New evidence ▶ suggests that a 5,300-year-old man found frozen in the Alps may have been murdered.

Who Killed the Iceman?

In 1991, high in the mountains of Europe, hikers made a gruesome¹ discovery: a dead man partly frozen in the ice. However, the police investigation soon became a scientific one. Carbon dating² indicated that the man died over 5,300 years ago. Today he is known as the Iceman and has been nicknamed "Ötzi" for the Ötzal Alps where he was found. Kept in perfect condition by the ice, he is the oldest complete human body on earth.

Who Was the Iceman?

Scientists think he was an important person in his society. An examination of his teeth and skull tells us that he was not a young man. His arms were not the arms of a laborer. His dagger was made of stone, but he carried a copper³ ax. This implies wealth, and he was probably from the upper classes. We know he could make fire, as a fire-starting kit was discovered with him. Even the food he had eaten enabled scientists to deduce exactly where in Italy he lived.



▲ The Iceman carried this ax with him on his final journey.

- ¹ Something that is **gruesome** is extremely unpleasant and shocking.
- 2 Carbon dating is a scientific method of finding out exactly how old an object is.
- ³ Copper is a soft, reddish-brown metal.
- 4 The upper classes are the group of people in a society who own the most property and have the highest social level.

Clues to an Ancient Murder

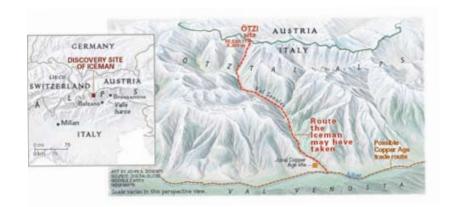
But why did the Iceman die in such a high and icy place? There have been many theories. Some said he was a lost shepherd.⁵ Others thought he was killed in a religious ceremony. Over the years since he was found, tiny scientific discoveries have led to great changes in our understanding of the story of the Iceman. The newest scientific information indicates that he was cruelly murdered. "Even five years ago, the story was that he fled⁶ up there and walked around in the snow and probably died of exposure,⁷" said Klaus Oeggl, a scientist at the University of Innsbruck in Austria. "Now it's all changed. It's more like a . . . crime scene."

A Bloody Discovery

In June 2001, an x-ray examination of the body showed a small dark shape beneath the Iceman's left shoulder. It was the stone head of an arrow. It had caused a deadly injury that probably killed him very quickly. In 2003, an Australian scientist discovered the blood of four different people on the clothes of the Iceman. Did a bloody fight take place before his murder? Injuries on his hand and head indicate that this may be true. One theory, put forward by archeologist Walter Leitner, says that the Iceman's murder was the end of a fight for power among his people. However, this idea is certainly debatable.

Today, the research continues, proving some theories false while opening the door to others. Through scientific research, this oldest member of our human family continues to tell us about his life and the time in which he lived.

- ⁵ A **shepherd** is a person, usually a man, whose job is to take care of sheep.
- ⁶ To **flee** means to escape.
- **7 Exposure** is the harmful effect on your body from very cold weather.













▲ Using detailed scans, scientists are able to recreate what the Iceman may have looked like.

■ The Iceman's body was found at a pass in the Ötzal Alps, between Austria and Italy. He had started his journey 12 miles to the south, in the Val Venosta. Why he was traveling so high in the mountains is still a mystery.