

Andrew Robinson is the author of 25 books on the arts and sciences, including the prize-winning *Earthshock: Hurricanes, Volcanoes, Earthquakes, Tornadoes and Other Forces of Nature* (1993), *The Story of Measurement* (2007) and *The Scientists: An Epic of Discovery* (as editor, 2012). He also writes for the science journals *The Lancet*, *Nature* and *New Scientist*. He has been a Visiting Fellow at the University of Cambridge and is a Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society.

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EARTHQUAKE

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Earthquake

Nature and Culture

Andrew Robinson

Los Angeles and Tokyo, Istanbul and Beijing, Lima and Cairo are among the more than 60 large cities at definite risk from an earthquake. Although European cities seem less vulnerable, devastating earthquakes have hit Athens, Bucharest, Lisbon, Madrid, Rome and Naples, among others, over the past three centuries. Even London experienced a shock in 1884 that stopped MPs in the Houses of Parliament in their tracks.

This book describes two millennia of major earthquakes and their effects on societies around the world; the ways in which cultures have mythologized earthquakes through religion, the arts and popular culture; and the science of measuring, understanding and trying to predict earthquakes. According to Charles Darwin, a great earthquake in Chile in 1835 was the single most interesting event of his entire five-year journey around the globe on HMS *Beagle*.

Despite advances in both science and engineering, and improved disaster preparedness, earthquakes continue to cause immense loss of life and damage. The Haiti earthquake of 2010 took some quarter of a million lives. No one will ever forget the catastrophic tsunami unleashed in 2011 by a magnitude-9 earthquake off the east coast of Japan – a crisis described by Japan’s prime minister as the most disastrous national event since the atomic bomb strikes of 1945. Tokyo was largely unaffected in 2011, unlike in 1703, 1855 and 1923, when earthquakes ravaged the capital. How long will it be before the next big Tokyo earthquake?

Written by a highly experienced science writer, journalist and scholar, *Earthquake* will appeal as much to general readers of popular science as it will to experts in many fields.

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