

Basic Detail Report



Five Cosmogenic Elements; Text and Illuminations of the Hundred Peaceful and Wrathful Deities of the Intermediate State (Bardo)

Date

ca. 15th century

Medium

Pigments on cloth

Description

This is the uppermost page of a manuscript that illustrates the contents of the Bardo Thodrol known as the Tibetan Book of the Dead in the West—a teaching revealed by treasure revealer Karma Lingpa (14th century), which describes the intermediate state between death and rebirth, known as the bardo. This section of the manuscript depicts five circles that serve as a mnemonic symbol of the five elements that constitute our psychophysical individuality: earth (yellow), water (white), fire (red), air (green), and space or quintessence (blue). They dissolve in succession at the time of death, thus propelling the mental principle of the deceased into the bardo of the afterlife.

Dimensions

2 5/8 x 12 in. (6.7 x 30.5 cm)