

## WINDOWS ON THE WORLD BACKGROUND

### *History*

#### AFRICA

**West Africa** *Yoruba culture: Ife* The city of Ife, which flourished from the eleventh to fifteenth centuries, was the first major state to arise in Yorubaland. The political capital first, it later became a holy city for the Yoruba. A group of city-states and isolated villages ruled by kings; a pantheon of divinities; and divination using sacred chants. Later Yoruba states established their authority by claiming descent from Ife.

#### AMERICAS

**Andes** *Sicán style, 700–1400* Developed by peoples centered in the North Andes. Outstanding metalworkers of the region; perhaps developed the area's only metal currency, made of copper. Worked with gold, silver, and copper and produced a large array of ornaments, tools, and weapons. Eventually conquered by the Chimú, who absorbed the Sicán style.

**Mesoamerica** *Mayan culture* Chichén Itzá, one of the chief Mayan cities; built near natural wells (cenotes); temples, pyramids, ball-court, observatory; rich sculptural program; human sacrifice.

**Native North America** *Mississippian culture, about 700–1500* The last major prehistoric cultural period in North America before the coming of the Europeans. Priest-rulers; artist and crafts guilds; farming (maize, beans, squash); each town grouped around a plaza with a pyramidal or oval earth mound, topped by a temple or residence for the ruler.

#### ASIA

**China** *Sung Dynasty, ended 1279* A time of aesthetic refinement, especially until the conquest of North China (1127) by Turkic invaders (the Chin). Sung technology surpassed that of Europe: making firearms and bombs, printing books with movable type, using the compass, shipbuilding, clockmaking, and devising a type of vaccination (variolation). *Yuan Dynasty, began 1260* Mongols denied Chinese the right to marry Mongols or to learn Mongol language. *Pax Mongolica* or Mongolian Peace, a policy that led to growth of international foreign trade and renewed China's link to the West via the Silk Road.

**India** *Chola (or Cola) Dynasty, about 200–1279* An expansionist family; defeated the Pallavas and the Pandyas (942); annexed modern Sri Lanka (about 1000) and Malay Archipelago (1014). Revived worship of Shiva and Vishnu. Birth of classic Tamil literature. *Delhi Sultanate, began 1192* First Muslim kingdom in India; ruled North India and Coromandel Coast. Muslim styles of art and architecture introduced, reflecting origins of varied dynasties, such as Afghan style of the Tughluqs (1320–1413).

**Japan** *Heian Period, 794–1185* During the so-called Fujiwara Regency, 897–1185, the Fujiwara clan ruled Japan and the imperial family was reduced to impotence. Feudalism; warrior families ran their tax-free estates and treated peasants as they pleased. *Kamakura Period, 1185–1333* Pattern of government set for Japan until 1867: civil (ornamental) power held by emperor; military (actual) power held by shogun. Shogun ruled from desolate coast of Kamakura, and the emperor lived on his estates in Kyoto.

## **Culture**

### AFRICA

**West Africa** *Yoruba culture: Ife* An Oni (local Priest-King) of Ife is the only African culture besides the Nok to develop an ancient artistic tradition of representing human figures in an almost life-size scale. This statuette of an Oni, or king, is typical of the Ife style, with its extreme naturalism and the heavy use of beading around the neck, ankles, and arms.

### AMERICAS

**Andes** *Sicán style: Ceremonial Tumi Knife* This knife was made from gold, silver, and turquoise. Topping the bimetal blade is an image of the Sicán Lord, a local god. The knife was probably made for a high official, as gold and silver were the most prestigious metals.

**Mesoamerica** *Mayan culture: The Caracol (Astronomical Observatory)* The Caracol (“snail”) had window openings oriented toward the movements of the planet Venus—the basis of the Mayan calendar. Knowledge of Venus’s position was essential to priests, among whose duties was maintenance of the calendar.

### ASIA

**China** *Sung Dynasty* Northern Sung art: dominant art subject was mountain landscape, a choice dictated by nearby mountains and Taoist ideals that stressed

harmony of humans with nature; artists perfected perspective in mountain landscapes so that the composition caused the viewer's eye to be raised upward in a continuous motion; imperial control of art encouraged a uniform style; Guo Xi, noted court painter and head of imperial academy. Southern Sung art: two painting schools, the official school that focused on romantic landscapes reflective of the tame terrain near the capital Hangzhou (Ma Yuan, a major artist) and the ch'an school, based on Buddhist ideas whereby monk painters created simple and witty designs with the purpose of instant enlightenment. Liao Dynasty, 907–1125, a state north of Manchu border that served as a bridge between Chinese and Korean culture.

**India** *Chola Dynasty*: Shiva Nataraja The Lord of the Dance is one of the most famous works of Hindu art. The god Shiva is depicted dancing his dual cosmic role, both creating the universe, symbolized by the encircling ring, and destroying the world, symbolized by the flames on the ring and the flame held in his left hand.

**Japan** *Heian Period*: Amida, Buddha of the Western Paradise This statue is the only surviving work by the famed artist Jocho (d. 1057), who worked mainly for the Fujiwara regent, the virtual ruler of Japan, and his clan. Assembled using the joined-wood method, this statue shows the quiet grace and elegant simplicity that are associated with the Buddha Amida cult. Buddha Amida is worshiped in Pure Land Buddhism, a cult that grew in popularity in the Heian period. Its appeal sprang from the belief that Buddha Amida saved the dying and ensured their rebirth in the Western Paradise, or Pure Land. View of the Phoenix Hall The regent's private chapel, the Byodoin, was inspired by the extremely popular Buddhist Amida cult. The chapel's simple and elegant design was based on a Chinese painting depicting the cult's vision of the Pure Land Paradise. Jocho's statue of Buddha Amida (see above) is housed in the Phoenix Hall of the Byodoin.