

Woods of a Miocene Petrified Forest near Ankara, Turkey

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Abstract: The taxonomic composition of a recently discovered silicified fossil forest, preserved by volcanic activity 18.2-16.9 million years ago in Çamlıdere near Ankara (Turkey), is investigated. Many samples collected were divided into 2 groups as CAM1 and CAM2. Thin sections from transversal, radial, and tangential directions were cut to identify the woods. Wood identifications were performed using standard techniques and fossil wood features. The preserved wood indicates that the forest was composed almost exclusively of *Taxodium* (CAM1) and *Sequoia* (CAM2). These genera were extinct from Anatolia and Europe during late Miocene.

Key Words: Fossil forest, *Taxodium*, *Sequoia*, palaeobotany, Miocene, Çamlıdere

Ankara Yakınlarındaki Miyosen Dönemine Ait Silisleşmiş Ormanda Saptanan Ağaçlar

Özet: Bu çalışma ile, Ankara-Çamlıdere yakınlarında bulunan ve 18.2-16.9 milyon yıl öncesinde meydana gelen volkanik faaliyetler sonucu silisleşen, fosil ormanı oluşturan ağaçlar saptanmıştır. Toplanan çok sayıdaki örnek iki grup halinde, CAM1 ve CAM2 olarak kodlanmıştır. Örnekler üzerinde anatomik çalışmalar yapmak üzere enine, radyal ve teğet yönlerde ince kesitler alınmış, odun tanımada kullanılan standart yöntemler ve özellikle fosil odun özellikleri esas alınarak, teşhisler yapılmıştır. Silisleşmiş odunların *Taxodium* (CAM1) ve *Sequoia* (CAM2) cinslerine ait olduğu saptanmış olup, bu cinsler günümüzde Anadolu'da doğal yetişmeyen, Miyosen sonlarına doğru Anadolu ve Avrupa'dan yok olmuş ağaçlardır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Fosil orman, *Taxodium*, *Sequoia*, paleobotanik, Miyosen, Çamlıdere

Introduction

Little is known about the palaeoecology of Turkey during the Tertiary since fossiliferous localities in both Thrace (European Turkey) and Anatolia (the Asian part of Turkey) have received few palaeobotanical investigations. Those studies have focused predominantly on evidence from macrofossils (Özgülven, 1971; Sayadi, 1973;

Eroskay & Aytuğ, 1982; Şanlı, 1982; Selmeier, 1990; Gemici et al., 1991; Dernbach et al., 1996; Akkemik et al. 2005) rather than microfossils (Şanlı, 1982; Batı, 1996; Kayseri and Akgül, 2007).

In Thrace, to the northwest of İstanbul, the upper Oligocene Ağaçlı Lignite Quarry has yielded relatively abundant Tertiary fossil materials, indicating that the

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vegetation was diverse in that period. Petrified wood provides evidence for forests composed of *Pinus*, *Taxus*, *Juniperus*, *Juglans*, *Quercus*, *Salix* (Aytuğ and Şanlı, 1974), and *Sequoioixylon* (Akkemik et al., 2005). Upper Oligocene wood from the Northern Thrace Basin has revealed the presence of *Sequoioixylon* (*S. egemeni*) (Özgüven, 1971) and *Sequoiadendron giganteum* (Aras et al., 2003). Further evidence for a taxodiaceous element to the vegetation comes from fossil wood assemblages in Miocene deposits around Küçük Çekmece Lake (NW Turkey), which indicates the sustained presence of *Taxodium* in the vegetation along with *Taxus* and *Alnus* (Selmeier, 2001).

In west central Anatolia, middle Miocene sediments around Kütahya have yielded abundant macro and microfossils. Over 70 species have been described from this region. Whereas *Glyptostrobus europaeus* was abundant in swamps, *Pinus* and *Quercus* formed a forest around the lake (Gemici et al., 1991). To the west, Suss and Velitzelos (1994a, 1994b) and Velitzelos (1996, 1997) described a petrified forest on Lesbos (Greece), which was composed of *Taxodioxyton*, *Pinoxyton*, *Quercus*, and *Alnus*. Studies of Miocene fossil wood from the Ergene Basin of Thrace provide evidence for the presence of *Carya* and *Juglans* (Eroskay and Aytuğ, 1982). Kayseri and Akgün (2007) identified vegetation composed of relatively abundant (5%-14%) *Pinus* (*silvestris*-type), Taxodiaceae, Nymphaeaceae, Myricaceae, *Ulmus*, *Quercus*, Cyrillaceae, and Chenopodiaceae along with rarer elements (1%-4%) such as *Engelhardtia*, Juglandaceae, *Platycarya*, *Carya*, *Salix*, *Quercus* (henrici-type), Fagaceae, *Castanea*, Oleaceae, Asteraceae (Tubulifloreae-type), *Gleichenia*, Sphagnaceae, *Podocarpus*, Cupressaceae, *Sequoia*, Ephedraceae, Sparganiaceae, *Tilia*, *Alnus*. Cycadaceae and Umbelliferae have also been identified from Miocene lignites of Çorum and Sivas provinces, located in the northern part of inner Anatolia (Kayseri and Akgül, 2007).

Further insights into the Late Tertiary palaeoecology can be gleaned from the discovery of 2 new petrified forests that have recently been uncovered (Ulrich Dernbach; personal communication). The forest studied in this work is located in Çamlıdere near Ankara in Central Anatolia and provides direct information regarding the biodiversity of the forests that grew near to what is now Ankara during the Miocene. To date only *Juniperus* and *Cupressus* wood materials have been found preserved in

the vicinity of this forest (Akkemik et al., 2008; Ulrich Dernbach; personal communication).

At this time, Ankara was a volcanically active region and, as a result of one such volcanic eruption, a pyroclastic flow felled many of the trees that carpeted the vicinity typically displacing their trunks (cf. Kenrick and Davis, 2004) leaving only the stumps in life position. Along with clouds of fine ash, the forest was then (partially) buried and became entombed in life position (Türkecan et al., 1991, Koçyiğit et al., 2003). Akkemik et al. (2008) identified juniper, pine, and cypress woods from Çamlıdere, Beypazarı and Kızılcahamam deposits.

The Petrified Forest at Çamlıdere is very different from the other fossiliferous localities in Turkey, because it is characterized by dense silicified tree stems, branches, and roots covering the surface. The aim of this study therefore was to (i) identify tree species of the Petrified Forest at Çamlıdere, and (ii) to consider the palaeoecology according to the samples collected.

Geological Setting

The fossil forest is located 85 km northeast of Ankara, 10 km from the centre of Çamlıdere, and just south of the village of Pelitçik. The site is small, measuring ~400 m × ~250 m, and lies at 40°26'N 32°24'E, and at an altitude of 1100 m a.s.l. It is partially surrounded, on its southern and eastern sides, by the Çamlıdere Dam Lake (Figure 1). Numerous petrified trunks and stem material can be found lying on the surface (Figure 2).

During the Miocene, this forest grew on the Galatia volcanic mass (Yılmaz et al., 1981) at a palaeolatitude of 39°N (Meulenkamp and Sissingh, 2003). The prevailing climate was initially sub-tropical but gradually became more arid (Tankut et al., 1995). Tankut and co-workers studying the surrounding volcanics of the Çamlıdere fossil forest proposed an age range of 18.2-16.9 million years (Tankut et al., 1995).

Material and Methods

Silicified wood material, collected from the site, represent stem parts that had been felled by a volcanic eruption. They were all situated in close proximity to one another with the 2 specimens described herein lying next to each other. The preservation of the material collected was variable with some specimens being well-preserved, and others less so.

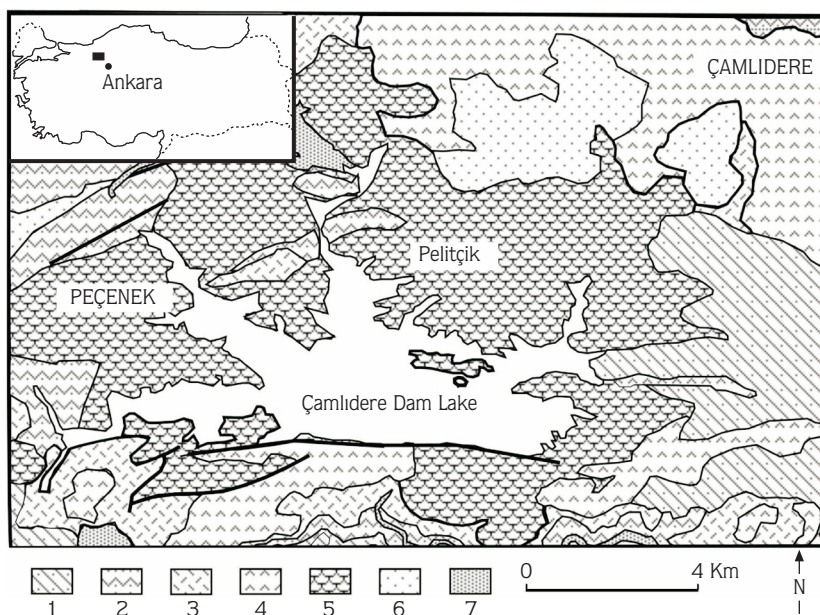


Figure 1. Location and geologic map of Peçenek Basin 1- Lower-Middle Miocene sandstone, claystone, clayey limestone, diatomite, chert, tuffite, conglomerate; 2- Lower-Middle Miocene andesite, basalt, pyroclastic rock; 3- Lower-Middle Miocene dacite, andesite, pyroclastic rock; 4-Lower-Middle Miocene andesite, dacite, pyroclastic rock; 5- Upper Miocene conglomerate, sandstone, mudstone; 6-Pliocene loosely consolidated conglomerate, sandstone, claystone; 7-Alluvium (after Altun et al., 2002).



Figure 2. A general view of the area showing abundant petrified wood material.

Two specimens (CAM1-01 and CAM2-01) are representative of the 2 taxa (CAM1 and CAM2) present in this assemblage. They were thin sectioned along 3 planes,

transverse section (TS), radial longitudinal section (RLS), and tangential longitudinal section (TLS), and were studied using a transmitted light microscope. Descriptions follow the terminology of the IAWA Committee (2004) wherever possible. Identifications were made following reference to well-described extant wood, preferably voucher specimens, housed in the Forest Botany Department, Faculty of Forestry, İstanbul University, and the University Utrecht Branch of the National Herbarium of the Netherlands along with comparisons with the literature (e.g. Jacquot, 1955; Greguss, 1955; Greguss, 1967; Eliçin, 1977; Barefoot and Hankins, 1982; Fahn et al., 1986; Schweingruber, 1990, 1993; Tidwell, 1998). The fossil material described has been referred, rather than assigned, to modern taxa at this stage. More specimens need to be sectioned to validate identification as fossil conifer wood morphospecies are usually ill-defined (cf. Wheeler and Baas, 1998; Falcon-Lang and Cantrill, 2000) and both quantitative and qualitative anatomical characters can vary greatly throughout one tree.

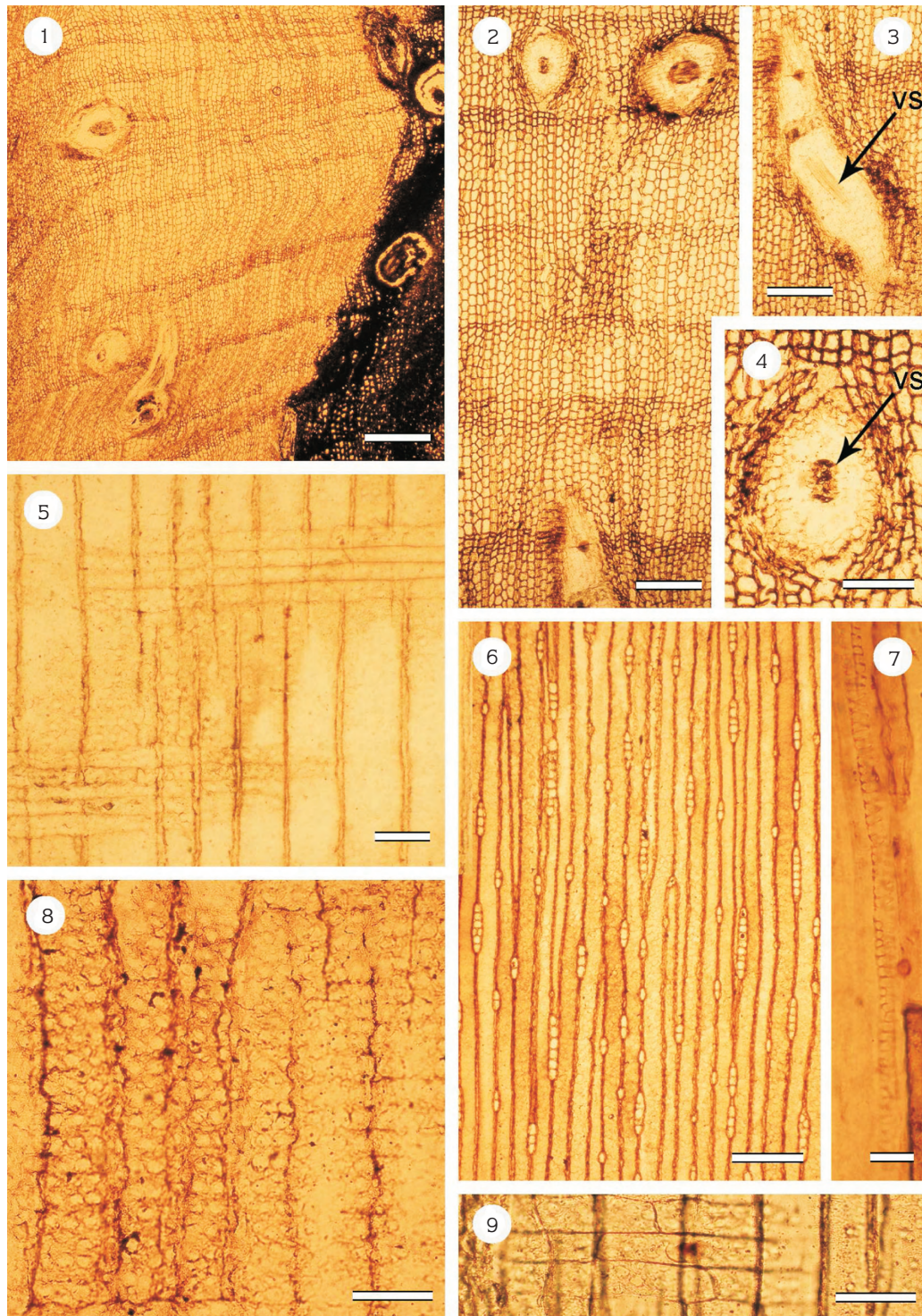


Figure 3. CAM01-01 '*Taxodium*'. 1. TS showing narrow growth rings with indistinct boundaries. Scale bar 1 mm. 2. Narrow latewood zone and 3 vascular traces, TS; scale bar 1mm. 3. Vascular trace running at $\sim 45^\circ$ to the main axis showing vascular strand (vs), TS; scale bar 1 mm. 4. Vascular trace running parallel to the main axis showing vascular strand and surrounding parenchymatous cells, TS; scale bar 250 μm . 5. RLS of 2 short rays; scale bar, 100 μm 6. TLS of short rays; scale bar, 250 μm . 7. Vascular strand in TLS showing spiral thickening; scale bar, 25 μm . 8. RLS showing biseriate and opposite tracheidal pitting; scale bar, 100 μm . 9. RLS showing cross field pitting; scale bar, 100 μm .

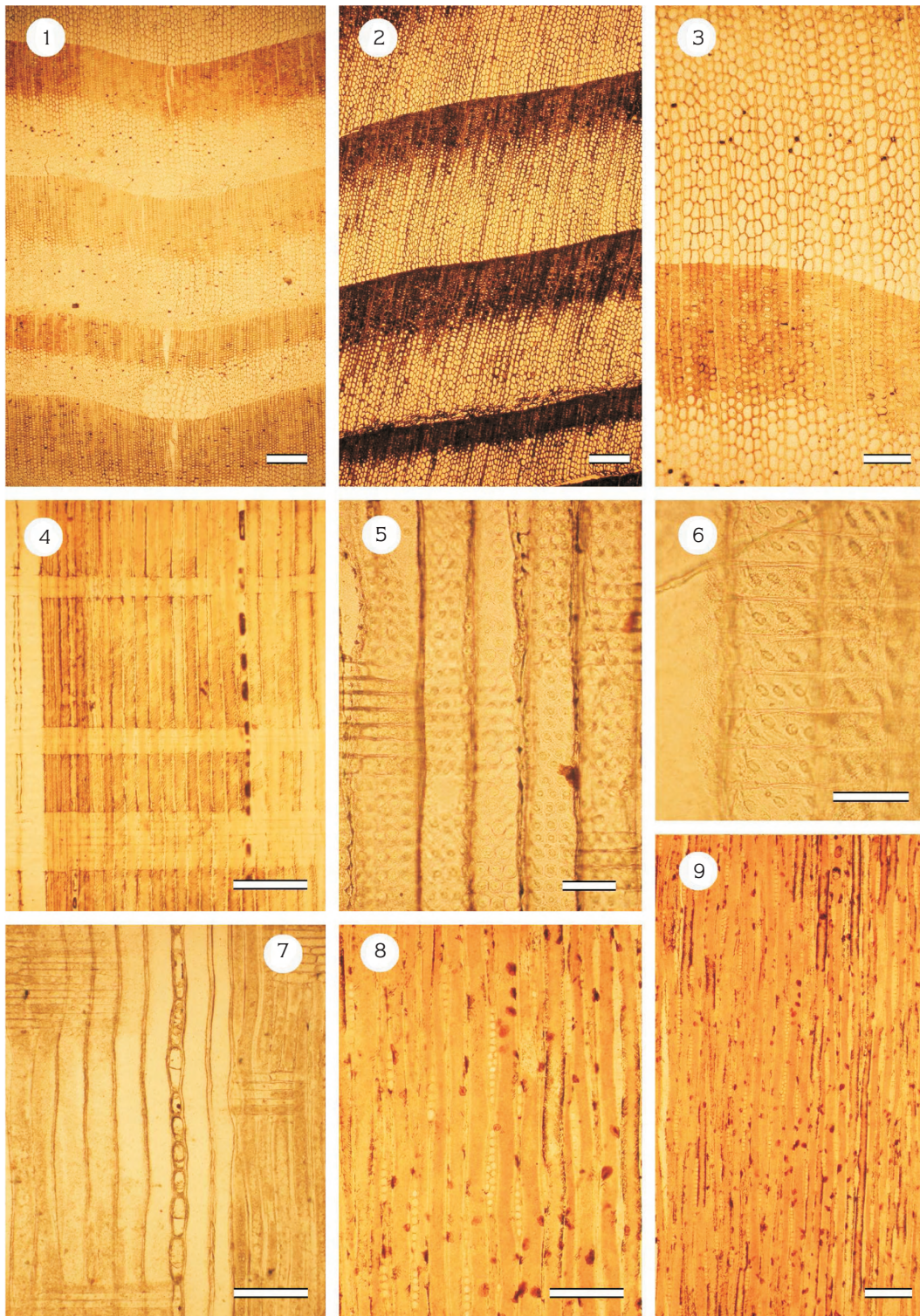


Figure 4. CAM02-01 '*Sequoia*'. 1 and 2. TS showing wide growth rings with distinct boundaries; scale bar, 1 mm. 3. TS showing wide zone of thick walled late wood tracheids with reduced radial diameters; scale bar 250 μ m. 4. Rays and axial parenchyma, RLS; scale bar 100 μ m. 5. Biseriate and triseriate tracheidal pitting, RLS; scale bar 100 μ m. 6. Horizontally aligned cross field pits, RLS; scale bar 50 μ m. 7. Axial parenchyma, RLS; scale bar 100 μ m. 8. Short, part-biseriate rays, TLS; scale bar 100 μ m. 9. TLS showing uniseriate ray size and distribution scale bar 250 μ m.

Transverse section: Growth ring boundaries indistinct (Figure 3.1). Transition from earlywood to latewood gradual with narrow zone (1-3, rarely more) of thin walled, latewood tracheids (Figure 3.1-3.2). Axial parenchyma diffuse and rare. Resin canals absent. About 20 vascular traces (probably leaf traces) present (Figure 3.1-3.4), in no obvious arrangement, with a central vascular strand (Figure 3.2-3.4), surrounded by parenchymatous tissue, running parallel to the longitudinal axis (Figure 3.2-3.4) or at an angle (e.g. 45°; Figure 3.2-3.3) or running perpendicular to the axis (not shown) and passing through at least 2 growth rings.

Tangential section: Rays uniseriate and very low (1-4 cells) to rarely medium (up to 10 cells) in height (Figure 3.6). Tracheidal pitting rare, uniseriate and non-contiguous or biseriata and contiguous. Helical thickening absent. Vascular traces composed of elongated cells with wall ornamentation and/or spiral thickening (Figure 3.7).

Radial section: Tracheid pitting uniseriate or biseriata (rarely triseriate) and opposite (Figure 3.8). Rays low (Figure 3.5). Three to seven seemingly taxodioid pits per cross field both horizontally and randomly (Figure 3.9). Ray tracheids absent. Ray parenchyma walls smooth.

Cupressaceae

'*Sequoia*' sp.

Representative specimen: CAM2-01

This specimen measures 5 cm diameter by 14 cm in length and displays ~20 growth rings.

Transverse section: Growth ring boundaries distinct (Figure 4.1-4.3). Transition from earlywood to latewood abrupt with a thick zone (>10 cells) of latewood tracheids with reduced radial diameters (Figure 4.1-4.3). Axial parenchyma diffuse to tangentially zonate (Figure 4.1, 4.3). Resin canals absent. Vascular traces absent. Crushing of the early wood tracheids present in some growth rings.

Tangential section: Rays uniseriate and (low) medium to high (5-33 cells) (Figure 4.9), rarely part-biseriate (Figure 4.8). Tracheidal pitting rare, non-contiguous uniseriate, and loosely biseriata and opposite. Helical thickening absent. Axial parenchyma in strands with brown contents present in each cell and smooth horizontal end walls.

Radial section: Tracheid pitting generally uniseriate in the latewood and bi- and triseriate, and opposite in the

earlywood (Figure 4.5). Ray (low) medium to high (Figure 4.4). One to six cupressoid-taxodioid pits per cross field, horizontally arranged (Figure 4.6). Ray tracheids absent. Ray parenchyma walls smooth. Axial parenchyma cells with (brown) contents (Figure 4.4, 4.7).

The 2 specimens are characterised by the lack of resin ducts, generally uniseriate rays, uniseriate and multiseriate opposite tracheidal pitting, axial parenchyma with smooth end walls (when observable), taxodioid-cupressoid cross field pitting, smooth tangential walls of the ray cells, which are characteristic of the taxodiaceous genera of the Cupressaceae. Taxodiaceous woods generally lack true resin canals, lack indentures in the horizontal walls of the ray parenchyma, and have taxodioid type cross-field pits (Visscher et al. 2003) – a character combination also observed in the fossil CAM1-01 specimens. These CAM1 specimens can be distinguished from the CAM2 specimens, represented by CAM2-01 by the presence of distinct growth rings with abrupt transition from late- to earlywood, seemingly tangentially zonate parenchyma and the presence of high rays, which are absent in CAM1-01, and the presence of vascular strands in CAM1-01. In comparisons with taxodiaceous woods, CAM1-01 exhibits closest similarity to modern *Taxodium* and CAM2-01 to modern *Sequoia* and have thus been referred to these modern genera.

Discussion

Today Turkey is a meeting point of 3 phytogeographical regions, namely the Euro-Siberian, Mediterranean, and Irano-Turanian regions, which reflects differences in climate, geology, topography, soils, and floristic diversity (Çolak and Rotherham, 2006). The Euro-Siberian region is characterised by deciduous forests growing under a relatively humid climate. The Mediterranean vegetation is predominantly sclerophyllous with maquis dominated by evergreen shrubs covering much of the land below 1200 m that gives way to coniferous forests at higher elevations. The vegetation of the Irano-Turanian phytogeographic region is less well known; however, over the Anatolia plateau, oak scrub dominates, giving way to pine forests in the north, west, and south. Today the native forests found in this region are composed of *Quercus pubescens* and *Juniperus* at lower elevations (700-1000 m), *Pinus nigra* at mid-elevations (1000-1400 m), and *Pinus sylvestris* and *Abies*

bornmuelleriana at elevations above 1400 m - a taxa combination commonly found in other arid parts of Turkey. The prevailing climate is continental with 565 mm annual precipitation and a mean annual temperature of 9.9 °C. According to the Thornthwaite Method (Çepel, 1988), the climate is generally humid with a summer dry period and a very cold winter season.

The Petrified Forest of Çamlidere of west Central Anatolia lay at a palaeolatitude of 39°N during the Lower Miocene (Meulenkamp and Sissingh, 2003). Bruch et al. (2006) describes a mean annual temperature of between 16 and 17 °C with a cold month mean of 5-7 °C and a warm month mean of 26-27 °C, and a total annual precipitation of 500-1000 mm. Although these climate parameters can not be applied directly to Turkey, as it lies outside the area of data cover (Bruch et al., 2006), it can provide a general idea of conditions in this part of Europe during the later Miocene.

Taxodiaceous conifers (Cupressaceae) were an important component of the vegetation of this region for several million years during the Palaeogene. Evidence for this comes from deposits ranging from Eocene to late Miocene in age (Özgüven, 1971; Gemici et al., 1991; Suss and Velitzelos 1994a, 1994b; Kayacık et al., 1995; Batı, 1996; Selmeier 2001; Aras et al., 2003; Akkemik et al., 2005; Kayseri and Akgün, 2007). This is not surprising since both *Taxodium* and *Sequoia* have a long fossil history and were common elements in the forests of Europe, Asia, and America forming a subcosmopolitan distribution up to about 5 million years ago. Interestingly, the monospecific *Sequoia*, which today is restricted to a narrow range along the Pacific coast, is one of the few

conifers that can vegetatively reproduce. Following a major environmental disturbance (e.g. fire), regeneration can occur from the stump, or even roots, and thus allowing it to survive and maintain dominance in an ecologically dynamic habitat. This ability may explain the dominance of *Sequoia* in the volcanic environment of Çamlidere. *Taxodium*, restricted to the southern part of North America, occupies flood prone areas and its presence in the Miocene Petrified Forest of Çamlidere may indicate that inundated regions were present in an otherwise *Sequoia*-dominated forest.

Conclusion

This study aims to highlight the excellent preservation of a newly discovered petrified forest from Çamlidere in Central Anatolia (Turkey). The trees are preserved as a result of volcanic activity that took place during the lower Miocene. Preliminary studies indicate that the forest was composed predominantly of *Taxodium* with few *Sequoias*. *Juniperus* has also been found from the same area (Akkemik et al., 2008) along with *Cupressus* and more evidence for *Juniperus* from neighbouring areas (Ulrich Dernbach: personal communication). With further studies of the site and fossils found in the region, both here and at other localities around Ankara, a more complete reconstruction of ecology of this region will be possible.

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