



Cladistics and Archaeology

Michael J O'Brien

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Cladistics is a method used in biology and paleobiology to establish phylogeny: what produced what and in what order. It is a very specific method, developed in Germany in the 1950s and currently the primary phylogenetic method in the world. Cladistics has also been applied to such fields as historical linguistics and manuscript history. If things evolve in a nonrandom way, they may be appropriately studied using this method.

In *Cladistics and Archaeology*, Michael O'Brien and Lee Lyman explore the application of cladistics to archaeology by considering artifacts as human phenotypic characters. Their fundamental premise is that particular kinds of characters (style, artifact type, tool) can be used to create historically meaningful nested taxa. Further, they argue that this approach offers a means of building connections and 'life histories' of archaeological artifacts.

In order to make a potentially difficult topic more readily comprehensible, the authors have organized the book as something of a primer. *Cladistics and Archaeology* includes many figures to illustrate basic concepts, as well as a case study that shows a step-by-step application of cladistics to archaeology.



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