As was the custom in Venice, on April 25, the feast day of San Marco, the brothers of San Giovanni Evangelista took the True Cross to the piazza, where, together with all of the city’s confraternities and other civic bodies, they honored Venice’s patron saint with a solemn procession. It was a festive occasion and another opportunity to display the brotherhood’s precious relic in a setting that highlighted the Cross as an essential part of the republic’s treasury of blessings. The ritualized demonstrations of civic pride involved government and citizenry in a show of unity and cohesion under supernatural protection, and offered a grand spectacle to foreign visitors, from political dignitaries to men of affairs attending to business in the city. In the first decades of the fifteenth century, as the Cross proved its reputation time and again, the government had come to see it not just as a confraternal relic but as a communal possession, “our Cross,” as the Council of Ten put it in one of their rulings in regard to the custody of the relic.

During the procession of 1443, among the crowd witnessing the celebrations was a citizen of Brescia, an honorable merchant of substantial means, by the name of Giacomo de Salis. Giacomo was much too upset to enjoy the spectacle and join in the festive mood. The night before, on the eve of the feast, he had received distressing news from back home. His young son, while running in the piazza della loggia in the newly reconstructed civic centre, had collided with a corner of a stone balustrade and injured his head. The impact fractured his skull, from which pieces of bone had to be extracted. The grim news had shaken the unfortunate father. Seized by despair, he numbly attended to the festivities. That is, until the procession carrying the Cross reached him. Remembering the miracles he had heard talked about, he threw himself on his knees before the relic as it was paraded and prayed for his son’s recovery. Sure enough, on the next day the doctors attending to the boy lifted the poultice on his head and found the tissue underneath clean, sound, and healing. As soon as he found out about this, the relieved Giacomo relayed the news to the scuola’s guardian, Francesco di Argoiosi, and pledged to have his
son come to the confraternity to thank the True Cross in person. Another grandissimo miracolo, worthy of the Cross's growing dossier of interventions on behalf of desperate supplicants, was recorded for posterity.

Intriguingly, it was a miracle wrought on behalf of a foreigner. Thus far in its career, the relic had intervened only on behalf of Venetians and naturalized citizens, protecting their foreign counterparts in the process—possibly Vendramin's sailors and the ship with Paolo Rabia—and would later protect from the fury of the Adriatic a native citizen travelling on a Candia-bound Cretan vessel. Giacomo, however, was a Brescian, and although he must have had Venetian citizenship de intus by default, he was still an outsider rather than a resident of the city. This enlargement of the relic's field of action to cover a denizen of the terraferma, and not just any but a Brescian, came at a time when the republic was pushing its territorial expansion westward to its limits, and suggests that the intervention on behalf of Giacomo was not accidental. By all indications, the miracle was part and parcel of Venice's strategy of building its territorial domain and provides a range of insights into the complicated nature of the process in the 1440s.

In the early 1440s, Brescia and its contado were a vital component of Venice's territorial empire, but the connections between the Lombard city and the metropolis on the Adriatic coast went back centuries. Located about 160 miles due west from Venice, Brescia was crucial for the political and economic expansion of the city in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Located about 160 miles due west from Venice, Brescia was crucial for the political and economic expansion of the city in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It sat astride the main commercial arteries linking Venetian trade to Milan and the Alpine passes to northwestern Europe. It was in control of a large, well-populated, and prosperous district, rich in metals, minerals, wool, agricultural products, and lumber from the Alpine valleys, all of great importance for Venetian trade both at home and abroad, and critical for Venice's lifeblood, the shipbuilding industry. As the republic tangled with the dukes of Milan in the early fifteenth century, Brescia increased in strategic importance, constituting the mightiest Venetian hold against the Milanese drive eastward. The Bresciano was a good market for the Venetian staple monopoly, salt, and furthermore provided a steady inflow of skilled immigrant labor. By the first quarter of the fifteenth century Brescian industrial products, especially the moderate-quality, adequately priced woolen fabrics, supplied a substantial segment of the Venetian woolens market and exports. In return, Brescians acquired a variety of

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1 Conclusions of Andrea Mozzato, "Il mercato dei panni di lana a Venezia nel primo ventennio del XV secolo," in Giovanni Fontana and Gérard Gayot, eds., *Wool: Products*