This paper is a first attempt to trace how the Regent Sangye Gyatsho (1653–1705) composed his famous commentary of the Rgyud bzhi, the Blue Beryl (Baidurya sngon po). Some of its textual sources will be introduced and discussed here. I would like to stress that the findings presented here are preliminary in every respect and may need further refinements. Nowadays the Rgyud bzhi forms the pivotal point of traditional medical education. Many commentaries were composed on it.

1 The term baidurya will be rendered here as beryl. For a discussion of this term, see Winder 1987. Bolsokhoyeva (1993: 25) is of the opinion that in all probability the title of vaidurya was given by the Regent as in his other treatises such as the Vaidurya dkar po etc., because the Regent was educated in the monastery Vaidurya ’gro phan lta na ngo mtshar rig byed gling. This appears to be very unlikely to me. A detailed discussion on the precious stone vaidurya is given by the Regent himself in his Dkar chag KCh [455/7–456/26].

2 The study of Taube (1981) and the introduction to the book Tibetan Medical Paintings (1992) by Fernand Meyer were most stimulating and aided the realisation of this paper. Their groundbreaking research is acknowledged here. Beside this, I wish to thank Richard Blitstein/Chicago for his untiring efforts in proof-reading the English version of this paper.

3 Many texts that Sangye Gyatsho used were not at my disposal and some of them are not extant anymore. Most important among them is certainly the medical history of Blo gros rgyal po (Sman pa rnams kyi sngon mi shes su mi rung ba'i shes bya spyi'i khog dbubs. Che’eng tu: Si khrun mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2001). A good overview is given by Taube (1981: 73 ff). At the time of his research, however, he was not able to rely on the most important source of the regent, the Khog ’bugs. Therefore, the outline presented by him is affected by this lack of information. Moreover, since then the situation regarding published Tibetan medical treatises has dramatically changed. Nevertheless, for my list of the sources of Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho given below I used the one prepared by Taube 1981 as a starting point (ibid.: 74ff). This appeared feasible to me due to the limited space of this paper. Furthermore, I would like to emphasise that a thorough survey of the entire Blue Beryl will reveal a few more medical texts than those used by the Regent. For example, in the chapter on smallpox (’brum) a treatise on the treatment of contagious diseases (Gnyan rims kyi bcos) is cited. This work is said to have been composed by one Zur sman Legs bshad 'tshol, VNg [666/20], alias Zur mkhar ba Blo gros rgyal po (1509–1579). His personal name was Legs bshad ’tshol. A work under this title, however, is not found among his works known today.
The Blue Beryl was, and still is, regarded as one of the most authoritative among them. However, until now, nothing substantial has been known about how Sangye Gyatsho created this work and no evaluation has been made of its place among the history of the commentaries of the Rgyud bzhi. In a rough outline, the present article will introduce the medical discourse of the 17th–18th century period in which the author and his Blue Beryl were embedded. It will explore his links, by way of some of his teachers, to the Byang pa and Zur pa medical schools that represent the main traditions in Tibetan medicine at that time. Furthermore, a few short case studies will be introduced to shed some light on his working procedure during his composition of the Blue Beryl.

THE FIFTH DALAI LAMA’S SUPPORT OF TIBETAN MEDICINE AND THE MEDICAL DISCOURSE IN THE 17TH CENTURY

The well-known and outstanding career of Sangye Gyatsho, called the ‘Regent’ for short in this article, was fostered by the Fifth Dalai Lama Blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617–1682) who was also influential in guiding him on his first steps in the field of medicine. Later he imparted upon him two important teachings—the Compendium of Practical Advice (Man ngag snying po bsdus pa) composed by Shakya dbang phyug (b.15th/16th cent.) and the Ten Million Relics (Bye ba ring bsrel) by Mnyam nyi rdo rje (1439–1475). In comparision to his other proclivities, however, the Fifth Dalai Lama was not very interested in medicine and his knowledge in this area always remained limited. Nevertheless, he promoted medical sciences in many ways, mostly by initiating new

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4 This is also acknowledged by himself. In his voluminous record of teachings received (gsan yig) merely one folio is devoted to his medical education. He admits that he did not study the Indian and Chinese medical treatises such as the Yan lag brgyad pa and the So ma ra dza. Instead, he focussed on the authorative texts that were revealed as treasures (rnying ma bka’ gter) like the Rgyud bzhi and the Bdud rtsi bum pa. SY-NgBBZGTsh vol. 1 [39/5–41/1]. In his autobiography the Dalai Lama says under the entry of the year 1639 that he learned the Rtsa rgyud and the Bshad rgyud. Their arboreal metaphors of classification (rde’u ’grems) were explained to him by Byang ngos nas Gzhan phan dbang po, NgBBZGTsh-NTh I [183/14]. The following year he studied the Phyi rgyud and the Man ngag rgyud, [194/13–19]. The report of Sangs rgyas rgya mthso is in agreement with this but in addition he gives two teachings—the Bye ba ring bsrel and the Nyams yig brgya rtsa, and furthermore he says that he practised the instructions of the G.yu thog snying tig, KhB [368/1–7]. The Dalai Lama had intensive-ly studied the Root, Explanation and Subsequent Tantras of the Rgyud bzhi, KhB [381/611]. See also VS [384/8–10], [388/12–14]. Cf. also Ahmad 1999: 260.