

In Honor of Altai Elders

by Carol Hiltner

An international perspective on the importance of Altai, for inclusion in a new (2011) book by Svetlana Katynova on the traditions of Ust Koksa region (including Mt. Belukha)

Mountain Altai is virtually unknown in the West. However, the Light Beings of Altai speak in people's dreams all over the world, re-orienting people's lives through these "visits." Two or three times a year, I get e-mails from people who have found my English-language website about Altai. They say, "I am called to Altai, and I cannot ignore this request. But, what is Altai?"

It was because of such dreams that I first came to Altai in 1999, and returned again each year for a decade. I feel the energy at Mt. Belukha so strongly that I get physically disoriented if I try to approach the mountain any closer than Lake Ak-kem at the base of the mountain. At the same time, as a result of approaching as close as the lake, my health has noticeably improved each year. I find that, when I am back in Seattle, my consciousness is still within that energy field. People who are aware of energy fields can distinguish the Altai energy that flows through me, and can also feel these fields in even reproductions of the paintings I have made of my visions.

However, the energy of Altai is not a gentle phenomenon. Not only are the weather and landscape extreme here, but the effect on the human psyche is equally extreme. I have come to understand that what I experience in Altai is clearly my own projection. If someone bothers me, he or she is simply reflecting the issues that I have brought. Thereby, the energy of Altai allows (or forces) one to notice one's own personal issues, and provides the opportunity to release or clear them. Until visitors learn this, interpersonal relationships are legendarily tumultuous!

It seems that the veil between dimensions is thin in Altai. It is breathtaking to me to see visions of Light Beings and angels. It is even more startling that I met person after person who also could see them, and then discovered that the indigenous Altai "religion" of White Burhan is based exactly on these interactions through the millennia.

Before I ever came to Altai, the Light Beings made sure I understood that the indigenous Altai people are the sacred stewards of this land. Russian language has come slowly for me, so it was several years before I could to converse with locals. Even so, I noticed two things that concerned me: 1) to the extent that Western culture had entered this area, the environment was damaged both by indigenous Altai people and by ethnic Russians; and 2) the sacred culture of the Altai people was completely invisible to the ethnic Russians.

Because environmental degradation of pristine wilderness areas with garbage and defoliation has been actively addressed for the mountains around my native Seattle, I noticed the damage done by human impact around Mt. Belukha and was moved to do something about it. As I was receiving such personal, spiritual gifts from visiting Mt. Belukha, I felt a deep need to return in kind. I have done this by

organizing clean-ups around Mt. Belukha, and also by pressing the necessity of such stewardship on anyone with whom I could communicate.

These efforts gradually led me into relationships with the local Altai people. As I encountered true Altai wisdom-keepers, I became increasingly appreciative of how utterly different the Altai culture is from the Western culture that I know. From this I began to understand how fundamental global indigenous cultures are to the health of the planet (including humanity, of course).

For those of European heritage (including ethnic Russians, especially since *perestroika*), "reality" is framed in Western terms of "power over." Thus, the indigenous viewpoint of "power with" is either invisible or considered hopelessly stupid. As a woman—even a Western woman—the "power with" mentality is also natural to me, and it is alarming to me to see the flooding tide of Westernization in Altai, even in the past decade.

What indigenous people have that I don't, however, is an ancient cultural heritage. Globally, it seems to be an era of re-emergence—of knitting back together—for indigenous cultures, even in the face of unspeakable hardships and disenfranchisement. Deep connection with their own ancient wisdom and traditions seem to be rising. So the second place where I have found that I can be of service—to both indigenous peoples and to Westerners starving for connection with Mother Earth and Father Sky—is to focus Western resources on the re-constitution of robust indigenous cultures, starting with Altai, from whence many indigenous cultures originated, globally. In this way, sustainable ways of being can be fostered for all of humanity.

It seems that all Altai people know of the prophecy that out of Altai will come hope for the world. I haven't heard from them exactly how they envision this happening. But I have heard from ethnic Russians that the "Mother of the World" will lead a thousand warriors of Light in a final battle (or some variation on that theme).

I have come to understand, thanks to the Light Beings who guide my way, that the swords of these warriors are swords of discernment, to cut away pain, suffering, fear, and death. Instead of bringing death, they bring life: life in right relationship with the Cosmos.

This brings me full circle to the importance of re-gathering and implementing the ramblings of the elders and wisdom-keepers. The reason their mumblings might be hard to understand is that they speak with a depth that is beyond our comprehension. What is it worth to have the blindfolds cut from our eyes?