



Secret Visions of the Fifth Dalai Lama

Samten Gyaltsen Karmay

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This beautiful Tibetan manuscript from the Fournier Collection at the Musee Guimet, Paris, recounts in words and images the visionary experiences of the Great Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Lobzang Gyamtso (1617-1682). It is the sole illustrated secret autobiography of a Tibetan lama known to exist and was until recently concealed both from Tibetans and others alike. Although it never circulated outside his personal court, the Dalai Lama clearly states that it was composed and executed "in order to guide the uninitiated andfor all those who wish to do drawings and paintings of the heavens".

The 67 illustrations, reproduced in full color, contain a total of around 886 individual subjects and consist of diptychs and triptychs which are grouped into five sections associated with the main participating deities. They represent the finest-known quality in miniature style Tibetan art and stand as the earliest manifestation of the 'black thangka' style of painting. The leaves are executed in gold, silver, subtle greens, blues and reds against a charcoal black background. Up to 48 different ritual objects can be depicted in an illustration and all have been full identified in the corresponding captions, with their ritual use explained in a comprehensive Glossary.



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