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## Colossal Olmec Heads

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# Chapter 21

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In the Book of Ether, there are only three principal Jaredite geographical places mentioned related to governance: the land of Moron, the land (and city) of Nehor, and the great city built by Lib<sub>1</sub>. In Olmec archaeology, there are four principal cities that have been identified: Tres Zapotes, San Lorenzo, La Venta, and Laguna de los Cerros. The Olmec evidence of specific rulers is one of the most well-known features of the Olmec in the form of carved, colossal heads. There are currently 17 known Olmec heads, and none are located in Laguna de los Cerros; all are located in the following Olmec cities or their environs:

|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| San Lorenzo  | 10 heads  |
| La Venta     | 4 heads   |
| Tres Zapotes | 3 heads (including the Cerro Vigia Cobata head) |

The Olmec colossal heads are generally recognized by scholars as the human representations of individual Olmec rulers and were likely used to recreate mythical and historical events (Cheetam and Blomster 2017, 33–34; Grove 2014, 175).

In following the line of succession in the Book of Ether, it is not always clear in which land the king resided of the three possibilities. The colossal heads clearly postdate the early Jaredite timeframe (2600–2023 BC). For the most part, except for brief splits in the kingdom, these early kings resided in the land of Moron, which was also referred to as the “land of first inheritance.” Based on the previous geographical analysis, the land of Moron is in the vicinity of Tres Zapotes. The great city of Lib<sub>1</sub> has been determined to be La Venta.

While the relatively later abandoned city of San Lorenzo corresponds with Ogath, a place name is not known for the time it was occupied, but it was likely considered part of the land of Nehor. Support for this conclusion can be found in the etymology of Nehor. In Hebrew, Nehor means *river*, which is consistent with San Lorenzo sitting on an island in the Coatzacoalcos River system. According to the Book of Mormon Onomasticon (2017), the derivation of *Nehor* in Egyptian is *n-hr*, which means “belonging to Horus.” Horus is the Egyptian bird god and was the Nephite description of the Principal Bird Deity and its manifestations (Grover 2017). The shape of the San Lorenzo plateau has been interpreted by archaeologist Michael Coe as the wing and tail feathers of a great bird effigy flying eastward (Coe 1989, 80; Coe and Diehl 1980, 27–28). Some portions of the bird features on the plateau may, however, be erosional features (Cyphers et al. 2014, 74–75). While this may be true, generally, erosional features follow pre-existing channels or areas of differential weakness, so the features may still have been a design on the original plateau. Many of the helmets of the colossal heads at San Lorenzo also feature bird-related motifs.

The construction of the San Lorenzo stone heads has been dated to the Preclassic period of Mesoamerican chronology, generally to the Early Preclassic (1500–1000 BC). Cyphers argued that monumental sculptures did not exist at San Lorenzo prior to 1150 BC (Cyphers 2012, 87). Some of the La Venta heads may have been made from 1000–600 BC, based on nearby radiometric dating. The Tres Zapotes heads are believed to be late in the Olmec timeframe. According to the Book of Ether and the calculated chronology, we can approximate the following timeframes and locations of the kings that actually served (excludes those who were held in captivity):

### San Lorenzo—(1420–1065 BC)

Morionton, Kim, brother of Kim, son of the brother of Kim (?), Levi, Corom, Kish, Lib

La Venta or Tres Zapotes—(1065–955 BC)Lib<sub>1</sub>, HearthomLa Venta or Tres Zapotes—(955–400 BC)

Four(?) unknown kings, Com, Amgid, Shiblom, unknown king, Ahah, Ethem, Moron (likely at Tres Zapotes), “mighty man” in iniquity (likely at La Venta), “mighty man” descendant of brother of Jared (likely at Tres Zapotes), Coriantumr<sub>2</sub> (at Tres Zapotes)

It is also possible that colossal heads were made for historic kings from the beginning of the Jaredite period, which is considered quite likely given the Mesoamerican penchant for establishing royal lineage to boost the current king’s bona fides.

Given the possibility that there may have been unmentioned kings before Morionton, the number of 10 colossal heads as kings can be accommodated at San Lorenzo by the Jaredite record in the San Lorenzo timeframe, and there are more than seven possible Jaredite kings in La Venta and Tres Zapotes. At San Lorenzo, the inclusion of deserving living and long-dead rulers in Olmec/Jaredite history arrives at a total number fairly close to those named in the Jaredite records. The Jaredite record of rulers is not inconsistent with the location and time period of the colossal heads.

Eight of the ten San Lorenzo heads show what look to be artificial, non-natural damage: four have a few drill holes, while the other four have much more extensive damage. One of the possible explanations is political upheaval, so it is also useful to see if the Jaredite record is consistent.

The only known hostile takeovers during the San Lorenzo timeframe were the overthrowing of Kim by his brother, and Kim’s son Levi overthrowing the then king (it may have been Kim’s brother, but the text does not say). Based on this information, the mutilation does not appear to have occurred individually at San Lorenzo for political reasons during the San Lorenzo period of occupation. If mutilation for political reasons occurred, it looks to be a later event, with all mutilation happening at one later period of time, perhaps later in the Jaredite history when the rival lineage took power, defacing all representations of the competing royal lineage. Diehl (2007) summarizes potential reasons for the defacing: 1) periodic, and tied to ritual cycles, 2) each change in ruler or ruling dynasties at the site, or 3) mutilation at the death of a ruler (120–21). None of these reasons is consistent with the fact that there is non-uniformity in the damage to each head, and some have little or no damage. Most of the heads are drilled, with some having pieces of basalt knocked off where the dimensions allowed it (i.e., protruding lip).

Archaeology at San Lorenzo has identified a workshop location for the recycling of stone monuments (Diehl 2007, 62). Given the long distance to the source of stone of the Tuxtla Mountains, it makes perfect sense that later populations would put a premium for the recycling of basalt. The mutilation of the monuments being related to basalt recycling has been suggested by Porter (1989). The fact that the primary damage of the heads at San Lorenzo are from drilling or cutting of slots seems indicative of an attempt to obtain basalt by cracking or breaking off pieces by penetrating into the basalt stone. The evidence also indicates that this is likely to have happened after the heads were displaced. The type of drilling that was practiced anciently relied upon preferred gravity and weight of the drill to apply the downward grinding force necessary to penetrate a hard rock like basalt. A partially buried head would present only certain surfaces for drilling. A comparison of the found position of the heads (including La Venta) and the likely downward direction and side of the drilling available on each head is as follows:

| <u>Head identification</u> | <u>Found position</u> | <u>Location of the drilling</u> |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| SL-1                       | Face-up               | On front of the head            |
| SL-2                       | Face-up               | On front of the head            |

|             |   |   |
|-------------|---|---|
| SL-3        | Indeterminate as head looks to have migrated down a gully, upside down, in a spring | On front of the head  |
| SL-4        | Lying down on right-hand side   | No holes but basalt removed from both sides of back of head           |
| SL-5        | Face-up   | On front of the head  |
| SL-6        | Semi face-down on left-hand side  | On right side and right front of the head                             |
| SL-7        | Face-up   | On front of the head  |
| SL-8        | Lying down on left side   | No holes  |
| SL-9        | Face-up leaning slightly to right-hand side   | On the front of the head  |
| SL-10       | Face-up   | On front of the head  |
| LV-1        | Upright, half buried  | Crown of head   |
| LV-2        | Upright, original location  | Lip and nose damaged, face, top of head, back of head, heavily eroded |
| LV-3        | Upright, original location  | Front, top, back, sides, heavily eroded                               |
| LV-4        | Upright, original location  | Top, heavily eroded   |
| TZ-1        | Upright, original location  | Minor, back of head   |
| TZ-2        | Upright, original location  | No damage   |
| Cobata head | Upright, original location  | No damage   |

It is possible, based on the nature of the damage, that basalt recycling may have been a motivation for at least some of the damage to the colossal heads. That much of the damage occurs on portions of the heads that are not buried and exposed indicates that the damage, if based on political reasons, would have occurred later in Olmec history, likely during a limited timeframe or episode.

It is notable that the Tres Zapotes heads and the nearby Cobata head have little or no damage. The San Lorenzo and La Venta heads did sustain damage, which would indicate that if the damage was based on politics hostile to the ruling line, the damage was based on a larger scale political division where the southern and eastern area experienced a political turnover hostile to the previous ruling line, which appeared to have occurred late in the Olmec history as the La Venta heads also experienced damage. The political conflict being later in Olmec time might also explain why the displaced and buried heads received damage relative to their aboveground exposed surfaces, indicating that the heads were there for some time before damage occurred. This is consistent with the final Jaredite conflicts, and with the geographical indications that the ruling of line of Ether and Coriantumr<sub>2</sub> were in the

Tuxtlas and north, whereas the rival and hostile lineage(s) were located to the south and east in San Lorenzo and La Venta.

### **Correlation of Specific Colossal Heads with Specific Jaredite Rulers**

It is recognized that the distinctive motifs of the helmet-looking headdresses served as an identifying emblem for the ruler being portrayed. The headdresses were likely not helmets but instead are the two-dimensional representation of a three-dimensional headdress (Grove 2014, 174–75). Though somewhat speculative, it looks like it is possible to make some correlation between individual Olmec colossal heads and Jaredite rulers, especially in La Venta and Tres Zapotes. San Lorenzo requires a few more assumptions and is a bit less definitive, but some correlations are also possible there.

#### *La Venta and Tres Zapotes*

One assumption made here is that the colossal heads were only created for the ruling line of Jared, and then only for kings that completed their rule without being placed in captivity. This assumption is verified in comparison with the number of heads present in La Venta and Tres Zapotes.

There are eight rulers who were not in captivity mentioned in the Book of Ether following the establishment of the great city of Lib<sub>1</sub> (La Venta) and are in order:

- Lib
- Hearthom
- Com<sub>2</sub>
- Shiblom
- Ahah
- Ethem
- Moron
- Coriantumr<sub>2</sub>

While both Hearthom and Moron had their reigns cut short by captivity, Hearthom's direct line came back into power. It would be reasonable to assume that a colossal head could still have been constructed by descendants for Hearthom. Moron's son Coriantor was in captivity and then he begat Ether, so, although Coriantumr<sub>2</sub> was possibly a relation, Moron did not have the opportunity to have a colossal head constructed. Moron, because of his name, can also be assumed to have been born or affiliated with the land of Moron, which is the area of Tres Zapotes.

Based on this Jaredite ruling analysis, while the king was located at La Venta, Lib<sub>1</sub>, Hearthom, Com<sub>2</sub>, and Shiblom should be represented at La Venta, while Ahah, Ethem, and Coriantumr<sub>2</sub> would be reflected in the Tres Zapotes area. It should be noted that if Coriantumr<sub>2</sub> had a head created for him, it would have had to have occurred in his lifetime if done by the Jaredites, or afterward by the remnant of the Jaredites that were mentioned by Limhi. There clearly was a stela honoring him created after the civil war, which was constructed for him and brought to Mosiah<sub>1</sub>. Therefore, it can be assumed that some form of a colossal head for Coriantumr<sub>2</sub> could have been made.

The archaeological history of La Venta indicates that there was a significant cultural change after 600 BC (Sorenson 2013, 536–45), which is roughly consistent with end of the Jared<sub>1</sub> ruling line at La Venta. According to the Jaredite chronology discussed earlier in the book, the Jared<sub>1</sub> ruling line was no longer in La Venta and was in Tres Zapotes by around 680 BC. The creation dates of the Tres Zapotes heads are unknown but thought to have been created sometime in the Middle Formative period (1000–400 BC) since the population of the site earlier than that was insufficient to provide the labor and political power necessary to create the heads (Pool 2007, 152). Therefore, creation of the heads post-680 BC is consistent with the current archaeological conjecture. The calculated Jaredite

chronology shown earlier in this book may need to be adjusted by 50 years or so later based on the evidence provided by the Olmec colossal heads.

So which colossal heads belonged to whom? The Olmec heads have all been recognized to be individual and unique. Each has a helmet or headgear that is unique with different motifs, geometric figures, and bands. The approach taken here will be to utilize a constructed Sumerian etymological meaning of the Book of Mormon name and compare it with the motifs or other elements of each head and see the amount of connections we can make. Multiple sources and examination of photos are utilized for the summary descriptions of each head and motif, and the figures in this section are from the same sources (Arqueología Mexicana 1995; Diehl 2004; Clewlow et al. 1967; Wikipedia 2017).





### La Venta Heads

The La Venta 1 (LV-1) head is speculated to have been the portrait of La Venta's final ruler (Diehl 2004, Plate V). The Jaredite lineage at La Venta explains that leader would have been Shiblom. One must keep in mind that the numbers assigned to the colossal heads are not based on the chronological age of the heads but is instead based on the order in which they were discovered.

LV-1 has a headdress with three motifs representing the claws of a bird or animal. The headdress has a horizontal band divided into two parallel bands on the sides. The headdress has a U-shaped design with three hook shapes. The earpieces are large, rectangular beads with rounded corners and a rhombus and circle carved inside of them. This head would have to have been constructed during Shiblom's reign because he was slain and was the last ruler in La Venta. These motifs do correspond with the Sumerian compound constructed name Shiblom:

*sě*: geometric shape

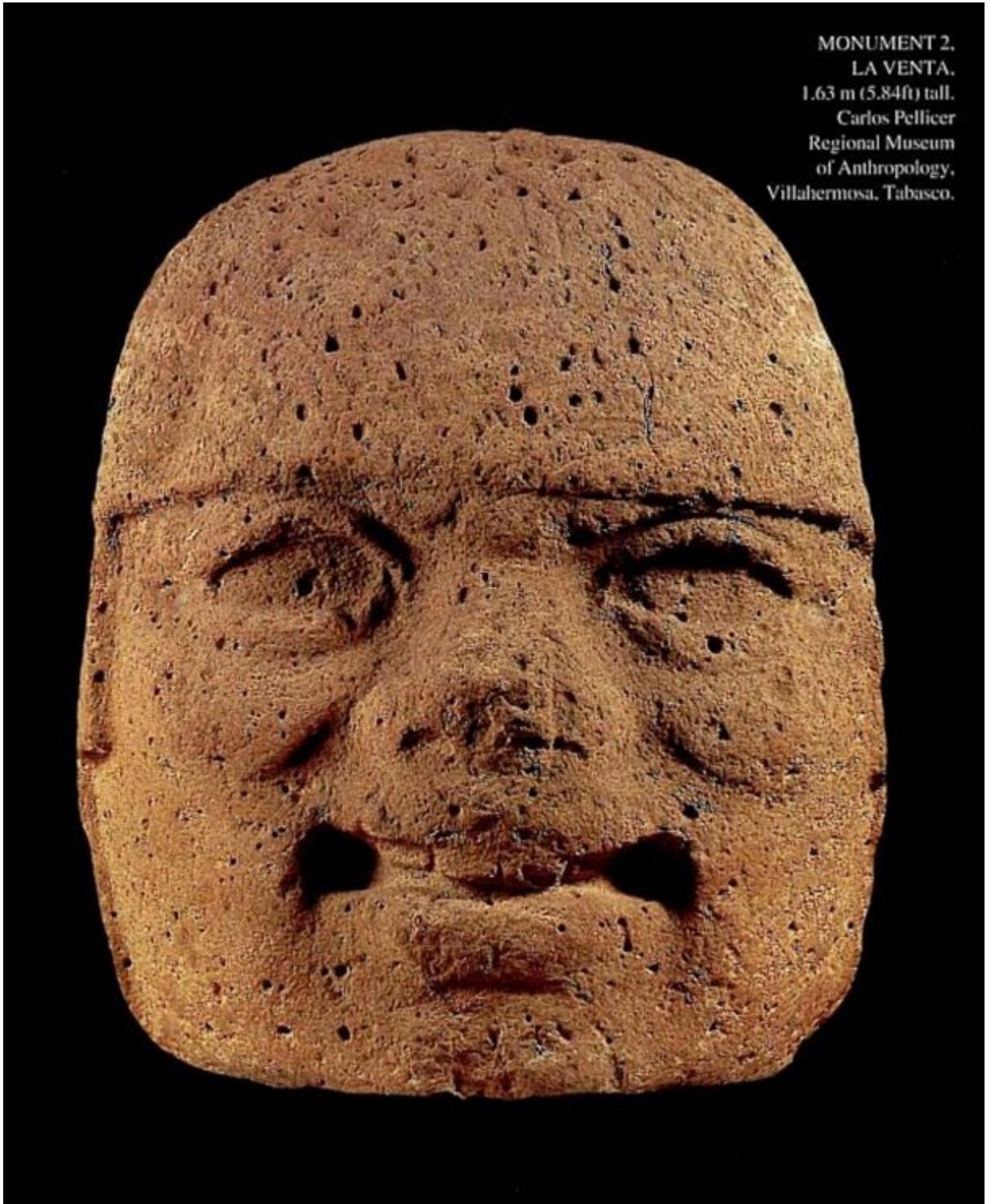
*ibla*: belt

*la*: to bind, binding

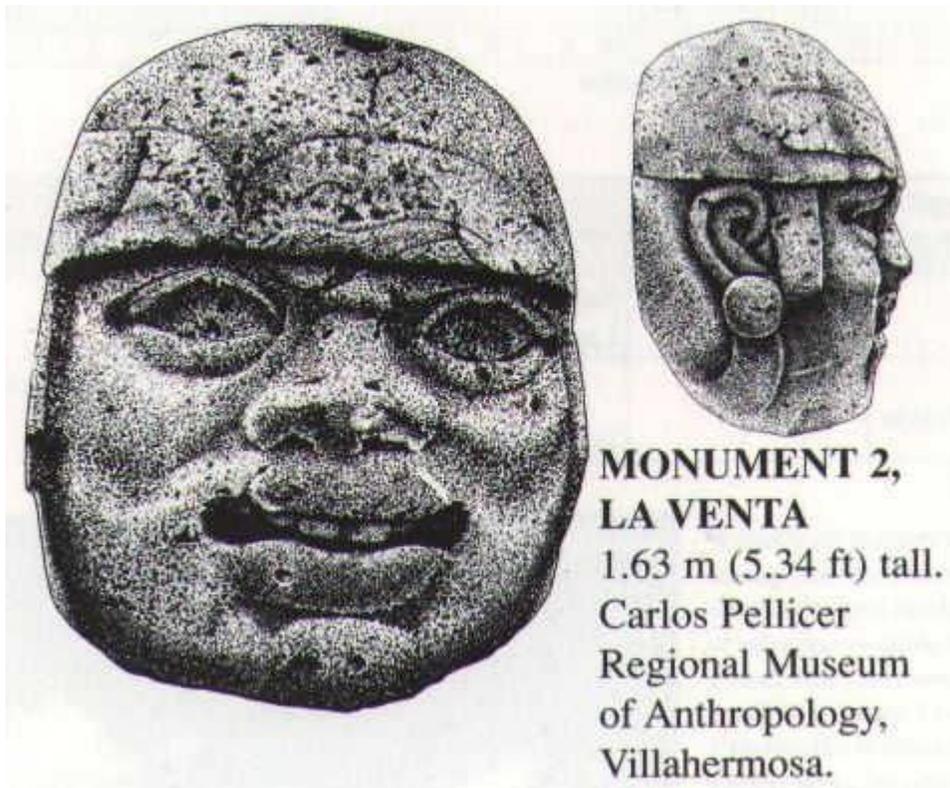
*am*: a bird

*um*: a bird

Compound Constructed Name: Sh(ě)ibl(a)om



MONUMENT 2,  
LA VENTA,  
1.63 m (5.34ft) tall.  
Carlos Pellicer  
Regional Museum  
of Anthropology,  
Villahermosa, Tabasco.



La Venta 2 (LV-2) is heavily eroded, so most of the helmet motif is no longer present. This head is notable because of its wide smile revealing the top front teeth. This head is also noted because the figure has prominent cheekbones indicative of a mature leader. This head is the middle head in a line of three heads positioned facing north running in an east-west direction. This head corresponds with the Sumerian compound constructed name Lib:

*lib*: to be happy, well-off

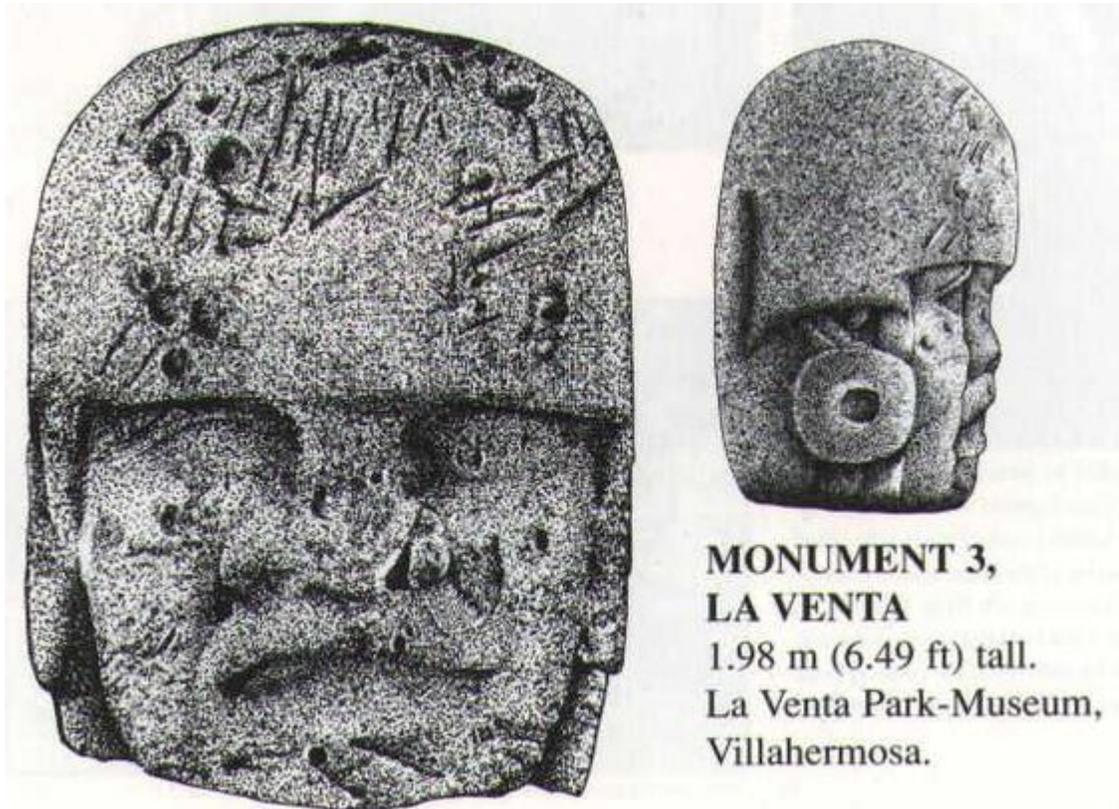
*ib*: middle

Compound Constructed Name: **Lib**

According to the Book of Ether, Lib<sub>1</sub> “did live many years” (Ether 10:29), so he would also match the observation of maturity found in LV-2.

MONUMENT 3,  
LA VENTA,  
1.98 m (6.49ft) tall.  
La Venta  
Park-Museum,  
Villahermosa,  
Tabasco.





La Venta 3 (LV-3) is heavily damaged and eroded causing most of the features and headdress to be erased. While damage is heavy, that fact may also be helpful in identifying the Jaredite ruler here. By process of elimination and by the nature of the reign, this head looks to belong to Com<sub>2</sub>. Com<sub>2</sub> was able to regain power and obtain half of the kingdom, but he fought for many years against king Amgid, finally gaining power of the full kingdom. Even after gaining power, Com<sub>2</sub> had to battle robbers in the land and “did not prevail against them” (Ether 10:32–34). Damage to Com<sub>2</sub>’s head would be consistent with animosity from a rival lineage or robbers who took over La Venta once the ruling lineage was relocated to the land of Moron.

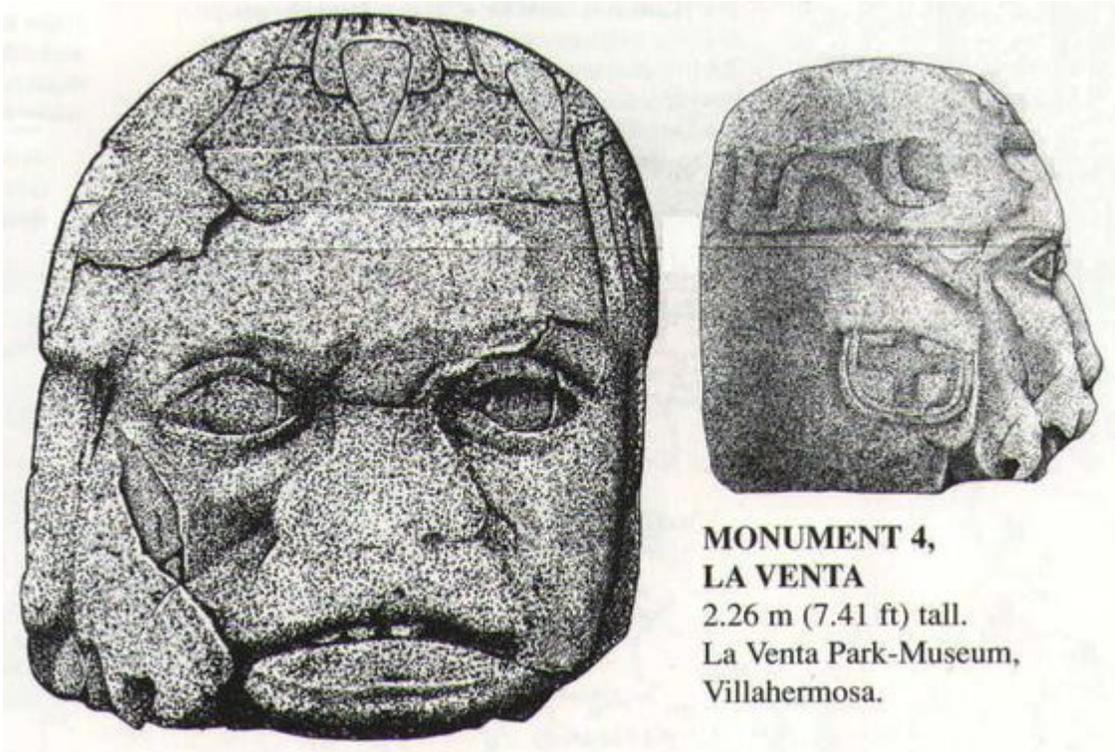
This head corresponds with the Sumerian compound constructed name Com, keeping in mind that some elements may have referred to headdress motifs that are no longer present:

- kam*: to alter
- ku*: to place
- u*: abuse
- U*: type of stone
- um*: a bird
- um*: reed rope

Compound Constructed Name: **Com**

MONUMENT 4,  
LA VENTA,  
2.26 m (7.41 ft) tall.  
La Venta Park-Museum,  
Villahermosa, Tabasco.





La Venta 4 (LV-4) has two or three horizontal strips forming the base of the headdress, with one side decorated with a double-disc motif. The top features a clawed foot of a bird of prey. This head sits just to the west of Lib<sub>1</sub> (LV-2). This head corresponds with the Sumerian compound constructed name Hearthom:

*har*: ring  
*HAR*: a bird  
*tu*: leader  
*tu*: priest  
*tum*: wild dove  
*U*: type of stone  
*um*: a bird  
*um*: reed rope

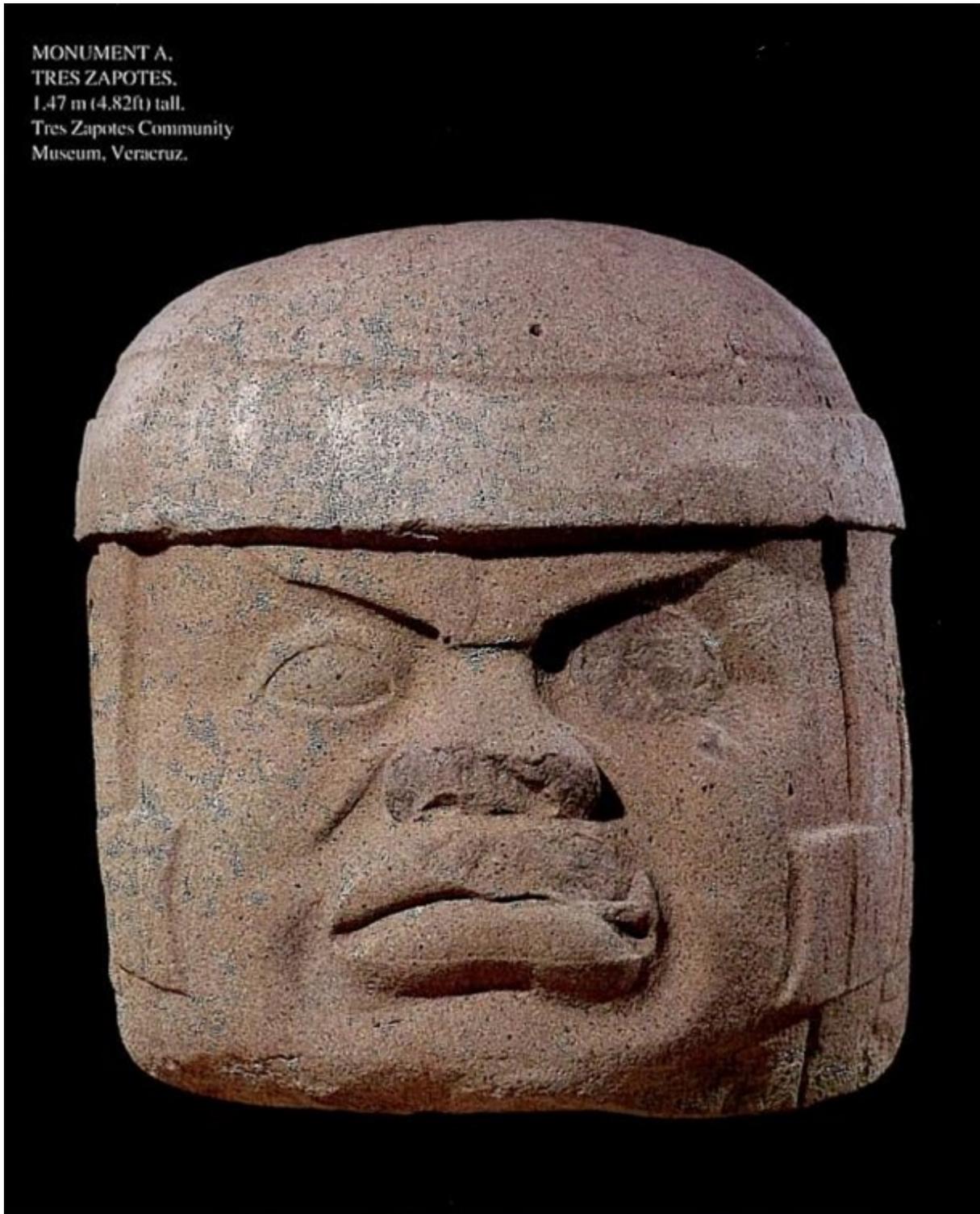
Compound Constructed Name: **Hartom**

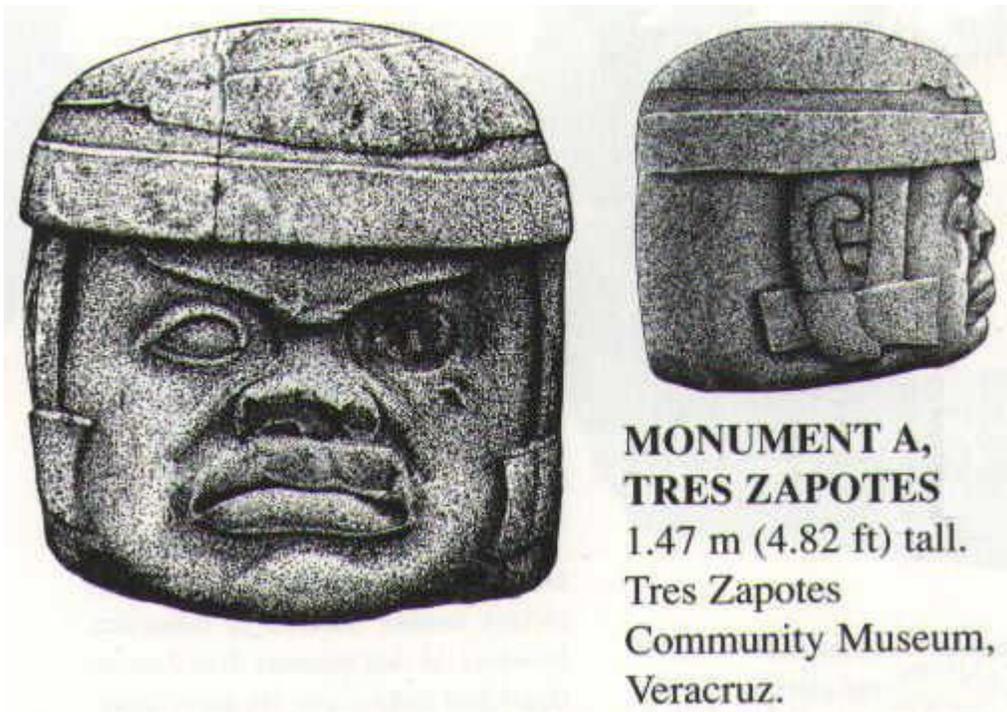
An interesting correlation between the LV-4 head and the San Lorenzo altar-throne Monument 14 has been documented:

An obvious question therefore is whether such identified personages are shown in more than one monument. San Lorenzo altar-throne Monument 14 provides an apparent match. Although its niched personage (ruler) is too eroded to be identified, the rope he holds in his left hand passes to a personage depicted in bas-relief on the side panel. That personage has prominent buck teeth and wears a brimmed hat, with a large and distinctive bird claw motif covering the hat's crown. A different carving depicting what is likely the same individual, with a bird claw headdress motif and buck teeth, is Colossal Head 4 at the site of La Venta. Was the La Venta personage the kinsman or ancestor of the San Lorenzo ruler, or his prisoner? (Grove 2014, 176)

This relationship is consistent with the Jaredite king sequence. Lib<sub>1</sub> is the king that created the great city of La Venta and was the first to reign there, but it is likely that his initial seat of power was San Lorenzo. He does not have a

colossal head there as it occurs in La Venta, but it is reasonable to assume that he did have a throne at San Lorenzo. Since the son of Lib<sub>1</sub> is Hearthom, this kinsman (son) relationship postulated by Grove is accurate.





Tres Zapotes and La Cobata Heads

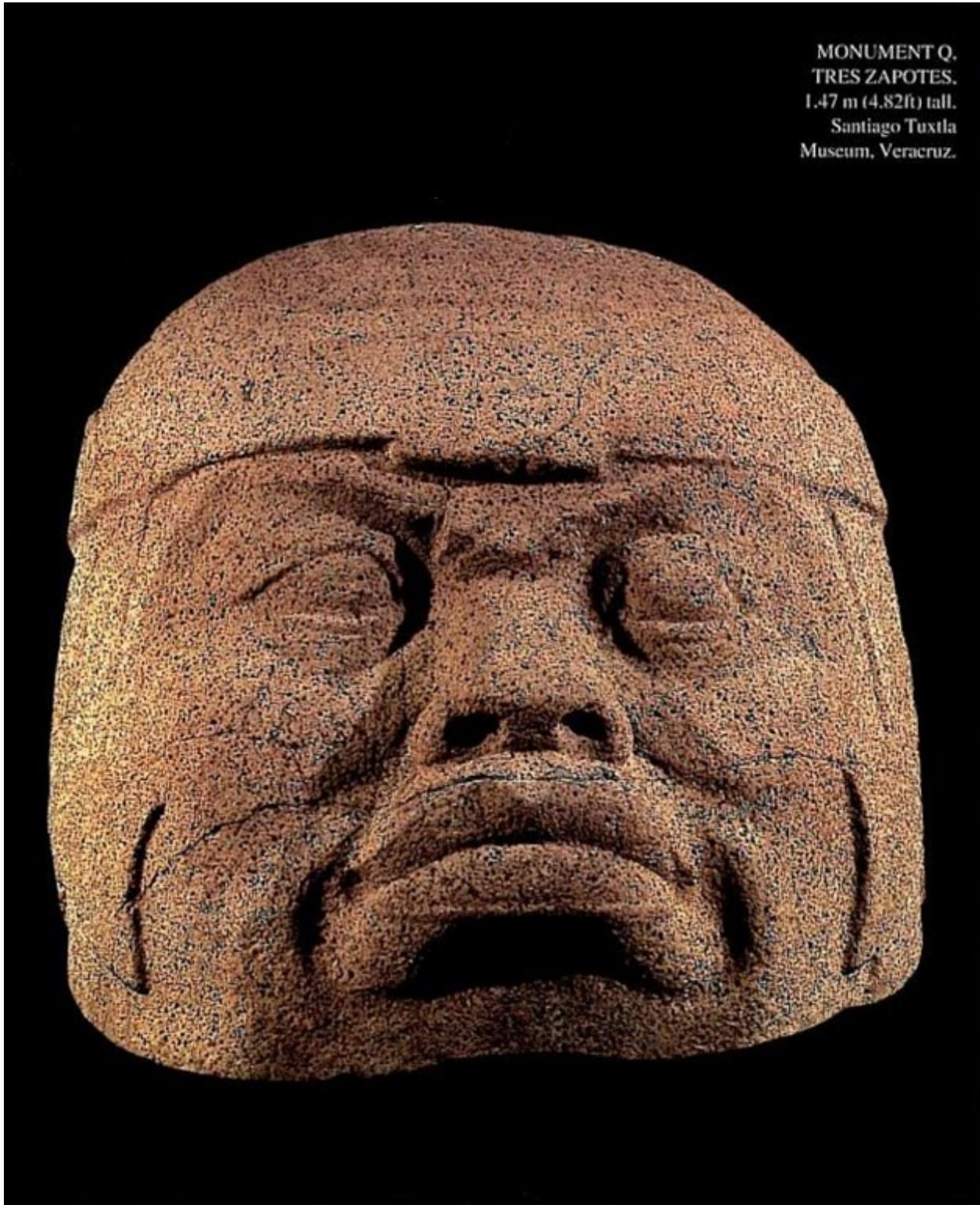
The three remaining Jaredite rulers are Ahah, Ethem, and Coriantumr<sub>2</sub>. Moron was also a Jaredite ruler but was defeated and placed into captivity. Based on the system of identifying rightful heirs to the throne, Moron's lineage remained in captivity until Ether, who coexisted with Coriantumr<sub>2</sub> and did not end up as a ruler. As a result, it is unlikely that a colossal head would have been created for Moron.

Tres Zapotes 1 (TZ-1) consists of a headdress that does not feature motifs but on the rear side features individual strands of grass or hair. While not as definitive as other heads, this head reasonably corresponds with the Sumerian compound constructed name Ahah:

*ah*: dried

*HA'A*: locust grass

Compound Constructed Name: **Ahah(A)**



MONUMENT Q.  
TRES ZAPOTES.  
1.47 m (4.82ft) tall.  
Santiago Tuxtla  
Museum, Veracruz.



Tres Zapotes 2 (TZ-2) consists of a head that features a tongue-shaped design on top of the helmet, with seven braided tresses on the rear of the head. It has protruding jaw and cheeks, and pierced ear pieces that extend well onto the cheeks. The ear pieces have been described as sea shells. This head has a reasonable correspondence with the Sumerian compound constructed name Ethem:

*e*: strip, to thread, hang on a string

*te*: cheek

*te*: to pierce

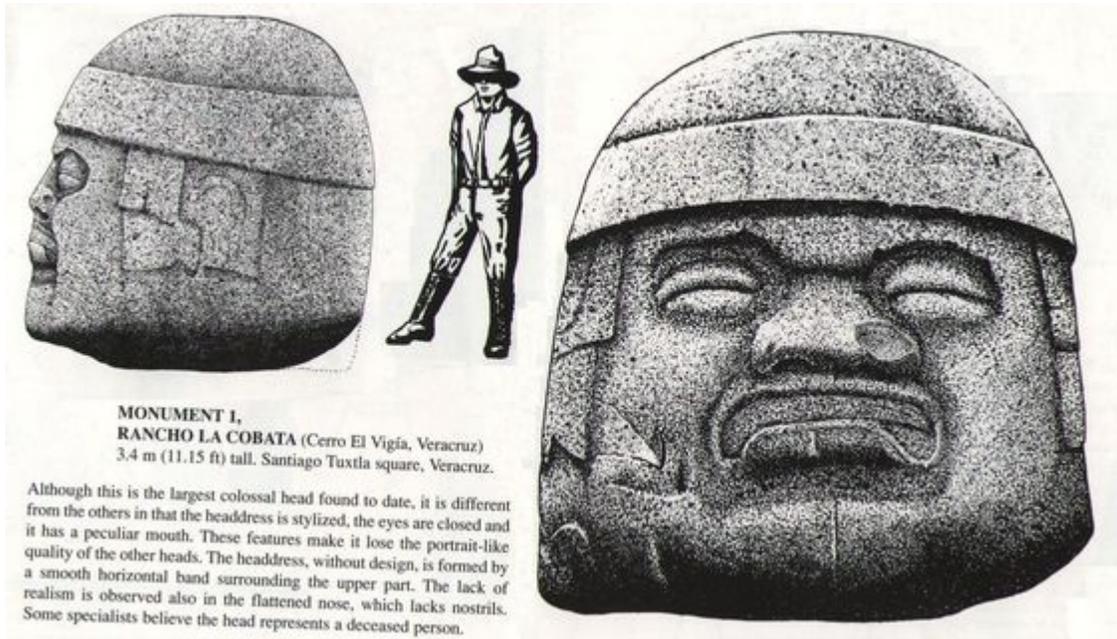
*hem*: type of stone

Compound Constructed Name: **Et(e)hem**

It should be noted that in ancient Egyptian, *etam* means sea shore (*Navigating the Bible* 2016), which might have some correlation with the sea shell-shaped ear pieces. TZ-2 has been described as having a “menacing appearance” which is consistent with Ahah, who did all manner of iniquity and caused the shedding of much blood (Ether 11:10).

MONUMENT 1,  
LA COBATA RANCH  
(Cerro El Vigía, Veracruz),  
3.4 m (11.15ft) tall.  
Santiago Tuxtla Square,  
Veracruz.





The La Cobata head is the largest of all the heads, and specialists believe that the closed eyes represents a deceased person or death. Importantly, the head was discovered in a mountain pass in the Sierra de los Tuxtlas, on the north side of El Vigía (hill Cumorah), not near any known ancient settlement, overlooking the final Jaredite battleground. The obvious ruler represented by this head is Coriantumr<sub>2</sub>. He is a larger-than-life figure and was noted to be “large and mighty” as previously discussed. The concept of the closed eyes representing the demise of the Jaredites is consistent with Coriantumr<sub>2</sub>. The question arises as to who would have created the head, but as has been previously discussed, there was a remnant of the Jaredites mentioned by Limhi (perhaps the Epi-Olmecs) and would not be dissimilar to the large stone (stelae) that was created giving an account of Coriantumr<sub>2</sub> and the slain of his people and their destruction, which was translated by king Mosiah<sub>1</sub> (Omni 1:20–22). Considering the location of this head it corresponds with the Sumerian compound constructed name Coriantumr:

*kur*: mountain  
*ri*: to be distant  
*ri*: to be set in place  
*anta*: upper  
*tu*: leader  
*TUM*: a stone  
*ur*: figure  
*ur*: man

Compound Constructed Name: Coriant(a)um(u)r

### San Lorenzo Heads

The correlation of the San Lorenzo heads is more complex than the other heads because there are a few possibilities. The heads may include unknown kings that go into the gap timeframe prior to Morionton, or the heads may just represent kings that are noted by Ether as being in the ruling line going all the way back to Orihah. In the latter case, that would indicate that the early ruler heads were created long after the fact, with visages that likely may not have been known (unless likenesses were somehow recorded). It has been noted by archeologists that the heads at San Lorenzo likely featured ancestral rulers with heads made long after the fact. The number of heads versus Jaredite rulers don't match exactly, but it is close if one considers the exclusion of unpopular kings and the possibility that a few heads may not yet be found or were destroyed.

The total number of kings for initial consideration are 15: Orihah, Kib, Shule, Omer, Emer, Coriantum, Com, Heth, Shez, Riplakish, Morionton, Kim, Levi, Corom, and Kish. Kings that might possibly not be considered because of their poor leadership are Heth, Riplakish, and Kim (he was deposed into captivity). That would leave 12 rulers; there are ten known colossal heads at San Lorenzo, so there may be two heads not yet located or they may have been destroyed and recycled. Monument 20 at San Lorenzo is an extensively damaged throne with a figure emerging from a niche. It is possible that this damage was caused by the initial stages of re-carving the monument into a colossal head but the work was never completed. This may also account for one of the two missing heads. The discovered location of each head at San Lorenzo with the corresponding number is shown in figure 94. The display of many of the heads has been proposed as a sequential display.

The asymmetry in the number of heads on the eastern and western sides of the South-Central Ridge, taken in conjunction with the evidence of others in process, is the basis for (the) proposal that they constituted an unfinished commemorative macro-scene of ancestral ruler portraits (Cypers 2004), which is akin to Grove's (1997) concept of a "processional" arrangement designed to be viewed sequentially in public rituals. (Cyphers et al. 2014, 85)

While not represented with a colossal head, the other, less-desirable kings may have been otherwise represented in the panoramic plazas with other monuments. For example, a large throne is present on the San Lorenzo plaza, and the evil Jaredite king Riplakish is noted for erecting himself "an exceedingly beautiful throne" (Ether 10:6). Riplakish could have been another stop on the plaza tour, but he lacked a colossal head of his own.

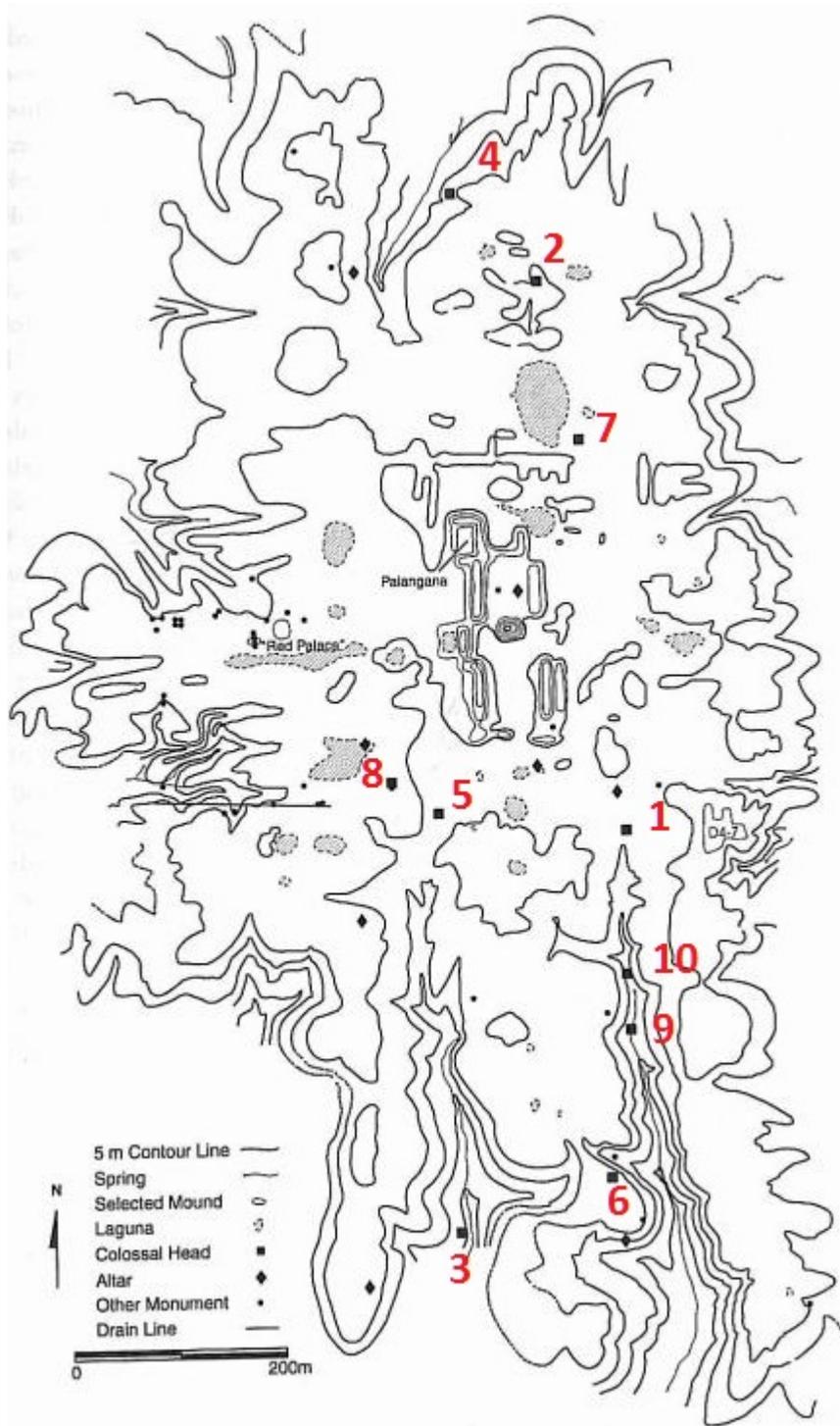


Figure 94. Map of San Lorenzo with the location of each colossal head. Contour interval = 5 m, lowest contour = 55 m. Numbers added by author. (Pool 2007, 101)

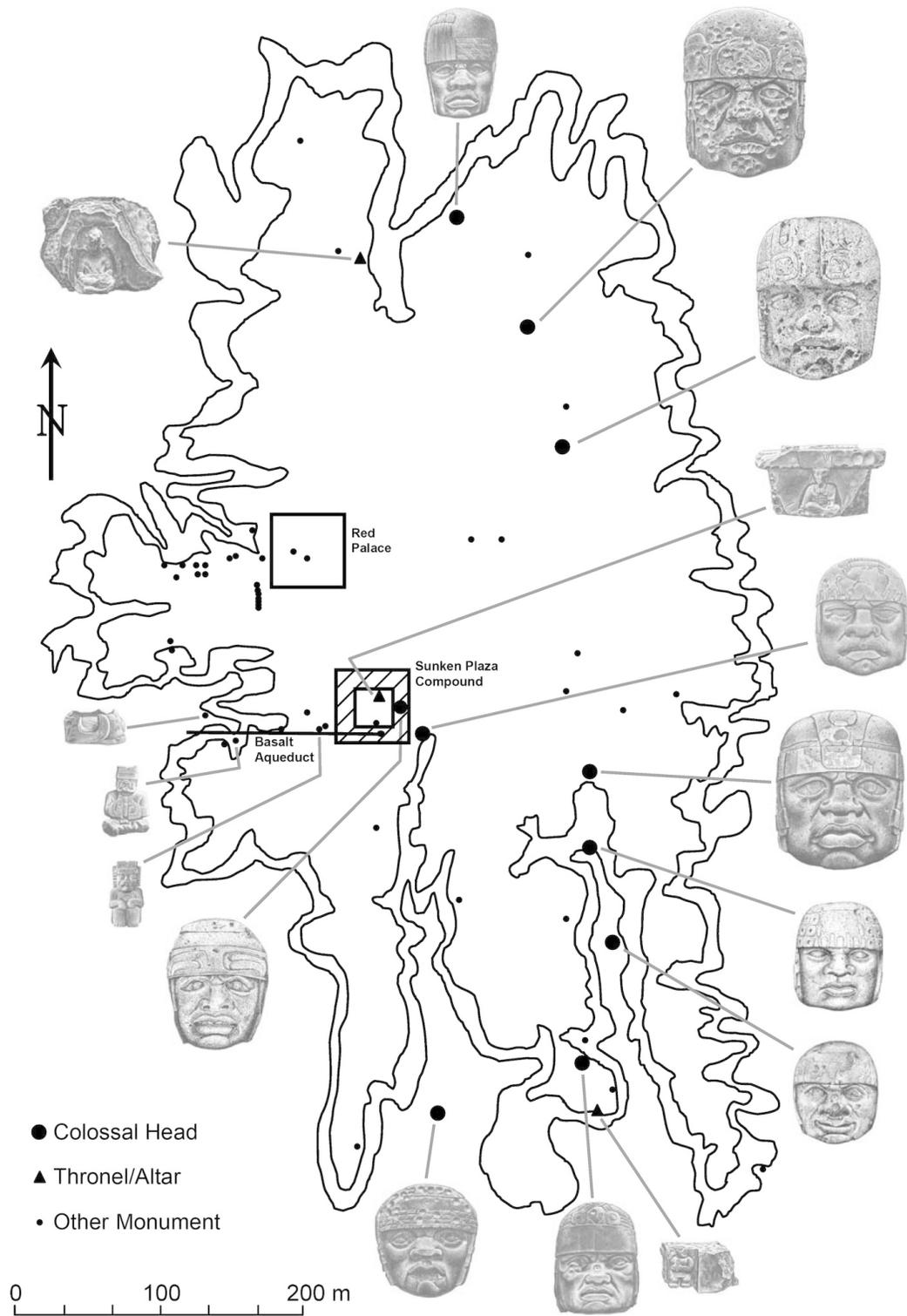
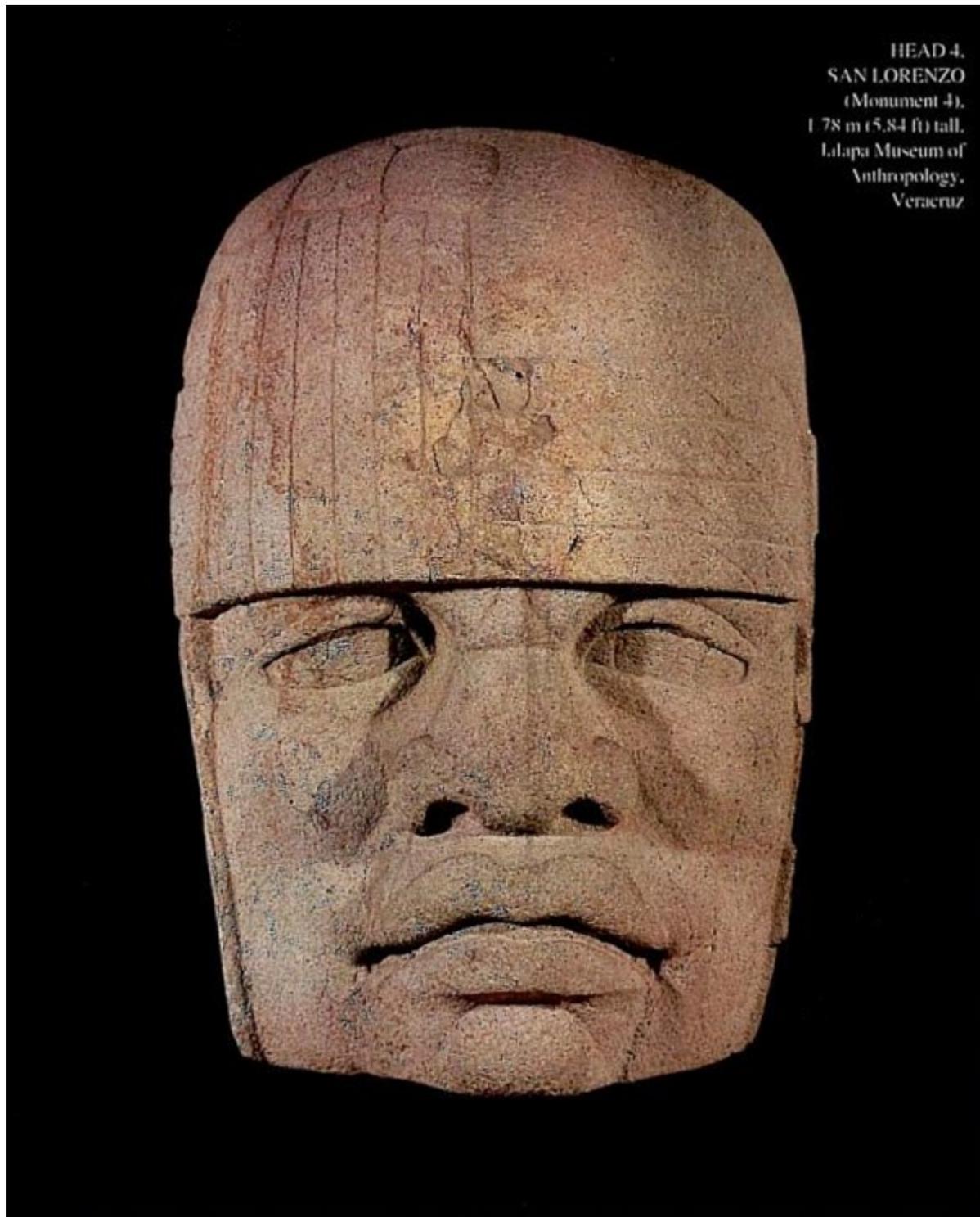


Figure 95. Map of the San Lorenzo acropolis illustrating the location of the colossal heads and monument. (Cheetam and Bloomster 2017, 18)

This being the case that the colossal heads are representing ancestral rulers displayed in sequence, an analysis of the heads versus individual Jaredite rulers indicates a sequence starting with the northernmost head and proceeding from north to south with a return on the west side going south to north, or in other words, in a clockwise direction. The Jaredite correlation of each of the heads is discussed in this sequence.





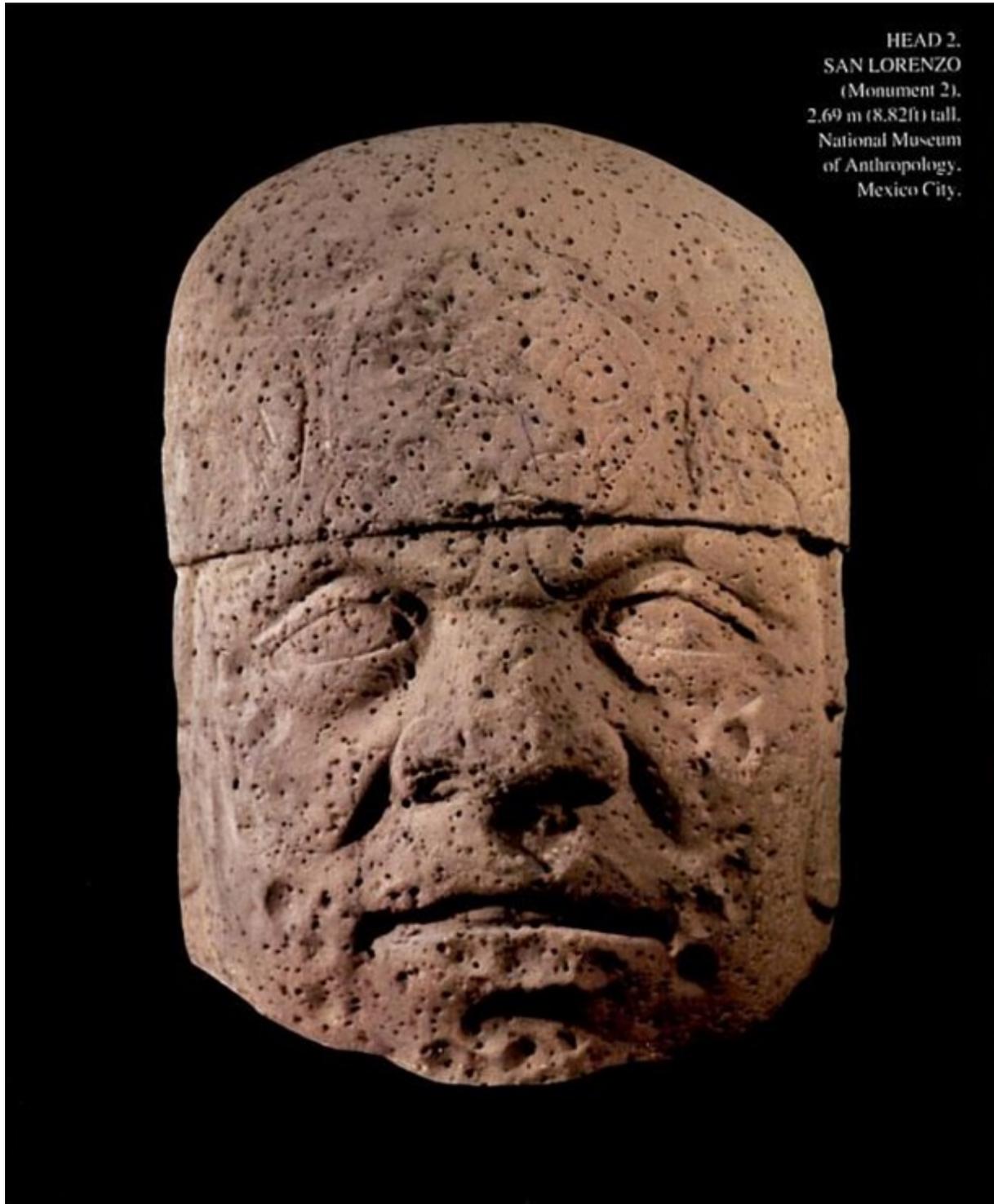
#### Plausible Identifications

San Lorenzo 4 (SL-4), the northernmost head, features four parallel cords wrapped around the smooth headdress, with eight strip tassels extending from three flat knots. This head corresponds with Orihah more by its numeric features. Orihah was the fourth son (Ether 6:14, 20), consistent with the four parallel cords. The tassel consisting of units of three and eight, has the product of 24, which corresponds with the number of males in the initial group (Ether 6:16). This head corresponds with the Sumerian compound constructed name Orihah:

*U*: type of stone  
*ur*: a man  
*ur*: cloth trimming  
*ri*: set in place  
*i*: garment  
*a*: power  
*he*: be he

Compound Constructed Name: **Oriah(e)**

SL-4 has been described as having the features of an “ageing man,” which corresponds to Orihah living to at least old age (Ether 7:3).



HEAD 2.  
SAN LORENZO  
(Monument 2).  
2.69 m (8.82ft) tall.  
National Museum  
of Anthropology,  
Mexico City.



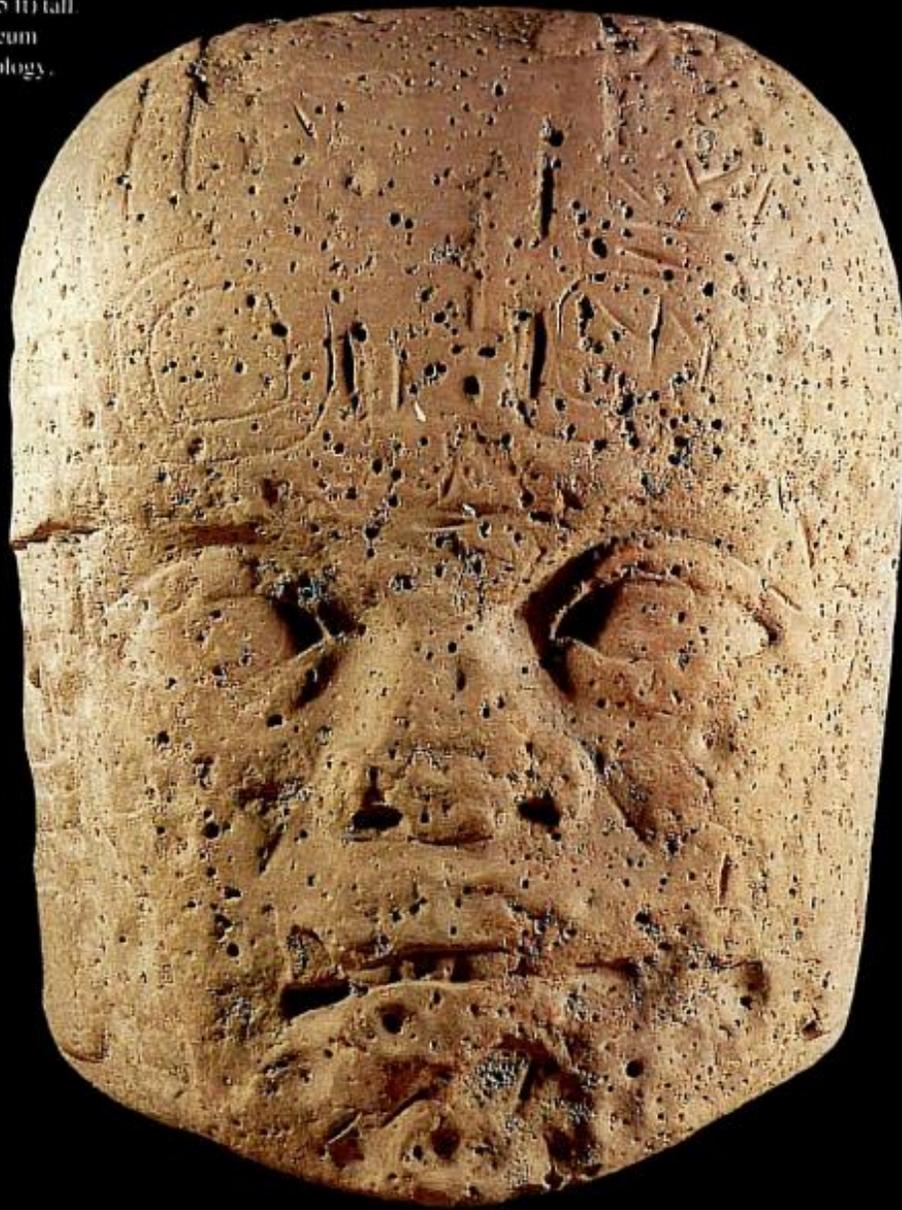
**HEAD 2,  
SAN LORENZO**  
(Monument 2),  
2.69 m (8.82 ft) tall.  
National Museum  
of Anthropology,  
Mexico City.

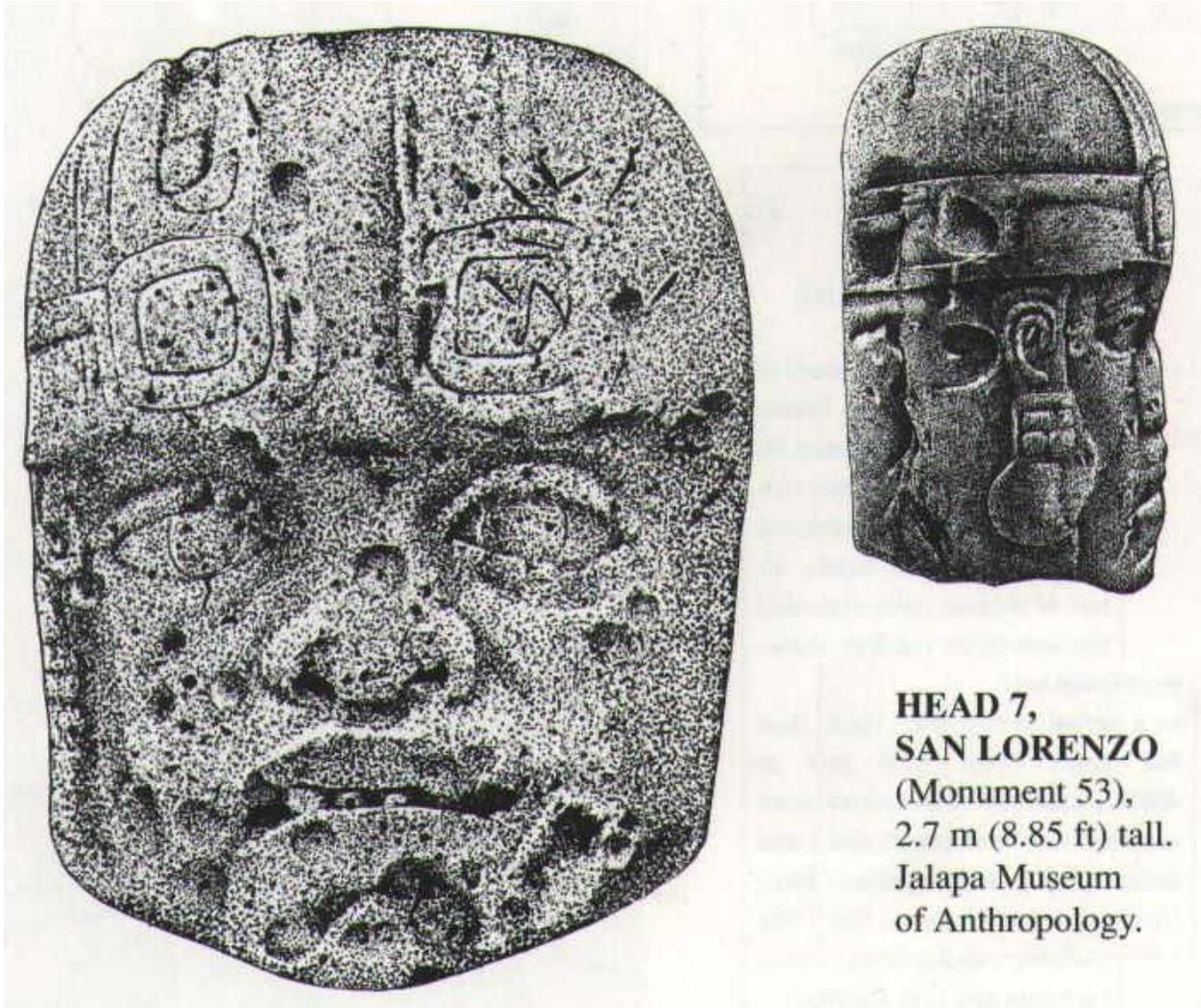
San Lorenzo 2 (SL-2), the next northernmost head, features an open weave headdress with three stylized parrot head symbols. The next king chronologically after Orihah is Kib, with the parrot motif corresponding with the Sumerian name Kib:

*kib*: bird

SL-2 has been described as having the features of an “ageing man,” which corresponds to Kib living to an exceeding old age (Ether 7:7).

HEAD 7.  
SAN LORENZO  
(Monument 53).  
2.70 m (8.85 ft) tall.  
Jalapa Museum  
of Anthropology,  
Veracruz.





San Lorenzo 7 (SL-7), the next head going south, features a pair of human hands with a bird feathered ornament carved on the back of the single wide strip headband. The next king chronologically after Kib is Shule. This head corresponds with the Sumerian compound constructed name Shule:

*šu*: hand

*šulu*: a bird

*U*: type of stone

*ul*: to be distant in time

*e*: strip of leather

Compound Constructed Name: **Shul(u)e**

HEAD I,  
SAN LORENZO  
(Monument 1),  
2.85 m (9.35 ft) tall,  
Jalapa Museum  
of Anthropology,  
Veracruz.





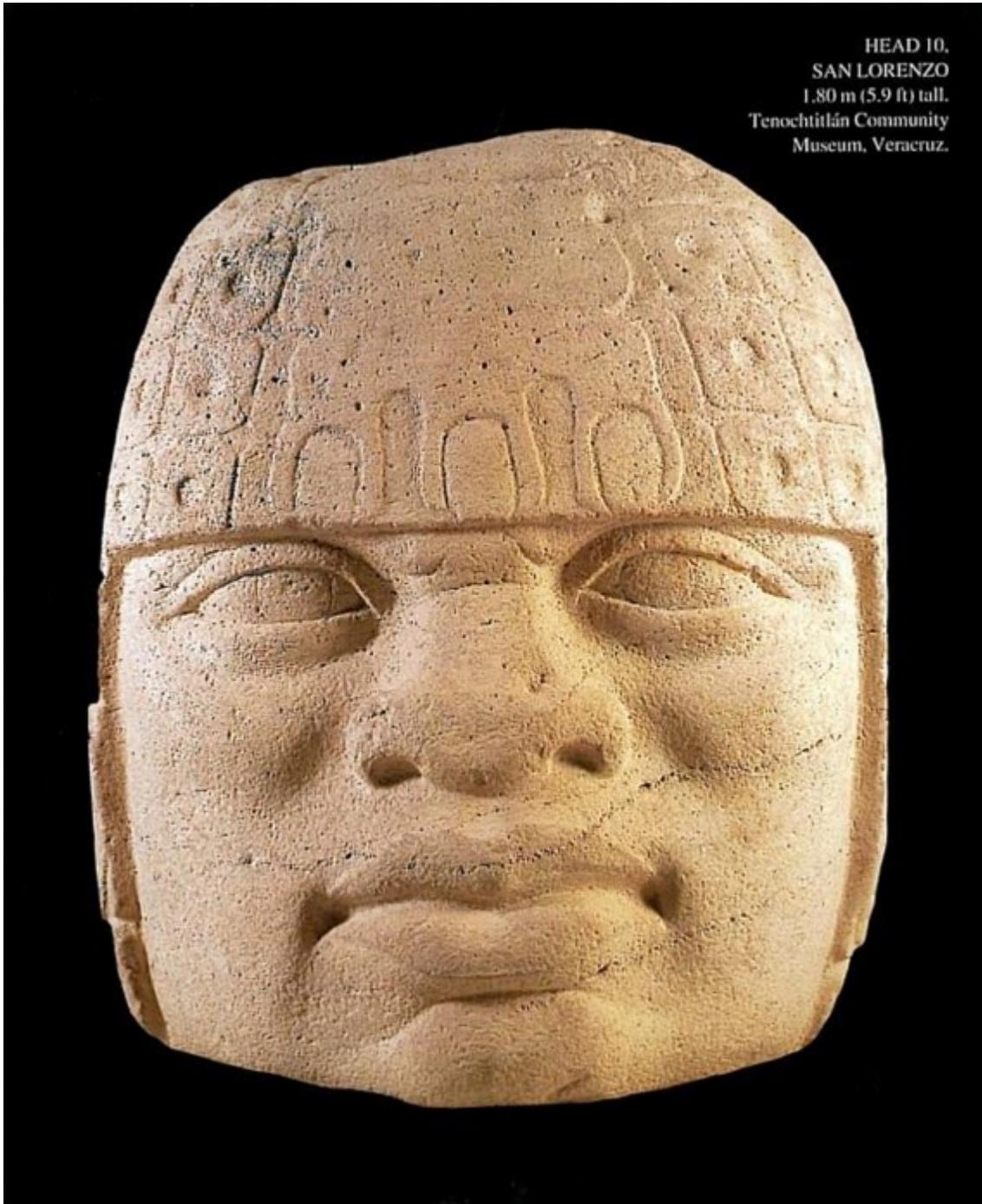
**HEAD 1,  
SAN LORENZO**  
(Monument 1),  
2.85 m (9.35 ft) tall.  
Jalapa Museum  
of Anthropology.

San Lorenzo 1 (SL-1), the next head going south on the east side, features a simple headdress that has four stylized fingers. The face has been characterized as frowning with a serious look. The next king chronologically after Shule is Omer. This head corresponds with the Sumerian compound constructed name Omer:

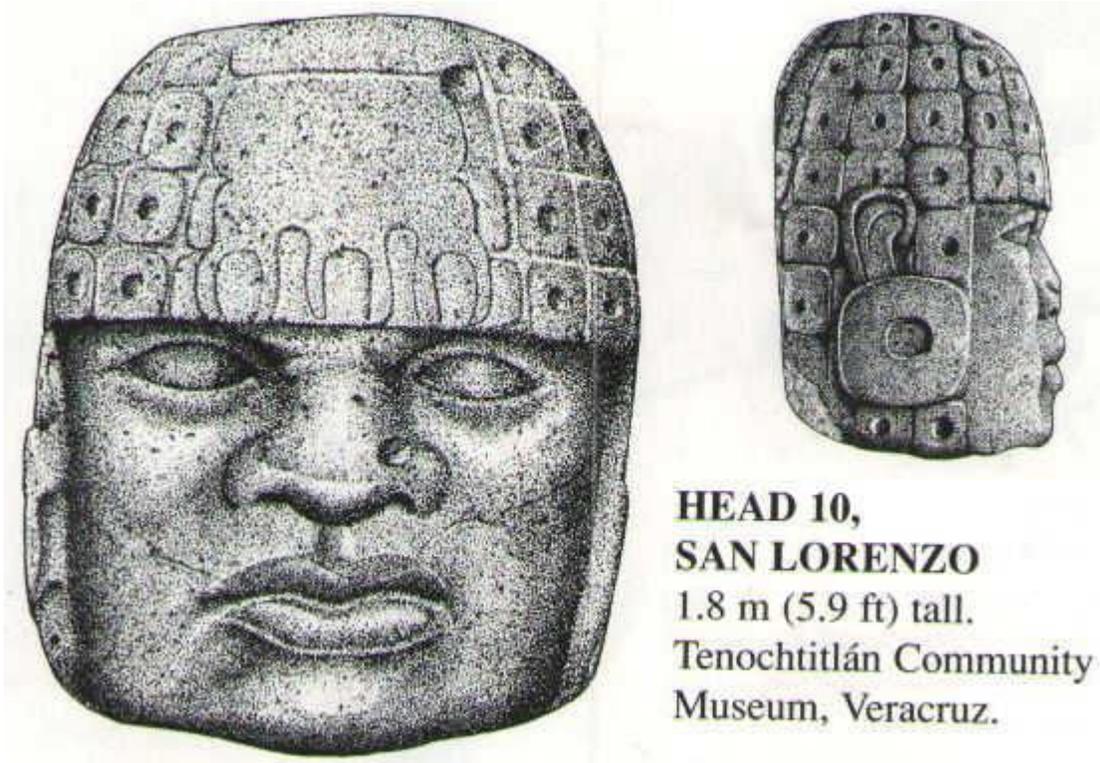
*u*: finger  
*U*: type of stone  
*me*: to be  
*er*: mourning

Compound Constructed Name: **Omer**

SL-1 has been described as having the features of older people, which corresponds to Omer living to at least old age (Ether 9:14). In addition, Omer was forced into exile, while nearly all of the Jaredite population was killed in a civil war, so a mourning king would be an appropriate description.



HEAD 10,  
SAN LORENZO  
1.80 m (5.9 ft) tall.  
Tenochtitlán Community  
Museum, Veracruz.



San Lorenzo 10 (SL-10), the next head going south on the east side, features a headdress that is made of what appears to be square beads with holes in the center. Above the forehead is a three-toed foot with long nails, appearing to be the foot of a bird or the paw of a jaguar. There is a significant geographical gap between the previous head (SL-1), so one might expect that the next king in chronological sequence, Emer, may be one of the heads lost and unaccounted for. In fact, SL-10 seems to fit the next king in sequence after Emer, which is Coriantum. This head corresponds with the Sumerian compound constructed name Coriantum:

*ku*: to place  
*kur*: mountain, east  
*ur*: lion  
*ri*: to set in place  
*an*: upper  
*TUM*: a stone  
*um*: a bird

Compound Constructed Name: **Coriantum**

SL-10 has been described as having the features of a “mature man,” which corresponds to Coriantum living to over 100 years of age (Ether 9:24).

HEAD 9.  
SAN LORENZO  
1.65 m (5.41ft) tall.  
Jalapa Museum  
of Anthropology.  
Veracruz.





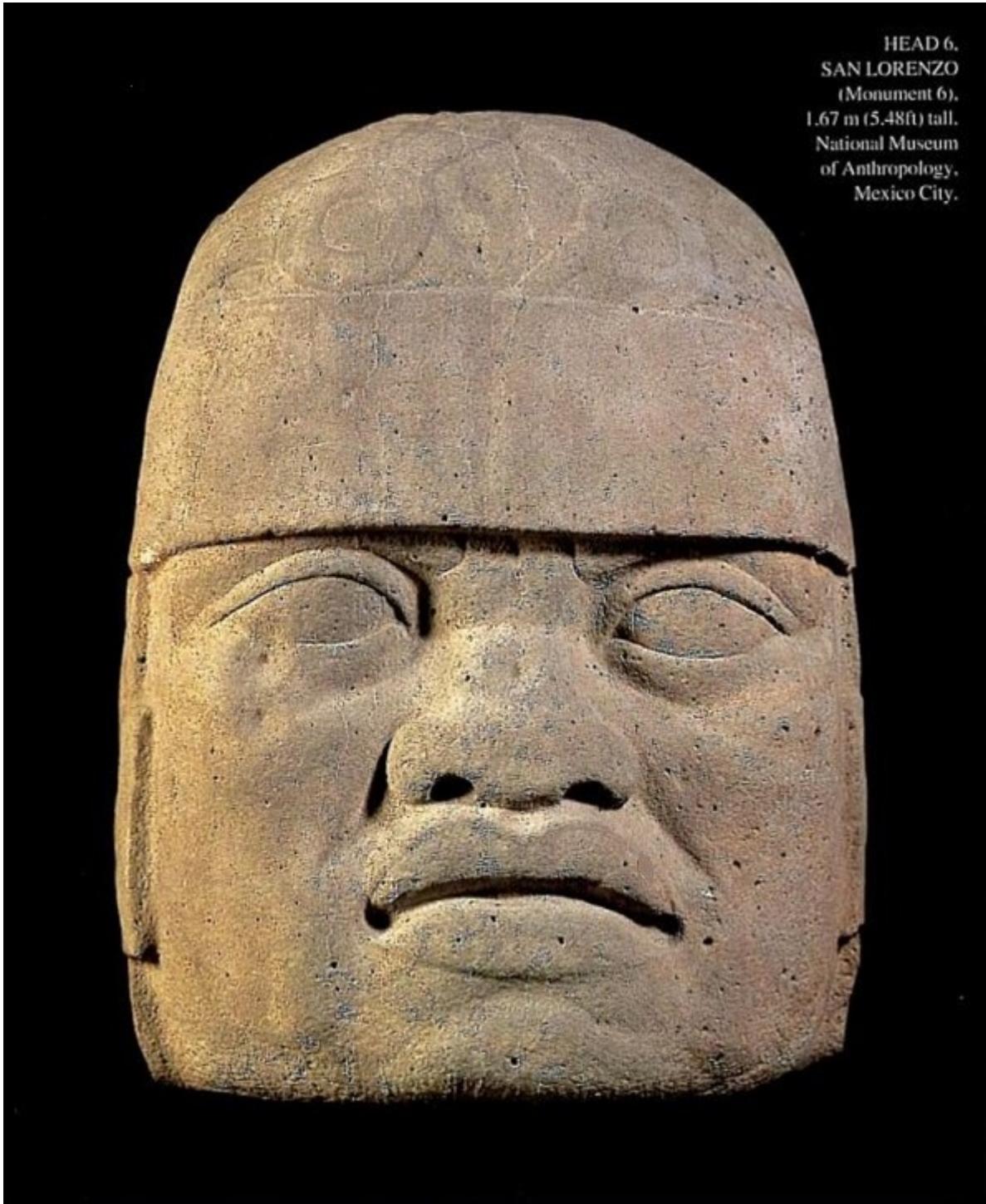
San Lorenzo 9 (SL-9) is the next head going south on the east side, and it is not clear what the main depiction is on the helmet because there is a wavy line that is weathered such that the image is unclear. The features on the sides appear to be strips or tresses that hang down. While much is to be desired for identification of this head, it does have some correspondence with the Sumerian compound constructed name Com, which is the next head in chronological sequence:

*ku*: to place

*U*: type of stone

*um*: reed rope

Compound Constructed Name: **Com**



HEAD 6.  
SAN LORENZO  
(Monument 6).  
1.67 m (5.48ft) tall.  
National Museum  
of Anthropology,  
Mexico City.



**HEAD 6,  
SAN LORENZO**  
(Monument 6),  
1.67 m (5.48 ft) tall.  
National Museum  
of Anthropology,  
Mexico City.

San Lorenzo 6 (SL-6) is the next head going south on the east side. There is a significant geographic gap following this head, so it is possible that the next king in chronological sequence, Shez, may be second of the heads unaccounted for. In fact, SL-6 fits the next king after Shez in sequence, which is Morionton. The helmet features an open-knotted weave headdress. It is sculpted with a net-like head covering joined together with sculpted beads. A covering descends from under the headdress to cover the back half of the neck. The headband is divided into four strips and begins above the right ear, extending around the entire head. A short strap descends from either side of the head to the ear. The ear ornaments are complex and are larger at the front of the ear than at the back. This head with a fish net-type headdress corresponds with the Sumerian compound constructed name Morionton:

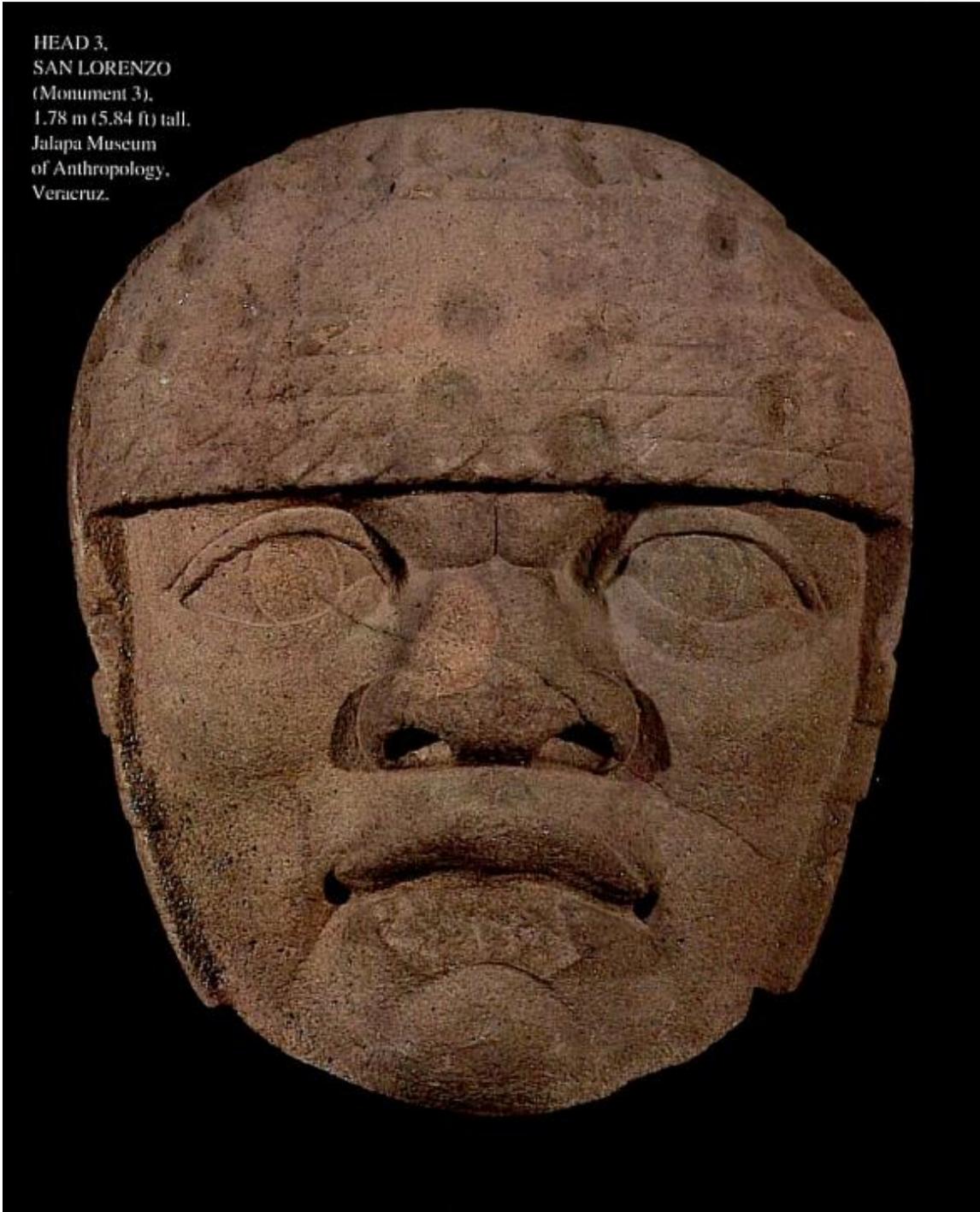
*mu*: a fish  
*mur*: to dress, to clothe  
*mur*: a fish  
*ri*: to cast  
*i*: clothing  
*a*: water  
*an*: upper, crown  
*tu*: a fish  
*un*: a bag, container

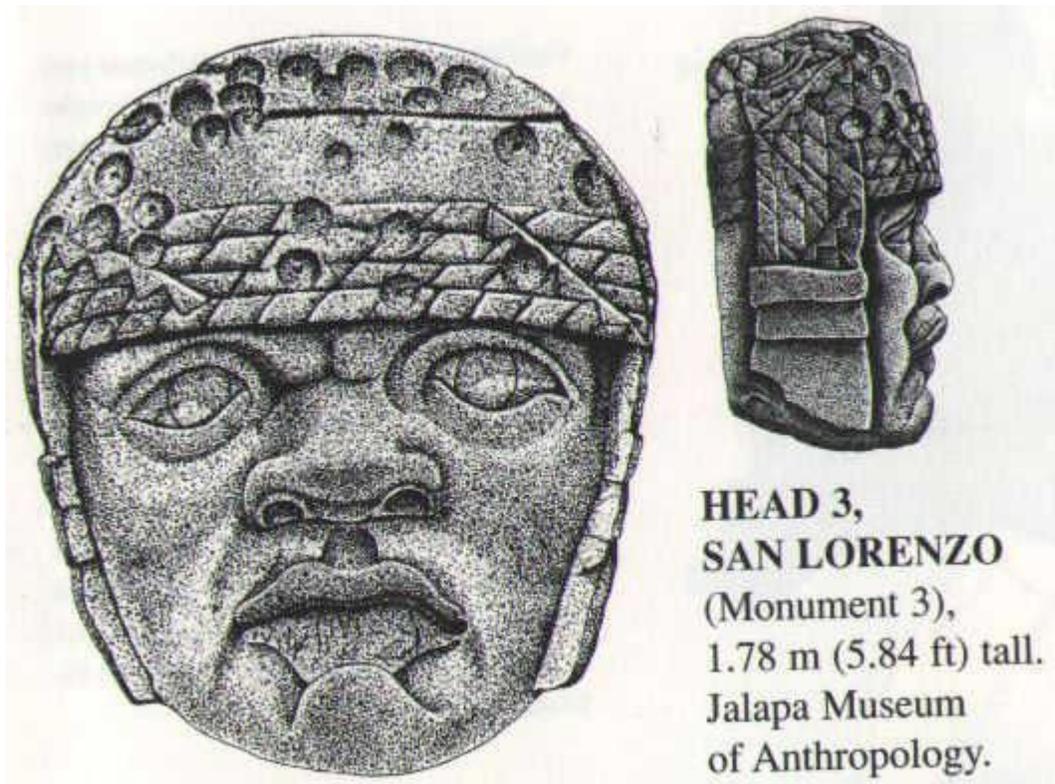
Compound Constructed Name: **Morionton**

SL-6 has been described as having the features of an "ageing man," which corresponds to Morionton living to an exceeding great age (Ether 10:13). SL-6 has also been described as appearing "bellicose." Morionton gave battle

unto the people and engaged in war that was “exceedingly sore” and lasted “for the space of many years” (Ether 10:9).

HEAD 3,  
SAN LORENZO  
(Monument 3),  
1.78 m (5.84 ft) tall,  
Jalapa Museum  
of Anthropology,  
Veracruz.





San Lorenzo 3 (SL-3) is the last head going south on the east side at the edge of the bird's wing configuration that Coe proposed at the site. The headdress is complex, with the horizontal basal band being formed by four twisted, horizontal cords, with diagonal folds above each eye. A small skullcap tops the headdress. A large flap formed of four cords drops down both sides of the head, completely covering the ears. Unlike other names derived from Sumerian, the name of the Jaredite king Levi appears to be a name provided by the Nephites from the biblical Hebrew name Levi. There is only one Levi in the Old Testament, namely, the third son of Jacob with Leah (Genesis 29:34), who gave rise to the priestly caste of the Levites. Specifically, the assumed root for Levi is לוה (*lwh*), which occurs all over the Semitic spectrum. It exists in Arabic, meaning "to turn, twist or wind," and in Assyrian as "to surround or encircle." In biblical Hebrew, it is not used as a verb but gives rise to the words לויה (*liwya*) and ליה (*loya*), both meaning "wreath" (Proverbs 1:9, 4:9; 1 Kings 7:29). Although the wreath is an item that is typically coiled or twisted, both ends are also joined to make a circle (www.abarim-publications.com 2015b). This corresponds very well with the headdress of SL-3. In addition, other Semitic etymologies are indicative of a priest:

The Hebrew root *lwh*, "to accompany" in the *qal*, and the Mari (Old Babylonian) PN *lawi-AN* with the Old South Arabic *lw'*, "priest," might suggest a meaning such as "pledged/priest of God." (Book of Mormon Onomasticon 2017)

The priestly skullcap portion, along with the rest of the headdress, obviously brings to mind the modern Jewish skullcap; however, Jewish head coverings that are consistent with this headdress go back to ancient times:

### Head Coverings in Ancient Israelite Culture

The Israelites on Sennacherib's [king of Assyria from 705 BCE to 681 BCE] marble relief appear with headdress, and although the ambassadors of Jehu on the Shalmaneser stele have head coverings, their costume seems to be Israelite. One passage of the older literature is of significance: I Kings 20:31 mentions חֲבָלִים *havalim*, which are placed around

the head. This calls to mind pictures of Syrians on Egyptian monuments, represented wearing a cord around their long, flowing hair, a custom still followed in Arabia.

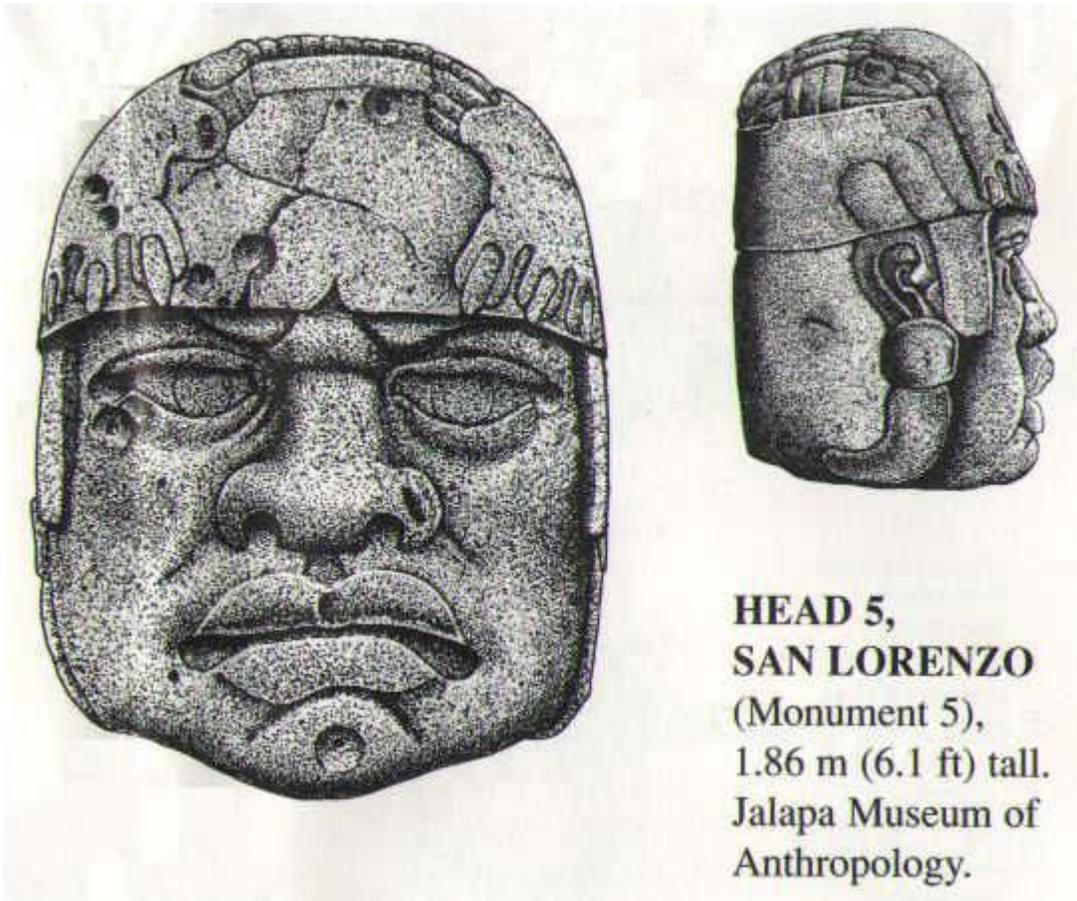
Evidently the costume of the poorest classes is represented; but as the cord gave no protection against the heat of the sun, there is little probability that the custom lasted very long. Much more common was the simple cloth skullcap, dating back to Egyptian times when those of high society routinely shaved their heads, to prevent lice. Conversely, their skullcaps then served as protection against irritation from their wigs.

The Israelites might have worn a headdress similar to that worn by the Bedouins, but it is unknown whether a fixed type of headdress was utilized. That the headdress of the Israelites might have been in the fellah style may be inferred from the use of the noun *tzanif* (the verb *tzanaf* meaning “to roll like a ball”, Isaiah 22:18) and by the verb *habash* (“to wind”, comp. Ezekiel 16:10; Jonah 2:6). As to the form of such turbans, nothing is known, and they may have varied according to the different classes of society. This was customary with the Assyrians and Babylonians, for example, whose fashions likely influenced the costume of the Israelites—particularly during and after the Babylonian Exile. (Wikipedia 2017a)

SL-3 has been described as having the “face of apparent maturity,” corresponding to Levi living to a good old age (Ether 10:16). The fact that Levi is an exclusively Hebrew name and fits the motifs on the colossal head so well may be an indicator that king Levi (and perhaps others) may have derived the name among the Nephites based on the appearance of the head itself and the observation of the head by the Nephites.

HEAD 5.  
SAN LORENZO  
(Monument 5),  
1.86 m (6.1 ft) tall.  
Jalapa Museum  
of Anthropology,  
Veracruz.





**HEAD 5,  
SAN LORENZO  
(Monument 5),  
1.86 m (6.1 ft) tall.  
Jalapa Museum of  
Anthropology.**

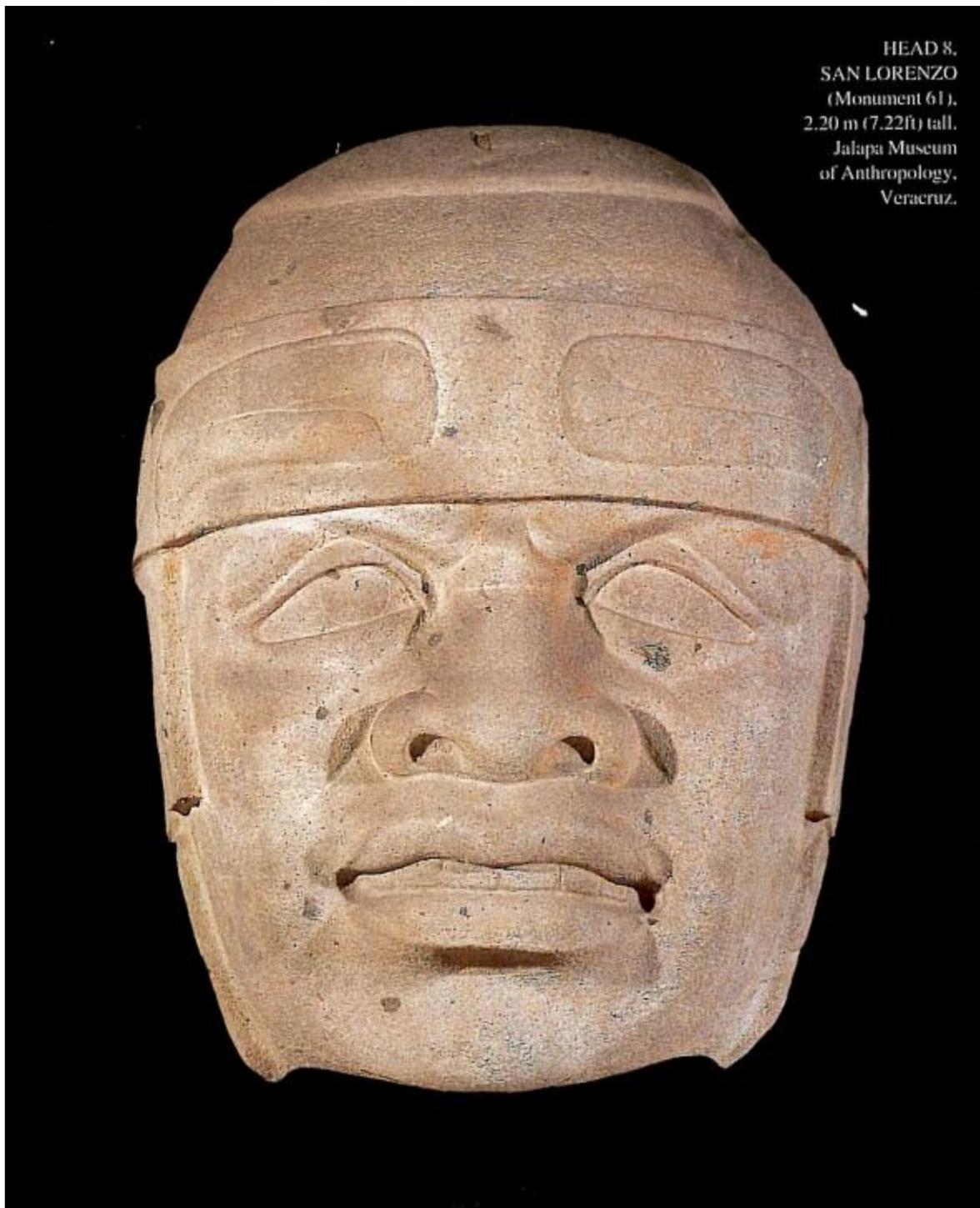
San Lorenzo 5 (SL-5) and San Lorenzo 8 (SL-8) are the last two heads and are located on the tail of the geographic bird figure, with SL-5 being the next head going counterclockwise from the chronological sequence of the heads on the east side. The next king in chronological sequence is Corom. The SL-5 headband of the headdress is set at an angle and has a notch above the bridge of the nose. The headdress is decorated with jaguar paws; although, because of the three claws, this has been interpreted to possibly be a bird claw. At the back of the head, ten interlaced strips form a net decorated with disc motifs. Two short straps descend from the headdress in front of the ears. The ears are adorned with disc-shaped earspools with pegs.

This head corresponds well with the Sumerian compound constructed name Corom:

- ku*: to place
- ur*: lion
- ur*: cloth trimming
- ur*: harness
- urum*: a male
- U*: type of stone
- um*: reed rope
- um*: a bird

Compound Constructed Name: **Corom**

SL-5 has been described as having the features of an “ageing man,” which corresponds to Corom having “seen many days” (Ether 10:17).



HEAD 8,  
SAN LORENZO  
(Monument 61),  
2.20 m (7.22ft) tall.  
Jalapa Museum  
of Anthropology,  
Veracruz.



SL-8 is the last head and is the last Jaredite king of San Lorenzo before Lib<sub>1</sub> founded the great city of La Venta. In Jaredite chronology, this king was Kish. The headdress is decorated with the talons or claws of either a jaguar or an eagle. It has a headband and a cover that descends from under the headdress proper behind the ears. Two short straps descend in front of the ears. The head sports large ear ornaments in the form of pegs. The name of the Jaredite king Kish appears to be a name provided by the Nephites from the biblical Hebrew name Kish. The most famous Kish in the Bible is the Benjaminite father of Saul, the first king of Israel (1 Samuel 9:1).

Linguists have determined that the Hebrew verb *יקש* (*yqs*) is the likely source of *Kish*. The verb *יקש* (*yaqosh*) originally meant to lay a bait or lure but came to denote laying a snare to catch animals, and from there to “snare” a person with alluring enticements (1 Samuel 18:21; Psalm 18:5; Jeremiah 5:26). This verb’s derivatives are:

- The masculine noun *יקוש* (*yaqosh*), meaning bait-layer or fowler (Hosea 9:8).
- The similar masculine noun *יקוש* (*yaqush*), also meaning bait-layer or fowler (Proverbs 6:5).

The name Kish may mean Snaring, Bird Catcher, according to Jones’s *Dictionary of Old Testament Proper Names* ([www.abarim-publications.com](http://www.abarim-publications.com) 2015c).

The definition of a *fowler* is “a hunter of birds.”

Thus, there is clearly a plausible relationship with the colossal Olmec heads that matches well with the Jaredite kings and chronology. It is also worth noting that consistent with the geographical configuration of San Lorenzo matching a bird, all of the Jaredite kings there, with the exception of Levi and Kish (which in Hebrew means bird catcher) have a potential Sumerian word in each of their names relating to a bird:

*a*: a bird cry  
*u*: wild goose  
*kib*: a bird  
*sǔlu*: a bird  
*amar*: a chick  
*am*: a bird  
*um*: a bird  
*ša*: a bird  
*ezi*: a bird  
*zi*: to chirp (birds)  
*um*: a bird  
*ku*: to lay eggs  
*tum*: wild dove

The Book of Mormon may thus give personal names and narratives to the otherwise anonymous individuals depicted in these unique Olmec sculptures.

