



# IDENTIFYING THE MONASTERIES AND TEMPLES WITH MAMBA DASTAN AND TREASURE HOUSE, ESTABLISHED BEFORE THE 20TH CENTURY IN ÖMNÖGOVI AIMAG

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## KEYWORDS

Medical schools (*Mamba datsan*); treasure house; Manal; Otoch; Mamba

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## ABSTRACT

Researchers of traditional Mongolian medicine have been intensively studying the number of Mamba datsan (Medical schools) with treasure houses called Manal jas, Otoch jas, and Mamba jas that existed in Mongolia before the 20th century. In addition, research works have been underway to identify the names of the repressed lama doctors and maarambas since 1937 and to study their biographies and medical works. Within the framework of this research work, we conducted a study for the first time to identify the old Mamba datsan and monasteries with treasure houses of the Manal, Otoch, and Mamba established in Ömnögovi aimag, one of Mongolia's 21 Aimags. In conducting this study, we first compiled a list of the number of Mamba datsan, treasure houses of the Manal, Otoch,

and Mamba of the monasteries and temples established in Ömnögovi aimag. After that, the GPS navigation determines the geographical coordinates of the monasteries and temples also their location in real-time, including latitude and longitude, at the current time. Then, a 1:650000 scale map of the area was drawn and processed. Finally, the map of the monastery with the Mamba datsan, treasure houses of the Manal, Otoch, and Mamba, was taken and verified, and the date of its establishment, description, and the names, biographies, and works of some lama doctors and maarambas who lived in the monastery were clarified. Conclusion: In the territory of present-day Ömnögovi aimag, 22 old monasteries and 24 temples established since the mid-20th century were identified, and a new 1:650,000

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scale map of their location was drawn, creating the opportunity to use them in future training and research.

**Conclusion:** In the territory of present-day Ömnögovı aimag, 22 old monasteries and 24 temples established since the mid-20th century were identified, and a new 1:650,000 scale map of their location was drawn, creating the opportunity to use them in future training and research.

## INTRODUCTION

As researchers in traditional medicine, we have the responsibility to study and preserve the rich legacy of our healing arts. This includes investigating the number of Mamba datsans, Manal, Otoch, and Mamba with treasure-house and documenting the doctors and healers who were persecuted from 1937 onwards<sup>1</sup>. We must gather their names, biographies, and works to ensure that future generations can be proud of them. In fulfilling this responsibility, it is crucial to clarify when the founders of Mongolian medical history and the practitioners of healing arts lived, which schools and monasteries they graduated from, what works they contributed, how they treated patients, and how they became renowned. This has both theoretical and practical significance.

Particularly, a key area of focus is the examination of those specialized in healing methods, which have distinct characteristics compared to other scholars in the medical field, especially those from the southern Mongolian Gobi region. The “Gobi healers” held unique positions within the community, and their treatments and works, based on both traditional knowledge and the local environment, were distinct from those of other medical practitioners. The southern region of Mongolia comprises 33 different Gobis, with the largest being the Galbyn Gobi. The Galbyn Gobi extends over 200 kilometers in length and approximately 50 kilometers in width, covering an area of 70,000 square kilometers in the southern part of the Ömnögovı province, particularly in the Khanbogd district<sup>2</sup>.

The Galbiin Gobi has long hidden great treasures, which have now become known<sup>3</sup>. Within these treasures are the lives, struggles, creations, treatment methods,

and preventive techniques of the healers born from the Gobi. The raw materials for medicines derived from animals, plants, and minerals, their pharmacological properties, and the significance of their compositions remain valuable to this day. The need to study and document this accumulated knowledge, incorporate it into research, and apply certain insights, diagnostic techniques, and treatment methods to address pressing health issues is more urgent than ever and continues to be felt in society.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Drone photography method

When using drones for photography, it is essential to control the height and angle to capture the best possible image. The image is distinctive because it shows perspectives that we might not usually see. To zoom in or out of the subject, the smooth movement of the joystick shifts the focus from the main object to the landscape and background. This technique not only ensures high-quality images but also blurs the background, highlighting the main subject. When taking pictures, we carefully considered using GoPro, which produces high-quality images and combined them with photos taken with traditional DSLR cameras.

### Inventory or Checklist method

The inventory method is used to list the types of objects and their surrounding components, comparing and categorizing them according to the project's objectives. This method was particularly useful in identifying and classifying the names and classifications of old-time Mamba datsans, treasure houses of Manal, Otoch, and Mamba monasteries and temples in the Ömnögovı province. It was also used to list the names of the doctors and healers who had worked in these sites.

## RESULTS

For centuries, Mongolian monasteries and temples have been a central focus of Mongolian culture, science, medicine, religion, and daily life. These sites are critical to our heritage and history. Due to several historical events in the past century, many

monasteries across Mongolia were destroyed, leaving few remaining. Notable ones that have survived include Erdene Zuu, Sangiin Dalai, Gandantegchinlin, Choijin Lama Temple, and Amarbayasgalant Monastery<sup>4</sup>. In 1944, Gandantegchinlin Temple was restored, and since the 1990s, several other monasteries have been reopened, but the authentic records and historical remains are scarce, mostly consisting of ruins, with few oral accounts left. This has created risks of distorting the historical truth, and the lack of authentic documents continues to pose a serious problem<sup>5</sup>.

In recent years, several research books and pamphlets by scholars of traditional medicine and individuals have been published. Therefore, we have taken the opportunity to clarify misunderstandings by revising the historical data, using modern technological advancements to document geographical coordinates accurately, and mapping the locations of monasteries and temples. Since 2018, we have begun research into the monasteries in Ömnögovi province.

#### **Including:**

#### **- Monasteries marked on the map of Ömnögovi province**

1. Uuljargalant monastery
2. Baishint monastery
3. Zoorin monastery
4. Doloo Shar Zag Monastery
5. Ovoot monastery
6. Khaniin Tsagaan Suvraga monastery
7. Zasgiin Shuteen Monastery
8. Tsohiot monastery
9. Sangiin Dalai monastery
10. Ekhen Zag monastery
11. Agui monastery
12. Bag Tod monastery
13. Tsagaan Tolgoi monastery
14. Tsogzol monastery

15. Ongiin Khuree Monastery
16. Balgas monastery
17. Tavan Khovoot Monastery
18. Tsagaan Uul monastery
19. Shiluustei monastery
20. Baruun Suu monastery
21. Sain Bichigt monastery
22. Ulaan Ergi monastery

#### **- The congregation marked on the map of Ömnögovi province**

1. Tsagaan Ders monastery
2. Nalikh monastery
3. Zuun Uujim monastery
4. Suvraga monastery
5. Shar Khuls monastery
6. Baynbulag monastery
7. Duch monastery
8. Khar Noyn monastery
9. Ganzgat monastery
10. Ganzgat monastery
11. Urtiin monastery
12. Tsalgai monastery
13. Dugan Gol monastery
14. Tsagaan Suvraga monastery
15. Alag Bayn Monastery
16. Tsagaan Tolgoi monastery and its subordinates  
Demchig monastery
17. Tsagaan Tolgoi Monastery and its subordinates  
Ulaan Sakhius monastery
18. Maani monastery
19. Shar Dov monastery
20. Avrakh monastery
21. Lun monastery
22. Khoolt monastery
23. Shar Del monastery
24. Goyot monastery

While researching these monasteries, we found discrepancies in the names of soums mentioned in historical records, which no longer match the current administrative divisions. For example, monasteries once located in areas now known as Javkhant, Buyant-Ovoo, Bayasgalant, and Munkh-Ovoo are listed differently in historical documents. Some of these areas and their associated monasteries and halls were included in the

early part of the book, with chronological records of the province's administrative boundaries. According to the Special Archives of the General Intelligence Agency and the provincial archives, there were 52 monasteries in Ömnögovi province, and 46 monasteries and ruins were identified within 13 of the 15 soums of the province, with their geographical coordinates correctly mapped for the first time using modern technology (Picture 1).



Figure 1. A map of Ömnögovi province indicating all monasteries and congregation established before the early 20th century.

In the next phase of the research, the photographs of the monasteries and temples that were established in Ömnögovi province will be verified, along with details such as their founding dates,

descriptions, and the names, biographies, and works of some of the doctors and healers who served there. We also determined that out of the 46 monasteries and temples in Ömnögovi, there were seven monasteries and temples with Mamba datsans, 18 were treasure houses of Manal, Otoch, and Mamba temples and halls (Picture 2).

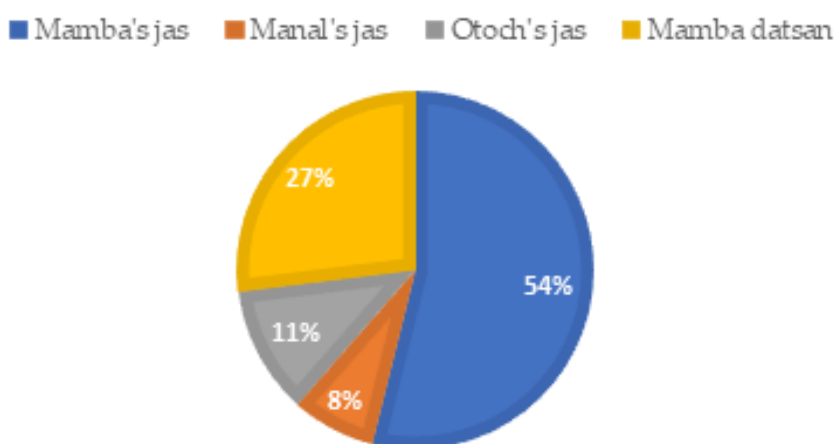


Figure 2. Temples and congregations, including Manal, Mamba, and Otoch with treasure houses established in Ömnögovi province before the early 20<sup>th</sup> century



## DISCUSSION

Our research is the first to compile a survey of rural monasteries, temples and treasure houses by soum and verify it with archival documents, and currently covers all soums of Ömnögovi aimag. The research was conducted between September 2018 and October 2019, visiting 46 temple and monastery ruins in Ömnögovi aimag, taking photographs, recording, and establishing geographical coordinates, and was confirmed by sources from the General Archives Department, The National Library Archive, Archival materials stored in the Special Archives of the General Intelligence Agency, as well as the State archives of Ömnögovi province from the 1930s and 1940s. The evidence found to the best of our knowledge was included in this study, and based on the main evidence from the original Mongolian script, it was translated into Cyrillic and used<sup>6,7,8</sup>. Between 1931 and 1938, a total of 41 temples and monasteries were active and contributed taxes in Umnugovi aimag. The Khoolt monastery in Sevrei soum was attacked by bandits and was likely destroyed during the retreat of Chinese forces in 1921. The Shar Del monastery in Nomgon soum disbanded before 1931, while the Goyot monastery in Gurvantes soum was absent from tax records after 1931. Additionally, the Ulaan Sakhius and Demchig monasteries were under the jurisdiction of the Tsagaantolgoi Monastery and did not pay independent

taxes. Consequently, these five monasteries were excluded from the total count and included only as general information<sup>9</sup>.

We also determined that out of the 46 monasteries and temples in Ömnögovi, there were seven monasteries and temples with Mamba datsans, 2 were treasure houses of Manal, 3 to Otoch, and 14 to Mamba temples, respectively. We mapped the locations of the identified Mamba datsans and the treasure houses of Manal, Mamba, and Otoch, creating a new map with detailed annotations. In the 18th century, significant advancements were made in various fields of knowledge and intellectual thought in Mongolian society. Numerous translations and commentaries on the Five Minor Sciences were widely published and distributed to nearly all monasteries and temples across the provinces, where they were studied extensively. Among these texts, the Mamba Datsan, which adopted the flow of the “Four Tantras” as its central theoretical and methodological guide, has continuously innovated and adapted its traditions, surviving and thriving into the 21st century<sup>10</sup>. It remains crucial to study and identify the scientifically grounded aspects of the traditional schools that trained physicians and to further develop them for the future.

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