

The Human Cost of Paleontology

Tatmadaw

- The military of the Myanmar government
- Known for their oppressive practices, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity
- Have led 3 coup d'états against the government with the most recent being in 2021
- Currently hold power in Myanmar after overthrowing the democratically elected government



Kachin Conflict

- Kachin is an ethno-region in northern Myanmar
- Location of the main amber mines
- Kachin insurgent have been fighting against the Tatmadaw since 1961
 - There was a ceasefire that last for only 17 years (1994-2011)
- Since 2011, thousands of civilians have been killed, whilst over 100,000 more have been displaced
- The conflict is marked with the use of landmines, child soldiers, and torture



Amber Mines

- The Kachin Region is home to most Burmese Amber with many fossils coming from the Hukawng Valley
- The KIA controlled the area during the early to mid 2010's before losing the mines to the Tatmadaw in June, 2017. This offensive by the Tatmadaw displaced thousands of people, an act condemned by the UN
- The working conditions at the mines are extremely unsafe, with narrow pits going down 100 m (330 ft), with no accident compensation.

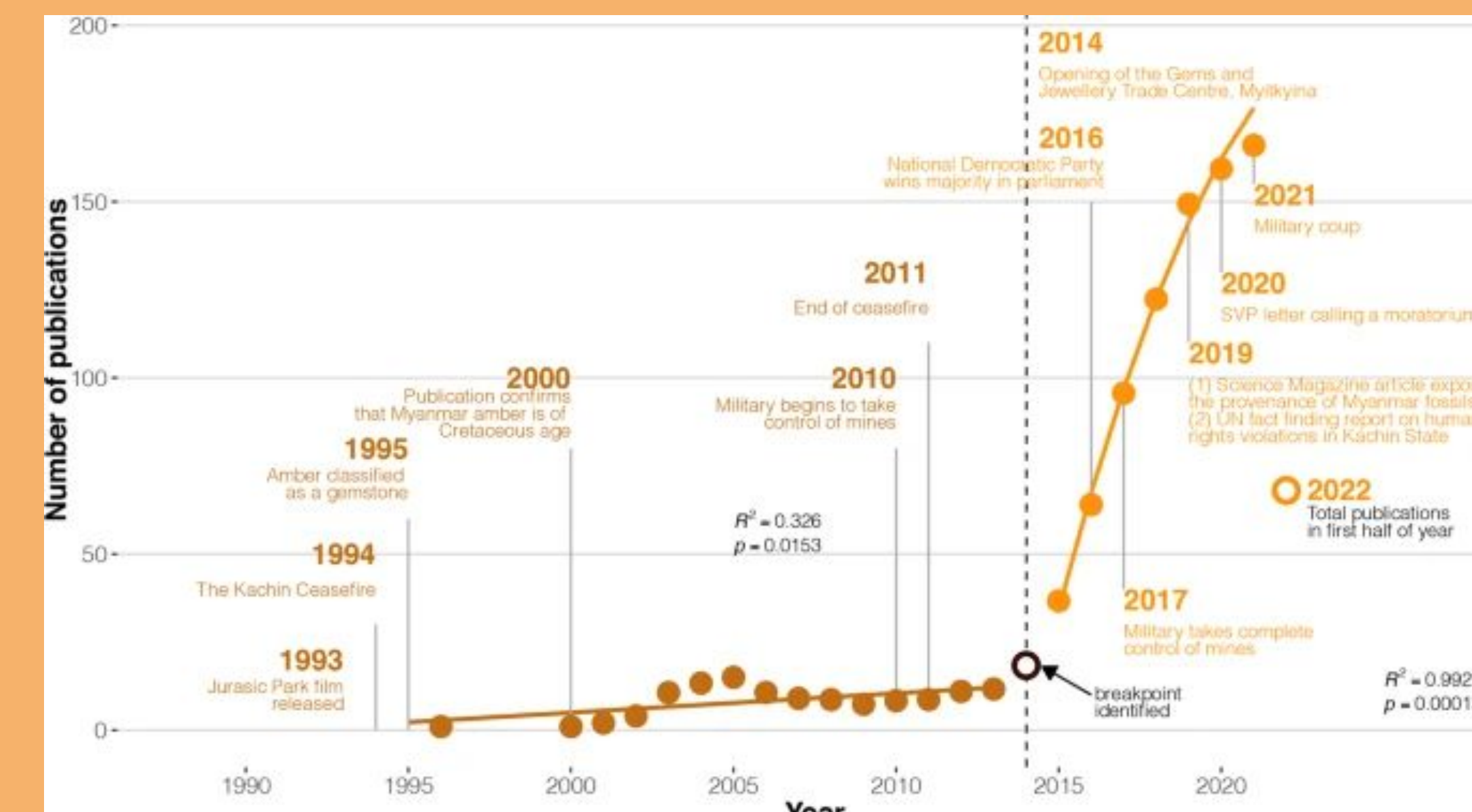
Amber Sale

- Since the mines were taken over by the Tatmadaw, there has been unregulated mining of amber.
- Illegal mining for amber has only intensified since the military coup in 2021, which has led the UN to suspend climate work with the Myanmar government.
- the Tatmadaw collects taxes on all amber transport routes into China - where the annual value of the trade is estimated at 1 billion USD making it almost indisputable that this unethical Amber funds ethnic and religious oppression in Myanmar.



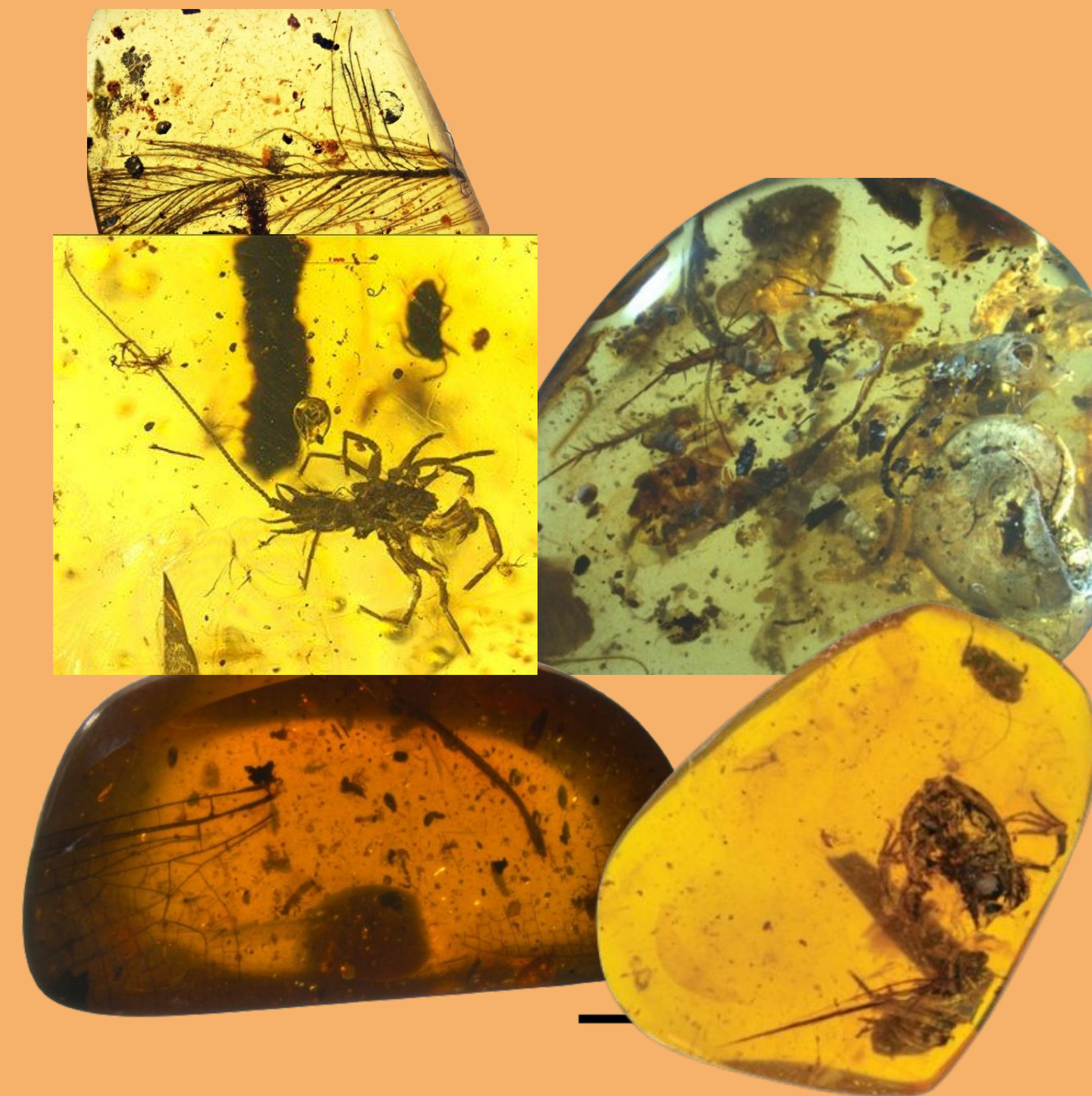
Myanmar Amber

- Fossils entombed in amber provide exceptional and unique insights into the morphology and evolution of organisms that inhabited past forest ecosystems
- Amber from Myanmar is particularly famous for preserving the remains of insects, plants, and reptiles that lived alongside the dinosaurs during the mid-Cretaceous
- The list of taxa is extraordinarily diverse, with 50 classes (or equivalent), 133 orders (or equivalent), 726 families, 1,757 genera and 2,770 species described as of 2023.
- Most amber is mined in the northern state of Kachin, this region is highly productive in terms of amber fossils, but on the ground, it has endured armed conflict since the 1960s



Resolutions

- In 2020, The Society of Vertebrate Paleontology (SVP) asked journal editors for moratorium on publications for specimens from Myanmar after June 2017 when the Myanmar military took control of the mines.
- The Acta Palaeontologica Polonica stated that it would not accept papers on Burmese amber material collected from 2017 onwards, requiring documentation demonstrating the legal and ethical acquisition of their amber specimens.



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