

How Civilization Develops Most historians believe that one of the first civilizations arose in Sumer. The colors of each cord represented the item being counted: people, animals, land, and so on. The quipucamayoc, officials who knew how to use the quipu, kept records of births, deaths, marriages, crops, and historical events. A civilization is often defined as a complex culture with five characteristics: (1) advanced cities, (2) specialized workers, (3) complex institutions, (4) record keeping, and (5) advanced technology. Just what set the Sumerians apart from their neighbors? Specialization helped artisans develop their skill at designing jewelry, fashioning metal tools and weapons, or making clothing and pottery. Specialized Workers As cities grew, so did the need for more specialized workers, such as traders, government officials, and priests. Though the Inca had no writing system, they kept records using a quipu, a set of colored strings tied with different-size knots at various intervals (see photograph). In civilizations, leaders emerged to maintain order among people and to establish laws. Sumer was located in Mesopotamia, a region that is part of modern Iraq. The wide range of crafts artisans produced helped cities become centers of trade. Global Patterns The Incan System of Record Keeping Early civilizations other than Sumer also developed record keeping. Complex Institutions The soaring populations of early cities made government, or a system of ruling, necessary. Most cities had great temples where dozens of priests took charge of religious duties. In early civilizations, government officials had to document tax collections, the passage of laws, and the storage of grain. Advanced Cities Cities were the birthplaces of the first civilizations. Farmers, merchants, and traders brought goods to market in the cities. Some city dwellers became artisans skilled workers who make goods by hand. The empire of the ancient Incan civilization stretched along the western coast of South America. Complex institutions, such as government, religion, and the economy, are another characteristic of civilization. Priests needed a way to keep track of the calendar and important rituals. Like their modern-day counterparts, ancient city dwellers depended on trade. The city dwellers themselves produced a variety of goods for exchange. Food surpluses provided the opportunity for specialization the development of skills in a specific kind of work. Government is an example of an institution a long-lasting pattern of organization in a community. With the growth of cities, religion became a formal institution. Merchants had to record accounts of debts and payments.