ARCHAEOLOGY
DECODING HISTORY

Monuments

Ancient monuments (a statue, building or other structure) often dazzle us, be it their sheer size, grandeur or age. As archaeologists, we believe that cultures with great pyramids, temples, standing stones and tombs must be highly developed. Monumental architecture is often seen as a sign of a civilization that is highly developed, having cities, a great ruler, a government, an army, upper and lower classes and control of a wide area of land amongst other things.
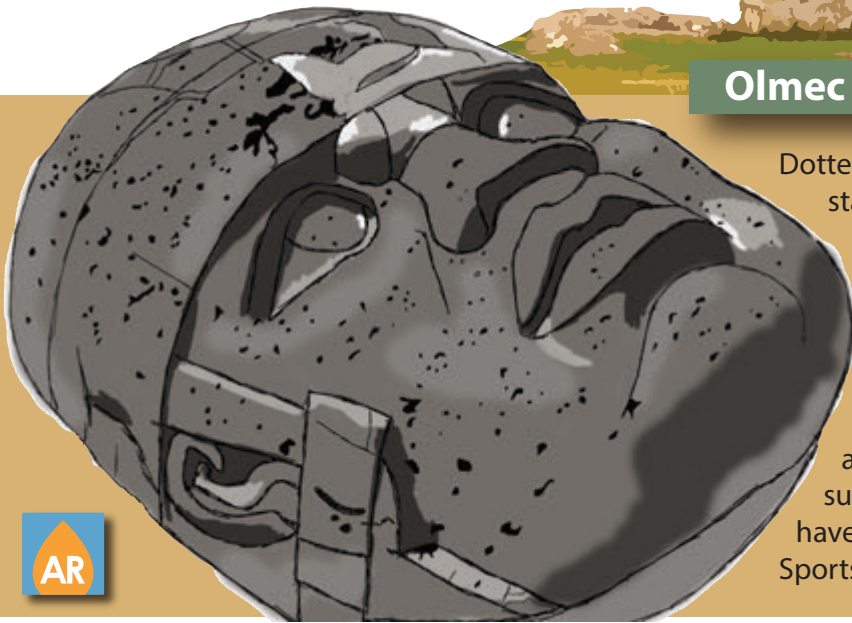
Olmec Heads

Dotted around several locations in Mexico, are huge statues of stone heads. These heads were carved by the Olmecs, a culture living along the Gulf Coast of Mexico between 1600 – 800 BC. They were carved using stone tools from basalt quarried from mountains 80 miles away!

Some of the heads measure up to 3.4 metres tall, and weigh up to 50 tonnes! Archaeologists are not sure who the statues are supposed to look like, They have strong, poweful faces and may be showing chiefs, Sports players or maybe Gods – we just don't know.

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We see massive building projects by the rulers (pharaohs) of the IV dynasty (2575–2465 B.C.) Pharaohs Khufu, Khafre, and Menkaure (father, son, and grandson). These three great pyramids were built over 80 years. The Khufu (Great) pyramid originally stood at 146.7 m (481 ft high). Apart from the corridors and chambers within it, the pyramid is made of solid limestone, using a total of 2.3 million blocks with an average weight of 2.5 tons each! All this was achieved before the invention of the wheel, the pulley, or iron tools. These amazing feats of construction show how much power Pharaoh Khufu had!

Slave labour?

People often think that slaves built many monuments like the Great Pyramid. Actually, it seems as if the ordinary people did, instead of paying tax as money. This was ofetn done when they were not needed to do other things such as working in the fields.

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