



Sphinxiocarpon, a new name for *Sphinxia* Li, Hilton & Hemsley, 1997 – not Reid & Chandler, 1933

QI WANG, JINZHUANG XUE AND CYRILLE PRESTIANNI

The name *Sphinxia* Li, Hilton & Hemsley, 1997, was proposed for a seed-like structure from the early Late Devonian (Frasnian) of Wuhan City in Hubei Province, China (Li *et al.* 1997), and was subsequently used by some authors (Hilton 1998; Li 2000; Gerrienne *et al.* 2004; Prestianni 2005). The genus only contains one species *Sphinxia wuhania* Li, Hilton & Hemsley. Li *et al.* (1997) precluded its affinities to the progymnosperm–spermatophyte lineage and demonstrated that having no information from its parent plant *Sphinxia* Li, Hilton & Hemsley cannot be unequivocally classified into any other known plant groups despite being suspected of a reproductively advanced lycopsid.

Sphinxia Li, Hilton & Hemsley, however, is a later homonym of the earlier published and valid generic name *Sphinxia* Reid & Chandler, 1933. *Sphinxia* was established for four specimens including fruits and seeds from the London Clay flora (early Eocene) and may be allied to two extant angiosperm genera: *Dombeya* Cav. and *Trochetia* DC. (Sterculiaceae Vent.) (Reid & Chandler 1933).

Later, Chandler (1961) added two new specimens to *Sphinxia* Reid & Chandler. Although the number of citations of the generic name is relatively few, reflecting the apparent rarity and possible endemism of this fossil plant, *Sphinxia* Reid & Chandler rather than *Sphinxia* Li, Hilton & Hemsley has been adopted in two internet websites: Index Nominum Genericorum (<http://ravenel.si.edu/botany/ing/ingForm.cfm>) and the Paleobiology Database (<http://paleodb.org/cgi-bin/bridge.pl>).

According to Article 11.3 and Article 53.1 of the International Code of Botanical Nomenclature (ICBN) (McNeill *et al.* 2006), *Sphinxia* Li, Hilton & Hemsley is an illegitimate name and should be rejected. No other legitimate name is available and hence a new name, that is, *Sphinxiocarpon* Wang, Xue & Prestianni n. nom. is proposed here to replace *Sphinxia* Li, Hilton & Hemsley in accordance with Article 7.3 and Article 33.4 of the ICBN (McNeill *et al.* 2006).

Etymologically, *Sphinxio-*, from a Greek mythical creature ‘sphinx’, implies this fossil showing enigmatic affinities, and *-carpon*, from Greek ‘Karpos’, refers to the seed-like structure.

Sphinxiocarpon Wang, Xue & Prestianni n. nom. replaces *Sphinxia* Li, Hilton & Hemsley, 1997 (p. 139, figs 1–24), which is a nomen illeg., (whereas *Sphinxia* Reid & Chandler, 1933 – pl. 20, figs 12–23, text-fig. 14 remains valid. The type is *Sphinxia ovalis* Reid & Chandler and the holotype is V. 22838, The Natural History Museum, BM).

Sphinxiocarpon wuhanensis (Li, Hilton & Hemsley) Wang, Xue & Prestianni **comb. nov.**: = *Sphinxia wuhania* Li, Hilton & Hemsley in *Botanical Journal of the Linnean Society* 123 (2): 139, figs 1–24, 1997. Holotype: CBWh 105 (Chinese National Herbarium, PE).

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Qi Wang (corresponding author) [E-mail: happyking@ibcas.ac.cn], State Key Laboratory of Systematic and Evolutionary Botany, Institute of Botany, the Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing 100093, China; Jinzhuang Xue [E-mail: jzhxue@163.com], Key Laboratory of Orogenic Belts and Crustal Evolution, Department of Geology, Peking University, Beijing 100093, China; Cyrille Prestianni [E-mail: cyrille.prestianni@ulg.ac.be], Département de Géologie, Université de Liège, allée du 6 Août, B18/P40, Sart-Tilman, Liège 4000, Belgium.