

Finding gaps in the historical earthquake record of Italy: case histories

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In the last few years, several earthquakes not listed in current Italian catalogues have been rediscovered thanks to the systematic exploitation of serial historical sources. In some cases these earthquakes are quite significant ones and/or the largest seismic events on record in their epicentral area. Contrarily to what could be expected, most of these earthquakes do not occur very far off in time (e.g. in the ancient or early medieval periods) but in comparatively recent time-windows, such as the 1500s-1600s, the first half of 19th century and even in the late 1900s. In fact it would seem that the Italian historical seismic record, though generally believed to be among the most detailed in the world, includes quite a few gaps. We present a set of case-histories concerning 'unknown' damaging earthquakes and attempt a preliminary evaluation of the likely relevance of the 'new' data for an evaluation of the level of completeness of the current Italian catalogue.