Improved high-quality genome assembly and annotation of Tibetan hulless barley

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Abstract

Background

The Tibetan hulless barley (Hordeum vulgare L. var. nudum), also called "Qingke" in Chinese and "Ne" in Tibetan, is the staple food for Tibetans and an important livestock feed in the Tibetan Plateau. The Tibetan hulless barley in China has about 3500 years of cultivation history, mainly produced in Tibet, Qinghai, Sichuan, Yunnan and other areas. In addition, Tibetan hulless barley has rich nutritional value and outstanding health effects, including the beta glucan, dietary fiber, amylopectin, the contents of trace elements , which are higher than any other cereal crops.

Findings

Here, we reported an improved high-quality assembly of Tibetan hulless barley genome with 4.0 Gb in size. We employed the falcon assembly package ,scaffolding and error correction tools to finish improvement using PacBio long reads sequencing technology, with contig and scaffold N50 lengths of 1.563Mb and 4.006Mb, respectively, representing more continuous than the original Tibetan hulless barley genome nearly two orders of magnitude. We also re-annotated the new assembly, and reported 61,303 stringent confident putative protein-coding genes, of which 40,457 is HC genes. We have developed a new Tibetan hulless barley genome database (THBGD) to download and use friendly, as well as to better manage the information of the Tibetan hulless barley genetic resources.

Conclusions

The availability of new Tibetan hulless barley genome and annotations will take the genetics of Tibetan hulless barley to a new level and will greatly simplify the breeders effort. It will also enrich the granary of the Tibetan people.

Keyword: Tibetan hulless barley; Genome assembly; full-length cDNA; Tibetan hulless barley Genome Database

Introduction

Tibetan hulless barley (Hordeum vulgare L. var. nudum) is a cereal crop, a variant of barley, alias called hulless barley, yuan wheat, rice barley(**Fig.1**). Tibetan hulless barley has a long history of cultivation in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. The adaptation to extreme environmental conditions in high altitudes made it the staple food for Tibetans beginning at least 3,500–4,000 years ago [1]. It continues to be the predominant crop in Tibet, occupying ∼70% of crop lands.

Genome sequences provide a substantial basis for understanding the biological essences of crops associated with biologically and economically essential traits[2]. Therefore, it is necessary and crucial to construct the genome of a species. In recent years, with the development of NGS sequencing technology, many crops have published the genome draft or near-finished genome sequences, especially the larger genome of the wheat family[3-13]. At the same time, two studies have published two versions of the Tibetan hulless barley genome in 2015[2] and 2017[14], respectively. And the former assembly strain is Lasa Goumang , the latter is Zangqing320, all excellent cultivars of Tibetan hulless barley. The estimated genome size of the Tibetan hulless barley is 4.48Gb[2], which is much smaller than the 5.1Gb[4, 10] of barley. Although the former is a subspecies of barley, considering that the barley genome is rich in repeats(about 80.8%-84%[2, 4, 10]), the difference in genome size may come from the numbers and length of transposons.

Although the publication of the Tibetan hulless barley genome has attracted a new upsurge in Tibetan hulless barley genetics research[15, 16], due to the current poor genome assembly, such as the particularly short contig, the very low contig N50, and the poor genome annotation, the functional genome studying of Tibetan hulless barley has caused some vital problems. In addition, with the development of single-molecule sequencing platforms, such as those by Pacific Biosciences and Oxford Nanopore Technologies, have become available to researchers and are currently being increasingly applied in *de novo* genome assembly and genome update , and other scaffolding techniques(such as BioNano optical mapping, Chicago, Hi-C and 10X genomics)[17-19], it provides a new opportunity for improving Tibetan hulless barley genome assembly.

Therefore, we *de novo* assembled a high-quality genome of Tibetan hulless barley using

high-coverage Pacbio long reads, combining published Illumina paired-ends and mate-

pairs reads. And then, we applied PacBio Iso-seq to get high confidence full-length

transcripts and re-annotation Tibetan hulless barley protein-coding genes. This new

assembly, annotations and newly online Tibetan hulless barley genomics database

discussed below will serve as valuable resources for investigating the economic and

genetic of Tibetan hulless barley and will also help the molecular breeders to continually

improve Tibetan hulless barley or barley germplasm resources.

85 DNA and RNA sequencing

DNA isolation, libraries construction and sequencing

The seedling of Tibetan hulless barley (NCBI BioSample ID **SAMN09914874**) were

collected from Tibet, China. After collection, tissues were immediately transferred into

liquid nitrogen and stored until DNA extraction. DNA was extracted using the

Cetyltrimethyl Ammonium Bromide (CTAB) method according to the protocal "

Preparing Arabidopsis Genomic DNA for Size-Selected ∼20 kb SMRTbell^{TM} Libraries

"(https://www.pacb.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Shared-Protocol-Preparing-

Arabidopsis-DNA-for-20-kb-SMRTbell-Libraries.pdf). The quality of the extracted

genomic DNA was checked using 1% agarose gel electrophoresis, and the concentration

was quantified using a Qubit fluorimeter (Invitrogen, Carlsbad, CA, USA).

Single-molecule Real-time long reads sequencing was performed at NextOmics

Technology Corporation (Wuhan, China) with a PacBio Sequel Sequencer (Pacific

Biosciences, Menlo Park, CA,USA). The SMRT Bell library was prepared using a DNA

Template Prep Kit 1.0, and Six 20-kb SMRT Bell libraries were constructed(**Fig. S1**).

Genomic DNA（10ug）was mechanically sheared using a Covaris g-Tube with a goal of

DNA fragments of approximately 20kb. A Bioanalyzer 2100 12K DNA Chip assay was

used to assess the fragment size distribution. Sheared genomics DNA(5ug) was DNA-

damage repaired and end-repaired using polishing enzymes. A blunt-end ligation reaction

followed by exonuclease treatment was conducted to generate the SMRT Bell template.

A Blue Pippin device(Sage Science) was used to size select the SMRT Bell template and

enrich large fragments(>10kb).The size-selected library was quality inspected and
quantified on an Agilent Bioanalyzer 12Kb DNA Chip (Agilent) and a Qubit fluorimeter
(Life Technologies). A ready-to-sequence SMRT Bell Polymerase Complex was created
using a Binding Kit 2.0 (PacBio p/n 100-862-200), according to the manufacturer's
instructions. The PacBio Sequel instrument was programmed to load and sequenced the
sample on PacBio SMRT cells v2.0 (Pacific Biosciences), acquiring one movie of 360
min per SMRT cell. The MagBead loading (Pacific Biosciences) method was used to
improve the enrichment of the larger fragments. A total of 64 SMRT cells were processed
yielding 300.24G subread sequences, average 4.69Gb per cell, and 9,358bp in
length(**Table S1**).
For Illumina sequencing data, we applied previously published paired-ends and
mate-pair library data[2](SRA no. SRA201388 , totally 819.37Gb clean data) for PacBio
assembly error evaluation and scaffolding, respectively.
RNA isolation and sequencing
Fresh roots, and leaves of Tibetan hulless barley were sampled in Tibet, China.
Totally, 12 samples ,different N condition (Prepared for unpublished paper) were used for
Iso-seq sequencing. Total RNA was prepared by grinding tissue in TRIzol reagent
(Invitrogen 15596026) on dry ice and processed following the protocol provided by the
manufacturer. To remove DNA, an aliquot of total RNA was treated with RQ1 DNase
(Promega M6101), followed by phenol/chloroform/isoamyl alcohol extraction,
chloroform/isoamyl alcohol extraction using Phase Lock Gel Light tubes (5 PRIME
2302800) and ethanol precipitation. Precipitated RNA was stored at -20℃.

One microgram of total RNA per reaction per tissue was reverse transcribed using
the Clontech SMARTer cDNA synthesis kit. Specific barcoded oligo dT in separate PCR
tubes, to generate barcoded FL cDNA. Large-scale PCR products were purified with
AMPure PB beads and quality control (QC) was performed on a 2100 BioAnalyzer
(Agilent). Equimolar ratios of six cDNA libraries were pooled together. A total of 3.8 mg
cDNA was subjected to size fractionation using the SageELF system. Size fractions
eluted from the run were subjected QC and pooled in equimolar ratios for subsequent re-
amplification to yield four libraries (1–2, 2–3, 3–6 and 5–10Kb). The pooled PCR
products were purified using AMPure PB beads. One to five micrograms of purified

amplicons were subjected to Iso-Seq SMRT Bell library preparation
(https://pacbio.secure.force.com/SamplePrep) .A total of 17 SMRT cells (unpublished
data) were sequenced on the PacBio RS II platform using P6-C4 chemistry with 3–4 h
movies.

Genome assembly

The Sequel raw bam files were converted into subreads in fasta format using the
standard Pacbio software package BAM2fastx. Totally, 300.24Gb PacBio data, covered
genome ~67X(estimated genome size 4.48Gb),was used to initially assemble.

Falcon assembly

we used falcon software package (https://github.com/PacificBiosciences/falcon)
to construct primary assembly. Firstly, corrected the error reads by the overlap strategy
(parameter length_cutoff control is used to correct the wrong seed reads length);Secondly,
pre-assembled the corrected reads; Thirdly, Constructed contig with long reads obtained
from pre-assembly (parameter length_cutoff_pr controls the pre-assembled reads length
used to build contig); After many attempts, we determined that the following two
reference settings can get better assembly results: length_cutoff = 5000;length_cutoff_pr
= 10000. And, we get the initial assembly, 1.229Mb in length of contig N50.

Arrow polish

There are often errors in the preliminary assembly results of the genome, such as
SNP or InDel, which can be fixed by certain algorithms. Arrow is a genomic polishing
tool based on hidden Markov models. We use the following steps to polish the genome:

1) Align the PacBio sequencing reads to the genome assembly with blasr (pbalign
--algorithm=blasr, the rest of the parameters default);

2) Use Arrow to polish based on the alignment result (variantCaller --
algorithm=arrow, the rest of the parameters default).pbalign and variantCaller are from
the SMRT Link 4 toolkit (https://www.pacb.com/support/software-downloads/)

Scaffolding

The Scaffolding tool can group, sort, and orient contigs to join contigs into longer

sequence fragments, called scaffold. The sequence between some contigs may be

unknown but the distance between them can be roughly known, which is also helpful for

subsequent related work.

SSPACE[20] is a widely used tool for building scaffold. Firstly aligned the reads

to contigs using alignment tools (such as BWA, bowtie), and then built scaffold based on

the connection information between the contigs. This project uses Illumina data

previously published and PacBio data to build scaffold.

Firstly , using Illumina mate-pair library (20kb and 40Kb fragment long)

sequencing data to scaffolding contigs. Aligned the paired-end reads to contigs with

bowtie[21]; then, constructed scaffold (parameter: -p 1 -g 2) with SSPACE-

STANDARD-3.0.

Secondly, using PacBio data to continuously improving the scaffolds. Aligned

PacBio reads to the scaffold version of Illumina data using blasr; and then, built scaffold

with SSPACE-LongRead[22].

The final assembly produced 1,856 scaffolds, 1,092 of which greater than or equal

to 1Mb, with a contig N50 length of 1.563Mb and scaffold N50 of 4.006Mb. Compared

to the preliminary draft of the published two Tibetan hulless barley genomes[2, 14], the

contiguity was improved more than ∼80 and 243 times, respectively(**Table 1**;**Table S2-**

S3;Fig. S2).

Assembly evaluation

First, the 682.57Gb Illumina paired-ends reads(library fragment 250,500 and

800,respectively) were mapped to new assembly, and 99.87-99.89% PE reads were

mapped concordantly (**Table S4**).

Using these short reads, the estimated quality value (QV) of Tibetan hulless

barley genome was calculated according to a previously described method[23]. The

erroneous bases in the genome assembly were identified using the variant calling

software Genome Analysis Toolkit (GATK) v4[24] with default parameters. The QV of

the Tibetan hulless barley genome was estimated to be 52(**Table S5**), which means that
the accuracy of the assembly in base level is very accurate after base correction.

We randomly downloaded 4 *Hordeum vulgare subsp. vulgare* (domesticated
barley) BAC clone sequencing data (NCBI ID: AC248476.1,AC250041.1,AC253057.1
and AC253422.1) to evaluate assembly quality. Using nucmer[25] mapping BAC data to
new assembly, the results manifested very high consistency.(**Fig. S3**).

In addition, we also used BUSCO[26] to perform an assessment of genome
completeness . BUSCO used a total of 1440 genes to evaluate the genome; the genome
has 1312 complete BUSCO genes, accounting for 91.1%, of which 1288 have single
copies, accounting for 89.4%, 24 have multiple copies, accounting for 1.7%; 34 gene
have only a few fragments of the gene; 94 genes are missing from the genome.

Together, the results indicated that our dataset represented a genome assembly
with a high level of coverage, quality and completeness.

208 **Repetitive sequences annotation**

Repetitive DNA accounts for much of the remarkable variation in plant genome
sizes[27], especially some Gramineae crop plants, above 80% [10, 12, 28] of genome for
repetitive elements . Repetitive sequences are divided into transposons and simple repeats.
According to Tandem repeats finder program[29] , we marked simple repeat elements,

155,813,415 in length , 3.89% of genome. For transposons, we performed homology-
based and de novo prediction, respectively. The software packages involved are
RepeatMasker[30],   RepeatProteinMask[30]   ,   repeatmodeler
(http://www.repeatmasker.org/RepeatModeler/) and ltr_finder[31]. The repetitive
database used here is Repbase 21.01[32](**Fig. S4**). Long terminal repeat(LTR)
retroelements, belong to class I elements, is accounted for 70.22% of genome. All repeats
together accounted for 87.48% of the genome(**Table 2**;**Table S6**).

220 **Gene prediction**

For the annotation of protein-coding gene, we used a combination of multiple data

sources, followed by a high confidence (HC) and low confidence (LC) classification of

the annotated genes(**Fig. S4-5**).

Combination of multiple annotations

According to Iso-seq methods, we obtained 39,442 high-quality full-length

transcripts. Theses high-quality transcripts were aligned to the genome using GMAP

(version 2017-05-08)[33], with a total of 14,099 perfect alignments; TransDecoder

v4.0.1(https://github.com/TransDecoder) was used to predict the coding region of 14,099

transcripts, of which 13,936 contained open reading frame (ORF), these ORF contained

transcripts are ultimately assigned to 9,360 genes, called perfect genes. We employed

Augustus v3.3[34],which used perfect genes as input train sets, to get 128,400 putative

genes. At the same time ,we downloaded representative proteins of 7 related species

(*Triticum aestivum A*[12], *Triticum aestivum D*[9], *Brachypodium distachyon*[35],

Hordeum vulgare[10], *Oryza sativa*[36], *Sorghum bicolor*[37] and *Zea mays*[38]) from

public database(**Table S7**). Aligning the protein sequences of each species to the Tibetan

hulless barley genome using tblastn v2.6.0+[39]; and then, using Genewise v2.4.1[40] to

predict gene structure and obtain homologous gene sequences from various species in the

Tibetan hulless barley genome. In addition, using 16 transcriptome data (**Table S8**) from

different tissues and different conditions, we mapped the reads to Tibetan hulless barley

genome by hisat2 v2.1.0[41] and reference-based assembled the 47,490 transcripts by

stringtie v1.2.4[42, 43]. The gene information extracted from PacBio Iso-seq, Augustus,

Homolog and RNA-seq was integrated using EVidenceModeler[44], according to

different weight parameters (**Table S9**), to obtain 129,269 putative genes. The same

RNA-seq reads were de novo assembled using Trinity v2.4.0[45] to obtain 722,803

transcripts. Structural optimization of EVM integration results was performed using

PASA v2.1.0[46] and Trinity assembly results.

129,269 transcripts were annotated with NR, Uniprot, and Pfam database. And

filter the putative genes according to the function assignment result: (1) NR, Uniprot

comparison identity>=50%, coverage>=50%; (2) Not satisfying (1), but protein length >=

50, and containing the Pfam domain. The tandem duplicated genes were identified using

MCScanX. Only the longest protein of each subgroup was kept to represent the

corresponding gene. The combine Tibetan hulless barley genome annotation included

65,833 genes with names derived from BLAST analysis and genes with domain names

derived from Pfam analysis.

High-confidence Genes

Stringent confidence classification was applied to all predicted genes to

discriminate between loci representing high-confidence (HC) protein-coding genes and

less reliable low-confidence (LC) genes, which potentially consisted of gene fragments,

putative pseudogenes and non-(protein)-coding transcripts. We assigned confidence

values to a gene model in a two-step procedure by using the similar criteria and methods

described previously[10](**Fig. S5**). Finally, we obtained 61,303 stringent confident

putative genes, of which 40,457 is HC genes(**Table 3**; **Fig. S5**).

Functional annotation of all 61,303 protein sequences was performed using NR,

KEGG, SwissProt, Trembl, GO, PFAM, and InterPro databases. 96.57% of all protein

sequences were assigned to at least one database(**Table S10**).

Non-coding Gene prediction

In the process of annotation of non-coding RNAs, tRNAscan-SE[47] software is

used to search for tRNA sequences in the genome according to the structural

characteristics of tRNA; since rRNA is highly conserved, the rRNA sequence of related

species can be selected as a reference sequence, through BLASTN Alignment to find

rRNA in the genome; in addition, using the Rfam family's covariance model, Rfam's own

INFERNAL software[48] can predict miRNA and snRNA sequence information on the

genome(**Table 4**).

Annotation evaluation

The BUSCO[26] assessment showed that 91% of the 1,440 genes were completed

annotated. And RNA-seq reads rates mapping to gene set also have a significant

improvement, from 60% previously annotation to exceed 70%(**Table S8**).

In summary, we also acquired a high-quality genome annotation, and it will

greatly benefit future function genomics research.

Genome database

A new Tibetan hulless barley Genome Database(THBGD) has been developed to
facilitate studies on Qinghai-Tibet Plateau crop plant genomics. The database currently
provides access to Tibetan hulless barley genome assembly V1,de novo assembly using
NGS sequencing and V2,de novo assembly improvement using combined TGS and NGS.
Meanwhile, it also provides access to genome annotation, including repetitive element
annotation, ncRNA prediction and protein-coding genes prediction(**Fig. 2**). The THBGD
embedded JBrowse[49] visual genomic display module to display genome and gene
annotation information. One can click on the gene name on the screen to display specific
information about the gene. One also can use online tools Blast v2.4.0+ to enter the query
sequence in fasta format, align and return the visual aligned results. In the future, we will
focus on optimizing the interactive operation and visualization of the THBGD.
You   can   access   to   the   THBGD   by   visiting
http://show.genebang.com/project/index
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Discussion

Tibetan hulless barley is a local species of barley and is of great significance to
the life and culture of the Tibetan. Its genome and annotation updates help future research
on functional genomics, and also help breeders to simplify their work and enrich the
genomics resources of barley. The generation of Tibetan hulless barley high-quality
reference genomes also demonstrates the superiority of PacBio long reads sequencing
technology for larger genome assembly[50]. Although the genome has a long contig, the
scaffold is still a bit short at the state-of-art of the current genome assembly, mainly
because of the complexity and data volume of the scaffolding mate-pair library is
relatively few. In the future, we will use BioNano optical mapping, Hi-C, and akin
weapon to complete the genomic construction at the chromosome level[17]. Having an
excellent Tibetan hulless barley genomics resources, it will enable geneticists to focus
more on functional genomics itself and breeding research.

Availability of supporting data

310 Raw genomic sequence reads are available in the NCBI Sequence Read Archive
311 under project number **SRS3725794**. Genome assembly and annotation file are available
312 in Tibetan hulless barley Genome Database (THBGD) or contact the correspondence
313 author. Supplementary files can be downloaded from the GigaScience Website.

Abbreviations

BLAST: Basic Local Alignment Search Tool;

BUSCO: Benchmarking Universal Single-Copy Orthologs;

QV:quality value;

PacBio: Pacifc Biosciences;

RNA-seq: RNA sequencing;

NGS: Next generation sequencing

TGS: Third generation sequencing

THBGD: Tibetan hulless barley Genome Database

Conflicts of Interest

324 The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Author Contributions

334   Project coordination: X.Z.,X.L.,Y.W.,L.B. and N.T.(Leader).

335   Sampling and experimentation: X.Z.,Y.W.,H.Y.,Q.X.,S.Z.,Z.W.,W.Q.,Y.B.,J.D.,M.Y..

336   Genome assembly and Genome annotation guidance and performance :

337   X.L.(Co-leader) and his team.

338   Data analysis: T.X., X.Z.,Y.W.,H.Y.,Q.X.,S.Z.,Z.W.,W.Q.,Y.B.,J.D.,M.Y..

339   Genome database construction: T.X. and his team

340   Data submission: T.X.

341   Writing: X.L.(Co-leader).

342   All authors read and commented on the manuscript.

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Tables

	This study	**Zeng *et al.*[2]**	**Dai *et al.*[14]**
Sequenced genome size (Gb)	4.00	3.89	3.73
Contig N50 (Kb)	1,563.00	18.07	5.94
Scaffold N50 (Kb)	4,006.00	242.00	171.11
Repeat proportion(%)	87.48	81.39	NA
Annotated protein-coding genes	61,303*	36,151	46,787

507 * Only refer to stringent confident putative protein-coding genes.
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510 **Table 2** Repetitive element annotation statistics.

Type	**Repeat Size**	**% of genome**
Trf	155,813,415	3.89
Repeatmasker	2,935,487,965	73.27
Proteinmask	19,934,506	0.50
De novo	3,359,143,070	83.85
Total	3,504,452,012	**87.48**

512 **Table 3** Protein-coding genes prediction summary.

Method	Software and gene set	Gene number
PacBio	Smrtlink	39,442
	Gmap	14,099
	TransDecoder	13,936
Ab initio	Augustus	128,400
Homology-based	Triticum aestivum A	42,601
	Brachypodium distachyon	33,911
	Hordeum vulgare	46,312
	Oryza sativa	38,426
	Sorghum bicolor	29,909
	Triticum aestivum D	44,897
	Zea mays	29,872
RNA-seq	StringTie	47,490
Integration	EVidenceModeler	129,269
	PASA	129,269
Filter	NR、SwissProt、PFAM	68,018
	After MCScanX moved	65,833
	After TE moved	**61,303**

514 **Table 4** ncRNA genes annotation statistics.

Type		Copy	Average length(bp)	Total length(bp)	% of genome
miRNA		5,530	129.27	714,857	0.0178
tRNA		2,477	74.71	185,064	0.0046
rRNA	**Total**	1,583	151.69	240,131	0.0060
	18S	63	1,076.60	67,826	0.0017
	28S	174	133.20	23,177	0.0006
	5.8S	39	147.33	5,746	0.0001
	5S	1,307	109.70	143,382	0.0036
snRNA	**Total**	1,156	115.14	133,097	0.0033
	CD-box	831	103.44	85,960	0.0021
	HACA-box	132	133.48	17,620	0.0004
	splicing	193	152.94	29,517	0.0007

Figures

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521 **Figure 1** Morphological characteristics of the Tibetan hulless barley, Tibetan hulless barley. These pictures
522 show (A),seedling;(B), heading stage; (C), mature stage;(D), filling stage spike and (E), grain of Tibetan
523 hulless barley.
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526 **Figure 2** Tibetan hulless barley Genome Database(THBGD). (A),the home page of THBGD;(B), Data
527 download page;(C),gene browse page and (D),sequences BLAST page.
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