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THE COVER

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1. Mayan: The Leyden Plate. Found near Puerto Barrios, Guatemala in 1864, it carries the earliest known date in the Mayan Long Count:

8.14.3.1.12 (AD 320).

2. Egyptian: Hieroglyphic text, part of an inscription containing a hymn to Osiris with figure of Kheruef. The text reads:

Prince, friend of the Lord of the Two Lands, Confidant of the good god, royal scribe, chief royal herald, steward of the great royal wife.

3. Japanese: The name Mimaki-iri-biko, written using Chinese characters purely for their phonetic values. Kojiki Book II, ch. 4: Sakamoto et al. 1967, I:182.

4. Indian: A couplet from the Rgveda:

If with the Yadus, Turevaṣas, ye sojourn, with Druhyus, Anus,  
Pûrus, Indra-Agni!  
Even from thence, ye mighty Lords, come hither, and drink  
libations of the flowing Soma. (Rgveda I.108.8)

Translated by R.T.H. Griffith, Hymns of the Rigveda (Benares, 1896-97).

5. Sumerian: Cuneiform text, part of a legal document from c. 2250 BC:

It is of Ur-Šara.

6. Linear B: Knossos tablet Dk(2)1065 by Hand 119:

KADANOR 100 [✓] rams 34 kg. of wool  
[at] Kutaton deficit: 41 kg. of wool

7. Greek: The opening lines of Herodotus' Histories:

Herodotus of Halicarnassus, his Researches are here set down to preserve the memory of the past by putting on record the astonishing achievements both...(Herodotus, Histories I.1)

Translated by A. de Sélincourt. Harmondsworth, Penguin.