



Volcanoes in Human History: The Far-Reaching Effects of Major Eruptions

Jelle Zeilinga de Boer, Donald Theodore Sanders

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When the volcano Tambora erupted in Indonesia in 1815, as many as 100,000 people perished as a result of the blast and an ensuing famine caused by the destruction of rice fields on Sumbawa and neighboring islands. Gases and dust particles ejected into the atmosphere changed weather patterns around the world, resulting in the infamous "year without a summer" in North America, food riots in Europe, and a widespread cholera epidemic. And the gloomy weather inspired Mary Shelley to write the gothic novel *Frankenstein*.

This book tells the story of nine such epic volcanic events, explaining the related geology for the general reader and exploring the myriad ways in which the earth's volcanism has affected human history. Zeilinga de Boer and Sanders describe in depth how volcanic activity has had long-lasting effects on societies, cultures, and the environment. After introducing the origins and mechanisms of volcanism, the authors draw on ancient as well as modern accounts--from folklore to poetry and from philosophy to literature. Beginning with the Bronze Age eruption that caused the demise of Minoan Crete, the book tells the human and geological stories of eruptions of such volcanoes as Vesuvius, Krakatau, Mount Pelée, and Tristan da Cunha. Along the way, it shows how volcanism shaped religion in Hawaii, permeated Icelandic mythology and literature, caused widespread population migrations, and spurred scientific discovery.

From the prodigious eruption of Thera more than 3,600 years ago to the relative burp of Mount St. Helens in 1980, the results of volcanism attest to the enduring connections between geology and human destiny.

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