***Changing Legends Surrounding the Holy Blood Ostensorium***

The small rock crystal vial containing the Holy Blood is one of two blood relics that were verified to have been in St. Mark's since the late Middle Ages and whose origin in Constantinople was either claimed in the sources or is obvious from their appearance.[[1]](#footnote-1) The crystal bottle containing the blood of Christ, together with a Cross relic and the skull of the Baptist, is first mentioned in the miracle story by Ranieri Zeno and at the same time explicitly identified as part of the plunder from 1204. The political implications of this claim can be understood from the specific context of the spring of 1265, as discussed earlier. But how important was it to the Doges to maintain this venerable provenance of the relic during the period that followed?

The case of the Blood relic, in particular, makes it clear that the link with Constantinople was by no means all that relevant for the Venetians, though this has been claimed by other scholars. I discussed earlier how the Doge conducted his diplomatic campaign to secure papal benevolence in the spring of 1265 primarily in order to achieve official recognition of the relic and its cult by the head of the Roman church, as well as the institutionalization of indulgences through the issuance of a papal bull. As for the authenticity, and thus the worthiness, of the relics involved in the miraculous ‘trial by fire', Ranieri's claim that the relics originally came from Jerusalem seems to me to be at least as important as his indication that they were looted from Constantinople. This is especially true with reference to the Holy Blood.

1. On other blood relics that were only first verified later in San Marco Polacco 2002. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)