

George B. McManus suggests (Letters, 18 Dec., p. 1867) that the prehistoric Tyrolean man might have died because of "overconsumption of prehistoric schnapps," but the distillation of alcohol was unknown until the 7th century in China, from whence the technique spread to Italy by the 12th century (1).

However, the prehistoric man may have carried some sort of fermented drink such as beer on his journey as refreshment, but with no intention of becoming intoxicated (a foolhardy thing to do in such a dangerous climb). His beer would have frozen and, when putting the container to his mouth, he would have found only a small portion that was liquid. This "frozen-out alcohol" would have been unfamiliar to him, rather fiery, and by no means unpleasant. Indeed, it would have been tempting to rapidly drink it all up.

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References

1. R. K. G. Temple, *The Genius of China* (Simon & Schuster, New York, 1986).