



Type: Magazine Article

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## The Olmeca Influence in Ancient America

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Source: *Improvement Era*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (January 1942)

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Page(s): 6

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**Abstract:** A series of brief comments in which the author presents archaeological findings, architectural notes, and myths and legends that deal indirectly with the Book of Mormon. Dibble discusses the wheel, ancient irrigation methods, metals, Mexican and Mayan codices, Quetzalcoatl, ancient buildings, and numerous other related items. The eighth part covers the Olmecs.

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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."