# PREFACE

In evaluating introductory and higher level courses in archaeology, one is struck with the absence of any general text which treats the units employed by the discipline, though all texts are cast in terms of peculiarly archaeological units. Many, if not most, prehistorians have acquired the terminologies by academic osmosis, having been exposed to them over long periods of time first as undergraduates, then as graduate students. But the inconsistencies in the literature of the discipline – the downright isolation displayed in almost all archaeological writing bespeak the failure of this kind of learning process.

It was in this context that I undertook to write this book, not only for students, but also for myself and my colleagues. It is fair, I think, to call it a first attempt, and I fear in places this is all too clear for comfort. In spite of the predictable shortcomings of such a foolish venture, there is, I think, much to be gained from the attempt itself – not the least of which is to stimulate a more thoroughgoing and deeper consideration of certain basic issues that we, as archaeologists and students of archaeology, all too easily slide under the academic rug in favor of the more active and glamorous aspects of the discipline.

The impression may be given by the pages that follow that there has been no overall and systematic treatment of classification and unit formation in prehistory. This is not true but here has been very little. Such treatments, however, focus upon how things ought to be done or what may become practice, rather than what has been done and what has been practiced. This limits the utility of such approaches in teaching as well as in making use of the bulk of the literature. I have tried here to bridge the growing gap between old and new archaeologies by attempting to clarify the old.

In this endeavor, I have been aided by many people, often unwittingly on their part as they simply asked the right question at the right time in the right way. Of the many who have made contributions in this effort, I should particularly single out for special acknowledgment Professors Irving B. Rouse and K. C. Chang of Yale University, who taught me most of what I know of prehistory and who both read my preliminary outlines critically and encouraged me to complete the endeavor. Professor Chang further read the manuscript in draft. His comments are gratefully acknowledged. Professor Michael Owen of the University of Washington read the first half of the book in detail providing the perspective of linguistics. A great deal of credit needs to be given to the students of Archaeology 497 who, over the past three years, have been the demanding proving-ground for much of what is contained within these covers. Without their questions and an insistence upon a straightforward answer, this would have been a far more difficult task than I otherwise could have undertaken. Mr. William E. Woodcock of The Free Press offered encouragement and advice and the kind of willingness to aid that lightens any load. Finally, I should like to thank my wife, who willingly undertook much of the drudgery, editing, and preliminary typing that made this a possible endeavor. Mrs. Carolynn C. Neumann typed the final draft of the manuscript and generously applied her editorial skills. To all these and many more this book owes its existence.

*Robert C. Dunnell University of Washington*