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Material for the investigation of the seismicity of the Ionian Islands between 1704 and 1766

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to provide data for the investigation of the seismicity of the Ionian Islands during the period 1704 to 1766. While no catalogue of earthquakes can hope to be exhaustive in retrieving all sources for a particular event, the new information presented here should afford to the reader an account that is as complete as possible both in general outline and in essential details.

The data here provided have been gathered during the CEC project "Review of Historical Seismicity in Europe"; other results of the research on the Ionian Sea area have already been published, and mostly concern the earthquakes of 1767 (Albini and Daltri, 1991; Albini, 1991; Kouskouna et al., 1993) and of 1769 (Tsiknakis et al., 1992; Kouskouna et al., 1993).

The earthquake of February 20th, 1743, has not been considered by this research, because it has been already investigated by previous studies (Margottini, 1985; ENEL, 1986; Guidoboni et al, 1989).

Sources of information

There are a number of earthquake catalogues either for Greece exclusively (e.g. Papazachos and Papazachos, 1989), or which include data for the Ionian Islands (e.g. Shebalin et al., 1974). All are to some extent deficient in that they do not always quote their source of information. To retrieve data already available in seismological literature, a supplement of research was devoted to a systematic reading of some of the most significant seismological compilations of the 19th century for this area, such as for instance Barbiani (1863), Schmidt (1875), Issel e Agamennone (1893).

In order to provide a context within which can be understood the macroseismic information which constitute the raw data of our research, it is necessary to give a brief outline of the historical development of

our study-area during the first half of the 18th century.

During the first half of the 18th century the Ionian Islands were part of the Republic of Venice, having entered the dominion in different periods (Lunzi, 1858; Dudan, 1938; Viggiano, 1993). The last was Lefkas (Santa Maura): conquered by Morosini in 1684, it was abandoned by the Venetians in 1715, during the last Venetian-Turkish war, and was Venetian again from 1718 to 1797, when the Republic of Venice fell. The continental areas east of the Ionian Islands (Epirus, Acarnania, and Morea) were under the dominion of the Ottoman Empire, with the exception of Morea between 1686 and 1718, when it was part of the Republic of Venice.

Fig. 1 shows some of the most important settlements of the area in that period, which were the centres from where information on the area was supplied to the central governments by peripheral officers. Venetian central magistracies sent governors to administrate the major islands (Corfu, Lefkas, Kefalinia, Zante), the minor ones (Paxos and Ithaca) as well as the forts on the mainland (Butrinto, Parga, Préveza, Vonitsa), while consuls were appointed especially to localities strategically located on the east coast of the Adriatic Sea - Scutari (Shkodër), Durazzo (Durrës), Arta, Lepanto (Nafpaktos) and Patras. The localities evidenced inside the Ottoman territory - Delvine, Yanya (Iannina), Tirhala (Trikala), Inebati (Nafpaktos), and Mizistre (Mistras) - were the seats of the *sanjak* (Turkish governors) during the 18th century.

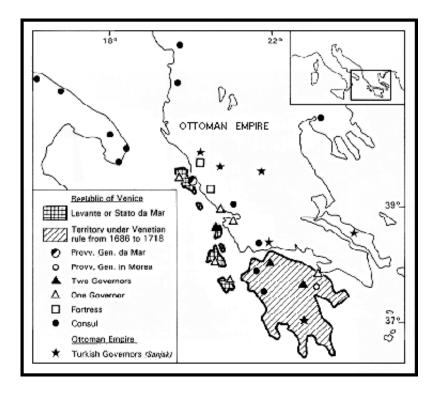
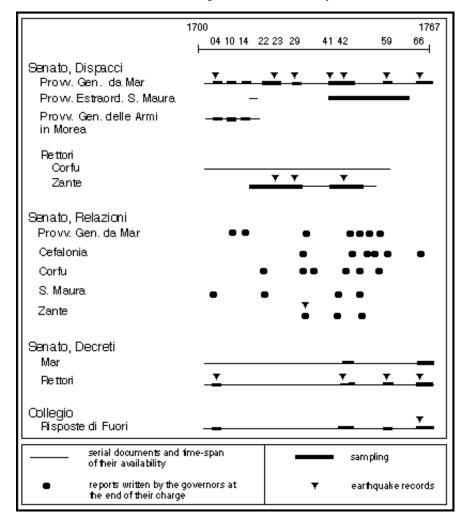


Fig. 1 - Centres of information and distribution of observers for the studied area in the 18th century.

Tab. 1 shows the Venetian documentary sources of information, today available at the State Archives of Venice, and specifically those concerning the Ionian Islands.



Tab. 1 - *Venetian documents on the Ionian Islands in the 18th century.*

Details are given on the time-span of the documents and the performed sampling with reference to the case histories discussed below; therefore, documents on the 1743 earthquake are not shown. Funds and series with a good temporal continuity of surviving documents are *Dispacci* (dispatches), *Provveditore Generale da Mar* and *Decreti* (resolutions) of the *Senato*. Gaps are more considerable in those series - *Dispacci*, *Rettori* and *Relazioni* - collecting documents produced from governors of one island (e.g. *Provveditore Estraordinario* of Lefkas) or area (*Provveditore Generale delle Armi* in Morea). Such gaps can mainly be attributed to changes in the administration, as in the case of Lefkas (1715-1718) and Morea (from 1718 on) or dispersion of the documents at the end of a governor's charge - for instance some personal archives are today kept at the Civico Museo Correr in Venice (see also Daltri e Albini, 1991). The holdings of the Ionian Islands archives, which possess a scarce number of files for the period of interest (Guêze, 1970), cannot fill in those gaps.

Results of the investigation of the fund *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia* were presented in the previous volume (Albini, 1993).

Discussing the case histories, reference will be made to the data shown in Tab. 1 when the lack of information on earthquake effects from an island could depend on the fact that no Venetian documents were available for that island at the time the earthquake occurred. Some of this information - especially that concerning the 1767 and 1769 earthquakes - has been published recently by Daltri e Albini (1991), Albini and Daltri (1991), Albini (1993), Kouskouna et al. (1993).

Our main sources, therefore, are local, first-hand observations derived from Greek marginal notes, diaries and local histories, from contemporary Venetian documents, and from coeval reports in the European press

and accounts of travellers. In spite of the proximity of the Ionian Islands to mainland Greece, very little has been found so far about earthquakes in published or unpublished Ottoman documents (Ambraseys and Finkel, 1993).

Case histories

In what follows we present the case histories of the events reappraised in this study. All the earthquakes discussed are documented as fully as possible on the basis of primary sources. Inevitably, however, there are cases where the references are omitted when they add no relevant details or give inaccurate or second hand information.

As many as possible of the sources that have been found to contain information are referred to in the course of these various accounts when they contribute value or original material to the seismological aspect of the paper. Any useful historiographic statements they contain, which may not have been referred to, on examination may easily be seen in perspective by the reader himself.

The date of the earthquakes is given both in Old Style (between parentheses) and in New Style.

1704 November (11) 22

This earthquake happened at 8 p.m. on Saturday 11 November 1704 (O.S.) and caused considerable damage in the north part of the island of Lefkas (Fig. 2).

A contemporary account written in Lefkas (VVA, cod. 128) says that:

"On 11 November 1704 [O.S.], Saturday night, which was the day of St. Minas, at one hour and a half of the night, there happened a terrifying earthquake in which all stone masonry houses in Amaxiki and a few made of bricks as well as the churches collapsed; only the church of St. Athanasius, which was made of timber, survived. Also, at Kastro a few houses collapsed and the rest were damaged; 13 people were killed at Amaxiki and 3 at Kastro and others were injured; similarly many houses collapsed in Fryni, and the earthquake was terrifying throughout the island of Lefkas, where a few monasteries and many houses in the villages collapsed and in [the church of] Sta Anastasia at Tsukalades, Athanasoula the wife of Michu Sofrona was killed; also the cells and bishopric and [the church of] Panagia in Gyra fell; in particular, a house at Dragano sunk all into the ground so that only a few stones could be seen; and great destruction was wrought to the island of Sta Maura [Lefkas]; and after this earthquake there were many others for many days; and no one had experienced in the past such a destruction; there fell arcades and hazinades, and similarly at Peratia many houses collapsed; and the earthquake was felt in Arta, but it was not as strong as here, and at Korfus [Corfu] and Cefalinia where it was not so strong".

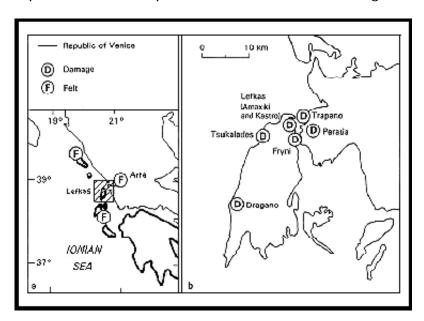


Fig. 2 - Distribution of the effects of the earthquake of 22 November 1704.

The *Provveditore Generale da Mar* in his dispatch of December 6 from Corfu (ASVe, 1704a) confirms that in Lefkas the earthquake occurred at about one and a half hour of the night on Saturday, 22 November. The shock damaged the Castle, where four people died, as well as the region of Amaxiki where 30 people lost their lives. In the Castle the house of the army commander collapsed and many houses inside and outside the walls, built of stone masonry, were seriously damaged. The church of Santa Maura was also ruined (Vladis, 1902). The walls of the Castle were also damaged, the earthquake adding ten new cracks to the eleven already existing. Also the small fortress of Trapano, which guarded the narrows between the island and the mainland, was damaged beyond repair and an engineer was sent from Venice to rebuild it (ASVe, 1704b). Following the earthquake financial assistance and materials for the repair and reconstruction were provided by Venice (ASVe, 1705a, b).

Damage did not extend very far; it was concentrated on the north part of the island and on the opposite coast of the Greek mainland (VVA, cod. 128). The earthquake was perceptible in Corfu (Partsch, 1887) where it did not cause great concern (ASVe, 1704a). Dispatches of that period of the Venetian governors of Zante and Kefalinia to the magistracy of the *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia* do not mention the earthquake (ASVe, 1693-1722; ASVe, 1700-1746). Aftershocks continued to be felt well into January 1705 (ASVe, 1704a; Gaceta de Madrid, 1705; Baglivi, 1710).

1710 May 17

From a marginal note, quoted by Barbiani (1863), we learn that just after midnight on 17 May 1710 (N.S.) a very strong earthquake in Zante caused the collapse of many buildings and the loss of two lives. There is no evidence that the shock was felt elsewhere or that it caused undue concern to the Venetian authorities. The *Provveditore Generale da Mar*, who normally lived in Corfu, was at that time in Morea, as it can be deduced from his dispatches. He was in Zante at least on July 25, when he sent to the *Senato* three dispatches (ASVe, 1710). For this period, no dispatches of the *Provveditore* of Zante are available (Tab. 1), and this earthquake is not mentioned in the letters of the same *Provveditore* to the *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia* (ASVe, 1700-1746).

1714 (August 28) September 8

A damaging earthquake in Kefalinia is mentioned in a 18th century history of Epirus (Michael, XVIII); it says that after the earthquake in Patras of 27 July (O.S.)

"... on 28 August [O.S.], another more dreadful earthquake occurred in Kefalinia, where the Venetian admiral was at anchor with his fleet: the earth opened, hot water flowed out; 280 houses were destroyed, water issued from the earth, and the inhabitants lived two months in the gardens".

So far we could find no mention of this event in the contemporary dispatches we have examined originating from the Ionian Islands and addressed to the Venetian authorities (Daltri e Albini, 1991): the *Provveditore Generale da Mar* Agostino Sagredo stayed for some time in Morea and was back in Corfu on 20 August (ASVe, 1714a). He was substituted by Daniele Dolfin, who visited Kefalinia early in October (ASVe, 1714b). In that period the attention of the Venetian governors was attracted by the war with the Ottoman Empire for the control of Morea. There is no mention of this earthquake (Tab. 1) in the dispatches and letters of the *Provveditore* of Kefalinia and of the consul in Patras to the *Cinque Savi alla Mercanzia* (ASVe, 1693-1722; ASVe, 1712-1764).

The earthquake was reported in the European press where the events in Patras and Kefalinia are amalgamated into one shock and dated at 3 September 1714 (N.S.) (Theatrum Europaeum, 1714). This erroneous information is repeated by other contemporary sources (Amato, 1715).

1722 (May 25) June 5

A damaging earthquake in the southwest part of the island of Lefkas. A Greek marginal note written in

Amaxiki says that

"... towards dawn on Thursday 22 May 1722, there were two consequitive earthquakes, and many houses fell in the villages of Lefkas, particularly Athani, Diamiliani, Aipetro [Agios Petros] which suffered great losses, but here at Amaxiki the shocks were less severe, and there followed many other weaker shocks for many days" (Sathas, 1867).

The date of the event is probably an error as 22 May 1722 O.S. fell on a Tuesday.

This earthquake is not mentioned by the contemporary dispatches of the *Provveditore Generale da Mar*, Andrea Corner (ASVe, 1722), and no dispatches from the *Provveditore Estraordinario* in Lefkas are available for this year at the State Archives of Venice (Tab. 1).

A later report (25 February 1723) by the *Provveditore* in Lefkas, P.A. Manio, is reported by Machairas (1951); it confirms this information adding that the Castle of Santa Maura also suffered some damage but dates the event on 25 May 1722 (N.S.) which was a Thursday.

1723 February 9 (20)

This was a large earthquake in the Ionian Islands that caused serious damage in north Kefalinia. A contemporary note, after describing the effects of the aftershocks of 11 February (O.S.) in Lefkas, adds that

"similarly there was an awful earthquake in Zante where a few houses collapsed and many were cracked, and also in Kefalinia it was terrible; there, at Erisos, as well as in Paliki many houses collapsed and some people were killed and very many were injured; also at Lixuri and Argostoli the shock caused great losses as we were told, and the earthquake which caused these losses was the one that occurred on the 9th of February which was great in these parts and which, had it occurred here [in Lefkas] it would have left nothing standing; and it was the same earthquake that was felt in the Morea, and was perceptible in Korfus and Arta and in all neighbouring regions..." (Sathas, 1867).

An eyewitness in Amaxiki notes that

"on 9 February 1723 [O.S.], at night, drawing towards dawn of Saturday, there was a freightful earthquake which lasted a long time and shook all the houses but fortunately no one fell, but it caused great panic ... the earthquake was followed by many smaller shocks ..." (Sathas, 1867).

The 9th of February 1723 (O.S.) was a Saturday.

Venetian sources are almost silent about the effect of this earthquake. They date it at February 8 and they attribute to it the damage sustained by the church of San Demetrio in Zante (ASVe, 1723a; 1724a, b, c; 1743).

We could find no mention of damage in Kefalinia.

A later source (Barbiani, 1863), which bases its information on local tradition, puts the earthquake at 7, on the night of 8 February. A discrepancy of one day is common when it is not known whether night in the source is reckoned from sundown or from midday.

1723 February (11) 22

This was probably a strong aftershock of the earthquake of 9 February with an epicentre closer to Santa Maura where the shock caused widespread damage.

Our basic source of information for this earthquake is a Greek note which says that

"on the 9th hour of the night of 11 February 1723 [O.S.], near dawn, on Monday, there was a great earthquake which destroyed many houses [in Lefkas]; it caused the collapse of the women's quarter of the church of Evangelistria, cracked in many places the church of St. Mina and the bell tower of St. Paraskevi ... and of the houses many fell and other were damaged. And there was considerable damage done at Amaxiki; and there followed other smaller shocks that continued day and night" (Sathas, 1867).

The Latin church of Pantokrator in the castle of Santa Maura collapsed, and according to an inscription, it was rebuilt in 1733 (Machairas, 1951).

Venetian sources are not explicit about the damage caused by this aftershock, and the documents that refer

to the results of the damage survey carried out by the Venetian authorities after the earthquakes are missing from the archives (ASVe, 1723b, c). The main concern of the authorities was the safety of the castle of Santa Maura, the palace, stores and houses in the fort.

1729 (June 27) July 8

This was a damaging earthquake in Zante, the effects of which are described in two contemporary documents.

The first, a codex from Volimes says that in the second hour of the day, on Friday 27 June 1729 (O.S.) there was a violent earthquake which lasted for 30 minutes and triggered rockfalls from mountains which fell into the sea. About the same time fire fell from the sky on Skinari, Salines and Sotiro (Barbiani, 1863). The second document from Zante adds that many houses collapsed in the town and in villages which are not named; the towers at Ammouderi, outside the town, also fell (Barbiani, 1863).

More details about the effects of the earthquake in the town are supplied by a dispatch of the Venetian *Provveditore Generale da Mar*, Marco Antonio Dolfin, written shortly after the earthquake. He says that "On Friday morning 27 [of June] O.S. that is 8 July N.S., at a quarter past 10 a terrible earthquake shook this island, which lasted for two Miserere ... All public and private buildings partly collapsed or they were partly shattered. The old, strong walls of the Castle opened up in places and many of its towers collapsed ... The walls of the storehouses for the gunpowder and military equipment, of the barracks, of the Admiral's depot, and of the prison were cracked ... The front wall of my house was destroyed ... Also a few small houses inside the Castle and in the town collapsed, and not more than 10 houses were left with their walls intact. I have no news from the villages, where damage seems to be less serious than in the Castle and town, where only one person was killed ..." (ASVe, 1729a).

Other dispatches (ASVe, 1729c, d, e) and Dolfin's final report to the *Senato* (ASVe, 1730) add nothing substantial about the effects of the earthquake in other parts of the island or elsewhere. The shock was also probably felt in Kefalinia (Tsitselis, 1904).

Strong shocks continued to be felt for eight days (Barbiani, 1863) and aftershocks did not stop until early September (ASVe, 1729b).

1741 June 23

On 23 June 1741 (N.S.) an earthquake affected the Ionian Islands. In the southwest part of the island of Kefalinia all the houses, particularly those in the districts of Lixuri, Argostoli and Borgo (Castro, now Agios Georgios) were shattered. The parish church of Lixuri was totally destroyed as well as a number of public buildings. In the fort of Assos many dwellings collapsed and the rest of the buildings were ruined, apparently without loss of lives (ASVat, 1743a).

Venetian documents do not supply the date and they shortly describe the damage in Argostoli and to the Fortress in Assos (ASVe, 1741b).

There is no evidence that the earthquake was felt elsewhere. It was followed by aftershocks that continued intermittently for five months (ASVe, 1741a), causing great concern and additional damage in the western part of Kefalinia (ASVat, 1743a).

1742 February (14) 25

A damaging earthquake, in the Ionian Islands, at Zante. The shock occurred: about midnight, on Sunday of the Prodigal Son, 13 to 14 February 1742 (O.S.), according to the wording of a document of the family Kattevati of Zante reported by Barbiani (1863); or in the night of 24, about the seven hours, according to Venetian sources (ASVe, 1742b).

In the town of Zante a number of houses collapsed as well as the bell-towers of the churches of St. Nicholas and of the Redeemer, killing a number of people (Barbiani, 1863). The cathedral of San Marco had recently been rebuilt because it was in bad condition (ASVe, 1740; 1741a): it was damaged as well as some other public buildings (ASVe, 1742b). A detailed survey of the damage carried out by the Venetian

authorities after the earthquake (ASVe 1742b, c, d, e) suggests that damage to the town was apparently so severe that the *Provveditore Generale da Mar*, who normally lived in Corfu, went to Zante and stayed there for two months (ASVe, 1742f, g, h), to take care of the repairs to the Cathedral and the Palace and that a senatorial resolution was passed to relieve Zante by remitting half of its tribute on raisin crops for a year (ASVe, 1742i).

Damage extended to villages in the island where a number of houses collapsed (ACCM, 1742; Barbiani, 1863) but details in local and Venetian documents of the effects of this earthquake outside the town of Zante are lacking.

The total number of people killed is variously estimated between 22 and 120 (Mercati, 1811; Chiotis, 1849; Chiotis, 1863; Zois, 1893). There is no evidence that the damaging effects of this earthquake extended beyond the island of Zante.

The shock was strongly felt in Kefalinia (AGP, 1628-1807; ASVat, 1743b) and it was perceptible in Corfu (ASVe, 1742d). The earthquake is not mentioned in contemporary dispatches of the Venetian consuls in Arta and Patras (ASVe, 1728-1794; ASVe, 1712-1764).

1759 June (2) 13

This was a series of damaging earthquakes in the western part of Kefalinia (Fig. 3).

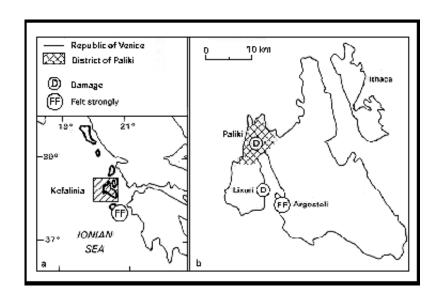


Fig. 3 - *Effects of the earthquakes of June 1759.*

According to a local contemporary note

"earthquakes began [in Kefalinia] on the 2nd of June [1759 O.S.] and continued until the 5th; the one which happened at noon destroyed many houses and the other on the 3rd caused the collapse of most houses in the villages and in the town ..." (Tsitselis, 1904).

A dispatch from the Venetian authorities in Kefalinia says that

"in the night between June 13 and 14 [N.S.], at about six hours, there was a violent earthquake which was followed by a series of weaker shocks ... The following morning, at 16 hours, there occurred a much stronger shock ... that produced great ruin ..." (ASVe, 1759a).

The damage caused by the two shocks was concentrated in the district of Paliki and at Lixuri (ASVe, 1759b) where most of the houses, windmills and churches collapsed and a few lives were lost. In Argostoli the shock was strongly felt but caused no damage. The serious situation of the country villages is stressed by the *Provveditore Generale da Mar*, Francesco Grimani, in his 12 September dispatch (ASVe,

1759c).

The main shock was felt strongly in Zante (AGP, 1628-1807). There is no evidence that the earthquake was felt at Arta and Patras (ASVe, 1728-1794; ASVe, 1712-1764). Strong aftershocks continued to be felt in Kefalinia until 5 June (Tsitselis, 1904).

1766 July (11) 22

A destructive earthquake in Kefalinia. Preceded by a foreshock before dawn, the main shock occurred one hour after sunrise on 11 July 1766 (O.S.) lasting, with intermissions, three minutes. The earthquake was followed by three other shocks during the same day.

The western part of Kefalinia suffered most. A manuscript note from Michalitzata (Vergotis, 1867) says that most of the houses in the district of Paliki were destroyed and those left standing were damaged. It adds, however, that 52 days earlier (20 May 1766 O.S.) the south part of Paliki had suffered from a whirlwind of unprecedented violence which did great damage. Contemporary reports (ASVe, 1766a, b, c) confirm that the damage caused by high winds, which persisted for 13 minutes, was enormous. The combined damage caused by the earthquake and the wind was such that many families left Paliki and settled in the Morea (Peloponnese). The seriousness of the situation in Kefalinia is testified by a petition to the *Collegio* produced by Niccolò Salomon, tax-farmer of that island (ASVe, 1766g): the *Collegio* recognized the right of his query and asked to the *Senato* to approve the diminution of his debt for the year 1766.

Earthquake damage extended to Assos (ASVe, 1766e, f), Lixuri (ASVe, 1766b) and Argostoli where among other buildings the Latin church of San Nicolò in Argostoli (ASVe, 1766d) and a number of manor houses were ruined (Fig. 4). In all about 20 people were killed in the island.

The earthquake was also experienced in Zante: a European traveller who happened to be in quarantine describes the shocks as very strong but he does not mention any damage done in the town (Chandler, 1776). There is some evidence, however, that the earthquake did cause the collapse of a few houses in other parts of Zante (Tsitselis, 1904). It is said that the shock was also felt in Ithaca (Vergotis, 1867). Aftershocks continued more or less for 2 months (Gazette de France, 1766; ASVe, 1766b). Some modern writers date this event to 11 May, 11 June and others place it on 24 July (N.S.), which is the date given by the European press (Gazette de France, 1766).

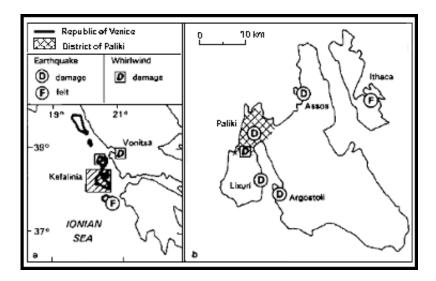


Fig. 4 - Localities damaged by the whirlwind of 31 May [square] and by the earthquake of 22 July 1766 [circle].

Discussion

From the foregoing we conclude that in spite of the large volume of information retrieved for earthquakes in this part of the Mediterrranean area, information remains insufficient for the assessment of the seismic potential of the region. Greek sources rarely mention the effects of earthquakes which originate in the Ionian Islands on mainland Greece unless they are destructive in populous centres which, in this part of the country, are very few. Even more limited in far-field information are Venetian sources which very seldom mention an earthquake unless it caused damage to the few forts and supply bases of the Republic in the region. This lack of information from localities situated some distance away from the Ionian Islands makes it difficult to quantify historical earthquakes in the region.

Acknowledgements

Part of the Venetian documents here considered (in particular on the earthquakes of 1704, 1710, 1714, 1723, 1729, 1742, 1759 and 1766) were retrieved in the framework of a research carried out at the State Archives of Venice by dott. A. Daltri, to whom authors express their thanks. The research is fully reported in Daltri e Albini (1991).

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