

WINDOWS ON THE WORLD BACKGROUND

History

AFRICA

West Africa *Yoruba culture* Benin became a powerful trading state, until about 1600. Benin's rise began under king, or oba, Eware "the Great" (r. 1440–80); he centralized his rule and expanded his state by annexing Yoruba lands in the west and Igbo lands to the east. Though freed from European control, he kept cordial relations with Portuguese traders who looked to Benin as a source of cloth, beads, and slaves.

AMERICAS

Andes *Inca culture* The meteoric rise of the Incas began with their first conquest in 1438. By 1500 their empire, centered on cities perched high in the mountains, was linked by a network of over 20,000 miles of roads.

Mesoamerica *Aztec culture* The last of the great native Mesoamerican cultures. The Aztecs called themselves the *Mexica*; the term Aztec began to be used in the 1800s. Their capital Tenochtitlán (modern Mexico City) was founded, according to unreliable records, in 1345. Until 1426, the Aztecs served as vassals of powerful neighbors. Aztecs were devoted to warfare for the sake of gaining and making human sacrifices to their deities.

ASIA

China *Ming Dynasty* A native Chinese dynasty; stable and autocratic rule. Zenith of Ming power under Emperor Yung-lo. Seven sea voyages (28,000 sailors on 300 ships) sent to ports in India, East Africa, and elsewhere. *K'un chü*, a popular form of musical theater, with many scenes and contemporary plots.

India *Delhi Sultanate* Political instability, as reflected in three dynasties between 1420 and 1451.

Japan *Muromachi period, began 1333* The name Muromachi derives from the Kyoto district where the first Ashikaga shogun set up his headquarters. Period of political turmoil; cultural growth. Collecting of Chinese art, formerly confined to monasteries, began by shoguns and ruling class. Chinese ch'an (in Japan, Zen) art was popular, but artists had to learn craft outside of China, as China's Ming

rulers placed limits on foreign access. Artists thus copied imported works or made innovations based on local taste.

Culture

AFRICA

West Africa *Yoruba culture: Bronze Head* Benin bronzes are perhaps the most famous sculptures of ancient Africa. Benin bronzes were first reported in the west in the sixteenth century, but it was not until the 1890s that they became widely known. The bronzes, cast using the lost-wax process, which had developed independently and perhaps earlier than that of the West, show a naturalistic style and were made for royal patrons.

AMERICAS

Andes *Inca culture: Machu Picchu* Known to local peoples, Machu Picchu became the object of almost worldwide interest when it was rediscovered in 1911 by a Yale archaeologist. Its spectacular setting—nestled into a deep mountain saddle with farming and living terraces hugging the hillside—has made it justifiably famous. The highest point of the site is a carved boulder known as Intihuatana Stone, “Hitching Post of the Sun.”

Mesoamerica *Aztec culture: Calendar Stone* The most memorable image produced by Aztec culture was the so-called Calendar Stone. In actuality, it was a historic monument that was probably set on the ground, with human sacrifices made over it in accordance with the Aztec belief that blood offerings would keep the end of the world from happening. As in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions, the Aztec religion taught that the world had a beginning and an end.

ASIA

China *Ming Dynasty: Forbidden City* The Mings constructed the buildings of the Forbidden City using traditional (dating from first century A.D.) Chinese elements: wooden beams and pillars and wide tiled roofs supported by bracketed eaves and crossbeams. This style became so authoritative that later Chinese architecture showed little innovation, except for decorative details on roof ridge ends and hip ridges.

Japan *Muromachi period: Ginkakuji* A central feature of Buddhist architecture in both China and Japan is the pagoda, as shown in the Ginkakuji. The pagoda is a multistory tower (the Ginkakuji has three stories) built of timber with upswept tiled roofs on each level.