

FOSSIL TERRESTRIAL GASTROPODS FROM THE NAMURUNGULE FORMATION, KENYA

Martin PICKFORD
Collège de France, Paris

Molluscs are exceptionally rare in the Namurungule Formation. A few aquatic snails assigned to *Melanoides tuberculata* were recorded by Pickford, 1984. An additional mollusc bearing locality was located during the 1984 field season, but it has yielded only two taxa of achatinid snails represented by a few dozen specimens. Nevertheless the few specimens available are of considerable interest from the point of view of reconstructing the palaeoenvironment, since the two species recorded, *Burtoa nilotica* and *Achatina cf fulica* seldom occur in the same locality today. Both *Burtoa* and *Achatina* are widespread in the East African zoogeographic region, but their distributions have little overlap. The principal region where both taxa occur today is in the Serengeti plains of northern Tanzania, a region of grassy savannah with cold nights and hot days. The altitude is in the region of 1400 to 1600 metres above sea level. It is surmised that during the upper Miocene the Namurungule region was possibly also an open environment at about the same altitude. This seems to be in accord with reconstructions based on the mammalian fauna which is dominated by *Hippotigris* and bovids.

The sediments at the snail locality (loc) are comprised of coarse reddened cross-bedded sandstones which form a prominent outcrop and dipslope. The gastropods are preserved in black calcite with red sandstone filling the body cavity. Only large specimens are preserved, and despite their deposition in fluvial strata, they show little in the way of abrasion or transportation damage.

Burtoa nilotica. Several shells can confidently be assigned to this species. Typical examples are SHS 796 and SHS 827 (figs 1-2) which possess the large body whorl and short spire which typifies the genus, the characteristic achatinid shell sculpture and the outwardly curved columella.

Achatina cf fulica. Several fossilised shells compare well with *Achatina fulica* from lowland eastern Kenya. They have the characteristic incurved columella, proportionately longer spire and shorter body whorl and typical achatinid shell sculpture. Specimen SHS 799 (fig. 3) is a representative example.

REFERENCES

- Pickford, M. (1984) : Fossil Mollusca from the Samburu Hills, Northern Kenya. *African Studies Monograph, Suppl. Issue 2* : 141–145.

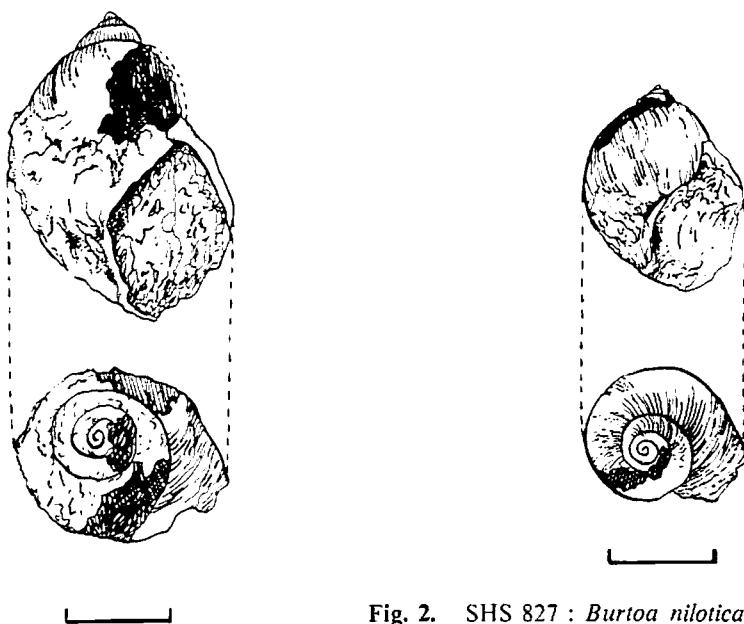


Fig. 1. SHS 796 : *Burtoa nilotica* (scale=2 cm)

Fig. 2. SHS 827 : *Burtoa nilotica* (scale=2 cm)

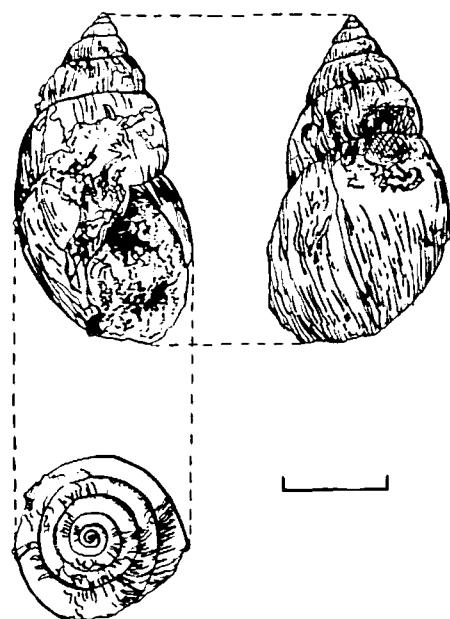


Fig. 3. SHS 799 : *Achatina* cf. *fulica* (scale=2 cm)