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Leiden  
The Netherlands

**Taxonomic and paleobiological insights into small mammals from the Pliocene of Western Turkey: a comprehensive study of the locality of Afşar**

Skandalos, P.

**Citation**

Skandalos, P. (2025, December 10). *Taxonomic and paleobiological insights into small mammals from the Pliocene of Western Turkey: a comprehensive study of the locality of Afşar*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4284715>

Version: Publisher's Version

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## Stellingen

### Behorende bij het proefschrift

Taxonomic and Paleobiological insights into Small Mammals from the Pliocene of Western Turkey. A comprehensive study of the locality of Afşar

1. The Eastern Mediterranean and Anatolia represent a paleontological frontier of immense potential. Their fossil-rich localities hold the key to addressing fundamental questions that the comparatively limited European record cannot fully resolve. This region promises to be a crucial area for future paleontological discoveries (this thesis).
2. Micro-CT technology significantly improves morphological analysis, allowing us to solve complicated taxonomic problems, as demonstrated by its use in studying Spalacinae (this thesis).
3. The exceptionally rich and well-preserved micromammal assemblage from Afşar provides an unparalleled key locality for understanding Pliocene faunal evolution and paleoenvironmental shifts in Anatolia (this thesis).
4. Standardized methods for describing and quantifying enamel-free areas are crucial, particularly for Arvicolinae, as they enable more reliable comparisons between fossil sites and a clearer understanding of their distribution (this thesis).
5. In paleontology, the ongoing process of re-evaluating older collections and questioning previous conclusions is essential for growth.
6. Nowadays, new revolutionary methods and technologies are often the primary focus of scientific magazines and institutions. However, regular, "simpler" research that provides science with data, such as taxonomic papers, is of equal importance. Science is like a wall, where each piece of research, both small and large, is essential to keep it together.
7. New technologies offer boundless potential in science, particularly in paleontology. However, their application to older natural history collections is of equal importance, as they can help unravel past errors and answer previously unsolved questions.
8. The precise taxonomic identification and systematic description of fossils are fundamental to any robust paleobiogeographic or paleoecological interpretation and the scientific community must not neglect it.
9. A PhD is a long, rewarding journey through knowledge, like a marathon runner's steady pace, not a quick speedrun.
10. Truth is like a diamond, it has many facets. In a world of one-liners, it is the duty of science to remind us truths are never that simple.

Panagiotis Skandalos  
Leiden, 10 December 2025