

## WINDOWS ON THE WORLD BACKGROUND

### *History*

#### AFRICA

**West Africa** *Cameroon* Became a U.N. trust territory under France, 1946; gained freedom, 1960. Despotic rule of Ahmadou Ahidjo to 1982; capital, Yaounde; discovery of oil reserves (1970s); large scale industrial development failed; success with growing agribusiness and medium-size companies; united with part of former Southern Cameroons, 1961. After a bloody interval, order restored under Paul Biya in 1984; tilt toward democratic society; troubled economy.

#### AMERICAS

**Latin America** *Brazil* End of dictatorship of Getulio Vargas, 1930–45; democracy restored; second Vargas term, 1951–54; new capital Brasilia founded, 1960; military regime, 1964–85; leading economy of Latin America. *Colombia* “La violencia,” a period of violence between Liberals and Conservatives, 1948 to 1958. Liberals and Conservatives rotate power, 1958–74; two-party elections, from 1974; new constitution, 1991.

**Native North America** The American Indian Movement (AIM) was founded in Minneapolis in 1968 by Dennis Banks, Clyde Bellecourt, Eddie Benton Banai, and George Mitchell. Russell Means later became the group’s spokesperson. At first, AIM’s policy was to help Indians in urban ghettos, but in time the goal expanded to include economic independence, revival of traditional culture, protection of legal rights, and Indian control of tribal areas and restoration of illegally seized lands. Protests in the 1970s led to the imprisonment of many leaders; the national group disbanded in 1978. Local groups continue.

#### ASIA

**China** *People’s Republic of China (PRC), 1949 to present* Failed Great Leap Forward (massive communalization of agriculture and local industry), 1958–60; Great Cultural Revolution, 1966–76; economic reform and renewed relations with West, from 1971; suppressed Tiananmen Square student uprising, 1989. Relations with Taiwan, an ongoing major problem.

**India** *Republic of India, 1947 to present* World’s largest democracy; politics controlled by Congress Party, prime ministers drawn from Nehru family to 1990;

sporadic clashes with Pakistan and China; two prime ministers assassinated, Indira Gandhi, 1984, and her son Rajiv Gandhi, 1991.

**Japan** *Showa period, ended 1989* Adopted Western style constitution (1947); signed mutual security treaty with the United States (1951); strong economic growth; a leading global economy to 1990; despite slowdown, still a global economic power.

## **Culture**

### AFRICA

**West Africa** *Cameroon: Throne* This unusual state throne is carved to represent the figure of Chief Mene of the Bamileke people. Over two million Bamileke live in Cameroon today in neighborhoods of widely scattered family farms and in square houses made of latticework walls topped with conical thatched roofs. Chiefs' houses are decorated with carved door frames, house posts, and thrones. The Bamileke play a major role in the state economy, as professionals, traders, artisans, and workers.

### AMERICAS

**Latin America** *Brazil: National Congress Building, Brasilia* Brazilian architecture is renowned as the most inventive in Latin America. This claim is vibrantly illustrated by the futuristic National Congress buildings at Brasilia built by Oscar Niemeyer (1902–98), the designer of the capital's master plan. Niemeyer's design juxtaposed delicate forms (the domed senate on the left) with powerful rectilinear shapes (the twin towers used by support personnel). *Colombia: Las Meninas* This painting is a witty parody of Velázquez's great court painting of the same name. Instead of the behind-the-scene look at the Spanish court, as Velázquez painted, Ramiro Arango's version depicts a meeting of coffee pots, jugs, and pears of various size. The parody suggests that the Old Masters have become overly familiar, much as the objects of everyday life that are taken for granted—a common theme in Modernist and Post-Modernist art.

### ASIA

**China** *PRC Painter with Mother as a Young Woman* The painter Zhang Xiaogang (b. 1958) emerged in the late 1970s, when state controls were loosened across the board. Thus, China's art changed so that traditional styles remained but did not predominate. Zhang Xiaogang, who graduated from the Sichuan Academy in

1982, developed a personal style in which he treats topical issues. He also made color a major element in his art, especially the fiery hues of Southeast Asia.

**India** *Republic of India: The Prancing Horse* Maqbool Fida Husain (b. 1915) is one of India's leading artists, working as a painter, sculptor, and filmmaker. One of the first artists of his generation to receive international recognition, starting in the 1950s, he has exhibited all over the world. Over the years, he has received some of India's most prestigious artistic awards. Relatively self-taught, except for a year at the School of Art, he has a highly original style rooted in India's traditional art yet with influences from the West and his own history as a designer of children's toys and movie posters. His paintings often draw on the tropical colors of the Far East, and his sculptures are highly expressionistic.

**Japan** *Showa period: Aerial View, Olympic Stadium* Japanese architects, led by Tange Kenzo (b. 1913), became a force in world architecture, emphasizing standard features of Japanese style, including simple lines, diffused lighting, and warm textures. Tange Kenzo's style blends Japanese and Western traditions. He first came to world acclaim with the 1964 Olympic Stadium, noted for its dramatic curved lines and steel suspension roofing.