

Emilia Roza Sulek

Trading Caterpillar Fungus in Tibet

When Economic Boom Hits Rural Area

When the demand for, and prices of caterpillar fungus (*Ophiocordyceps sinensis*, 'the Himalayan Viagra', long a part of traditional Chinese medicine) soared, the pastoralists of Golok on the Tibetan plateau where the fungus is endemic dug up, dried and sold the fungus to traders. In the process, these yak and sheep farmers, used to living on the edge of subsistence, became wealthy beyond their imagination. *Trading Caterpillar Fungus in Tibet: When Economic Boom Hits Rural Area* tells the story of what they do with the money they earned from gathering and trading caterpillar fungus, and what this money does to them, revealing a sophistication few outsiders would credit them for.

"A comprehensive, delightfully readable and insightful ethnographic account of the highly significant harvest and trade of caterpillar fungus, and its role in the rapid socioeconomic transformation of the Tibetan region of Golok. It is an impressive achievement."

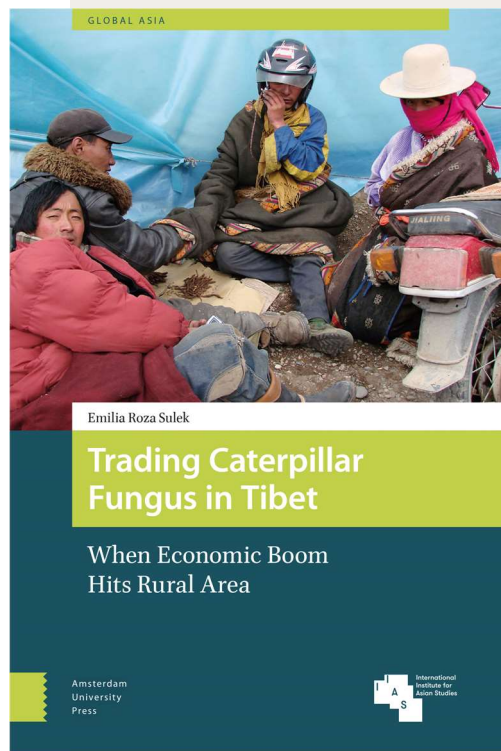
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"This excellent study of Tibetan pastoralism by one of the best young scholars is a must read for all interested in the changing and controversial world of pastoralists in China."

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"A significant contribution to both the anthropology of Tibet and studies of modern China."

Toni Huber, Humboldt University of Berlin



Emilia Roza Sulek is an anthropologist of China, Tibet and Central Asia. She writes about shadow economies, development, conflicts over natural resources, state power, and gender politics. She teaches at the Universities of Zurich and Bern.

Global Asia

July 2019

328 pages, 21 colour, 8 b/w, 4 line art illustrations

Hardback

ISBN 978 94 6298 526 1

e-ISBN 978 90 4853 629 0

€109.00 / £94.00 / \$136.00

€108.99 / £93.99 / \$135.99

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