

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

AHMET ARI

THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY

**THE BIOGRAPHY AND
MULTIVALENCE OF
SACRED SILVER
OBJECTS IN THE
SIXTH-CENTURY SION
TREASURE**

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SUMMARY

The aim of this thesis is to demonstrate that the sacred silver objects from the sixth-century Sion treasure had different biographies and multivalences in different contexts. By this I mean that these objects had different conceptual dimensions in their production and usage in sixth-century Byzantium. These different meanings were a result of the changing interrelationships between people and the objects, depending on the intention and functionality of the objects and the contexts in which they were used. I will highlight three main aspects, all closely related. The first is the question of the changing function of the silver treasure: as commodity for sale; as a gift to God; as used inside the church for liturgical performances or as decorative church revetments. Tied to this is the intention of its users, something developed through ritual and knowledge, which gave the treasure its intended function – which relates to its functionality and the contexts in which it was used. These contexts enabled the users of the silverware to perceive these objects in different ways and give them meanings and life-stories, or biographies. For example, when a worshipper inside the church engaged with a paten, say, their reading and valuing of that object was not that which the donors perceived when they gave it as a gift.

My examination is carried out with a focus on the fifty-two silver objects from the Sion treasure which I have examined in Antalya Museum in Turkey and the Dumbarton Oaks Collection in Washington DC. Relying on my examinations in these two collections, the arguments in this thesis will be based on the forms, inscriptions, decorations, stamps and monograms on the objects. My thesis will discuss both what the value of the silverware was to its producers, donors and what its value might have been to those using these objects inside the church, not only to clergy but also to lay worshippers.