

Insect Evolution in an Amberiferous and Stone Alphabet

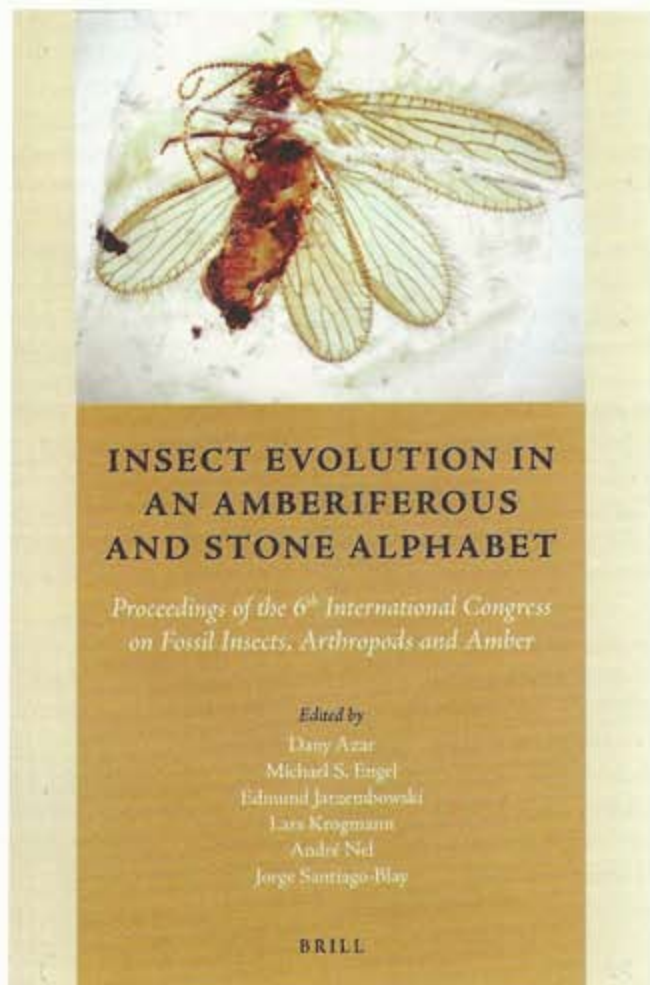
Proceedings of the 6th International Congress on Fossil Insects, Arthropods and Amber

by Dany Azar, Michael S. Engel, Edmund Jarzembowski, Lars Krogmann, André Nel & Jorge Santiago-Blay (editors)

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It is now 15 years since the first international palaeontological conference and the volume reviewed here represents the proceedings of the sixth and most recent meeting, held in Lebanon in 2013. The publisher's website gives no indication of the contents of the volume, and so the subtitle may mislead prospective readers into thinking it represents a full account of the meeting. Unfortunately, this is not the case. The volume includes only 12 of the 32 papers submitted, the remainder being published in two other journals by the same publisher (see later).

Following a short preface explaining the rather flowery title, there is a seven page introduction by the editors, including a photograph and list of the participants, followed by a full list of all 32 submitted papers. The main part of the volume consists of the academic papers separated into six sections as follows [with number of papers]: 1) Insects from Caenozoic Amber [4], 2) Insects from Upper Cretaceous Amber [1], 3) Insects from Lower Cretaceous Lebanese Amber [4], 4) Fossil Insect Compression [1], 5) New Amber Outcrop [1], New Techniques for Amber Preparation [1]. The last paper in the first section is misplaced there as it concerns Burmese amber, which is of Cretaceous age. The papers are mainly taxonomic in nature, most describing just a single new taxon, briefly summarized as follows: Mexican amber (Diptera: Psychodidae, new species), Rovno amber (Diptera: Sycoracinae, new species; Hemiptera: Miridae, new species), Burmese amber (Coleoptera: Lepiceridae, new genus and species), Cretaceous French amber (Diptera: Ceratopogonidae, new genus and species, new species), Lebanese amber (Hemiptera: Aleyrodidae and Perforissidae, new genus and species; Neuroptera: Berothidae, new genus and species; Diptera: Tanyderidae, new species plus first description of the male of a previously described species), rock from Lebanon (Blattida: Mesoblattinidae, new genus

and species). The two final papers describe a new Lebanese amber outcrop that is no longer accessible as it has a building on top of it, and a very useful technique for preparing very tiny amber samples for scientific study. The descriptions are supported by clear diagrams and colour photographs (most of which are of reasonably good quality).

Despite having a team of six editors, very little attention has been paid to correcting typographical, grammatical or style inconsistency errors and these abound on almost every page. In terms of the physical quality, the cover and binding are good, but the paper used for the inner pages is too thin, resulting in a considerable degree of show-through. In short, for what you get (content and quality of production), this is a very expensive book and it is difficult to see how the high price can be justified (especially for what I expect is a print-on-demand volume). Given there is no indication of the contents on the Brill's website, the subtitle "proceedings of ..." is rather misleading as it is only a partial proceedings, representing only around one-third of the papers published from the Congress. The other papers are available online from the journals *Insect Systematics and Evolution* and *Terrestrial Arthropod Reviews* (both also published by Brill), where you will be expected to pay an extra \$30 plus tax per paper, unless you subscribe to the journals for €172.00/154.00 (\$230.00/206.00) respectively.

The introduction by the editors ends with "a plea for integration" of palaeontological data in studies by neontomologists. This is very important and I support this initiative. I feel the potential for engaging neontomologists with palaeontomology would, however, have been significantly increased through production of a more complete, professionally edited and more reasonably priced volume.

David Penney