

Alessandro Boesi

Alessandro Boesi is a Tibetologist and Biologist. He graduated in Biological Sciences at the University of Milan (1992). His thesis, being an archaeobotanical research, aimed at reconstructing vegetation and climate of a Neolithic site in northern Italy, by examining botanical macro-remains found during archaeological excavations, and particularly by identifying wood charcoal fragments coming from ancient fireplaces, on the basis of their wood anatomy, which remains perfectly preserved after carbonization.

He obtained the Ph. D. at the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle de Paris/Université de la Méditerranée de Marseille (France) in 2004. His thesis is entitled “Le savoir botanique des Tibétains: conception, classification et exploitation des plantes sauvages”.

Alessandro's research interest mainly focuses on all types of interactions between man and plants in Tibet, and on Tibetan medicinal plants, by examining both present knowledge among medical practitioners, and past understanding according to ancient treatises.

Alessandro has conducted research fieldwork in Tibetan regions investigating into local concepts of wild plants and their pre-modern and modern exploitation. He has examined traditional classification and identification systems of Tibetan *materia medica*, and the criteria of attributing curatives properties to substances according to Tibetan pharmacology and medical practice. Since 2005 he has worked specifically on modern and traditional *materia medica* treatises, and translated from Tibetan into Italian an ancient *materia medica* handbook “*Piante medicinali del Tibet. Un antico manoscritto di scienza della guarigione* [Medicinal Plants of Tibet: An Ancient Manuscript of the Science of Healing] (In print, Novissimo Ramusio, Rome; English translation forthcoming), which presents an untitled, anonymous manuscript, collected possibly in Central Tibet by Professor Giuseppe Tucci, which describes features, ecology, and therapeutic properties of around 180 medicinal plants, and medical instruments and deities.

At present Alessandro's research is strongly focused on paper plants and paper production in Tibetan cultural regions. Since 2012 he has started collecting data in the field, examining the rare available research, and translating excerpts of Tibetan treatises devoted to describing paper manufacture, and of Tibetan medical texts mentioning in passing plant employ for paper production. Owing to this experience he participated in workshops on printing technologies in Tibet, organized by MIASU (University of Cambridge), collaborated in the recent exhibition, “Buddha's Word. The Life of Books in Tibet and Beyond”, held at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology of the University of Cambridge, and contributed a paper to a section of its catalogue.

Selected Publications

The “*dByar rtswa dgun 'bu* is a Marvellous Thing”: Some Notes on *Ophiocordyceps sinensis*' Concept among Tibetan People and on its Significance in Tibetan Medicine. (in preparation)

Some remarks on the Tibetan understanding of plant structures and their functions. (in preparation)

2016. Exploring Wood from Ancient Tibetan Book Covers and Block-prints. In *Proceedings of the workshop How to Create a Template for the Identification of Tibetan Xylographs*. 8–9 January 2015 Seminar Room, MIASU, Cambridge. (in preparation).

2016. (with Helman-Ważni). Paper Manufacture According to Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Taye's 19th Century Treatise Treasury of Knowledge. In *Proceedings of the workshop How to Create a Template for the Identification of Tibetan Xylographs*. 8–9 January 2015 Seminar Room, MIASU, Cambridge. (in preparation).

2015. Paper Plants in the Tibetan World: a Preliminary Study. In: *Printing as an Agent of Change in Tibet and Beyond*. Amsterdam, Brill (in print).

2015. Representing medicinal plants in pre-modern Tibet: outline of an ancient illuminated manuscript. *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* (in print).

2014. Traditional knowledge of wild food plants in a few Tibetan communities. *Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine*, 10: 75.
<http://www.ethnobiomed.com/content/10/1/75>

2014. Plants used for Tibetan paper-making. In Elliot M., Diemberger H., Clemente M. (Eds.): *Buddha's Word: The Life of Books in Tibet and Beyond*. Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge University: 95-97.

2014. A Preliminary Report on a Tibetan Materia Medica Illuminated Manuscript. In edited by F. Sferra and Dramdul, *From Mediterranean to Himalaya. A Festschrift to Commemorate the 120th Birthday of the Italian Tibetologist Giuseppe Tucci*. China Tibetology Publishing House, Beijing: 375-434.

2014. The *Materia Medica* of Tibetan Medicine According to Practitioners from the Lower Mustang District in Nepal. *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*. Vol. LXXXVII, 1-4, 73-106.

2012. A Preliminary report on the Art of representing Tibetan Materia Medica. In edited by Elena De Rossi Filibeck: *Tibetan art between past and present: studies dedicated to Luciano Petech*, Proceedings of the Conference held in Rome on the 3rd November 2010, *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*, LXXXIV, 1: 15-24.

2011. Plants in the Tibetan Perception of the Environment. *Asiatica Ambrosiana*, 3: 315-336.

2009 (with Cardi F.). *Cordyceps sinensis* Medicinal Fungus. Traditional Use among Tibetan People, Harvesting Techniques, and Modern Uses. *Herbalgram*, 83: 52-61.

2009. Un antico manoscritto illustrato di materia medica tibetana. *Quaderni Asiatici*, 88: 5-20.

2008. Le Piante Medicinali nella “Scienza della Guarigione” Tibetana. *Collana di letture*. CESMEO, Torino, 1-15.

2007. The Nature of Tibetan Plant Nomenclature. *The Tibet Journal*, Vol. XXXII No. 1: 3-28.

2007. The classification of medicinal plants in Tibetan medicine. In: Bray J. & Shakspe N. T., eds. *Recent Research on Ladakh 2007*. Leh: Jammu & Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages/International Association for Ladakh Studies: 133-140.

2006 (with Cardi F.). Tibetan Herbal Medicine: Classification and Utilization of Natural Products Used as Materia Medica in Tibetan Traditional Medicine. *Herbalgram*, 71: 38-48.

2006 (with Cardi F.). The Selection Process of the *Materia Medica*: the Approach of a Tibetan Practitioner in the Region of Dhorpatan (Nepal). *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*, 1-4: 47-64

2005-2006. Plant Categories and Types in Tibetan Materia Medica. *The Tibet Journal*, Vol. XXX No. 4 Summer 2005 & Vol. XXXI No. 1 Spring 2006: 67-92.

2005. Plant Knowledge among Tibetan Populations. In: A. Boesi & F. Cardi (eds.). *Wildlife and plants in traditional and modern Tibet: conceptions, exploitation, and conservation. Memorie della Società Italiana di Scienze Naturali e del Museo Civico di Storia Naturale di Milano*, 33 (1): 33-48.

2003. The *dByar rtswa dgun 'bu* (*Cordyceps sinensis* Berk.): An Important Trade Item for the Tibetan Population of the Li thang District, Sichuan Province, China. *The Tibet Journal*, vol. XXVIII, 3: 29-42.

2003 (with Cardi F.). The variability of Tibetan *materia medica* and its identification criteria according to Tibetan practitioners: the case of Ladakh, India. *Atti della Società Italiana di Scienze Naturali e del Museo Civico di Storia Naturale di Milano*, 144 (II): 211-230.

1992 (with Marziani Longo G.P., Iannone A.). La végétation de la plaine du Pô et des zones limitrophes du Néolithique ancien à l'Age du Bronze d'après l'analyse des charbons de bois. *Bull. Soc. bot. Fr.*, 139, Actual. bot. (2\3\4): 319-328.

Edited volumes

2005-2006 (with Cardi F.). Contributions to the study of Tibetan medicine. *The Tibet Journal* Vol. XXX No. 4 Summer 2005 & Vol. XXXI No. 1 Spring 2006: 1-172.

2005 (with Cardi F.). Wildlife and Plants in Traditional and Modern Tibet: Conceptions, Exploitation, and Conservation. *Memorie della Società Italiana di Scienze Naturali e del Museo Civico di Storia Naturale di Milano*, 33: 1-88.

Books

Piante medicinali del Tibet. Un antico manoscritto di scienza della guarigione. [Medicinal Plants of Tibet. An Ancient Manuscript of the Science of Healing] Novissimo Ramusio, Roma. (in print)

Tibetan Medicinal Plants. An Illuminated Manuscript of the Tibetan Science of Healing. (forthcoming)