



# The Illusive Play: The Autobiography of the Fifth Dalai Lama

*Samten Gyaltsen Karmay*

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The Illusive Play: The Autobiography of the Fifth Dalai Lama is an English translation of the autobiography of Ngagwang Lobzang Gyatsho, the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617-1682). The work is of exceptional value because it has taken such care to give a precise chronology throughout its entire length. Lobzang Gyatsho's autobiography is therefore a veritable witness to the life and culture of Tibet in the 17th century, which was a formative period for the establishment of the Tibetan Buddhist theocracy. In addition, the major events in which he himself played a pivotal role are presented: the overthrow of the king of Tsang, the creation of the Tibetan theocratic state with the founding of the Gaden Phodrang government, the building of the Potala Palace and the undertaking of major diplomatic relationships with foreign powers, such as the Mongols and the Manchu empire. All these events are either alluded to or fully recounted in a personal way, so that on reading them one cannot help but feel the momentous occasions which the author recounts from his own experience.

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