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The Curse of Ötzi?

ÖTZI

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STUDIES, THEORIES, MYTHS

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Is there a Curse of Ötzi?

Der unheimliche Ötzi-Fluch

Der Entdecker der Mumie ist jetzt selbst in den Alpen verschollen...

...hoffentlich reiten sie ihn nicht erst in 5300 Jahren

So far, seven people associated with the Iceman or his discoverers have died. When these deaths are added up and viewed together, some people have concluded that a Curse of Ötzi truly exists.

Here are the deaths, in order of occurrence:

[scientific studies](#)

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ÖTZI'S NEW HOME

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First death: Rainer Henn, 64, a forensic pathologist from the University of Innsbruck who placed the Iceman in a body bag with his bare hands (you can read about the recovery of the body in some detail in Fowler's [Iceman](#); a picture of Henn helping to place the body into a coffin is included in her book). A year later, he was killed in an automobile accident on his way to a conference where he would discuss the results of his work on the Iceman.

Second death: Kurt Fritz, 52, a mountain guide who supposedly led Dr. Henn to the Iceman's body and who was said to have uncovered the Iceman's face when it was recovered from the ice (NOTE: this is far from the official report according to [Fowler's book](#) and Fritz's name isn't mentioned in her book, which is the most comprehensive source to date. It may be that he simply organized the helicopter transportation for the Iceman's body off the mountain). He was killed in an avalanche.

Third death: Rainer Hölz, 47, a filmmaker who made a documentary about the recovery of Ötzi from the ice for the ORF network. He died of a brain tumor.

Fourth death: Helmut Simon, 69, who, along with his wife, discovered the Iceman's body. His body was discovered October 23, 2004, after he went missing while on a mountain hike. Eight days after he had failed to return from a mountain hike, searchers discovered Simon's body in a stream. He apparently died after a 300 foot fall on Austria's Gaiskarkogel peak. Searchers believe that he was hiking on an unmarked path when he fell.

Fifth death: Dieter Warnecke, 45, who headed the rescue team looking for Simon's frozen body. He died of a heart attack just hours after Helmut Simon's funeral.

Sixth death: Konrad Spindler, 66, who led the scientific team that recovered and examined the Iceman in Innsbruck, Austria, in 1991. According to newspaper accounts, Spindler died from complications related to multiple sclerosis.

Seventh death: Tom Loy, 63, a molecular archaeologist who discovered human blood on Ötzi's weapons and clothing and who was featured in a National Geographic documentary about the Iceman in 2002. Family members confirmed that Loy suffered from a hereditary blood disease (that caused blood clots to form), first diagnosed about 1992o...when Loy first began work on the Iceman.

Of course, anyone interested in exploring the possibility of a curse would have to ask some key questions:

- how many people have worked on or come into contact with the Iceman since he was

discovered in 1991?

- is their death rate significantly higher than the ordinary population?
- how unusual is it for 7 people associated with the Iceman's discovery or his discoverers to die (considering they would be dying one day anyway)?

When this same type of analysis was done for the "Curse of King Tut's Tomb," the [theory of the curse fell apart](#).

And at least one other question must also be asked:

- who benefits from the idea of an Ötzi curse?

Anyone interested in selling more newspaper and magazines (or on-air advertisements for television "documentaries") stands to gain whenever "the curse of Ötzi" is publicized, with another name added to the growing list of the deceased. And the South Tyrol Museum of Archaeology (the Iceman's home in Bolzano, Italy) probably gains, since any publicity may well increase attendance at the museum.

But the simple truth of the matter is: there is no such curse, no matter what the media reports.

SOURCES: telegraph.co.uk (10/19/04); agi.it (10/21/04); bbc.co.uk (10/13/04); guardian.co.uk (10/23/04); discovery.com (1/4/05); guardian.uk.co (4/20/05); discovery.com (5/23/05); ansa.it (10/6/05); theaustralian.news.com.au (11/04/05); discovery.com (3/22/06); personal correspondence

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