Evidence for Recent Wet-Based Crater Glaciation in Tempe Terra, Mars.

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Evidence for recent wet-based crater glaciation in Tempe Terra, Mars?

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**Evidence for basal melting of putative debris-covered glaciers in Mars’ mid-latitudes is extremely rare.**

- The glaciers are currently frozen to their beds, but has this always been the case?

- Eskers (Fig 1) emerging from two mid-latitude glaciers [1-2] indicate at least two localized melting events beneath existing glaciers ~110-150 Myr ago (Fig 2).

**Eskers indicate past glacial melting.**

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**Ice at glacier bed melts.**

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**Meltwater deposits sediment in the tunnel.**

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**Eskers are linked sinuous ridges in Chukhung Crater?**


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**The two sinuous ridge populations are morphologically distinct, supporting different origins.**

- The esker-like ridges are younger, more sinuous, and have sharper crests than the inverted channel-like ridges (Fig 5).

- However, the ridges have similar dimensions, so differences in crest morphology could be due to differences in degradation state rather than formation mechanism.

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**The esker-like ridges ascend valley walls.**

- Esker-forming meltwater can ascend bed slopes under hydraulic pressure in subglacial tunnels [8]. Ascent of valley walls (Fig 6b) is inconsistent with deposition under gravity-driven flow in subaerial fluvial channels.

- However, ascent of slopes could be inherited from differential erosion under the alternative inverted channel hypothesis, rather than a primary feature.

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**There are challenges for the esker hypothesis.**

- The esker-like ridges could be a second population of inverted channels.

- Glacial deposits (Vff, Gtr, Rpu) covering the southern crater floor hinder scrutiny of the relationship of the esker-like ridges to pre-glacial fluvial deposits.

- Eskers are ice-contact deposits but there is no additional evidence for past glaciation northward of the moraine-like deposits (Gtr & Rpu).

- There is one esker-like ridge system on the northern floor, where there is no evidence for glaciation.

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**Lessons from Chukhung Crater.**

- Even where sinuous ridges emerge from existing glaciers, and where they have esker-like non-slope-conforming topographic signatures, conclusive identification as eskers is complicated by similarities in form between inverted channels and eskers [e.g. 8].

- Regional mapping and quantitative 3D morphometric analyses [e.g. 2, 9] should always be performed before an esker origin can be concluded. Such analyses are ongoing for Chukhung Crater.

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References:


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