Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Section: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**DESCRIPTION**

1. Look at and handle the object for a short time, then write a brief description of the object – what do you think are its most important characteristics?

2. How would you describe this object’s state of preservation? Do you think anything might be missing, or is it whole and intact?

3. (a) Carefully use the calipers to determine the height, width, and thickness of this object in centimeters.

Max Diameter: Height: Wall Thickness:

3. (b) Use your measurements and observations to draw a **rough** sketch of the object here:

 **Side/Profile Top-Down**

**PRODUCTION**

4. From which material and how was this object made? Refer to the list of production methods at the end of this worksheet.

5. Do you think this object was expensive or inexpensive? What gives this object its value: is the vessel more important than the writing, or vice versa?

**FUNCTION AND CONTEXT**

6. (a) Even today, to speak the words “thee I do wed” or “I christen this ship…” has performative value: the writing or reading of formulaic words takes on an active power that *accomplishes something*. What does this inscription accomplish, or intend to *do*? Read the translation of the inscription on the following page. What are the principle verbs employed? Who is the subject or principal concern of the inscription? Who are the objects?

6. (b) Compare the following two ancient authors’ positions on the function of language for prayers and incantations. In the space at the top of the next page, explain why your object may or may not have been understood to be efficacious by people in the ancient world, in light of these two passages.

“We have to mention that those who are skilled in the use of incantations relate that the utterance of the same incantation in its proper language can accomplish what the spell professes to do; but when translated into any other tongue, it is observed to become inefficacious and feeble. And thus it is not the things signified, but the qualities and peculiarities of words, which possess a certain power for this or that purpose.” [Origen, *Against Celsus* 1.25 (third century CE)

“Why, also, are terms preferred that are unintelligible, and of those that are unintelligible why are foreign ones preferred instead of those of our own language? For if the one who hears gives attention to the signification it is enough that the concept remains the same, whatever the term may be. For the divinity that is invoked is possibly not Egyptian in race; and if he is Egyptian, he is far from making use of Egyptian speech, or indeed of any human language at all. These may all be the artful contrivances of jugglers. [Iamblichus, *On the Mysteries* 3.25 (early fourth century CE)]

**SIGNIFICANCE**



7. Horseshoes and crucifixes are just two of the objects commonly used as protective devices for houses and households around the world today. What makes these objects powerful, so that they are understood to provide or communicate the idea of protection? Explain your object in light of these modern parallels.

8. If you took this object out of the museum and put it back in the ancient world, where and with whom would you put it, and why?

**TRANSLATION[[1]](#footnote-1)**

1 In the name of Life. May there be healing

2 and arming and sealing and protection for Hormiṣ [note, these names are Persian]

3 and Frawardīn-dād and Zādān-farrōkh and Khwarkhšēd-Ma and Rām-Gušnaṣ

4 and Bindoy, children of Ašarqum, and for their spouses, and for their sons, and for their daughters,

5 and for the house and the dwelling and the residence and the building and the livestock. Bound is the mountain *Ishtar*, and bound is

6 the dog-like *Ishtar* [goddess from Mesopotamian pantheon], bound is the rebellious *Abugdana* [king of demons] and the rebellious *abugdanita* [little demons], who stand before them.

7 Bound are all the *abugdanas* and demons, all the *sahras* and *dēvs* and amulet-spirits and Liliths [a female demon from Judaic Babylonian Talmud literature] who are loosed by them

8 into the earthly world, who seduce (or drive mad?) men and women and fill them with burning wrath (lit. heat and wrath) and cause them to quarrel with each other, and out of their burning

9 wrath they go out into the steppe and pull out (the hair of) their heads. They (the demons) eat of their flesh and drink of their blood and they (the victims) languish away.

10 They (the victims) cry out at night and during the day, and kneel on their knees, and spit upon the ground, and curse and shout, and you (the demons) hear them. With your amulet-spirits

11 you finish them off, you destroy their houses and desolate their residences. Behold, you are bound and fettered and suppressed (away) from

12 Hormiṣ and Frawardīn-dād and Zādān-farrōkh and Khwarkhšēd-Ma and Rām-Gušnaṣ and Bindoy, children of Aša(r)qum, and from their spouses and their sons and their daughters, and from

13 this house and dwelling and residence, and from the souls that are in it. You are suppressed and put under the feet of the selected of righteousness, by the power and the word of the one great name of Life. Life is victorious!

*Outside, perpendicular to rim (as label):*

14 It is ‘Bound is

15 the *Ishtar*’.

**Production Methods**

Ceramics

* 1. Wheel-made ceramic objects were made on a potter’s wheel: this is a flat disk on which clay was placed that was spun at high speed. The potter used their hands or instruments to shape the clay as it turned. Afterwards hundreds to thousands of objects were placed in a kiln and fired until hard. Because these objects are turned on a potter’s wheel, they are circular on one axis and symmetrical about a center point (think of a plate or bowl). They usually have ridge lines from the vessel spinning in the potter’s hands.
	2. Mould-made ceramics were created by first carving a mould in two pieces of stone (one for the top, one for the bottom). Clay was pressed into each half of the mould, the two halves were pressed together and the whole thing was fired in a kiln until hard. The result was an object of almost any shape (as opposed to the wheel-made ceramics, which must be circular on one axis), often with intricate “carved” designs. You can often see a line where the two mould halves came together.

Metal

* 1. Casting was a technique similar to mould-made ceramics (above), but whereas clay is pressed into a mould, molten metal or glass is poured into a cast.
	2. Lost-wax (or lost-mould) casting was a technique for casting objects in which the artist created an object’s model from hard wax (or another material with a low melting-point temperature). Clay was then shaped around the wax model, forming a soft interior and a hard exterior. A hole was pierced through the hard exterior into the wax and the mould was fired until hard, thereby also melting and draining the wax. Molten metal was poured into the empty exterior mould and allowed to cool, before the mould was broken to reveal the now-hardened metal version of the wax model.

Glass

* 1. Cast glass: see above under “casting”.
	2. Blown glass was created using a technique in which molten glass was placed on the end of a tube that the glassblower would then blow through. The result was any roundish object that was hollow.
	3. Core-formed glass vessels were created by first creating the shape of the intended object out of clay (the core) and then heating it and rolling it in powdered glass, which built up around the core. Bands of colored glass were then applied and pressed into the powdered glass. Designs were then made with tools and handles were attached (if the vessel had handles). The core was then removed, resulting in a glass vessel with geometric designs on the outside.

Lots of Materials

* 1. Carving a negative process, whereby different instruments (blades, chisels, etc.) are used to remove material from a larger block in order to create a desired shape.
1. Translation by Dr. James Nathan Ford. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)