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# PRESENTING THE MANUSCRIPT

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## THE ILLUSTRATED MANUSCRIPT OF THE FIFTH DALAI LAMA'S "THE SECRET VISIONARY AUTOBIOGRAPHY" PRESERVED IN THE ST. PETERSBURG BRANCH OF THE INSTITUTE OF ORIENTAL STUDIES

### I. Introduction

The Fifth Dalai Lama Ngag-dbang blo-bzang rgya-mtsho (1617—1682), who is the only one in his lineage to be called “the Great” by the Tibetan tradition, is celebrated as an outstanding statesman and a prolific writer on various topics. Though his “Collected Works” (Tib. *gsung-'bum*) number twenty-five Tibetan-style volumes, they are not at all his complete *opera omnia*.

One of the most distinguished among his exoteric works not included into his *gsung-'bum* is the “The Secret Visionary Autobiography” (*rNam thar rgya can*) (henceforth *VA*). The works of that kind were not uncommon for the Tibetan Buddhism, and “the focus upon dreams and visions that occurs in certain Tibetan autobiographies” [1] has found its realization *par excellence* in the Dalai Lama's composition. A volume of illustrations for the *VA*, which were drawn according to the Dalai Lama's instructions, attests the importance he himself attached to his mystical experiences: his “external” autobiography did not have that privilege. These illustrations have become famous due to the publication of the album by Dr. Samten Karmay who also took a painstaking work of identifying every tiny object depicted in the manuscript which is preserved now in the collection of Lionel Fournier in Paris [2]. The book by Samten Karmay is well-known to tibetologists and needs no special presentation. The present article aims at providing essential information about the materials on the *VA* found in the collections of St. Petersburg.

The St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies possesses a two-volume manuscript copy of the *VA* which is the most complete of its versions so far known (their call numbers are Tib. B 9517 and Tib. B 9518). These *pothi*-style volumes are written on brownish Tibetan paper; the average size of the folios is 55 × 10 cm. The text consists of three major parts: 1. the “Mother” (*ma*) section; 2. the “Son” (*bu*) section; 3. illustrations. It seems that a manuscript written in a kind of the *dbu-med* script served as a model for the copyist who failed in some cases to understand correctly some spellings.

Almost all the “Mother” section text is known to tibetologists through the publication of its twenty-five chapters made in Ladakh and of its twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh chapters in the work by Samten Karmay [3]. The “Son” section is much less known. A catalogue of the two-volume manuscript collection entitled *gSang ba rgya can*, which is preserved in China, has been published within the catalogue of the “Complete Works” by the dGe-lugs-pa School masters (henceforth *CS*; a full name of the catalogue is given at the end of the article, see *Abbreviations*) [4]. These two volumes represent the “Mother” section which contains only twenty-five *rgya-cans*, and the “Son” section though not bearing such titles. I was unable to locate the corresponding titles in the St. Petersburg manuscript for a half of the works, mostly of small size, listed in the *CS*. But since the *CS* provides only a brief information about the work's titles (shortened ones) and on the number of pages, it is obvious that one needs much more data concerning the Chinese manuscript to make any sound identifications. Several of the small works were published in the Karmay's book (see the catalogue of the “Son” section in this article).

The origin of these two titles is obvious: the “Mother” section is a description of visions and revelations obtained by the Fifth Dalai Lama, while the “Son” section mainly contains the instructions concerning the rituals to be performed on the basis of the precepts revealed [5]. The author of the present article gives but a brief description of these works, indicating: 1) the number of pages; 2) availability of the colophons (abbreviated as col.); 3) the date of composition; 4) the author's name. As for the first twenty-five chapters of the “Mother” section, only their titles are given.

The rNying-ma-pa sources' information on the work runs as follows: “He [the Fifth Dalai Lama — V. U.] named the twenty-five treatises *gSang-ba-rgya-can*. He composed supplements which fill two further volumes [these two seem to be the “Son” section and a volume of illustrations — V. U.]. The Fifth Dalai Lama handed down these books (*gter-ma*) to *Chos-rgyal gTer-bdag-gling-pa* and *Rig-'dsin*