

**The making of the *Blue Beryl*: some remarks on the textual  
sources of the famous commentary of Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho  
(1653–1705)**

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The 'Four Treatises' (*rgyud bzhi*) as it is widely known formed the pivotal point of medical writings on Tibetan medicine. Many commentaries were written on its behalf. Among them one finds two composed by Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (1653–1705): one that covers the whole range of topics found in the *rgyud bzhi*: the *Blue Beryl* (*vaidurya sngon po*), one that focuses on the third part of the *rgyud bzhi*: the 'Supplement' (*lhan thabs*). Both can be regarded as some of the most influential medical treatises and were a hallmark for Tibetan medicine at the end of the 17th century. Even nowadays they still have highly valued position in medical thinking on the *rgyud bzhi*. As it is known Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho was assisted in his task by the celebrated physician Dar mo 'Tsho byed Blo bzang chos grags also shortly called Dar mo sMan rams pa. Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho although highly educated was not a doctor himself. Until now, however, no thoroughly study on the sources on which Sangs rgya rgya mtsho has relied has been undertaken. Admittedly this paper too cannot fill this gap but only call its importance into the attention of the audience. The paper aims on showing the diversity of opinions found in the medical treatises that were reshaped and brought into a single one by Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho that is nowadays a standard. Some of the medical treatises out of which his *Blue Beryl* (*vaidurya sngon po*) was created will be introduced here such as the 'Medical Treatments, A Royal Treasury' (*gso dpyad rgyal po'i dkon mdzod*) composed by Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1147- 1216), the 'Instructions of the Grandfather' (*mes po'i zhal lung*) written by Zur mkhar ba Blo gros rgyal po (b.1509), 'Ten Million Relics' (*bye ba ring bsrel*) of Zur mkhar ba Chos rje mNyam nyid rdo rje (1439–1475) or the 'Practices of Medical Treatments, A Source for All What is Desired' (*gso dpyad kyi lag len dgos 'dod kun 'byung*) by bDud rtsi 'gyur med (16th cent.). A few words of assessment on them should be given as for instance on the work attributed to Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1147–1216). This medical treatise in its form known today seems be rather a compilation done by Sa skya Pandita Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (1182–1251). To retrace how Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho made use of its sources and to establish something of a scale of reliability or authority among these textual compositions a comparison will be done of what all these treatises have to say on specific medical topics. When certain methods of treatment were discussed the sources differ in some points like measures of diet or more significantly on which vertebrae moxibustion has to applied. In some instances one is left with the impression that Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho has preferred the *gso dpyad kyi lag len dgos 'dod kun 'byung* of bDud rtsi 'gyur med (16th cent.) and regarded him as the most authoritative.

By presenting these initial findings it is intended to make one beware of the diversity of approaches within Tibetan medicine through a critical examination of its textual tradition.