And what if it weren’t a lion? The Venetians asked themselves this right away, and in 1293 the Maggior Consiglio or Higher Council resolved to restore the bronze statue, which to this day sits overlooking St. Mark’s Square on one of the two granite columns, the other pertaining to St. Theodore. We are talking about the most mysterious and legendary of Venice’s restorations, the very symbol of the city. The lion placed on top of the column is a mystery still unsolved even by the latest studies. Disagreement prevails as to its construction date and origin. All we have are well-reasoned conjectures. Let’s talk about the most credited of these: the lion is instead a hybrid between a lion and a griffin supposedly made in the early Oriental Hellenism by a Greek or

È quindi probabile che, nel corso del XII secolo, i veneziani si fossero impadroniti della statua (che aveva già perso la sua caratteristica con la raffigurazione di Sandon) in una città costiera...

Se leone non fosse? È questa la domanda che da subito si fecero i veneziani che in una delibera del Maggior Consiglio del 1293 decisero che la statua in bronzo, che tutt’ora sovrasta piazza S. Marco sopra una delle due colonne in granito (l’altra è la colonna di San Teodoro), andava restaurata. Stiamo parlando dell’opera più misteriosa e leggendaria di Venezia. Tanto più che fa riferimento al simbolo stesso della città. Il leone posto sopra la colonna è un arcano non risolto anche dai più recenti studi che non hanno saputo decidere né sulla data della sua costruzione, né sulla provenienza. Abbiamo solo delle ipotesi, anche se ben argomentate. Diciamo subito la più accreditata: il leone è un ibrido fra un leone e un grifone prodotto nel primo ellenismo...
Greek-Ionic artist, somewhere between the end of the 4th and the beginning of the 3rd centuries a.C.. The monument was apparently erected on behalf of Sandon the pagan goddess and protectress of the city of Tarsus in Cilicia, in modern-day Turkey. According to archaeologists, around the 3rd century there existed a monument representing the goddess atop a large winged and horned lion, the appearance of which is compatible with that of the lion of St. Mark. Tarsus being an Episcopal seat at least until the end of the 4th century, one can surmise that the statue was knocked down due to its pagan nature and stripped, perhaps at least until the IV century a.C. And in the 13th century, the Venetians may have come into possession of the statue (which by then had already lost the part representing a lion). The monument was rediscovered in 1293, and the Venetians, who also restored it, decided to represent a lion-like figure (a griffin with a lion’s head). Venetian merchants, who skillfully brought home beautiful artwork from foreign lands, assiduously visited the Gulf of Alessandretta as of the 12th century d.C.. The monument was restored by Bertucius in 1816 and 1892.

The legend of the St. Mark’s bronze

The legend of the St. Mark’s bronze far east, or that maybe it was a Babylonian monument, let us return to more recent times and the year 1297. According to the eyewitness account of Marco Polo’s undertakers, in 1293 there is no written record of the winged lion cult dates back to the end of the 8th century. Meanwhile in Venice, Marco replaced Theodore, the Greek-Byzantine warrior-saint, by the winged Lion, a symbol of the city’s courage and strength. Venice adopted it to represent both beard of water and of land, thus highlighting its power on the seas and mainland alike. When the winged lion rested its paw on an open book, this meant that times of peace prevailed.

HYPOTHESIS
1st period (IV-III century B.C.)
a) Monument of Sandon in Tarsus
b) Monument of Ishtar in Babylon
2nd Period (IV-VI century A.D.)
• The Griffon Lion is replaced by a lion
3rd period (XII century A.D.)
The lion is transformed into S. Mark’s symbol
4th period (1293)
Restorated by Bertucius
5th & 6th period (1816 & 1892)
Ristrutturato per Fermi e ristrutturazione Boni

LE IPOTESI
I fase (IV-III secolo a.C.)
a) Monumento di Sandon a Tarso
b) Monumento di Ishtar a Babillonia
II fase (IV VI secolo d.C.)
Il leone gatto è sostituito da leone
III fase (XII secolo d.C.)
Il Leone è restaurato nel simbolo di San Marco
IV fase (1293)
Restaurazione Bertucius
V e VI fase (1816 e 1892)
Riportato Fermi e restaurato Boni