ANO MUSEUM, LIMA

A quipu, or knot-record (also called khipu), was a method used by the Incas and other ancient Andean cultures to keep records and communicate information

Objects that can be identified unambiguously as quipus first appear in the archaeological record in the first millennium AD. They subsequently played a key part in the administration of the Kingdom of Cusco and later Tawantinsuyu, the empire controlled by the Incan ethnic group, flourishing across the Andes from c. 1100 to 1532 AD. As the region was subsumed under the invading Spanish Empire, the use of the quipu faded from use, to be replaced by European writing systems. However, in several villages, quipu continued to be important items for the local community, albeit for ritual rather than recording use. It is unclear as to where and how many intact quipus still exist, as many have been stored away in mausoleums, 'along with the dead.'