

Earliest Silurian articulate brachiopods from central Kazakhstan

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An abundant early Silurian brachiopod assemblage of 14 species, with strong affinities to the early Rhuddanian faunas of Britain and Baltoscandia, was recovered from the Akkermere Peninsula, on the western side of Lake Balkhash, southern Central Kazakhstan. The occurrence of *Stricklandia lens mullochensis*, which is the earliest member of the *Stricklandia-Costistricklandia* lineage, dates this brachiopod assemblage as early Rhuddanian, within a stratigraphic interval from the *Akidograptus acuminatus* to the lower part of the *Monagraptus cyphus* graptolite biozones. This is the first well documented record of early Rhuddanian brachiopods in Kazakhstan. The assemblage also includes *Meifodia tulkulensis* sp. nov. and *Eospirifer cinghizicus* with well preserved spiralia. The co-occurrence of *Stricklandia lens mullochensis* and *Eospirifer cinghizicus* has not been recorded previously and is regarded here as the most significant difference between the early Rhuddanian brachiopod faunas of the Baltic (East-European) Plate and Britain; in contrast *Eospirifer* first appears in the two latter areas in the late Llandovery.

Key words: Brachiopoda, taxonomy, palaeogeography, Silurian, Rhuddanian, Kazakhstan.

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