New evidence of gastropod affinities for some key bellerophontiform molluscs

Nueva evidencia de afinidades con los gasterópodos en moluscos bellerofontiformes típicos

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RESUMEN

Se presenta el hallazgo de un bellerofontido del Ordovícico medio de los Montes de Toledo (Zona Centroeibérica), que presenta diversos depósitos secundarios en la superficie externa de la concha, interpretados como perinductura, inductura y cointductura. Tales depósitos se consideraban características de ciertos gasterópodos devónico-pérmicos (Euphemitidae), por lo que su registro entre los sinuitidos ordovícicos plantea unas relaciones filogenéticas inéditas con un modo de secreción similar en ambos grupos y, secundariamente, ello representa un nuevo argumento en favor de la clasificación de los Sinuitidae entre los gasterópodos.

Key Words: Mollusca, Gastropoda, Ordovician, Central Iberian Zone, Spain.

Geocacta, 20 (1) (1996), 228-230
ISSN: 0213-683X

Introduction

The bellerophontiform molluscs were a common component of Palaeozoic marine benthic communities for more than 250 millions of years (Cambrian through Triassic), and their representatives are known from all continents. More than 50 genera and several hundred species have been described (Knight et al., 1960), but the class-level assignment of these molluscan group remain unclear and has been debated since the early 19th century. The controversy about the morphology of soft parts of these molluscs with coiled, bilaterally symmetrical shell divided palaeontological opinion as to whether all, part or none from the bellerophontiform molluscs (i.e., family Sinuitidae) were untorted, eoxogastrically oriented monoplacophorans (= tergomyans) or torted, endogastrically oriented gastropods.

We report the discovery of an unusual sinuitid from the Middle Ordovician of Spain, whose outer surface is entirely covered by secondary shell layers (perinductura, inductura and cointductura). Such structures were previously considered as typical of Euphemitidae, placed undoubtedly within the Class Gastropoda. The similar constitution and probably homologous secretion of secondary deposits in both groups reveals unsuspected phylogenetic relationships, arguing in favour of gastropod affinities for sinuitids.

Previous to the findings presented herein, the only known inductural deposits in Ordovician bellerophontiform molluscs were rare findings restricted to the columellar part of conch, described both in Sinuites as well as in cyrtolynellid tergomyans (Horný, 1963; Horný & Vizcaíno, 1995).

The studied material

The bellerophontiform molluscs are common fossils in some Middle and Upper Ordovician formations in central and southwestern Europe (Horný, 1963, 1992; Babin et al., 1982; Pillet, 1992; Horný & Vizcaíno, 1995). This is the case for the «Tristani Beds» of Central Spain, where several thousands of specimens have been collected by us. Most of them belong to the genus Sinuites according to Gutiérrez-Marco et al. (1984), but three shells of bellerophontiform molluscs with unusual secondary shell deposits have been recently recovered (Fig. 1). They were found by a senior amateurist, who passed us the specimens for study, in a small outcrop of dark ferrugineous shales with siliceous nodules 5.200 m SW of Navas de Estena (N Ciudad Real province). Associated trilobites and ostracods prove a lower Ordovician (= early Llanviri) age for the fossiliferous level. Specimens are housed in the Department of Paleontology, Complutense University of Madrid, Spain.

Description and discussion

The morphological characters of shell (general form of shell, form of aperture, wide sinus in anterior apertural lip: Knight et al., 1960), show that this unusual mollusc may be considered as a typical member of the family Sinuitidae, which was removed from the Class Gastropoda to the Class Monoplacophora by several authors (Rollins & Batten, 1968; Peel, 1980; Wahlman 1992). Monoplacophorans (now tergomyans: see Peel, 1991) with single bilaterally symmetrical shells play an important role in the question of the origin of gastropods and the early history of the Phylum Mollusca (Knight et al., 1960). They do not undergo torsion and therefore their mantle cavity remains posteriorly positioned and the shell coils forward over the head exogastrically. Sinuita bellerophontiforms with paired muscle scars usually located umbilical-laterally in the shell interior, have been described in Sinuites, Sinuitopsis or Sylvastrophaera (Cox, 1960; Rollins & Batten, 1968; Peel, 1980, 1991; Runnegar, 1981; Horný, 1992). Pairs of discrete muscle scars are a typical shell character
that the outer shell surface is entirely covered by characteristic shell material (Fig. 1), only previously known in one group of late Paleozoic bellerophontiform molluscs (family Euphemitidae), interpreted as members of the Class Gastropoda (Knight et al., 1960; Wahlman, 1992).

The secondary shell deposits of euphemitids have been known for more than 50 years (Weller, 1930; Moore, 1941; MacCulloch, 1967; Harper & Rollins, 1982), who recognised the three layers termed inductura, perinductura and coinductura. The secondary shell deposits of the Spanish Ordovician sinuitid may also be identified as perinductura (layer with smooth surface; Fig. 1A), inductura (layer with wrinkled surface covering perinductura; Fig. 1B) and coinductura (layer with smooth surface covering inductura; Fig. 1C). The inductura extends between one half and three quarters of the whorl back from the aperture, and the outline of perinductura-inductura boundary forms a shallow, wide, U-shaped arch on the dorsum, both features known from euphemitids. It is concluded that the secondary shell deposits were secreted by the homologous mantle flaps in both groups of bellerophontiform molluscs. This indicates close phylogenetic relationships between Ordovician-Devonian sinuitids and Devonian-Pennsylvanian euphemitids, and contradicts the assignment of the two families to different molluscan classes (sinuitids to Monoplacophora, and euphemitids to Gastropoda) (Wahlman, 1992). The new evidence confirms Ordovician sinuitids as gastropods.

Acknowledgements

Richard A. Fortey (The Natural History Museum, London) is thanked for improvement of the language, and Uly Martín for photographs. This paper is a contribution to Project AMB92-1037-C02-01 of the Spanish CICYT.

References


