

2000-year-old mummy found near Russian reservoir

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Credit: Marina Kilunovskaya

A team of researchers from St Petersburg's Institute of History of Material Culture [has found](#) the naturalized remains of a mummy in an ancient gravesite near the Sayano-Shushenskaya Dam in Russia. In speaking with the press, the researchers reported that the remains were those of a mummified young girl lying in a stone gravesite and that they believe she lived almost 2000 years ago.

The archaeologists reported that along with the [remains](#), there was a belt with beads and a buckle made of jet, a vase resembling those used by Huns of the period, and a box made of birch wood that held a small mirror. Other assorted ceramic utensils were also found. Initial examination of the mummified remains revealed patches of skin, soft tissue and cloth remnants that appeared to be made of silk.

The researchers noted that the area where the grave was found is normally underwater, but this year, the reservoir created by the dam was abnormally low, exposing ground that had been submerged since the 1980s. As the researchers were exploring the exposed land last month, they came upon the tomb.

The researchers suggest the clothing and materials in the grave indicate the girl was likely a nomadic Hun—likely one of high regard. She could have been part of the nobility. They also note that the vase contained what appeared to be a funeral meal and that a sack of pine nuts had been placed on her chest. The Huns, the researchers note, lived in parts of what is now modern China and Siberia almost 2000 years ago. They were migratory, and prior studies have shown they tended to mix with local people.

The remains and other artifacts have been removed from the gravesite and have been transported to a location suitable for studying them. The researchers report that a lot of work is required to learn more about the girl's origins and how she came to be mummified. They will also be working to understand how her remains and other artifacts were able to withstand being submerged under the reservoir for over 30 years.

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