

Mystery of the 535 A.D. Climate Catastrophe

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The source of the 535 A.D. climate catastrophe is unknown. In his book, Catastrophe!, David Keys unearthed a statement from the History of the Southern Dynasties. In February 535 A.D., “there twice was the sound of thunder” in Nanjing. This is the only reference to thunder from 500 to 550 A.D. Of the three references to thunder between 500 and 600 A.D., it is the only reference to a thunderclap that was heard twice and the only reference that does not describe a massive storm. The Chinese record also says that the two thunderclaps came from the southwest of Nanjing.

David Keys argues that the two thunderclaps came from an explosive eruption of Krakatau. However, the ice core data does not show the massive sulfate anomaly that would be associated with such a volcanic eruption. Furthermore, deep-sea cores near Krakatau show no evidence for the over 1 meter of volcanic ash that should be present. Thus, an eruption of Krakatau cannot be the source of the 535 A.D. climate catastrophe. None of the other volcanoes in the Java-Sumatra arc show any evidence for a massive volcanic eruption around 535 A.D. We must thus look elsewhere for the source of the two bangs heard in 535 A.D.