

though its second appendages were not coded as chelicerae, they are uniramous, subchelate, and reminiscent of the range of morphology displayed by this appendage (23). Moreover, some schemes equate the cheliceral somite with the antennal somite of crustaceans [for example, (24)], so that chelicerae derive from the second somite after the acron. Thus, the possession of a pair of antennae, as in *Fuxianhuia* (9), may represent the primitive chelicerate condition.

The cephalon in *Fuxianhuia* apparently incorporates just two pairs of appendages rather than six or seven as in other chelicerates (8). The number of cephalic limbs has proved to be one of the most labile characters in previous cladistic analyses of the arthropods (6). Its low consistency index is largely attributable to the inclusion of Cambrian forms. The implications of this finding for possible post-Cambrian developmental entrenchment and canalization have already been discussed (3, 20). The cephalon has proved difficult to define for a number of taxa [for example, euthycarcinoids (25) and *Sidneyia* (17, 26)], and it may be an oversimplification to regard *Fuxianhuia* as possessing only two pairs of limbs in the "head" (27).

Statements that other Cambrian arthropods should be drawn into the chelicerate fold seem based on scant evidence. The Lower Cambrian *Eolimulus* is known only from carapaces and cannot be assigned to the group with confidence (28). *Sanctacaris* from the Middle Cambrian Mount Stephen Formation has chelicerate-like tagmosis (29) but has consistently failed to resolve with the group cladistically (3, 4, 6). The earliest, undisputed chelicerates therefore date from the Arenigian (22).

Unweighted cladistic analysis places *Fuxianhuia* within the arachnomorphs (3). Only by making premature assumptions about the sequence in which characters are acquired (for example, recruitment of appendages into the cephalon) or by attributing overriding weight to these features can *Fuxianhuia* be interpreted as basal to the other euarthropods (1), a status more probably afforded to the tardigrades (4, 30). Rooting a phylogeny with a relatively apomorphic taxon could seriously mislead our understanding of arthropod evolution.

*Fuxianhuia* therefore joins the growing ranks of fossils that, despite their outwardly perplexing array of features, fit decisively into a small number of large and increasingly densely occupied clades (4).

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*Response:* We welcome Wills's test of our hypothesis (1) that *Fuxianhuia* is a basal euarthropod. However, his conclusion that *Fuxianhuia* is a chelicerate conflicts with better quality data than those marshalled in its support. The exercise he has undertaken serves to illustrate some analytical problems

that may be producing spurious results in parsimony analyses of arthropod phylogeny.

The cladogram derived by Wills is consistent with the traditional interpretation of chelicerate tagmosis: No more than 19 somites are divided into a prosoma and opisthosoma. The former bears six pairs of appendages, or the appendage of a seventh, opisthosomally derived somite may be incorporated into the prosoma (2). Fossil arachnomorphs reveal that the precursors of chelicerates had biramous head and trunk appendages (3), but crown group chelicerates provide clear evidence that one ramus was suppressed on each tagma. Evidence for a relict exopod on the prosomal walking legs of chelicerates may be provided (4) by the flabellum on the sixth leg of xiphosurids or by transient rudiments on the embryonic prosomal limbs (5). On other prosomal appendages of xiphosurids and all other chelicerates, there is meager evidence for an exopod, leading to the general conclusion that this ramus was lost in the course of chelicerate evolution. Where present, opisthosomal appendages of chelicerates have been interpreted as predominantly exopodal. A relict endopod is represented by the small segmented median branch on the platelike appendages of xiphosurids (4). Wills's interpretation of *Fuxianhuia* within Chelicerata forces the removal of prosomal-opisthosomal tagmosis, despite the fact that these body regions may be identified with precision in all other chelicerates, living or fossil. Furthermore, his hypothesis forces the reevolution of exopods on all prosomal limbs except the chelicerae, as well as the reevolution of opisthosomal endopods. Given the extreme modification of the vestigial rami (when present at all) in all other chelicerates, it is most implausible that reevolved prosomal exopods and opisthosomal endopods would be completely undifferentiated from those on the other tagma. Wills states that antennae in *Fuxianhuia* provide support for their existence in chelicerate ancestors, a hypothesis already supported by Palaeozoic fossils (6). Yet if *Fuxianhuia* is an ingroup chelicerate as he argues, the presence of antennae must be interpreted as reevolving after a prior loss at node 3 of his cladogram.

We will not argue that structures lost in phylogenesis can never be reacquired—an atavistic scenario can always be evoked. But it must be asked if such transformations can be defended in the name of parsimony. The low phylogenetic cost (as measured by number of steps) that Wills affords to such major transformations as the reevolution of lost limb rami may be an artifact of his method of coding inapplicable characters. The database used in his prior studies (7) often does not distinguish between inapplicable characters, such as prosomal exopods and opis-

thosomal endopods (and exopods in arachnids), and missing data, both being scored identically. This may have the effect of optimizing a nodal state based on other characters that conflict with the observed absence (or inapplicability) of a state (8). By allowing several appendage characters for the scorpion and eurypterid to be spuriously optimized as missing data, real differences from *Fuxianhuia* are not being acknowledged in tree construction.

We observe that many of the putative synapomorphies used by Wills to defend his interpretation (his nodes 1 through 5) are characters that are absent in *Fuxianhuia* (9); his topology forces their interpretation as reversals. Compelling chelicerate synapomorphies, such as genital modifications of the eighth (first opisthosomal) somite, are lacking in *Fuxianhuia*.

Wills dismisses the value of diplosegmentation as too ambiguous for comment and endorses a phylogeny in which the obliteration of basic chelicerate tagmosis is associated with the evolution of diplosegments de novo. That such a profound structural innovation would occur within the crown group of Chelicerata opposes notions that arthropod morphology was canalized after the Cambrian explosion (10). Wills alludes to this canalization being a post-Cambrian phenomenon, an assertion contradicted by his cladogram. Were *Fuxianhuia* a chelicerate as he suggests, its eurypterid-arachnid sister group must be as old (11), and xiphosurids even older. Again, we concede that this is a possibility. This scenario contradicts the known evidence concerning the age of these groups as well as widely held views on chelicerate evolution.

We conclude that the phylogenetic position of *Fuxianhuia* is near the basal node of the euarthropods. A more precise positioning awaits the results of our continued study of the Chengjiang material, promising to yield new data for use in a stringent phylogenetic analysis. Our original comparison with euthycarcinoids has already been taken up in an unorthodox study (12) that, in this respect, may well be closer to the point than the view held by Wills. Wills and his co-workers regard euthycarcinoids as ingroup

taxa for a curiously resolved Hexapoda (13). This position conflicts with our data, which indicate a more basal position (14), and, as significantly, it forces robust apomorphies of hexapods to be radically reversed in euthycarcinoids (for example, detailed homologies of the tripartite thorax, cerci, and caudal filament). A close affinity between *Fuxianhuia* and euthycarcinoids is irreconcilable with their cladogram (13), resulting from a study rooted in the analytical problems (9) repeated in Wills's arguments.

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## **Response: Classification of the Arthropod *Fuxianhuia***

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