

Macroseismology in Finland from the 1730s to the 2000s: From an obligation of the learned elite to citizen science

Päivi Mäntyniemi

*Institute of Seismology, Department of Geosciences and Geography, P.O. Box 68, FI-00014 University of Helsinki, Finland,
e-mail: paivi.mantyniemi@helsinki.fi*

The presentation is based on a snapshot of macroseismology in Finland from the 1730s to the 2000s that has recently been completed. It shares some highlights of the work. The focus is on the design and dissemination of macroseismic questionnaires and the authors, i.e. people who wrote down earthquake observations. Eight generations of Finnish macroseismic questionnaires since 1882 are discerned. The ownerships belonged to one geologist, the Geological Commission, the Geographical Society of Finland, the Seismological station of the University of Helsinki, the Sodankylä Geophysical Observatory of the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, and the Department of Physics of the University of Oulu. The later generations belonged to the Institute of Seismology, University of Helsinki. At the turn of the 2000s the questionnaire was placed on the Internet.

The standard practice in Finland is to conduct macroseismic questionnaire surveys remotely. However, observations have occasionally been collected at interviews and questionnaires distributed during field trips, mainly in the 1900s. No networks of permanent correspondents have been arranged in Finland for the purpose of macroseismic surveys, so respondents have to be found in the affected area time and again. As an example of dissemination of questionnaires, the work of Henrik Renqvist between 1926 and 1946 is described.

The group of earthquake reporters that stands out throughout centuries is the clergy. Its leading position waned only in the 1900s. Finns became more literate, in particular in terms of writing skills, during the 1800s.