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Wild Resource Use among Dai People in Nabanhe National Nature Reserve (NNNR): Cultural Importance of Medicinal and Food Plants

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Abstract

Nabanhe National Nature Reserve (NNNR) located in Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Prefecture, SW China is rich in biological and cultural diversity. Plant diversity includes 1954 species, many of them being endemic to the area. NNNR is topographically mountainous especially in its western part and more than 55 % of the total area is above 1000 m asl. With exception of Han Chinese, five ethnic minority groups are living in NNNR including Dai, Lahu, Bulang, Hani and Yi. Dai people are living mainly in four villages which are located in low altitudes. They have their own community forest, sacred forest and their own perception about forest and environment. In this study wild plant uses among Dai ethnic group have been studied. Data collection was done through conducting freelisting interviews, semi-structured interviews, field walks and botanical sample collections. Botanical samples were identified scientifically and cultural importance of useful plants has been calculated. Dai People in NNNR are benefiting from 143 species of wild food and medicinal plants from 51 families from which 76 species are used medicinally and 81 species as wild food and 14 species is considered as food and medicine. The culturally most important food plants are *Callipteris esculenta* (Retz.) J. Sm. (*Dryopteridaceae*), *Piper longum* L., *Piper flaviflorum* C. DC. (*Piperaceae*), *Solanum americanum* Mill. (*Solanaceae*) and *Musa acuminata* Colla. (*Musaceae*). Most important medicinal plants for Dai people include *Tacca chantrieri* Andre (*Taccaceae*), *Clausena excavata* Burm. f. (*Rutaceae*), *Plantago erosa* Wall. (*Plantaginaceae*), *Boehmeria siamensis* Craib (*Urticaceae*) and *Artemisia argyi* Levl. et Van. (*Asteraceae*) The results shows that most of the food species are collected from farm edges, road sides or water streams near rice fields whereas most of the medicinal plants are collected from collective or secondary forest. Detailed information about the importance of land use type as a source of medicinal and food plants will be presented.

Keywords: Dai minority, ethnobotany, wild medicinal plants, wild food plants