

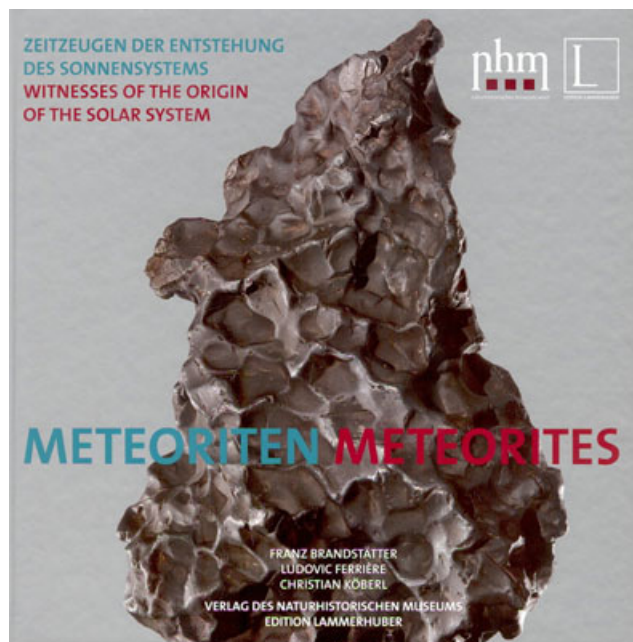
Book Review

Meteoriten—Meteorites: Zeitzeugen der Entstehung des Sonnensystems/Witnesses of the origin of the solar system, edited by F. Brandstätter, L. Ferrière, and C. Köberl. Lammerhuber: Verlag des Naturhistorisches Museum Wien, 2013, 270 p., €35 (ISBN 978-3-902421-68-5); (Friends of the museum: €20).

There are many glossy books on meteorites and some fall into the category of what one might term “coffee table books.” Although at first glance, this book appears to be one of these, closer inspection shows that it is a gold mine of information about meteorites, accompanied by some wonderful pictures. The iron meteorite Hraschina, the first meteorite in the Vienna collection, graces the cover. The authors have spent a great deal of effort to acquire pictures highlighting the many aspects of meteoritics—not just images of the Vienna meteorite collection, which would be impressive by itself. Hence, there are pictures highlighting the history of meteorites, composition, locating meteorites, and descriptions of meteorite classes—as well as discussion of impact craters and impact hazards, and origin of the solar system.

The book begins with a history of our understanding of meteorites, from the discussion of the first apparently documented fall in Gallipoli in 465 BC by Diogenes of Appolonia, to the first lunar meteorite (ALHA81005) and the Hayabusa mission collection of asteroidal material. It’s a minor detail that the last item is not really a meteorite *per se*. We are then treated to an extensive discussion of the history of the Vienna meteorite collection, from its origins as a personal collection of Emperor Franz I Stephan (1708–1765) to the current curators. On Franz’s death, the Empress Maria Theresa donated the meteorite collection to the state—initiating the first public museum in Austria. There is a long history of the development of the meteorite collection, which was initially in the Hofburg in Vienna—to the building of the current Natural History Museum. All the curators of this collection are discussed at some length; indeed, even the first two authors find their way into this discussion.

From my perspective, the best part of this book is the section on meteorite hunting and location, followed by the extensive discussion of “what are meteorites made of” for the nonspecialist. Some pages are devoted



to classification as well. What follows is an outstanding section of 99 pages devoted to pictures of different classes of meteorites from stony meteorites, through irons, and ending with Martian meteorites. In this section, many of the illustrations highlight the incredible collection in Vienna. The third author makes an appearance, albeit in a younger form, in a picture of the Hoba meteorite on page 60—leaving this reader to wonder how many pictures of meteoriticists at the Hoba site must exist.

There is also a great section on impact cratering—reflecting the interests of the Vienna authors. These 30 pages give the reader a great introduction to this important field, also feature some more great pictures of impact craters and impactites. Finally, there is a section on origin and age of the solar system for the general reader, and why meteorites are important to our understanding of the solar system. Of course, this is the title of the book, so this seems like a fine concluding section.

In contrast to some books of this genre, the volume is not only magnificently illustrated, but the bilingual (German and English) text is perfectly and idiomatically correctly written for both languages. This shows an

attention to detail of the Vienna team, which is often lost in some “bilingual” books. The authors are to be congratulated on this nice book—which is also useful for your coffee table if you do not have time to read it, but wish to impress your colleagues about meteorites.

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