

Thomas J. Pluckhahn and Victor D. Thompson

# Contents

List of Figures ix

List of Tables xiii

Acknowledgments xv

1. Crystal River and the Archaeology of Early Village Societies in the American Southeast (and Beyond) 1
  2. Context 25
  3. A Center Emerges 71
  4. From Vacant Center to Early Village (Phase 1) 101
  5. From Early Village to Regional Center (Phase 2) 117
  6. From Regional Center to Mound-Residential Compound (Phase 3) 155
  7. New Centers Emerge (Phase 4) 168
  8. The Early Village at Crystal River in Broader Perspective 194
- Afterword: Why Early Villages Still Matter 209
- References Cited 215
- Index 263

“Through careful and thorough archaeological research, Pluckhahn and Thompson have cleared away the speculations and provided a readable interpretation of this archaeological site and its importance.”—**JEFFREY M. MITCHEM**, editor of *The West and Central Florida Expeditions of Clarence Bloomfield Moore*

“Significantly advances our knowledge by providing exciting new—and sometimes surprising—information about a Florida archaeological site that has been justly famous for over a century.”—**WILLIAM H. MARQUARDT**, coauthor of *The Calusa and Their Legacy: South Florida People and Their Environments*

“All regional archaeologists of the prehistoric Southeast, and especially those of the Archaic and Woodland periods, will find this book useful.”—**KEITH STEPHENSON**, director, Savannah River Archaeological Research Program

**T**HIS VOLUME EXPLORES HOW NATIVE PEOPLES of the Southeastern United States cooperated to form large and permanent early villages using the site of Crystal River on Florida’s Gulf Coast as a case study.

Crystal River was once among the most celebrated sites of the Woodland period (ca. 1000 B.C. to A.D. 1050), consisting of ten mounds and large numbers of diverse artifacts from the Hopewell culture. But a lack of research using contemporary methods at this site—and nearby Roberts Island—limited a full understanding of what these sites could tell scholars. Thomas Pluckhahn and Victor Thompson reanalyze previous excavations and conduct new field investigations to tell the whole story of Crystal River from its beginnings as a ceremonial center through its growth into a large village to its decline at the turn of the first millennium while Roberts Island and other nearby areas thrived.

Comparing this community to similar sites on the Gulf Coast and in other areas of the world, Pluckhahn and Thompson argue that Crystal River is an example of an “early village society.” They illustrate that these early villages present important evidence in a larger debate regarding the role of competition versus cooperation in the development of human societies.

**THOMAS J. PLUCKHAHN**, professor of anthropology at the University of South Florida, is the author of *Kolomoki: Settlement, Ceremony, and Status in the Deep South, A.D. 350 to 750*. **VICTOR D. THOMPSON**, professor of archaeology at the University of Georgia, is coeditor of *The Archaeology and Historical Ecology of Small Scale Economies*.

A volume in the Florida Museum of Natural History: Ripley P. Bullen Series

*Front:* Portions of the same ceramic vessel recovered by Moore in 1903 (Moore 1903:384) and 1906 (Moore 1907:411).

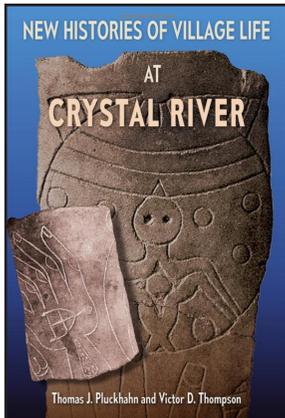
**University of Florida Press**

<http://upress.ufl.edu>

ISBN 978-1-68340-035-6 \$79.95



9 781683 400356



## New Histories of Village Life at Crystal River

Thomas J. Pluckhahn and Victor D. Thompson. 2018. [University of Florida Press](#). ix–276 pp., 79 figures, 4 tables, reference, index. \$79.95 (Hardcover)

*Reviewed by Jayur Madhusudan Mehta, Assistant Professor, Florida State University*

To scholars of intermediate and complex societies, the relevance of Pluckhahn and Thompson's stirring new book, *New Histories of Village life at Crystal River*, should become immediately apparent in Chapter 1. At the first, the authors juxtapose issues of nomenclature against the paradigms of historical particularism and processualism. This is a critical conversation among contemporary practitioners of our dirt-oriented discipline and the authors navigate these waters skillfully. Their study of Woodland period sites in the Crystal River region emphasizes societies that can be variously called hunter-gatherer-fishers, complex foragers, and/or early village societies. Naming the focus of one's study is critical—we cannot tip-toe around specific words and describe every concept and object in minute detail—as words matter and exist as shorthand for a broad range of concepts and ideas. Pluckhahn and Thompson emphasize social and residential relationships in categorizing the people of Crystal River, and thus opt to use “early village society” in their work, a term carrying connotations tied to transitions in subsistence, residential patterns, and social relations. For readers of MCJA focused on the large-scale social and ecological changes to landscape after the adoption of maize agriculture and indigenous cultigens, this book serves as a compelling case study. For those more interested in theoretical issues tied to particularism versus processualism, analyses in this book forge their own path, with the authors adroitly meandering between describing unique social developments during the first millennium AD and their larger-scale implications. Finally, this book stakes its own claims on how archaeology should be interpreted for understanding present-day environmental and social issues: as such, any and all scholars interested in contextualizing the bigger picture of their findings will do well to read the afterward closely and frequently.

Pluckhahn and Thompson dedicate Chapter 2 to helping the reader “remember” how and why Crystal River is part of a bigger archaeological puzzle and how despite its long history of research, much of the site's social history was unknown until recently. Although not considered in mound surveys conducted by Squire and Davis and Cyrus Thomas at the end of the nineteenth century, the site did receive CB Moore's attention at the beginning of the twentieth. Later, notables like Gordon Willey, Ripley Bullen, and Hale Smith turned their attentions to Crystal River. Despite these works, the site was largely ignored (and well-preserved) until development projects ramped up in South Florida after WWII. Readers of MCJA will of course recognize similar existential threats in the Midwest, as many sites in the region have been eaten by tractors in service of roads, bridges, and farming. The remainder of Chapter 2 describes the development of the Crystal River Early Village Archaeological

## *Book Review*

Project (CREVAP) and outlines research conducted under the auspices of CREVAP, including the many student theses that emerged from this tone-setting work.

Chapters 3 through 6 are the fundamentals of the book, providing a thorough accounting of how Crystal River first became a ceremonial center (Chapter 3), how it was transformed into a village (Chapter 4), and regional center (Chapter 5). Ultimately, village life wind down at Crystal River (Chapter 6), and new villages like Roberts Island come to power (Chapter 7). Each of these chapters reviews archaeological data from both published sources and those obtained by the authors and their students. These data-oriented chapters should be of interest to anyone interested in how the authors arrive at bigger picture interpretations of cultural dynamics in the first millennium AD and as presented in Chapter 8.

One additional, and significant, feature of this innovative book is the consideration the authors provide on the role that cooperation and competition play in the formation of early village societies. This key consideration underscores a fundamental premise in anthropological research and thought; that the authors were able to do so through such a data-heavy enterprise at Crystal River only serves to underscore the importance engaging of with social theory using the kinds of data available to archaeologists. Furthermore, and in the final chapter, the tension between historical particularism and process is negotiated through a series of eight postulates that incorporate data and theory to make synthetic statements ranging in scope from the site-scale to the regional-scale. These postulates do much to keep the data and interpretations historically contingent; however, if one were inclined to do so, one could take the scope of these inferences and apply them to the study of early villages and early village societies across the world.