

New Data from the Early Pliensbachian Tethyan Ammonite in the Central High Atlas (Morocco)

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A fauna recently discovered in the Central-Eastern High Atlas of Morocco allows the re-examination of the taxonomic, stratigraphic and paleogeographical frameworks of *Pseudoskirroceras mastodon* (Fucini, 1935), an Early Pliensbachian (Polymorphus - Brevispina sub-chronozones) Tethyan taxon probably restricted to the southern part of the western (Mediterranean) Tethys.

This taxa, which is the type-species of the genus *Pseudoskirroceras*, have been for the first time collected in a well-known stratigraphical context.

Three biohorizons are known for the lower part of the Early Pliensbachian in the central High Atlas, successively the *Miltoceras taguendoufi* biohorizon (El Hariri et al., 1996), the *Pseudoskirroceras mastodon* biohorizon (proposed in the present study) and the *Metaderoceras apertum* biohorizon (El Hariri et al., 1996). According to the biochronological interpretation proposed by El Hariri et al. (1996), this set of three biohorizons roughly corresponds to the Polymorphus and Brevispina sub-chronozones of the chronostratigraphic standard scale and to the Mediterranean *Miltoceras sellae* biozone.

These observations significantly reduce the usual meaning of *Pseudoskirroceras* which is actually a rare taxa, probably strictly localized in the western Mediterranean Tethys and not a pantropical genus.

Thus, the revised scope of *Pseudoskirroceras* is consistent with the idea of a western Tethyan (Mediterranean) palaeobiodiversity which included many rare and localized taxa.

These results confirm that the Mediterranean (West Tethyan) ammonite paleobiodiversity includes more rare and localized species that for example in NW Europe.

Key words: Ammonites, Early Jurassic, Western Tethys, Biostratigraphy, central High Atlas.