



LW2 Ötzi the Iceman – Austrian, Italian, or Other?

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After attending this presentation, attendees will better understand how the Copper Age influenced the Modern Age and what scientific methods can be used in that effort.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by describing the use of various scientific methods in understanding the world's most studied 5,300-year-old mummy. This presentation will shed a contrarian light on the discovery of Ötzi the Iceman by using the archaeological, medical, toxicological, and engineering sciences which, when combined, lead to astounding opinions. This presentation will also shed light on early tattooing practices and artifacts as they might relate to today.

A German husband and wife, hiking along the Tisenjoch border between Austria and South Tyrol, Italy on September 19, 1991, near the Ötztal Valley, discovered a body sticking out of the ice – hence named Ötzi the Iceman – along with his equipment and clothing. No form of ID, such as credit cards, hunting license, passport, bar bill receipt, etc., was found upon his partially clothed body. At first, the body was believed to have been a hiker who inexplicably perished not long before the discovery. Others believed the body to have been only 500-years-old. For these reasons, the recovery was performed with great care.

Amateur recovery attempts to free the mummified, dried, jerky-like body, half frozen in ice, involved ski poles, picks, and hair dryers which caused some damage to the body and artifacts.

The artifacts found give us a fascinating picture of life in the late Neolithic period or the beginning of the Copper Age and represent the unique features of the discovery of the Iceman, Ötzi.

The tool artifacts claimed to have been associated with “Ötzi” include a copper axe, half-finished bow and arrows, quiver flint bladed “dagger” and sheath, retouching tool of stag antler, marble stone with leather cord, einkorn wheat kernel, hophornbeam tree pollen, flint drills, birch fire container, and bone needle fire starter. All of his belongings have undergone meticulous examination.

Associated with the body, the fragments of restorable clothing artifacts include goat skin leggings, belt pouch, hide coat, bear skin hat, deer skin shoes, backpack, and a grass mat overcoat.

Ötzi has been studied, analyzed, x-rayed and has had his personal space, innards and orifices invaded by over 100 scientists and researchers. It is now known that his spine, ankle, hip, and knee joints were strained and his teeth worn down. Other medical conditions discovered included a hardened aorta, a broken nasal bone, parasitic worms, and cysts. The oldest tattoos ever seen have been documented on his body. From Ötzi's preserved stomach, intestinal contents and fingernails have been analyzed. “Ötzi hurried through a forest he knew well, wincing from the pain in his injured right hand and pausing occasionally to listen for sounds that he was being pursued...” as Stephen S. Hall writes for National Geographic magazine.

Ötzi's origins, destination, and who he was have been debated. Ötzi's current resting place is in Bolzano, Italy. After almost 20 years of international analysis and speculation by others, it is time for forensic experts to enter the debate and present the possible politically correct or incorrect opinions and fan the contrarian notions as to Ötzi being Italian, Austrian, or other; and his effect on today's society.

Iceman, Ötzi, Anthropology