



Type: Terracotta oil lamp
Chronology: 5th century AD
Findspot: Cyprus
Actual location: Metropolitan Museum New York (inventory nr. 74.51.2039).
Website: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/241592>

This is a terracotta oil lamp of the type that was commonly used on a daily life basis but could also be placed in burials.

On the disc, it features the Christian chi-rho monogram (*chrismos*) formed by superimposing the first two Greek letters chi and rho (XP) from the Greek word ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ (Christos). The symbol is found on Roman sarcophagi of the 3rd century AD but it is after Constantine that it became more common. The symbol was associated to Constantine's victory against Maxentius at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, Rome, on the 28th of October 312 AD and from the 4th century onwards it features prominently on Christian funerary monuments, on paintings, mosaics and artefacts such as oil lamps, rings, coins and so on.

MY RESEARCH

How far does material culture reflect religious identity in the Roman world?