



PLEISTOCENE COALITION NEWS

VOLUME 18, ISSUE 5

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2026

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Chilean archaeologist,
Ana María Barón Parra,
MA (known especially for her excavations
and work at the Tulo and Ghatchi sites in
the Atacama Desert) and longtime ar-
chaeoastronomer and Chilean prehistory
associate, **Patricio Bustamante Díaz**, relate the
unexpectedness of discoveries in the Atacama.
See [Barón Parra and Bustamante Díaz p.2](#).

This anniversary—challenging paradigms
involves teams and independents and the
qualities of dissent, truth-seeking & integrity.

Below: Objectivity through living and extinct
forms contrasting scientific unaccountability



Part 8: Porifera and Cnidaria
(Sponges and Corals)

No meaningful change after 700
million years—sponges and corals
are still sponges and corals.

And similar with all other
animals, don't be misled by
claims of countless 'species.'

"The idea is to start thinking
'dog breeds' for all fossil types.
Use of the term 'species' has
long been out of control in the
fields of biology, anthropology,
and paleontology and can no
longer be trusted as anything
more than a way to differenti-
ate varieties. Remember, if
paleontologists never knew
about modern-day dogs but
found Chihuahua, St. Bernard,
and German Shepherd fossils
they would call them differ-
ent species. Anyone alive
today knows that they are
the same."

See [Feliks p.22](#).

Dutch stone tool expert,
Jan Willem van der Drift,
explains why appropriate
credit should be given to
famed U.K. researcher
James Reid Moir for his
discoveries and work
promoting and essentially creating the idea of Mode-1
stone tool types based on evidence he personally recov-
ered from West-Runton, U.K. about 100 years ago. At right,
example of Reid Moir's work. See [Van der Drift p.8](#).



J.W.D., thinking outside the box



Landscape architect
and researcher of
prehistoric civilizations,
Tina Wan (MLA),
describes a complete
turnaround in ideas
involving the re-

markable 12,000-year-old site Gobekli Tepe. The evidence
goes up against a century of presumption civilization began
with the advent of agriculture. Was
it really hunter-gatherers who
made this profound contribution to
human culture? See [Wan p.16](#).



Cultural and experimental archae-
ologist and professional visual artist,
Professor Dragoș Gheorgiu PhD (Romania), is an editor of
conference volumes on prehistoric imagination, ceramics and
other signs of expression in the archaeological record. He has just
returned from the UISPP Congress in Poland co-chairing a session
on *archaeoacoustics*. Here, he introduces intriguing modern anal-
ogy for what may be a prehistoric musical instrument producing
subtle sounds through body movements. See [Gheorgiu p.13](#).



Retired pediatrician and researcher in archaeology,
Christian Humburg (MD), continues exploring the likely
mental projection of animal forms onto natural stones.
Humburg also looks for evidence of human workmanship,
context and datability. This issue, he spotlights a very recog-
nizable outline, the mammoth and its distinctive highly-domed
head and prominent shoulder. See [Humburg p.6](#).



Demo-
graphic
change in
archae-
ology? See
[Baldwin
p.12](#).

Rick Dullum (BA)
begins exploring the baffling subject
of protuberances
known as "nubs,"
a feature at
megalithic sites worldwide, in-
cluding USA. See [Dullum p.19](#).



Voices of the desert: Leakey, Le Paige, Barón, and the question of early humans in Atacama

By Ana María Barón Parra and Patricio Bustamante Díaz*

"The driest desert in the world does not bury; it



world does not bury; it



exposes. Sites such as Ghatchi, which I have studied, have no stratigraphy a 12,000-year-old tool may coexist on the same pampa with a 3,000-year-old hearth and a modern can."

1. The letter

In my personal archive I keep a letter dated

October 21, 1966, in Nairobi. Louis Leakey responds to Father Gustavo Le Paige (1970) in San Pedro de Atacama, after receiving photographs of skulls from the Tambillo site, near San Pedro de Atacama, Chile—skulls that he classified and published as Neanderthaloid.

Le Paige transcribed it by hand:

"Thank you very much for your letter of the 9th and for the enclosed photographs of the three skulls. I shall be exceedingly interested to hear more about this discovery. I note that you do not consider that these particular specimens date back to more than 6,000 BC, but that you believe (as I do) that man must have crossed into the Americas before 70,000 BC. Personally I suspect that the earliest humans to enter America were Hominids of the Solo man Type." (*Homo erectus soloensis*)..."

And he adds in French:

"Nous avons désiré insister sur tout ceci pour que nos lecteurs se rendent compte que le problème est difficile et qu'on peut diverger d'opinion."

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Fig. 1. Levallois points, classic of the Mousterian, Middle Paleolithic, found in the Atacama Desert, Chile. Stone tools from Ghatchi in the upper right and from Tulan in the lower half. See figure enlargement on back page. Ana María Barón Parra.

["We wanted to emphasize all of this so that our readers would realize that the issue is complex and that opinions may differ."

—DeepL French/English transl.]

Leakey, the patriarch of Olduvai, and Le Paige—who between 1955 and 1980 excavated 5,482 bodies in the Salar basin, forming the collection now held at the IIAM of the Catholic University of the North—corresponded because they shared a question that remains relevant today.

2. The problem of the clock

Archaeological dates do not date the stone. They date the associated organic matter. A lithic artifact found on the surface is chronologically mute. One could also say that, in this sense, we are archaeologically deaf to what it tells us.

This is critical in Atacama. The driest desert in the

world does not bury; it exposes. Sites such as Ghatchi, which I have studied, have no stratigraphy. They are palimpsests: a 12,000-year-old tool may coexist on the same pampa with a 3,000-year-old hearth and a modern can (see Fig. 1 and enlargement on the last page).

If we date the charcoal from the hearth, we date the fire, not the stone. If that stone was reused, the organic material will always be more recent than the artifact. Therefore, using traditional techniques such as radiocarbon dating or others, sites consisting only of stones and soils without organic material are still impossible to date absolutely.

3. What we accept today

The current consensus places the first peopling between 16,000 and 22,000 BP (Dillehay, 2015; Davis et al., 2019; Bennett et al., 2021). Strictly speaking, it is

> [Cont. on page 3](#)

Voices of the Desert...early humans in Atacama (cont.)

"They are the same types of tools from the Lower and Middle Paleolithic—the Acheulean and Mousterian—that are found on other continents."

"I do not claim that they are 70,000 years old or that they are Solo Man. I claim that they are there, that they are concentrated outside a clear context, and that their technology cannot be explained by what we know of the last 11,000 years in the region."

based on a thin body of evidence:

- White Sands, footprints, 22,000 BP.
- Cooper's Ferry, hearths, 16,000 BP.
- Monte Verde II, huts, 14,500 BP. Confirmed with excavations Sept. 25-27, 2026
- Paisley Caves, coprolites containing DNA.

Clovis-type site, 13,000 BP.

None of these sites contains evidence of human bones or bodies.

Five sites, without people, for a period spanning 9,300 years and an area of 42.5 million km². The only human skeleton from that entire period is the Anzick child, 12,600 BP, buried in isolation 400 km from the nearest Clovis site (Rasmussen et al., 2014).

The entire history of the peopling of the Americas was constructed on five dated hearths and an isolated dead child. Thus, if the absence of human bodies invalidates a hypothesis, then it also invalidates all of these sites.

4. Ghatchi and similar sites

During my surveys at Ghatchi, Tambillo, and other sites, I have recorded hundreds of artifacts made of quartzite and local basalt that apparently do not fit the Tulan, Tuina, Punta Negra, or Ghatchi types. According to the criteria of Bordes and Clark, they are unifacial, with two to four blows, without invasive retouch, made on a pebble. A very simple technical solution, convergent with Oldowan industries from Asia, Africa, and Europe.

I think the differences are merely in the lithic material,

because they are the same types of tools from the

of the last 11,000 years in the region.

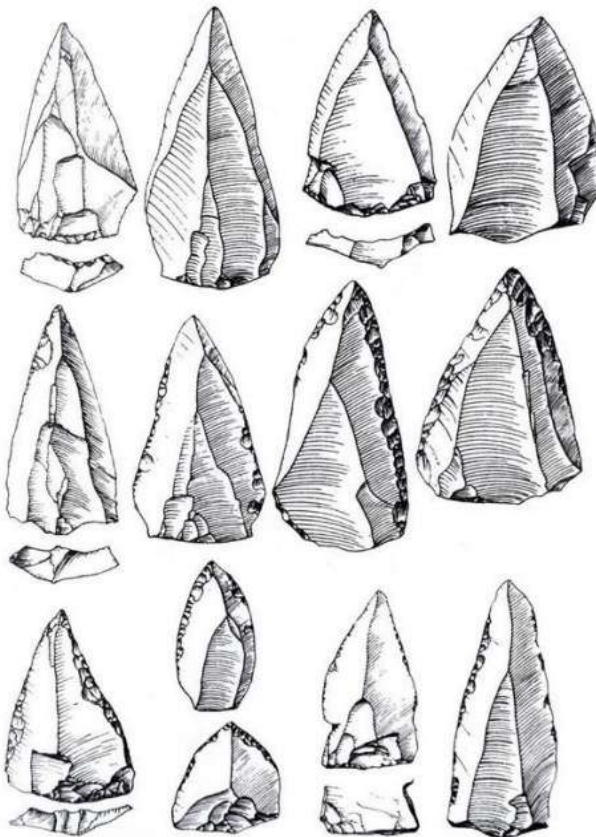


Fig. 2. Levallois points drawn in the classic book by François Bordes, "Typologie du Paléolithique Ancien et Moyen." Compare with Figs. 1 & 4.

Lower and Middle Paleolithic—the Acheulean and Mousterian—that are found on other continents (see also **Fig. 2**). It is possible that they do not correspond to the time when they were manufactured at Ghatchi and on the pampa of the Atacama Desert.

I do not claim that they are 70,000 years old or that they are Solo Man. I claim that they are there, that they are concentrated outside a clear context, and that their technology cannot be explained by what we know

If there was a very ancient and technologically simple occupation, Atacama would possibly be the only place on the planet where it could still be recognizable today. In jungle, pampa, or Patagonia, it would have been destroyed by acidity, soil disturbance, glaciation, or water transport.

Only the hyperaridity and geomorphological stability of the Atacama Desert allow a pebble palimpsest to remain on the surface. That is why Le Paige

> [Cont. on page 4](#)

Voices of the Desert...early humans in Atacama (cont.)

""They are the same

searched here. That is why I continue searching here.

The present absence of 70,000-year-old human bod-

That has been my effort: to put the material on the table so that new techniques—OSL, U-Th dating of carbon-

val of the Americas. It is the only desert sufficiently old and stable that, if something very simple and very ancient



Fig. 3. Idealized reconstruction of an in situ village, on top of Ghatchi, Atacama Desert, between the Vilama and San Pedro rivers.

types of tools from the Lower and Middle Paleolithic—the Acheulean and Mousterian—that are found on other continents.”

ies cannot be presented as solid evidence that they did not exist. And the absence of radiocarbon dates at Ghatchi does not prove that the material is young; it only proves that there is no sealed organic material.

Given these antecedents—with five sites without human bodies for an entire continent, enormous gray and dark-gray areas even within what is accepted, and thousands of lithic artifacts in the only desert that could preserve them but which are impossible to date using radiocarbon—it would be illogical, from a scientific standpoint, to abandon this line of research.

ates, and 3D morphometry—can do what we have not been able to do until now.

5. Discussion

If five sites without human bodies were sufficient to rewrite the prehistory of a continent of 42 million km², the absence of human bodies cannot now be used as an argument to prohibit further searching in the only desert where a body of such antiquity might have been preserved.

Lucy was preserved because she died in a desert. The oldest tools (Oldowan Mode) were preserved because they were made in a semi-desert environment. The Atacama Desert is the Afar and Oldu-

existed, it could still be lying there in plain sight.

For Le Paige (see **Fig. 3**):

“On a hill of land descending from the Andes, between Vilama and Guatín, we found the oldest lithic material. They are stone tools, made by flaking a single edge into a cutting form, and large points reminiscent of the oldest Abbevillian tools of France” (Le Paige, 1960).

The trunk of the tree of the peopling of the Americas may be longer than the evidence available so far indicates. Perhaps its roots extend much farther into

> [Cont. on page 5](#)

Voices of the Desert...early humans in Atacama (cont.)

"The trunk of the tree of the peopling of the Americas"

the past, where the desert has not yet finished telling its story.

6. Conclusions

Ultimately, we could conclude that the current lack of

Upper Paleolithic occupation at Cooper's Ferry. *Science*, 365(6456). <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.aax9830>

Dillehay, T. D., et al. (2015). Monte Verde: Seaweed, food, medicine. *PLOS ONE*.

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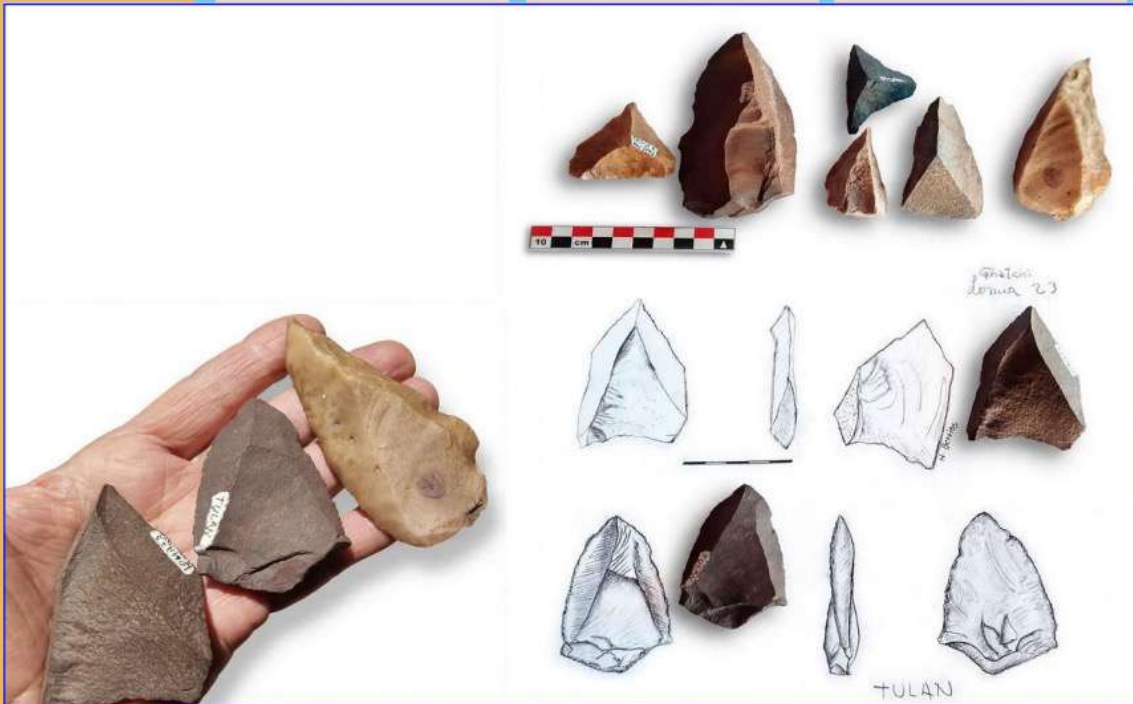


Fig. 4. Enlargement of Fig. 1. Levallois points, classic of the Mousterian, Middle Paleolithic, found in the Atacama Desert. Stone tools from Ghatchi in the upper right, and Tulan in the lower half. Ana María Barón Parra.

may be longer than the evidence available so far indicates. Perhaps its roots extend much farther into the past, where the desert has not yet finished telling its story."

evidence is not proof that something does not exist.

In science, discovering something new often requires taking a path different from the one marked by one's colleagues.

The above points to the need for continued research.*

*This document was researched and written together with Patricio Bustamante.

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work in northern Chile, particularly in the San Pedro de Atacama region.

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All of Patricio's articles in *Pleistocene Coalition News* can be found at the following link:

https://pleistocenecoalition.com/#patricio_bustamante_diaz