

Human skeletal remains from the Lagoa Santa quaternary and the query about the peopling of the Americas: 160 years of scientific debate

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When the Danish paleontologist Lund arrived in Brazil and started researching the limestone caves in Lagoa Santa region, MG, in 1833, he could not imagine that his findings of human skeletons would call the world's attention, attesting to the antiquity of the human presence not only in the Americas, but in the whole earth, far beyond the biblic chronology. Ever since, archaeologists, geologists, paleontologists and anthropologists have enlarged, and (re)interpreted, these ancient human remains, trying to offer more adequate scientific explanations to the peopling of the Americas. As an exception in pleistocenic human findings of human remains in the New World, Lagoa Santa offers a great number of sites, with remains of nearly 400 individuals preserved in different geologic conditions. The amazing morphological uniformity and aspects related to chronology have been extremely debated since the 19th century. More recently, it has been suggested that Lagoa Santa materials present non-mongolized cranial features. The debate about Lagoa Santa is currently enriched by the application of new technological and methodological approaches, leading to the revision of old paradigms in the study of the human evolutionary history.