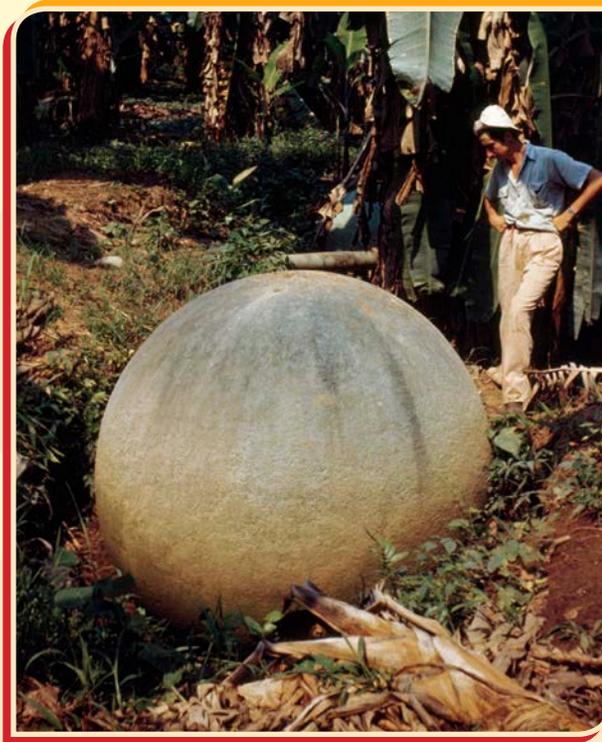


WHAT ARE THE GIANT STONES OF COSTA RICA?

During the 1940s, land in the southern region of Costa Rica was being cleared. A company wanted to use this land to grow bananas. Hundreds of round stone spheres, or balls, were dug up. The spheres range in size from only a few inches to about 6 feet in diameter. Many of them are as tall as the humans who dug them up. The largest ones weigh over 16 tons! The workers soon learned that they had stumbled onto a mystery. Who made these giant spheres? What were they used for?



Beginning around 2,200 years ago, native artists cut large pieces of volcanic stone. The stone came from quarries that were far away from where the spheres were found. The artists probably used other hard stones to create the perfectly round spheres. This meant that they spent a lot of time chipping, scraping, and smoothing the large stone balls. Scientists know that the artists did not have metal tools to help them with this work. They certainly did not have laser technology like we do today. This would have made their job a lot easier!

Scientists do know something about the people who probably made the spheres. This is information they got by studying archeological sites near the spheres. The makers of the giant stone balls probably lived in small villages. They were farmers as well as fishermen and hunters. Their houses were usually round in shape.

Trying to learn more about the everyday life of the culture is important. It is one way scientists might find clues to solve the mystery.

Scientists remain unsure about what the giant spheres were used for. The people who made them left no written record of their purpose. Their civilization was wiped out by an enemy. Scientists are left to research the area around the stones. Then they make informed decisions about them. One of the biggest problems, though, is that most of the stones have been moved from their original locations. Many of the mysterious stone balls have become lawn decorations. Some of them can be found in front of office buildings. Sadly, some of the spheres were blown up because they were thought to have treasure in the middle of them.

It is believed that the placement of the original spheres is important. The labor needed to move the spheres shows that the civilization was advanced. Some people believe that the stones may have been an earthly map of the night sky.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 2001, over 80 tons of the giant spheres were moved back to their original location. Here they are being stored and protected.

Others believe that they acted like a compass pointing out north, south, east, and west. So many of the balls have been moved. It is nearly impossible to tell what their real purpose might have been. The government of Costa Rica is trying to create a museum for the spheres.

Studying these old spheres helps us understand another civilization. We can compare our lives to their lives. The mystery of the giant spheres of Costa Rica may never be solved. The stone spheres stand tall, guarding the secrets we hope to someday understand.

