THE LEGEND OF ST. FRANCIS IN THE BARDI
CHAPEL AND IN THE SASSETTI CHAPEL

by

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STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the pictorial evolution of the legend of St. Francis as demonstrated in the Bardi Chapel in Santa Croce and the Sassetti Chapel in Santa Trinita. The first chapter is a synopsis of Florentine society of the fourteenth century, and examines to what extent society, the patron, the artist and the Church govern the selection of scenes for this fourteenth century Franciscan cycle.

The second part of this paper discusses the social changes in Florentine society from the time of Giotto's execution of the Franciscan program in the Bardi Chapel to the late fifteenth century. In this chapter, one development to be discussed is the inclusion of portraiture within religious art commissions. The last chapter examines Ghirlandaio's fresco program in the Sassetti Chapel in Santa Trinita. After an examination of the role of the patron, new iconographic elements will be discussed.
CHAPTER ONE
FOURTEENTH CENTURY FLORENTINE SOCIETY

The economic power of Florence expanded with unequaled importance during the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The foundation of this economic expansion rests on three distinct bases; banking, textile production and trading of textiles. The great entrepreneurs of Florence, who controlled textile production and the trading commerce, were also its principle bankers.\(^1\) The Florentine exporting-importing offices throughout Europe were concurrently banks of exchange. Furthermore, these prominent industries were inevitably controlled by a few all-powerful men. These men not only managed the fiscal accounts of the world's greatest foreign courts but eventually obtained almost exclusively the control of the Papal court's monetary business.\(^2\) The Papacy had great confidence in the

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1. Ferdinand Schevill, *History of Florence from the Founding of the City through the Renaissance* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1936), p. 296. The Florentine bankers achieved international power through business endeavors with the Papacy and the emperor. The banking companies engaged not only in banking but also in trade. Representatives of the Florentine firms appeared at all the great European fairs. The Florentines, in particular, possessed special information about goods, markets and developed a new device; a bill of exchange, the florin.

Florentine bankers, for not only were these men bankers, industrialists and merchants, they were also unquestionably in control of every aspect of Florentine life, especially within the political sphere.3

Beginning in the thirteenth century in Florence, the workers, the merchants and even the industrialists organized into guilds. These guilds were formed to protect the economic interests of their profession. However, the relationship of each member within a guild or the power of each guild itself was far from equal. In addition to protecting their economic interests, guilds simultaneously acquired political emancipation and political autonomy for their own bourgeois stratum.4 The guilds, in time, channeled the population of Florence into two distinct groups, those with power and active rights and those without. In addition to the inequality of active rights among the Florentine people, the inequality of the division of wealth also grew increasingly more blatant in Florence.5


5. Antal, p. 27. For example, Antal notes that between the years of 1393 and 1396 the groups which held political power became more exclusive. The governing middle sections and the moderate sections of the upper class were reduced to political impotency.
During the latter part of the thirteenth century the Church associated both economically and politically with the upper bourgeois class. This relationship, in turn, carried with it a change in religious trends. One such trend was the founding of the Mendicant Orders. Of the two most popular Mendicant Orders, the Dominicans and the Franciscans, the Franciscans possessed the capability of changing religious practices. The immense popularity enjoyed by the Franciscan friars was largely due to their practice of preaching the moral truth of Christian history and religious dogma. By the use of the vernacular during the friar's sermon and the particular wandering nature of the preachers, the Franciscans succeeded in diminishing the gap between the laity and the Church. The Franciscan Order directly affected the Church's new more humane approach to the story of Christ and the saints. This new approach, inspired by St. Francis, stressed the human side of Christ and the saints. Francis preached continually on the joys and sufferings of the holy personages. Therefore, it was this new humanistic attitude of the Church, and especially of the Franciscan Order, that

6. Antal, p. 68. The need for the Mendicant Orders in Florence arose after the Church completely supressed such sectarian groups as the Waldenses, Cathari and Albigenses.


was responsible for initiating a new artistic trend -- the great narrative cycles. These pictorial programs mirrored the newly founded approach of the Church. The lives of Christ, Mary and the saints were equated on a human level. In essence, the great narrative cycles served not only as a constant visual reminder but also served as a silent sermon aimed at the human sympathies of the viewer.

Following the death of St. Francis, pictorial representations of him were directly influenced by contemporary ecclesiastical writings. The earliest pictorial image of St. Francis may be found in the St. Gregory chapel of the Sacre Speco monastery in Subiaco. The inclusion of the words FRATER FRANCISCUS, have lead some scholars to believe that this work may date to the time when St. Francis visited the monastery in 1218, that is, prior to his death in 1226. However, the arguments for a later date are far more convincing. The basis for a later dating is the stylistic similarities found in another mural which is also located in the St. Gregory chapel. In the mural Pope Gregory IX is consecrating the chapel. Behind the pope stands a cleric and behind the cleric stands St. Francis. St. Francis is represented with


11. Kaftal, St. Francis, p. 20.
the same stylistic features as the earlier mural; thereby increasing the likelihood that both murals were created by the same artist at a similar date. An inscription states that this fresco was executed in 1228, one year after the completion of the chapel. Signor Hermanin's hypothesis however is that Pope Gregory ordered both murals to commemorate the Saint's visit of 1218. The Saint does not correspond at all with the description given of him by Tommaso da Celano. Even the pope, who was eighty years old at the time of his election to the Papacy on 19 March 1227, was idealized. Therefore, St. Francis was represented as he appeared prior to receiving the stigmata and his canonized status.

In the decade following the death and canonization of St. Francis, the stylistic elements within pictorial representations of the saint changed drastically. This new artistic trend was greatly influenced by the writings of Tommaso da Celano. The first official biography was delegated by Pope Gregory IX, who formerly was the Cardinal Protector of the Friar Minors. Upon his arrival at Assisi, in order to canonize Francis on 26 July 1228, he concurrently

12. C. Campbell Crowther, "St. Francis of Assisi." Apollo, vol. 4, October (London: 1926), p. 151. The completion date of the chapel was 1227, the second year of Gregory IX pontificate.


commissioned Tommaso da Celano to write the biography of the saint.\textsuperscript{15}

The first official biography was presented and approved by the Pope on 25 February 1229.\textsuperscript{16} Included in the text of the \textit{Vita Prima} by Tommaso was a verbal description of the saint.\textsuperscript{17} This description greatly influenced early representations of St. Francis. For example, in Bonaventura Berlinghieri's \textit{St. Francis} c. 1235 (Fig. 1), an attempt to record the saint's personal peculiarities within the general confines of the Byzantine pictorial tradition was afforded. His art typifies this early stylistic period. The saint is centralized, stylized and frontal in pose. It is the ascetic and iconic qualities of the saint which were accentuated over a true to life portrait.

The program of imagery depicted in this painting, with its six lateral miniature scenes, was partially

\begin{quote}


17. Mockler, p. 152. In Tommaso da Celano's writings a physical description of St. Francis was included: "He was of medium height, closer to shortness, his head was moderate in size and round, his face a bit long and prominent, his forehead smooth and low, his eyes were black and sound, his hair black, his eyebrows straight, his nose symmetrical, thin and straight, his ears sticking out but small, his temple smooth. His teeth were set close together, even and white. His neck was slender, his shoulders straight, his arms short, his hands slender, his fingers long, his nails extended, his lips were thin, his feet small, his skin was delicate and his flesh very spare."
\end{quote}
Fig. 1. Berlinghieri, Bonaventura, St. Francis Altarpiece (after Frederick Hartt, History of Italian Renaissance Art, 1974). Alinari photograph.
influenced by the design of the traditional painted cross.\textsuperscript{18} It is significant to note that four of the scenes represented are posthumous miracles. The inclusion of these posthumous miracles within the panel painting insures the laity of his role as an intercessor, a position of great importance for a saint. With regard to iconography, it is essential to remember the current medieval division between images and scenes. Kaftal states, "a devotional image may be defined as a pictorial representation of a saint; it has the primary aim of concentrating and helping the devotion of the faithful. The devotional image was the sign of the saint, the visible sign of an invisible presence."\textsuperscript{19} In contrast, Kaftal continues, "the 'scenes' were always an illustration of an existing text. Their aim was the edification of the faithful, mostly illiterates."\textsuperscript{20} These scenes were developed to instruct the faithful in Christian virtues, by presenting the life of the saint as an example. In essence, the surrounding scenes function as visual exegesis.

The first Vita by Tommaso da Celano and the construction of the huge basilica in Assisi were both commissioned by the Church to preserve the memory of St. Francis and cement the relationship between the Order and the Church. The

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{19} Kaftal, St. Francis, p. 21.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Kaftal, St. Francis, p. 22.
\end{itemize}
Chapter of Genoa in 1244 requested friars to send in their reminiscences to complement the Vita Prima and Tommaso was again engaged to write a biography.\textsuperscript{21} In Tommaso's Vita Secunda, he discusses more clearly the views of the saint on such matters as poverty, mendicancy, religious education and the association of the brothers to the clergy.\textsuperscript{22} The need for a second biography clearly demonstrates the new direction of the Order. The Order was becoming firmly entrenched within the Church's ecclesiastical hierarchy.

After a few years, Giovanni di Parma, now the Minister General of the Franciscan Order, c. 1248-1257, commissioned Tommaso to write yet a third book concerning the miracles of St. Francis. This book is called the Tractatus de Miraculi and dates c. 1250-1253.\textsuperscript{23} Giovanni di Parma was asked to resign as Minister General because of his pronouncedly spiritualist sympathies. However, through unrelenting support of the friars and contrary to custom,

\textsuperscript{21} Mockler, p. 30. The Pentacost Chapter General, Fra Crescentius of Iesi elected sixth Minister-General of the Order, requested for memoirs of Francis' life and miracles to be sent to Tommaso da Celano.

\textsuperscript{22} Kaftal, St. Francis, p. 25. During the writings of the Vita Prima, Elias, who though not the Minister-General was nevertheless very powerful within the Order. In the first biography Brother Elias was shown to be the successor appointed by Francis himself on his deathbed. But by 1247, the situation had changed greatly, Brother Elias had been excommunicated for his association with Emperor Frederick II and therefore his name is not mentioned once in Vita Secunda.

\textsuperscript{23} Mockler, p. 30.
Giovanni di Parma selected as the next Minister General
Giovanni da Fidanza, who eventually was known as St.
Bonaventura. 24

St. Bonaventura was commissioned to write a new
official biography of St. Francis; the need for which arose
from the dissension created by different factions of the
Franciscan Order. Although Bonaventura's Legenda Maior gives
the impression that the sources were acquired firsthand, they
were in reality a compilation from Celano's Vitae. However,
the St. Francis who emerges from Bonaventura's biography was
more in keeping with what the Order had become -- an
organization. The Paris General of the Franciscan Chapter
thereafter passed a decree ordering all previously written
biographies destroyed. Miraculously, a few copies of the
Vitae by Tommaso survived the Paris decree. 25

By this time in the history of the Franciscan Order,
the original Rule of St. Francis had been greatly altered.
The three main themes that concerned St. Francis and the
brothers -- poverty, humility and the prohibition of
ownership, had to be vitiated. Yet, it was the third theme,

24. Kaftal, St. Francis, p. 25. On 2 February 1257
Giovanni of Parma resigns, but during the Chapter General in
Rome he selects Bonaventura as the eighth Minister-General of
the Order.

25. Mockler, p. 15. Only two complete copies have
survived of the Vita Secunda -- the Assisi MS and the
Marseille MS; of the Vita Prima, only one copy survived in
Franciscan hands; but fortunately the Cistercians saved eight
and with the Benedictines three extant copies remain.
the prohibition of ownership, that gave the order of wandering preachers its peculiar character. The friars openly declared their imitation of Christ and the Apostles (Matthew 10. 5ff.). These convictions, however, were in no way useful to the Church and the upper bourgeois class. In other words, the Order in its original state acted socially and ideologically as a subversive force. Therefore, the need for alteration was inevitable as the order gradually became interwoven with the ecclesiastical hierarchy. In the years following the death of St. Francis, the friars, who earlier under the Rule of St. Francis were strictly forbidden to build any but the humblest of churches, now boasted of the most richly decorated church in Italy. Not all factions of the Franciscan Order supported these new alterations. In the end, it was the moderate Franciscan party that gradually assumed control.

In all probability the decree ordering the destruction of earlier biographies was not the first attempt by the Church to discredit earlier writings. The Church felt that these earlier biographies fostered opposition toward the Papacy's newly founded Franciscan policies. For example, the question of Franciscan poverty dominates every passage of the

26. Mockler, p. 100. (Matthew 10. 5ff.) is the famous passage where Christ tells his disciples to go out into the world without money or possessions and preach about penance and the kingdom of God.

27. Antal, p. 69.
Sabatier proposes that the *Vita Secunda* written by Tommaso in 1247 represents a careful editing at the injunction of Gregory IX. It is not surprising that the Spirituals regarded Gregory IX as an enemy to the true Franciscan cause. In his bull, "Quo Elongati" of 1230, the Pope further enrages the Spirituals by declaring that the Testament of St. Francis was not universally binding upon the Order. The fact that Pope Gregory IX is represented twice within the Assisi cycle is not without significance. Bonaventura consciously chose episodes from St. Francis' life that stressed his deference to the papacy. More important, however, was the theological significance of St. Francis' life, which became the underlying theme of Bonaventura's *Legenda Maior*. Behind the human interest of the story narrated in the St. Francis cycle lies the underlying theme of *imitatio Christi*. It is through Francis' acts of humility, charity and love that a perfect conformity can be drawn between his life and the life of Christ.


30. Smart, *Assisi Problem*, p. 15. In addition to Pope Gregory's 'Quo Elongati' another Bull with a similar theme was declared in 1245. For all practical purposes the poverty theme of St. Francis was eliminated. The Church maintained the theme only in theory, for now, the Church became the 'owner' of the order's property.
The largest and most extensive cycle depicting the Life of St. Francis may be found in the Upper Church of the huge basilica in Assisi (Fig. 2). The date of the cycle falls generally between 1296 and 1307. The cycle is based upon the Legenda Maior written by St. Bonaventura at the direction of the Chapter of Narbonne in 1266. Its iconographical program is inextricably linked with contemporary Franciscan controversies. The pictorial program of the St. Francis cycle in Assisi is basically a translation of the Legenda Maior into painted images. Smart has divided the cycle of twenty-eight scenes into seven groups. 1) The prelude to the ministry of St. Francis wherein his future sanctity is disclosed by various signs (Scenes I-III) (Fig. 3); 2) Francis is revealed as the destined Saviour of the Church (Scenes IV-VI) (Fig. 4); 3) the prophecy of the glory of St. Francis and the reward for his humility (Scenes VII-IX) (Fig. 5); 4) the ministry of St. Francis and the seal placed upon it by Christ by the imprinting of the stigmata (Scenes X-XIX) (Figs. 6, 7, 8); 5) the death and glorious ascension of St. Francis (Scenes XX-XXII) (Fig. 9); 6) the funeral and canonization of St. Francis and his appearance to Gregory IX (Scenes XXIII-XXV) (Fig. 10); and 7) the posthumous miracles of succor (Scenes XXVI-XXVIII) (Fig. 11). With regard to the Franciscan pictorial program

31. Smart, Assisi Problem, p. 18.
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Fig. 8. The Upper Church, Assisi (after Alastair Smart, The Assisi Problem and the Art of Giotto, 1971). Plate 6a, South wall, first bay: Scenes XVI-XIX.
Fig. 9. The Upper Church, Assisi (after Alastair Smart, *The Assisi Problem and the Art of Giotto*, 1971). Plate 6b, South wall, second bay: Scenes XX–XXII.
Fig. 10. The Upper Church, Assisi (after Alastair Smart, The Assisi Problem and the Art of Giotto, 1971). Plate 7a, South wall, third bay: Scenes XXIII-XXV.
Fig. 11. The Upper Church, Assisi (after Alastair Smart, The Assisi Problem and the Art of Giotto, 1971). Plate 7b, South wall, fourth bay: Scenes XXVI-XXVIII.
at Assisi, three distinct observations can be made. First, the emphasis drastically shifts from the earlier devotional image of St. Francis to narrative scenes, scenes which illustrate pictorially the life of St. Francis, as based on the writings of St. Bonaventura; second, the perfect conformity between the life of Christ and the life of St. Francis is firmly established; third, the iconography of the cycle, in general, concentrates mainly on the ministry and miracles of St. Francis, and it is these events which are depicted most often in the Assisi cycle.

Following the modification of the Franciscan Order, the main tasks of the friars became preaching and doing penance for members of society, their actions illustrated to society the ideal of Christian perfection. These new functions of the order greatly accommodated the wealthy class. Now the wealthy bourgeois could secure for himself a share in the efficacy of the friars' achievements by donating large endowments to communal projects. These donations served a dual purpose, for not only did these projects display the greater glory of God, but also they significantly enhanced the beauty and fame of the city.

The religious sentiment of the upper bourgeoisie of the later fourteenth century was rather detached, strictly

32. Antal, p. 70.
adverse to any display of exaggerated mysticism. In Florence, the uniquely powerful oligarchic ruling class patronized works of art which pronouncedly reflected a new religious trend. This new religious, artistic trend implied a manner of thinking which grew from the essence of capitalism. Works of art contained an essentially new element -- tranquility -- which firmly controlled the emotional content of the piece. This new view appears as well in the religious architectural structures. In the Mendicant Church of Florence, Santa Croce, with its spacious and hall-like quality, a democratic general view of the whole congregation was afforded. Preaching during the religious service took on a new primacy. The presence of the private chapels along the transept in no way interfered with the democratic character of the overall plan. In fact, the creation of these privately owned chapels enabled the laity, who previously were isolated from the high altar, a closer view and a more personal involvement during religious services.

34. Antal, p. 80. From the start of the fourteenth century, Florence's leading citizens and intellectuals, with their soberationalism and growing scientific knowledge, were able to carry the secularization of religion much further than their counterparts of the thirteenth century.

35. Antal, p. 118. The works of art were no longer, as in earlier periods, esoteric and monastic in nature and unintelligible to the majority of the population. These works were now explicitly produced for the laity, by the laity and generally for the beautification of the city.
Simultaneously, the number of masses that could be celebrated in these subsidiary chapels was increased.

The early capitalistic entrepreneur believed in God and the authority of Christian dogma. Within the realm of fourteenth century religious rationalism, the Church and the Mendicant Orders steadily increased their cardinal influence over the private lives of the Florentine citizens. In its essentials, Florentine society was an ecclesiastical culture.  

Every facet of life was subordinate to religion, although expressed in a temperate and rational manner. The Mendicant Orders achieved great prominence during this early period. The upper bourgeoisie firmly believed that in this sinful world the need for the pious, ascetic friar was essential for the salvation of souls. By bequeathing large sums of money to religious orders, the upper bourgeoisie believed they increased their chances for salvation.

During the thirteenth century, the legend of St. Francis was by far the most popular among the lives of the saints. However, despite some decrease in the number of representations of the saint's legend, the wealthy class of the fourteenth century still can be found selecting scenes

36. Antal, p. 120. Antal has suggested that it is merely a question of a shift of stress, of whether the emphasis is on the Church's secularization or on the new bourgeois newly founded ecclesiastical thinking.

37. Antal, p. 120.
from the Franciscan legend for mural decoration. This selection of subject matter presented a perfect opportunity to demonstrate their respect for the popular idea of poverty, yet in a manner prudently noncommittal.

As the urban bourgeoisie began to patronize works of art, the symbolic, dogmatic, didactic and highly emotional art of previous periods greatly changed. The need for devotional art was still prevalent. However, this new ruling class, despite all its religious sentiment, was so sober-minded and rational that art which contained exaggerated emotionalism was unsuitable to their taste. Along with the reduction of the highly charged emotional elements, the symbolic and dogmatic aspects were also simultaneously curtailed. This new tranquil art, developed in the fourteenth century, tended to gravitate toward a humanization of the divine. By giving prominence to the narrative elements, works of art began to show a considerable degree of humanism. The religious narrative acquired new significance; having lost their overpowering dogmatic character, they now became understandable, illustrative images.

38. Schevill, p. 101. It was not until 1228 that the first group of Franciscans settled in Florence. The congregation of brothers who made their home at Santa Croce affected Florentine manners, morals and of course the fine arts. In addition, the founding of the order in Florence supplied the pope with an additional political center within the city.
In Florence during the fourteenth century, church interiors continued to monopolize the majority of artistic enterprises. Over the years, the decoration of individual chapels with frescoes greatly increased in popularity. These fresco cycles were under-written by the wealthy citizens, whose families claimed proprietary rights over certain chapels. It was in the chapel sanctuaries of the Mendicant Churches that works of art gradually accumulated. In fact, the architectural structure of Mendicant Churches suggests that such chapels were designed with mural decoration in mind. Since the Franciscan Order was directly associated with the revolutionary rise to power of the upper middle class and its new bourgeois attitude, it is not surprising that the private chapels of the Franciscan Church in Florence, Santa Croce, became richly decorated. This extensive decoration of privately owned chapels served two purposes: First, the patrons could satisfy their own consciences by bequeathing more or less considerable legacies for the atonement of their sins. This charitable gesture, in turn, would appease the Church and secure religious absolution for the patron, who had by the very nature of his profession committed usury. Second, with the wealth available

39. Antal, p. 150. The decrease in the number of representations of the saint's legend meditates the diminishing importance of the Franciscan order.

40. Antal, p. 133.
to hire the most progressive artists of the period, the art is some of the most innovative, demonstrating the virtues of the patron. Although these chapels were privately owned, the frescoes were exhibited to public view. Therefore, the democratic concept was respected and preserved. Concurrently, the family's reputation and the credibility of the family-owned business, likewise, found visible expression. These murals, then, satisfied a wide diversity of needs; to honor, to instruct, to admonish and to beautify.  

CHAPTER TWO

THE BARDI CHAPEL

The great Florentine entrepreneur, Ridolfo de' Bardi, commissioned Giotto to decorate his family-owned subsidiary chapel in Santa Croce. As is the case with most of Giotto's work, no documentation concerning the identity of the artist, the completion date or payment has survived for the Bardi Chapel. One pre-Vasari source, Ghiberti's Commentarii, mentions four chapels in Santa Croce decorated by Giotto, but unfortunately it fails to describe which chapels. Vasari in his book Le vite de' piu' eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architettori attributes the Bardi fresco cycle to Giotto and describes the chapel in some detail. For example, Vasari states "And in Santa Croce there are four chapels by the same man's hand (Giotto); three between the sacristy and the great chapel, and one on the other side. In the first of the three, which is that of Messer Ridolfo de' Bardi, and is that wherein are the

42. Antal, p. 213. The selection of iconography was due to two factors: First, Santa Croce is a Franciscan church; and secondly, one of the sons of the patron, Ridolfo de' Bardi, was a Franciscan friar.

bellropes, is the life of St. Francis, in the death of whom a good number of friars show very naturally the expression of weeping.  

Despite, however the lack of contemporary documentation, the cycle reflects many of the same aesthetic preoccupations that are present in the documented Paduan cycle of Giotto. For example, the basic mode of composition, a uniform light source that accords with the actual light from the chapel's one lancet window, the construction of space and the placement of the figures within that space all share affinities with the style manifested in the Arena Chapel.

The fresco cycle which decorates the walls of the Bardi Chapel and dates between the years 1317 and 1325 is devoted to the life of St. Francis. The specific iconography chosen by Giotto for the Bardi cycle exhibits yet another stage in the pictorial evolution of the St. Francis legend. There is a shift in the selection from the earlier miracle scenes which accentuated the divinity of St. Francis. The scenes selected for the chapel's program emphasize his

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connection with the pope, monastic life and the lives of the wealthy citizens. This new fourteenth century conception of the life of St. Francis now becomes eminently middle class and restrained in character. In other words, the entire program of the Bardi cycle is firmly entrenched in upper bourgeois views and ideals.

The pictorial program of the Bardi Chapel consists of six narrative frescoes. The frescoes are placed one above the other, with three scenes on the left wall and three scenes on the right wall. The narrative begins in the lunette of the left wall. The scenes chosen for the Bardi cycle are as follows: Scene 1) Francis Renouncing Worldly Goods; Scene 2) Approval of the Franciscan Rule; Scene 3) Apparition of St. Francis at Arles; Scene 4) Trial by Fire; Scene 5) Death of St. Francis and the Verification of the Stigmata; and, Scene 6) Visions of Brother Agostina and Bishop Guido of Assisi. Although not actually located within the confines of the Chapel, another fresco belongs to the Bardi program. That fresco; Scene 7) The Stigmatization of St. Francis, is located on the transept wall above the entrance arch (Fig. 12). The Stigmatization of St. Francis was the one miracle that the Franciscans took greatest pride in, for it was the evidence of Francis' imitation of Christ. This event firmly established the Christ-like nature of the

47. Antal, p. 150.
Fig. 12. Giotto, The Stigmatization of St. Francis, Bardi Chapel in Santa Croce (after Alastair Smart, The Assisi Problem and the Art of Giotto, 1971). Plate 29b.
Saint. Therefore, the event could not be omitted from the pictorial program of the Bardi cycle. In fact it creates a visual link with the large crucifix which was suspended in the choir above the altar. The Stigmatization fresco of the Bardi program is symbolically related to another fresco in Santa Croce. This latter fresco depicts the Assumption of Mary and occupies a relatively similar position over the entrance arch of the Tosinghi-Spinelli Chapel, which is located on the other side of the transept, across from the Bardi Chapel. The symbolic connection between the Tosinghi-Spinelli Assumption of the Virgin Mary fresco and the Bardi Chapel's Stigmatization of St. Francis, is established by the fact that St. Francis received the stigmata on the day of the celebration of the Assumption. However, as important is the fact that both murals show examples of mortals enjoying the particular favor of Christ. This symbolic connection further equates Francis as a parallel intercessor to Mary.

The importance of St. Francis' stigmatization is reflected in the large number of extant representations of this event. The earliest pictorial representation of the Stigmatization of St. Francis is to be found in one of the lateral miniature scenes of Bonaventura Berlinghieri's St. Francis altarpiece (Fig. 13). The only written description

of the stigmatization that preceded the painting was the *Vita Prima* by Tommaso da Celano. Therefore, it was this text that inspired and influenced the basic iconographic pattern of Berlinghieri's early representation of the miraculous event. In the *Vita Prima*, (Celano, III, 94), appears the following description:

Two years before Francis gave his soul back to heaven, while he was living in the hermitage which was called Alverna, after the place on which it stood, he saw in the vision of God a man standing above him, like a seraph with six wings, his hands extended and his feet joined together and fixed to a cross. Two of the wings were extended above his head, two were extended as if for flight, and two were wrapped around the whole body. When the blessed servant of the Most High saw these things, he was filled with the greatest wonder, but he could not understand what this vision should mean. Still, he was filled with happiness and he rejoiced very greatly because of the kind and gracious look with which he saw himself regarded by the seraph, whose beauty was beyond estimation; but the fact that the seraph was fixed to a cross and the sharpness of his suffering filled Francis with fear. And so he arose, if I may so speak, sorrowful and joyful, and joy and grief were in him alternately. Solicitously he thought what this vision could mean, and his soul was in great anxiety to find its meaning. And while he was thus unable to come to any understanding of it and the strangeness of the vision perplexed his heart, the marks of the nails began to appear on his hands and feet, just as he had seen them a little before in the crucified man above him.  49

In Berlinghieri's *Stigmatization*, the image accords with the description given by Celano. For example, the artist has represented the schematized mountainous terrain of

Alvern, the Saint is shown with the marks of the stigmata, and finally, the visionary figure conforms to Celano's description.

In the later biography, the *Legenda Maior*, by St. Bonaventura, the distinction between the seraph and the crucified man increased. This disparity, in turn, produced new iconographic results. For example, Bonaventura describes the stigmatization as follows:

> When, therefore, by seraphic glow of longing he had been uplifted toward God, and by his sweet compassion had been transformed into the likeness of Him Who of His exceeding love endured to be crucified on a certain morning about the Feast of the Exaltation of Holy Cross, while he was praying on the mountain, he beheld a Seraph having six wings, flaming and resplendent, coming down from the heights of heaven. When in his flight most swift he had reached the space of air nigh the man of God, there appeared bewixt the wings the Figure of a Man crucified, having his hands and feet stretched forth in the shape of a Cross, and fastened unto a Cross. Two wings were raised above His head, twain were spread forth to fly, while twain hid His whole body. Beholding this, Francis was mightily astonished, and joy, mingled with sorrow, filled his heart. He rejoiced at the gracious aspect whereby he saw Christ, under the guise of the Seraph, regard, but His crucifixion pierced his soul with a sword of pitying grief. He marvelled exceedingly at the appearance of a vision so unfathomable, knowing that the infirmity of the Passion doth in no wise accord with the immortality of a Seraphic spirit.50

The basic difference between the two literary works is the interpretation of the event. In the *Vita Prima*, the emphasis is placed on Francis' spiritual relationship to God. This relationship is in accordance with the iconic style of Bonaventura Berlinghieri's which clearly emphasizes Francis' divinity. In the later biography, *Legenda Maior*, Francis'

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50. Cole, "Another Look", p. 49
resemblance to Christ incarnate is expounded. An important distinction concluded by Bonaventura was the identification of the seraph with Christ. In the earlier period, the importance of the seraph as an eternal being was greater than the crucified man. Therefore, the visible marks of the crucified man — the wounds — were not accentuated. However, during the later period, a new conception, which developed first in the writing of St. Bonaventura, explicitly identified the seraph as Christ 'under the guise of the seraph'. In the Assisi cycle new iconographic elements appeared (Fig. 14). In this fresco the seraph has become the crucified Christ. Here two new iconographic elements were introduced; first, the wings which earlier had covered the body are now lowered to expose the wounds of Christ; secondly, the number of rays have now increased to five and emanate from the wounds of Christ to the wounds of St. Francis. It is these changes in iconographical details which stress St. Francis' direct and visible relationship to Christ. In other words, it is not an

51. Millard Meiss, Painting in Florence and Siena After the Black Death (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), p. 120.

52. Meiss, p. 120. It should be noted that the rays which emanate from the wounds of Christ are not mentioned at all in any of the numerous accounts of the Stigmatization of St. Francis. It was not until the latter part of the thirteenth century did the rays begin to appear. In Berlinghieri's St. Francis altarpiece the path of gold is tripled. These three rays denote the three spiritual gifts — divine love, mercy and innocence of sin — which according to Tommaso da Celano are also symbolized by the three pairs of wings.
Fig. 14. The Stigmatization of St. Francis, Upper Church at Assisi (after Alastair Smart, The Assisi Problem and the Art of Giotto, 1971). Plate 76.
eternal being with whom Francis has shared the experience, but it is Christ Himself, thereby shifting the emphasis to the crucified man, i.e., Christ. This transformation accentuates the Christ humanity of and generally reflects the new humanistic attitude of enth early fourtecentury patrons.

Due to the fact that the church of St. Francis at Assisi was the "mother church" of the order, the iconography formulated for the Stigmatization is credited with setting the standard for later representations. However, a notable exception to this is the Bardi Chapel's Stigmatization. The Bardi scene has been greatly simplified. A major difference appears in the treatment of the Saint himself. For example, in the Assisi scene, Francis faces the vision as he kneels on his right knee, whereas, in the Bardi fresco, the torso of the Saint faces forward and the right knee is raised. Also, the head twists sharply in an upward direction. It is these iconographic elements, the violent twisting of the head, the diagonal slant of the raised right leg and the general positioning of the torso which distinguishes the dramatic Bardi fresco from the more static Assisi representation. The concern of the Assisi artist was to narrate the story clearly and to make manifest its theological significance. In the Bardi scene, Giotto has emphasized the dramatic moment; St. Francis as a human being is suddenly overwhelmed by a divine visitation. Cole states that the dramatic elements expressed
in the Bardi fresco were due to Giotto's understanding of the story. This is not surprising, since the artist's acute concentration on the dramatic moment of the story will be demonstrated throughout the Bardi cycle. Cole concludes,

The state of mental anguish which is the hallmark of the story of the stigmazation of St. Francis does not find expression in the fresco at Assisi where the Saint accepts the vision and the stigmata in a most straightforward and passive way. There is nothing about the composition, gesture of the body or facial expression which gives the onlooker more than the slightest hint of the psychic agitation which all sources so strongly emphasize. In the Bardi Chapel, on the other hand, it is the psychological tension of the narration which forms the core of the visual representation. The violent twisting of the body of Francis with hands extended, head twisted and mouth opened expresses by its formal idiom exactly what the legend tells us happened to the Saint when he saw the Serph-Christ.

In other words, it was Giotto's astute ability to select, within the narrative, the moment of high dramatic tension that gives visual expression to conflicting emotions of joy and pity. Once the dramatic moment was selected, Giotto illustrated the story in the most direct, economical and understandable way.

Like the Stigmatization, all other scenes selected for the Bardi Chapel were represented previously in the Assisi cycle. The Bardi cycle begins in the left lunette with the scene of Francis Renouncing His Father and All Worldly Goods (Fig. 15). In the pictorial arrangement of

Fig. 15. Giotto, St. Francis Renouncing His Father and All Worldly Goods, Bardi Chapel in Santa Croce (after Raimond Van Marle, History of Italian Painting, vol. 3, 1923). Anderson photograph.
the scene, the palatial architectural structure contributes dramatically to the centralized figure composition. The alignment of the figure of St. Francis along the sharp edge of the building demonstrates Giotto's ability to stabilize the composition while simultaneously emphasizing the most highly charged dramatic moment. The tension between the raging Pietro Bernadone and his son is further intensified by the dramatic gap, over which the angry father must be restrained from crossing. In other words, Giotto has emphasized the dramatic moment by aligning the figure of Francis along the corner edge of the protruding palatial structure and by establishing a pyramidal composition based simultaneously on action and restraint. The other active figures in the composition are two small children in each corner of the lunette, who must be restrained from hurling stones at St. Francis. The inclusion and placement of these active, secondary figures alludes generally to the rebellious nature of children.

The Approval of the Franciscan Rule by Pope Innocent III is the second scene represented in the Bardi Chapel (Fig. 16). The importance of this scene to the overall pictorial program is its message of authority and power. Papal supremacy over and control of the Franciscan Order is suggested in the humble gesture of the kneeling St. Francis, as well as the low position of the Franciscans in contrast with the figure of the Pope. The location of the scene is suggested
Fig. 16. Giotto, Approval of the Franciscan Rule, Bardi Chapel in Santa Croce (after Raimond Van Marle, History of Italian Painting, vol. 3, 1923). Anderson photograph.
by the bust in the building's pediment. The bust, probably St. Peter's, not only alludes to the location; Rome, but also to Peter being the antecedent of the Pope. By implication, then, the respectful attitude of the patron is established vis-a-vis the proper relation between the Pope and the newly founded Franciscan Order.

The third scene is the Apparition at Arles (Fig. 17). This image illustrates the Saint's miraculous appearance to the brothers in a chapter house at Arles. In the _Legenda Maior_, (Bonaventura, IV, 10.), appears the following account:

> ...While he (Brother Anthony) was most earnestly and devoutly preaching to the brethren on the text, 'Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews', Brother Monaldo looked toward the door of the house wherein the brethren were assembled, and there saw with his bodily eyes blessed Francis raised up in the air, with his hands stretched out as on a cross, blessing the brethren.  

The uniqueness of this scene to the overall Bardi program is the mode developed by Giotto to represent this miraculous apparition. What confronted Giotto was the problem of representing a miracle scene within a cycle whose underlying theme emphasized the humanity of St. Francis. Giotto achieved continuity within the cycle by employing the same formal principles for both actual and miraculous events. However, it was the essence of the story, a miracle, which stimulated Giotto to lessen the importance of the dramatic narrative; thereby insuring that mysticism would not dominate.

55. Kaftal, _St. Francis_, p. 54.
Fig. 17. Giotto, The Apparition at Arles, Bardi Chapel in Santa Croce (after Raimond Van Marle, History of Italian Painting, vol. 3, 1923). Anderson photograph.
the representative. He did not, for example, depict shock and pathos in the figures to whom the vision appeared. Instead, Giotto developed a complex spatial treatment between the architectural structure and the figures. This design fused the figures and architectural elements together to produce a single, very subtle dramatic effect. However, more important in the scene is Giotto's treatment of St. Francis. Davis states, "One of the subtleties of Giotto's rendering resides in an initial ambiguity of pose which gives way progressively to a sense of the floating quality of a vision.\textsuperscript{56} Giotto, then, apparently wished St. Francis to appear both real and concrete on the one hand and visionary on the other since this was demanded by the narrative. At first glance the figure of the saint appears to be physically standing on the floor of the chapter house. However, Giotto has represented the essence of the miraculous event through formal manipulations. First, Francis is represented in a very slight contrapposto pose. Second, he is the only figure completely free of architectural elements. Third, the half-circle formed by his arms is visually lifted upward by the half-circle of the arch. It is the abstract circle formed by the two unified half-circles, which creates the subtle illusion of a spiritual, floating saint. Finally, the slight

movement of the drapery also contributes to the scene of his being a momentary apparition.

Briefly, in comparing the Bardi Apparition fresco with the earlier Assisi Apparition (Fig. 8, Scene XVIII), the Assisi scene produces through its specific iconographic elements a much more emotional expressionism. The figure of St. Francis is partially covered by the seated friars, therefore, making it impossible to determine his relationship to the floor. The arrangement of the friars in the Assisi scene corresponds faithfully to the narrative; whereas, in the Bardi fresco, the figures are disposed in layers of succeeding planes. It is this systematic placement of the figure groups which emphasizes the overall compositional design of the Bardi over the literary account of the event. In Bonaventura's account, "...Francis is raised up in the air, with his hands stretched out as if on a cross." This iconographical detail finds direct visual expression in the Assisi model. In the Bardi fresco, however, Giotto achieved a similar solution by placing a Crucifixion directly behind St. Francis to compensate for the departure from the narrative demands of the text.

The next scene of major importance to the pictorial program of the Bardi cycle is the fourth scene, the Trial by Fire (Fig. 18). This episode was first described by St. Bonaventura. In the Legenda Maior Francis is said to have addressed the sultan as follows:
Fig. 18. Giotto, The Trial by Fire, Bardi Chapel in Santa Croce (after Raimond Van Marle, *History of Italian Painting*, vol. 3. 1923). Anderson Photograph.
But if thou art hesitating whether to give up the law of Mahomet for the faith of Christ, do thou command that a great fire be kindled and I will enter the fire with thy priests, that even thou mayest learn which faith is the surer and holier and most worthy of being held. Unto whom the sultan made answer, 'I do not believe that any of my priests would be ready to expose himself unto the fire in defence of his faith, or to undergo any sort of torture.' For he had seen that, so soon as mention of this was made, one of his priests, an aged man and one in authority, had fled from his presence.

Along with the references to power and authority that were present in the two previous scenes, the inclusion of this subject within the Bardi program allowed Giotto the opportunity to represent a monarch. Giotto discerned that the real impetus of the narrative is the sultan, for it is around him that the action revolves. The sultan is seated under a baldachino, placed exactly in the center of the composition and elevated above the other figures. By these devices Giotto has physically isolated and emphasized the figure of the sultan. The mental strain of the sultan's perplexing situation, as suggested by the narrative, is mirrored in his agitated pose. For example, Giotto has the sultan's head looking in one direction, towards his fleeing priests, and his shoulders and arm in another, pointing towards St. Francis. Therefore, it is not the retreating subjects of the sultan or the figure of St. Francis that are

58. Antal, p. 151.
of greatest importance in this dramatic action. Rather, the
focus of the story is in the agonizing mental tension of the
sultan's predicament. Again, as so often is the case in the
Bardi Chapel, Francis' acceptance by figures of authority,
both secular and religious, provide a dominant text motive.

The fifth scene in the Bardi Chapel is the Funeral of
St. Francis and the Verification of the Stigmata (Fig. 19).
This scene, like the others in the Bardi program, is full of
restrained human drama. The scene represents the death of
St. Francis while his friends and followers grieve. Giotto
expressively displays various degrees of sorrow through the
different facial and body gestures of the mourners. Although
this is a highly charged moment, Giotto has contained and
controlled the potential emotionalism by balancing the
response of each figure to the others. Each mourner expres-
ses his grief in his own personal and individual way. For
example, one monk kisses the hand of St. Francis, while
another stares into the face of the saint and still another
is overwhelmed by the vision of St. Francis' soul ascending
to heaven. The arrangement of the figure groups at each end
function as figural parentheses around the body of St.
Francis. The figures represented are monks, laymen, clerics
and even one nobleman, Jerome.60 The latter, who doubted
the miracle of the stigmata, lifts the tunic of St. Francis

60. Raimond Van Marle, The Florentine School of the
Fig. 19. Giotto, the Death of St. Francis and the Verification of the Stigmata, Bardi Chapel in Santa Croce (after Raimond Van Marle, History of Italian Painting, vol. 3, 1923). Anderson photograph.
and discovers that the stigmata are indeed authentic. One of the many perfect conformities between the life of Christ and the life of St. Francis is depicted within this scene. This conformity, the doubting nature of Jerome and his need for actual exploration parallels the episode in Christ's life when Thomas doubted the authenticity of Christ's wounds, only to be given tangible proof of his reality. Thus, in this case, Giotto has followed a major phenomenon in the Assisi program, the depiction of the Saint as *imitatio Christi*.

The final scene in the Bardi Chapel is the *Vision of Brother Agostino and Bishop Guido of Assisi* (Fig. 20). In the *Legenda Maior* appears the following description:

Furthermore, the Minister of the Brethren in Terra di Lavoro at that time was a Brother Agostino, a man both holy and honest, who having reached his last hour, suddenly cried out in the hearing of those that stood by, although a long while before he had entirely lost the power of speech, and said: 'Wait for me, Father, wait! Look, now I am coming with you!' When the Brethren, marvelling greatly, inquired who it was that he spoke to so boldly, he answered them: 'Do you not see our Father Francis, who is going to heaven?' And immediately his holy soul, departing from his body, followed.

At that time the Bishop of Assisi had gone on a pilgrimage to the Oratory of St. Michael on Monte Gargano, and the Blessed Francis, appearing to him on the night of his passing, said to him: 'Behold, I leave the world and go unto heaven.' Accordingly, he rose in the morning, the Bishop related to his companions what he had seen, and returning to Assisi, he learnt for certain, after making careful inquiries that at the very hour at which this became known to him through the vision, the blessed Father had departed from this world.61

Fig. 20. Giotto, Visions of Brother Agostino and Bishop Guido of Assisi, Bardi Chapel in Santa Croce (after Edi Baccheschi, Giotto, 1966). Plate 144.
This scene represents two distinct events which are closely related in St. Bonaventura's *Legenda Maior*. Although this fresco is extensively damaged, a few observations can be made. First, this scene conﬂates two separate events into one scene, as does its earlier counterpart in the Assisi cycle. Second, in Giotto's version the two different visions appear to take place in the same architectural structure. The Assisi fresco's composition is more directly associated with the previous scene of the *Death and Ascension of St. Francis*. The relationship is established by the carefully disposed heads of the friars on the left of the Assisi scene, and through the reaching arms of Brother Agostino (Fig. 9; Scene XXI). However, this association does not appear to be present in the Bardi scenes. Instead, as is so often the case in the Santa Croce chapel, members of the Catholic hierarchy attest to the divine authority and apotheosis of the Saint.

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The communal and private projects in Florence which assumed such great importance in the fourteenth century, as seen in the Bardi Chapel, continued to flourish in the fifteenth century. In the early years of the fifteenth century, the upper bourgeois class had reached the zenith of its power. The influential men of Florence, the Medici, Strozzi, Albizzi and the Tournabuoni, all achieved great success and wealth through their business and banking endeavors and after the defeat of the Ciompi revolt of the 1380's had nothing to fear from the lower classes. These few all-powerful families who were once dominated by the Church's authoritative rule, were now attaining considerable independence. The rational element which grew increasingly during the fourteenth century was now most pronounced. These self-assured, puritanical upper bourgeoisie eventually lost their power of resistance to the splendors of aristocratic life. The Medici in particular represent a family's rise to power from commercial to banking activities and ultimately to political power.

By the year 1434, the ruling power of the other bourgeois families had been curtailed by the wealthy and powerful Cosimo do' Medici.\textsuperscript{64} Not satisfied with just wealth and influence, the Medici now wished to express themselves as equals to and heirs of the ancient nobility by reviving courtly fashions.\textsuperscript{65} In general, the ideology of the Florentine upper bourgeoisie of the fifteenth century became increasingly more secular, rational and aristocratic.

During the fifteenth century, the upper bourgeoisie commissioned artists to decorate their privately owned chapels in much the same manner as their counterparts of the previous century. However, within the confines of the painting's iconography, one particular element emerges -- the portrait. Antal states that the inclusion of the portrait is "...a genuine symptom of upper middle class self-assurance, and of greater worldliness in that class's artistic requirements."\textsuperscript{66} For this reason, therefore, the inclusion of portraiture within religious paintings gradually achieves great prominence in the fifteenth century.

\textsuperscript{64} Antal, p. 288.

\textsuperscript{65} Sleptzoff, p. 37. One method the Medici used to equate their social position with the ancient nobility was by reviving former seigniorial splendors and courtly fashions, such as the tournaments, which returned to fashion under the rule of Cosmio I.

\textsuperscript{66} Antal, p. 297.
The secularization of religious frescoes began in the fourteenth century. In Giotto's *Last Judgment* from the Paduan cycle the donor Enrico Scrovegni appears at the foot of the Cross. His physical presence constitutes only a small detail within the overall composition, thereby indicating that the religious aspect of the story was still the dominating factor, whereas Masaccio's *Trinity* fresco in Santa Maria Novella conferred distinct importance upon the donor and his wife. Here the donors appear on the same monumental scale as the holy figures. They are identifiable individuals with strikingly realistic profiles. However, more important is the secular connotation that man is no longer overwhelmed by his proximity to the Divine. In other words, humanity affirms itself in its full dignity, no longer suffering the hieratic diminution in scale found in previous art. Therefore, it is this new humanistic relationship between man and the Divine that is developed pictorially through images in the fifteenth century.

In the fifteenth century, donor portraiture acquired a more definitive quality. Now, in religious paintings, donors were included within the story itself. One way of doing this was to give the features of the donor to one of the figures in the story. Another mode was to simply include the donor as a bystander or spectator to the event. For example, Masaccio's *St. Peter Healing the Sick with His Shadow*, in the Brancacci Chapel, includes portraits of
contemporary personages. The purpose of including portraits of eminent citizens within religious frescoes was the visual affirmation of the dignity and social aggrandizement of the ruling Florentine bourgeoisie.

The portrait mode of the first half of the fifteenth century follows a fairly rigid norm. These portraits, although recognizable, were stiff, idealized and lacking in psychological distinction. In the second half of the century, portraits displayed a more realistic resemblance to the model. The sitter's expression, his pose and his clothing were included to suggest certain personal qualities and exhibit individual traits and tastes. As the realistic resemblance to the model increased, the need arose to represent the model in definite time and place. Increasingly, the model was placed in a historically truthful setting or in an environment which conformed to his specific class and place of residence. It is, therefore, the landscape or background behind the sitter which contributed to evoke a new kind of realism, a realism that established pictorially a sitter's social position within his own physical environment. The definition of portraiture thus expanded to include one's architectural and topographical surroundings.
CHAPTER FOUR
SASSETTI CHAPEL

In 1485 Domenico Ghirlandaio received a commission from Francesco Sassetti to execute a series of frescoes in Santa Trinita.67 Francesco Sassetti, a man of considerable wealth and power, was closely allied with the great banking house of the Medici and once had been their financial representative in Avignon and Lyons.68 The Sassetti Chapel is located second from the choir in the right transept of Santa Trinita. The patron, Francesco Sassetti, acquired the rights of patronage and burial in the Vallombrosan Church of Santa Trinita between 1470 and 1479, after the Dominicans refused to permit a Franciscan fresco cycle to be painted on the walls of the old Sassetti family chapel in Santa Maria.

67. Borsook, The Mural Painters, p. 159. Ghirlandaio and his assistants must have completed the chapel by 1 January 1486, when regular masses were once again held in the chapel and Ghirlandaio was working on the frescoes in Santa Maria Novella.

68. Warburg, Band I, p. 98. In addition to Sassetti's banking career, he was an enthusiastic collector of Roman coins, ancient texts and a promotor of humanistic studies. Sassetti expressed in a letter, to Lorenzo de Medici on 10 May 1485, his passionate interest in humanism. See Borsook, Francesco Sassetti and Ghirlandaio at Santa Trinita, Florence, History and legend in a Renaissance Chapel. (Doornspijk-Holland: Davaco Publishers, 1981), p. 11.
The Dominicans, quite understandably, rejected any artistic commissions within their church which would have honored the titular saint of their main rival order. A fragmentary inscription below the frescoes of the kneeling donors, Francesco Sassetti and his wife, Nera Corsi, to the right and left of the altar, reads A.D. MCCCCLXXXVI and _XV DECEMBRIS (Fig. 21 and 22). Most scholars believe that, due to the empty space before the _XV, an error was made and the more likely completion date of the Chapel was XXV DECEMBRIS, since a similar date of 1485 can be found also on the altar panel.  

The scenes decorating the walls of the Sassetti Chapel are taken from the life of St. Francis. Although Santa Trinita is the abbey church of the Vallombrosa Order, loose family connections and special veneration of St. Francis by the Vallombrosans was the pretext which allowed Sassetti

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69. Eve Borsook, Francesco Sassetti and Ghirlandaio at Santa Trinita, Florence, History and Legend in a Renaissance Chapel (Doornspijk-Holland: Davaco Publishers, 1981), p. 13. This dispute between Sassetti and the Dominicans is first mentioned in a late sixteenth century chronicle. The story of Sassetti's project to decorate the walls of Santa Maria Novella was described in his biography written by Giovambattista Sassetti, a descendant. Quoted in Warburg, Gesammelte Schriften, Band I, p. 136-138.

Fig. 21. Ghirlandaio, Francesco Sassetti, Sassetti Chapel in Santa Trinita. Alinari photograph.
Fig. 22. Ghirlandaio, Nera Corsi, Sassetti Chapel in Santa Trinita. Alinari photograph.
the opportunity visually to honor his patron saint.\textsuperscript{71} Another factor which may have been instrumental in conceding Sassetti the patronage of the chapel, was his association with the Medici rule. The Vallombrosans, during this period, were having internal problems with dissident sects and the Florentine order, therefore, looked to the government, the Medici regime, for support.\textsuperscript{72} In addition to the Franciscan scenes, Ghirlandaio, Sassetti and his close friends devised a program which would give the chapel a dual theme. The chapel is dedicated both to St. Francis and to the birth of Christ.\textsuperscript{73} Along with these two main themes, the chapel also presents some less obvious subsidiary themes concerning life, death and resurrecting, peace and reconciliation with the papacy, and the notion of Florence as the new Rome.

There is evidence that the pictorial program of the Sassetti Chapel was altered at the last moment. Two significant frescoes, located behind the altar, were modified. A drawing in Rome by Ghirlandaio for the Sassetti Chapel

\textsuperscript{71} Borsook, Francesco Sassetti, p. 17. In 1418, a member of the Spini family provided the funds for an annual mass to honor St. Francis at Santa Trinita.

\textsuperscript{72} Borsook, Francesco Sassetti, p. 17.

\textsuperscript{73} Since this chapel is also dedicated to the birth of Christ, as Warburg first recognized, the inscriptions preserved below the frescoes of the kneeling donors would logically date the completion and consecration date of the chapel on Christmas day, the birth date of Christ.
depicts the popular Franciscan miracle, the *Apparition of St. Francis at Arles*.\(^74\) However, the extant fresco depicts a far less well known miracle from the saint's life, St. Francis Resuscitating the Notary's Son (Fig. 23). The explanation for this substitution as noted by Warburg, was the death of his eldest son, Teodoro and the birth of his namesake.\(^75\) The birth of Teodoro II, before 12 May 1479, may have appeared to the grieving father as a miracle. Contemporary chroniclers report that the murals were commissioned by Sassetti in fulfillment of a vow. Borsook suggests that the vow, which the fresco represents, symbolizes the death of Teodoro and the birth of Teodoro II.\(^76\) It is therefore, this felicitous birth of a son which explains why the theme of Christ's advent is intertwined with the legend of St. Francis. It was the death of one son and the birth of another which prompted the substitution of the *Apparition at Arles* miracle for the *Resuscitation* miracle and also accounts for the iconography of the altarpiece, the *Nativity*.

\(^74\) Domenico Ghirlandaio, drawing, *The Apparition of St. Francis at Arles*; Rome, Gabinetto delle Stampe, n.r. 130495; recto and verso.

\(^75\) Warburg, *Band I*, p. 131-132.

\(^76\) Borsook, *Francesco Sassetti*, p. 19. This fulfillment of the vow would explain the importance of the dual theme; patron saint, *St. Francis* and the *Nativity*. 
Fig. 23. Ghirlandaio, St. Francis Resuscitates the Notary's Son, Sassetti Chapel in Santa Trinita. Alinari photograph.
The literary sources for St. Francis Resuscitating the Notary's Son miracle can be found in Tommaso da Celano's *Tractatus de Miraculis* and in St. Bonaventura's *Legenda Maior*. In the latter appears the following account:

A certain notary in the city of Rome had a little son scarce seven years old, who once, when his mother was going unto the Church of Saint Mark, was fain, as children be, to go with her; when he was bidden by his mother to tarry at home, he threw himself from a window of the palace, and, his bones broken by the final concussion, breathed his last on the spot. His mother, who had not yet gone far, at the sound of a fall feared it might be that of her child, and returned with all speed; then, when she found her son thus taken from her by this pitiable accident, she forthwith began to lay vengeful hands upon herself, and with woeful cries roused the whole neighbourhood to mourn with her. Then a certain Brother, named Ralph, of the Order of Minors, who had come thither to preach, drew nigh the child and, full of faith, said unto the father: 'Dost thou believe that Francis, the Saint of God, can avail to raise up thy son from the dead, by the love that he ever had for Christ Who was crucified to restore life unto men?' When he made answer that he firmly believed and faithfully confessed it, and would be for evermore a servant of the Saint if by his merits he might be found meek to receive from God so great a benefit -- that Brother prostated himself in prayer, together with the Brother that was his companion, stirring up the rest that were present unto prayer. This done, the boy began to gape a little and, opening his eyes and stretching his arms, raised himself, and at once, in the presence of all, walked, whole and sound, restored by the wonderous might of the Saint unto life and health at the same time.  

After reading Bonaventura's account, it is apparent that the scene represented by Ghirlandaio is no other than the posthumous miracle of St. Francis Raising a Notary's Son.

in Rome. Ghirlandaio has purposefully moved the story to an identifiable locale, the Piazza Santa Trinita in Florence. It is, in other words, taking place in the piazza outside of the very church in which the Sassetti Chapel is located. Many recognizable buildings and structures associated with the piazza are represented. For example, in the background on the left side of the composition is the Palazzo Spini-Ferroni, from which the boy is shown falling from the window.\textsuperscript{78} In the center of the composition Ghirlandaio has represented the old Ponte Santa Trinita. Finally, on the right side of the composition, a procession can be seen coming forth to carry the dead child to the vigil in the church. The church on the right is the Santa Trinita, which is represented with its Romanesque facade as it appeared before Buontalenti's transformation in the late Cinquecento.\textsuperscript{79} The doorway on the right, immediately behind the group of men, has been identified as the entrance to Sassetti's new home. This identification was established by a document which states that on 6 April 1484, Sassetti petitioned the government of Florence to have his new home in Via Lata (now called Via

\textsuperscript{78} Borsook, Francesco Sassetti. p. 28. The notary's son is seen falling from the Spini-Ferroni palace. It was this familiar ambience which was responsible for the mislabeling of the scene. For over a century this scene was mistitled as the Resuscitation of the Spini Boy.

\textsuperscript{79} Vasaturo, p. 6. In 1593, Bernardo Buontalenti remodelled Santa Trinita's Romanesque facade into its present day Baroque aspect.
Tornabourni) redistricted for tax purposes. The existence of such a document along with the inclusion of the door within the fresco further corroborates the dating of the Sassetti frescoes after 6 April 1484.

In the foreground of the Resuscitation fresco, the group on the right although clearly individualized has not been completely identified. Vasari identified three of the figures as Maso degli Albizzi, Messer Agnolo Acciaioli and Messer Palla Strozzi. Vasari also established the identity of the baldheaded man with the hat suspended over his shoulder as Niccolò da Uzzano. It is, however, likely that these men were incorrectly identified. The evidence for supporting this scepticism is based on the incongruity of the period when these men lived and the actual execution date of the frescoes. In other words, all these men identified by Vasari belonged to a different era, when they united to


81. Gerald S. Davies, Ghirlandaio (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909), p. 76. Vasari states, 'where there are painted Maso degli Albizzi, Messer Agnolo Acciaiuolo, Messer Palla Strozzi, notable citizens and in the histories of that city renowned enough.'

82. Hatfield, p. 237.
challenge the totalitarian rule of the Medici.\textsuperscript{83} It is, therefore, highly unlikely that Francesco Sassetti, close friend and associate of Lorenzo de Medici, would have allowed, let alone commissioned, the portraits of these onerous individuals.

In a recent study, Rab Hatfield has identified some of the men in the group as husbands and fathers-in-law of Sassetti's daughters. By the completion date of the cycle, 25 December 1485, only three of Sassetti's six daughters were married. These three daughters were Sibilla, Lisabetta and Violante.\textsuperscript{84} Beginning with Sibilla, her father-in-law Antonio Pucci had already been represented in the Confirmation scene located directly above the Resuscitation and is thus not included. Lisabetta married the son of a prominent Florentine businessman, Tanai di' Nerli. This marriage, however, took place on 7 November 1485, and did not allow Ghirlandaio enough time to include his portrait. Finally, Sassetti had arranged for his eldest daughter, Violante to marry the son of Gino di Neri Capponi. Gino di Neri Capponi, one of the wealthiest men in Florence, has been identified

\textsuperscript{83} Davies, p. 77. Maso degli Albizzi died in the year 1417 and Niccolo' da Uzzano dies in 1433, both died many years before the frescoes had been painted. These two men along with Agnolo Acciaiuoli and Palla Strozzi, had been the founders and strongest representatives of the Ottimati party, a group adamently opposed to the growing power of the Medici rule.

\textsuperscript{84} Hatfield, p. 237.
by Hatfield as the bald-headed man on the right, the figure identified earlier by Vasari as Niccolo'da Uzzano.  

Since the elder Gino di Neri Capponi died in 1457, this portrait, like others in the chapel, is also a posthumous portrait. As on the right side, the identity of the figures on the left can only be conjectured. In addition to Sassetti's daughters, relatives and friends, the two male figures farthest back in the group on the left display the likeness of Domenico and Davide Ghirlandaio. At this point in the fifteenth century the practice of including a portrait of the artist had become quite common, with many examples in Florence beginning with Masaccio's appearance in St. Peter Healing the Sick with His Shadow in the Brancacci Chapel.  

The identification of the figures in the scene is secondary in importance to the reasons for their inclusion. The explanation for their appearance is twofold: First, the patron Francesco Sassetti, commissioned Ghirlandaio to include them, because he wanted to express visually his influence, wealth and prestigious social connections. Second, the patron wanted Ghirlandaio to follow a precedent established by Baldovinetti in the same church.  

In 1471

85. Borsook, Francesco Sassetti, p. 39. It is, however interesting to note, that Gino di Neri Capponi's father was a close associate of Niccolo' da Uzzano.

86. Borsook, The Mural Painters, p. 159. Ghirlandaio also turned to examples of 70 years earlier; Masaccio's Brancacci Chapel. Masaccio perfectly blends contemporary portraits within religious stories.
Baldovinetti executed a series of frescoes in the choir of Santa Trinita. Although destroyed we know these scenes contained the portraits of many contemporary Florentine citizens. Therefore, it was Baldvinetti's fresco cycle in the choir of Santa Trinita that inspired both the artist and the patron to include portraits in this posthumous miracle scene. However, unique to Ghirlandaio was the ability to translate effectively religious events into contemporary scenes, scenes that were full of familiar landmarks and recognizable people. Ghirlandaio demonstrated the earnest self-confidence typical of these powerful Florentine citizens. His portraits are of vigorous men, full of strong character, men good enough to keep company with sacred personages and ancient heroes. He gave them a setting to suit their spirits; noble palazzi with marble columns, wide airy piazzas and idyllic well-groomed landscapes.

Turning now to more established Franciscan iconography the representation of Pope Honorius III Confirming the Rule of the Order is located directly above the Resuscitation scene on the altar wall (Fig. 24). In this scene the religious narrative has taken a secondary position to the depiction of secular personages and their surroundings. The Franciscan theme is set back to the middle ground between the portraits in the front and the public buildings of Florence in the back. Although portraits of donors continued to appear in religious compositions, the influential members of
Fig. 24. Ghirlandaio, The Approval of the Franciscan Rule, Sassetti Chapel in Santa Trinita. Alinari photograph.
the ruling class gradually preferred a different way of including themselves in the religious narratives. This new mode was the insertion of group portraits. The powerful patrons wanted to see not only themselves but also their entire families and friends represented in the painting. When portraits were inserted into the compositions, the figures were not always successfully integrated. It is immediately evident to the viewer that the contemporary figures, represented among the onlookers, belong to a different level of reality. This difference is to a great extent due to the realism of the portraits and a certain stiff self-consciousness as if posing for a group photograph.

As was the case with the previous Resuscitation scene, the Confirmation fresco had also been altered from its original design. The modifications appear to involve the series of portraits which were not originally an integral part of the design. This revision became necessary after a tardy decision was made to insert the portraits of Sassetti, Lorenzo de' Medici, Lorenzo's friends and children. An understanding of how the original design might have appeared is permitted by the survival of a preliminary sketch (Fig. 25).

87. L.M. Sleptzoff, p. 64.

88. Warman Welliver, "Alterations in Ghirlandaio's Santa Trinita frescoes." Art Quarterly, no. 3 August (New York: 1969), p. 270. This Confirmation scene is particularly interesting because the revisions were even more dramatic than in the previous fresco.
Fig. 25. Ghirlandaio, A Preliminary Sketch for a Scene, Sassetti Chapel in Santa Trinita (from Warman Welliver, "Alterations in Ghirlandaio's Santa Trinita Frescoes." Art Quarterly, no. 3 August 1969).
The preliminary drawing for this scene is substantially different from the fresco. In the sketch, the figures are successfully integrated within the architectural structure; for example, Ghirlandaio has represented the Pope enthroned on a dais, the attending friars are arranged along the transept, and finally the main body of Franciscan friars headed by St. Francis are positioned in the nave. In the extant fresco, with the inclusion of so many prominent citizens, the clear relationship between the narrative and the architecture has been lost.

A look at the fresco reveals the papal court appearing to be in session in a somewhat ambiguous structure on the north side of the Piazza della Signoria. Many identifiable monuments directly associated with the piazza are recognizable. For instance, represented in the background is the Loggia dei Lanzi and further to the left is the Palazzo Vecchio with the Ringhiera platform in front of it and the Marzocco of Donatello upon it. In Giotto's version of the Confirmation scene in the Bardi Chapel, the Roman location of the room in which the pope and his Curia are gathered is identified by the clipaeus with St. Peter's bust in the gable. This fresco by Giotto was, therefore, closer to the actual truth of the historical accounts. At the same time, it shows how Florence has been thought of as the successor of Rome.
In the foreground of the composition, Ghirlandaio has included the portraits of Florence's most notable citizens. A study by Aby Warburg has successfully identified almost all of the personages. To the right of the pope stand four lay figures; from right to left the figures are identified as Federigo Sassetti (son of the patron), Francesco Sassetti (patron), Lorenzo de' Medici (the most powerful and influential man in Florence) and Antonio di Pucci (a powerful Florentine politician) (Fig. 26). The figure of Antonio di Pucci was included for several reasons. Along with Francesco Sassetti, Antonio di Pucci was an ardent supporter of Lorenzo de' Medici regime and as a former gonfaloniere di giustizia had held the most important public office in it. The inclusion of his portrait in such a prominent place in the composition is the result of a marriage agreement drawn up between Pucci and Sassetti. Antonio's son Alessandro di Antonio Pucci married Francesco's daughter Sibilla on 27

89. Warburg, Band I, p. 93-126.

90. Warburg, Band I, p. 131. Beside Francesco Sassetti stands his twelve year old son Federigo. Warburg states that this son of Sassetti had already been destined for the clergy and Francesco hoped endlessly that one day he would become the abbot of Santa Trinita.

91. Borsook, Francesco sassetti, p. 36. Antonio di Pucci's grandfather was elected to public office in 1382 and had been one of the masons responsible for the construction of the Loggia dei Signoria.
Fig. 26. Ghirlandaio, detail of the Approval fresco, Sassetti Chapel in Santa Trinita. Alinari photograph.
September 1482. His appearance thus commemorates an act of familial diplomacy.

The four figures at the right welcome six figures who emerge from a stairwell. The foremost of them is Agnolo Poliziano, the tutor of Lorenzo's sons and a distinguished member of the Medici court (Fig. 27). The three young boys from right to left are Giuliano (beside Poliziano, age 4), Pietro (age 12) and Giovanni (the future Pope Leo X, age 7). The two figures behind Giovanni have been identified as Luigi Pulci and Matteo Franco (Fig. 28). Both Pulci and Franco were scholars, poets and tutors at Lorenzo's court. Finally, the three figures on the left have not been firmly established but are conjectured by Lauts to be the three eldest sons of the patron; Galeazzo, Cosimos and Bartolommeo Sassetti.

The question arises as to why the portraits of the figures identified above were included in this Franciscan legend. The answer to this question is discovered after briefly examining specific fifteenth century Florentine historical details. The main objective of Florentine foreign

92. Hatfield, p. 237.

93. Borsook, Francesco Sassetti, p. 37. In the fall of 1484, Pulci died in Padua. It is, therefore, likely that this portrait along with others in the fresco cycle is posthumous.

Fig. 27. Ghirlandaio, detail of the Approval fresco, Sassetti Chapel in Santa Trinita. Alinari photograph.
Fig. 28. Ghirlandaio, detail of the Approval fresco, Sassetti Chapel in Santa Trinita. Alinari photograph.
policy under Lorenzo was gaining control of the papacy for the good of the Florentine empire. His pursuit of this goal began with a persistent effort to win a cardinalate for his younger brother, Guiliano. However, Pope Sixtus IV firmly rejected the proposal. During the winter of 1477-1478, Pope Sixtus IV and his nephew, Girolamo Riario, joined forces with the archbishop of Pisa and with a prominent Florentine banking family, the Pazzi, to overthrow the existing Florentine government. On 26 April 1478, the attack which left Lorenzo wounded and Guiliano dead had failed in its attempt to seize the Florentine government. When this attempted coup failed Sixtus declared war on Florence. For the next eight years Lorenzo's designs on the papacy had to be deferred by the need to repel three papal inspired wars; the first two initiated by Sixtus and the third by his successor, Pope Innocent III.

Because he was occupied with the war with Naples, Pope Innocent III in autumn of 1486 proposed friendship to Lorenzo. The pope had determined that the papacy could greatly benefit from Lorenzo's and Florence's patronage. In a gesture of good will, and to solidify the alliance, the pope offered to marry his son to one of Lorenzo's daughters.


After a short period of consultation with his allies, Lorenzo enthusiastically accepted the offer.

Returning after the excursion into Florentine diplomacy, we can see that the fresco was undoubtedly altered to celebrate this new Papal-Florentine pact of friendship. This revision reflects a Florentine habit of recognizing and exploiting historical events, either secular or sacred, as parables pertinent to their own experience. One characteristic of this Florentine practice was the inclusion of portraits. In the preliminary sketch (Fig 25), there was no indication either that the pope was holding court in any precise location or that the time was other than the year 1220, when the confirmation actually occurred. After the alterations, however, the scene was explicit as to time and place. Pope Honorius is shown holding court in the Piazza della Signoria, while Lorenzo and his court observe but do not participate in the religious event.

In addition to the Papal-Florentine allusion, the secular action in the foreground parallels the religious event of the middle ground. As the pope displays his authority and power by confirming and institutionalizing St. Francis and his Order. Lorenzo's gesture sanctions the activity of Poliziano and other scholarly members of his court. Ghirlandaio, therefore, has placed these two powerful realms of the fifteenth century, the religious and the secular, side by
side. The pope is symbolically presiding over the religious world and Lorenzo is ruling his secular court in Florence.

The four remaining frescoes are located to the right and left side of the altar. In addition to the Confirmation scene and the Resuscitation scene, the four remaining frescoes are well known Franciscan stories. These scenes are: On the left wall, Scene 1) Francis Renounces His Father and All Worldly Goods; Scene 2) The Stigmatization of St. Francis and on the right wall; Scene 3) Trial by Fire; and Scene 4) The Funeral of St. Francis.

In the first scene, Francis Renouncing His Father and All Worldly Goods, Ghirlandaio selected the same moment from the story as had Giotto in the Bardi Chapel (Fig. 29). However, the primary difference between the two representations is the lack of drama in the Sassetti scene. The highly charged confrontational moment of the story is softened by the absence of any psychological tension between Francis and his father. The fury and rage of Pietro Bernadone and the rebellious nature of Francis are not emphasized by Ghirlandaio; whereas, Giotto pointedly drew our attention to it by placing the climatic moment at the edge of the extremely oblique palazzo. Also, behind the figure in the background, Ghirlandaio depicts the town of Geneva, a visual distraction and narrative distortion. For it was in Geneva that Sassetti amassed his
Fig. 29. Ghirlandaio, St. Francis Renouncing His Father and All Worldly Goods, Sassetti Chapel in Santa Trinita. Alinari photograph.
sizable fortune, from which he allocated the funds to commission the work at hand.\textsuperscript{97} Unlike the Bardi example, the Sassetti representation alters the focal point of the composition from Francis and his father to Francis and the Bishop. Ghirlandaio emphasizes the psychological interaction of Francis and the Bishop rather than the dramatic human story of a son renouncing his father. The artist thus deviates dramatically from the literary accounts of the event. For example, in the \textit{Vitae} and in the \textit{Legenda Maior}, Francis was described as stripping naked in front of a group of spectators, who had gathered to watch Pietro denounce his son. In addition to this iconographic vagary, nowhere in either text is Francis described as kneeling before the Bishop. It is, therefore, the blessing gesture of the Bishop that establishes the main theme of the composition. That message is the Church's approval of Francis and his Order and, more important, Francis' deference to papal authority.

In the lunette on the right wall is \textit{St. Francis' Trial by Fire} (Fig. 30). The style and quality vary greatly from the previous frescoes. This variation is undoubtedly the result of Ghirlandaio's familiar practice of delegating much of the actual work to his assistants, his brothers Davide and

\textsuperscript{97} Borsook, Francesco Sassetti, p. 27. The same view appears in a portrait painting of Sassetti and his eldest son Teodoro by Ghirlandaio. This painting is now housed in the Metropolitan Museum in New York.
Fig. 30. Ghirlandaio, *The Trial by Fire*, Sassetti Chapel in Santa Trinita. Alinari photograph.
Benedetto and his brother-in-law Bastiano Mainardi. In this scene there are very few figures and only one portrait. At the extreme right is the face of a young man who, according to Davies, has the features of Domenico's brother Davide. Although this portrait may be attributed to Domenico, the authorship of the rest of the scene belongs to Davide, Benedetto and Mainardi. In this scene the artists have borrowed directly from Giotto's composition in the Bardi Chapel. For example, the figures in the Sassetti fresco are arranged in much the same manner as the figures in the Bardi scene, with the Sultan centrally placed in the composition. The gestures of the Sultan and Francis were clearly inspired by Giotto's figures. However, the most notable and important element of Giotto's composition, the psychological tension of the Sultan's perplexing situation, is completely missing from the Sassetti representation.

The next scene, the Stigmatization of St. Francis, is located below the Renunciation scene on the left wall (Fig. 31). Most scholars agree that the figures were executed by Mainardi, while the rocky landscape around La Verna was designed by Davide. In this scene, St. Francis kneels inward

98. Lauts, p. 23. The chapel, therefore, represents the combined efforts of Domenico, his brother Davide, Benedetto and brother-in-law Bastiano Mainardi, along with a group of assistants.

99. Davies, p. 75.
Fig. 31. Ghirlandaio, The Stigmatization of St. Francis, Sassetti Chapel in Santa Trinita. Alinari photograph.
towards the central axis of the painting. His gesture resembles the pose created by Giotto for the Bardi Chapel's Stigmatization scene. However, lacking in Mainardi's figure is the expressive psychological facial features of St. Francis, which were so beautifully depicted by Giotto. In Mainardi's figure, the facial expression has a tranquil quality and the direction of the saint's glance is obscure and confusing. It's direction is so vague, in fact, that one cannot be sure whether he sees the vision or is looking at the two birds in the sky above him. The inclusion of the many genre elements; the birds, the deer, towns and people all add to the ambiguous feeling of the representation. The town of Pisa, with its leaning tower, is clearly visible on the extreme right. Again Ghirlandaio has represented an identifiable locale, the decision to depict Pisa was probably made because it stands at the end of the Arno river which begins near La Verna. However, what is totally lacking in Ghirlandaio's Stigmatization as opposed to Giotto's representation in the Bardi Chapel is the complete lack of interest in the event as a psychological and spiritual trauma expressed metaphorically by Giotto in the twisted pose of the saint.

The final scene in the Franciscan cycle, the Funeral of St. Francis, is located on the lower right wall (Fig. 32). The overall composition is surprisingly similar to Giotto's version in the Bardi Chapel, completed approximately 160 years earlier. In addition to the direct transposition of Giotto's
Fig. 32. Ghirlandaio, The Funeral of St. Francis and the Verification of the Stigmata, Sassetti Chapel in Santa Trinita. Alinari photograph.
composition, Ghirlandaio has also tried to capture the Giottesque facial schemata for the grief-stricken monks. However, lacking in the facial features of Ghirlandaio's mourning monks is the intense reality of grief so poignantly displayed in Giotto's faces, a grief which is clearly manifested through the angular shadows around the eyes and furrowed brows.

The main focus of attention in the Bardi scene is the body of Francis lying in the center of the composition. In the Sassetti scene, the focal point is not on the horizontal figure of the dead saint but rather on the three or four brothers, who bend over the body. These three figures form a progressional line which directs the eye toward the apse and altar. The notable lack of concentration on the part of the bystanders is due to the inclusion of portraits. All the faces must be clearly visible and therefore, look around in various directions, totally unaffected by the scene taking place in front of them. Only one figure, Jerome, who is about to place his hand upon the saint's wound, exhibits any expression. In other words, the concern of Ghirlandaio was not to elaborate the potential drama but rather afford another opportunity to include contemporary portraits in a sacred narrative. The story, therefore, has lost its drama and turns instead to a secularizing ceremonial effect.

As mentioned earlier, the Sassetti Chapel has a dual theme, the Legend of St. Francis and the Advent of Christ.
The frescoes which will follow symbolically present the second theme. For example, whereas Giotto depicted four Franciscan virtues in the vault frescoes of the Bardi Chapel, in the Sassetti Chapel, Ghirlandaio chose four sybils. Three of the sybils are identified by the texts inscribed upon their scrolls. Sybils, representations of pagan antiquity, were becoming quite popular at this time in Florence. Their rising esteem was largely due to the influence of a Dominican friar named Filippo Barbieri. In addition to the sybils, further prophecies of Christ's advent are represented outside the chapel. On the wall directly above the entrance arch to the Sassetti Chapel is a fresco; The Prophecy of Christ's Birth by the Tiburtine Sybil and the Heavenly Vision of Christ by Emperor Octavianus Augustus (Fig. 33). It continues the narrative and anticipates iconographically the event associated with the sybils in the vault. In comparison with the three frescoes whose stories took place in Rome; the Confirmation scene, the Resuscitation scene and finally the Prophecy of Christ scene, only the last one remained in a Roman setting. The view of the city appears as it would have to Ghirlandaio in the latter half of the fifteenth century. For

100. Borsook, Francesco Sassetti, p. 29. The three sybils with inscriptions on their scrolls are Eritraean, Agrippan, Cumaean and the fourth may be the Cimmerian sybil. The contexts of the texts on their scrolls all prophesized Christ's advent.
example, clearly visible is old St. Peters and the Pantheon.101

The Birth of Christ theme concludes in the altarpiece. The Adoration of the Shepherds (Fig. 34), also by Ghirlandaio visually fulfills the prophecy of the birth of Christ and the end of the pagan world. The general arrangement of the figures, and especially the portrait-like quality of the shepherds, are evidence of Ghirlandaio's having examined Hugo van der Goes' 'Portinari' altarpiece, which had arrived in Florence in 1483. The Christ child is the visual apex of the two venerating circles. Within the painting, Mary and the shepherds, and we the viewers, adore the infant Christ. The life of Francis and his role as an intercessor are secondary only to the Virgin and Christ.

Although the Tiburtine Sybil over the entrance arch prophesied the birth of Christ and the end of the classical world, the pictorial design of the two tombs is completely antique in style and iconography. These two tombs were designed by Guiliamo da Sangallo and were executed by Simone di Caprino (Fig. 35 and 36). With regard to the two tombs, Charles de Tolnay states "The black porphyry sacophagi,

101. Tolnay, p. 245. Ghirlandaio was one of the earliest artists to paint a panarama of Rome. Our view of Rome dating to ca. 1485 influenced other views of Rome of the 1490's, e.g., the woodcut by F. Foresti in supplement to the Chronicle by J. Bergomense, Venice, 1491 and the canvas of 1498 in the Museo Civico of Mantua. Both are illustrated in the Enciclopedia Italiana, sub Roma.
Fig. 34. Ghirlandaio, Adorations of the Shepherds, Sassetti Chapel in Santa Trinita. Alinari photograph.
Fig. 35. Giuliano da Sangallo, Francesco Sassetti’s Tomb, Sassetti Chapel in Santa Trinita. Alinari photograph.
Fig. 36. Giuliano da Sangallo, Neri Corsi's Tomb, Sassetti Chapel in Santa Trinita. Alinari photograph.
decorated with bucraniae in the niches, imitate the shape of ancient bathtubs; the small marble friezes, at the bottom of Francesco's tomb, representing at the left the ancient rite of bacchic initiation, is partly inspired by antique gems, and at the right an ancient death-bed scene is copied from the antique Meleager sarcophagus (Figs. 37 and 38)."

They are in style and iconography completely pagan and thus independent of Ghirlandaio's fresco program. In addition to the tombs, other iconographic details within the overall burial structure bolster the integration of a purely pagan program. For example, the donors are represented profile in a tondo obviously imitating ancient coins and cameos (Fig. 39). The explanation of the inclusion and selection of the pagan iconography in the tomb decoration depends upon the humanistic tendencies of the patron, Francesco Sassetti, who was an enthusiastic student of ancient literature and artifacts. It is apparent that no attempt was made to reconcile the Christian-Franciscan program of the fresco cycle with the pagan program of the sculptural design of the tombs. Nevertheless, one subsidiary theme binds the pagan, Franciscan and Christian programs together; all express by different means the glorification of earthly life, death and resurrection.

The subsidiary themes of peace and Florence as the new Rome are found throughout the Chapel's pictorial program. In

102. Tolnay, p. 23.
Fig. 37. Giuliano da Sangallo, detail of Sassetti's Tomb, Sassetti Chapel in Santa Trinita. Alinari photograph.
Fig. 38. Giuliano da Sangallo, detail of Sassetti's Tomb, Sassetti Chapel in Santa Trinita. Alinari photograph.
Fig. 39. Giuliano da Sangallo, Tondo of Francesco Sassetti, Sassetti Chapel in Santa Trinita. Alinari photograph.
the Confirmation fresco the Loggia dei Signoria, with its majestic arches, was selected because it reflected the formal elements of a Roman structure, the tribunal hall. In all probability, only antiquarians would have realized that the large arches of the Loggia dei Signori were derived from the Roman Temple of Peace. The grisailles around Francesco's tomb allude to coins made during the time when Vespasian began the Temple of Peace, cs. 70-71 A.D. and according to legend collapsed when Christ was born.\textsuperscript{103} This subsidiary theme of peace, as discussed earlier, alludes to the Pazzi conspiracy of 1478 and thereafter to the dissension between Lorenzo de Medici and the papacy. Peace was finally achieved on 13 March 1480, but the definitive reconciliation ceremony between Florence and the papacy did not take place until 3 December 1480, when twelve Florentine ambassadors kissed the pope's feet on the steps of St. Peter's.\textsuperscript{104} Therefore, the Franciscan Confirmation scene symbolizes also the reconciliation between Florence and the papacy. The inclusion of portraits was not an initial part of this design either but,

\textsuperscript{103} Borsook, \textit{Francesco Sassetti}, p. 48. The broken columns of the Roman Temple of Peace are found in Ghirlandaio's Nativity altarpiece.

\textsuperscript{104} Borsook, \textit{Francesco Sassetti}, p. 50. The twelve Florentine ambassadors sent to Rome at the end of November were: Francesco Soderini (Bishop of Volterra), Luigi Guicciardini, Antonio Ridolfi, Giovanni Gianfigliazzi, Piero Minerbetti, Guido Antonio Vespucci, Maso degli Albizzi, Gino Capponi, Jacopo Lanbedini, Domenico Pandolfini, Giovanni Tornabouni and Antonio de' Medici.
as Warburg suggests, merely an afterthought. The other subsidiary theme of Florence as the new Rome may explain why Ghirlandaio represented on the altar wall two events which, according to Franciscan legend, occurred in Rome. This parallel would have been obvious to Florentines of the fifteenth century. For decades many Florentines believed the city had been founded by Romans and that they, therefore, were direct descendants of Roman families. In the Sassetti Chapel, Florence is the setting for the Franciscan legend. This patriotic theme was completely interwoven with the religious one. In both frescoes, the Resuscitation scene and the Confirmation scene, Florence is shown as the site of spiritual and political renewal.

105. Warburg, Band 1, p. 115. This conclusion is supported after the frescoes were examined by restorers in 1967. The number of events which occurred in Florence after the December of 1480 would explain why the lower section of the completed Confirmation fresco was subsequently ripped out to make space for the portraits.
In conclusion, the Franciscan legend depicted at Assisi, in the Bardi Chapel in Santa Croce and in the Sassetti Chapel in Santa Trinita, all contain a common element. The common thread which binds these three pictorial programs together is the subject matter, the legend of St. Francis. Each pictorial program mirrors the religious sentiment of its patron. For example, in the Upper Church at Assisi, the devotional image of St. Francis is replaced by narrative scenes, scenes which could act as silent sermons. These scenes concentrate mainly on the ministry and miracles of St. Francis and firmly establish Francis' perfect conformity with Christ. It was, therefore, this cycle which became the model for all subsequent Franciscan fresco programs.

With the rise to power of the upper bourgeoisie in the fourteenth century, religious sentiment dramatically changed. This new religious attitude implied a manner of thinking which grew from the conceptual essence of capitalism. The art produced during this period tended to gravitate toward a humanization of the divine. The Bardi Chapel decorated by Giotto is firmly entrenched in these newly founded
ideals. The scenes which were selected accentuate the humanity of St. Francis and appeals to the senses of the viewer. Giotto had the astute ability to select, within each narrative, the moment of highest dramatic tension. Once this moment was chosen, Giotto established the narrative in the most direct, economical and understandable way. The scenes selected by Giotto emphasized Francis' association with the pope, monastic life and the lives of wealthy citizens.

The wealthy and powerful citizens of the fifteenth century became increasingly more secular, rational and at the same time aristocratic. The art style which began in the fourteenth century now acquired a new element, the portrait. The inclusion of portraiture within religious art commissions reflected the assurance and greater worldliness of the fifteenth century patrons and their strict detachment from the drama which suggests the kind of vicarious religiosity of the fifteenth century. The Sassetti Chapel's fresco program is a superb example of this fifteenth century religious detachment. Ghirlandaio, Sassetti and others devised a highly complex homogeneous scheme which included a dual theme; the legend of St. Francis and the advent of Christ. In addition to the major theme, subsidiary themes of peace, reconciliation with the papacy and that of Florence as the new Rome are present. In general, the Sassetti Chapel's decorative program expresses both the hope and optimism of Florence and its ruling regime. It was no coincidence that children
inhabit the altar wall; the infant Jesus, the resuscitated boy and the sons and daughters of the ruling class of Florence. They are indeed the future which the patron confidently expected. It was also no coincidence that these religious events were taking place in Florence.

The pictorial program developed for the Assisi fresco cycle, the Bardi Chapel in Santa Croce and the Sasetti Chapel in Santa Trinita were all directly affected by the changes in society, the Franciscan Order, the Papacy and the ruling classes. By comparing these three fresco programs we have clearly seen the progressive diminution of the spiritual factor from the religious narrative as part of the secularization of the age.
APPENDIX A

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