Perforissidae (Hemiptera: Fulgoroidea) from the Lower Cretaceous San Just amber (Eastern Spain)

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ABSTRACT

A new genus, *Iberofoveopsis* gen. nov., and its type species *Iberofoveopsis miguelesi* sp. nov., belonging to the extinct family Perforissidae Shcherbakov, 2007 (Hemiptera: Fulgoroidea), are described on the basis of a female specimen. This new perforissid is preserved in Lower Cretaceous (Albian) amber from the San Just outcrop of Teruel Province, Eastern Spain. The Perforissidae, a recently described family, contains six genera recorded from the New Jersey, Taimyr, Burmese, and Spanish ambers, and laminated sedimentary rocks of Mongolia. The new genus mainly differs from the five previously described taxa in tegmine venation, features of the ovipositor, and the abundance and distribution of sensory pits on head and pronotum.


INTRODUCTION

In 2007, Shcherbakov described a new family of Cretaceous planthoppers, the Perforissidae, which previously comprised two subfamilies and five monospecific genera, based on fossils from the Taimyr, New Jersey and Burmese ambers, and laminated sedimentary rocks of Mongolia (Shcherbakov 2007).

A new specimen belonging to this family was found in 2007 during a palaeontological excavation in the amber-bearing locality named San Just, located in the Utrillas-Escucha area of Eastern Spain (see Peñalver et al. 2007, Delclòs et al. 2007).

The main outcrops of amber in the Utrillas-Escucha area are located along the northern margin of the Aliaga sub-basin, one of the Mesozoic sub-basins described by Salas & Guimerà (1997) as forming part of the Maestrat Basin (northeast of Spain). The Maestrat Basin was originated by listric faults during the Late Oxfordian-Albian interval (Salas et al. 2001). Amber with insect inclusions has been found in a one-metre thick bed of grey-black claystones, which underlies a sandstone stratum and also contains abundant plant remains. Stratigraphically, the site occurs within the La Orden Member of the Albian Escucha Formation, deposited in a fluvial delta plain environment (Querol et al. 1992). Based on palynology, Peyrot et al. (2007) indicated a late Aptian-early Albian age for the basal part of the Escucha Formation in the Maestrat Basin. More recently, Moreno-Bedmar et al. (2008) used ammonoids to limit this age, indicating that Maestrat Basin depocentre is Lower Albian in age.

As the fossil shows unique characteristics, we describe it herein as a new genus and species. The small amber fragment containing the planthopper was embedded in epoxy resin using the procedure described in Corral et al. (1999). Drawings and photos presented in this paper were made using an Olympus BX51 microscope and an Olympus V-DA camera lucida.
Wing nomenclature follows the modified interpretations of Emeljanov (1977), Dworakowska (1988), and Anufriev & Emeljanov (1988).

**SYSTEMATIC PALAEONTOLOGY**

Order: Hemiptera Linnaeus 1758  
Suborder: Fulgoromorpha Evans 1946  
Superfamily: Fulgoroidea Latreille 1807  
Family: Perforissidae Shcherbakov 2007  
Subfamily: Cixitettiginae Shcherbakov 2007

**GENUS Iberofoveopsis gen. nov.**

Type species: *Iberofoveopsis miguelesi* sp. nov.

**Diagnosis:** Costal margin of tegmen widened at base, gibbous in basal portion (costal margin gibbous about midlength in *Foveopsis*); costal cell wide distally (costal cell very narrow distally in *Foveopsis*); stem Sc+R leaves basal cell with a very short stalk. Stems M and CuA leave basal cell with a short common stalk, distinctly shorter than arculus (stalk of Sc+R about as long as arculus in *Foveopsis*); branch CuA forked slightly apicad of claval apex, branch CuA forked apical of claval apical line of veinlets (CuA simple in *Foveopsis*); claval closed and claval apex angulate (clavus open in other Perforissiidae); ovipositor very simple in as opposed to at midlength. A gibbous costal margin is widened at base, gibbous basally, and the tegmen costal margin gibbous basally, as opposed to at midlength. A gibbous costal margin is typical of representatives of the subfamily Perforissiidae Shcherbakov, 2007, but is also present in the genus *Foveopsis* Shcherbakov, 2007. Cixitettiginae now contains four genera from the Taimyr, Burmese, and Spanish ambers, and from sedimentary rocks of Mongolia. The most similar genus to *Iberofoveopsis* gen. nov. within the Cixitettiginae is *Foveopsis* (from Burmese amber).

**Iberofoveopsis miguelesi** sp. nov.

**Figure 1; Plate 1**

2007 Homoptera Cicadomorpha, Delclòs et al.: p. 144, fig. 4B

**Holotype:** Alate specimen CPT-4132, female, deposited in the Fundación Conjunto Paleontológico de Teruel-Dinópolis (Teruel, Spain). Specimen complete (Fig. 1) associated with the following synincusions: four dipterans (CPT-4151–4154), five hymenopterans (CPT-4076, CPT-4077, CPT-4088, CPT-4089 and CPT-4126), and a fragment of spider web in contact with the holotype. The holotype was isolated within a small piece of transparent amber (5 x 3 x 3 mm) and embedded in a regular prism (piece 13 x 3 x 3 mm) of epoxy resin for optimal viewing. It was possible to study the specimen in dorsal, ventral, lateral and frontal views.

**Etymology:** Named in memoriam of Mr. Miguel Ángel González Míguez “Miguelés”.

**Type locality:** San Just outcrop, in the municipality of Utrillas, near the village of Escucha (Teruel Province, Spain) (Peñalver et al. 2007).

**Stratum typicum:** The amber-bearing strata are included within the Escucha Formation of the Maestrat Basin. These strata consist of carbonaceous lutites deposited in deltaic and estuarine environments, and are Lower Cretaceous (Lower Albian) in age (Peñalver et al. 2007, Delclòs et al. 2007).

**Diagnosis:** As for the genus. Additional character: tibiotarsal formula 9:7:7.

**Description:** Adult female (Pl. 1, fig. A). Total length about 3.93 mm. Head (including compound eyes) about as wide as pronotum, c. 0.91 mm; vertex short, about 4.5 times as wide as long in mid line, partly covered by the anterior margin of pronotum; compound eyes bulging laterally. Frons slightly wider (c. 0.52 mm) than long along mid line (c. 0.48 mm), with distinct median carina, median carina protruded, slightly arched in lateral view; lateral margins carinate, slightly sinuous in lower portion; each half of frons with 16 large sensory pits (upper-median group contains 12 pits, smaller the external-lateral ones, and lower group contains 4 pits; Fig. 1A – median). Postclypeus slightly longer than frons in mid line (c. 0.56 mm), with median carina and lateral carinae, slightly produced in lower portion (Fig. 1A - right), median carina and lateral carinae of postclypeus exceeding to anteclypeus. Antennal scapus short, pedicel subcylindrical, covered with short setae, flagellum 0.37 mm long. Rostrum c. 0.35 mm long, reaching hind coxae, apical segment slightly shorter (c. 0.15 mm) than subapical one.

**Pronotum** about as wide as head (including compound eyes), c. 0.91 mm, c. 0.39 mm long along mid line (c. 0.52 mm long in total), with anterior margin distinctly arcuate, distinctly produced over head, posterior margin shallowly incised; median carina of pronotum distinct; 29 sensory pits on each half of disc (Fig. 1A – left); lateral lobes of pronotum rounded, declivous, with group of 6 sensory pits.

**Mesonotum** in mid line distinctly longer (c. 0.61 mm) than pronotum in mid line, with obscure lateral carinae and 3 sensory pits lateral of lateral carinae (Fig. 1A – left).

**Tegula small.**

Wings overlapping: hind wings folded and obscured (Pl. 1, fig. C). Tegmen 3.3 times as long as wide (3.3 mm long, 1 mm wide), with narrow appendix; unicolorous, veins delicately granulate (Pl. 1, fig. D), and polygonal reticulated...
sculpture on dorsal portion of the wing membrane (Pl. 1, fig. E). Costal margin widened at base, sinuate sub-basally; basal cell elongate, about 4 times as long as wide; stem Sc+R leaving basal cell with a short stalk; branch ScRA not forked before apex, curved and subparallel to costal margin; branch RP not forked before apex; stems M and CuA leaving basal cell with a short common stalk (slightly shorter than basal cell); stem M not forked up to level of nodal line, stem CuA forked slightly apicad of claval veins junction, branch CuA, simple, branch CuA forked slightly apicad of claval apex, branch CuA forked in apical portion, apicad of icua veinlet. Clavus long, apex of clavus reaching ⅔ of tegmen length, claval apex angulate, clavus closed; claval veins Pcu and A fused at ⅓ of clavus length. Veinlet ir at level of nodal line, veinlet r-m oblique, at level of nodal line, apparently reaching M branch (portion obscured), veinlet m-cua at level of nodal line, connecting branches M and CuA, one veinlet icua almost at the same level.
Legs – Fore leg 1.5 mm long, fore femur about as long as fore tibia, fore tibia subquadrate in cross section, merely widened apicad, length of fore tarsomeres: 1.04 mm, II 0.09 mm, III 0.09 mm, tarsal claws and arolium distinct. Mid femur 0.6 mm long, mid tibia subquadrate in cross section, merely widened apicad: tarsal claws and arolium as in fore leg. Hind legs slender, 1.8 mm long with uniserial tibial and tarsal apical pectens; hind tibia 0.96 mm long, widened apicad, apical row of at least 9 teeth with subapical setae (Fig. 1B). Basitarsomere 0.16 mm long with at least 7 apical setigerous teeth, about as long as combined length of mid and apical tarsomeres; midtarsomere 0.09 mm long, with at least 7 apical setigerous teeth; apical tarsomere longer than mid tarsomere (0.14 mm) with distinct claws and wide arolium (Fig. 1B). Tibio-metatarsal formula 9 : 7 : 7.

Abdomen not visible, approximately as long as ovipositor.

Ovipositor ensiform, straight and very long (Fig. 1A – right, & Pl. 1, fig. F), not adpressed to pygofer, slightly longer than half of hind tibia, 0.58 mm long, 0.11 mm wide. Gonoplacs fused in dorsal portion forming a tube or sheath opened in ventral margin.

DISCUSSION

This new genus, Iberofoveopsis, differs from other Perforissidae in having a closed clavus, i.e. joined veins Pcu+CA, which reach the margin of the tegmen based on claval apex. Apart of the diagnostic characters, the new genus differs from Foveopsis, the most similar genus of Cixitettiginae, in having 29 (as opposed to 17) sensory pits on each half of the pronotum disc, and in having a mesonotum with three sensory pits at different positions. Iberofoveopsis gen. nov. differs from the genera Cixitettix and Tsaganema in the shape of tegmen, which is gibbous with a sub-basal concavity (unicolorous and not gibbous in Cixitettix and Tsaganema), and in the abundance and distribution of sensory pits in the head and pronotum. In respect to other characters: in Cixitettix the stems Sc+R, M and CuA leave the basal cell separately and the posterior margin of the pronotum is deeply incised: in Tsaganema, the costal area is very narrow distally, and the ovipositor is longer than hind tibia and adpressed to the pygofer.

Two structures figured and marked with arrows (Fig. 1) call for further discussion. The huge sensory pit at base of Iberofoveopsis’ fore coxa, near the lower margin of pronotum (Fig. 1A – right) could be related to the pits present on head, pronotum and mesonotum; that is, it could be a proprioceptor or have a hygroreceptive function. However, there are no setae visible. Another similar structure is figured on Figure 1C and appears as a plate with a few sensory pits. It is unclear if this structure is part of the tegmen base or part of the thorax. These pits differ in shape from sensory pits on the body. Sensory pits with seta at the tegmen base of Iberofoveopsis gen. nov. may be related to this complex of veins, or “epipleuron”.

The other possibility is that this sensory structure is a part of the thorax sternite, but the function of these pits remains unclear (hygroceptors or proprioceptors?).

As previous specimens of Perforissidae have been found in the Cretaceous deposits of Asia and North America, this discovery extends the distribution of the family to Europe. As originally defined, the Perforissidae contained two subfamilies: Perforissinae Shcherbakov, 2007 with Perforis sus muiri Shcherbakov, 2007 from the Upper Cretaceous New Jersey amber and Cretarius emelianovi Shcherbakov, 2007 from the Upper Cretaceous Taimyr amber; and Cixitettaginae Shcherbakov, 2007, comprising Cixitettx yangi Shcherbakov, 2007 from the Upper Cretaceous Taimyr amber, Foveopsis fennahi Shcherbakov, 2007 from the Lower Cretaceous Burmese amber and Tsaganema oshanini Shcherbakov, 2007 from the Lower Cretaceous of Mongolia (Shcherbakov 2007). Forms belonging to this family are also recorded in the Lower Cretaceous Lebanon and Jordanian ambers (Kaddumi 2007).

Shcherbakov (2007) interpreted Perforissidae as a neotenous offshoot of the common ancestors of all recent Fulgoroidea, i.e. the Jurassic paraphyletic family Fulgororitidae. Placement of the Perforissidae is not fully clear, as both nymphs and adults are highly derivative; however, preliminary analysis of the nymphal and imaginal characters of the Cretaceous families Perforissidae, Mimarakidae and Neazoniidae allowed the Perforissidae to be placed close to the Cixiidae and Delphacidae, with this lineage related to the Neazoniidae and Kimnariidae + Meeoplididae lineage. On the other hand, the Perforissidae shares some features with Mimarakidae, e.g. type of tegmen venation, and presence of sensory pits in imagines (Szvedo 2009). Features shared by Perforissidae, Cixiidae and Delphacidae, and Kimnariidae + Meeoplididae, e.g. sensory pits on the face arranged in rows, nymphal metatarsal segments with more than three apical teeth seem to be the plesiomorphic condition, according to Emelianov (2001). On the other hand, the presence of sensory pits on the meso- and metanotum could be treated as a synapomorphy for the group of families (Szvedo 2009). Sensory pits are specific organs in fulgoroid larvae and are very rare in adults (Emelianov 2001), usually placed on head and thorax. Gnezdilov & Wilson (2007) also described sensory pits on abdominal sternites in some genera of the
Nogodiniidae tribe Mithymiini. Similar analogous sensory organs are also known for the Cixiidae (Bennini Metcalf, 1938 and Bennarellini Emeljanov, 1989), Achilixiidae (Achilixinaceae Muir, 1923 and Bebaiothinae Emeljanov, 1991), and Tropiduchidae (Alleloplasis Waterhouse, 1839). Emeljanov (2001) suggested that sensory pits arranged in rows, with setiform sensilla directed to adjoining carina, is the plesiomorphic condition of Fulgoroidea as a whole. Contrary to this, Gnezdilov & Wilson (2006) suggested that the lack of sensilla on the sensory pit border may be treated as a plesiomorphic character. As such, more data must be collected and more detailed morphological and ultrastructural studies are necessary to resolve these contradictory interpretations.

Shcherbakov (2007) also stated that the Perforissidae were an early attempt to construct leafhopper-like forms from planthoppers essentially quasi-leafhoppers as a response to the colonization of the earliest angiosperms (or proangiosperms) in coastal–littoral environments. Multiple sensory pits in adults and nymphs indicate that the Perforissidae inhabited biotopes with highly variable and/or extreme humidity. The Perforissidae (both adults and nymphs) look more “leafhopper-like” than any other planthopper group with exception of the Tettigometridae. It could therefore be speculated that the Perforissidae inhabited low herbaceous and/or cheirolepidiaceous plants (Shcherbakov 2007). Evolution of the proangiosperms into angiosperms (angiospermization) is considered to have been ruled by neoteny (Ponomarenko 1998), like that of their presumed trophic associates, the Perforissidae. Perforissidae presumably became extinct by being outcompeted by the late Perforissidae (both adults and nymphs).

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