

# Rocce evaporitiche

Depositi salini che si formano per precipitazione diretta da soluzioni concentrate.

In natura, la concentrazione e la sovrassaturazione dell'acqua marina rispetto determinate fasi mineralogiche avviene per evaporazione => questi depositi si chiamano **evaporiti**.

Dall'evaporazione dell'acqua marina si ha la precipitazione di una grande varietà di sali (cloruri, solfati, carbonati, borati e nitrati) tra i quali solo gesso (solfato di calcio idrato,  $\text{CaSO}_4 \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$ ), anidrite (solfato di calcio anidro,  $\text{CaSO}_4$ ) e sal gemma o *halite* (cloruro di sodio,  $\text{NaCl}$ ) sono geologicamente importanti.

Per le caratteristiche fisiche del sale (bassa densità e attitudine a fluire in modo viscoso se sottoposto a pressione) le evaporiti tendono a formare diapiri, ad essere il sito preferenziale di grandi scollamenti tettonici ed a fungere da lubrificante tettonico.

Le evaporiti sono importanti economicamente sia per il loro valore intrinseco e sia perché associate a molti giacimenti petroliferi (copertura impermeabile dei giacimenti e formazione di trappole attraverso il diapirismo)

## Evaporazione dell'acqua marina

Salinità media del mare 35 %.

Nel Mar Morto, è del 192 % in superficie e 260 % a 300 m di profondità

Nel Gran Lago Salato, Utah, 137-277 %.

Facendo evaporare acqua marina o salamoie di acqua marina, i sali precipitano in ordine inverso alla loro solubilità

- 1 carbonato di calcio (*calcite, aragonite*)
- 2 solfato di calcio (*gesso, anidrite*)
- 3 cloruro di sodio (*sal gemma*)
- 4 solfato di magnesio
- 5 cloruro di magnesio
- 6 bromuro di sodio
- 7 cloruro di potassio

Per evaporazione di una colonna di acqua marina normale alta 300 m precipita una spessore di sali di solo 4.5 m, dei quali soltanto una minima parte è formata da gesso e anidrite e sali di K e Mg, ed in massima parte da sal gemma.

Per depositare uno spessore di 3 m di gesso/anidrite occorrerebbe far evaporare una colonna d'acqua di 7.5 km di altezza.

Impossibile ipotizzare sistemi evaporitici chiusi, ma occorre investigare modelli deposizionali che prevedano il rifornimento idrico (continuo o discontinuo) da un lato e l'estrazione di sali dall'altro.

### Esperimento di Usiglio (Francia, 1849)

Acqua marina normale, salinità 38.45 ‰, densità 1.025 g/cm<sup>3</sup>

Fino a salinità del 53.3 ‰ e densità di 1.050 g/cm<sup>3</sup>, no precipitazione.

A questo valore limite precipitò CaCO<sub>3</sub> e tracce di ossidi di Fe

A salinità 5x salinità iniziale (190 ‰) e densità 1.10 g/cm<sup>3</sup>, iniziò a precipitare gesso (CaSO<sub>4</sub>·2H<sub>2</sub>O).

A salinità 8x salinità iniziale (310 ‰) e densità 1.13 g/cm<sup>3</sup>, anidrite (CaSO<sub>4</sub>) sostituì il gesso.

A salinità 10x salinità iniziale (380 ‰) e densità 1.215 g/cm<sup>3</sup>, iniziò a precipitare sal gemma (NaCl).

A salinità 100x salinità iniziale (3800 ‰) e densità 1.26 g/cm<sup>3</sup>, iniziarono a precipitare solfati e cloruri di Mg e successivamente NaBr KCl.

*esperimento di Uriglio*

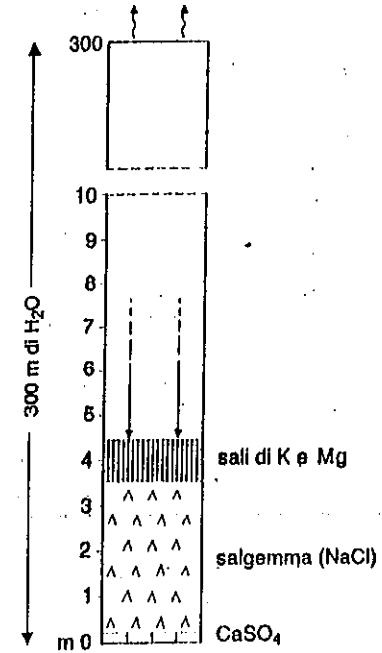


Fig. 6.6 - La completa evaporazione di una colonna d'acqua marina alta 300 m fa depositare soltanto 4.5 m di salti, in larga parte rappresentati da sal gemma.

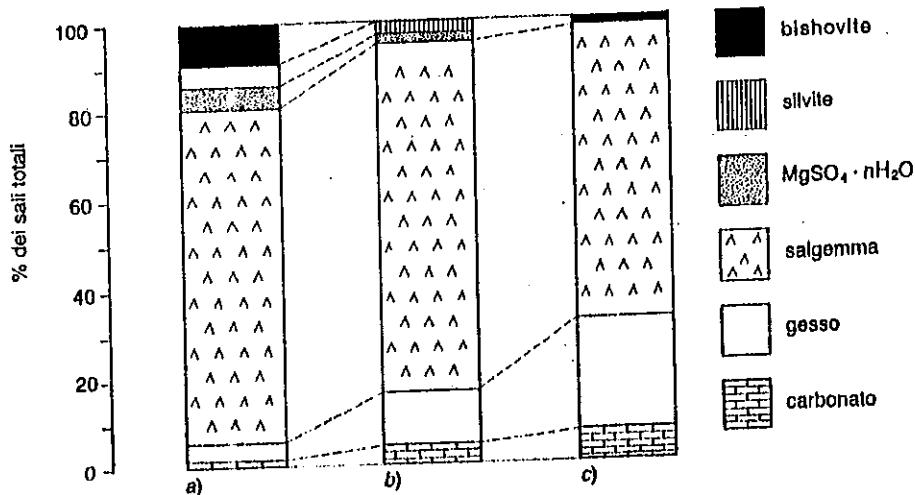


Fig. 6.5 - Abbondanza relativa dei principali salti. (a) precipitati in condizioni sperimentali per evaporazione di acqua marina normale; (b) presenti nella successione permiana dello *Zechstein*; (c) presenti mediamente nei depositi evaporitici. Si noti l'eccesso di carbonati e solfati nelle successioni fossili.  
(Borelli e Muri, 1964; Schnalz, 1969.)

## **Contesto geodinamico**

- tettonica quiescente (solo subsidenza), mari epicontinentali con circolazione ristretta o depressioni continentali, clima arido, bacini di tipo mediterraneo morfologicamente articolati con possibilità di più o meno prolungati isolamenti (es. Golfo Persico, Golfo di Karabogaz nel Mar Caspio)
- tettonica distensiva, rift intracontinentali (es. il Mar Rosso).
- tettonica compressiva, bacini cannibalistici (Appennino).

## **Giacimenti evaporitici antichi**

Le evaporiti si trovano dal Cambriano al Quaternario ma non in rocce precambriane.

In Europa vi sono tre orizzonti evaporitici principali:

- Permiano superiore: Zechstein (Europa centro-settentr.) e Formazione a Bellerophon (Alpi Meridionali);
- Triassico superiore: Keuper (Europa centrale), Anidriti di Burano (Italia centro-settentrionale) e Formazione di Raibl (Alpi);
- Miocene superiore: Formazione Gessoso-Solfifera (Mediterraneo).



## Evaporites



Evaporites are rocks composed of minerals which precipitate from natural waters concentrated by evaporation. Although only a few minerals are abundant in marine evaporite deposits, complex textures may develop as a result of the replacement of one mineral by another during diagenesis. On evaporation of seawater, the first minerals to precipitate after carbonate are the calcium sulphates. The hydrous form, *gypsum*, ( $\text{CaSO}_4 \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$ ) occurs only near the earth's surface, whereas *anhydrite* ( $\text{CaSO}_4$ ) is formed at the surface and also replaces gypsum at depth.

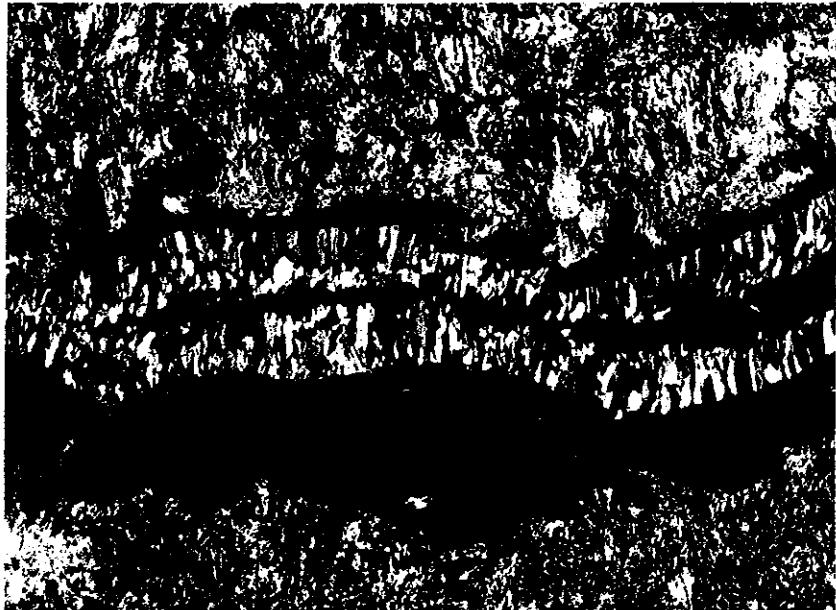
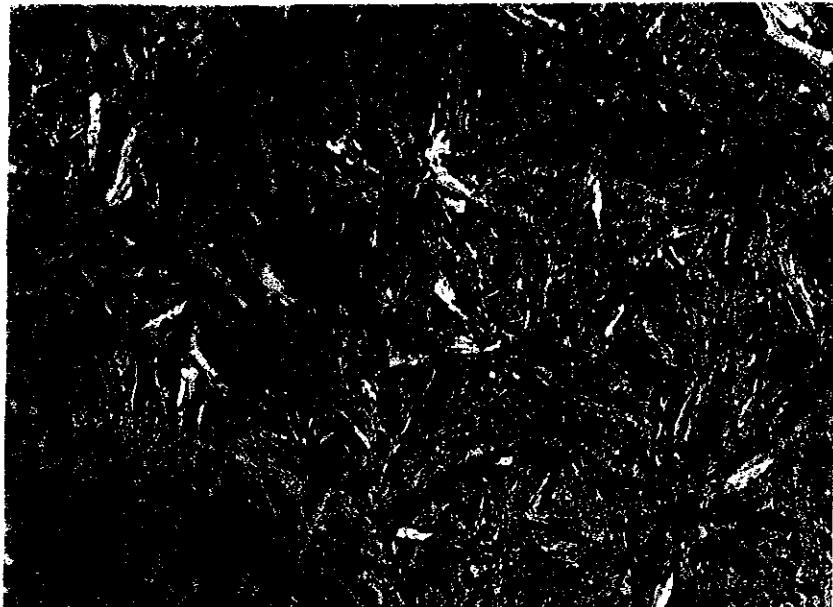
**189** and **190** show laths of gypsum partially filling a cavity in a dolomite rock. The dolomite shows the very high relief and strong birefringence of a carbonate, whereas the gypsum shows low relief and weak birefringence. The photograph taken with crossed polars shows typical gypsum interference colours, up to first-order pale grey.

**191** and **192** show a thin section through a sediment composed almost entirely of anhydrite. It can be distinguished from gypsum by its higher relief and stronger birefringence. In the example shown, the anhydrite is in the form of laths with a radiating habit. The view taken with crossed polars shows the bright second-order interference colours characteristic of anhydrite.

**193** and **194** show a sediment composed of gypsum and dolomite. The dolomite is very fine-grained and almost opaque in the photograph. The gypsum is in two forms. At the base and top of the photograph it is in the form of a network of irregular crystals, whereas in the centre it is in the form of fibres aligned at right angles to the bedding. The former type is characteristic of gypsum replacing anhydrite, whereas the fibrous gypsum is filling a vein running parallel to bedding.

# Evaporites

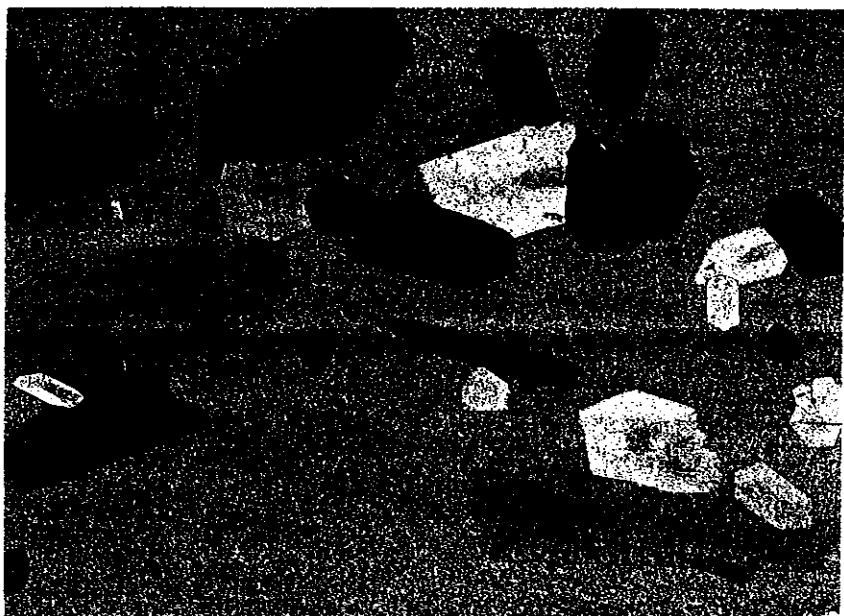
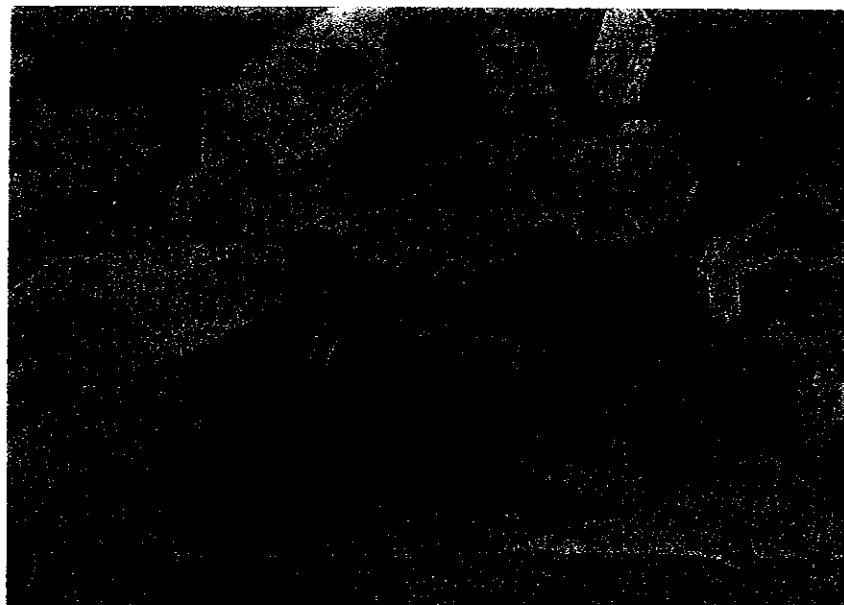
(continued)



189 and 190: Carboniferous Limestone, Taff's Well, South Wales; magnification  $\times 20$ ; 189 XPL, 190 XPL.

191 and 192: Permian, Billingham, Teesside, England; magnification  $\times 16$ ; 191 PPL, 192 XPL.

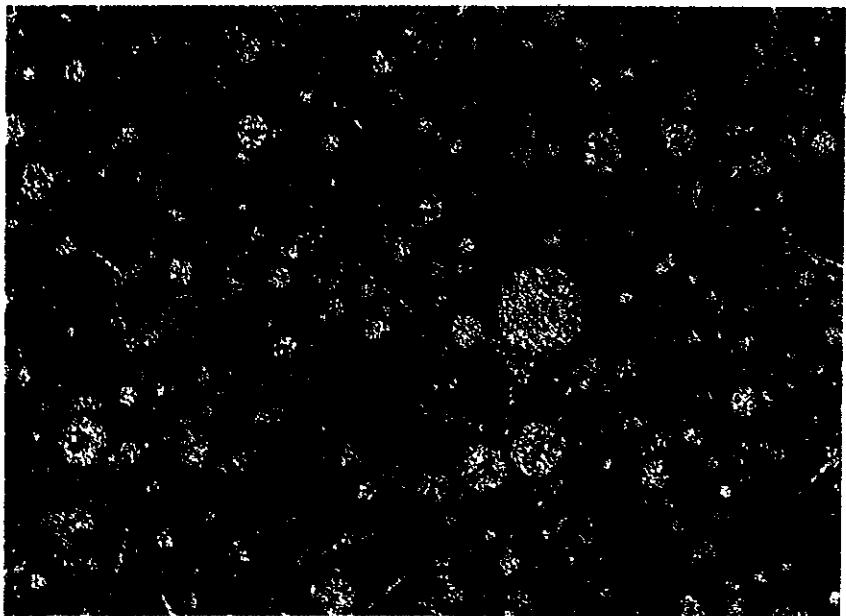
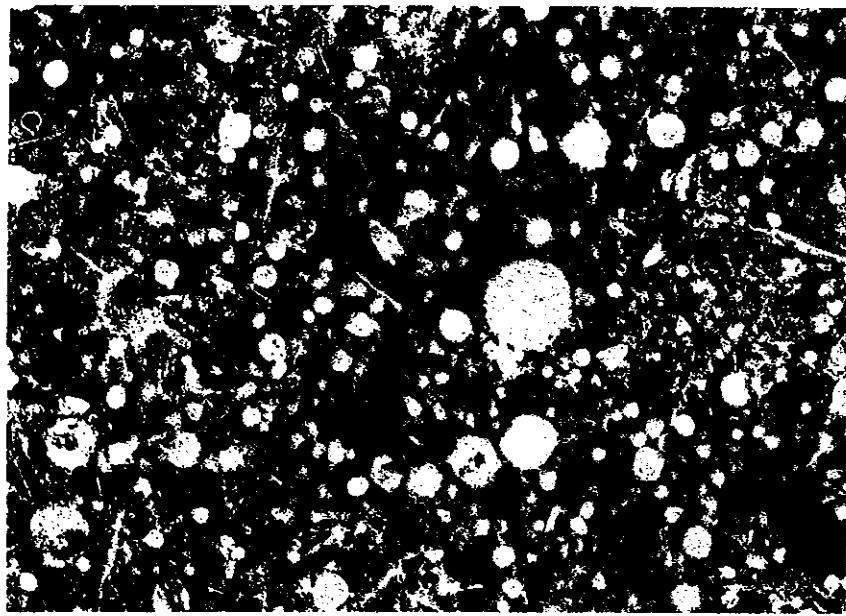
193 and 194: Permian, Billingham, Teesside, England; magnification  $\times 9$ ; 193 PPL, 194 XPL.

**Evaporites***(continued)*

Gypsum may replace anhydrite on uplift of evaporite sequences and when removal of the overburden brings them near the surface. Textures are often of the type shown in 193 and 194, with small irregular gypsum crystals, but sometimes large euhedral crystals form. 195 and 196 show gypsum porphyroblasts replacing fine-grained (aphanitic) anhydrite. Note the six-sided gypsum crystals with low relief and first-order interference colours, contrasting with the anhydrite showing moderate relief and bright second-order interference colours. Note that the distribution of relict anhydrite inclusions within the gypsum porphyroblasts has sometimes led to the development of a texture similar to 'hour-glass' zoning, a feature found in some minerals in igneous and metamorphic rocks.

195 and 196: Permian, South Durham, England; magnification  $\times 8$ ; 195 PPL, 196 XPL.

## Cherts



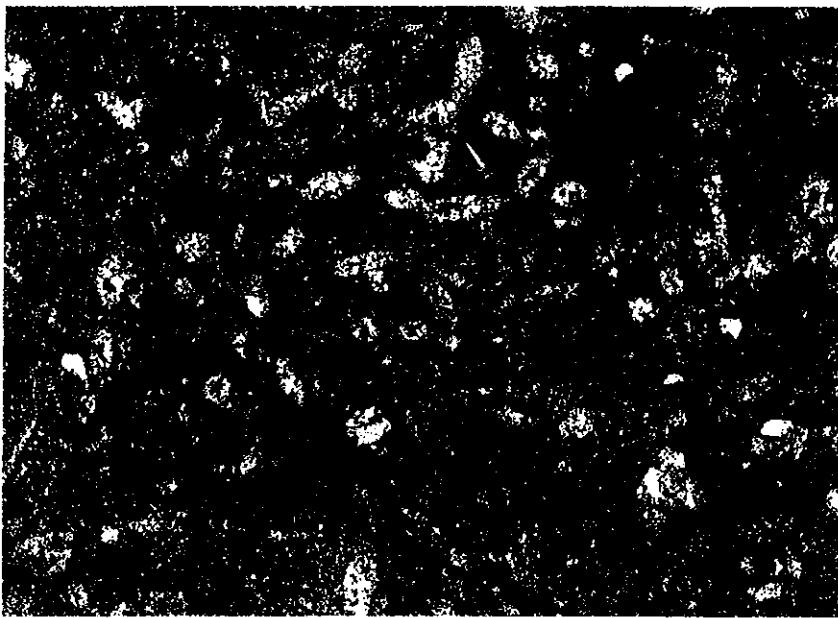
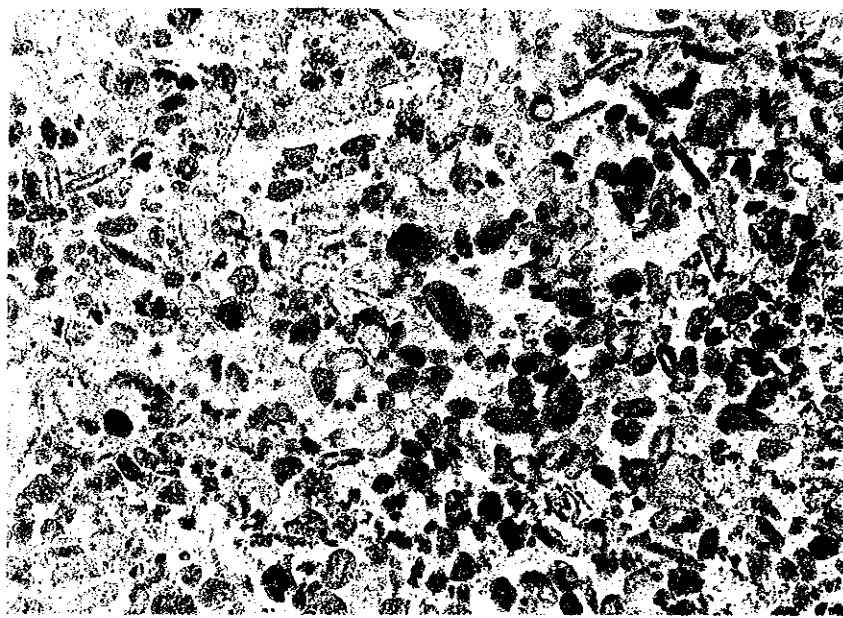
Cherts are rocks composed of authigenic silica usually in the form of fine-grained quartz. Cherts may be primary, in which case most of the silica is in the form of hard parts of siliceous organisms such as radiolaria, diatoms and some sponges. Much chert, however, is secondary, usually replacing limestone. Scattered grains of authigenic replacement quartz, often hexagonal in cross-section, are not uncommon in limestones and are illustrated in 73 and 169.

Radiolaria are siliceous microfossils which accumulate in sediments of the deep ocean floor. 181 and 182 show a radiolarian chert with spherical radiolaria skeletons and their long thin spines. The matrix contains fine-grained iron oxide, hence the red-brown colour. Radiolaria are originally opaline silica, an isotropic form containing water. This has been converted to fine-quartz (micro-quartz) showing low first-order interference colours in XPL.

181 and 182: Lower Cretaceous, Greece magnification  $\times 32$ ; 181 PPL, 182 XPL.  
Calcite casts of radiolaria are shown in 89.

## Cherts

(continued)



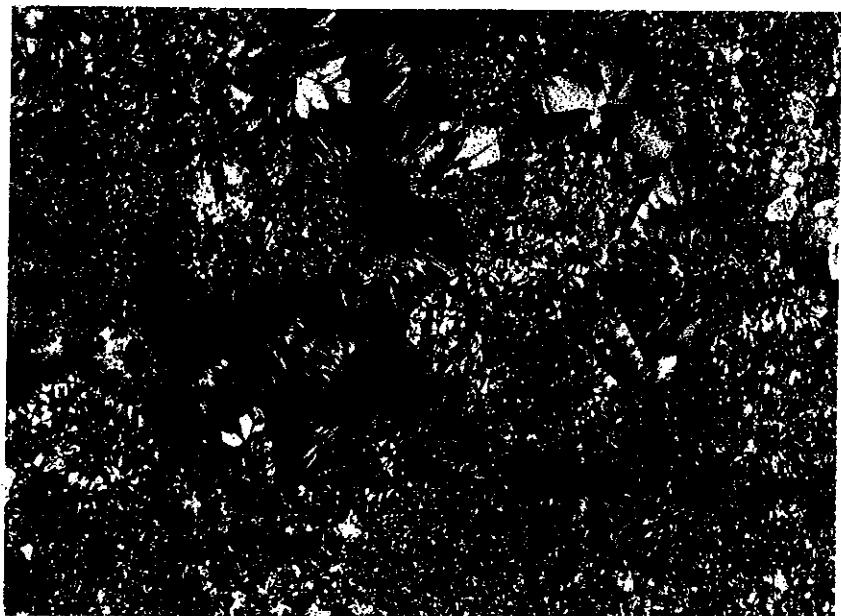
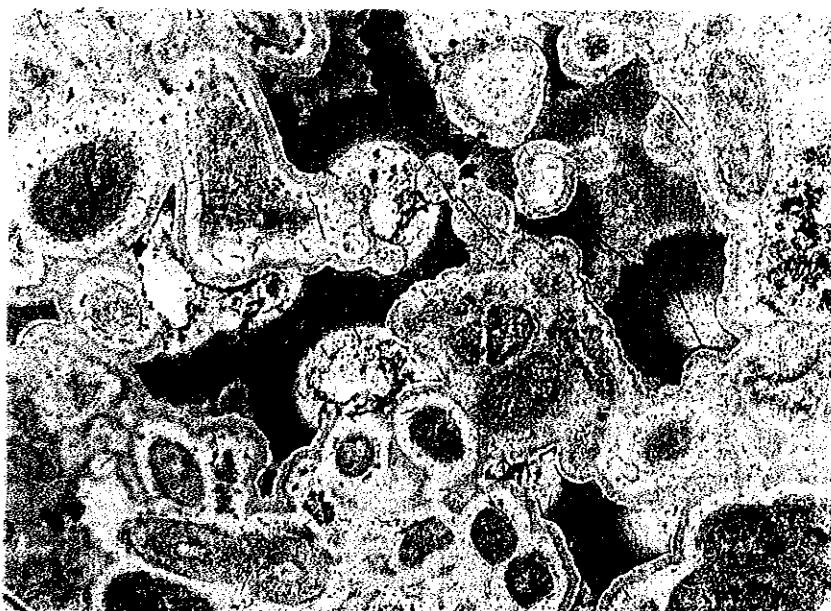
185 and 186 show a silicified limestone in which silification is not quite complete. The brownish grains seen in PPL are unaltered calcite, as indicated by their high birefringence when viewed with crossed polars. Those grains which are clear in PPL show first-order interference colours when the polars are crossed, and have been entirely replaced by quartz. Although the limestone has undergone considerable alteration, the ghost texture visible shows that the original sediment comprised small rounded grains (peloids) and a few shell fragments.

185 and 186: Age and locality unknown; magnification  $\times 22$ ; 185 PPL, 186 XPL.

# Cherts

(continued)

187 and 188 show a variety of quartz types. The circular to elliptical areas of fine quartz (microquartz) may be the original sediment grains replaced by silica. The surrounding areas consist of clear and cloudy zones of radial-fibrous quartz, known as *chalcedonic quartz*. The final generation of brown silica illustrates most clearly the radial-fibrous structure. Chalcedonic quartz is often a pore-fill rather than a replacement. This is supported from the evidence of the sample illustrated, in that there are straight boundaries between adjacent growth of chalcedonic quartz and triple points where three growths meet. These polygonal boundaries are characteristic of radial-fibrous, pore-filling cements. The upper right of the photographs shows coarse equant quartz (macroquartz) which contains inclusions of highly birefringent carbonate, indicating that the silica has probably replaced limestone.



187 and 188: Upper Jurassic, Dorset, England; magnification  $\times 43$ ; 187 PPL, 188 XPL.