Introduction

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The current issue is compiled of papers dedicated to the study of brachiopods, their history of study, classification, morphogenesis, brachiopod evolution from the Cambrian up to Recent, shell structure and microornamentation, and peculiarities of stratigraphical and geographical distribution of brachiopod assemblages.

G.T. Ushatinskaya describes the microornamentation and shell structure of the oldest lingulids from the Lower Cambrian of the northwestern Siberian Platform and discusses the transformation of lingulid shells in the course of early diagenesis and its importance for reconstruction of burial conditions.

G.A. Afanasjeva presents a detailed comparative morphological analysis of several genera similar to *Notanoplia* Gill, 1950, the systematic position of which was constantly debated, refines the taxonomic composition of this group of genera, and places it as a separate superfamily, Notanopliidea Gill, 1969, in the order Strophomenida.

I.N. Manankov describes in detail the composition, stratigraphical and geographical distribution of Permian brachiopod assemblages of Mongolia, establishes a number of horizons and brachiopod zones and correlates them with the stratigraphical units of the adjacent Northeast Asian regions.

T.N. Smirnova studies the Early Cretaceous rhynchonellids of Dagestan and reveals sharp morphological changes in their shell exterior and endoskeleton at the Barremian–Aptian boundary.

O.N. Zezina considers the age of generic brachiopod assemblages in different faunal belts based on refined and supplemented data on the composition and distribution of recent brachiopod genera.

A.V. Pakhnevich revises the systematic position of the punctate rhynchonellids that were previously combined into the superfamily Rhynchoporoidea, shows, based on his comparative morphological analysis of punctate rhynchonellids of different age, that the punctuation arose independently in different rhynchonellid evolutionary branches, and proposes a new classification of punctate rhynchonellids.

A.A. Madison studies the development of cardinal process in uniquely preserved Ordovician strophomenids.

N.V. Oleneva describes the types of microornamentation and shell structure peculiarities in the Devonian spiriferids of the East European Platform.

G.A. Afanasjeva