

Original article

## The infaunal echinoid *Micraster*: Taphonomic pathways indicated by sclerozoan trace and body fossils from the Upper Cretaceous of northern Spain

L'échinide fouisseur *Micraster* : trajectoires taphonomiques indiquées par des corps fossiles et des traces de sclérozoaires dans le Crétacé supérieur du Nord de l'Espagne

El equínido infáunico *Micraster*: trayectorias tafonómicas indicadas por pistas y fósiles corporales de esclerozoos en el Cretácico Superior del norte de España

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### Abstract

*Micraster* echinoid fossils are common in the Upper Cretaceous Olazagutía Formation of northern Spain. Tests frequently record sclerobiont signatures (including bioerosion and encrustation), left by reaction and/or coaction phenomena. Among bioerosion structures, *Oichnus simplex*, *O. paraboloides*, *O. ichnosp. A*, *Trypanites solitarius*, *Rogerella* ichnosp. indet., *Centrichnus* cf. *eccentricus*, *Maeandropolydora* ichnosp. indet. and fungal microborings are found, as well as pits and fractures. As for sclerozoan body fossils, bivalves (Dimyidae, Anomiidae, Plicatulidae and other Pectinacea), polychaete annelids (serpulids and spirorbids), litiolid foraminiferans (Haddoniidae and Coscinophragmatidae) and bryozoans (cheilostomate ones and others undetermined), as well as other less common groups, have been identified. Taphonomic paths followed by *Micraster* tests are analysed, based on conservation state and degree of colonisation and sedimentary filling. This allows to distinguish between accumulated fossils and non accumulated ones (including resedimented and reelaborated ones).

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### Résumé

Les fossiles d'échinoïde *Micraster* sont fréquents dans la formation Olazagutía du Crétacé supérieur du Nord de l'Espagne. Les carapaces de ce genre montrent souvent des évidences de sclérobiontes (y compris de bioérosion et d'incrustation) laissées par des phénomènes de réaction et coaction. Quelques taxons de *Micraster* ont donné des traces fossiles de bioérosion (comme *Oichnus simplex*, *O. paraboloides*, *O. ichnosp. A*, *Trypanites solitarius*, *Rogerella* ichnosp. indet., *Centrichnus* cf. *eccentricus*, *Maeandropolydora* ichnosp. indet., microperforations fongiques et aussi fosses et fractures) et des structures d'incrustation de sclérozoaires. Parmi celles-ci, se retrouvent des pélicypodes (Dimyidae, Anomiidae,

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Plicatulidae et quelques autres Pectinacea), des annélides polychètes (serpulides et spirorbides), des foraminifères lituolides (Haddoniidae et Coscinophragmatidae), des bryozoaires (cheilostomes et d'autres non déterminés) et d'autres groupes peu fréquents. Les trajectoires taphonomiques suivies par les carapaces de *Micraster* sont analysées sur la base de l'état de conservation, le degré de colonisation et le remplissage de sédiment. Cela permet de distinguer les fossiles accumulés de ceux non accumulés (y compris ceux résédimentés et retravaillés).

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## Resumen

El equínido fósil *Micraster* es frecuente en la Formación Olazagutía del Cretácico Superior de Navarra (norte de España). Sus caparazones registran frecuentemente evidencias de la acción de esclerobiontes (bioerosión e incrustación), producidas por fenómenos de reacción y/o coacción. Entre las estructuras de bioerosión se han hallado *Oichnus simplex*, *O. paraboloides*, *O. ichnosp. A*, *Trypanites solitarius*, *Rogerella ichnosp. indet.*, *Centrichnus cf. eccentricus*, *Maeandropolydora ichnosp. indet.* y microperforaciones de hongos, así como hoyos y fracturas. Entre los fósiles corporales de esclerobiontes incrustantes, se han encontrado bivalvos (dimífidios, anomífidios y plicatúlidos, además de Pectinacea indeterminados), anélidos poliuetos (serpúlidos y espirórbidos), foraminíferos lituóolidos (hadonífidios y coscinofragmátidos) y briozoos (queilostomados y otros de asignación incierta), así como otros grupos en menor abundancia. Se analizan las trayectorias tafonómicas seguidas por los caparazones de *Micraster*, con base en su estado de conservación, grado de colonización y tipo de relleno, lo que permite diferenciar entre elementos acumulados y no acumulados (incluyendo los resedimentados y los reelaborados).

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**Keywords:** *Micraster*; Epibiosis; Bioerosion; Taphonomy; Upper Cretaceous; Spain

**Mots clés :** *Micraster* ; Épibiosis ; Bioérosion ; Taphonomie ; Crétacé supérieur ; Espagne

**Palabras clave :** *Micraster*; Epibiosis; Bioerosión; Tafonomía; Cretácico Superior; España

## 1. Introduction

In comparison with regular echinoids, irregular echinoids are more common in the fossil record, mainly because they frequently live inside a soft substratum (which may easily fill the test after soft tissue decay) in areas of sedimentation. This situation promotes preservation (Smith, 1984; Barnes, 1987). During a long span in the history of life since the Ashgill, dead echinoid tests have appeared as potential and stable, hard substrata ready to give shelter to bioerosion and other types of substrate colonisation (Santos et al., 2003). Evidences for this are common in the fossil record, though published studies about this topic are surprisingly few. The oldest known syn-vivo, epibiont-echinoid relationship is recorded in Pennsylvanian *Archaeo-ocidaris* from Texas (Schneider, 2003). Kidwell and Baumiller

(1990) reported the presence of encrusting organisms on regular echinoids in the Upper Cretaceous British Chalk. Drill holes in fossil echinoids were reported from Cretaceous (Smith, 1984; Cross and Rose, 1994), Eocene (Gibson and Watson, 1989) and Miocene (McNamara, 1994; Martínez, 2001; Ceranka and Zlotnik, 2003) rocks, as well as in extant species (McClintock and Marion, 1993; Nebelsick, 1999; Nebelsick and Kowalewski, 1999, 2001). In this paper, we report a noteworthy taphonomic case, where 95% of the infaunal echinoid sample shows bioerosion and/or epibiontic signatures. Relationships both between echinoid tests and their sclerobionts (term defined by Taylor and Wilson, 2002, to refer to any organism fouling any kind of hard substrate) and between sclerobionts themselves, as well as derived taphonomic, palaeoecological and palaeobiological implications are analysed in this paper.

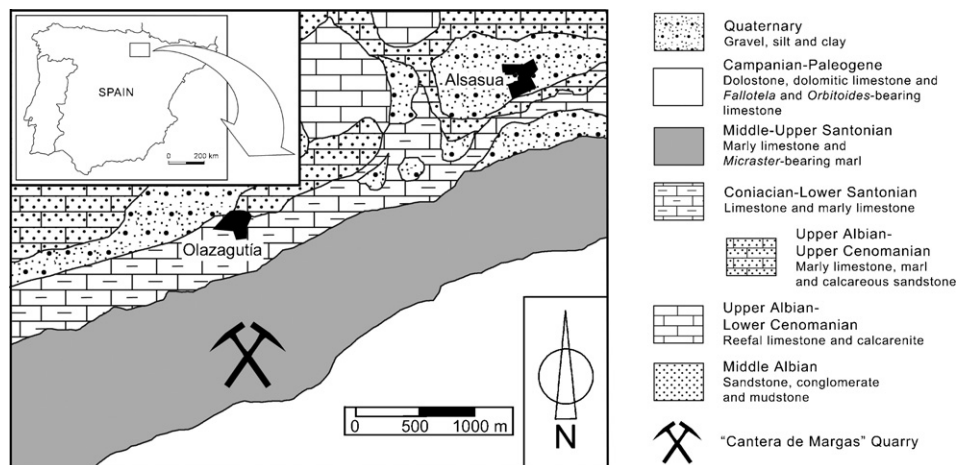


Fig. 1. Geological sketch of the Olazagutía area, northern Spain (slightly modified from Lozano and Rodrigo, 1998).

Fig. 1. Cartographie géologique de l'aire d'Olazagutía (Nord de l'Espagne) (modifiée de Lozano et Rodrigo, 1998).

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