Instrumental seismic data reveals that the Calabro Arc region is one of the most seismically active areas in the Central Mediterranean. Many earthquakes repeatedly shook this region during the last millennium causing heavy damage and sometimes the whole destruction of towns. Among them we mention the 1626 event with its epicentre in Girifalco (I = IX MCS, Baratta, 1907; M = 6.2, Camassi and Stucchi, 1997); the 1638 event with its epicentre in Nicastro (I = XI MCS, Baratta, 1907; M = 7.3, Camassi and Stucchi, 1997), the 1783 seismic sequence where 5 strong events with $5.9 \leq M \leq 7.3$ and $I \geq IX$ MCS (Camassi and Stucchi, 1997) hit the town of Gioia Tauro, the northern edge of the Straits of Messina, the western side of Mt Serre and north-eastern side of the Mesima Basin; the 1905 event with its epicentre in the S. Eufemia Gulf (M ~ 7, $I \geq X$ MCS; Boschi et al., 1997) and the 1908 event with its epicentre on the Calabrian side of the Straits of Messina ($I = XI$ MCS, $M = 7.1$; Postpischl, 1985; Boschi et al., 1997).

Historical data shows that almost no seismic activity occurred before AD 1000 and only four earthquakes are documented in the seismic catalogues: (1) the event before 91 BC reported by the historian Strabo, mentions that before the Marsian war (91-89 BC) many settlements were reduced to ruins by earthquakes (Guidoboni et al., 1994); (2) the AD 17 event reported by Phlegon of Tralles, a writer in the 2nd century AD, mentions that many cities in Sicily and Calabria were struck by an earthquake (Guidoboni et al., 1994); (3) the event occurred some years before AD 374 in Reggio Calabria, for which an inscription found by Putortì (1912) during the rebuilding works of the town after the 1908 earthquake, attests that the Roman bath and basilica were rebuilt on the ruins of the previous ones with new decorative features, and the addition of a portico built on the orders of the imperial family (Guidoboni et al., 1994; Bottari et al., 2002) and (4) the event occurred in Rossano that caused the destruction of many churches and houses dated to AD 968 (Baratta, 1907) while Guidoboni et al. (1994) suggested that the earthquake occurred between 951 and 1004.

From the 4th to the 9th century no historical documentation exist in the scanty records of the period. Is this lack of historical seismic records for the period before AD 1000 indicative of a silence in historical sources or is it a variation of seismicity rates over time?

To answer this question, we have begun a detailed study of the ancient ruins in Calabria and the preliminary results show that the Greek village of Skylletion did in fact suffer an earthquake. The seismic event, dated between the 6-7th century AD and the 10th century AD, caused the collapse of a wall in the Roman Forum, where five statues also fell down in the same North-South direction, still preserving their original arrangement as if they had been pushed down by a horizontal force. In the Roman theatre where the scene-building collapsed, cracks in the southern lateral passage way and the fallen arch blocks can be identified as evidence of an earthquake.
REFERENCES


