

Accepted Manuscript

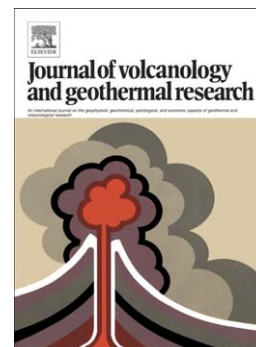
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PII: S0377-0273(15)00228-0
DOI: doi: [10.1016/j.jvolgeores.2015.07.020](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvolgeores.2015.07.020)
Reference: VOLGEO 5599

To appear in: *Journal of Volcanology and Geothermal Research*

Received date: 28 April 2015
Accepted date: 14 July 2015



Please cite this article as: Branca, Stefano, Azzaro, Raffaele, De Beni, Emanuela, Chester, David, Duncan, Angus, Impacts of 1669 eruption and the 1693 earthquakes on the Etna Region, (Eastern Sicily, Italy): an example of recovery and response of a small area to extreme events, *Journal of Volcanology and Geothermal Research* (2015), doi: [10.1016/j.jvolgeores.2015.07.020](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvolgeores.2015.07.020)

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Impacts of 1669 eruption and the 1693 earthquakes on the Etna Region, (Eastern Sicily, Italy): an example of recovery and response of a small area to extreme events

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Abstract

In this paper we trace the impact of the 1669 eruption and the 1693 earthquakes in eastern Sicily, their effects on the people living in the Etna region and, more particularly, in the city of Catania and its hinterland. The former event was the largest historic eruption of Etna, having a flow field with an area of ca.40 km² and a maximum flow length of ca. 17 km, whereas the latter - occurring only 24 years later - killed between 11,000 and 20,000 of Catania's estimated 20-27,000 inhabitants, plus many more in smaller settlements. Using a combination of field-based research, contemporary accounts and archival sources, the authors are able to draw a number of conclusions. First, the 1669 eruption, although it did not kill or injure, was economically the most devastating of historical eruptions. Although it affected a limited area, inundation by lava meant that land was effectively sterilized for centuries and, in a pre-industrial agriculturally-based economy, recovery could not occur quickly without outside assistance from the State. Indeed some

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