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Sexual conflict during Mesozoic: the first Cretaceous damsel bug in Burmese amber
 (Hemiptera: Heteroptera: Nabidae)

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- 19 ABSTRACT

The oldest Nabidae, *Cretanazgul camillei* gen. et sp. nov., is described from the mid Cretaceous Burmese amber and attributed to the extant subfamily Prostemmatinae. This new record is in accordance with the emergence of the Nabidae between 150 and 130 Ma. This new fossil should help to precise future dating of this family. As the amber area of Myanmar was probably an island of the Thetys Ocean during the mid-Cretaceous, originating from the Gondwana, it is possible that the Nabidae have a Gondwanian origin. *Cretanazgul* possibly practiced traumatic insemination as all extant Prostemmatinae, but it was not possible to find the male internal
organ linked to this behavior in this fossil despite 3D reconstruction with CT-scan data and
fluorescence imaging.

29

30 *Keywords*:

- 31 Insecta
- 32 Heteroptera
- 33 Nabidae
- 34 Prostemmatinae
- 35 Traumatic insemination
- 36

37 **1. Introduction**

The Nabidae (sensu Schuh and Štys, 1991) is a relatively small family of cimicomorphan bugs, 38 with 31 genera and 386 modern species (after Coscarón et al., 2015). It is currently divided into 39 40 Nabinae and Prostemmatinae (Li et al., 2012a). All the extant Prostemmatinae are involved in traumatic insemination via several ways, including perforation of the female abdomen 41 teguments by a sharp acus in apical position of the intromittent organ. Traumatic insemination 42 is a bizarre form of mating practiced by some insects in which males use hypodermic genitalia 43 to penetrate female's body wall during copulation, frequently bypassing the genital tract and 44 ejaculating in the hemocoel (Tatarnic et al., 2014). There are very few data on the fossil Nabidae 45 sensu stricto. After a biogeographical inference, Asquith and Lattin (1990) proposed a Late 46 Cretaceous age for the genus Nabicula Kirby, 1837 (Nabinae). Kerzhner (1981) cited 47 Metatropiphorus succini (Jordan, 1952) from the Eocene Baltic amber in the subfamily Nabinae 48 (Jordan, 1952). Nabis gracillimus (Heer, 1865) (Late Miocene, Germany), Nabis lividus (Heer, 49 1853) (Early Miocene, Croatia), and Nabis vagabundus (Heer, 1853) (Early Miocene, Croatia) 50

are based on compression fossils that have never been revised (Heer, 1853, 1865). Kerzhner 51 (1981) considered these fossils as probably dubious, and added that only 'Nabis lucidus Germar 52 and Berendt, 1856' (Eocene Baltic amber) could belong to the Prostemmatinae (see also 53 Péricart, 1987). This fossil taxon has never been revised. Lastly Nabis strausi Jordan, 1969 was 54 described from the Pliocene of Germany on the basis of an apparently poorly preserved 55 compression fossil (Jordan, 1969). Karanabis kiritshenkoi Becker-Migdisova, 2008 (Late 56 Jurassic of Kazakhstan) resembles Nabinae but Popov and Bechly (2007) put it in the 57 58 Mesoveliidae and Damgaard (2008) considered it as a Gerromorpha. The Early Cretaceous genera Izinabis Shcherbakov, 2008, Juracipeda Shcherbakov, 2008, Saldonabis Shcherbakov, 59 2008, Vetanthocoris Yao, Cai et Ren, 2006, Collivetanthocoris Yao, Cai et Ren, 2006, 60 Byssoidecerus Yao, Cai et Ren, 2006, and Mecopodus Yao, Cai et Ren, 2006 are Velocipedidae 61 after Shcherbakov (2008) who considered this group as a subfamily of the Nabidae (but see 62 63 Yao et al., 2006; Hou et al., 2012). In summary, the oldest relatively 'accurate' Nabidae sensu stricto are Middle Eocene. Nevertheless, Jung and Lee (2012) considered that 'the split of 64 Nabidae and Lasiochilidae most probably occurred in the Jurassic', after a molecular 65 phylogenetic analysis of the Cimicoidea, using the Eocene Metatropiphorus succini as 66 calibrating point. Here we describe the first Mesozoic representative of this family from the 67 mid Cretaceous Burmese amber. 68

Like many Cimicomorpha, most of the recent Nabidae (especially all Prostemmatinae) are
involved in processes of sexual conflict through several traumatic insemination modes
(Tatarnic, 2014). We have performed a CT-Scan of this bug inclusion to check the preservation
and to have access to the morphology and fine anatomy of its genitalia.

73

74 **2. Material and methods**

The amber piece was polished before being examined and photographed. The fossil was 75 examined and measured using an incident light stereomicroscope (Nikon SMZ 1500 and SMZ 76 25). Photographs were taken using a Zeiss Discovery V20 microscope system. Optical 77 instruments were equipped by camera lucida and digital cameras. The raw digital images were 78 processed with focus stacking software, and figure plates prepared with Adobe PhotoshopTM. 79 Flurorescence Imaging have been realized on Zeiss V16 AxioZoom in MNHN Microcopy 80 Platform. Microtomography CT-scan was done on a GE Sensing & Inspection Technologies 81 Phoenix X|ray v|tome|x 240 L with the following parameters: voxel size: 0.0019 mm; 2200 82 projections; exposure time: 2.000 s with two images per projection; voltage: 50 kV; current: 83 200 µA. Scan was performed without filter. 84

Fossil-bearing Burmite amber has mostly been collected from the Hukawng Valley in northern 85 Myanmar (formerly known as Burma) (Dong et al., 2015). For an overview of the amber deposit 86 87 and its geological setting see Zherikhin & Ross (2000), Cruickshank & Ko (2003) and Ross et al. (2010), and for the list of described fossils see Ross (2019). Radiometric U-Pb zircon dating 88 89 (Shi et al., 2012) recently constrained this amber to a minimum age of 98.79±0.62 Ma, which 90 is equivalent to the mid-Cretaceous (earliest Cenomanian). The original habitat of the amber forest is still controversial, in fact it has originally been assumed to be a 'tropical' araucarian 91 forest (Grimaldi et al., 2002; Poinar et al., 2007), possibly with Dipterocarpaceae as another 92 source for the fossil resin. However, the first detailed report on the macromolecular nature and 93 palaeobotanical affinity of Burmite amber (Dutta et al., 2011), based on gas chromatography -94 mass spectrometry, rejected Araucariaceae and Dipterocarpaceae in favour of Pinaceae as 95 Burmite amber tree. 96

We follow the subfamily classification of Schuh and Štys (1991), based on a
morphological cladistics analysis, in defining the Nabidae as including only the Nabinae and
Prostemmatinae, and considering the Medocostidae Štys, 1967 and Velocipedidae Bergroth,

100 1891 as separate families, contra Péricart (1987), Shcherbakov (2008) or Novoselsky et al.

101 (2014) who considered these two groups as nabid subfamilies. Tian et al. (2008) supported well-

separated positions for the Nabidae and the Velocipedidae in a molecular phylogenetic analysis

that did not include the Medocostidae.

104

105 **3. Systematic paleontology**

- 106 Order: Hemiptera Linnaeus, 1758
- 107 Suborder: Heteroptera Latreille, 1810
- 108 Family: Nabidae Costa, 1853
- 109 Subfamily: Prostemmatinae Reuter, 1890
- 110 Genus: *Cretanazgul* gen. nov.
- 111 Type species: *Cretanazgul camillei* sp. nov.
- 112 urn:lsid:zoobankxxxx

Diagnosis. This genus can be separated from the other Prostemmatinae with the following characters: pronotum not clearly divided into an anterior and a posterior part; scutellum with two pairs of long trichobothria located on its lateral margins; costal fracture rudimentary; forefemur without a distinct angle, and only small spines on the inner side; no clear row of setae on hind tibia corresponding to stiff setae associated to Ekblom's organ.

- 118 *Etymology*. Named after the Cretaceous and the Nazgul, evil hunter characters in the book 'The
- 119 Lord of the Rings' by British writer J. R. R. Tolkien, like extant Prostemmatidae, mainly active
- 120 hunter of heteropteran. Gender masculine.

121

- 122 *Cretanazgul camillei* sp. nov.
- 123 Figs. 1–3

Material. Holotype NIGP 164903 (male), deposited at Nanjing Institute of Geology and
Paleontology, P.R. China.

126 *Etymology*. Named after Camille Garrouste, daughter of the first author RG.

127 *Type locality and stratum*. Tanai Village, Hukawng Valley, Kachin State, northern Myanmar.

128 Burmite amber, mid-Cretaceous (earliest Cenomanian), ca. 99 Ma (Shi et al., 2012).

129

130 **Description**

Body 2.6 mm long; head 0.22 mm long, 0.6 mm wide; mandibular plates not enlarged; labium 131 short and stout, four-segmented, and inserted anteriorly on head, reaching base of head; head 132 133 not neck-like behind eyes; two high tubercles aligned with bases of antennae; two ocelli placed posteriorly to eyes; a pair of long trichobothria near eyes; antennal prepedicellite present; 134 antennae with four long segments plus one extra at base of antennal segment II, antennal 135 136 segment I 0.1 mm long, II 0.4 mm long, III 0.3 mm long, IV 0.26 mm long; thorax 0.96 mm wide; pronotum 0.4 mm long, 0.8 mm wide, not clearly divided into an anterior and a posterior 137 138 part, a pair of long trichobothria in anterior part and another in posterior part, plus a row of short curved setae along lateral margins; pronotal collar weakly indicated; no prosternal sulcus; 139 scutellum 0.67 mm long, 0.8 mm wide, with two pairs of long trichobothria located on its lateral 140 margins; tegmen 2.2 mm long, 0.6 mm wide, embolium distinct; costal fracture short and 141 rudimentary; clavus not widened posteriorly; membrane 1.1 mm long, with a stub on a vein 142 diverging from corium-membrane boundary and three cells with emanating veins; 'fossettes 143 parastigmatiques' only present on abdominal segment 3; abdominal spiracles 2-8 not visible on 144 laterosternites; ventral laterotergites not visible and fused with abdominal sternum; male 145 abdominal segment 8 reduced and for the most part telescoped within segment 7; male 146 parameres well visible, and very acute, blade shape slightly twisted; fore femur greatly 147 broadened, without a distinct angle, 0.6 mm long, 0.22 mm wide; two longitudinal rows of 148

small spines on inner side of forefemur; foretibia widened from base to apex, 0.6 mm long, with a large apico-ventral fossula spongiosa clothed with modified microtrichia; hind femur 0.66 mm long, 0.16 mm wide, hind tibia 0.87 mm long, no clear row of setae on hind tibia corresponding to stiff setae associated to Ekblom's organ, which is not visible, if present.

153

154 **4. Discussion**

After Schuh and Štys (1991), *Cretanazgul* gen. nov. falls in the Nabidae (= Nabinae + Prostemmatinae) because of the following apomorphies: prepedicellite present; labium inserted anteriorly on head; ventral laterotergites not visible and fused with abdominal sternum; fossula spongiosa well-developed apico-ventrally on foretibiae, clothed with modified microtrichia; membrane with a stub on a vein diverging from corium-membrane boundary; costal fracture reduced; male abdominal segment 8 reduced and for the most part telescoped within segment 7; 'fossettes parastigmatiques' present.

162 *Cretanazgul* gen. nov. differs from the Velocipedidae in its weak costal fracture; antenna 163 with five apparent segments; and foretibia with a fossula spongiosa (Van Doesburg, 2004). It 164 differs from the Medocostidae in its antenna with five apparent segments; fossula spongiosa 165 present; and scutellum with trichobotria (Štys, 1967; Schuh and Slater, 1995).

Also, after the key to the cimicomorphan families of Schuh and Slater (1995), *Cretanazgul* gen. nov. can be attributed to the Prostemmatinae for the following characters: mandibular plates not enlarged; labium short and stout, four-segmented, and inserted anteriorly on head; fossula spongiosa present in protibial; no prosternal sulcus; head not neck-like behind eyes; antenna with five apparent segments; membrane with a stub; antennal prepedicellite present; membrane with three cells with emanating veins; two pairs of trichobothria located on lateral margins of scutellum. Brailovsky (2018) listed the following characters for the Prostemmatinae: body oblong and stout; antennae with four segments plus a supplementary one, rostrum moderately stout, collar narrow or absent, scutellum with 1-7 pairs of conspicuous trichobothria along the lateral margins, hemelytra with the embolium distinct and clavus not or only scarcely widened posteriorly, fore femora strongly incrassate, provided with a tooth or angula process on the ventral surface, and tibiae with a fossa spongiosa at the apex. All these characters are present in *Cretanazgul* gen. nov.

Other characters of this subfamily, present in *Cretanazgul* gen. nov., are: profemur greatly broadened; protibia widened from base to apex; pronotal collar weakly indicated; 'fossettes parastigmatiques' only present on abdominal segment 3; costal fracture rudimentary; abdominal spiracles 2-8 not visible on laterosternites; antennae four segmented plus one extra at the base of antennal segment II (Carayon, 1948, 1950; Péricart, 1987; Kerzhner, 2007; Cornelis and Coscaron, 2013).

Nevertheless, *Cretanazgul* gen. nov. has only small teeth on forefemur as in some recent
taxa (e.g. *Pagasa* Stål 1862) (Kerzhner, 2007). Also it has no clear row of setae on the hind
tibia that would correspond to the stiff setae associated to the Ekblom's organ normally present
in these bugs (Schuh and Slater, 1995). These character states are probably plesiomorphic.

The Prostemmatinae comprise the following modern genera: Alloeorhynchus Fieber, 190 1860, Pagasa, Prostemma Laporte, 1832 (Prostemmatini), Phorticus Stål, 1860, and 191 Rhamphocoris Kirkaldy, 1901 (Phorticini). In the genera Rhamphocoris, Alloeorhynchus, 192 Pagasa, and Phorticus, the pronotum is clearly divided into an anterior and a posterior part, 193 unlike in Cretanazgul gen. nov. (Harris, 1936; Carayon, 1970; Blinn, 1995; Cassis, 2016; 194 Brailovsky and Barrera, 2017). Furthermore *Phorticus* has the supplementary antennal segment 195 obsolete or absent, unlike in Cretanazgul gen. nov. (Harris, 1928; Brailovsky, 2018). In 196 *Prostemma*, the pronotum is sometime weakly divided, especially in macropterous forms, as in 197

our fossil (Péricart, 1987). *Cretanazgul* gen. nov. differs from *Prostemma* in the forefemur
without a distinct angle (Péricart, 1987: fig. 16a). Thus we can attribute it to a new extinct
genus.

201

202 **5.** Conclusion

203

Extant Nabidae are predaceous, mainly on small insects. The strong and short mouthparts of *Cretanazgul camillei* gen. et sp. nov. support the inference of similar feeding habits for this Cretaceous taxon. After the phylogenetic analysis of Li et al. (2012b), the Cimicomorpha would originate in the Late Triassic, and the Nabidae could be dated between 150 and 130 Ma. Our discovery is congruent with these hypotheses. It should help to precise future dating of these clades. As the amber area of Myanmar was probably an island of the Thetys Ocean during the mid-Cretaceous (Metcalfe, 2011; Zahirovic et al., 2014; Rasnitsyn and Öhm-Kühnle, 2018),

originating from the Gondwana, it is possible that the Nabidae have a Gondwanian origin.

212 The assignment of Cretanazgul camillei gen. et sp. nov. to the Prostemmatinae could 213 direct us to the fact that this Cretaceous insect could have practiced this mode of reproduction also well-represented in the extant representatives of many cimicomorphan lineages. But it was 214 not possible to have information on internal structures with intromitant organ characteristic of 215 the Prostemmatinae and involved in traumatic insemination (Carayon, 1977), even under X-ray 216 imaging, due to the poor preservation of the inner structures. The traumatic insemination could 217 also involve acute parameres, but we cannot accurately infer sexual behavior of this type for 218 Cretanazgul gen. nov. 219

220

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- **Fig. 1**. *Cretanazgul camillei* gen. et sp. nov., holotype NIGP 164903,. A, habitus dorsal; B,
- 352 habitus lateral; C, tegmen. Scale bars = 1 mm.
- 353 Fig. 2. Cretanazgul camillei gen. et sp. nov., holotype NIGP 164903. A, fore femur; B, fore
- tibia; C, head dorsal; D, hind leg. Scale bars = 0.2 mm(A, B, C), 0.5 mm(D).
- **Fig. 3**. *Cretanazgul camillei* gen. et sp. nov., holotype NIGP 164903. Male parameres (arrows).
- 356 A, right; B, left. Scale bars = 0.1 mm.







