

# The Peopling of South America 2026: There is No Silver Bullet

Gustavo G. Politis

INCUAPA-CONICET. Universidad Nacional del Centro de la Provincia de Buenos Aires,  
Argentina

In the last decades, the archaeological record from South America has challenged the main models about the expansion of *Homo sapiens* on the continent. After the almost universal acceptance of pre-13,000 cal. BP human occupation of the Americas (the Clovis First Model), the focus of the discussion shifted to evaluate the evidence of human colonization in South America before or during the Last Glacial Maximum. However, most of the support of a deep chronology is based on only one line of evidence, used as a “silver bullet,” and at the same time, the results of experimental archaeology, primarily related to cut marks on bones, have been taken as definitive proofs of human action on extinct megamammals. In this presentation, I will critically discuss these two research strategies and evaluate their weight in the current debate in South America. I will also explore how the new genomic results are integrated with the archaeological data. Finally, I will summarize the main agreements and disagreements concerning the expansion of humans in South America, and I will identify the main gaps and pending issues in this always lively debate.