Collectors of Rhodiola species on the Sichuan-Tibetan and Sichuan-Shaanxi borders
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This is an electronic version of a poster presented at The 16th International Congress on Ethnopharmacology, Yulin, China 15 to 18 May 2016.

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**Introduction**

Medicinal *Rhodiola* species, including *Rhodiola rosea* L. and *Rhodiola crenulata* (Hook.f. & Thomson) H.Ohba (Hongjingtian 红景天) are widely used as herbal medicines with numerous claims for their therapeutic effects. Tourists from the lower territory in China visiting the Tibetan Kardze Prefecture in Sichuan (ganzi zhou 甘孜州) take Rhodiola as pills to supplement lacking oxygen in their blood (altitude sickness). These products are registered by a number as pharmaceuticals (guoyao zhun zi 国药准字). Throughout China *Rhodiola* is also taken for wellness (yangsheng 养生) and is registered as a self-mediated wellness product (baojianpin 保健品) for ‘blood-boosting and heart-strengthening.’

**Methods**

Data were collected between May and July 2015 using non-participant observation and interviews with collectors, middlemen and TCM market retailers.

**Findings**

On the Sichuan – Tibetan borders, *R. crenulata* is collected by the Yi minority and represents about one third of their financial income. It is typically dried on the village rooftops and sold at the main market in Chengdu, Sichuan province, one of the ‘pharma-capitals’ in China.

**Conclusions**

A more sustainable way should be found to produce this valuable and culturally significant medicinal plant, e.g. by cultivation or wild-crafting.

This will have benefits both for the minority groups who rely on it for their income and also for the end users who take it as medicine.

**References**


We would like to acknowledge the help of the minority groups living on the Tibetan plateau. Anthony Booker’s research position is funded through a charitable donation by Dr. Willmar Schwabe GmbH & Co. KG, Germany. Lena Springer is funded by the Wellcome Trust project “Beyond Tradition”. EAST medicine at the University of Westminster.