INTERNATIONAL MAPPING PROJECT THE ATLAS OF GREATER ALTAI: NATURE, HISTORY, CULTURE AS THE FOUNDATION FOR MODELS OF SUSTAINABLE
INTERNATIONAL MAPPING PROJECT “THE ATLAS OF GREATER ALTAI: NATURE, HISTORY, CULTURE” AS THE FOUNDATION FOR MODELS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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https://doi.org/10.24057/2071-9388-2014-7-1-99-108

Abstract

The paper presents the concept and approaches to the creation of a special interdisciplinary Atlas of Greater Altai. The main objective of the Atlas is to ensure the maximal possible access of the international community to reliable, current, and accurate spatial information on the transboundary Greater Altai region. The paper discusses the preconditions that facilitate the development of this unique cartographic product, the main sections of its structure (nature, history, and culture), and the main themes of its maps. The paper demonstrates the need for geoinformation support and a web-based version of the GIS-based Atlas. The Atlas can be used in decision-making in the scope of the international cross-border cooperation in the Altai region.

Keywords

Altai, GreaterAltai, the Altai region, Atlas of Greater Altai, GIS, web-atlas

For citation:

Views: 190

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THE CHINESE INITIATIVE "THE BELT AND ROAD": A GEOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVE
Vol 10, No 1 (2017)

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Vol 10, No 1 (2017)

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Vol 10, No 1 (2017)

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Vol 10, No 3 (2017)

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Vol 10, No 1 (2017)

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Vol 9, No 3 (2016)
Altai is a harmonious co-existence of humanity and nature. This is traditional wisdom of the people of Russia's Altai Republic, located at the crossroads of China, Kazakhstan and Mongolia. The mountains here host rich indigenous culture that has protected the natural environment for countless generations. Through the centuries, Altaians have developed a unique ecological culture, including an entire spectrum of moral values and an unusual philosophical view of the world. Altai's mountains are sacred places to the clans and tribes of the indigenous population. Chagat Almashev is the director of the Foundation for Sustainable Development of Altai (FSDA), an NGO focused on conservation of natural and cultural heritage of local and indigenous communities. photo courtesy the Altai Project

The Ukok Plateau is a scared place for the Telengit people of Russia's Altai Republic. Part of the plateau is a UNESCO World Heritage site. Deep in the Siberian south, tucked along Russia's border with Kazakhstan, China, and Mongolia, lies the Altai – a fairy tale land of snow-capped peaks, deep crystal lakes, and rare wild animals. Altaians fear that China is using the pipeline as a wedge to open up that border in order to have easier access to Russia's natural resources. The pipeline can be opposed on legal grounds, says Urmat Knyazev, an Altai Republic deputy and an elected leader of the greater Altai Indigenous community. For historical and geopolitical reasons, the Pivot became the natural center of force. Mackinder also identified the "inner crescent," coinciding with the Eurasian coastal areas. He described these as the area of the most intensive civilizational development. It included Europe and Southern, Southwestern, and Eastern Asia. There was also the "outer crescent," which included Britain, South and North America, Southern Africa, Australasia and Japan, zones geographically and culturally alien to inner Eurasia.