

Otzi “The Ice Man” Revealed

Otzi “The Ice Man” Revealed by Deepa Gopal

Courtesy of Youngzine: <http://www.youngzine.org/article/otzi-ice-man-revealed>

Annotations and Notes



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It is referred to as the world’s oldest murder mystery. In 1991, a German couple hiking off the beaten path in the Ötztal Alps—a mountain range that separates Austria and Italy—ran into a grizzly find: a skeleton with its upper body sticking out of a melting **glacier**. At first, they believed it to be the body of a mountaineer, but as authorities continued digging further, they realized this was no ordinary man.

Next to the body were a copper axe, a knife with flint-stone blade, a **quiver** full of arrows, a fire-starting kit, two baskets containing berries, and other Stone Age tools. Here was the skeleton of a 5,300-year-old man that had been mummified by ice and was very well **preserved**. He belonged to the Copper Age—a period in human history between the Stone Age and Bronze Age when copper was used for making tools.

The “Ice Man” was named Otzi after the Ötztal Alps where he was found.

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glacier: a very large area of ice that moves slowly down a slope or valley or over a wide area of land

quiver: a case used for carrying arrows

preserve: to keep (something) in its original state or in good condition

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How did Otzi die?

Based on his fine woven-grass cloak and coat, leggings, leather shoes, and tools he was carrying, scientists conclude that Otzi might have had a respectable social standing in his community. He may have belonged to an agricultural community, as there were grains, deer meat, and herb bread detected in the contents of his intestine. It also appeared that he had just eaten a big meal. What then was he doing 10,500 feet up in the Italian Alps? Was he a weary traveler who had collapsed from hunger and tiredness?

Nearly a decade after his skeleton was discovered, scientists ran into something they had missed earlier in x-ray scans: an arrowhead mark in his left shoulder. The pieces of the puzzle were falling in place. Otzi was likely fleeing his attackers, and just when he thought he had given them the slip and finished feasting on a meal, one or more of them had caught up with him. He **succumbed** to an arrow, and perhaps died within a few hours.

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succumb: to fail to resist, or to die

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<p>The latest discovery</p> <p>Analysis of the skeleton showed that Otzi was a 5-foot-2-inch-tall, 46-year-old man with long brown hair and brown eyes. We now know a lot more thanks to a recently completed DNA map. According to scientists, had Otzi not died from an arrow, he would have surely died from heart disease. He was predisposed to a heart condition, and had thickened arteries. This find is very important, because so far, heart disease had been thought to be a modern-day condition due to lack of exercise. But it appears our ancestors who led a much more physically demanding lifestyle suffered from it as well.</p> <p>Besides a heart condition, Otzi was afflicted with Lyme disease, which is carried by ticks, and was lactose intolerant—that is, his body could not digest milk. Early nomadic hunters took to farming 5,000 to 10,000 years ago, and it is not surprising that milk, which became a stable part of their diet, may not have suited everyone. Through his DNA, scientists have also concluded that his closest descendants live in the islands of Sicily and Corsica off the coast of Italy today.</p> <p>Otzi has become the most-studied skeleton, and it is amazing that with every passing decade and scientific advances, we are getting to know him better and better!</p>	<p>predispose: to cause (someone) to be more likely to behave in a particular way or to be affected by a particular condition</p>