Plant reproductive structures and other mesofossils from Coniacian/Santonian of Lower Silesia, Poland

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ABSTRACT

Mesofossils from the Upper Cretaceous of Lower Silesia are described from the Nowogrodziec Member of the Czerna Formation. The investigated strata are part of the North Sudetic Synclinorium and are of either late Coniacian or early Santonian age. The flora comprises megaspores of lycophytes, conifer and angiosperm mesofossils, and insect-related fossils (coprolite, eggs). Megaspores are assigned to the genus *Ricinospora*. Fragments of the sterile conifer twigs *Cunninghamites* sp. and *Geinitzia formosa* are associated with isolated seeds of the conifer genera *Seletya* and *Alapaja*. The greatest diversity is found among reproductive structures of angiosperms within the Normapolles complex. They are assigned to *Caryanthus communis*, *Caryanthus trebecensis*, *Caryanthus triasseris*, *Caryanthus* sp., *Zlivifructus vachae*, and *Zlivifructus microtriasseris*. Additionally, there are several unidentified reproductive structures showing affinities with plants of the Normapolles complex. Finally, there is a single insect coprolite and a few possible insect eggs assigned to *Costatheca striata*.
INTRODUCTION

Mesofossils related to the Late Cretaceous vegetation of Lower Silesia (south-western Poland; Figure 1) are investigated in this study both as interesting study object in themselves and as a proxy for vegetation reconstruction. A previous study providing an overview of megafossils and palynospectra has been prepared by some of the present authors (Halamski et al., 2020). The paper by Halamski et al. (2020) deals with the mega- and the microflora, whereas mesofossil data are summarized there only as a part of a more extensive palaeoecological analysis of several assemblages (Turonian to middle Santonian). The focus of the present paper is on the systematic description of mesofossils, not given in Halamski et al. (2020).

The present study is a continuation of our interest in fossil plant material from Lower Silesia (Heřmanová et al., 2019). The studied mesofossils expand our understanding of the plant fossil diversity, particularly angiosperms of the Normapolles Complex. The diversity of this group is reflected in previously-published dispersed palynospectra from the same area and stratigraphic level (Halamski et al., 2020). The mesofossil material described in the present paper comes from two sources, “old” material stored for several decades in museum collections on the one hand and the material newly collected in the field on the other hand. The “old” material comes only from Rakowice Małe locality (Knobloch and Mai, 1986). The “new” material, collected in 2017–2019, comes from two localities: Rakowice Małe and Żeliszów. We assume that the material collected recently at Rakowice Małe is from approximately the same place where it was collected in the 1980s by Knobloch and Mai (1986).

Fossil reproductive structures from the Rakowice Małe and Żeliszów localities are mostly fruits assigned to the Normapolles complex. The Normapolles complex includes flowers and young or fully developed fruits associated with pollen grains.

The present paper is based on micro-CT, a relatively new technology, which allowed a detailed description and in some cases a reinterpretation of the “old” material. Standard observation under a scanning electron microscope was used first, then, the fossils were further investigated using Micro-computed tomography (micro-CT). Micro-CT uses X-rays to visualize internal structures and provides 3D reconstructions of the studied fossils. The main benefit of this method is its non-destructive nature. This method allows the study of the internal structures without damaging the specimen and at the same time retains the possibility of a complete repetition of the procedure.

**MATERIAL AND METHODS**

The “old” material from the Rakowice Małe locality is a part of Ervín Knobloch’s collection gathered in the 1980s, partly published by Knobloch (1984) and Knobloch and Mai (1986). The “new” material was collected in Rakowice Małe and Żeliszów during the 2017 and 2019 field seasons, by two of the authors (JK and ATH).

Ervín Knobloch’s collection is housed in the National Museum Prague (NMP), and encompasses megaspores, flowers, fruits, seeds, insect eggs, and coprolites from Lower Silesia and other regions. The greater part of that material was sieved about 50 years ago but never published. In the collections of the National Museum Prague, there were several small boxes labelled “Rakowice Małe – nicht bearbeitet”, meaning “not described”. This particular part of the collection is described in the present paper.

All studied specimens (from both old and new collections) are charcoalified or lignified mesofossils, gathered using standard bulk maceration. The mesofossil material was treated with hydrofluoric acid and hydrochloric acid, rinsed in water, and dried in air. Preliminary studies were carried out using an Olympus SZX 12 binocular microscope. Specimens for SEM observations were mounted on aluminum stubs using nail polish, coated with gold and studied using a Hitachi S3700 field emission scanning electron microscope at 2 kV. Uncoated specimens were studied in low vacuum at 15 kV.

Specimens NMP K2768, K2905, K2906 and K2951 were studied using X-ray micro-tomography with the SkyScan 1172 equipment (Bruker). The effective pixel size was ca. 0.5 μm. Tube voltage was set to 40 kV, and the current source was 250 μA. No filter was used. The acquired data were processed using flat field correction and reconstructed by the supplied software NRecon (Bruker). Photographs were created by Avizo 9.1 software. The presented figures were edited in Adobe Photoshop CS5. Plates were formed using Adobe InDesign CS5.5.

Under the “Range” we understand the stratigraphic range of the material described in the paper, not the total range of the species.

**GEOLOGY**

The mesofossils described in the present paper from the Rakowice Małe and Żeliszów localities were collected in Lower Silesia (Dolny Śląsk, Niederschlesien), more precisely, in the North Sudetic Synclinorium (Walaszczyk, 2008), situated approximately between the towns of Lwówek Śląski (Löwenberg in Schlesien) and Bolesławiec (Bunzlau) in south-western Poland (Figure 1). They all come from a single stratigraphic unit, the formal name of which is the Nowogrodziec Member of the Czerna Formation, which is a characteristic coaly-clayey decametre-scale intercalation between two predominantly sandstone parts of the succession. The Nowogrodziec Mb. is a regressive unit. Its deposition took place in an embayment subject to limited marine influence, as testified by the palynomorph assemblage dominated by terrestrial pollen and spores, with only relatively few dinocysts (Halamski et al., 2020).

The “new” mesofossils material was collected from the only two outcrops of the Nowogrodziec Member existing at present. These are the Rakowiczki mine at Rakowice Małe (Wenig-Rackwitz) (several levels with mesoflora within sections RK-2 at 51°9.967’N 15°32.482’E and RK-4 at 51°9.962’N 15°32.525’E) and an open-cast mine east from Żeliszów (Giersdorf), where a single mesoflora-
yielding level was found in a trench dug at 51°11.049’N 15°38.892’E (Halamski et al., 2020). A detailed sedimentological account of the Rakowiczkí site was given by Leszczyński (2010), whereas the outcrop of the Nowogrodziec Mb. at Żeliszów was discovered only recently (Halamski et al., 2018) and as yet has no comprehensive interpretation. Notable variations in thickness and lithological details are evident both between and within the two outcrops. For example, Halamski et al. (2020, figure 20) observed marine-influenced levels alternating with levels devoid of marine palynomorphs, whereas a section in the same quarry described by Leszczyński, (2010, fig. 4) was interpreted in terms of a general transgressive trend (first a lake, then a lagoon, finally shoreface).

The age of the Nowogrodziec Member is close to the Coniacian–Santonian boundary. It was dated to the early Santonian by Mitura et al. (1969) and Milewicz (1997), but according to Walaszczyk (2008) and Leszczyński (2010), it should be rather treated as late Coniacian, but details have not been provided. Palynological data (Halamski et al., 2020) are inconclusive, but indicative, if anything, rather of the Santonian than the Coniacian.

**SYSTEMATIC PALAEONTOLOGY**

Kingdom PLANTAE Linné, 1753 sensu Cavalier-Smith, 1981

Division LYCOPHYTA Zimmermann, 1959

Class LYCOPODIOPSIDA Bartling, 1830

Order SELAGINELLALES Prantl, 1874

Genus RICINOSPORA Bergad, 1978 emend. Li et al., 1987

**Type species.** *Ricinospora cryptoreticulata* (Bergad, 1978), pp. 48, 50, pls. 4, 5.

**Remarks.** The studied megaspores were identified by Knobloch (1984) as aff. *Istisporites inornatus* (Miner) Potonié. The material is mentioned in his review of mid-European Cretaceous megaspores. However, the complex spongiose material is much more characteristic for the genus *Ricinospora*. The type *R. cryptoreticulata* Bergad (1978) described from the Maastrichtian of North Dakota, USA, is of similar size, the trilete body is also round and the surface is reticulate, it also shows similar spongiose material on the surface (Bergad, 1978). Our material differs in the presence of reticulum with larger lumina and more pronounced muri. *Ricinospora* sp. differs from *R. laevigata* Li et al. (Li et al., 1987): *Ricinospora* sp. has delicately reticulate body that can be completely covered by spongiose material, while *R. laevigata* has a smooth body covered with spongiose material only in the apical part. A similar “irregularly lobed substance” in the apical part is mentioned by Dijkstra (1959) in *R. pileata* (Dijkstra) Singh, 1983, from the Maastrichtian of Limburg. The studied material is covered by this substance over nearly whole body, except for the distal apex. However, Lupia (2015) found out that megaspores can lose substantial portions of this spongiose structure. A similar structure has been described in spores of Recent *Selaginella* by Korall and Taylor (2006), particularly in species *S. pygmaea* and *S. gracillima*. Unlike these species, two of our fossil specimens have this mass more extended (Figure 2A, C).

**Range.** Late Coniacian or early Santonian age.

**Occurrence.** Rakowice Male locality.

**Material studied.** K 3014-3019; the material is housed in the National Museum Prague.

Division GYMNOSPERMAE (Lindley, 1830) Prantl, 1874

Class CONIFERAE (de Jussieu, 1789) Engler, 1892

Order PINALES Gorozhankin, 1904

Family CUPRESSACEAE Gray, 1821

Genus CUNNINGHAMILITES Presl in Sternberg, 1838

**Type species.** *Cunninghamites oxycedrus* Presl in Sternberg, 1838, p. 203, pl. 48, figs. 3a-c, pl. 49, figs. 1a, b from Late Cretaceous, Cenomanian; Niederschôna, Saxony, Germany.

**Remarks.** The leaves are dorsiventrally flattened with expanded leaf cushions, and adaxially showing two distinct bands of stomata, characters that indicate the genus *Cunninghamitites* Presl in Sternberg.
**Cunninghamites** cf. *squamosus* Heer, 1871

Figure 3A-C

1871 cf. *Cunninghamites squamosus* Heer, p. 9, pl. 1, figs. 5-7.

1880 cf. *Cunninghamites recurvatus* Hosius et von der Marck, p. 178, pl. 37, figs. 143, 144.


1910 cf. *Cunninghamites elegans* (Corda) Endlicher; Berry, p. 186, pl. 20, figs. 1-4


1922 cf. *Elatocladus elegans* (Corda) Seward; Kräusel, p. 10, pl. 1, figs. 4-10; pl. 2, figs. 1-5; pl. 3, figs. 1, 2; Text figs. 4.5.

1925 cf. *Cunninghamites elegans* (Corda) Endlicher; Berry, p. 33.

2000 cf. *Elatocladus elegans* (Corda) Seward; Rüffle and Trostheide, p. 434, pl. 1, fig. 6; pl. 2, fig. 2; pl. 3, fig. 1.

2009 cf. *Cunninghamites squamosus* Heer; Bosma et al., p. 486, fig. 4c-f; fig. 5.

2012 cf. *Cunninghamites squamosus* Heer; Bosma et al., p. 24, pl. 1, figs. 5-6, pl. 2, figs. 4, 7.

**Lectotype.** Designated by Bosma et al. (2012), No. 6166 (ex coll. Schenk in the Würzburg University), Late Cretaceous, late Santonian, “Altenburg” near Quedlinburg, Germany.

**Description.** The material consists of fragments of branches. The terminal part of the sterile twig 8 mm long and 4.0 mm broad shows needles packed in a pointed bud (Figure 3A). A fragment of an axis (4.0 mm long) shows helically arranged basal parts of needle-like leaves. A nearly complete isolated leaf 5.0 mm long, shows basally broadened leaf cushion (Figure 3B). Its cuticle shows adaxially two clearly distinct stomatal bands (Figure 3C). Stomata tend to be orientated perpendicularly to the leaf margin.

**Remarks.** The material resembles the type material designated by Bosma et al. (2009). However, it is too fragmentary to allow precise comparison. We found minor differences in the studied material from the type, so open nomenclature is used. Particularly the leaves of the studied material show only one rib/keel and contained probably only one vein. Its stomata are orientated perpendicularly to the leaf margin, while the type material shows a random orientation (Bosma et al., 2012, 2009).

**Range.** Late Coniacian or early Santonian age.

**Occurrence.** Żeliszów locality.

**Material studied.** K 2940, K 2948, K 2953, K 2956; the material is housed in the National Museum Prague.

Genus ALAPAJA Dorofeev, 1979

**Type species.** *Alapaja uralensis* (Dorofeev, 1979), p. 314, figs 1, 5-10, fig. 7, 1-10

**Remarks.** Based on the presence of a structure very probably representing a curved embryo, asymmetric wings, pronounced funiculus and due to the overall shape of the seed, we assign the seed to the genus *Alapaja*. *Alapaja* differs from *Seletya* Dorofeev and *Kozykorpesia* Dorofeev in having a marginal crest, being less curved, and lacking a basiventral micropyle (Dorofeev, 1979; Kunzmann and Friis, 1999).

*Alapaja* sp.

Figure 3G
FIGURE 3. Conifers (A) Cunninghamites cf. squamosus terminal fragment of twig, no. K2948, scale bar 1 mm (B) Cunninghamites cf. squamosus isolated leaf with leaf cushion, no. K2956, scale bar 1 mm (C) Cunninghamites cf. squamosus adaxial cuticle showing two bands of stomata, no. K2956, scale bar 100 µm (D) Geinitzia formosa, fragment of twig, no. K2958a scale bar 1 mm (E) Geinitzia formosa, isolated leaf with keel, no. K2958b scale bar 1 mm (F) Geinitzia formosa, detail of abaxial cuticle showing two irregular stomatal bands, no. K2958b scale bar 100 µm (G) Alapaja sp. seed, no. K2962 scale bar 1 mm (H) Seletya sp. seed no. K 3012 scale bar 1 mm (I) Seletya sp. seed no. K 3013, scale bar 1 mm. All specimens from Żeliszów locality.

Description. Seed is 2.7 mm long, 1.4 mm broad, flattened, ovate, asymmetric, showing fragments of one narrow, inconspicuous wing and one wider wing (Figure 3G). Margin shows both large and smaller projections, forming a crest. Larger projections frequently broken off. Micropyle pointed and partly broken in terminal part. Basal part formed by distinctive funicle. Central part of the seed relatively smooth, showing a central depression and a curved structure representing an embryo.

Remarks. Although the seed is not well preserved, we decided to publish it here as unequivocally doc-
omenting the presence of the genus at Rakowice Male. Our seed is more similar to the type material of (Dorofeev, 1979) from the Cenomanian–Turonian of Alapayevsk (Yekaterinburg, east Ural). Our seed is smaller than Alapaja uralesis from the Turonian of Kazakhstan (Frumina et al., 1995) 

**Range.** Late Coniacian to early Santonian age.

**Occurrence.** Želiszów locality.

**Material studied.** K 2962; the material is housed in the National Museum Prague.

Genus **SELETYA** Dorofeev, 1979  

**Type species.** *Seletya kryshtofovichii* Dorofeev, 1979, p. 315, pl. 2, figs. 1-6, pl. 3, fig. 1, 2, pl. 8, figs. 1-6.  

**Remarks.** Seeds of *Seletya* differ from *Alapaja* in having a smooth margin and a clearly projecting hilum. The type *S. kryshtofovichii* was transferred to *Geinitzia* by Knobloch and Mai (1986), but *Geinitzia* is based on sterile foliage, so from a nomenclatorial point of view this need not be accepted. We therefore applied a more conservative approach, and separated the seeds (and ovuliferous cones) from the sterile twigs *Geinitzia formosa*.

*Seletya* sp.  

**Figure 3H, I**

**Description.** Seeds small, 2.0–2.6 mm long, 1.6–1.4 mm broad, flattened, ovate to sub-circular showing a very narrow inconspicuous wing (Figure 3H, I). Locule curved campylotropous, hilum and micropyle basiventral, hilum circular, broad, micropyle pointed and conspicuous. Seed coat rugulose, pits quadrangular or polygonal, rarely oblong, arranged in regular parallel grooves following curvature of seeds.

**Remarks.** The described seeds are reminiscent of *Seletya krishtofovichii* from the Cenomanian of Kazakhstan (Dorofeev, 1979) and Santonian of Quedlinburg (Knobloch and Mai, 1986) in number of characters e.g. in having a very narrow wing and a conspicuous micropyle. An ovuliferous cone comparable to that described by Kunzmann (1999) attached to twigs of *Geinitzia formosa* was described from the studied area and stratigraphic horizon (Rakowice Male) by Halamski et al. (2020). The seeds of similar shape are found in ovuliferous cones *Fricia nobilis* Velenovský, described from the Turonian of the Bohemian Cretaceous Basin (Kvaček, 2013).

**Range.** Late Coniacian or early Santonian age.

**Occurrence.** Želiszów locality.

**Material studied.** K 3012, K 3013; the material is housed in the National Museum Prague.

Family **GEINITZIACEAE** Kunzmann, 1999  

Genus **GEINITZIA** Endlicher, 1847  

**Type species.** *Araucarites reichenbachii* Geinitz, 1842, p. 98, pl. 24, 4 = *Geinitzia reichenbachii* (Geinitz) Hollick and Jeffrey, 1909, p. 38, pl. 5, figs. 7-10, pl. 8, figs. 3, 4, pl. 16 figs. 2-4, pl. 17 figs. 1-4, pl. 18, figs. 1-4

**Remarks.** The material of sterile shoots is assigned to this genus, as suggested by Harris (1969) and Harris et al. (1979). It is characterised by helically arranged needles that are triangular in cross-section, and having a conspicuous keel. Our material shows all those characters very clearly.

*Geinitzia formosa* Heer, 1871  

**Figure 3D-F**

v 1871 *Geinitzia formosa* Heer, p. 6, pl. 1, fig. 9, pl. 2, figs. 1-6  

v.1999 *Geinitzia formosa* Heer, Kunzmann, p. 114, pl. 26, figs. 1-8, pl. 27, figs. 1, 5-10, pl. 28, figs. 1-6  

2003 *Geinitzia formosa* Heer, Kunzmann, p. 13, fig. 4A-D, pl. 4, figs. 1-9

**Lectotype.** No. UW 3936, designated by Zijlstra et al. (2010), based on Kunzmann (1999), pl. 27, fig. 1, coll. University of Würzburg, Germany, Late Cretaceous, Santonian, Quedlinburg.

**Description.** Fragments of sterile twigs 1.0–2.0 mm broad, 4.0–13.0 mm long, with helically arranged needle-like leaves (Figure 3D), 1.5–4.5 mm long and 0.6–0.8 mm broad. Leaves triangular in cross section, showing a conspicuous keel (Figure 3E). Sometimes amber droplets preserved adhering to twigs. Abaxial cuticle shows two bands of stomata 200–500 μm broad (Figure 3F), the same arrangement is on abaxial cuticle. Stomata surrounded by 5–6 subsidiary cells. Stomatal axes irregularly orientated. Ledges of guard cells sunken in shallow stomatal chambers, sometimes surrounded by a slightly raised stomatal rim.

**Remarks.** We assign the studied material to *Geinitzia formosa*, as described from the type locality at Quedlinburg by Kunzmann (1999), particularly on account of leaves that are amphistomatic and triangular in cross section in terminal parts. *G. formosa* differs from *G. reichenbachii* in having shorter needles, which are frequently s-shaped. The needles of *G. formosa* are rhomboidal only in their basal parts, they are triangular terminally. *G. formosa* differs from *Cunninghamites* cf. *squamosus*, in having more three dimensional leaves. Leaves of *Cunninghamites* cf. *squamosus* are flattened in cross section, and their cuticle shows irregularly orientated stomata forming two bands. We also collected *Seletya* seeds in...
association, similarly to the situation described by Kunzmann (1999). However, Kunzmann did not make the nomenclatorial distinction between seeds and twigs, assigning seeds described herein under Selitya directly to Geinitzia (Kunzmann, 1999) along with sterile shoots.

**Range.** Late Coniacian or early Santonian age.

**Occurrence.** Želíšzów locality.

**Material studied.** NMP K 2933-5, 2942-6, 2947, 2955, 2958, 3009; the material is housed in the National Museum Prague.

**Division ANGIOSPERMAE Brown and Doell ex Doell, 1857**

Class Dicotyledoneae de Candolle, 1824

Order FAGALES Engler, 1892 s.l.

Genus CARYANTHUS Friis, 1983

**Type species.** Caryanthus knoblochii Friis, 1983, p. 172, pl. 5, 6, 7, figs. 1-4

**Remarks.** Fruits of the genus Caryanthus are small, ribbed, bisymmetrical and epigynous, nuts supported by a bract showing single erect seed (Friis, 1983; Friis et al., 2011, 2006; Heřmanová et al., 2016). In some cases, remains of perianth are preserved. They show a perianth consisting of four tepals arranged in two decussate pairs. Lateral face of fruit shows a long concave tepal attachment scar, placed mid-way between the base and the apex. Lateral faces of the fruit show two deeply sunken ridges running from the base to the apex. Surface covered with irregularly shaped thick-walled cells. Periclinal wall of cells sometimes collapsed (Figure 4F).

**Remarks.** The specimen from the Rakowice Male locality is slightly longer than other fruits of Caryanthus communis (Heřmanová et al., 2016). The species Caryanthus communis is described as having a concave base, but the specimen from Rakowice Male has slightly pointed base. However, absence of this character may be due to poor preservation of the specimen.

**Range.** Late Coniacian or early Santonian age.

**Occurrence.** Rakowice Male locality.

**Material studied.** K2899; the material is housed in the National Museum Prague.

*Caryanthus trebecensis* Knobloch and Mai, 1983

**Figure 4D-F**


v1986 Caryanthus trebecensis Knobloch et Mai; Knobloch and Mai, 1986, p. 76, pl. 5, fig. 4.

v2006 Caryanthus trebecensis Knobloch et Mai; Friis et al., 2006, p. 113.


v2016 Caryanthus trebecensis Knobloch et Mai; Heřmanová et al., 2016, p. 42, pl. 6, figs 1-12.

**Holotype.** Published by Knobloch and Mai (1983), pl. 8, figs. 1-3, stored in the National Museum Prague NMP F3873, Late Cretaceous, Upper Turonian–Santonian, Branišov Br 21 borehole, 23.0–23.5 m, Czech Republic.

**Description.** The specimen from Rakowice Male locality is a slightly deformed fruit of ellipsoid shape (Figure 4D). Length 1.4 mm; breadth 1.0 mm. Apical part of the fruit concave; persistent perianth fused basally forming hypanthium, which covers the entire fruit (Figure 4E). Lateral faces of the fruit show two deeply sunken ridges running from the base to the apex. Surface covered with irregularly shaped thick-walled cells. Periclinal wall of cells sometimes collapsed (Figure 4F).

**Remarks.** The specimen from the Rakowice Male locality is slightly longer than other fruits of Caryanthus trebecensis (Heřmanová et al., 2016). The apical part of the specimen described here is
FIGURE 4. Caryanthus (A) Caryanthus communis broadly elliptical fruit, no. K2899; (B) Caryanthus communis apical part of fruit, no. K2899; (C) Caryanthus communis detail of epidermis, no. K2899 (D) Caryanthus trebecensis ribbed fruit, no. K2900; (E) Caryanthus trebecensis apical part of fruit, no. K2900; (F) Caryanthus trebecensis detail of epidermis, no. K2900; (G) Caryanthus sp. ribbed fruit, no. K2906; (H) Caryanthus sp. apical part of fruit, no. K2906; (I) Caryanthus sp. detail of epidermis, no. K2906; (J) Caryanthus sp. X-ray image, longitudinal/lateral section of fruit, no. K2906; (K) Caryanthus sp. X-ray image, transversal section of fruit, no. K2906; (L) Caryanthus sp. X-ray image longitudinal/adaxial-abaxial section of fruit, no. K2906. Scale bar for all images 0.1 mm. All specimens from Rakowice Male locality.
deformed, thus shape and position of tepals, usually attached on top of the hypanthium, are unclear.

**Range.** Late Coniacian or early Santonian age.

**Occurrence.** Rakowice Male locality.

**Material studied.** K2900; the material is housed in the National Museum Prague.

*Caryanthus triasseris* Knobloch (Knobloch and Mai), 1983

Figure 5A-F

v1964 *Microcarpolithes triasseris* Knobloch; (Knobloch, 1964) p. 170, pl. 5, fig. 6.

v1970 *Microcarpolithes octocostatus* Knobloch; (Knobloch, 1970), pl. 11, figs. 4, 16, 17.

v1971 *Microcarpolithes octocostatus* Knobloch; (Knobloch, 1971) p. 27, pl. 6, figs. 1-5, 9, 11.

v1971 *Microcarpolithes triasseris* Knobloch; (Knobloch, 1971) p. 21-5, pl. 3, figs. 1-8 (non figs. 9-14), non pl. 6, figs. 12-13, pl. 10, fig. 5.

v1977 *Microcarpolithes triasseris* Knobloch; (Knobloch, 1977) p. 113-114, pl. 1, figs. 5, 9, 11, 13, 16, 18, 19, pl. 2, figs. 8, 10, pl. 4, figs. 25, 26, pl. 5 figs. 13, 21-23 pl. 11, 6-9.

v1983 *Caryanthus triasseris* (Knobloch) Knobloch et Mai; (Knobloch and Mai, 1983) p. 309, pl. 6, figs. 4, 5 (non pl. 6 fig. 11), (non pl. 8 fig. 6), pl. 9, fig. 8, pl. 10 fig. 9.

v1986 *Caryanthus triasseris* (Knobloch) Knobloch et Mai; (Knobloch and Mai, 1986) p. 76, pl. 5 figs. 1-3, non (figs. 7-10), (non pl. 6 fig. 18).

v2006 *Caryanthus triasseris* (Knobloch) Knobloch et Mai; (Friis et al., 2006) p. 113.

v2016 *Caryanthus triasseris* (Knobloch) Knobloch et Mai; (Heřmanová et al., 2016) p. 44 pl. 7 figs. 1-11.

**Holotype.** Published by Knobloch (1964); pl. 5, fig. 6, stored in the National Museum Prague No. NMP F 3611, Late Cretaceous. Upper Turonian–Santonian, Včelná borehole GB2 119.5–119.8 m, Czech Republic.

**Description.** Four specimens from Rakowice Male locality are fruits, round to elliptical in shape. Length 0.9–1.3 mm (arithmetic mean 1.0 mm); breadth 0.7–1.1 (arithmetic mean 0.1). Three specimens round (Figure 5A), one elongated (Figure 5D). Apical part of fruit pointed or slightly pointed (Figure 5B, E), as well as its base. Perianth persistent, fused basally, forming a hypanthium, which extends for almost the entire length of fruit. Lateral faces of fruit have three very indistinct ribs running from the base to the margin of hypanthium.

**Discussion.** Specimens of *Caryanthus triasseris* from the Rakowice Male locality are above average in size of the fruits, compared to the type material (Knobloch and Mai, 1986). The ribs that are very characteristic for the species run from the base to the margin of the hypanthium. However, this character is very indistinct in material from Rakowice Male.

**Range.** Late Coniacian or early Santonian age.

**Occurrence.** Rakowice Male locality.

**Material studied.** NM K2898; K2901; K2902; K2907; the material is housed in the National Museum Prague.

*Caryanthus sp.*

Figure 4G-L

**Description.** The single specimen from the Rakowice Male locality is a slightly deformed flattened fruit, ellipsoid in shape (Figure 4G). Length 1.4 mm; breadth is 2.0 mm. Apical part of the fruit concave and strongly deformed (Figure 4H). Basal part convex. Persistent perianth fused basally, forming hypanthium, which covers the entire fruit. Lateral faces of fruit show five slightly sunken ridges running from base to apex, surface covered with irregular thick-walled cells (Figure 4I). Distinct compact outer and inner layers of the fruit wall consist of small cells. The middle layer has larger cells (Figure 4J-L).

**Remarks.** Lateral face of *Caryanthus trebecensis* shows two to four sunken ridges, lateral face of *Caryanthus triasseris* shows three parallel ribs and lateral face of this fruit shows five slightly sunken ridges so it is difficult to decide to which species this specimen belongs, either to *C. trebecensis* or *C. triasseris*.

**Range.** Late Coniacian or early Santonian age.

**Occurrence.** Rakowice Male locality.

**Material studied.** K2906; the material is housed in the National Museum Prague.

Genus *ZLIVIFRUCTUS* Heřmanová, Dašková et J. Kvaček, 2017

**Type species.** *Zlivifructus vachae* Heřmanová, Dašková et J. Kvaček, 2017

**Remarks.** The genus represents small flowers and fruits. The flowers are bisexual, bisymmetrical and have an inferior ovary with a hypanthium. The tepals are attached on top of the hypanthium. The genus has four tepals, in two decussate pairs. The androecium consists of four stamens. The gynoeceum is bicarpellate, with a unilocular ovary and two styles. Fruits are nuts with a single erect seed. Normapolles pollen grains of *Plicapollis*-type were found on the surface of the fruit (Heřmanová et al., 2017).

*Zlivifructus vachae* Heřmanová, Dašková et J. Kvaček, 2017

Figure 6A-I
Zlivifructus vachae Heřmanová, Dašková et J. Kvaček; (Z. Heřmanová et al., 2017) p. 181, pl. 1, figs. 1-9, pl. 2, figs. 1-7, pl. 3, figs. 1-2.

Holotype. Selected and illustrated by Heřmanová et al. (2017), pl. 1, fig. 1, stored in the National Museum Prague No. NMP F4557, Late Cretaceous, Upper Turonian–Santonian, Třebeč TSV-5 borehole 106.5–107 m, Czech Republic.

Description. Two specimens from Rakowice Małe locality are round fruits, flattened to some degree. One almost completely flat (Figure 6A); the other more ovoid (Figure 6D). Lengths 1 and 0.9 mm; breadths 1.1 and 0.7 mm. Apical part of fruits convex, basal parts show scar where fruits were attached to infructescence (Figure 6B, E). Persistent perianth fused basally, forming hypanthyum, which covers two-thirds of fruit. Lateral faces of the fruit show three indistinct ribs extending from base of fruit to margin of hypanthyum. Androecium consists of four stamens (Figure 6D), but only basal parts of stamens are preserved. Distinct compact outer layers of the fruit wall consist of small cells. The middle layer has larger cells (Figure 6G-I). Surface covered with irregular thick-walled cells (Figure 6F).

Remarks. The present material seems to match the main diagnostic characters of the type, but it is poorly preserved. Tepals are absent in both specimens, but we interpret the preserved scars as resulting from detachment of tepals. We assume tepals attached on top of the hypanthyum. Scars are immediately adjacent to each other, with indistinct boundaries and the scars form a roughly regular ring.

Range. Late Coniacian or early Santonian age.

Occurrence. Rakowice Małe locality.

Material studied. K2905, K2903; the material is housed in the National Museum Prague.

Zlivifructus microtriasseris (Knobloch et Mai) Heřmanová, J.Kvaček et Halamski 2019

Figure 7A-C
FIGURE 6. *Zlivifructus vachae* (A) fruit, round in outline, no. K2903 (B) apical part of fruit, no. K2903 (C) detail of epidermis, no. K2903 (D) fruit, basal parts of stamens arrowed, no. K2905 (E) apical part of fruit, no. K2905 (F) detail of epidermis, no. K2905 (G) X-ray image, longitudinal/adaxial-abaxial section of fruit, no. K2905 (H) X-ray image, longitudinal/lateral section of fruit, no. K2905 (I) X-ray image, transversal section of fruit, no. K2905. Scale bar for all images 0.1 mm. All specimens from Rakowiec Male locality.

v1983  *Caryanthus microtriasseris* Knobloch et Mai; (Knobloch and Mai, 1983) p. 308-309, pl. 8, fig. 9.
v1986  *Caryanthus microtriasseris* Knobloch et Mai; (Knobloch and Mai, 1986) p. 76, pl. 5, figs. 5-6, pl. 55, fig. 3.
v2006  *Caryanthus microtriasseris* Knobloch et Mai; (Friis et al., 2006) p. 113.
v2016  *Caryanthus microtriasseris* Knobloch et Mai; (Heřmanová et al., 2016) p. 40, pl. 5, figs. 1-3.

**Holotype.** No. NMP F3872, selected and illustrated by Knobloch and Mai (1983); pl. 8 fig. 9, stored in the National Museum Prague, Late Creta-
ceous, Upper Turonian–Santonian, Záblatí borehole 65/21, 34.0–35.0, Czech Republic.

**Description.** The single specimen from Rakowice Male locality is a small, flat fruit, round in outline (Figure 7A). Length 0.4 mm; breadth 0.4 mm. Apical part of the fruit concave (Figure 7B), basal part convex. Persistent perianth fused basally, forming hypanthium, which extends more than two thirds of the fruit. Tepals not preserved; but scars indicating their insertion present. Lateral attachment scars of tepals and medial attachment scars immediately adjacent to each other, with indistinct boundaries forming a ring. Androecium consists of four stamens (Figure 7B), but only basal parts of stamens are preserved. Lateral faces of the fruit show two parallel ribs running from base of fruit to margin of hypanthium.

**Remarks.** This specimen was revised in Hefmanová et al. (2019). Fowers and fruits of Zlivifructus microtriasseris, originally described as Caryanthus microtriasseris from the North Sudetic Basin and South Bohemian Basins (late Turonian - Santonian) were reinterpreted. Zlivifructus microtriasseris differs from species assigned to genus Caryanthus Friis (1983) in the presence of four stamen scars, and in having two lateral ribs in the face of the fruit (Hefmanová et al., 2019).

**Range.** Late Coniacian or early Santonian age.

**Occurrence.** Rakowice Male locality.

**Material studied.** K 1290; the material is housed in the National Museum Prague.

**Family unknown**

**Fruit of Normapolles affinity**

**Figure 7D-F**
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Description. One specimen from Rakowice Małe locality is a slightly deformed fruit, elliptic in outline (Figure 7D). Length 2.1 mm; breadth 1.0 mm. Apical part of fruit slightly pointed. Perianth persistent, fused basally, forming hypanthium, which extends for almost entire length of fruit. Tepals attached on top of hypanthium. Basal parts of two, very narrow tepals are preserved (Figure 7F). Lateral faces of fruit strongly deformed, epidermis largely destroyed.

Remarks. The number of stamens is not clear, so it is difficult to decide to which genus the specimen belongs, but probably to Caryanthus or Calaticarpus.

Range. Late Coniacian or early Santonian age.

Occurrence. Rakowice Małe locality.

Material studied. K2904; the material is housed in the National Museum Prague.

Pistillate flower of Normapolles affinity

Figures 8A, 9A-C

Description. Specimen No. K2951 from Żeliszów shows a unit of flowers on a common short twig (Figures 8A, 9A), subtended by a common bract. The unit consists of three epigynous flowers, each subtended by a bract (Figure 9B). Length of flowers - 1.7-2.0 mm; breadth 0.9-1.2 mm. Each flower is extremely flattened consisting of five tepals (Figure 9C) that are fused basally; their free parts are triangular, 0.4 x 0.5 mm in size. The gynoecium is very flattened and of unknown structure (Figure 9A, C).

Remarks. The studied fragment of an inflorescence and its general construction argues for its systematic affinity to plants of the Normapolles Complex. However, more and better preserved material is necessary for closer comparison with other genera of the Complex.

Range. Late Coniacian or early Santonian age.

Occurrence. Żeliszów locality.

Material studied. K 2949, K2950, K 2952, K 2961; the material is housed in the National Museum Prague.

Insect coprolite

Figure 10A-C

Description and remarks. The single specimen from Rakowice Małe is of ellipsoid shape (Figure 10A) and hexagonal in transverse section (Figure 10B). Length 0.7 mm; breadth 0.4 mm. Surface of the fossil is smooth. No inner structures documented from this fossil (Figure 10C). Fossil faecal pellets, also called coprolites, are associated with many Cretaceous mesofloras (Colin et al., 2011; Knobloch, 1971, 1977; Vangerow, 1954). Affinity of fossil insect coprolites traditionally assigned to Microcarpolithes hexagonalis Vangerow to recent Kalotermes (Isoptera) has been suggested by Colin et al. (2011).

Range. Late Coniacian or early Santonian age.

Occurrence. Rakowice Małe locality.

Material studied. K2768; the material is housed in the National Museum Prague.

Kingdom, Phylum/Division, Class INCERTAE SEDIS

Genus COSTATHECA Hall, 1967

Type species. Chrysotheca diskoensis Miner, 1935, p. 590, pl. 18, figs. 1-10 = Costatheca diskoensis (Miner) Hall, 1967, p. 1298, figs. 1-3.

*Costatheca striata* (Dijkstra 1949) Hall, 1967

1949 *Chrysotheca striata* Dijkstra, p. 26, pl. 2, fig. 7.

1967 *Costatheca striata* (Dijkstra) Hall, p. 1298

1983 *Costatheca striata* (Dijkstra) Hall, Binda and Nambudiri, p. 2721, figs. 10, 12 (emended diagnosis).

For a more extensive synonymy see (Batten and Zavattieri, 1996, 1995).

**Lectotype.** Sample/slide 738-9. Maurits State Mine selected by Batten (1988, pl. 19, fig. 30).

**Description.** Elongate bodies, 2.2–2.5 mm long and 0.6–0.8 mm broad (Figure 10D, E); ends slightly S-shape curved. A more complete specimen shows a scar (Figure 10E) that may represent the structure termed “operculum” by Batten and Zavattieri (1995). About ten ribs running parallel to the longitudinal axis, and less pronounced perpendicular structures resembling striation caused by thickly cutinised cells.

**Remarks.** According to Knobloch (1981), *C. diskoensis* shows a large variability in terms of size, shape and number of ribs. This opinion was questioned by Batten (1988), who studied the type material from Greenland, and who distinguished the specimens grouped by Knobloch into a separate species of *Costatheca*. Following Batten (1988), we assigned the studied material to *C. striata* (Dijkstra) Hall from the Santonian of Limburg (Dijkstra, 1949). *C. striata* was described from the Santonian of Limburg. This species differs from most species of *Costatheca* in having perpendicular striations. *C. lata* (Vangerov) Hall from the San-
tonian of Aachen (Vangerow, 1954) differs from *C. striata* in having relatively low length/width ratio (Kovach and Dilcher, 1988). It is not clear what *Costatheca* represents. It could be an insect egg as suggested by Tiffney (1983) and Batten and Zavattieri (1995), whereas Binda and Nambudiri (1983) assumed that *Costatheca* could be related to the seeds of angiosperms of the Butomaceae family.

**Range.** Late Coniacian or early Santonian age.

**Occurrence.** Żeliszów locality.

**Material studied.** K 3010, K 3011; the material is housed in the National Museum Prague.

**DISCUSSION**

Generally, Late Cretaceous mesofossil floras from central Europe are dominated by fruits of the Normapolles complex (Table 1). However, both localities studied herein show relatively low diversity of reproductive structures compared with other European Late Cretaceous assemblages (Knobloch and Mai, 1986). With a total of 11 taxa from Rakowice Małe and seven from Żeliszów, these assemblages belong to the smallest mesofloras in Central Europe.

Sixteen taxa of mesofossils are described and figured in this paper: one species of megaspores, two species of conifer twigs, two conifer seeds, eight angiosperm reproductive structures, a single species of *Costatheca* (problematic, probably insect egg), and one type of insect coprolite. Additionally, there are two taxa *Calathiocarpus octocostatus* (Knobloch) Knobloch et Mai and *Walbeckia guttaeformis* (Knobloch) Knobloch et Mai that should be mentioned: that material was not found in the collections, but was properly described and documented by Knobloch and Mai (1986); we, therefore, consider these two species to be part of the Lower Silesian Late Cretaceous mesoflora. *Calathiocarpus* is assigned to the Normapolles complex (Friis et al., 2011). The systematic position of genus *Walbeckia* was briefly discussed by Friis et al. (2006) as follows: the “fossil probably also belongs to Normapolles complex of plants based on close morphological and organisational similarity, however, so far no pollen has been observed.” We agree in supposing that this taxon may be related to the Normapolles complex.

Sediments of the two localities, Rakowice Małe and Żeliszów, contain different mesofloras, and so represent rather different vegetation types:

- The Rakowice Małe mesoflora has a prevalence of fossil fruits of the Normapolles complex, representing alluvial plain and upland vegetation, similarly to the Turonian–Santonian flora from the South Bohemian Basins, described in detail by Knobloch and Mai (1986).
- The Żeliszów mesoflora is rich in conifer remains, representing swamp/wetland vegetation, with *Geinitzia* twigs and *Seleyta kristofovichii* seeds, similarly to the Santonian mesoflora of Quedlinburg (Knobloch and Mai, 1986; Kunzmann, 1999).

The terrestrial flora, the source of the mesofossils described herein (Rakowice Małe assem-
blage as well as Żeliszów mesoflora), grew on the East Sudetic Island, one of those forming the European Archipelago on the seaway between the Northern Ocean and the Tethys in the south (Csiki-Sava et al., 2015; Leszczyński, 2018). The Coniacian–Santonian vegetation of the East Sudetic Island, characterised on the basis of angiosperm-dominated mega- and mesofossil assemblages and of fern-dominated palynoassemblages (Halamski et al., 2020), consisted of several communities, among which back swamps and several variants of riparian forests are of interest herein as possible sources of mesofossils. Important mega-fossil taxa include the conifer Geinitzia, three species of the presumed basal eudicot Dewalquea, the fagalean Dryophyllum, and platanoids.

Halamski et al. (2020) distinguished eight Late Cretaceous megafloral assemblages in the North Sudetic Basin. The Assemblage 5 corresponds to the upper (coaly) portion of the Nowogrodziec Mb., which is the only part of the stratigraphic sequence that yielded any mesoflora. The upper portion of the Nowogrodziec Mb. has also yielded one of the two palynological assemblages studied by Halamski et al. (2020), termed Palynoassemblage A. However, plant megafossils from the Assemblage 5 are interpreted to have originated from a conifer swamp forest. The Normapolles mesofossils were produced by plants growing in communities more alike those recorded as megafossils in the slightly younger Assemblages 6 and 8 (Czerna Fm., unnamed member, lower–middle Santonian). The latter are interpreted as recording variants of riparian forests.

The Rakowice Małe mesoflora is similar to the South Bohemian flora in dominance of Normapolles complex. However, flowers and fruits of Normapolles complex are present in the South Bohemian flora in significantly greater amounts, both in terms of specimens and of taxa and other

FIGURE 10. Insect remains (A) insect coprolite no. K2768, scale bar 0.1 mm, Rakowice Male locality (B) coprolithe apical view, hexagonal in outline, no. K2768, scale bar 0.1 mm, Rakowice Male locality (C) X-ray image, cross section, no. K2768, scale bar 0.1 mm, Rakowice Male locality. (D) Costatheca striata no. K3010 scale bar 1 mm, Żeliszów locality (E) Costatheca striata showing “operculum” no. K3011 scale bar 1 mm. Żeliszów locality.
angiosperm groups (platanoids, ericoids) also show high diversity there. The Rakowice Male mesoflora is also similar to the Aachen Santonian mesoflora, with which it shares three genera: Caryanthus, Calathiocarpus, and Walbeckia (Knobloch and Mai, 1986). It also shares two genera, Caryanthus (C. triasseris) and Calathiocarpus, with the Santonian mesoflora of the German locality Walbeck from the foothills of the Vosges (Vogesen) mountains. There are additional minor findings of reproductive organs from Carpathian flysch sediments in southern Poland (Turonian - Santonian) that also show "Normapolles nuts" similar to those from Rakowice Male, for example, Caryanthus communis and Calathiocarpus deltoides as well as insect eggs Knoblochia cretacea from Rabka Zaryte (Heřmanová et al., 2013). However, flysch sediments are sedimentologically different from the sediments bearing the flora of Rakowice Male.

In the Nowogrodziec Member of the Czarna Formation in Lower Silesia, palynological studies by M. Svobodová and E. Durska in Halamski et al. (2020) showed that the palaeoassemblage was dominated by fern spores and pollen grains of the Normapolles type. Our current study confirms this work by documenting the presence of a certain number of angiosperms of various genera that may have produced such pollen.

### CONCLUSIONS

Eighteen taxa of mesofossils are mentioned in this paper. One species of megaspore, two species of conifer twigs, two conifer seeds, 10 angiosperm reproductive structures related to the Normapolles complex, one species of Costatheca (problematic, probably insect egg), and one type of insect coprolite. The material investigated herein comes from two localities, Rakowice Male and Żeliszów (Lower Silesia). The Rakowice Male mesoflora has a prevalence of fruit fossils of the Normapolles complex, representing alluvial plain and upland vegetation. The Żeliszów mesoflora is rich in conifer remains, representing swamp/wetland vegetation, with Geinitzia twigs and Seletya kristofovichii seeds.

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