

Siberians Fight Scythian Mummy's 'Curse'

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An ancient mummy found in the Altai Mountains is responsible for the area's worst flooding in 50 years, local activists and shamans said, Interfax reported Monday.

A petition for the reinterment of the 2,500-year-old "Altai Princess" is presently under way, in a drive to spare the Republic of Altai her posthumous wrath, Interfax said Monday.

The mummy, also referred to as Oochy-Bala, has also launched earthquakes and caused a spike in suicides in the Siberian region, one of the campaigners was cited as saying.

"Naked and defenseless, Ooch-Bala is freezing from inexplicable shame," the petition's organizers said in a statement cited by local news site Amic.ru.

"Who puts up the naked corpse of their mother for public display? She knocks into our heart, seeking compassion. She is cold from evil indifference," added the flowery statement.

Fifteen of the Siberian republic's 106 cities have backed the petition drive so far, ITAR-Tass said.

Local officials pledged to consider the request, the news agency said.

The mummy, unearthed in 1993 and presently on display in Altai, belongs to the Pazyryk culture, a Scythian-Siberian people who lived between the eighth and third centuries BCE.

The woman, also known as the "Siberian Ice Maiden," was about 25 at the time of her death. Her arm tattoos and rich clothes indicate that she dwelled among society's upper echelons, though she may not necessarily have been royal.

The "Altai Princess" became the instant stuff of legend in the Siberian republic, where campaigns for her reburial flare up regularly, usually timed to coincide with local elections.

Altai has been hit with the worst flooding in 50 years this summer, with three neighboring regions also affected. At least six people died, and damages were estimated at almost 5 billion rubles (\$140 million).

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