

**A *Mitilanotherium* (Artiodactyla: Giraffidae)
skull from the Lower Pleistocene locality of Sésklo
(SE Thessaly, Greece)**

Athanassios Athanassiou

Hellenic Ministry of Culture, Athens, Greece; aathanas@geol.uoa.gr

Despite their taxonomic diversity and wide geographical range during the Miocene, the family Giraffidae experienced a dramatic species loss at the beginning of the Pliocene. In Western Eurasia only one genus, *Mitilanotherium* Samson & Radulesco, 1966, seems to have survived till the Early Pleistocene, as indicated by the close morphological and metrical resemblance among the scarcely available giraffid samples. Due to its rarity, the morphology of *Mitilanotherium* is not known in detail. A recently discovered skull, excavated in 2009 at the Lower Pleistocene (MN17) locality of Sésklo and described here, provides a more complete picture of the genus' cranial characters.

The specimen is fairly complete, lacking its rostral part (anterior of the premolars) and its zygomatic arches. It is long and rather low, being extremely wide at the level of the orbits. The ossicones are long and widely separated, with pointed apices uncovered by skin during life; they emerge supraorbitally, initially inclined rostrally and then curving mediocaudally. The cranial roof is nearly flat caudally, but becomes markedly concave between the ossicone bases. The dentition is brachyodont with moderately rugose enamel, prominent styles and weak lingual cinguli in the molars.

Compared to already known Eurasian fossil giraffids, *Mitilanotherium* is morphologically very similar to *Palaeotragus*, though somewhat larger, and it is considered as a close relative of it.