

# **DISCOVERY OF A MIDDLE PERMIAN BRACHIOPOD FAUNA FROM PENINSULAR MALAYSIA AND ITS PALAEOBIOGEOGRAPHICAL IMPLICATIONS**

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A Middle Permian (Guadalupian) brachiopod fauna is described from the 'Leptodus shales' of the Gua Musang Formation in the Central Belt of Peninsular Malaysia. The 'Leptodus shale' brachiopod fauna is dominated by lyttonids and productids, with characteristic genera including *Vediproductus*, *Uncinunellina*, *Leptodus*, *Transennatia*, *Neochonetes*, *Meekella* and *Derbyia*. Overall, the fauna shows strong Palaeoequatorial (Cathaysian) affinities and can be correlated with other Middle Permian brachiopod faunas from Indochina, such as the Cambodian *Sisophon* fauna and the Lengwu fauna from Zhejiang Province, South China block.

This fauna is important for two reasons. Firstly, brachiopod faunas from the 'Leptodus shales' are currently thought to be Changhsingian in age, while the discovery here of genera such as *Vediproductus* indicates that an older Guadalupian age is more likely for this fauna.

Secondly, the presence of a Guadalupian fauna with strong Palaeoequatorial affinities in this area of Peninsular Malaysia is important for the study of the tectonic history of the Southeast Asian region, as it adds evidence to the theory that east and west Peninsular Malaysia were separated during the Early and Middle Permian. It indicates that the eastern and central parts of Peninsular Malaysia were within the Palaeoequatorial Realm in the Middle Permian, while faunas from the western part are characteristic of the Sibumasu province and were allied with the cool water Gondwanan faunas.

The discovery of this Guadalupian brachiopod fauna from the Central Belt of Peninsular Malaysia is important in understanding the somewhat controversial tectonic and palaeobiogeographical history of the Southeast Asian region at the close of the Palaeozoic.