

Mummified Baby Unearthed in Altai

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The infant's remains were unearthed during excavations in Altai's Kosh-Agachsky district.

Archaeologists in the southern Siberian republic of Altai announced Tuesday the discovery of a mummified young child believed to have lived more than 1,500 years ago.

The infant's remains were unearthed during excavations in Altai's Kosh-Agachsky district abutting Mongolia, China and Kazakhstan, according to a statement on the website of Gorno-Altai State University, that financed the expedition to the site endangered by erosion.

“There was no earth in a tightly shut box that was the tomb of the baby, and the body had been isolated in this air chamber for more than 1,500 years,” the statement said.

It was not immediately clear the ethnic or cultural group to which it belonged or the circumstances of the child's death — scientists stressed that the mummification was not deliberate — but the university said genetic testing could shed light on migration flows in Siberia and Central Asia.

“Dried soft body tissue and a leather shroud in which the child was wrapped have been partially preserved,” the university said.

Altai's climate is particularly conducive to the preservation of human remains and a number of significant finds have been made in the region, including the 1993 discovery of a 2,500-year-old Scythian woman's mummified corpse, dubbed The Ice Princess.

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