

Student Handout #2 – Empire, civilization, or both?

The article you just read was titled “The Rise and Fall of the Mayan Empire.” Did the Mayans really have an empire? Were they a civilization? Revisit the articles using the checklists below. Check off the criteria for civilization, and then for empire, that the Mayans met. With your group, decide if you think the Mayans should be described as a civilization, an empire, or both.

<i>Civilizations have</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Did the Mayans have this?</i>	<i>Evidence / Example</i>
Cities	Cities supported large populations of over 30,000 people	yes	The map shows several cities... we don't know for sure how many people lived there, but historians think they were big
Specialization	People living in cities took full-time specialized jobs and were supported by farmers from the surrounding community.		
Hierarchy	A class system emerged where certain men (and sometimes women) held all the power.		
The State	Specialized roles for those making the rules. In early societies, these roles were often played by a king and a small group of officials.		
Networks of Trade	Many civilizations traded within and outside of their borders.		
Technology	People used advanced tools to develop their food supplies, housing, etc.		
Monuments	Large buildings were constructed like city walls, temples, palaces, and tombs for powerful rulers.		
Spiritual Beliefs/Laws	Spiritual beliefs and laws became richer and more complex.		
Creativity	Individuals worked with the ruling class to study astronomy, mathematics, sciences, and engineering.		

Empire Checklist	Did the Mayans have these characteristics?	Examples / Evidence
Group of states united under one ruler (often by force)		
Large geographic area		
United and rules by a central authority		
Organized military used to expand and hold territory		
Territory included different cultural and geographic regions		

So... how would you describe the Mayans? Were they an empire, a civilization, or both? Provide some examples to support your claim.