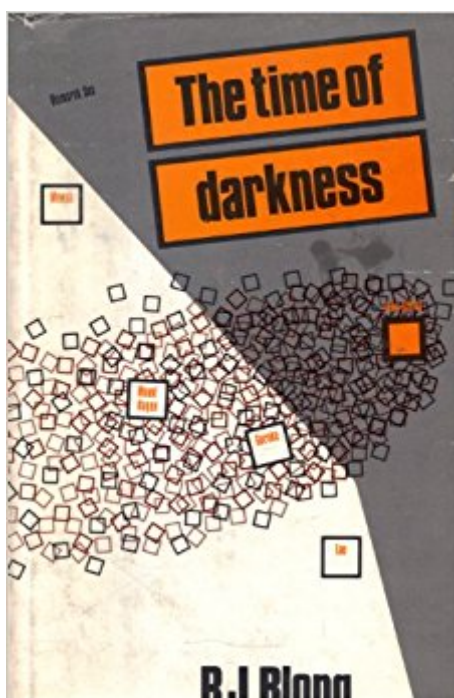


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The Time Of Darkness: Local Legends And Volcanic Reality In Papua New Guinea



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In about 1660, the volcano situated at Long Island, off the coast of Northeast New Guinea, experienced a gigantic pyroclastic eruption, probably larger than any occurrence since Tambora in 1815. The mountain was decapitated, and in the place of its former summit, a caldera lake, known as Lake Wisdom, was formed. Tsunamis occurred, and villages were annihilated. Apart from certain New Guinea tribal legends, nothing was known of the eruption, since Europeans had not yet reached the region and no other record-keeping peoples inhabited the area. This book is the story of those legends and how they were validated by modern scientific investigation. One CAVEAT: The reader should have a fairly well-versed command of the basic tenets of volcanology to truly enjoy this book. Otherwise, some aspects of the detective story may go unappreciated. So advising, I proceed. The book fully covers such subjects of the investigation as geochemistry, tephrochronology, dating the legends and the eruption, analyzing the physical characteristics of the tephra, and the identification and distribution of the tephra flows. Regrettably, the book contains no photographs. To some extent, this is made up by excellently drawn maps, however. The book is well written, but the overall format hops around to some degree. The book is obviously intended for professionals in the field, and has more mathematical discussion than I would have preferred, but it is still one of the most interesting volcanology books I have read in quite a while. Subject to the remarks above, I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in volcanoes and volcanology. For such people, it is a valuable addition to your library on these topics.

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