

Smithsonian Institution/ Bureau of American Ethnology/  
The Quipu and Peruvian / Civilization / By John R. Swanton /  
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*como se ha visto*  
As is well known, the ancient Peruvians used knotted cords  
*como un sustituto o parcial sustituto de los caracteres*  
as a substitute, or partial substitute, ~~from~~ for written cha-  
*caracteres*  
racters. Knotted cords were employed as ~~mnemonic~~ mnemonic devices  
*en otros parte tanto del Nuevo y del Viejo mundo pero no fueran*  
in other parts of both the New and the Old Worlds but were  
*elaborados a el grado que se encuentran en el antiguo Peru*  
nowhere elaborated to the extent that we find in the old Incaic

Empire. For scientific studies of the existing quipus we are indebted to L.Leland Locke ("The Ancient quipu, or Peruvian Knot Record", American Museum of Natural History, 1923), and to a study by Erland Nordenskiöld (1925) entitled "The Secret of the Peruvian Quipu", in two parts in N° 6 of ~~his~~ his Comparative Ethnographical ~~and~~ Studies. Nordenskiöld promised further publications on this subject but his untimely death put an end to the undertaking.

Mr. Locke's conclusions regarding the quipu are :

1°- The quipu was used primarily for recording numbers ; 2° The quipu was probably used as memoria technica, in memorizing historical items, poems, lists of kings, etc. ; 3° The quipu was not adapted to calculation ; 4° A scheme of <sup>arrolanamente</sup> roughly suggestive colors was probably in use ; 5° The evidence is intrinsically against the supposition that the quipu was a conventional scheme of writing. (And he adds) In conclusion, the evidence is that all of the authentic quipu examined are numerical in nature. It

may be that through the irony of fate no specimens of genuine & historical quipu, if they existed, have been preserved. It is recorded that great quantities of quipu were destroyed by the Spanish invaders."

Locke and Nordenskiöld both depend <sup>mainly</sup> upon Garcilaso de la Vega for historical information regarding the use of this device, and Locke is probably influenced as to its limitations by Garcilaso's statements, the following in particular :

"The Quipucamayus noted, by means of knots, all of the tribute that was given to the Inca every year....."

A system of knots of this kind does, of course, lend itself very readily to the expression of numbers and the method of recording these is made very clear by Locke and Nordenskiöld.

But it is evident that it is of little utility to have the exact number of things unless we know what things. Probably quipus were used by individuals for their ~~own~~ own record, the objects, animals, or persons enumerated being lodged in the memory of the owner of the quipu. It would have been strange, however, if no mnemonic devices had been added to remind the user of the quipu of the specific application of the record. There would be occasions, particularly when the owner of the quipu was a public officer, when it ~~would~~ would have been of importance to have such marks of identification in his quipu, and we have the best of evidence that these were made. These marks of identification were often peculiar colors. Garcilaso says :

also  
who

The thing to which a string referred was understood by its color, for instance a yellow string referred to gold, a white to silver, and a red one to soldiers."

the  
who  
who