

WINDOWS ON THE WORLD BACKGROUND

History

AFRICA

West Africa *Nok culture* Noting the introduction of iron is a method of tracking the progressive development of cultures within the global community. Although there is definitely a bias favoring industrial cultures in this method, it nevertheless helps make differing cultures comparable by showing their rates of technological development. The Nok were the first people in sub-Saharan Africa to work with iron, and they ultimately shared their techniques with their neighbors. The Nok farmed and raised cattle and were concerned with personal adornment, especially the hair, as reflected in their sculpture.

AMERICAS

Andes *Chavín culture* Chavín de Huantar was a sky-high city situated in a basin between two mountain ranges halfway between the coast and the jungle. It was located at the juncture of two rivers and near two mountain passes. During its 700-year-life (900–200 B.C.), Chavín was a pilgrimage center, an importer of luxury goods, and the creator of the first uniform Andean style.

Mesoamerica *Olmec culture* At its zenith (1100–800 B.C.), Olmec culture influenced peoples in the valley of Mexico in the north and in parts of Central America in the southeast. When decline set in after 800 B.C., not all the Olmec sites were abandoned, but the distinctive style changed and lost its influence on neighbors.

Native North America *Adena culture* Like other native Americans, the Adena people shared many traits with the early peoples of Africa and Eurasia, such as the use of fire and the fire drill; the domesticated dog; stone implements; cordage, netting, and basketry; and varied rites and healing beliefs and practices. The Adena, living in villages mainly in the Ohio River Valley, were hunters and gatherers, and their success helped to bring about the more sophisticated Hopewell culture. Adena dwellings were either overhanging rock ledges or circular houses with conical roofs, made of poles, willows, and bark.

ASIA

China *Warring States Period* Six or seven states now fought to control China; two states, Ch'in and Ch'u, finally emerged supreme. Nevertheless, this period was

as critical for China as Hellenic Greece (479–323 B.C.)—another unsettled period—was for the West (see Chapter 3). China also now witnessed the rise of its greatest thinkers and the founding of governmental structures and cultural patterns that would characterize its civilization until the twentieth century.

India Divided into tens of feuding minor states, India was in the final phase of its reemergence as an urban civilization. Hundreds of towns were scattered across the land, with guilds of merchants engaged in local and long-distance trade. Writing and coinage now reappeared—two features of urban culture. India was changing from a tribal to a peasant society, with a stable agricultural economy. The old tribal system run by local chiefs was being replaced by kings, or sometimes oligarchies, identified with a territory. We can call these new political entities *states*.

Japan Very little is known of the political and social organization of the Jomon people. Human settlements, based on archaeological remains, appear to have been quite small, ranging from a group of five or six inhabitants to several dozen. Weaving was unknown, and clothing was made mainly of bark.

Culture

AFRICA

West Africa *Nok culture: Jemaa Head* The Nok people were innovators in art, for they established black Africa's first known sculptural tradition. Only with the first finds in 1928 has this sculptural tradition been known to the modern world. The sculptures, made of hollow terra-cotta pottery, represent both human and animal figures and vary in size from about four inches to four feet in height, though none of the larger figures is intact. Typical features of Nok art include naturalism; stylized treatment of the mouth and eyes; and relative proportion between the parts of the body. Nok art may have influenced Nigerian art in Ife, Esie, Benin City, and other cities.

AMERICAS

Andes *Chavín culture: Gold Alloy Pectoral* This pectoral, with a jaguar face encircled by a braided pattern, was worn over a man's chest—a symbol of high social status. Scholars suggest that it was typical of the Chavín style to try to impress; hence the use of gold (with its glittering surface and its reputation for permanence) was reserved for high status people and sacred imagery. The stylized jaguar face on the pectoral—with upturned fangs, accentuated irises, and two snakes serving as the lower jaw—was a common Chavín motif.

Mesoamerica *Olmec culture*: Las Limas Sculpture This figure was thought by the peasants who unearthed it in 1965 to depict the Madonna and Child. Today, this figure is interpreted as representing a young person (unclear as to which sex) who holds the Olmec rain god, identified by the “howling baby” face. Other Olmec sacred images of various divinities are incised into the knees, shoulders, and face of the youth.