A new pleurodiran turtle from the African Aptian locality of Gadoufaoua

**Pérez-García, Adán**

Grupo de Biología Evolutiva, Facultad de Ciencias, UNED, Paseo de la Senda del Rey 9, 28040 Madrid, Spain. E-mail: paleontologo@gmail.com

The clade of turtles Pan-Pleurodira experienced an important radiation during the Early Cretaceous, from the Barremian or earlier. As a consequence, a wide Lower Cretaceous diversity is recorded, including some lineages that did not reach the Upper Cretaceous (e.g., Platychelyidae), but also basal or closely related forms to the main extinct pleurodiran clades (e.g. Bothremydidae) or that are part of the current biodiversity (e.g. Chelidae and Podocnemididae). The origin of the two lineages constituting the crown Pleurodira, Pan-Chelidae and Pelomedusoides (including, among others, Bothremydidae and Podocnemididae), is related to this radiation. Pelomedusoides diversified in northern Gondwana, in a relatively short period of time. The oldest African identification of the synchronic and sympatric presence of several pleurodiran taxa was performed in the Aptian fossiliferous region of Gadoufaoua (central Niger). At least two lineages of Pelomedusoides are represented there. One of them is the extinct Araripemydidae. The second lineage was recognized as related to Pelomedusidae or to Podocnemidoidea, both clades being represented by extinct and extant representatives. A poorly known form from Gadoufaoua, preliminarily presented almost forty years ago, and so far determined as aff. *Platycheloides* sp., belongs to this second lineage. Its detailed study allows its attribution to a new taxon, constituting one of the few nominated pan-pleurodiran taxa recognized in the Lower Cretaceous record. The detailed comparison of this turtle with the other Lower Cretaceous forms, but also with other fossil and current taxa, allows establishing its phylogenetic position, providing new data on the early diversity and evolution of Pelomedusoides.