



A *nomen novum* for *Protechinus* Lavocat, 1961 (Mammalia, Erinaceidae), a junior homonym of the valid name *Protechinus* Noetling, 1897 (Echinoidea, Arbacioida)

JELLE S. ZIJLSTRA

483 Mather Mail Center, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138. <jelle.zijlstra@college.harvard.edu>

Noetling (1897: 14) named the echinoid genus *Protechinus* from the Maastrichtian of Pakistan. Lambert (1898: 126) replaced the name *Protechinus* with a new name, *Noetlingia*, because Austin (1860: 446) had previously used the name *Protoechinus* for a different echinoid from the Carboniferous of Ireland. However, *Noetlingia* Lambert, 1898 is itself preoccupied by *Noetlingia* Hall & Clark, 1893, a brachiopod, and was accordingly replaced by *Noetlingaster* Vredenburg, 1911. Since then, *Noetlingaster* has been in general use for this genus (e.g., Mortensen 1940, Smith 1995). Apparently unaware of Noetling's name, Lavocat (1961) described an erinaceid insectivore from the Miocene of Beni Mellal, Morocco, as the new genus and species *Protechinus salis*. The genus has rarely been referred to in the literature, and McKenna & Bell (1997) listed it as a synonym of *Amphechinus* Aymard, 1850. However, Benammi (2006) and Butler (2010) still recognized it as a distinct genus.

The current version of the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* (Anonymous 1999) stipulates that a one-letter difference is sufficient to prevent homonymy between two genus-group names (Art. 56.2); thus, *Protechinus* Noetling, 1897 is not a junior homonym of *Protoechinus* Austin, 1860, and potentially an available name. Prevailing usage may be preserved if the senior synonym or homonym has not been used as a valid name since 1899, among other conditions (Art. 23.9), but *Protechinus* Noetling, 1897 was used by Noetling (1903). Thus, *Protechinus* Noetling, 1897 is valid and a senior objective synonym of *Noetlingia* Lambert, 1898 and *Noetlingaster* Vredenburg, 1911. Four species are currently recognized in the genus (Smith & Jeffery 2000): *Protechinus complicatus* Noetling, 1897, the type species by original monotypy; *Protechinus emiratescus* (Ali, 1989); *Protechinus sphericus* (Ali, 1992); and *Protechinus monotuberculatus* (Smith, in Smith & Jeffery, 2000).

In addition, *Protechinus* Lavocat, 1961 is an unavailable junior homonym of *Protechinus* Noetling, 1897. I therefore propose the name *Mellalechinus* nom. nov. as a replacement name for *Protechinus* Lavocat, 1961. The type by original monotypy under *Protechinus* Lavocat, 1961, and only described species is *Mellalechinus salis* (Lavocat, 1961), originally *Protechinus salis*. The new name combines the toponym of the fossil site where the genus was first found, Beni Mellal, with the Ancient Greek term ἐχῖνος (*echinos*). This word was used for both hedgehogs and sea urchins (Liddell *et al.* 1940), and has been adopted as a standard element of modern generic names in both groups, leading to the homonymy noted here.

Acknowledgements

I thank A. B. Smith (the Natural History Museum, London) for his help with echinoid nomenclature.

References

- Anonymous [International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature] (1999) *International code of zoological nomenclature*. Fourth edition. London, International Trust for zoological Nomenclature, i–xxix + 1–306.
- Ali, M. S. M. (1989) Late Cretaceous echinoids from Gebel El Rowdah, Hatta area, U.A.E. *Neues Jahrbuch für Geologie, Paläontologie und Mineralogie Abhandlungen*, 177, 393–412.
- Ali, M. S. M. (1992) A new genus and species of regular echinoid from the Late Cretaceous of Gebel El Rowdah, Hatta area, Oman-U.A.E. *Journal of Paleontology*, 66, 693–696.
- Austin, F.-M. T. (1860) On a new genus of echinoderm, and observations on the genus *Palæchinus*. *The Geologist*, January 1860, 446–448.
- Aymard, A. (1850) [Untitled]. *Annales de la Société d'Agriculture, Sciences, Arts et Commerce du Puy*, 14, 104–114.