

A new deinopoid spider from Cretaceous Lebanese amber

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Palaeomicromenneus lebanensis gen. et sp. nov. (Araneae: Deinopidae) is described from Upper Neocomian–basal Lower Aptian (ca. 125–135 Ma) Cretaceous amber from the Hammama/Mdeyrij outcrop, Lebanon. This is the oldest known, and possibly the first true fossil, deinopid. The lack of ocular modifications in the new fossil genus does not exclude it from having exhibited the same net-casting prey capture behaviour as extant deinopids. Alternatively, this prey-capture behaviour may be highly derived and whether it had evolved by the Early Cretaceous cannot be determined for sure; early deinopids (as diagnosed by pedipalp morphology rather than behaviour) may have been orb-web weavers as is their sister taxon the Uloboridae.

Key words: Araneae, Deinopidae, Cretaceous, Lebanon, spiders.

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