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The Olmeca Influence in Ancient America

Author(s): Charles E. Dibble

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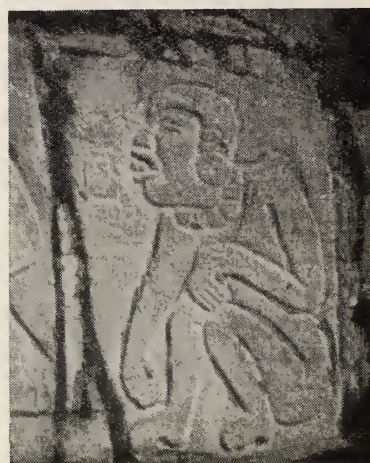
Send the ERA to your sons and daughters who are away.

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THE OLMECA INFLUENCE IN ANCIENT AMERICA

By Charles E. Dibble

THE Smithsonian Institute of Washington, D. C., under the leadership of Dr. M. W. Sterling, has completed the third season of exploration and excavation in the region of the Tehuantepec Isthmus of southern Mexico. Of unusual significance has been the unearthing of a number of huge stone heads and quantities of jade of exceptionally refined workmanship.



SCULPTURE WORK OF THE "DANZANTE" PERIOD SHOWING CHARACTERISTICS OF OLMECA ART.

The massive stone heads and jade statuettes are characterized by a head-dress resembling a football headgear; also note the partly opened mouth, thickened lips, and round childish face, also called "baby face." The creators of this art have been called Olmecas. They were a gifted and highly civilized people with an evolved artistic taste and technique.

This same Olmeca influence extended westward to Oaxaca. The earliest sculpture work at Monte Alban bears striking resemblance to Olmeca art. This is readily noted by comparing the giant Olmeca heads with the "Danzante" figures at Monte Alban.

It is becoming increasingly evident that shortly after the birth of Christ, a highly developed people occupied the Tehuantepec region and extended to the surrounding territory.

In the isthmus this Olmeca complex has been called the "Tres Zapotes I" and "La Venta" period; in Oaxaca it is known as "Monte Alban I" or "Danzante"; to the east, in the land of the Maya, archeologists have designated the period as "Uaxactun I."