigang Dzongkhag has tended to exceed the national average. From these two graphs, it can be said that Trashigang has been developing as one of the outstanding maize-supplying districts.

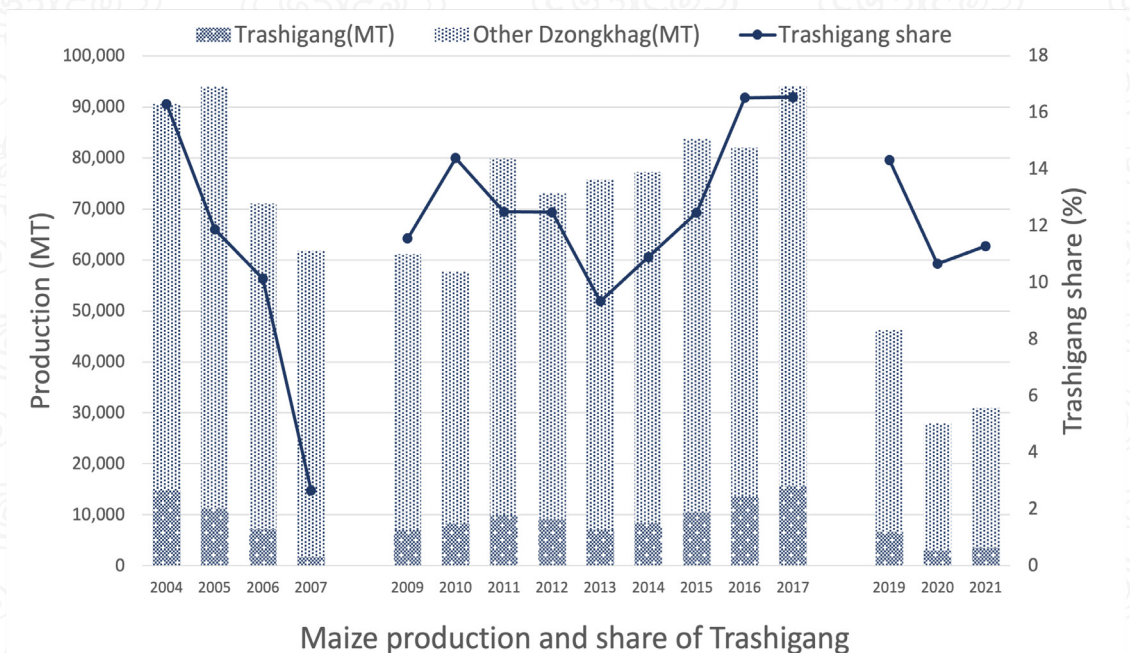
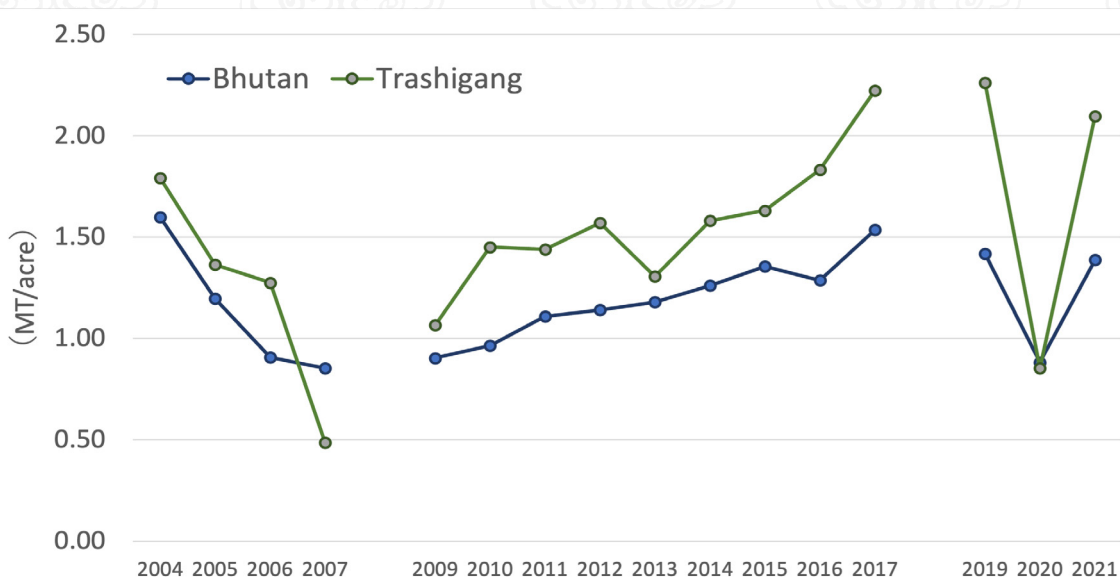


Figure.1 Maize production and share of Trashigang
(Based on agricultural statistics 2004-2021)



Maize productivity of Trashigang by year since 2004

Figure. 2 Maize productivity of Trashigang by year since 2004
(Based on agricultural statistics 2004-2021)



How do farmers select a variety to produce?

Let's take a closer look at maize variety grown in Bartsham. When I arrived at Bartsham in May, maize was still small and a lot of works for weeding and soiling (*Ashum bak pe*) were being implemented (see Image. 1). Then time passed, maize harvest has been taken place since September in Bartsham (see Image. 2).

The main variety in the village, where we are staying, is a local one called *Khaling pa*. However, in recent years, a few farmers have also started cultivating a hybrid variety called *Zhungka ashum* or hybrid corn which was introduced by the government. In Bartsham, another variety called *Yangtse pa* has been identified, but a more detailed survey is required to get a full picture of maize production here.



Image 1. *Ashum Bak pe* experience in May



Image 2. *Khaling pa* (harvest in Sep)

According to villagers, *Khaling pa* grows up to about three meters and produces one to three clusters (three is rare). In other hand, introduced hybrid one can produce three or even more corns from a single plant so, farmers can expect better production. Hybrid varieties have been considered being shorter and less prone to fall-down compared to local varieties.

It, however, has become clear that excessive fertilization and strong wind can cause fall-down of maize (see picture. 3). Some farmers who introduced hybrid varieties for the first time this year had experienced maize fall-down after intense wind, and I have heard some lamentations on that issue. Additionally, there seem to be numerous reasons behind the difficulty in expansion of hybrid varieties. One female farmer said, “I prefer *Khaling pa* to others because it ripens fruit faster and withers quickly”. Farmers can expect earlier harvest of *Khaling pa* compared to hybrid corn. Furthermore, thinned maize in growth step is used as cattle feed, but a little ingenuity is needed in the case of hybrid varieties because cows don’t like to eat hybrid varieties as their leaves are stringy and hard.

The physical characteristics of maize also affect the food processing steps. Maize is processed into products and consumed in different forms, such as *Ara* (local alcohol), *Tengma* (roasted and pounded maize) and *Kharang* (maize grit). For example, in order to produce *Tengma*, it shouldn’t be dried too much. So, early stage of maturity is favorable²). Considering harvest and subsequent use for processing including drying up, “easy to wither and rot” seems to be important. In other words, depending on what the maize is processed into, the timing of the harvest could be different, even for the same variety.



Image: hybrid corn introduced by the government



Image: Fallen Maize (hybrid introduced by the government)

From the fieldwork to date, I have learned that maize, which tends to be lumped together in statistics, is composed of a wide variety. Among them, farmers select and cultivate suited ones under consideration of not only productivity but also their cultivating environment and utilization.

References

- Ministry of Agriculture. 2004-2007. and Ministry of Agriculture and Forests. 2009-2021.
- Kinley Wangmo. 2019. Effect of Harvesting Stages of Maize on Quality and Consumption Preferences of Tengma. Bhuanese Journal of Agriculture 2(1): 131-142.





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