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Introduction to Post-Devonian Hypercalcified  
Sponges (Stromatoporoid Type)

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# PART E, REVISED, VOLUME 4, CHAPTER 3: INTRODUCTION TO POST-DEVONIAN HYPERCALCIFIED SPONGES (STROMATOPOROID TYPE)

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## EXTERNAL MORPHOLOGY

### GROSS MORPHOLOGY

As with most epibenthic invertebrates, calcified sponges display a wide range of gross morphologies and sizes, which may be more an expression of environmental controls than phylogeny. Modular organisms (those that show a repetition of functional units or individuals) have particularly flexible morphologies, which appear to be designed for life under varied rates of sedimentation, hydrodynamic energies, and substrate types. Some species have fixed morphologies and sizes, others show variation according to setting, and yet others show evidence that individuals can adapt to changing energy and sediment regimes, as shown by changing growth styles over the individual's lifetime.

Mesozoic stromatoporoids tend generally to be smaller than Paleozoic representatives, but they fall into the same three main groups of branching, laminar, and massive morphologies. The full range of gross morphologies they exhibit is listed in Table 1, together with their growth form, and an interpretation of the environments in which such forms most commonly grew (compiled from KISSLING & LINEBACK, 1967; KERSHAW, 1998). Growth form denotes the organization of functional units and follows the scheme outlined by COATES and JACKSON (1985). Laminar forms are subdivided into those that formed a permanent attachment to a hard substrate (encrusting) and those that grew upon soft sediment (recumbent). Detailed descriptions of the gross morphologies and growth forms are given in the Glossary (see *Treatise Online*, Part E, Revised, vol. 4, Chapter 8).

## SURFACE FEATURES

Most Mesozoic stromatoporoids show open, porous surfaces, where the skeletal elements form a network. Other surface features fall into two categories: first are those structures related to the immediate hydrodynamic conditions under which an individual grew. These are oscular chimneys, mamelons, and subsidiary branches. Oscular chimneys are tubelike elongations bearing exhalant, oscular pores; mamelons are rounded, moundlike elevations that often bear astrorhizae or oscular pores. Subsidiary branches represent further skeletal development from either of these structures. All these structures enabled the sponge to increase the diameter of supply and thus avoid recycling of exhalant water (FRY, 1979). The presence or absence of such structures cannot always, however, be attributed to large-scale environmental causes. For example, adjacent individuals of the living chaetetid, *Ceratoporella*, show varied mamelon development. Reconstruction of hydrodynamic regimes should therefore only be considered when the range of surface features of an assemblage is available.

The second category of surface features reflects the organization and position of the aquiferous filtration system in relationship to the areas of skeletogenesis. The skeleton of a sponge serves to support the aquiferous system and will reflect the position of this when the soft tissues have gone. Most Mesozoic stromatoporoids possess complex traces of the intricate canal systems within their skeletons, often as ramifying unwallled spaces within the skeleton, which open out into astrorhizae on the upper surfaces. As the individual grows, successive layers are superimposed.

TABLE 1. Gross morphology and growth form of Mesozoic stromatoporoids, together with inferred environments in which each form most commonly occurred (new).

| Gross morphology                | Growth form                | Inferred hydrodynamic regime | Inferred sedimentation rate |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| branching-delicate              | pseudocolonial (uniserial) | low energy                   | high                        |
| branching-delicate              | pseudocolonial (uniserial) | moderate energy              | moderate                    |
| branching                       | multiserial erect          | low-moderate energy          | moderate                    |
| laminar-recumbent               | multiserial                | variable energy              | low                         |
| laminar-encrusting              | multiserial                | high energy                  | low                         |
| massive: hemispherical, nodular | multiserial encrusting     | moderate-high energy         | low                         |
| massive: columnar, conical      | multiserial encrusting     | low-moderate energy          | high                        |

The form of the aquiferous system is largely dictated by the relative thickness of soft tissue and can thus be an important clue in soft-tissue reconstructions. For example, astrorhizae, the unwalled traces of the stellate, branching, exhalant canal system, are expressed in the fossilizable skeleton only when the soft tissue is sufficiently thin for the exhalant canals to be directly adjacent to the areas of calcification—i.e., the aquiferous system is essentially surficial. In contrast, oscular pores will be present within the skeleton only if the soft tissue is thick and the aquiferous system is penetrative and enclosed within the upper portions of the calcareous skeleton. Here, the exhalant canal traces are expressed as ramifying canals within the skeleton and not as superficial astrorhizal furrows. Ostia do not normally have any skeletal expression, although the tubules in chaetetids may correspond to the placing of one or more ostia, as noted in the living chaetetid *Ceratoporella*.

As in Paleozoic representatives, many Mesozoic stromatoporoids show a concentric layered appearance on the undersurface of hand specimens or when viewed in longitudinal thin section. These layers are periodic skeletal growth increments known as latilaminae. They are formed by alternating changes in the thickness or spacing of skeletal elements, or by a periodicity in the arrangement of the secondary skeleton. They may also be produced by preservational differences in the skeletal elements, perhaps due to varying amounts of organic material, leading to differing diagenetic susceptibility.

Latilamination appears to be a reflection of different rates or types of skeletal growth and may indicate some cyclicity, possibly seasonal, of the environment in which stromatoporoids grew.

## INTERNAL MORPHOLOGY CONSTRUCTION OF THE SKELETON

The skeletal construction of many living calcified sponges consists of four successive growth stages: (1) organic skeleton; (2) spicular framework; (3) primary calcareous skeleton; (4) secondary calcareous skeleton (filling tissue). Some or all of these growth stages are inferred to have been present in Mesozoic stromatoporoids and are illustrated schematically in Figure 1.

1. Fine collagen fibers, known as spongin, occur in many sponges and in all demosponges. Spongin fibers are a few millimeters in diameter and are formed by numerous collagenous fibers 10  $\mu\text{m}$  or less in diameter. Spongin is secreted by spongeocytes and is found in varying quantities in different groups.

2. Siliceous and calcareous spicules are known from Mesozoic stromatoporoids, placing their possessors in the classes Demospongiae and Calcispongiae, respectively. Spicules are secreted by sclerocytes. In demosponges, an axial filament appears within the sclerocyte, which serves as the template for silicification. Collenocyte cells are probably active in moving spicules to their final positions, at which point basal exopinacocytes engulf the spicules and cover them with a

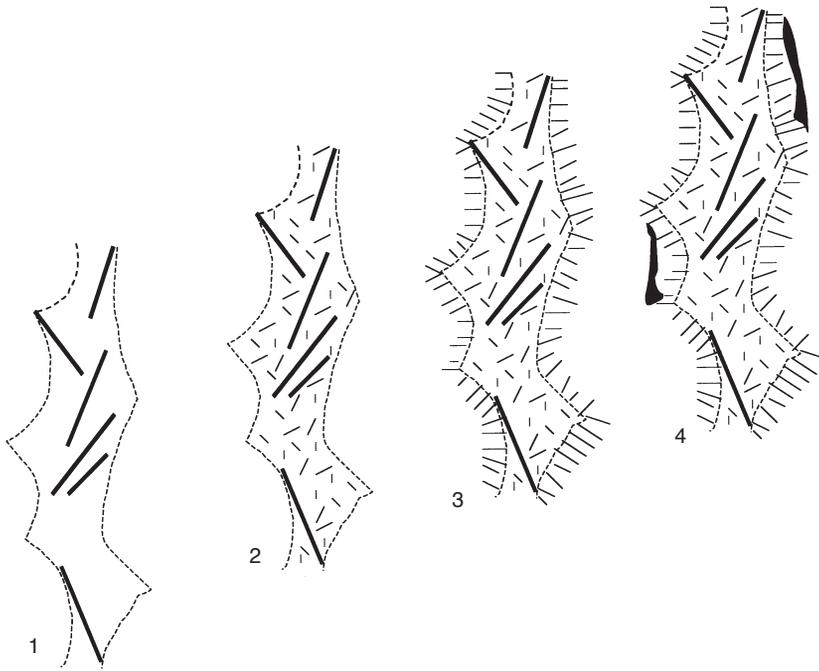


FIG. 1. Schematic illustration of the four successive skeletal growth stages inferred to have been present in Mesozoic stromatoporoids (adapted from Wood, 1987).

layer of spongin. Spicules are thus trapped and interconnected within the skeleton of spongin, from which the spicules echinate (protrude upward and outward from the fibers). As more spicules are moved into place and join the skeletal network, all parts of the spicule-spongin complex become covered with a similar layer of exopinacocytes. The skeleton of siliceous spicules and spongin fibers provides support for the soft parts of the sponge; in demosponge cultures raised in a silica-free medium, the aquiferous system fails. Spicules are highly variable in morphology and organization, and they often show considerable variety within different histological parts of an individual. Spicule tracts (bunches of spicules) may show an axial condensation from which they diverge in a plumose (as in *Milleporellidae*) or a plumulo-reticulate arrangement (as in *Actinostromarianinae*), which radiate to the surface of the sponge.

3. The form of the primary calcareous skeleton is often determined by the posi-

tion of the organic skeleton and may also be influenced by the positioning of the spicular skeleton.

The resultant primary calcareous skeletal elements fall into two categories: radial and concentric elements (Fig. 2). Radial elements may be pillars (of limited length) or columns (more continuous). Concentric elements are known as pillar-lamellae (short, discontinuous elements contiguous with pillars or columns) or laminae (independently secreted, continuous elements). Laminae are often punctured by pores, which are interpreted as oscular openings, as found in *Burgundia* (see *Treatise Online*, Part E, Revised, vol. 4, Chapter 4A, Fig. 52a-f). Astorhizae are often limited to interlaminar areas where laminae are present, although there may be some connection between successive generations. In some forms, the radial skeletal elements initiate from an axial condensed area (e.g., *Actinostromarianina*, *Treatise Online*, Part E, Revised, vol. 4, Chapter 4A, Fig. 33,3a-b).

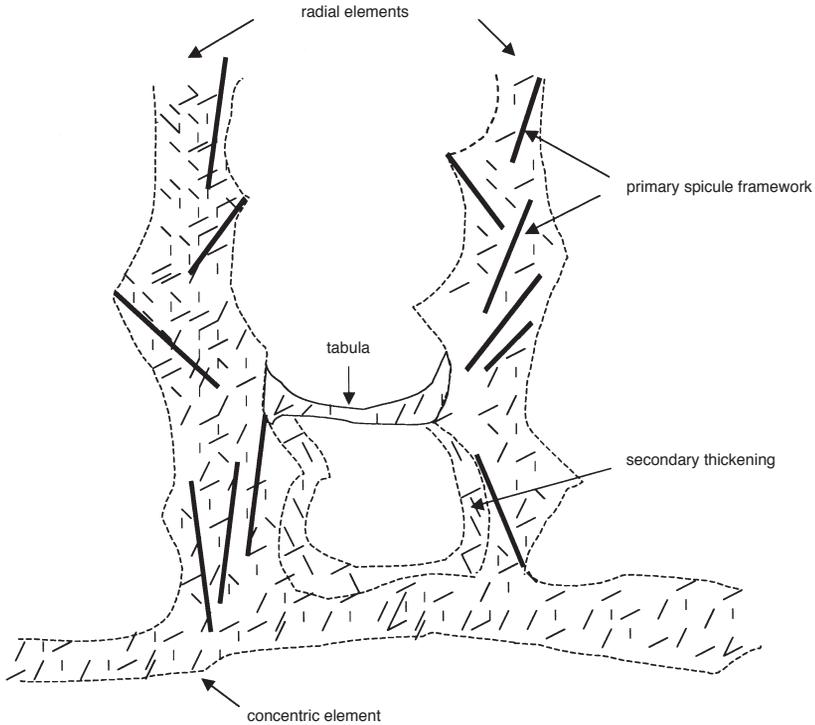


FIG. 2. Nomenclature of the skeletal elements in Mesozoic stromatoporoids (adapted from Wood, 1987).

Sometimes the skeleton of Mesozoic stromatoporoids forms a reticulum where no distinction between radial and concentric elements can be made. This is often the case in the undifferentiated juvenile skeletal tissue at the base of stromatoporoid skeletons.

4. Only the peripheral areas of most calcified sponge skeletons are open, water-supplied frameworks covered by or filled with living soft tissue. Abandoned, older parts of the skeleton no longer occupied by living tissue are sectioned off or secondarily infilled by skeletal structures, which also provide a support platform for the soft tissue. A variety of secondarily precipitated structures (tabulae, secondary thickening, and backfill) constructed of various microstructures are common in Mesozoic stromatoporoids (Fig. 2). Tabulae are plate-like, straight or curved elements that span between radial elements, parallel to the

growth surface of the individual or across exhalant canal traces and oscular tubes. They may be precipitated at irregular intervals (independently) during the lifetime of the sponges or aligned as periodical growth increments. Tabulae often show a greater degree of alignment in forms with inferred thin veneers of tissue. They may be thin and of irregular microstructure or relatively thick, fibrous structures. Some Recent calcified chaetetid sponges possess tabulae (*Merlia* spp., *Acanthochaetetes* spp., and *Ceratoporella* sp.), but most other forms, especially *Ceratoporella*-like forms, form a backfill of solid skeleton, which may completely occlude the primary pore spaces that formerly housed the living tissue. The backfilling tissue forms syntaxially upon the primary skeleton, and, generally, the two components cannot be easily distinguished. Sometimes the development of backfill is limited to a secondary thickening of the

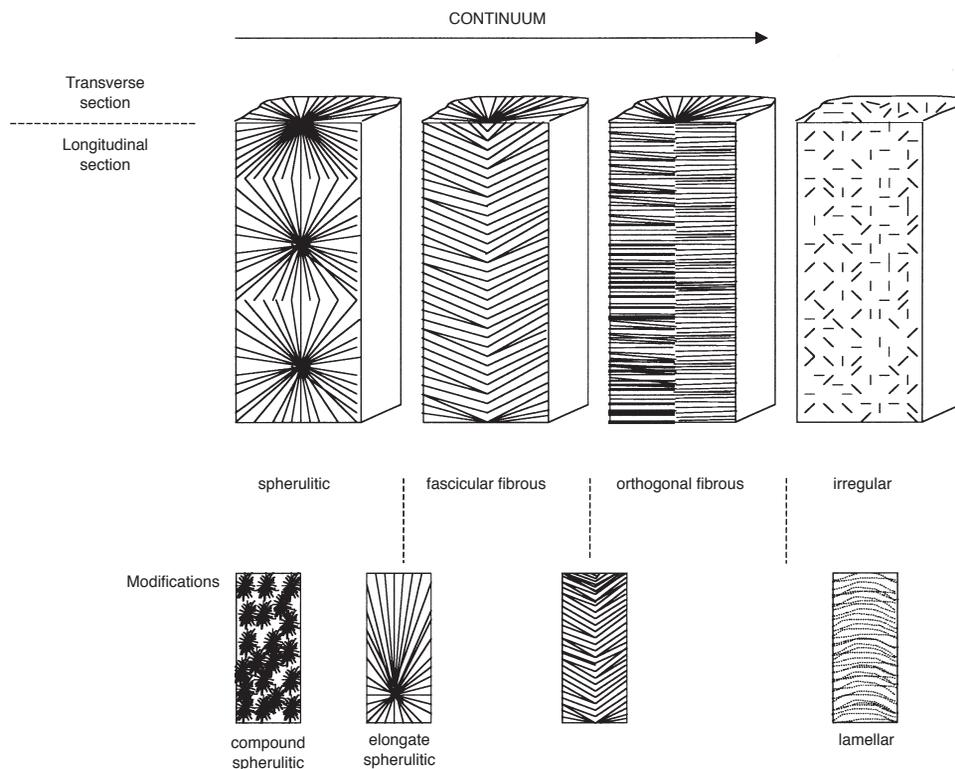


FIG. 3. Four main microstructural types of calcareous skeleton found in Mesozoic stromatopoids, illustrated schematically as they appear in sections through a radial element. Modifications of these types are shown below (adapted from Wood, 1987).

skeleton, especially the radial elements. It is not clear whether this overgrowth of crystals in optical continuity is an organic or inorganic process. Often, secondary back-fill can initiate from a tabula, as found in *Ceratoporella*. Here, the distinction between types of filling tissue can be an arbitrary one. In other cases, such as the Cretaceous–Recent chaetetid *Acanthochaetetes*, tabulae may form contiguously with the primary skeleton, making a distinction between primary and secondary skeleton also problematic.

The following relationships have been determined between these three skeletal products in calcified sponges.

1. The calcified skeleton is precipitated directly within an aspiculate spongin framework or matrix, e.g., *Vaceletia* (Recent

sphinctozoan) and possibly *Burgundia* (Mesozoic stromatopoid).

2. Spicules are present, but only incorporated into the skeleton by chance, e.g., *Acanthochaetetes* (Recent chaetetid) and *Blastochaetetes irregularis* WOOD & REITNER, 1988 (Mesozoic chaetetid).

3. The calcified skeleton is precipitated around a primary spicule framework or lattice, e.g., *Petrobiona* (Recent calcisponge) and *Actinostromaria* sp. (Mesozoic stromatopoid).

4. The acicular crystals of the calcified skeleton initiate from the spicule bases within tracts, e.g., *Calcifibrospongia* (Recent stromatopoid) and *Dehornella* (Mesozoic stromatopoid).

5. The calcified skeleton is precipitated within a spongin matrix, which drapes,

meniscus-like, around a spicule framework, e.g., *Actinostromarianina lecompti* (Mesozoic stromatoporoid).

In addition to latilaminae, growth interruption surfaces may also be detected within longitudinal sections. These represent periods of considerable soft-tissue loss, due to sediment incursions or scour events, and may be followed by encrustation of the resulting free skeletal surface. The stromatoporoid soft tissue may subsequently regrow over some or all of the area, and skeletal growth will recommence. The undersurfaces, or within the skeleton, may also show epithecae. These are solid, platelike deposits of secondary tissue, which are often continuous across growth surfaces. When such structures appear within the skeleton, they are interpreted as having been precipitated in response to adverse environmental conditions.

#### MODES OF PROLIFERATION

Branches in Mesozoic stromatoporoids often arise from a basal nodule by either a dichotomy (longitudinal fission) or budding, which initiates from the axial part of the skeleton. Mode of branching affects the resultant branching form. Individuals may show a fasciculate arrangement of the branches.

#### BIOMINERALIZATION AND MICROSTRUCTURE

Sponges not only produce a diverse variety of microstructural fabrics (Fig. 3), but also form them via several biomineralization mechanisms. These mechanisms can be classed within genetic subdivisions, which are described below. This has the advantage of separating microstructures that have previously been classified together under the same descriptive heading, but which clearly have different modes of genesis (WOOD, 1991). Table 2 summarizes information concerning the supposed nonspicular biomineralization mechanisms found in Recent calcified demosponges, their products, and systematic distribution.

All biomineralization mechanisms employed by calcified sponges appear to precipitate crystals from beneath an organic layer that, to varying extents, acts as a template. The distribution of nucleation sites, presumably determined by organic tissue organization, also appears to be an important factor in determining the resultant microstructural type. In most cases, with the exception of irregular microstructures, the crystals are precipitated with their c-axes oriented perpendicular to the pinacoderm. When all three skeletal elements are present, the sequence of precipitation is always the same: (1) spicule formation, transportation, and orientation; (2) spongin-collagen fibers to bind the spicules in place; (3) calcareous skeleton precipitation.

The terms biologically induced, organic matrix-mediated (LOWENSTAM, 1981), and biologically controlled (MANN, 1983) have been established for describing the varying degrees of control of the organic component. Calcified demosponges appear to show representatives from all these types.

#### MINERALIZATION OF A COLLAGENOUS MATRIX

In this mode of calcareous skeleton formation, the calcareous skeleton is wholly defined by the extent of a preformed collagenous framework of spongin that becomes calcified. This would seem to indicate an organic matrix-mediated mechanism, in which the cell manipulates an organic framework upon which regulated mineralization occurs (LOWENSTAM, 1981). Spicules may or may not play a role, but, where present, they appear to act as a framework around which the organic matrix is precipitated, and in the case of fibrous microstructures, they act as nucleation sites for the acicular crystal growth. Two living sponges calcify via calcification of an organic matrix, but they are systematically unrelated and produce totally different microstructures.

*Vaceletia* (a Recent aspiculate verticillitid sphinctozoan) produces a skeleton composed of a feltwork of aragonitic microfibrils

TABLE 2. Summary table of biomineralization mechanisms found in Recent calcified demosponges and calcisponges, their products, and their systematic distribution (adapted from West & others, *Treatise Online*, Part E, Revised, vol. 4, Chapter 4).

| Systematics   | Genus                                    | Biomineralization mechanism     | Microstructure and mineralogy             |
|---|--|---------------------------------|---|
| Class Demospongiae<br>Order Agelasida<br>Family Astroscleridae  | <i>Astrosclera</i>                       | intracellular                   | spherulitic aragonite                     |
|   | <i>Ceratoporella</i>                     | secretory pinacoderm            | pencilate (fascicular fibrous) aragonite  |
|   | <i>Stromatospongia</i>                   | secretory pinacoderm            | pencilate (fascicular fibrous) aragonite  |
| Order Haplosclerida<br>Family Calcifibrospongiidae              | <i>Calcifibrospongia</i>                 | secretory pinacoderm            | pencilate (fascicular fibrous) aragonite  |
| Order Hadromerida<br>Family Acanthochaetidae                    | <i>Willardia</i>                         | secretory pinacoderm            | pencilate (fascicular fibrous) aragonite  |
|   | <i>Acanthochaetetes</i>                  | secretory pinacoderm            | microlamellar calcite                     |
| Order Poecilosclerida<br>Family Merliidae                       | <i>Merlia</i>                            | secretory pinacoderm            | pencilate (fascicular fibrous) calcite    |
| Order Verticillitida<br>Family Vaceletidae                      | <i>Vaceletia</i>                         | noncollagenous organic template | microgranular irregular aragonite         |
| Class Calcispongiae<br>Order Lithonida<br>Family Minchinellidae | <i>Plectroninia</i> , <i>Minchinella</i> | secretion by telmatoblasts      | orthogonal calcite                        |
| Order Murrayonida<br>Family Murrayonidae                        | <i>Murrayona</i>                         | secretory pinacoderm            | pencilate (fascicular fibrous) calcite    |
| Order Baeriida<br>Family Petrobionidae                          | <i>Petrobiona</i>                        | secretory pinacoderm            | radial flake (fascicular fibrous) calcite |

known as microgranular irregular microstructure. New chambers are added periodically, and they initiate by the formation of a collagenous template below the upper pinacoderm layer. Mineralization first occurs within isolated spherical regions, extending along the length of the new chamber wall (GAUTRET, 1985). Crystals first form bundles of disoriented acicular rods (compact in the terminology of GAUTRET, 1985), which later become more granular (composite in

the terminology of GAUTRET, 1985) during a further phase of precipitation. In some parts of the skeleton, the bundles may show a preferred orientation parallel to the collagenous fibers between which they grow. The pillars that support the hemispherical chambers form during the first mineralization phase by mineralization of organic strands. Older, abandoned chambers become filled with layered lenses of irregular microstructures, and although it is not clear whether

these are the result of inorganic or organic mineralization, their form does suggest an organic origin.

Nonspicular fossil spinctozoans, which bear an irregular calcareous skeleton, are inferred, by suggested affinity to *Vaceletia*, to have possessed a similar mode of biomineralization. In addition, spiculate stromatoporoids, e.g., *Newellia mira* (Carboniferous haplosclerid), and the calcitic species *Actinostromarianina lecompti* (Jurassic agelasid), bear irregular calcareous skeletons that appear to drape around a primary spicular skeleton, also implying direct mineralization of a collagenous template (WOOD, 1987; WOOD, REITNER, & WEST, 1989).

*Calcifibrospongia* (Recent haplosclerid stromatoporoid) also biomineralizes by calcification of an organic matrix. Here, the calcareous skeleton precipitates around a lattice of siliceous strongyles that are bound within spongin fibers. The calcareous skeleton forms elongate sclerodermites 60–110  $\mu\text{m}$  long. HARTMAN (1979) suggested that the centers of calcification may form simultaneously within a particular length of fiber, where the acicular aragonite crystals grow out in all directions from each center until they reach the boundary of the organic fiber, or are stopped by the crystals of a neighboring sclerodermite. Spicules frequently appear to serve as the nuclei for the sclerodermites. *Calcifibrospongia* can show deposits of epithelial material varying from 40–250  $\mu\text{m}$  thick, representing planes of the successive dieback and regrowth of the skeleton, but no other filling tissue or secondary skeleton is present.

*Euzkadiella* (Cretaceous haplosclerid stromatoporoid) possesses a microstructure similar to *Calcifibrospongia*, and although this form was originally calcitic rather than aragonitic, it has been inferred to have formed by the same process (REITNER, 1987).

#### SECRETORY PINACODERM

Here, calcified sponges produce a calcareous skeleton by precipitation through a secretory pinacoderm via a thin mucous- or

fluid-filled (possible polysaccharide) layer, resembling the process found in calcareous algae. This would indicate a biologically controlled mechanism of precipitation, in which the cell appears to act as a causative agent and in some way controls the precipitation of minerals (MANN, 1983). The muco-polysaccharide layer might provide a migration path and medium for joining  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  and  $\text{CO}_3^{2-}$  ions, as known in scleractinian corals. This layer may also serve, to a lesser extent, as a template controlling the configuration of crystals. Several forms are at present collected under this subheading, until more details allow us to refine the scheme.

The calcareous skeletons of *Ceratoporella* (agelasid chaetetids) and *Acanthochaetetes* (hadromerid chaetetids) are thought to be produced by this mechanism. In *Ceratoporella*, the calcareous skeleton is formed of acicular or fibrous crystals arranged in a modified spherulitic form known as penicillate. HARTMAN and GOREAU (1975) observed this skeleton to form around clots of organic matrix (possibly spongin) surrounding the heads of some spicules. Thus, to some extent, the positioning of the calcareous skeleton appears to be determined by the placing of the spicule and spongin frameworks. In the acanthochaetetids, the high-Mg calcite skeleton has an irregular microstructure of crystals (1–8  $\mu\text{m}$  long) oriented in one plane only, giving the appearance of a microlamellar microstructure in longitudinal section. Instead of the abandoned parts of the skeleton being filled with a secondary epitaxial backfill, the portions below the living tissue are sectioned off by a series of tabulae or horizontal partitions. Growth of the tubule walls is incremental and layered, and the spines and tabulae grow in an integrated way as outgrowths form the calcite walls. However, secondarily precipitated tabulae are also known. The microscleres form a dense layer at the surface of the living tissue, while the tylostyles are aligned parallel to the tubule walls. In living forms, the spicules are not incorporated into the calcareous skeleton, but in fossil representa-

tives they are, although by chance (REITNER & ENGESER, 1983). The megascleres tend to occur parallel to the tubule walls, and the microscleres within the tabulae, perhaps indicating the formation of the latter near the living tissue surface. Nanometer-sized organic fibers act as the matrix for calcification, and the tubule wall centers are richest in organic material. Collagenous strands extend into the calcareous skeleton, which seem to act as anchorage points for the soft tissue, as noted in some scleractinian corals. The exhalant canals sometimes leave impressions on the skeletal surface as in *Ceratoporella*. Both *Ceratoporella* and *Acanthochaetetes* have considerable fossil records, extending to the upper Permian and Upper Cretaceous, respectively.

Many Mesozoic stromatoporoids, such as the Milleporellidae, are inferred to have formed their calcareous skeletons by this method (WOOD, 1987). These forms produce fascicular fibrous skeletons, similar to those of *Ceratoporella*.

#### PASSIVE SECRETORY PINACODERM (CEMENT)

Orthogonal microstructure is common in many fossil calcified sponges, including fossil demosponges. They are also found in some living calcisponge sponges (e.g., *Minchinella*). This simple microstructural type could be explained by the cement-like precipitation of acicular crystals with their c-axis parallel to a secretory membrane. They would, as such, constitute a biologically induced precipitation mechanism, in which the cell appears to act as a causative agent in the precipitation of minerals, but where the cell has little control (LOWENSTAM, 1981). The Upper Jurassic agelasid stromatoporoid *Actinostromaria* forms a primary calcareous orthogonal skeleton upon a spicule lattice. *Actinostromarianina lecompti* shows a primary irregular calcareous skeleton and a secondary orthogonal fibrous one, which has a banded distribution, forming latilaminae throughout the growth of the individual (see *Treatise Online*, Part E, Revised,

vol. 4, Chapter 4A, Fig. 33.3a–b). This would seem to point to the mediation of some periodic environmental effect, such as warmer temperatures, causing an intermittent biologically induced precipitation.

#### INTRACELLULAR ORIGIN

*Astrosclera* (a Recent agelasid stromatoporoid) is the only known calcified sponge whose calcareous skeleton has an intracellular origin. The basal calcareous skeleton of *Astrosclera* consists of a fine reticulum of aragonite with no differentiation into pillars and laminae. Calcareous spherules are formed intracellularly by amoebocytes as small nuclei (15  $\mu\text{m}$ ) near the surface of the sponge and then transported to a position where they grow larger by epitaxial growth and add to the general calcareous skeletal network to produce a compound spherulitic microstructure. The spherules are known to possess an organic calcification center of approximately 7  $\mu\text{m}$  in diameter, and they show several organic rich layers, one of which corresponds to the attachment of the spherules to the skeletal wall, where it is replaced by a covering organic envelope. The living tissue penetrates the mesh of the skeleton to a depth of approximately 10  $\mu\text{m}$ , and a secondary deposit of acicular calcite crystals partially fills the abandoned inner skeletal reticulum. In the Indian Ocean, *Astrosclera* secretes siliceous acanthostyles, but Pacific populations largely lack them; although, when present, the spicules are incorporated into the calcareous skeleton. There appears to be no discernible direct relationship between the spicules and the positioning of the calcareous skeleton; they are incorporated by chance. Below the pinacoderm are large exhalant canals, 60–80  $\mu\text{m}$  in diameter, that branch downward and outward into the skeletal tissue to form astrorhizal-like structures. No tabulae are known, but secondary epitaxial backfill occurs as penicillate tufts in the abandoned parts of the skeleton.

A wide variety of fossil calcified demosponges are known that show this aragonitic

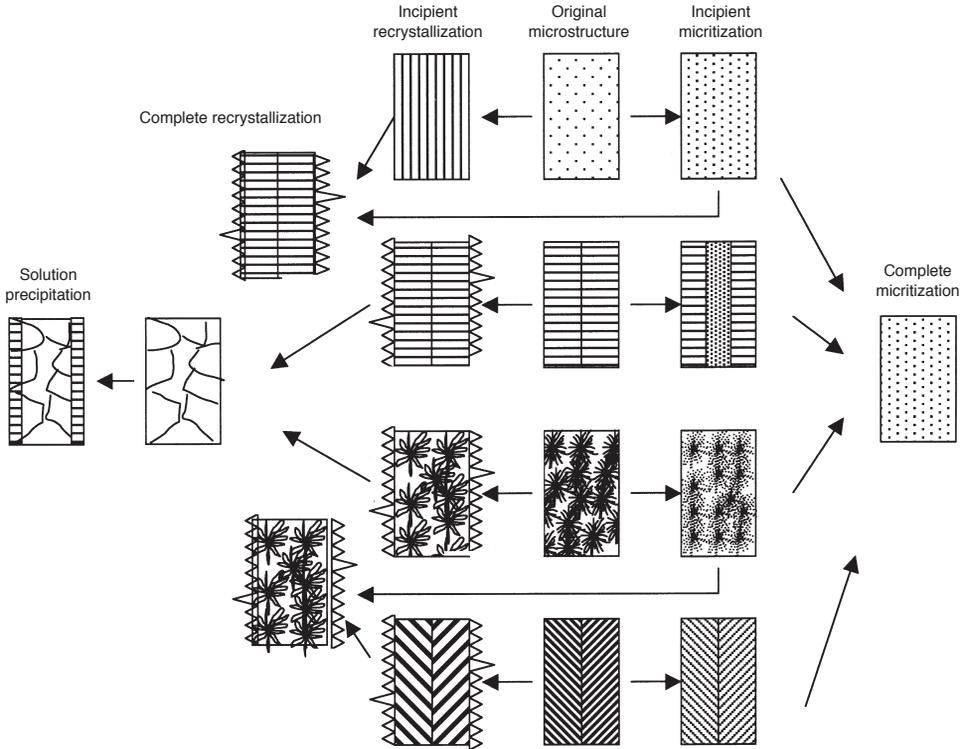


FIG. 4. Suggested diagenetic trends found in the calcareous skeletons of fossil calcified sponges (adapted from Wentz, 1984; Wood, 1987).

spherulitic microstructural type, especially from the Upper Triassic of Italy and Turkey. WEST, VACELET, WOOD, WILLENZ, and HARTMAN (*Treatise Online*, Part E, Revised, vol. 4, Chapter 4A) regard *Astrosclera* as having an Upper Triassic age. However, although the biomineralization mechanism was probably the same, taxonomic affinity cannot be assumed until we have spicule confirmation.

### MINERALOGY

Living calcified sponges may be aragonitic (e.g., *Ceratoporella*) or high-Mg calcite (e.g., *Acanthochaetetes* and *Merlia*). Although our sample size is small, mineralogical type has some stability within families, but not at higher taxonomic levels. Mineralogical composition therefore appears to be of low phylogenetic signifi-

cance and to have arisen independently within different families.

Due to the fine microstructural preservation of many Mesozoic stromatopores, their original mineralogy is inferred to have been low-Mg calcite (WOOD, 1987). However, forms with original aragonite preservation are known from several Upper Carboniferous, middle to upper Permian, and Upper Triassic localities.

It is clear that the mineralogy of calcified sponges has varied throughout the Phanerozoic. Although our knowledge is patchy, especially from the Tertiary, aragonitic forms are only known from the Upper Carboniferous to Upper Triassic, and Recent (WOOD, 1987; STANLEY & HARDIE, 1998). These periods correspond to the aragonite facilitating phases of SANDBERG (1983) and suggest that mineralogy of sponge calcareous

skeletons may be under such environmental rather than taxonomic controls. Taxa with different mineralogies coexisted, such as the chaetetid genera *Acanthochaetetes* (high-Mg calcite) and *Ceratoporella* (aragonite) and milleporellid stromatoporoids (possibly low-Mg calcite), during the Upper Jurassic to Upper Cretaceous. Perhaps the calcareous skeletons in these groups arose during their appropriate facilitating phases (WOOD, 1987). We require a greater diagenetic understanding, valid phylogenetic allocations, and far more material if we are to fully assess the significance and controls of mineralogical composition in calcified sponges.

## DIAGENESIS

### DIAGENESIS OF THE CALCAREOUS SKELETON

Diagenetic alteration is significant in stromatoporoids, as it may enhance, modify, or destroy primary skeletal characteristics.

WENDT (1984) and WOOD (1987) have described diagenetic trends in Mesozoic stromatoporoids in which they distinguished three independent processes: alteration of mineralogy, alteration of microstructure, and the formation of diagenetic pseudostructures. Stromatoporoids are also subject to the range of diagenetic replacements found in other calcareous fossils, such as chertification.

### ALTERATION OF MINERALOGY

Although there are several locations within upper Paleozoic and Mesozoic strata that yield forms with original aragonite preservation, most fossil sponge material, including most Mesozoic stromatoporoids, is now low-Mg calcite. Low-Mg calcite is the most stable mineralogy under normal diagenetic conditions, and originally low-Mg forms tend to retain their original mineralogy and possess well-preserved microstructures. Originally high-Mg calcite always reverts to low-Mg calcite, sometimes with loss of microstructural detail, as known from fossil acanthochaetetids, but aragonitic forms tend

to be wholly recrystallized with no or few traces of primary microstructure.

### ALTERATION OF MICROSTRUCTURE

WENDT (1984) described microstructural alteration from aragonitic Permian and Triassic material in terms of micritization, cementation, and recrystallization (transformation). Figure 4 shows suggested diagenetic trends found in the calcareous skeletons of fossil calcified sponges (adapted from WENDT, 1984, and WOOD, 1987). Completely micritized, recrystallized structures and solution precipitation may be derived from any of the four original microstructures.

#### Micritization

Micritization is attributed to the decomposition of organic matrices with biominerals. The final result is the complete breakdown of the original crystal arrangement and the formation of irregularly organized granular crystals between 1 and 8  $\mu\text{m}$  in length.

Micritization appears preferentially to attack areas in the microstructure most accessible to percolated fluids or where organic matter was concentrated. In orthogonal microstructure, micritization starts from the central axis of calcification and may increase in width, to eventually totally obscure the original fibers. The centers and edges of spherules are the most susceptible areas in spherulitic microstructures. Fascicular fibrous microstructure appears to be least susceptible to micritization.

#### Cementation

Modern calcified demosponges show the rapid precipitation of micritic aragonite within the empty cavities formed in abandoned basal parts of the skeleton.

Two phases of cementation are often found within the skeletons of Mesozoic stromatoporoids. (1) Early rim cements, precipitated epitaxially to the microstructural fibers of the skeletal elements. Syntaxial crystal growth may also occur in forms

with fibrous microstructures, leading to thickening of the skeletal elements. Aragonitic calcareous sponges often show acicular aragonite crystals growing isopachously from the skeletal elements, including the tabulae. (2) Later drusy or equant cements within the interskeletal pore space. The preservation of spicules within the interskeletal spaces, or projecting into the interskeletal spaces, indicates that this cementation can occur before the diagenetic breakdown of the spicules. Since Recent calcified sponge spicules are known to dissolve during the lifetime of individuals (HARTMAN & GOREAU, 1970), this cementation must be a very early diagenetic event.

### Recrystallization

In Mesozoic stromatoporoids, recrystallization leads to a general increase in crystal size. During early recrystallization, the individual crystals in the three fibrous microstructures will maintain their acicular nature, but continued recrystallization will cause the growth of more equidimensional crystals. Previously micritized specimens can be recrystallized to form coarse mosaics with residual micritized areas.

### DIAGENETIC PSEUDOSTRUCTURES

Pseudolamellar structure and scalenohedral pseudostructure have been noted in Mesozoic stromatoporoids (WENDT, 1984; WOOD, 1987). Under SEM, pseudolamellar structure consists of interlocked, curved, bladed crystals, 5–10  $\mu\text{m}$  thick and a few mm long. WENDT suggested that microlamellar structure is probably derived from a calcitic irregular microstructure showing some parallel orientation. Scalenohedra appear as saw-toothed formations or indentations projecting toward the center of the skeletal elements. A similar structure has been characterized by BATHURST (1975) as being a recrystallization fabric.

### DIAGENESIS OF SPICULES

Spicules have been found in several Mesozoic stromatoporoid genera from many

localities with differing diagenetic histories. They may be originally siliceous (demosponges) or calcareous (calcsponges) and are often incorporated into the calcareous skeleton. In Recent calcified demosponges, spicules consist of hydrated amorphous silica (HARTMAN & GOREAU, 1970; JONES, 1979). Recent calcsponges have single crystal high-Mg calcite spicules. Minor amounts of  $\text{SO}_4^{2-}$ ,  $\text{Sr}^{2+}$ , and  $\text{Na}^+$  have also been found in calcitic spicules (JONES, 1979). Use of standard carbonate stains greatly enhances the visibility of fossil spicules. It is still unclear whether the absence of microscleres is due to nonsecretion or to their increased susceptibility to diagenetic loss.

Spicule diagenesis begins during the lifetime of Recent calcified demosponges. The processes are not fully known but have been partially described by HARTMAN and GOREAU (1970) and HARTMAN (1979).

Due to the thermodynamic instability of inphase silica and calcite, silica spicules begin to corrode at high pH. Pitting of the spicule surface and corrosion of the acanthostyle spines and of the projecting tips have been noted in Recent and fossil forms (GRAY, 1980; HARTMAN, 1980). This corrosion of spicules during the lifetime of a sponge starts in the older parts of the specimen. HARTMAN and GOREAU (1970) noted that spicule dissolution sometimes starts from the axial filament; in other cases, the head of the spicule is most susceptible. Eventually, spicule cavities or molds are left. The subsequent diagenetic history of the spicules appears to be determined by the role they played in relation to the calcareous skeleton.

### Originally Siliceous Spicules

Early diagenetic processes have nearly always replaced the amorphous silica of demosponge spicules by a secondary polycrystalline mosaic of  $\text{CaCO}_3$ ,  $\text{SiO}_2$ , or  $\text{FeS}_2$ , or a single crystal pseudomorph of  $\text{SiO}_2$ .

### Early Diagenesis

During life, spicules may be wholly free or incorporated partially or fully into the

primary or secondary calcareous skeleton. In forms that produce a secondary backfill, the spicule molds may become filled with a syntaxial growth of calcite crystals, making it impossible to determine the original placing and presence of the spicules.

#### Later Diagenesis

If not totally obliterated by epitaxial skeletal growth, the mold may be subsequently filled with other minerals.

#### Calcite Pseudomorphs

Calcite pseudomorphs may be mono- or polycrystalline. Where calcite pseudomorphs are found, the microstructure of the calcareous skeleton is always well preserved. Pseudomorph boundaries are only apparent when they are covered with a thin micrite envelope or when they are of different calcite mineralogy from the calcareous skeleton as shown by staining. Otherwise, the pseudomorphs appear as spicule ghosts as in *Parastromatopora japonica*, described by HARTMAN and GOREAU (1970, fig. 16). Here, the spicules are recognized by their crystallographic difference from the fibers of the calcareous skeleton microstructure. The calcite pseudomorphs tend to be found in the core areas of the specimens, which have been partially protected from later leaching of corrosive pore waters.

In forms where the originally siliceous spicules formed a primary skeletal framework, the calcite pseudomorphs are rarely found projecting into the interskeletal spaces. Most frequently, they terminate abruptly due to corrosion of the projecting tips. In *Blastochaetetes irregularis* WOOD & REITNER, 1988, where calcareous pseudomorphs are preserved within the tubules, the areas of spicule contact with the calcareous skeleton are more poorly preserved than in areas where spicules are encased by spar within the pore space. The skeletal calcite appears to have a corrosive effect upon the spicules.

Calcite pseudomorphs are also susceptible to micritization. All stages, from well-

preserved pseudomorphs with a thin micritized coating, through badly micritized, but discernible spicules forming diffuse elongate and circular lighter areas, to a totally micritized central zone within the calcareous skeletal elements are noted.

#### Pyrite Pseudomorphs

Pyrite pseudomorphs appear as agglomerates or as chains of pyrite crystals (see *Actinostromarianina lecompti*, *Treatise Online*, Part E, Revised, vol. 4, Chapter 4A, Fig. 33,3b). They are often shorter than calcite pseudomorphs, but both pseudomorph types are frequently found together in the same specimen (WOOD & REITNER, 1986) indicating that pyritization has occurred either after partial dissolution of the siliceous spicule or as replacement of the calcite pseudomorph. Examples have been found in which threads of pyrite are seen forming within calcite pseudomorphs. Pyritization appears to nucleate upon the organic axial filament, probably due to bacterial activity, and this may occur at a very early stage of diagenesis.

Pyrite pseudomorphs are often found in large numbers near the outer edges of specimens (see WOOD & REITNER, 1986, pl. 35,3), and pseudomorphs can remain after total obliteration of the calcareous skeleton by subsequent silicification.

#### Siliceous Spicule Pseudomorphs

Siliceous spicule pseudomorphs are occasionally found in Mesozoic stromatoporoids. They are found in chertified areas of specimens, often where the calcified skeleton has been totally obliterated and can be exceptionally well preserved.

The typical corrosion and pitting features noted by HARTMAN and GOREAU (1970) in Recent calcified demosponge spicules are seen on these pseudomorphs. Axial canals are preserved, but no acanthostyle spines are noted. Considering their excellent preservation, it is therefore unlikely that they were originally acanthostyles.

Siliceous spicule pseudomorphs sometimes appear dark brown and microgranular.

The axial canals are not visible, and the brownish granular appearance and high relief of some pseudomorphs suggest that the original spicule mineralogy has been altered. GRAY (1980) noted that the occurrence of this microgranular silica within spicule pseudomorphs and not within the chalcedonic silica walls, as well as the retention of delicate spicule corrosion features, are good evidence of an original mineralogy of opal A in fossil calcified demosponges, as in their extant relatives.

## PRESENT CLASSIFICATION

The following lines of evidence suggest that the formation of a basal calcareous skeleton in sponges is a simple process and that sponges can calcify with relative ease.

1. Calcareous skeletons have a wide systematic distribution within the Porifera. Calcified demosponges are known from the orders Haplosclerida, Agelasida, Hadromerida, and Poecilosclerida. Calcified calcsponges are known from both the Calcinea and the Calcaronea.

2. Different microstructures and seemingly different biomineralization mechanisms are present within closely related forms. For example, both *Astrosclera* and *Ceratoporella* are haplosclerids, but one produces a spherulitic microstructure with an intracellular origin and the other an elongate spherulitic one via a secretory pinacoderm. In addition, members of the same clade appear to have independently produced different calcareous mineralogies and microstructures at different times (e.g., *Newellia mira* and *Euzkadiella erenoensis*) (WOOD, REITNER, & WEST, 1989).

3. The closest relatives of Recent calcified forms are noncalcified (e.g., *Spirastrella* to *Acanthochaetetes*, and *Agelas* to *Astrosclera* and *Ceratoporella*).

4. Some species appear to have a facultative ability to calcify. There are four species of the genus *Merlia*, but only two produce a calcareous skeleton.

5. The crystals precipitated by sponges do not have a unique crystal habit, trace

element, or isotopic composition, which points to a minimal intervention of biological processes. The  $\delta^{18}\text{O}$  signature of calcified demosponges all fall within the field of normal seawater, indicating that little vital fractionation occurs (e.g., ROSENHEIM & others, 2004).

6. The favored polymorph of calcified demosponge calcareous skeletons follows the oscillating trend first proposed by SANDBERG (1983) and STANLEY and HARDIE (1998).

It is clear that the mere possession of a calcareous skeleton has little higher taxonomic significance. In addition, the calcareous skeleton is convergent in many characteristics.

## Gross Morphology

Although the gross morphology of Mesozoic stromatoporoids is often subject to environmental control, there does appear to be stability within some species. However, gross morphology can be used only as a subsidiary generic or specific feature, and then only with caution.

## Surface Features

Stromatoporoid surface features are an expression of the relative thickness of soft tissue, the aquiferous system required to drain it, and the position of this system relative to the areas of skeletogenesis. These features may not always be consistent within a species and hence can only be used as subsidiary species characteristics.

## Spicular Skeleton

In Mesozoic stromatoporoids, spicule type and arrangement are the best taxonomic criteria available, and the only criteria of use in high-level systematic allocation. They offer the only indication of taxonomic affinity within the Porifera. However, it is highly likely in the evolution of demosponges that the basic monaxon megasclere spicule has evolved several times. For this reason, much stress has been laid upon the use of microscleres for demosponge systematics. Unfortunately, the majority of

known Mesozoic stromatoporoid spicules are monaxon megascleres and few microscleres have been found.

The following relationships have been determined between the primary spicule framework and the secondary calcified skeleton.

1. A calcified skeleton without spicular skeleton (e.g., *Vaceletia*, *Burgundia*).

2. Spicules present, but placing is independent of calcified skeleton: i.e., spicules are incorporated into the skeleton by chance (e.g., *Blastochaetetes irregularis* WOOD & REITNER, 1988, *Ceratoporella*).

3. The calcified skeleton is precipitated around a primary spicule framework or lattice:

3a. The crystals of the calcareous skeleton initiate from spicule bases: e.g., *Dehornella*.

3b. The calcified skeleton is precipitated around a spicule framework: e.g., *Actinostromarianina lecompti* and *Actinostromaria* sp.

The way in which forms construct their skeletons is taken to be of family level and lower taxonomic significance when combined with spicule data.

### Microstructure

Microstructure seems to be the result of the form of organic template and the biomineralization mechanism or mechanisms employed by the sponge. Microstructure of the calcareous skeleton may be a highly specific characteristic that allows placement of aspiculate fossil forms within particular orders. Some combinations of microstructure and mineralogy, however, are known only in the fossil record, and data about the systematic distribution of biomineralization mechanisms in sponges is insufficient to assess the relative status of differing microstructures. It would seem probable that biologically controlled precipitations (e.g., intracellular spherulites) would have greater higher systematic use than biologically induced ones (e.g., orthogonal cement).

### Internal Organization of the Calcareous Skeleton

REISWIG (1975) stated in his study of the aquiferous systems of three living marine

demosponges that the aquiferous systems of two unrelated species, *Halichondria panicea* (order Halichondrida) and *Haliclona permollis* (order Haplosclerida) were so similar that it was impossible to make species determinations of desilicified sections on the basis of canal organization alone. This suggests that the construction and organization of the aquiferous system can only be used as a very low-level taxonomic criterion.

The internal organization of the sponge calcareous skeleton can be taken to be a direct reflection of soft-tissue and aquiferous system organization and will be of low systematic significance. In general, forms that have a thin veneer of tissue and, therefore, show traces of the exhalant canal system as astrorhizal grooves or ridges in the surface of the calcareous skeleton produce a compact skeletal network with little or no internal traces of the aquiferous system. In contrast, forms that have a greater thickness of living tissue have penetrating aquiferous systems, thus producing an open calcareous skeleton.

Some skeletal features have been found to be extremely variable: e.g., presence or absence of laminae. These can also no longer be used as significant taxonomic features.

### Mineralogy

Mineralogy appears to be of low phylogenetic significance, having arisen independently within several living calcified demosponge families. It is proposed that this feature not be used beyond the family level. The Porifera, both living and fossil, remains one of the most difficult groups to systematize and hence construct reliable phylogenies. Although cladistic analyses have been attempted for Recent poriferans, these have as yet proved most inconclusive, due to the lack of understanding of the various character states. With no soft tissue and uncommon spicule preservation and the dominance of skeletal features that are of no higher taxonomic importance, this situation is compounded for fossil forms. The possibility of much further insight remains bleak.

The following classification outline is adopted in this *Treatise* for Mesozoic and Cenozoic stromatoporoids. The placing of families in the Porifera has been determined by their spiculation; those families with no spiculate representatives remain as *incertae sedis* within the Porifera. The phylum allocation of some families remains uncertain.

- Class DEMOSPONGIAE SOLLAS, 1885  
 Order HADROMERIDA TOPSENT, 1894  
 Family ACANTHOCHAETETIDAE FISCHER, 1970  
 Family SUBERITIDAE SCHMIDT, 1870  
 Family SPIRASTRELLIDAE RIDLEY & DENDY, 1886  
 Order CHONDROSIDA BOURY-ESNAULT & LOPES, 1985  
 Family CHONDRILLIDAE GRAY, 1872  
 Order POECILOSCLERIDA TOPSENT, 1928  
 Family MERLIIDAE KIRKPATRICK, 1908  
 Order ?HALICHONDRIDA GRAY, 1867  
 Family UNCERTAIN  
 Order AGELASIDA HARTMAN, 1980  
 Family MILLEPORELLIDAE YABE & SUGIYAMA, 1935  
 Family ACTINOSTROMARIIDAE HUDSON, 1955  
 Family ACTINOSTROMARIANINIDAE WOOD, 1987  
 Family ASTROSCLERIDAE LISTER, 1900  
 Family ?ASTROSCLERIDAE LISTER, 1900  
 Family UNCERTAIN  
 Order HAPLOSCLERIDA TOPSENT, 1928  
 Family CALCIFIBROSPONGIIDAE HARTMAN, 1979  
 Family EUZKADIPELLIDAE REITNER, 1987  
 Family NEWELLIDAE WOOD, REITNER, & WEST, 1989  
 Order VERTICILLITIDA TERMIER & TERMIER in TERMIER, TERMIER, & VACHARD, 1977  
 Family VACELETIIDAE REITNER & ENGESER, 1985  
 ?Order UNCERTAIN  
 Family BURGUNDIIDAE DEHORNE, 1920  
 Family UNCERTAIN  
 Subclass CALCINEA BIDDER, 1898  
 Order MURRAYONIDA VACELET, 1981  
 Family MURRAYONIDAE DENDY & ROW, 1913  
 Family PARAMURRAYONIDAE VACELET, 1967  
 Subclass CALCARONEA BIDDER, 1898  
 Order LITHONIDA DÖDERLEIN, 1892  
 Family MINCHINELLIDAE DENDY & ROW, 1913  
 Order BAERIIDA BOROJEVIC, BOURY-ESNAULT, & VACELET, 2000  
 Family PETROBIONIDAE BOROJEVIC, 1979  
 Family LEPIDOLEUCONIDAE VACELET, 1967

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