

Quantitative investigation led to the result that the ants made up 11.2 per cent of the dry weight of the stomach contents. As *Paltothyreus tarsatus* lives mainly solitarily it is assumed that *Cephalophus monticola* picks up the ants deliberately. Thus the Blue Duiker is to be placed among the carnivorous antelopes.

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## On a Supposed Prehistoric Representation of the Pleistocene Scimitar Cat, *Homotherium* Fabrini, 1890 (Mammalia; Machairodontidae)

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Representations of animals, especially of mammals, made by prehistoric man, whether paintings, engravings, or sculptures, are often of great importance for restorations of the external characteristics of those species that became forever extinct.

In 1896, a small statue of a feline-like animal was found in the cave of Isturitz (Basses-Pyrénées). Unfortunately, the statue made of a piece of stone („Statuette très aplatie en pierre tendre“, according to ROUSSEAU 1967 b, p. 34), was later on lost and the only evidence of this master-piece of prehistoric art that we have at our disposal is a photograph by CARTAILHAC (cf. KOPY 1941, p. 185). The statue in question was about  $16 \pm 1$  cm in length and CAPITAN, BREUIL u. PEYRONY (1910, quoted after KOPY l. c. and ROUSSEAU l. c.) attributed it to the „Aurignacien supérieur“.

The general features of the statue show indubitable feline characteristics. The sculptured feline has a relatively very big and heavy head, rather short body and powerful, strong legs, the distal parts of which are missing. The general aspect of the statue suggests quite clearly that the animal represented by the prehistoric artist was a heavily built, rather long-legged cat, with a massive head. The tail is short, stump-like. An excellent picture of this statue published by ROUSSEAU (1947 a, fig. 4 and 1967 b, fig. 15) seems to indicate that the tail was neither broken off nor simply unrepresented by the artist (as is the case with a few of other prehistoric sculptures of cats) but, on the contrary, the tail seems to have been carved in such a way that I incline to believe it was shown as being short on purpose. The most striking feature of the statue is the

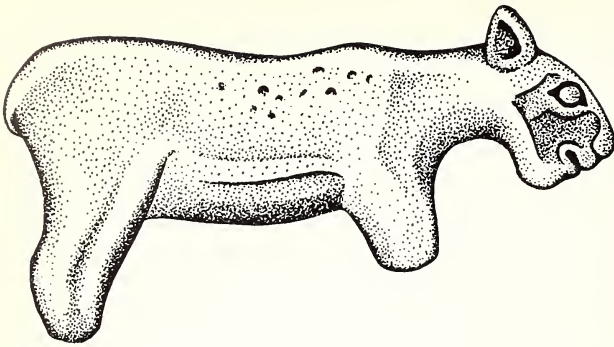


Fig. 1. The statue of a felid-carnivore found in the cave of Isturitz (After ROUSSEAU)

as some quite specific features of the animal represented by the artist of Isturitz suggest it could be referred rather to another, quite different, species than to the Cave Lion. As mentioned above the most remarkable characteristic of the animal in question is the form of the mandible. The prehistoric representations of large felids are not too numerous, it is true, but none of those that can be without any doubt referred respectively to the Cave Lion, or Lion, of however different artistic style they are, shows such a peculiar shape of lower jaw. Since the whole statue of Isturitz was sculptured with a great sense for reality I have no doubt that the quite specific shape of mandible reflects the reality as well.

The general features of the statue and, especially, a quite singular appearance of its head have led me to the conclusion that the prehistoric artist might have created in this case a representation of a member of the group of the so-called „sabre-tooth cats“ (Machairodontidae, sensu THENIUS 1960, p. 174; or Machairodontinae of the majority of other authors).

Generally, two species of the European machairodontid cats are recognized as to have lived in the course of Pleistocene era, viz. the so-called Greater Scimitar Cat, *Homotherium sainzelli* (= *crenatidens*) and the so-called Lesser Scimitar Cat, *Homotherium latidens*, the former being known from the Villafranchian and Middle Pleistocene deposits, the latter from those of the Middle and Late Pleistocene. As to their size both were big animals, comparable to a smaller or average sized lion, the species *latidens* being, nevertheless, in general slightly smaller than the species *sainzelli*.

According to the paleontological data there is not much evidence that, in Europe, the sabre-tooth cats survived for long into the last Ice Age, i. e. into the Würm. Yet KURTÉN (1968, p. 278 and p. 77) mentions the species *Momotherium latidens* as having been found in several Würm deposits of Europe.

The upper Aurignacian (or Gravettian) horizons might roughly be assigned to the Würm II/III Interstadial (cf. MOVIVUS 1953, p. 174) or Interstadial LGI 2/3 of ZEUNER (1959, cf. p. 54). Now, KURTÉN (1968, p. 77) states that

shape of head which is characterized by an extremely powerful and heavy mandible, exceptionally deep, or high, in its symphyseal part.

The statue has frequently been referred to the Cave Lion, *Panthera spelaea* (GOLDFUSS, 1821) (cf. KOPY 1941, ROUSSEAU 1967 a and 1967 b, and others). I however think that this determination is not completely justified



Fig. 2. Head of the Isturitz statue

*Homotherium latidens* was determined among animal remains of the Pin Hole Cave, Derbyshire, which ZEUNER (1959, p. 327) dates right to the time of Interstadial LGL 2/3. Thus we have at our disposal certain indications that the sabre-tooths still lived at the time of the Aurignacian man. Hence we cannot completely exclude a possibility that the species survived on the European continent similarly as it did on the British Islands and that the man of Isturitz could have really known a species of the sabre-tooth cats from his own autopsy. If we admit this then we can suppose that the species known to the Isturitz prehistoric man was the Lesser Scimitar Cat, *Homotherium latidens*.

If we study a skull of the genus *Homotherium* and try to restore the external appearance of the head of these extinct cats then we find really remarkable similarity between the result of our work and the form of head of the Isturitz statue (cf. figs. 2 and 3). In addition, the general features of the statue, as mentioned already above, give an impression of an animal with rather long legs and relatively short body which is, as far as the paleontological evidence go, in exact correspondance with the supposed

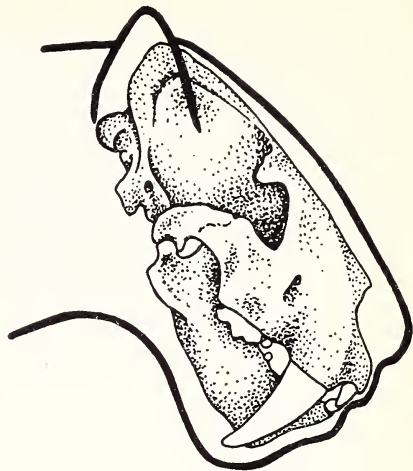


Fig. 3. Skull of the Scimitar Cat *Homotherium* with restored outlines of the head to be compared with fig. 2

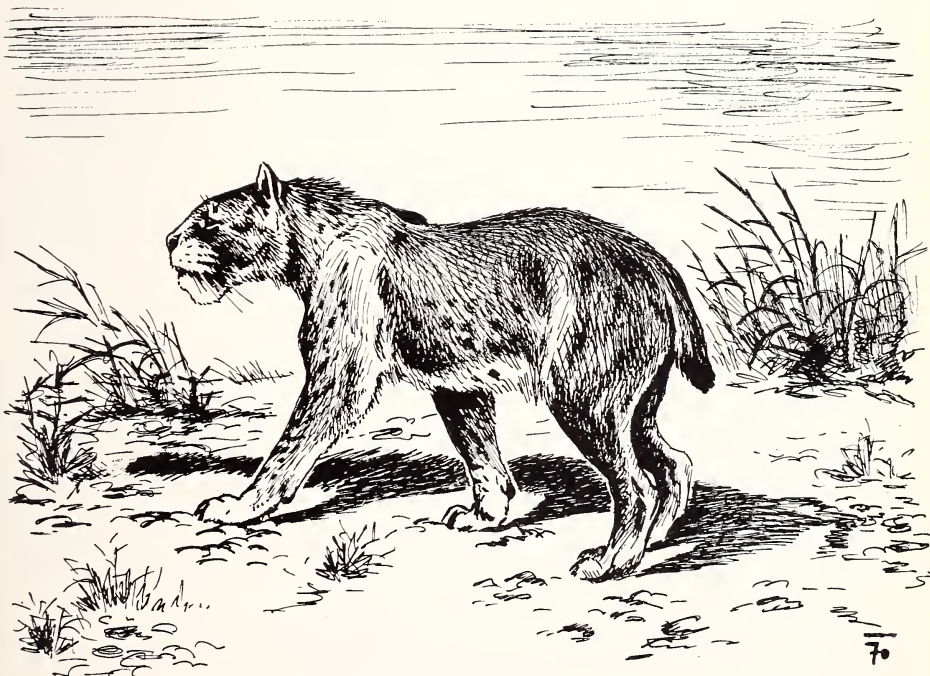


Fig. 4. Restoration of the Lesser Scimitar Cat, *Homotherium latidens*, made on the basis of the Isturitz statue (Del. MAZAK)



external appearance of the sabre-tooths of the genus *Homotherium* (cf. KURTÉN 1968, p. 76, fig. 29; PIVETEAU 1961, p. 791). As to the length of tail, which is known to have been extremely short in this group of carnivores, I have already mentioned above that it seems to have been sculptured in the way that indicates the artist's purpose to show it short.

All the evidence summarized here seem to indicate that we should bear in mind, at least, the possibility that the Isturitz statue could be ascribed to the Lesser Scimitar Cat, *Homotherium latidens* (OWEN, 1846).

The Isturitz statue, if my interpretation of it is accepted, could thus rather considerably contribute to our knowledge on the external appearance of the Lesser Scimitar Cat. I would like to mention here especially the fact that the scimitar-like canines of *Homotherium* were obviously hidden by the lower lip when the mouth was closed and did not bite outside the lower lip as is generally shown on nearly all the restorations of the representatives of this genus.

### Summary

The authors discuss the question of the species to which a statue of a feline-like carnivore found in 1896 in the cave of Isturitz could be referred. In his opinion the statue in question does not represent a Cave Lion as generally believed but the Lesser Scimitar Cat, *Homotherium latidens* (OWEN, 1846).

### Zusammenfassung

Der Autor diskutiert die Frage, zu welcher Art die Statue eines katzenähnlichen Raubtieres gehören könnte, welche 1896 in der Höhle von Isturitz gefunden wurde. Es wird die Meinung vertreten, daß es sich nicht um die Darstellung eines Höhlenlöwen handelt, wie allgemein angenommen wird, sondern um die der kleinen Scimitar-Katze, *Homotherium latidens* (OWEN, 1846).

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