

Buchbesprechung

R. Gutdeutsch, G. Gruenthal, R. Musson, Editors: *Historical Earthquakes in Central Europe*, Monographs Volume 1 (in English). – *Abhandlungen der Geologischen Bundesanstalt*, Band 48, Wien 1992, 109 pp (ISSN 0378-0864)

The compilation and publication of contemporary sources in their original language is an important issue for seismologists, historians and engineers in the reliable assessment of the effects of past earthquakes. Scientific journals, due to their different scopes, often do not accept such rather lengthy and complex texts. It is therefore gratifying that an established publisher, the Geologische Bundesanstalt in Vienna, has taken the responsibility of printing such specific material.

The content of this volume is the outcome of intensive investigations of specialists in their field. The co-operation between seismologists, looking for reliable means to estimate earthquake effect with respect to hazard assessment, and historians searching for the truth in contemporary texts make this book at the same time an enjoyable reader and scientific reference material of high standard.

The volume contains three contributions in the interdisciplinary field of seismology and history. The first article by E. Oeser on «Historical Earthquake Theories» (20 pp) gives a general review of the development of human concepts of earthquakes in the European tradition. It helps to understand the scientific

background and theories of contemporary authors on earthquakes. Many of the original texts are given in their original language, mostly Latin and Greek. This makes reading not easy but extremely rewarding, if one takes the trouble of translating.

The second article by U. Eisinger, R. Gutdeutsch and Ch. Hammerl on «Historical Earthquake Research- an Interdisciplinary Co-operation between Seismologists and Historians» (17 pp) provides a general overview of aims and working methods of historical earthquake research. Examples are included from various earthquakes. The meaning of accuracy and completeness are discussed with examples.

The third paper by G. Gruenthal on «The central German Earthquake of March 6, 1872» (58 pp) presents the case history of one of the most important earthquake in recent German history. The paper includes a complete list of original sources written in German, and the seismologist's view is presented in isoseismal maps. A map of known damaging earthquakes in central Europe is a welcome compliment to the reader.

The latter two articles contain every reference material one can possibly find with respect to specific earthquakes, and are therefore an absolutely indispensable source for further studies.

In the extensive introduction, R. Gutdeutsch describes the rules and contents of a thorough approach to scientific investigation of historical events. It must be seen as a guideline for other similar efforts.

D. Mayer-Rosa