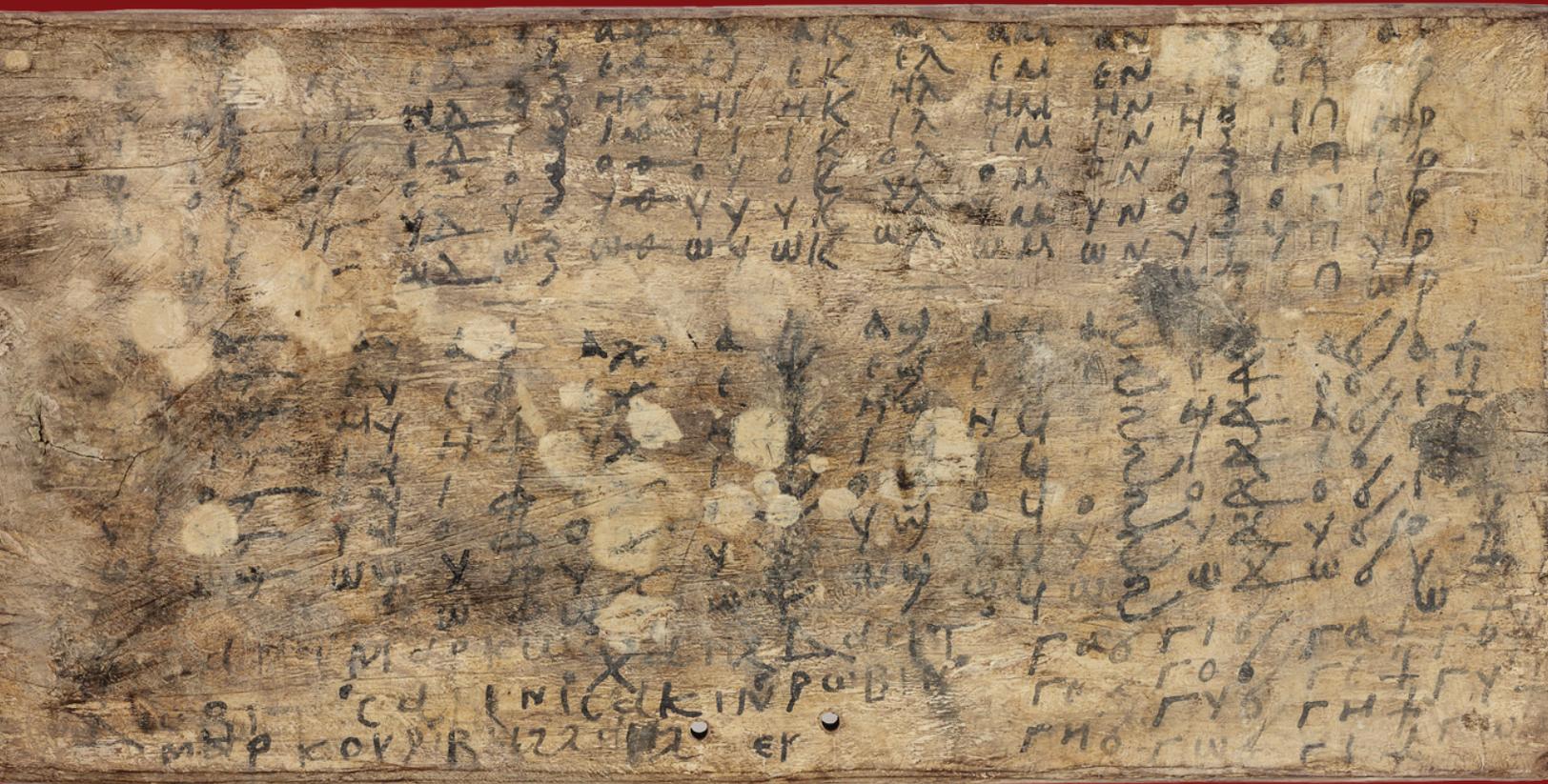


# LANGUAGE AND WRITING WORKBOOK



E49447: Writing board, not on display



**ORIENTAL INSTITUTE**  
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

# Ancient Scribes Scavenger Hunt

Writing was an important tool for ancient civilizations—with writing, contracts, laws, stories, and records could be recorded permanently and easily shared. Because ancient writing systems were often complicated, a specialized group of people called scribes were responsible for writing records. Use this scavenger hunt to explore the lives and roles of scribes in the ancient world!

## How to search for objects:

1. Go to [oi-idb.uchicago.edu](http://oi-idb.uchicago.edu).
2. Type or copy and paste the registration number for the object (Example: A9325).
3. Check the box "Images Only."
4. Press Submit.



Scribes often worked for the government in ancient times. What is the name of the royal scribe shown here? **E10507**

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This is the seal of the scribe Kirbanum. What is the name of the king he worked for? **A917**

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This ink-stained pen was used by a scribe in ancient Egypt. What is it made from? **E8522**

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What is contained in this scribal box from ancient Egypt? **E10780D**

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Learning to be a scribe was hard work. In ancient Mesopotamia, students copied cuneiform words onto small clay tablets, like this school tablet here. What language is written on this tablet? **A3398**

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This writing board was used by a student to practice in late antique Egypt. What language is written on this board? **E49447**

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Scribes played an important role in everyday life, including writing contracts. This document contains five copies of what kind of contract? **E25259**

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Scribes also wrote records about farming, food, and trade. What is recorded on this Sumerian cuneiform tablet? **A5701**

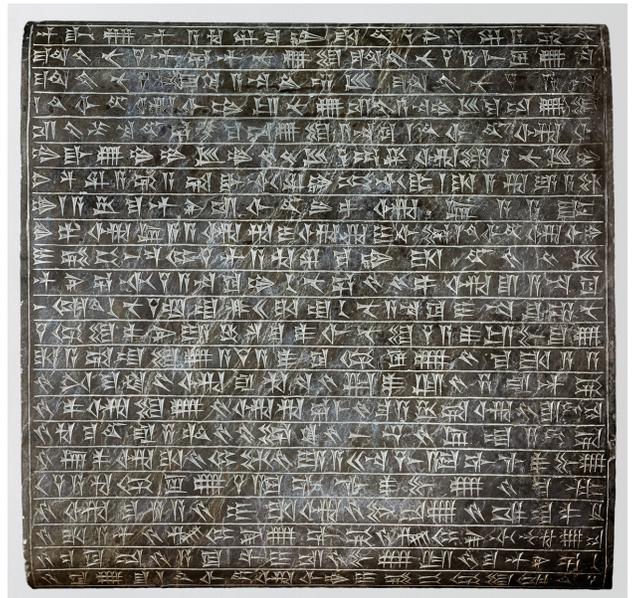
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Scribes wrote important texts for kings, which were probably carved into stone by artisans.

This foundation slab may have been buried under the corner of an important building when it was being constructed. What Persian king was this made for? **A24120**

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What script is used on this throne fragment from Tell Tayinat in ancient Anatolia? **A27861D**

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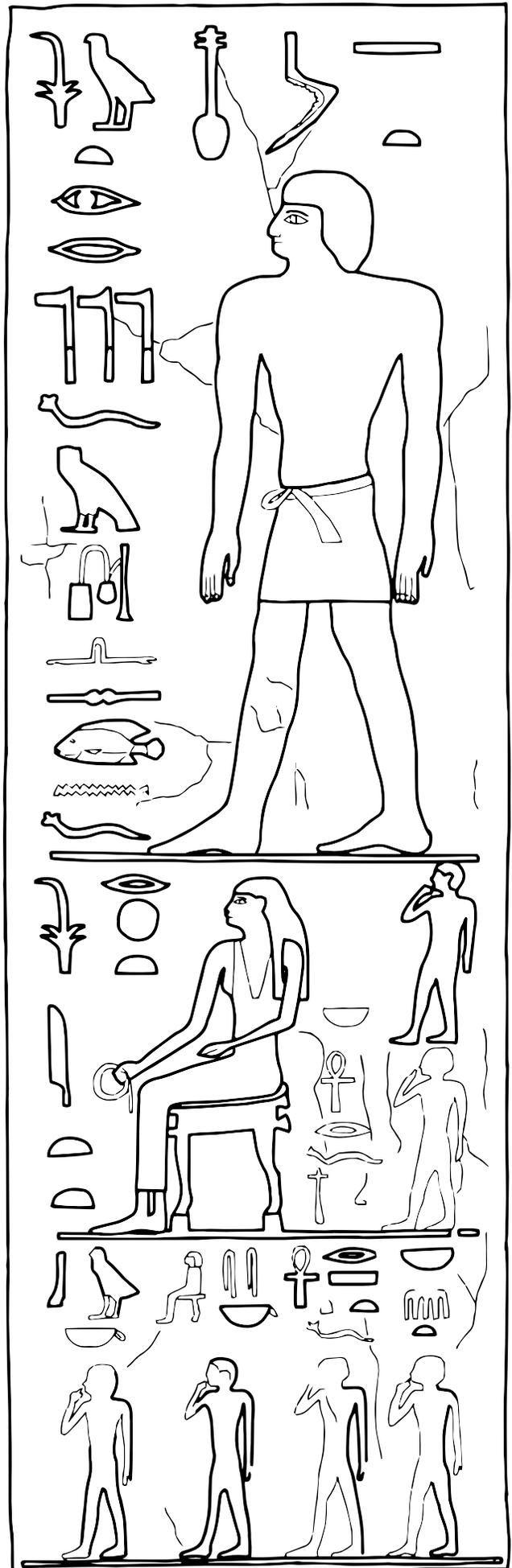
Scribes also wrote religious texts, like this one inscribed on an offering table from ancient Nubia. The language written here has not been entirely deciphered by experts. What is this language? **E22557**

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Scribes wrote down stories, including the oldest story ever written, the Epic of Gilgamesh. When was this tablet written? **A22007**

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## Relief of Nefermaat and Itet

E9002, on display in the Joseph and Mary Grimshaw Egyptian Gallery

This relief comes from the tomb of an Old Kingdom vizier, Nefermaat, and his wife, Itet. In ancient Egypt, the most important and expensive thing a person could purchase was their tomb. A tomb would protect a person's body after they died and would ensure that their memory and thus their afterlife continued forever.

Ancient Egyptians feared that their tombs' decorations, including images and hieroglyphs, would be damaged—by tomb robbers, personal enemies, or even people looking to steal the tomb for their own use. Hieroglyphs could be chiseled out of a wall, and new ones could even be written in their place! To prevent this damage, the vizier Nefermaat took a unique approach. He had the images and hieroglyphs in his tomb carved deep into the surface of the walls and then filled with a colored paste. The hieroglyphs in this relief refer to this process: “He is one who made his gods in writing that cannot be erased.” In this case, “gods” does not mean images of gods, but the literal meaning of the ancient Egyptian word for “god,” which means “symbol” or “image.” Unfortunately, the paste could still fall out of the carvings, and the process took a lot of work, so it was not repeated.