

Short communication

A new species of the extinct family Minlagerrontidae (Insecta: Hemiptera: Cicadomorpha) from mid-Cretaceous Burmese amber

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ABSTRACT

The extinct family Minlagerrontidae bears unusual morphological characteristics and includes two close species within one genus from mid-Cretaceous Burmese (Myanmar) amber. Herein, a third species of *Minlagerron* Chen, Szweo and Wang, 2019, *Minlagerron hongii* sp. nov. is characterized, described and illustrated based on a well-preserved specimen from the mid-Cretaceous Burmese amber. The new species can be distinguished from other species mainly by its wing venation characters. This discovery increases the knowledge on the palaeodiversity of this peculiar hemipteran family, and probably reflects the complexity of the region of Myanmar during the Cretaceous.

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1. Introduction

The clade Clypeata, Qadri, 1967 unites all living Cicadomorpha (i.e. Cercopoidea, Cicadoidea, Myerslopioidea and Membracoidea) and the extinct superfamily Hylcilloidea (Wang et al., 2012; Szweo, 2018; Fu and Huang, 2019). The Clypeata firstly originated in the latest Permian and gradually diversified and radiated during the early and middle Mesozoic. This clade is represented by some ancient groups such as Hylcellidae, Chiliocyclidae, Mesojablioniidae, Tettigarctidae, Archijassidae, Procercopidae, Sinoalidae and Cercopionidae (Hamilton, 1990; Shcherbakov and Popov, 2002; Chen et al., 2019).

The extinct and poorly-studied superfamily Hylcilloidea Evans, 1956 is considered as the common ancestor to all extant superfamilies of Cicadomorpha (Shcherbakov, 1996; Wang et al., 2012). To date, four families have been attributed to Hylcilloidea: Hylcellidae Evans, 1956 (occurred from the Middle Triassic (Ladinian) to the Early Cretaceous (Aptian)); Chiliocyclidae Evans, 1956 and Mesojablioniidae Storozhenko, 1992 (only known from the Late

Triassic (Carnian); and Minlagerrontidae Chen et al., 2019 (only known from mid-Cretaceous Burmese amber (Szweo, 2018; Chen et al., 2019)). Minlagerrontidae is the latest representative of Hylcilloidea hitherto, bearing a set of extremely specialized morphological characters that are not recorded in other Clypeata (Chen et al., 2019). They include a highly specialized head with crown concave at anterior margin, angled in the middle; compound eyes produced; pronotum divided into two sections with anterior portion sharply constricted, protruded anteriorly, posterior side distinctly wider, forming a unique 'neck' and 'shoulder' structures; profemur with a row of teeth; and tegmen with cell C5 almost closed, cross veins including two ir and rp-mp (Chen et al., 2019). Nymphs of minlagerrontids were probably subterranean like modern cicadas and their adults might live on trees and bushes, using their specialized 'grasping' prolegs to anchor themselves to the bark or foliage (Chen et al., 2019).

Here we describe a new species of Minlagerrontidae, *Minlagerron hongii* sp. nov., from the mid-Cretaceous Burmese amber.

2. Material and methods

The amber comes from Hukawng Valley of Kachin Province, about 100 km southwest of the Village of Tanai, in northern

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Myanmar (see Yin et al., 2018; fig. 1A). Burmese amber harbors probably the most diverse Mesozoic palaeobiota; among the burmite bioinclusions, fossil insects are the highest diverse (Ross, 2019). Available data suggest that the age of the Burmese amber turns around the Albian–Cenomanian boundary (Cruikshank and Ko, 2003; Grimaldi et al., 2005; Ross et al., 2010; Shi et al., 2012; Rasnitsyn et al., 2016; Grimaldi and Ross, 2017; Mao et al., 2018; Smith and Ross, 2018).

The studied specimen represents a well-preserved adult (NIGP170945), preserved in a piece of clear yellowish amber. The amber piece containing the inclusion was cut, shaped, and polished using emery papers of different grain sizes and rare earth polishing powder, before preparations between two coverslips and in a Canada balsam medium, in order to observe as many characters as possible, as described in Azar et al. (2003) and Sidorchuk and Vorontsov (2018). Photographs were taken with a Zeiss AxioZoom V16 stereoscope; photomicrographs with green background (Figs. 2A, B, D, E, G and 3A, C) are taken using green fluorescence as light source attached to a Zeiss Axio Imager 2 light microscope and a confocal laser scanning microscopy (CLSM) Zeiss LSM 710 with 10 objectives and using a laser at 488 nm (Figs. 2C, F and 3B) (Cai and Huang, 2014); stacked using Helicon Focus 6 software; line drawings were drafted with Adobe Illustrator CC 2018 graphic software. The material studied is housed in the Nanjing Institute of Geology and Palaeontology, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Nanjing, China.

The taxonomic framework of fossil and living Hemiptera employed herein follows Szweido (2018). Wing venation terminology and cell nomenclature largely followed Bourgoïn et al. (2015) and Chen et al. (2019). All measurements were presented in millimeters. The nomenclatural acts established herein are registered under Zoo-Bank LSID urn:lsid:zoobank.org:pub:3C7FA708-E168-4BE6-B99F-A03BC396F46F.

3. Systematic palaeontology

Order: Hemiptera Linnaeus, 1758

Suborder: Cicadomorpha Evans, 1946

Family: Minlagerrontidae Chen et al., 2019

Genus: *Minlagerron* Chen et al., 2019

Type species. *Minlagerron griphos* Chen et al., 2019; by original designation.

Minlagerron hongii sp. nov.

Figs. 1–3

Etymology. The specific name honored Professor You–Chong Hong, the Chinese pioneer of Palaeoentomology, passed away on 4 July, 2019. The species is registered under LSID urn:lsid:zoobank.org:act:F3FA8C25-CDC8-4A6B-B990-CE19B2B5D0D4.

Material. Holotype, specimen number NIGP170945, adult, male; deposited in the Nanjing Institute of Geology and Palaeontology, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Nanjing, China.

Locality and horizon. Burmese amber, from deposits near the Tanai Village in the Hukawng Valley of northern Myanmar; mid-Cretaceous.

Diagnosis. The species is characterized by the following combination of characters: Anterior margin of crown concave in middle with widely angled (more angulate in *M. griphos*); tegmen sub-trapezoid (sub-ellipse in *M. griphos* and *M. onyxos*); prenodal veinlets inclined to costal margin, first prenodal veinlet basad of bifurcation of stem ScP+R+MP (prenodal veinlets almost perpendicular to costal margin in *M. griphos*, first prenodal veinlet as level of ScP+R+MP branching in *M. onyxos*); ScP+R branching into ScP+RA and RP distinctly basad of bifurcation of CuA (ScP+R

branching as level of bifurcation of CuA in *M. griphos*); cell C1' much longer than C1, C2' broadest, C4 nearly twice as wide as C5 (C1' much shorter than C1 in *M. onyxos*, C2' as wide as C2 in *M. griphos* and *M. onyxos*, C4 relatively narrow in *M. onyxos*); proximal cross vein ir and rp-mp distinctly shorter than distal ones, and mp-cua much longer than proximal rp-mp (proximal ir and rp-mp longer than distal ones, and mp-cua nearly as long as proximal rp-mp in *M. griphos* and *M. onyxos*).

Description. Body length 6.6 mm; crown, pronotum, and mesonotum covered with small round punctures (Fig. 1A, B).

Head. (Figs. 1C, D, 2A, B, C). Length 1.2 mm, width with compound eyes 1.5 mm; crown with a slightly sinuate anterior margin, concave in middle, widely angulate; compound eyes large, spherical; three ocelli on crown (Figs. 1D, 2B, C), median ocellus oval, wider than long, lateral ocelli nearly globular; ecdysial suture convex; postclypeus bulging (Figs. 1C, 2A), 1.1 mm long and 0.8 mm wide, lateral margin converging ventrad; anteclypeus narrow, nearly 1/3rd of postclypeus (Figs. 1C, 2A); loreal plates semilunar (Fig. 2A); antenna (Fig. 2D) with pedicel distinctly longer than flagellomere I, flagellum elongate with 7 segments, flagellomere I slightly thinner than pedicel and as wide as than flagellomere II and III, flagellomeres III–VII becoming progressively thinner, flagellomere III slightly longer than flagellomere I and II, about 1.4 times as long as flagellomere IV, and 1.8 times as long as flagellomere V; rostrum very short and thick (Fig. 2A), not extending to mesocoxae.

Thorax. Pronotum (Figs. 1D, 2B) nearly 1.5 times as wide as head; anterior portion sharply constricted, protruded anteriorly and constituting a 'neck'; anterior margin short, nearly straight; anterolateral margin concave medially with posterior part constituting a 'shoulders'; posterior margin widely acutely W-shaped, concave medially. Mesonotum with scutellum distinctly narrower than pronotum, mesoscutellum triangular. Prothoracic leg with prothorax 0.38 mm long and 0.29 mm wide; profemur robust, armed with a row of three ventral tiny spines visible (Figs. 1C, 2A), 0.92 mm long and 0.34 mm wide; protibia widened apically, slightly longer than profemur; mesofemur nearly 1.3 times as long as profemur; metafemur (Fig. 2E) 1.25 mm long and 0.31 mm wide; metatibia (Fig. 2E) widened apically with apical rows of teeth, nearly 1.3 times as long as metafemur.

Tegmen. (Figs. 1E, 3C, D, 4A). sub-trapezoid, distinctly exceeding the tip of abdomen, length 5.6 mm, width 2.1 mm, with length/width ratio about 2.7; basal portion of clavus with piliferous granules, membranous; costal margin and longitudinal veins covered with two rows of tiny hairs (Figs. 1F, 3B); Pc+CP thickened, exceeding 2/3rd of tegmen length; basal cell narrow, at basal 0.18 of tegmen length; ScP fused to stem R+MP+CuA nearly at half of basal cell length; common stalk of ScP+R+MP+CuA branching into stem ScP+R+MP and CuA from basal cell; ScP+R about 1.7 times as long as ScP+R+MP, branching into ScP+RA and RP slightly at mid-wing length; ScP+R+MP, ScP+R and ScP+RA totally with seven and eight terminal prenodal veinlets in right and left tegmen respectively, prenodal branches of ScP+R+MP single, almost perpendicular to costal margin, and additional prenodal branches of ScP+R and ScP+RA inclined to costal margin; RP single-branched, connecting ScP+RA by two cross vein ir, distal ir about 1.5 times as long as proximal one; MP with 2 branches, branching into MP₁₊₂ and MP₃₊₄ at basal 0.71 of tegmen length; two cross vein rp-mp present, distal rp-mp about 1.5 times as long as proximal one; CuA strongly curved anteriorly, branching into CuA₁ and CuA₂ after bifurcation of ScP+R and distinctly basad to bifurcation of MP; cross vein mp-cua as level of rp-mp, about 1.6 times as long as rp-mp; CuP curved anteriorly, and then nearly

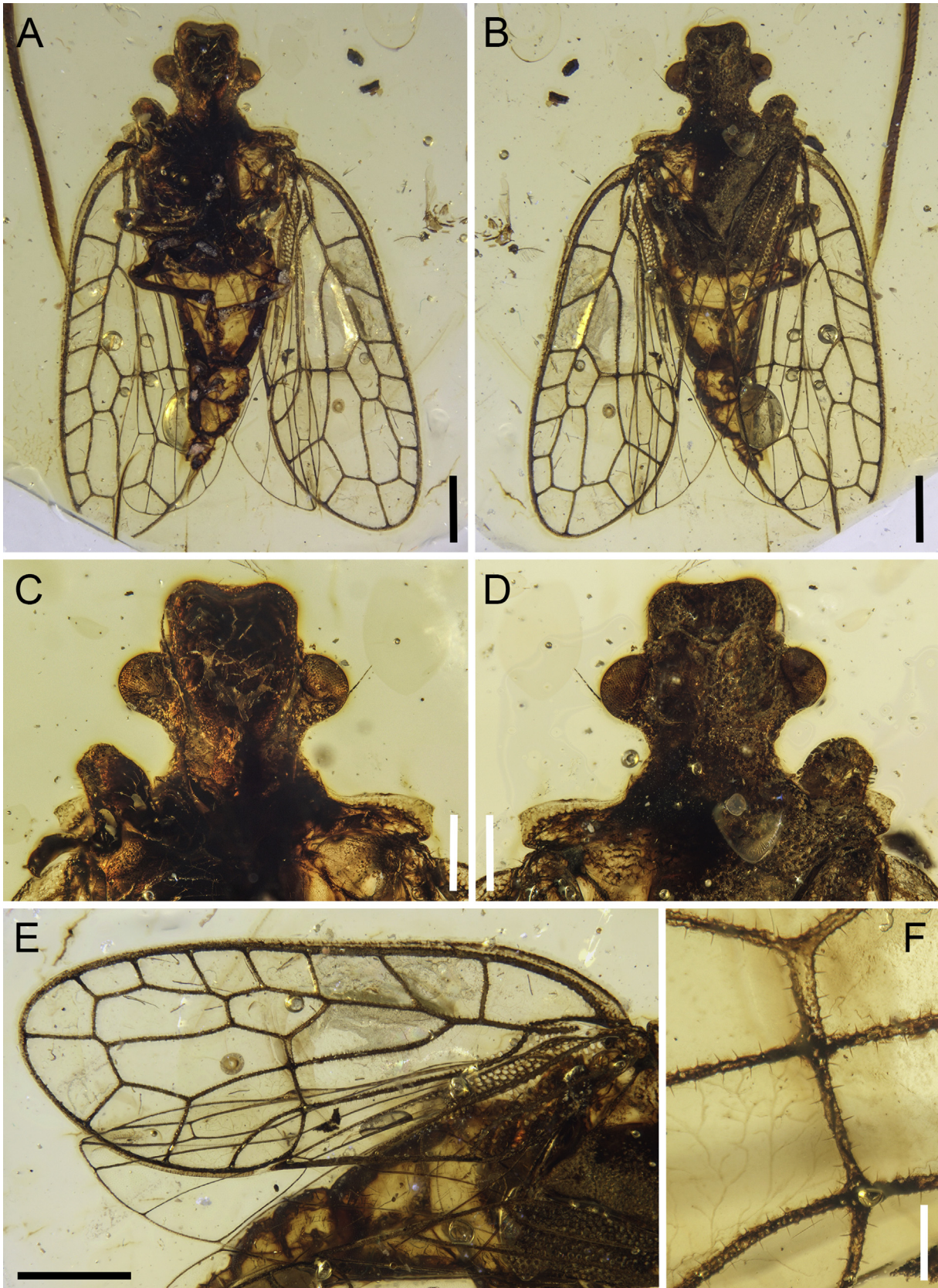


Fig. 1. Microphotographs of holotype (NIGP170945) of *Minlagerron hongii* sp. nov. from the mid-Cretaceous Burmese amber, under normal reflected light. A. ventral view, showing general habitus; B. dorsal view, showing general habitus; C. compound eyes, clypeus, antenna and fore leg; D. head structure and pronotum; E. right tegmen and hind wing; F. tegmen venation with hairs. Scale bars: 1 mm in A, B, E; 500 μ m in C, D; 200 μ m in F.

straight, terminating just basad of CuA_2 termination; Pcu sub-parallel to CuP ; $A1$ slightly arcuate; cell $C1'$ about 1.4 times as long as $C1$, cell $C2'$ about 1.8 times wider than cell $C2$; peripheral membrane present (Fig. 3A). Hind wings (Figs. 1E, 3E) with membrane with tiny grains, peripheral membrane narrow

(Fig. 3A); appendix narrow; RA , RP and MP single-branched; CuA with 2 branches; cross vein ir , $rp-mp$ and $mp-cua$ present. **Abdomen.** Abdomen tapered, segments III broadest. Male genitalia (Fig. 2F, G) with genital valve, genital plates and pygofer fused, anal tube elongate, widening caudad.

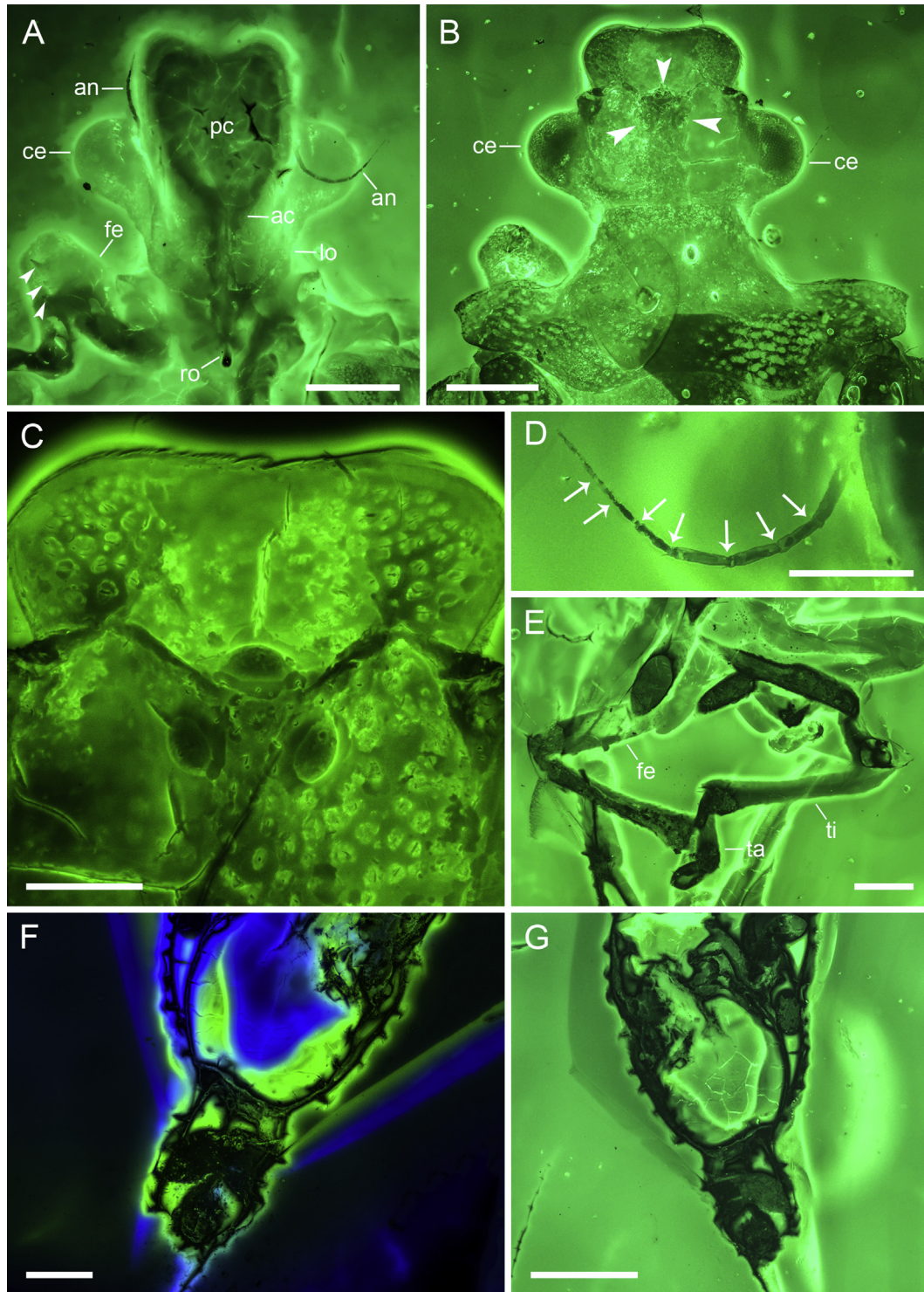


Fig. 2. Microphotographs of holotype (NIGP170945) of *Minlagerron hongii* sp. nov. A. showing details of clypeus, lora, antenna, rostrum and profemur with teeth (white arrows), under green fluorescence; B. showing details of head structure with three ocelli (white arrows) and pronotum, under green fluorescence; C. showing details of three ocelli and sutures, under confocal laser scanning microscopy; D. showing details of antenna, under green fluorescence; E. showing details of hind legs, under green fluorescence; F. showing details of genital, under confocal laser scanning microscopy; G. showing details of genital, under green fluorescence. Scale bars: 500 μ m in A, B, E, G; 200 μ m in C, D, F. (For interpretation of the references to color in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the Web version of this article).

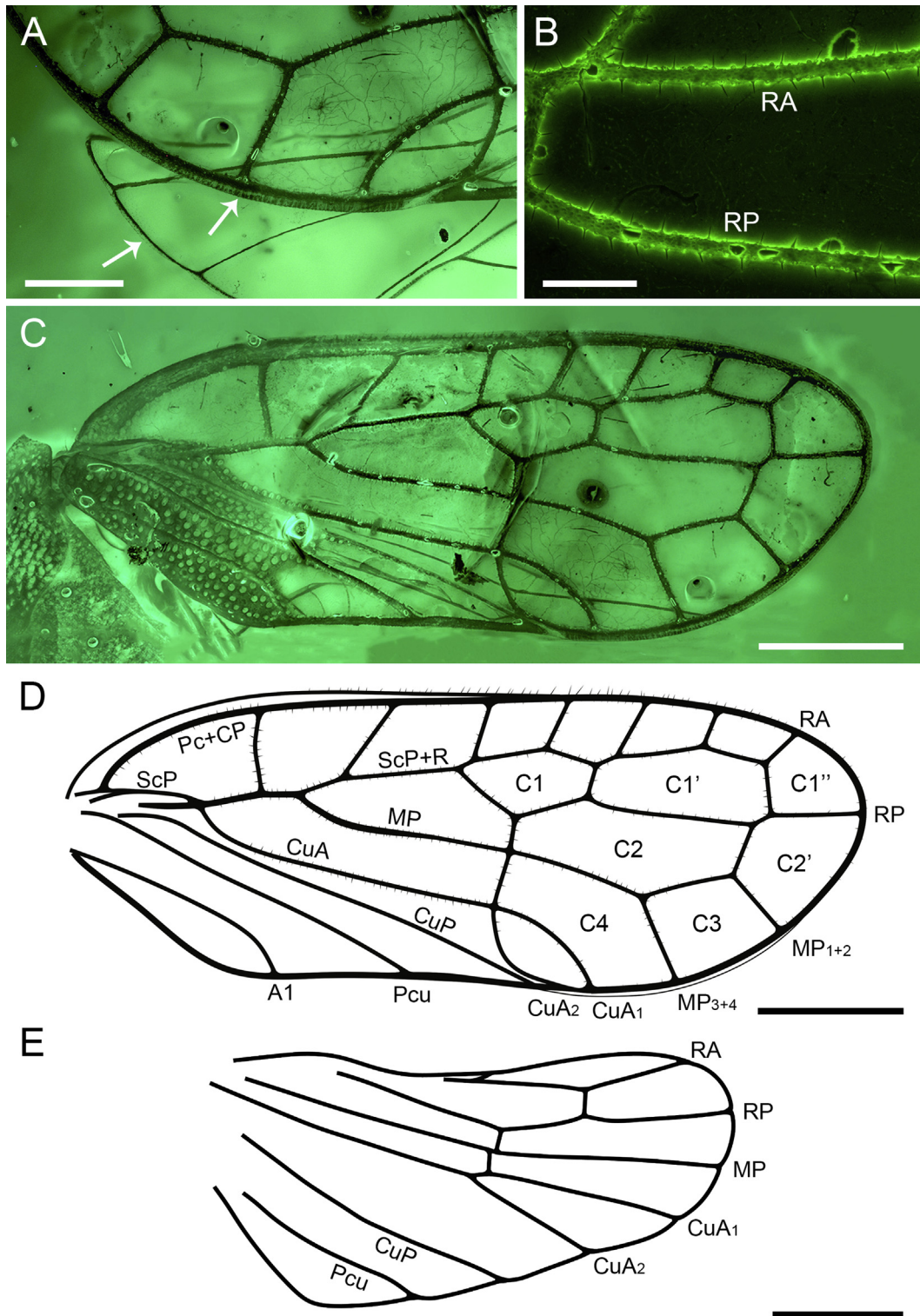


Fig. 3. Right wings of holotype (NIGP170945) of *Minlagerron hongii* sp. nov. A. showing details of peripheral membrane, under green fluorescence; B. showing details of vein RA and RP with hairs, under confocal laser scanning microscopy; C. showing details of tegmen, under green fluorescence; D. line drawing of tegmen; E. line drawing of hind wing. Scale bar: 1 mm in C–E; 500 μ m in A; 200 μ m in B. (For interpretation of the references to color in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the Web version of this article).

4. Discussion

The first records of superfamily Hylcelloidea can be traced back from the latest Permian, occurring throughout the Triassic and Jurassic, and declining in the Cretaceous with only two families (i.e. Hylcellidae and Minlagerrontidae) with a few

species. The systematic position, early evolution and paleoecology of Hylcelloidea are poorly-known (Li et al., 2010). Knowledge on body structures of this superfamily is still limited, and most of them are described only on the basis of wing fragments (Evans, 1956; Shcherbakov, 2012; Fu and Huang, 2019).

Ross (2019) suggested that an amazing diversity of fossil insects is preserved in mid-Cretaceous Burmese ambers. However, Fossil records of the infraorder Cicadomorpha from Burmese amber are comparatively rare, with only 11 genera and 12 species attributed into 5 families, comprising 3 extant families (i.e. Cicadoidea: Cicadidae and Tettigarctidae; Cicadelloidea: Cicadellidae) and 2 extinct families (i.e. Cercopoidea: Sinoalidae and Hylacelloidea: Minlagerrontidae, representing the latest record respectively) (Ross, 2019; Chen et al., 2019). Minlagerrontidae previously included two species with relatively limited morphological differences from the Burmese amber (Fig. 4). The new species *Minlagerron hongii* sp. nov. we are describing herein belongs to Minlagerrontidae owing to the following combination of characters: head with crown angled in the middle, compound eyes extremely produced, pronotum highly specialized, forming a 'neck' and a 'shoulder' structures, profemur armed with a row of teeth, tegmen with cell C5 almost closed, and cross veins including two ir and rp-mp (Chen et al., 2019).

The new species *Minlagerron hongii* mostly resembles *Minlagerron onyxos* Chen et al., 2019 from mid-Cretaceous Burmese amber. It shares with *M. onyxos* several head and venational characters, including the anterior margin of crown widely angled (roundly angled in type species *Minlagerron griphos* Chen et al., 2019); lora short and broad (lora long and narrow in *M. griphos*); tegmen with prenodal veinlets inclined to costal margin (prenodal veinlets almost perpendicular to costal margin in *M. griphos*); tegmen with ScP+R branching into ScP+RA and RP distinctly basad of bifurcation of CuA (ScP+R branching as level of bifurcation of CuA in *M. griphos*). However, *M. hongii* differs from *M. onyxos* by following characters: 1) tegmen with the first prenodal veinlet basad of stem ScP+R+MP branching (first prenodal veinlet as level

of ScP+R+MP branching in *M. onyxos*); 2) cell C1' about 1.4 times as long as C1 (C1' much shorter than C1 in *M. onyxos*); 3) cell C2' much wider than C2 (C2' as wide as C2 in *M. onyxos*); 4) cell C4 broad, nearly twice as wide as C5 (C4 relatively narrow, slightly wider than C5 in *M. onyxos*); 5) proximal cross vein ir and rp-mp shorter than distal ones, and mp-cua much longer than proximal rp-mp (proximal ir and rp-mp almost twice as long as distal ones, and mp-cua as long as proximal rp-mp in *M. onyxos*).

5. Conclusions

Our discovery of a new fossil species of the extinct family Minlagerrontidae, *Minlagerron hongii* sp. nov., increases the known diversity of this family to three species, all of which are from Burmese amber, indicating that minlagerrontids were rare but likely diverse in the Cretaceous of Myanmar. Myanmar block probably split from Gondwanan in the Early Jurassic, forming an island drifting northward, completely isolated from any continental landmasses (Cruickshank and Ko, 2003; Seton et al., 2012; Oliveira et al., 2016). Available data suggest that the locality of Burmese amber's forest producer was on a marine shore during the mid-Cretaceous, widely remote geographically from other ecosystems (Mao et al., 2018; Smith and Ross, 2018; Yu et al., 2019). Ancestral group of minlagerrontids could have appeared at least in the Late Triassic, and lived in Myanmar block to the mid-Cretaceous. Due to the possible complex topography of the island, minlagerrontids further differentiate into multiple species.

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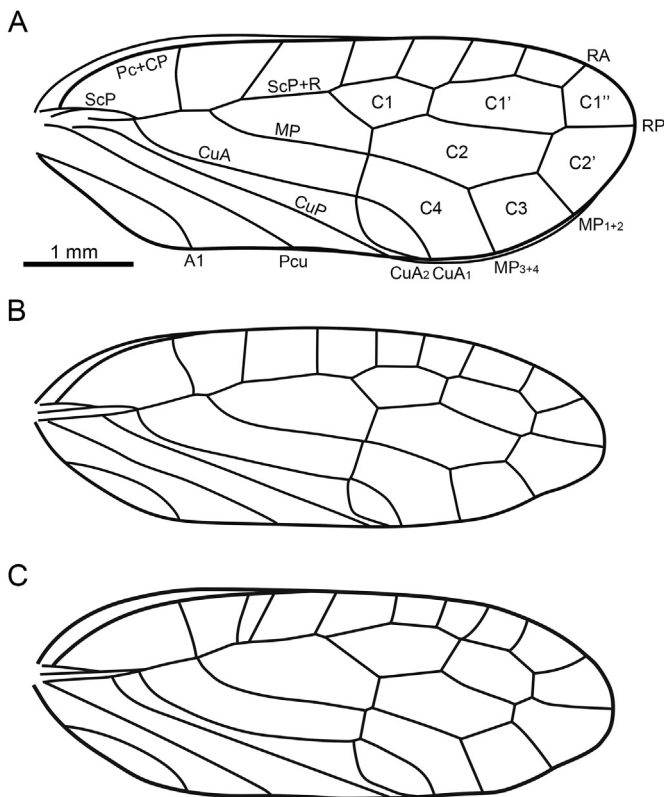


Fig. 4. Modified comparative line drawings of forewings of Minlagerrontidae. A. holotype (NIGP170945) of *Minlagerron hongii* sp. nov.; B. *Minlagerron griphos*; C. *Minlagerron onyxos*. Scale bar: 1 mm.

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