
In his report on the recent Fossilium Catalogus Plagiaulacidorum by G. and R. Hahn (2006a), Sabath (2006) gave an historical review of the Series, the aim of which is to provide scientists with the most recent consensus on the taxonomy of a specific group of mammals.

In the same report, Sabath emphasized the qualifications of these specialists, renown for their competence and scientific exactness. These qualities are once more demonstrated in the Catalogus Haramiyorum that the same authors present, just a year after the preceding volume. In fact, no one could have been in a better position to write this catalogue, since Hahn and Hahn recently (2006b) devoted a whole study to the analysis of the evolution of the dentition of the Haramiyida.

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Haramiyida draw their name from the genus Haramiya, itself coined by Simpson (1947) in replacement of the preoccupied Microcleptes, both meaning “small robber”; while the latter is of Greek origin, the former, of Arabic origin, testifies to the interest that Simpson had for the Arabic language. As for the genus Haramiya, it was synonymized with Thomasia Simpson, 1928, which had then priority; but the suprageneric denominations derived from Haramiya persist as “nomina protecta”.

The group of Mesozoic mammals involved is particularly challenging, being mostly known by isolated teeth. The oldest haramiyid remains date from the Middle Triassic, and the group seems to have had its principal expansion between this epoch and the Middle Jurassic, though persisting locally into the Late Cretaceous. It has been found in Gondwanian as well as in Laurasian territories. Haramiyida are most generally included within the infraclass Allotheria, as an independent order differing from the only other Allotherian order, the Multituberculata, by the direction of the masticatory movements. They encompass two suborders, two superfamilies, five families, eight genera and 11 species: the classification, just compiling the index was in itself a remarkable achievement. All this testifies once more to the competence of the authors and to the debt that the palaeontological community owes to them.

As for the editorship, should my own incompetence in German prevent me from pointing out that the near-to-only typographic errors appear in the French references? Easily verziehen.

Given the specificity and limited presence of haramiyids in the fossil record, this book is mainly destined for specialists. It should however figure in all palaeontological libraries, first as an indispensable complement to the Catalogus Plagiaulacidorum, second as a reference to all those interested in the early evolution of Mesozoic mammals: the origin of the group remains veiled.

References


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