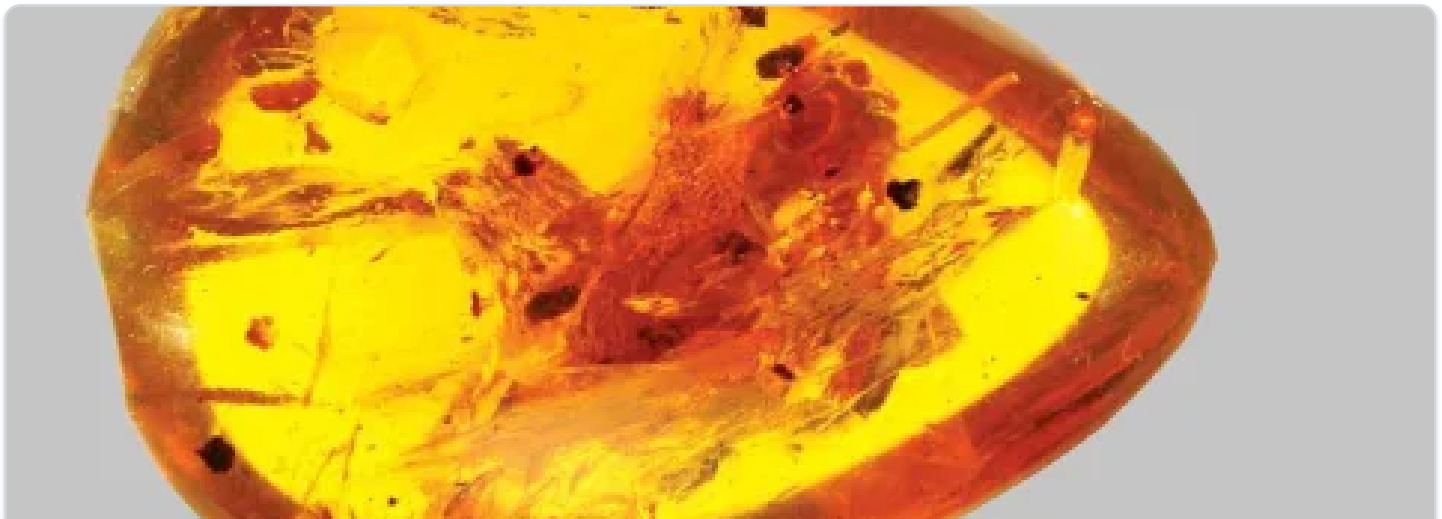




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about 2 million years ago.

Now, a set of 99-million-year-old fossils redefines these tiny animals as sit-and-wait predators that snatched prey with a projectile firing of their tongue – and not underground burrowers, as once thought. The fossils, one previously misidentified as an early chameleon, are the first albies discovered in modern-day Myanmar and the only known examples in amber.

They also represent a new genus and species: *Yaksha perettii*, named after treasure-guarding spirits known as yakshas in Hindu literature and Adolf Peretti, the discoverer of two of the fossils.

"This discovery adds a super-cool piece to the puzzle of this obscure group of weird little animals," said study co-author Edward Stanley, director of the Florida Museum of Natural History's Digital Discovery and Dissemination Laboratory. "Knowing they had this ballistic tongue gives us a whole new understanding of this entire lineage."

A fortunate mistake. The discovery began with a bumble.

In 2016, Stanley and Juan Diego Daza, lead author of the Science study and assistant professor of biological sciences at Sam Houston State University, published a paper presenting a dozen rare amber fossil lizards – or so they thought. One juvenile specimen possessed a hodgepodge of bewildering characteristics, including a specialized tongue bone. After much debate and

consultation with colleagues, the scientists finally labelled it an ancient chameleon, about 99 million years old, an estimate based on radiometric dating of crystals at the site where the fossil was found.

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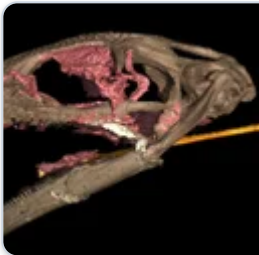


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