



From Local Patriotism to a Planetary Perspective: Impact Crater Research in Germany, 1930s-1970s (Science, Technology and Culture, 1700-1945)

Martina Kölbl-Ebert

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The Nördlinger Ries and Steinheim Basin, two conspicuous geological structures in southern Germany, were traditionally viewed as somewhat enigmatic but nevertheless definitely volcanic edifices until they were finally recognized as impact craters in the 1960s. The changing views about the origin of the craters mark an important paradigm shift in the Earth sciences, from an Earth-centric approach to a planetary perspective that acknowledged Earth's place in the wider cosmos. Drawing on a range of printed sources, detailed archival material, letters, personal notes, and interviews with veterans of Ries research, Martina Kölbl-Ebert provides a detailed reconstruction, not only of the historical sequence of events throughout the twentieth century, but also of the personal thoughts, emotions and motives of the scientists involved and the social context of their research. She shows that there was a sudden reconnection of German researchers with the international scientific community, particularly with more progressive American researchers, after some twenty-five years of scientific isolation during the build-up to WWII and its aftermath. This reconnection brought about not only a new view of geoscience, but also saved German geology from self-sufficiency and patriotic arrogance by integrating it in an interdisciplinary and international framework. In so doing this book sheds much valuable light on an under-explored but crucial development in the way we understand Earth's history, as well as the way that science functioned during times of conflict.

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