

Conodonts from Ordovician ophiolites of central Kazakhstan

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Central Kazakhstan is frequently referred to as a hypothetical Paleozoic continent Kazakhstania, although its geological structure suggests that in the early Paleozoic it was either a series of island arcs or microcontinents separated by small oceanic basins, each having its own history of development. The cherty and volcanogenic-cherty deposits of the south-western Predchingiz Region and the North Balkhash Region in central Kazakhstan represent an ophiolite rock association with pelagic sediments. The Early-Middle Ordovician conodonts found in the cherty rocks are the only fossils useful for precise dating of the strata and for interpretation of the palaeobiogeographic relations. A low taxonomic diversity is typical of conodonts from these pelagic sediments. Most of them are of the Baltic type, and only some, like *Paroistodus horridus* and *Histiodella tableheadensis*, represent other, apparently more warm-water faunal elements. Deep-water conodont faunas from central Kazakhstan are coeval with the Early-Middle Ordovician conodonts from the shelf deposits of southern Kazakhstan, but the latter are taxonomically more diverse and contain warm-water forms (e.g., *Juanognathus variabilis*, *Reutterodus andinus*, *Serratognathus bilobatus*, and *Bergstroemognathus extensus*). This corroborates the idea that Kazakhstania was closer to the equator, than to the Baltic region in the Ordovician.

Key words: conodonts, Ordovician, Kazakhstania, biostratigraphy, palaeogeography, ophiolites.

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