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Genealogy as a Heuristic Device for Franciscan Order History in the Middle Ages and Early Modernity: Texts and Trees

This paper explores the significance of spiritual genealogy as a historiographical device in Franciscan representations of the order’s past during the medieval and early modern period. Certain visual exponents of this heuristic – murals, engravings, and manuscript paintings of Franciscan family trees – have been the subject of increasing scholarly attention. I argue that these visual family trees are only one manifestation of a broader tendency to represent and analyse Franciscan order history in genealogical terms. Other manifestations include written historiography, as well as genealogical images other than trees. The versatility of these visual and verbal genealogical representations of the Franciscan past made them into an adaptable means for communicating a variety of messages, apart from emphasizing Franciscan community in a general sense.

First, I discuss the main developments in visual representations of the Franciscan family tree during the late medieval period, in tandem with closely related written perspectives on Franciscan order history, so as to point out the perennial conversation between its textual and visual manifestations. By shifting away some of the attention from the

visual tree-model in favour of seeing it as part of a larger tendency in textual culture to represent order history in genealogical and/or arboreal terms, it becomes clear that late medieval Franciscan genealogical representations offer a particular, eschatological perspective on order history, associated with Spiritual and Observant Franciscan contexts.

Second, my examination of the same phenomena during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when family tree visualisations became much more widespread, suggests that the *genealogia* emerged as a particular form for organising and presenting written order histories, current among all Franciscan orders. I outline the contours of this diversified sub-set of Franciscan order historiography that employed genealogy as a versatile heuristic, connecting Franciscan communities to a shared familial past, often elaborating links or occasionally even claims to certain local territories.

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Overall, it shall become clear that textual and visual representations of the order's past often – but not necessarily – went hand in hand, and that genealogical perspectives on Franciscan order history were a deeply-seated heuristic device that exceeded the visual rhetoric of the tree diagram.

Medieval genealogical representations of Franciscan order history

The late medieval exponents of the Franciscan family tree serve as the starting point of my discussion of perspectives on Franciscan genealogy. This tree image is relatively well-known because it has recently attracted the attention of several art historians, who usually connect its iconography with *Lignum Vitae* representations (discussed below). In what follows I complement these existing perspectives by also considering coeval written accounts of the Franciscan family tree and again other (non-genealogical) Franciscan tree visualisations. As a

result, it becomes evident that the late medieval Franciscan family tree iconography is indeed only one expression of a particular (not necessarily visual) perspective on Franciscan order history, articulated by ideologies of apocalyptic renewal associated with Spiritual and later Observant Franciscan contexts. My analysis of these late medieval Franciscan tree representations thus suggests that genealogy was the stuff of history.

Visualisations of the biblical tree of Jesse – widespread from the twelfth century onward – are an important step in the development toward the ‘family tree’ representations of the later Middle Ages. The motif is based on a prophecy in Isaiah 11:1 “And there shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root.”¹ This was typically interpreted as foretelling the Incarnation and as referring to the genealogy of Christ.² Jesse is often depicted in a reclining position, with a stem growing from his abdomen that branches out to hold Old Testament ancestors of Christ and a centrally positioned Virgin (fig. 1).³

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During the later Middle Ages, family tree representations of religious orders eventually emerged from a complex melting pot that included the tree of Jesse, family metaphors, various circle diagrams, *arbores iuris* and other tree diagrams, and representations of biblical and aristocratic genealogies.⁴ Dominique Donadieu-Rigaut pays particular attention to order trees, which proliferated for example in Benedictine, Cistercian, Carthusian, Dominican, and Franciscan contexts, explicitly rebaptizing them *arbres-orde* to emphasize that they differ

¹ Douay-Rheims 1899 American Edition. Cf. *Et egredietur virga de radice Jesse, et flos de radice ejus ascendet* (Vulgate).

² R. Howard Bloch, “Genealogy as a Medieval Mental Structure and Textual Form,” in *La Literature Historiographique des Origines a 1500*, vol. 1, ed. Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, Ursula Link-Heer, and Peter Michael Sprangenberg (Heidelberg: Winter, 1986), 135-56, esp. 150.

³ For the developments and variations in this iconography see Susan L. Green, *Tree of Jesse Iconography in Northern Europe in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 2-15.

⁴ For these complex phenomena and developments see the excellent discussion in Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *L'Ombre des Ancêtres: Essai sur L'Imaginaire Médiéval de la Parenté* (Paris: Fayard, 2000).

from secular family trees and are not – strictly speaking – genealogical. According to Donadieu-Rigaut, the visual rhetoric of *arbres-ordo* typically underemphasizes the progression of family history generation by generation, highlighting instead the direct linkage with the founder. The tie with the original founder is then elaborated in different ways, based on different ideologies, across different orders. In the case of Franciscan trees, both Francis and the Crucified are often simultaneously present in the iconography, on account

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of Francis' Stigmatization and his supposed conformity with Christ: an image that would invite his followers to practice *imitatio christi*.⁵

This reading of Franciscan family trees along devotional lines owes much to Bonaventure of Bagnoregio's *Lignum Vitae* (c.1260), a manual for meditation on the life, suffering, and resurrection of Christ, which adapts the then existing tree of life iconography as a mnemonic device. From the late thirteenth century onward, manuscripts of this originally unillustrated text began to include diagrammatic illustrations that fuse a (highly schematic) tree with the Cross (fig. 2).

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This diagram gradually evolved into a more naturalistic rendering of a tree as it moved out of Bonaventure's text in the early fourteenth century, figuring as an independent miniature or

⁵ Dominique Donadieu-Rigaut, "Les « Arbres-ordo » ou la Complexité Organique des Ordres Religieux," *Hypothèses* 5, no. 1 (2002): 89-101; Dominique Donadieu-Rigaut, *Penser en Images: Les Ordres Religieux: XIIe-XVe Siècles* (Paris: Arguments, 2005), 239-335, esp. 334. By calling them *arbres-ordo*, Donadieu-Rigaut aims downplay the 'genealogical' character of these trees. I would still describe such trees as family trees – even if genealogical in a spiritual sense only, and requiring a different reading – because they explicitly cite the visual rhetoric of secular family trees. Moreover, since concepts of spiritual family and genealogy appear as heuristic keys for approaching Franciscan order history in other domains as well, we should be careful to disqualify the overtones they invoke too quickly.

convent wall mural.⁶ The inception of the Franciscan family tree iconography is often traced back to the pre-existing *Lignum Vitae* images. Taddeo Gaddi's famed *Lignum Vitae* fresco (c. 1340) in the refectory of the Santa Croce convent in Florence, is frequently mentioned in this context (fig. 3).

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Its iconography privileges Franciscan saints, most of all Francis, who conspicuously holds the tree's trunk in a position that mimics his posture in a Stigmatization scene, represented to the left of the tree.⁷ Given the context of more generalized medieval genealogical thinking, this leads Ulrike Ilg to interpret Gaddi's tree as "quasi-genealogical", loosely connecting it with later, more explicitly genealogical mendicant trees.⁸ Raphaële Preisinger argues for an alternative missing link between the *Lignum Vitae* visualisations and later Franciscan family trees: two rather badly preserved murals at Sant'Antonio in Padua (1302–09) and San Fermo in Verona (first half of the fourteenth century). By combining their reconstructed iconographies – dubbed *Lignum vitae sancti Francisci* – an intermediate form emerges: the medallions hanging from the tree show scenes of Francis' life. At Sant'Antonio a Franciscan figure (Francis?) is incorporated into the tree's stem, while at San Fermo a seraph hovers over the tree's crown.⁹

Although the suggestions by Ilg and Preisinger toward reconstructing a quasi-uninterrupted iconographic evolution from early fourteenth-century Franciscan *Lignum Vitae* visualisations to late fifteenth-century Franciscan family trees are stimulating, I believe that

⁶ Ulrike Ilg, "Quasi *Lignum Vitae*: The Tree of Life as an Image of Mendicant Identity," in *The Tree: Symbol, Allegory, and Mnemonic Device in Medieval Art and Thought*, ed. Pippa Salonijs and Andrea Worm (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 187–212, esp. 187–94. For an in-depth discussion also see Raphaële Preisinger, *Lignum Vitae: Zum Verhältnis Materieller Bilder und Mentaler Bildpraxis Im Mittelalter* (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2014).

⁷ Ilg, "Quasi *Lignum Vitae*", 194–200; cf. Preisinger, *Lignum Vitae*, 154–74.

⁸ Ilg, "Quasi *Lignum Vitae*", 202–08, esp. 203.

⁹ Preisinger, *Lignum Vitae*, 209–20.

such a reconstruction cannot tell the entire story. The appearance of Franciscan family tree representations cannot be sufficiently explained by looking at iconographic precursors only.¹⁰ By examining non-visual representations of the Franciscan family tree as well as other tree images (apart from the *Lignum Vitae*) in Franciscan texts, it becomes clear that the earliest visualisations of a Franciscan family tree (discussed below) could draw on a diversified reservoir of tree-images: verbal, visual, genealogical, and non-genealogical.¹¹ The significance of this genealogical representation

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thus runs deeper than an extended afterlife of *Lignum Vitae* iconographies. I argue that genealogical thinking about the order's past precedes the first Franciscan family tree visualisations, and indeed constitutes a broader heuristic device to approach the order's history that manifested itself both verbally and visually.

Chapter sixty-four of the anonymous *Actus Beati Francisci et Sociorum Eius* (c. 1327–41) offers an excellent starting point to illustrate this.¹² It relates a vision of Jacopo of Massa, in which he saw the entire order in the shape of a beautiful tree with a golden root, a silver

¹⁰ The coeval rise of (secular) family trees could do with more attention, however. Despite the reservations expressed by Donadieu-Rigaut, I believe that Klapisch-Zuber is right to discuss the family trees of religious orders in the wider context of late medieval genealogical representations, including secular family trees. These formed part of the broader cultural framework of reference that made the iconography of (Franciscan) order trees legible to contemporaries (alongside *Lignum Vitae* visualisations). Donadieu-Rigaut, “Les « Arbres-ordo » ou la Complexité”; Klapisch-Zuber, *L'Ombre des Ancêtres*, 121ff.

¹¹ In this paper I concentrate on the exponents of Franciscan spiritual arborescence that had a noticeable impact on Franciscan family tree representations. Some well-known examples like Ubertino of Casale's *Arbor Vitae Crucifixae Jesu* (1305 – c. 1329) thus remain outside the scope of the present discussion. While Ubertino's *Arbor* certainly formed part of the broader cultural context of Franciscan spiritualised tree images, any direct influence on Franciscan family tree representations is difficult to gauge. It has been suggested that Ubertino's *Arbor* influenced the *Lignum Vitae* panel painting by Pacino of Bonaguida for the Poor Clares of Monticelli (c. 1310), but this argument has been cogently deconstructed by Ulrike Ilg, “*Quasi Lignum Vitae*”, 191–94, esp. 192 n. 28. For a stimulating discussion of “spiritual arborescence”, the proliferation of tree-images in late medieval devotional culture, see Sara Ritchey, “Spiritual Arborescence: Trees in the Medieval Christian Imagination,” *Spiritus* 8 (2008): 64–82; “Ubertino da Casale” in *Franciscan Authors, 13th – 18th Century: A Catalogue in Progress*, <http://users.bart.nl/~roestb/franciscan/index.htm> (accessed on 10 July 2019).

¹² For an edition see *Actus Beati Francisci et Sociorum Eius. Nuova Edizione Postuma di Jacques Cambell*, ed. Jacques Cambell, Marino Bigaroni, and Giovanni Boccali (Assisi: Edizioni Porziuncola, 1988). For a recent discussion see Antonio Montefusco, “The History as a Pendulum: The Actus and the Fioretti,” *Franciscan Studies* 71 (2013): 361–73.

stem, and branches with silver gilded leaves. This tree had as many branches as there were Franciscan provinces and its fruits were the friars. Giovanni of Parma, minister general of the order until 1257, sat at its top, which strongly bespeaks the Spiritual Franciscan context from which the *Actus* originated.¹³ Jacopo then saw Christ enthroned asking Francis to offer all his followers a drink from a chalice with the ‘spirit of life’. Some, like Giovanni of Parma, drank eagerly and became enlightened; others, like his successor Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, half-heartedly drank a little, and again others nothing at all. When the tree was shaken in a storm, the latter group fell from it first and came to a particularly bad end, being dragged off to hell, while eager drinkers went to heaven. The Franciscan tree in the *Actus* represents the order in a well-ordered way (a branch per province) and it serves as the stage for the drama of Spiritual renewal of the order after 1257. The tree is not genealogical and it is not typically visualized.¹⁴ This verbal representation of the Franciscan order as a tree became widespread from the second half of the fourteenth century onwards, through its vernacular adaptation as chapter forty-eight of the popular *Little Flowers* or *Fioretti* of St Francis, a text aimed at a lay audi-

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ence without strong ties to the Spiritual Franciscan movement.¹⁵ It seems that from this point onward the (mental) image of the order as a tree proliferated, often in Spiritual and later Observant Franciscan contexts.

¹³ David Burr, *The Spiritual Franciscans: From Protest to Persecution in the Century after Saint Francis* (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 2001).

¹⁴ Donadieu-Rigaut identifies one manuscript of the *Fioretti* that visualizes this tree. Donadieu-Rigaut, *Penser en Images*, 314-15.

¹⁵ Arthur L. Fisher, “A Reconsideration of the *Fioretti*, the Little Flowers of St. Francis,” *Collectanea Franciscana* 57 (1987): 5-24; Antonio Montefusco, “The History as a Pendulum,” 361-73; Daniele Solvi, “Spiritualità Francescana dei *Fioretti*,” *Vita Minorum* 84, no. 6 (2013): 47-126.

For example, a genealogical order tree appears in the little-known text the *Kinship of St Francis* (1365) by the French friar Arnald of Sarrant, which can be linked to the Spiritual movement. This text marks a turning point in Franciscan hagiography: while rooted in earlier traditions, the *Kinship* innovates by relating the life of Francis in terms of nine conformities with Christ.¹⁶ In the short prologue Arnald presents Francis in the light of the Franciscan Joachite apocalyptic, as a sun warming a world that had become cold and “renewing it with abundant fruit of merits and enriching it with a variety of fruit-bearing trees in the three Orders established by him”.¹⁷ These three trees – the Friars Minor, the Poor Clares, and the Third Order – have a genealogical connotation. This becomes evident directly in the first chapter (the first conformity with Christ): Francis’ choice of friends, which resulted in a group of followers that parallels Christ’s apostles and saints. First Francis’ own family is discussed, his (grand)parents, his brother, and his brother’s offspring. The text then seamlessly continues to relate that Francis fathered 11 sons in Christ before the approval of his rule by Innocent III. After approval “he fathered in Christ’s Gospel so many sons and daughters that his seed

¹⁶ The Latin title is *De Cognatione S. Francisci*. Little is known about the author, except that he served as provincial minister of Aquitaine in 1361–83. The *The Chronicle of the Twenty-four General Ministers* is generally attributed to him. See the introduction to the recent English translation of the text: *The Kinship of Saint Francis by Arnald of Sarrant* (1365), in *Francis of Assisi*, Vol. 3: *The Prophet*, ed. by Regis J. Armstrong, J.A. Wayne Hellmann, William J. Short (New York/London/Manilla: New City Press, 2001), 673-75. Also see the discussion and edition by Marian Michalczyk, “Une Compilation Parisienne des Sources Primitives Franciscaines (Paris, Nationale Ms. Latin 12707),” *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 74 (1981): 3-32, 401-55; & *AFH* 76 (1983): 3-97.

¹⁷ *The Kinship* (ed. Armstrong, Hellmann, and Short), 678. For an introduction to the Franciscan Joachite apocalyptic movement see Bernard McGinn, *Apocalyptic Spirituality: Treatises and Letters of Lactantius, Adso of Montier-en-Der, Joachim of Fiore, the Franciscan Spirituals, Savonarola* (Mahwah, Paulist Press, 1979), 150-52; David Burr, “Mendicant Readings of the Apocalypse,” in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, ed. Richard K. Emmerson and Bernard McGinn (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1992), 89-102; David Burr, “Franciscan Exegesis and Francis as an Apocalyptic Figure,” in *Monks, Nuns, and Friars in Mediaeval Society*, ed. Edward B. King, Jacqueline T. Schaefer, and William B. Wadley (Sewanee: The Press of the University of the South, 1989), 51- 62; Raoul Manselli, “L’Apocalisse e L’Interpretazione Francescana della Storia,” in *The Bible and Medieval Culture*, ed. W. Lourdaux and D. Verhelst (Leuven: Leuven UP, 1979), 157-70.

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spread throughout the whole world, seems beyond number, like the sand of the seashore.”¹⁸

Arnald offers a perspective that is both decidedly apocalyptic and genealogical: Francis as *alter Christus* renews the world with his three orders, and parallels Christ by gathering a following of ‘sons and daughters’ represented in arboreal terms: seeds, fruit-bearing trees, and fruits. Moreover, the text’s title, the *Kinship of St Francis* or *De Cognatione S. Francisci*, emphasizes that this representation of the order as a family fathered by Francis is important, even if it is discussed only briefly at the outset of the text.¹⁹ Above all, its arboreal overtones seem to be geared toward underlining the fruitfulness of the eschatological renewal initiated by Francis.

There are no indications that *The Kinship* was at any point an illustrated text; the genealogical imagery is verbal, yet it may have likely inspired later tree visualisations. Notwithstanding its mere two surviving manuscript copies, *The Kinship* did have a significant influence, as is testified by Bartolomeo of Pisa’s popular *Book of the Conformity of the Life of St Francis to the Life of Christ* (1385–90), which also includes a programmatic tree image. Bartolomeo particularly elaborates the suggestion of interpreting the life of Francis in terms of conformities with the life of Christ, organising his text into no less than forty lengthy chapters discussing as many conformities.²⁰ Bartolomeo does not explicitly pick up on the genealogical imagery of *The Kinship*; however, the image of a fruit-bearing tree suggested by Arnald is important in the *Conformities*. It is the main structuring device of the text: each of its forty

¹⁸ *The Kinship* (ed. Armstrong, Hellmann, and Short), 680–81.

¹⁹ The oldest, fifteenth century manuscript (Assisi, Sacro Convento, Codex 558) bears this title. The Parisian manuscript dating to 1508 (Paris, BNF, MS. Lat. 12707, 1508) apparently does not. Since only a short portion of the text deals with explicitly kinship, Marian Michalezyk rebaptized the text *De Conformitate B. Francisci ad Christum*. Cf. *The Kinship* (ed. Armstrong, Hellmann, and Short), 673.

²⁰ Following official approval of the text by the order’s general chapter in 1399, Bartolomeo’s *Conformities* soon became widely disseminated. Apart from a considerable number of surviving manuscripts, three printed editions appeared during the sixteenth century. For a recent introduction to this text with an up to date discussion of the relevant bibliography see William J. Short, “The ‘Book of Conformities’: Its Printers, Illustrators and Protestant Critics,” *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 110, no. 3–4 (2017): 411–38.

fruits corresponds to a conformity/chapter. This tree image may initially have functioned as a mnemonic device not visualized in early manuscripts, but it is probable that later copies did come to include a tree diagram.²¹ All the more so be-

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cause all three printed editions of the *Conformities* do include an image of a fruit bearing conformities-tree. This programmatic tree image appears at the outset of the main text, by way of table of contents. The first, 1510 edition, shows forty conformity-fruits in the form of inscribed placards hanging from twenty branches. Christ crucified appears nailed to the top of the tree and Francis hugs its trunk in a kneeling position at the bottom.²² The trees in the second and third edition of 1513 and 1590 are similar, but the conformities are now shaped like fruits, while Francis displaying the stigmata in his hands and a friar holding a book (Bartolomeo?) are shown standing on either side of the trunk looking up (fig. 4).

The *Conformities* tree was likely inspired by Arnald's arboreal genealogical imagery, but it is not genealogical. This illustrates that medieval Franciscan trees are mercurial shapeshifters that easily transition back

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and forth between verbal imagery and mental mnemonic image, to visualisations with various devotional and eschatological connotations. The common denominator of the trees in the *Kinship* and the *Conformities* is that they both emphasize the fruitfulness of Francis as the herald of the transition to the Joachite third *status* of the Holy Spirit. The image of the fruit-

²¹ The late fourteenth-century manuscript of the *Conformities* preserved at the Biblioteca Estense in Modena (MS Campori y. B. 6. 24) contains twenty-five illustrations, but it does not include a tree diagram. This illustrates that the visualization of the *Conformities* tree is a later development. "Codices Bibliothecae Estensis Mutinae," *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 5 (1912): 95-7.

²² This image is reproduced on a plate in the preface of the Quarracchi edition of the *Conformities*. *Analecta Franciscana* V (Quarracchi: Coll. S. Bonaventura, 1912).

bearing tree represents Francis' conformity with Christ as overwhelmingly productive, and in the case of the *Kinship* this includes his following/offspring.

The early sixteenth-century visualisations of the *Conformities* tree discussed above also clearly allude to visualisations of Bonaventure's *Lignum Vitae*: a merger of crucifix and tree whose branches extend fruits for contemplation (of Christ's life and Passion in the case of the *Lignum Vitae*). However, the *Conformities* tree is much more overtly Franciscan: the Crucified Christ and the Stigmatized Francis are both explicitly present in its iconography. Indeed, it might be interpreted as yet another visual intermediary between *Lignum Vitae* iconographies and later genealogical trees. Yet, given the fluid, multifarious character of medieval Franciscan trees it seems less helpful to place the *Conformities* tree on a time line of more or less straightforward iconographic evolution. Instead, by approaching this and other medieval Franciscan trees as a genre of creative composition and invention (like so many other mental and visual medieval tree and other diagrams), it becomes possible to discern what unites its various manifestations, be it verbal/mental or visual.²³ Rather than a linear iconographic development, the common denominator of medieval Franciscan trees is more likely an eschatological perspective on Franciscan order history.

Indeed, the earliest tree-visualisation that represents the Franciscan family in an explicitly genealogical way does not seem to be inspired on visualisations of Bonaventure's *Tree of Life* or Bartolomeo's tree of *Conformities*. It concerns a tapestry of Flemish make (fig. 5) that was donated to the upper Church in Assisi in 1479 by Francesco della Rovere, then Pope Sixtus IV (p. 1471–84).²⁴

²³ Cf. Klapisch-Zuber, *L'Ombre des Ancêtres*; Lina Bolzoni, *La Rete degli Imagini: Predicazione in Volgare dalle Origini a Bernardino da Siena* (Turin: Einaudi, 2002), 103–44; Mary Carruthers and Jan M. Ziolkowski, *The Medieval Craft of Memory: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 1–31.

²⁴ For the year of donation see Donadieu-Rigaut, *Penser en Images*, 316; Bonaventure, in the lower-left corner does not have a halo, which suggests the tapestry was made before his canonisation in 1482. Cf. Preisinger, *Lignum Vitae*, 221–23, and *Sauver Assise*, ed. Giovanni Morello (Milan: Electa, 1998), 156.

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The composition of this tree, especially the way its branches with prominent Franciscan saints radiate outward from the central root, reminds of tree of Jesse iconographies, as does the image of the Virgin at the tree's crown (compare fig. 1). However, unlike many tree of Jesse images the stem does not grow out of the abdomen of the patriarch reclining: its roots appear on the back of St Francis (at the centre of the image) and are not visibly rooted in his body. This has led Donadieu-Rigaut to conclude that the root-Francis connection is not the main connection visualized on the tapestry. Instead, his analysis emphasizes the link between the Christ-seraph and Francis, who is portrayed at the moment of Stigmatization, which would turn the saint into a 'christomorphous body' revealed to the onlooker as a precious relic. Donadieu-Rigaut starkly distinguishes between the link between Christ and Francis, described as

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conformatio, while the connection between Francis and his followers is described in terms of *imitatio*.²⁵ This interpretation breaks the iconography up into two relatively disconnected parts: the Christ-seraph and Francis on the one hand, and the Franciscan family on the other.

I would like to suggest an interpretation of the Assisi tapestry that integrates these two parts of the iconography more closely. My interpretation is based on the Franciscan order trees projected by Arnald of Sarrant and Bartolomeo of Pisa. Their trees emphasize the productiveness (in terms of conformities and followers) of Francis as the *alter Christus* and as the herald of a new stage in history. Seen in this light, it seems likely that the Assisi tapestry shows Francis in the moment of Stigmatization, *because* this moment exemplifies the moment of germination of the order, appropriately visualized by the Franciscan family tree sprouting

²⁵ Donadieu-Rigaut, *Penser en Images*, 316-18.

from behind Francis' back. Rather than a disjuncture, there is more likely a causal relationship between the Stigmatization scene and the Franciscan family tree that surrounds it.

The only slightly later *Rosarium beati Francisci*, a Franciscan family tree printed in Nuremberg in 1484 (fig. 6), corroborates this interpretation of

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the Assisi Tapestry. The iconography is again diverse: the tree is rooted in three virtues personified – Chastity, Poverty and Obedience – and its shape is comparable to the *Conformities* tree, with Christ crucified at the top and Francis at the centre. The lowest branch to the left is reserved for four prominent Poor Clares, the lowest branch to the right for four members of the Third Order, and the remaining branches sport thirty-three friars.²⁶ The title is communicated by a central banderol: *Rosarium beati Francisci*: the Rosary or rose bush of Francis. If the image refers to a meditative prayer exercise, it is not in the first place the *Lignum Vitae* (even if the image alludes to *Lignum Vitae* iconographies). The intended purpose of this modestly sized single leaf woodcut print (402x292 mm) is difficult to determine, but it appears to have served as an exemplar for more ornate painted images (as is also the case with its seventeenth century with printed counterparts).²⁷

While the iconography thus appears to be quite different from the Assisi Tapestry, the overall visual rhetoric of the tree is similar. The Stigmatization is visualized prominently: red

²⁶ The virtues are identified with banderols stating: *Castitas pudorosa, Paupertas zelosa, Obedientia studiosa*. For schematic rendering of the tree, a detailed discussion of all the individuals visualized, and transcriptions of the banderols, see Bonaventura Kruitwagen, "Een Arbor Seraphicae Sanctitatis (Rosarium Beati Francisci) van Nürnberg 1484. Een onbekend werk van Nic. Glassberger?" *Franciscana, Revue trimestrielle/Driemaandelijksch Tijdschrift* 6 (1923): 159-94, esp. 168-94; cf. Kruitwagen, "Een Arbor Seraphicae Sanctitatis" *Franciscana* 7 (1924): 99-114 & 177-187; also see Bonaventura Kruitwagen, "Der Nürnberger Einblattdruck *Rosarium beati Francisci* (1484), eine Arbeit Nicolaus Glaßberger?" *Franziskanische Studien* 13 (1926): 54-82.

²⁷ Adaptations of the *Rosarium* appear in a liturgical manuscript associated with the Poor Clares of Sankt Jakob am Anger (*Granduale de Sanctis*, post 1494. Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek: CLM 23042, f. 4v.), and in the shape of a late fifteenth-century panel painting now preserved at the *Musée des Beaux Arts* at Tournai. For reproductions and further references see: Donadieu-Rigaut, *Penser en Images*, 323-26; Ilg, "Quasi Lignum Vitae", 205-08; Preisinger, *Lignum Vitae*, 220-22.

lines run down from Christ's wounds to Francis and his Stigmata below, who occupies a central position on the tree stem. Again, it offers a Franciscan Joachimite perspective on order history. In the case of the *Rosarium Beati Francisci* this is emphasized by the largest banderol of the image which cites Apocalypse 7: 2-4.²⁸ This passage, commonly cited to identify Francis as the herald of the Joachimite third *status*, has been extended beyond its usual length to include phrases that in the context of the *Rosarium* clearly point to Fran-

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cis' numerous followers. The *Rosarium* thus suggests a reading in which the Stigmatized Francis (having the sign of the living God), then marks his followers, who are numerous: the Apocalypse of St John gives the number 144.000.²⁹ It is therefore probably no coincidence that the tree includes 44 well-known and/or holy followers. Once more, it seems, the Stigmatization was included in the iconography of this family tree as a symbolic shorthand for the moment of germination of the order.

The *Rosarium* thus communicates a particular eschatological perspective on Franciscan order history embedded in the larger currents of salvation history, and it foregrounds the importance of Francis' followers in this larger narrative. In his pioneering discussion of the *Rosarium*, Bonaventura Kruitwagen rightly points out that whoever designed the complex iconography of this image was very well-versed in Franciscan order history. Kruitwagen even proposes the Observant order historian Nikolaus Glassberger as its author: of all the notable Franciscans featured on the tree only two do not appear in *The*

²⁸ *Vidi alterum angelum ascendentem ab ortu solis habentem / signum dei vivi et clamavit voce magna quatuor / angelis quibus datum est nocere terre et mari dicens Nolite nocere terre et mari neque arboribus quoadusque signemus / servos dei nostri in frontibus eorum ut [et] audivi numerum signat-/orum, centumquadraginta quatuor millia Apocal. vij. Cf. Kruitwagen, "Een Arbor Seraphicae Sanctitatis (1923): 193.*

²⁹ "And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the sign of the living God; and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying: Hurt not the earth, nor the sea, nor the trees, till we sign the servants of our God in their foreheads. And I heard the number of them that were signed, an hundred forty-four thousand were signed." Douay-Rheims 1899 American Edition.

Chronicle of the Twenty-four General Ministers, a text that Glassberger knew intimately. Moreover, he produced two secular genealogies, a *Genealogium Ducum Austria* and a family tree for Maximilian I. Finally, Glassberger lived in Nuremberg from 1483–1508 and the abbreviation “n.f.” on the tree’s trunk may just stand for “Nikolaus Frater”.³⁰ However likely, Glassberger’s authorship of the *Rosarium* cannot be proven. Yet the likelihood illustrates all the more that this Franciscan family tree visualizes a complex perspective on Franciscan order history that is clearly distinct from the earlier, more devotional *Lignum Vitae* iconographies.

My discussion of late medieval Franciscan trees complements existing, predominantly art historical, perspectives by also including textual tree representations. It has become clear that interpretations of late medieval Franciscan family trees that highlight earlier Franciscan *Lignum Vitae* iconographies as their direct precursor (and as the most important key for interpretation) leave the story of such genealogical representations partly untold. While Franciscan *Lignum Vitae* iconographies undeniably offer an important cultural backdrop for elucidating particular features of the Franciscan family tree, genealogical representations like the Assisi

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tapestry of 1479 and the Nuremberg *Rosarium* are also in conversation with a reservoir of Franciscan tree images in Franciscan texts from Spiritual and Observant contexts in particular. In the *Actus* (and later *Fioretti*), the *Kinship*, and the *Conformities* the Franciscan tree (both verbal and visual, genealogical and non-genealogical) figures as an image that bespeaks the fruitfulness or productiveness of Francis as the herald of a new stage in history. In the case of the Assisi tapestry and the *Rosarium*, the eschatological context of Francis’ fruitfulness in terms of followers is invoked by inclusion of the Stigmatization. Future analyses of medieval

³⁰ Kruitwagen, “Een Arbor Seraphicae Sanctitatis,” *Franciscana* 7 (1924): 99-114, esp. 106-14.

Franciscan tree images (both visual and textual) therefore stand to gain from incorporating these various tree representations in texts and their ideological context. Moreover, my discussion also highlights that Franciscan family trees offer a complex eschatological perspective on the order's history, associated with the sphere of activity of accomplished order historians like Nikolaus Glassberger. In these late medieval representations, genealogy (imagined as a tree) thus furnishes a particular, eschatological perspective on order history. From these beginnings, genealogy (defined more broadly) developed into a versatile heuristic device for approaching and representing Franciscan order history during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Franciscan *genealogia* during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries'

From its late medieval Spiritual/Observant beginnings, the Franciscan family tree went on to become a more widespread phenomenon that emanated from Observant, Conventual, and Capuchin contexts in the centuries that followed, in the shape of various printed images as well as murals on convent walls.³¹ In what follows, I argue that these family tree images are indeed one exponent of a broader range of genealogical representations of the order and its history. These include non-arbo-

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real genealogical images as well as historiography. It will become clear that during the period under discussion *genealogia* emerged as a particular mode of representing order history.

³¹ Various versions of the Franciscan family tree were printed up to the nineteenth and twentieth century, and the (often derivative) murals can be found on convent walls across Europe and the New World, particularly the Latin Americas. P. Hildebrand, "De Franciskaanse Boom," *Franciscaans Leven* 36 (1953): 4-13; P. Hildebrand, "Nog over de Franciskaanse Boom," *Franciscaans Leven* 37 (1954): 122-24; Jesús Pérez Morera, "El Árbol Genealógico de las Órdenes Franciscana y Dominica en el Arte Virreinal," *Anales del Museo de América* 4 (1996): 119-26; Ángel Justo Estebaranz, "Para Honra y Gloria De La Orden: Las Pinturas De Las Genealogías de las Órdenes Religiosas en los Conventos Quiteños en el Barroco," *Laboratorio de Arte* 28 (2016): 259-81; Giuseppe Cassio, "Saint Giovanni of Capestrano in the Artistic Representations of the Franciscan Family Tree," *Franciscan Studies* 75 (2017): 233-73.

Finally, I explore how some of these visualisations of the Franciscan family tree as well as textual genealogies (often combined) could function as territorial representations, geared toward rooting Franciscan communities in specific regions or provinces, and/or were employed in the competition between (Franciscan) orders.

The *Genealogia delle Provincie de' Beati, e Santi della Religione di San Francesco* (Florence, 1525) is an early witness of the use of *genealogia* as a heuristic for interpreting order history. This text does not survive in its entirety. We know of its existence because it was cited, along with excerpts of its contents, as a work of the Observant historian Mariano of Firenze (d. 1523) in nineteenth century canonization proceedings.³² Based on examination of the available fragments, Arnaldo Sancricca suggests that this posthumous *Genealogia* is indeed a synthesis by an anonymous Tuscan friar, based on Mariano's compilation manuscripts for, and drafts of his *Legende et Vite di Sancti Frati et Suore de' Tre Ordini Istituiti* and *Fasciculus Chronicarum Seraphici Ordinis Minorum*.³³ It is no longer possible to assess exactly how the theme of Franciscan genealogy was worked out in the Florentine *Genealogia* of 1525. Yet given its inclusion in the work's title, it seems that the anonymous compiler deemed 'genealogy' an appropriate mode for communicating order history, that possibly even points to a particular angle on that history.

Franciscan tree visualizations also circulated separately. For example, in 1585 the Florentine printer Giovanni Antonio Borghi received a licence from Henry III of France to publish a Franciscan tree image that does not survive. The description in the licence text suggests a curious iconography: the *Conformities* tree 'surrounded by all Franciscan saints'.³⁴

³² Arnaldo Sancricca, "La *Genealogia delle Provincie de' Beati e Santi della Religione di S. Francesco*. Un'Opera a Stampa Attribuita a Fra' Mariano da Firenze nel *Summarium Super non Remotione Cultus* di S. Liberato da Loro," *Picenum Seraphicum* 24 (2005): 147-89, esp. 166.

³³ Sancricca, "La *Genealogia delle Provincie*," 178-89.

³⁴ "arborem conformitatis vitae S. Francisci cum illa Domini nostri Jesu-Christi ... in qua ... quadraginta ... mysteria dicti S. Francisci et quadraginta Jesu-Christi conformia, circa quam arborem erunt omnes sancti dictae religionis et Ordinis." Anon., "Recensiones Operum ad Rem Franciscanum Pertinentium," *Collectanea Franciscana* 8 (1938): 396-97.

This quasi merge between a *Conformities* tree and a Franciscan family tree, underscores several points raised before. It testifies that Franciscan tree images other than *Lignum Vitae* iconographies (such as the *Conformities* tree) influenced Franciscan family tree visualisations. Moreover, it hints at an eschatological perspective on Francis' productiveness (in the shape

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of both conformities and holy followers), also present in medieval Franciscan trees. Finally, the tree described in the 1585 licence text illustrates that during the sixteenth century the Franciscan tree continued to function as an adaptable creative concept that could manifest itself in various guises, as had been the case in previous centuries. Thus, while examples of Franciscan tree visualizations dating to the seventeenth century are typically an easy fit with the category 'family tree', the iconography of their predecessors is often more varied.

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This is corroborated by several tree images in two influential late sixteenth-century Franciscan order chronicles by the Conventual friar Pietro Ridolfi and the Observant friar Francesco Gonzaga respectively. These works also illustrate that Franciscan genealogical diagrams and textual culture often went hand in hand. Although texts and images could circulate separately, as was the case with the Florentine *Genealogia* of 1525 and the tree image licenced in 1585, this was by no means the norm. Ridolfi's *Historiarum Seraphica Religionis* (1586) is a case in point. It relates the history of the order from various angles, including discussions of Franciscan convents and monuments, and the order's most learned friars. The text starts out with a discussion of the life of Francis, followed by the lives of

prominent followers. The first paragraph of the first book discusses his origins, coat of arms, and genealogy.³⁵

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This topic is further elucidated by an illustration of Francis' family tree, titled *Arbor consanguinitatis B. Francisci in quartam progeniem* (fig. 7). It shows a man standing on a tree stump (representing Francis' direct ancestors), who holds two branches: one is Francis, and the other his brother Angelo and four generations of his offspring. Below, the coat of arms of his family and of the Franciscan order are shown. The inscriptions make clear that although the 'ancient root of Francis' has produced good offspring – the good plant carried good fruit – Francis' secular family suffered a dismal fate, due to the horrors of the plague.³⁶ That the 'good fruit' referred to may indeed be interpreted as the spiritual progeny of Francis, is suggested by a later, probably seventeenth-century, engraving of a Franciscan family tree image which cites this part of the inscription (fig. 8).³⁷ Moreover, the inscription next to Francis' branch in Ridolfi's *Historiarum* further emphasizes Francis' spiritual offspring "Just as the cause of trees and shoots is in the seeds, so too you (singular) were the seed of this holy group", the Franciscans.³⁸

The genealogical opening of the *Historiarum* is reminiscent of the start of Arnald of Sarant's *Kinship of St Francis*.³⁹ First the worldly family of Francis is discussed, before his spiritual family receives attention. In the case of the *Historiarum*, the episodes relating how

³⁵ "De B. Francisci origine, stemmate, atque eius in quartam progeniem genealogia." Pietro Ridolfi, *Historiarum Seraphica Religionis* (Venice: apud Franciscus Senenseni, 1586), Lib. I, ch. 1. In this context *stemma* appears to refer to 'coat of arms' (following the Italian significance of the word).

³⁶ "Defecit haec arbor saevae pestis contagio, cuius natura talis est, ut quo quis laborat solo contactu caeteros statim inficit." & "Stipite FRANCISCI antiquo est bona reddita proles; namque bonos fructus fert bona planta suos. Sed tantum haec proles quantum genus attigit ipsum; Nam nulli parcens abstulit atra lues." See fig. 7.

³⁷ *Stipite Francisci antiquo est bona reddita proles; namque bonos fructus fert bona planta suos*. See fig. 8.

³⁸ "Ut in seminibus caussa est arborum, et stirpiu(m), sic huius sacratissim(i) gregis semen tu fuisti." See fig. 7. This phrase echoes Cicero (*Philippicae* 2).

³⁹ Whether Ridolfi used the *Kinship* as a source is difficult to ascertain.

Francis gathered his first following around him and sought approval for his Rule are accompanied by a diagram that can arguably be described as genealogical (fig. 9). Its visual rhetoric combined with the inscriptions, suggests that while the ship of the church was suffering bad weather, Francis brought it safely to port, through the founding and proliferation of his order. Thanks to the uninscribed banderols with busts of order members that unfold to either side of the central mast, the image strongly resembles a family tree, although it is in fact a ship.⁴⁰ This visual allusion to family tree iconographies (already previously invoked by the *Arbor consanguinitatis B. Francisci*) lends the ship image clear genealogical overtones.

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These two illustrations in Ridolfi's *Historiarum* testify to the malleable character of sixteenth-century Franciscan tree visualisations, and suggest that non-arboreal images could be used to represent genealogy as well. The three tree images in Francesco Gonzaga's *De Origine Seraphicae Religionis Franciscana* (1587), an influential history of the order at the time, also illustrate the varied character of Franciscan tree visualisations. Two of these are not explicitly (although arguably implicitly) genealogical: a tree diagram with the leaders of the Observance *sub vicariis* prior to 1517, and a palm tree diagram with medallions of the order's ministers general on its branches, leading from Francis at the base of the stem, straight up to Gonzaga himself at the palm's top.⁴¹ These two trees can be described as historiographical diagrams. They visualize a chronological succession in the governance of the order, and were possibly intended for mnemonic purposes.

⁴⁰ Giuseppe Cassio describes this diagram as an "albero dell'ordine serafico di san Francesco". Despite the visual resemblance to tree diagrams, this characterisation of the image might be slightly imprecise. Cf. Cassio, "Saint Giovanni of Capestrano," 262.

⁴¹ Francesco Gonzaga, *De Origine Seraphicae Religionis Franciscana* (Rome, 1587), 40, 64.

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The third tree is found at the outset of book two of Gonzaga's history, which deals with provinces of the order. Each section opens with an emblem that represents the province discussed. The province of St Francis (Umbria) – the order's heartland surrounding Assisi – is visualized as St Francis himself, who reclines in a hilly landscape with a Franciscan family tree rooted on his abdomen (fig. 10). Of the Franciscan saints among its branches, several have no connection with this province. The iconography of the image suggests a particularly close association, or even conflation, between this province and (the body of) Francis, as the region that gave birth to his order. This Franciscan family tree thus elaborates a territorial link: the order first grew up out of soil of Umbria / Francis. Such explicit linkage between the order and a particular area by means of a genealogical device was to become more common in later centuries, as shall become clear.

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Before continuing to examine the potentially territorial overtones of early modern genealogical representations of Franciscan order history, it is important to first take note of the proliferation of Franciscan family tree visualizations during the seventeenth century. While such iconographies were relatively unusual during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, their omnipresence during the seventeenth century undoubtedly contributed toward normalising genealogical perspectives on Franciscan order history.⁴² The *Epilogus Tocius Ordinis Seraphici S. P. Francisci*, a large printed image of a Franciscan family tree composed

⁴² To the examples of Franciscan family trees dating to before 1600 discussed so far (the Assisi tapestry of 1479 (fig. 5), the *Rosarium* of 1484 (fig. 6) and its two derivatives, and the printing licence for a Franciscan tree of 1585), we can still add the (now lost) mural of a Franciscan family tree dating the late sixteenth century at the convent of Caiazzo (Caserta, Italy). On this mural see Cassio, "Saint Giovanni of Capestrano," 243-45, 263. More fifteenth and sixteenth-century specimens may have been lost over time. Yet the abundance (in comparison) of such images dating to the seventeenth century does strongly suggest that the iconography became much more common during that period.

of 12 plates (c. 184 x 126 cm) printed in Antwerp in 1626, played a significant role in this development. The *Epilogus* of 1626 was designed by the Spanish Capuchin Vitale of Alcira, engraved and printed by the Antwerp artist Pieter de Joode I, and sold in Paris by Nicolas de Poilly.⁴³ The print offers an overview of the history of all Franciscan orders up to the end of the sixteenth century, described in various cartouches. Apart from the Poor Clares and the Third Order, the Observants, Conventuals, and Capuchins (three distinct organizations after the separations of 1517 and 1528) are represented, as are various internal reform movements.⁴⁴ The historiographical intent of the print is confirmed by the transcription of the *Epilogus*, written in

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Antwerp in 1626 by a member of the Montoya family, which presents it as a chronicle as well as a genealogy: *Cronycke ende Ghenerale Genalosisie*.⁴⁵

⁴³ For a detailed description and transcription of this image see Servus Gieben, *L'Albero Serafico e Carlo de Arenberg. Il Modello di Vitale di Alcira e il Progetto di Giovanni de Montoya* (Rome: Collegio San Lorenzo da Brindisi, 2008), 9-56, 115-36. As Capuchin order historian, Vitale of Alcira apparently also published an *Arbor Originis et Progressus FF. Capuccinorum* and a *Historia Chronographica FF. Minorum*. These publications are not discussed in the present, exploratory study, because I was not able to ascertain whether they survive. However, they may yet provide important context for further investigations into the *Epilogus*, and genealogical representations of Franciscan order history in general. Giovanni Giacinto Sbaraglia, *Supplementum et Castigatio ad Scriptores Trium Ordinum S. Francisci a Waddingo aliisve Descriptos* (Rome: S. Michaelis ad Ripam apud Linum Contedini, 1806), li; also see "Vitalis Algezira" in *Franciscan Authors, 13th – 18th Century: A Catalogue in Progress*, <http://users.bart.nl/~roestb/franciscan/index.htm> (accessed on 8 July 2019).

⁴⁴ The most conspicuous sign of Vitale of Alcira's affiliation to the Capuchin order is visible at the base of the tree where Francis and twelve of his earliest followers are represented wearing Capuchin habits with pointy hoods.

⁴⁵ The full title is: *Chronicle and General Genealogy or Table of the Family Tree of the Entire Seraphic Order of the Holy Father Francis* (my translation). "CRONYCKE ENDE GHENERALE / GENALOSIE OFTE TAFEL / VAN GHESLACHTEN BOOM VAN / GHEHEEL HET H. / seraphiense order vanden heijlighen / vader franciscus van assisien." The transcription is preserved at Bruxelles, Bibliothèque Royale, MS 12161-63, fol. 5-52. The title, given by Gieben, is corroborated by a photographic reproduction in his book, although it does not correspond exactly to the manuscript description by Van Den Gheyn: "(F.5-52). Ghenerale genalosisie en gheslachtenboom ofte cronycke van den h. seraphiense order". From Van Den Gheyn's description it does become apparent that MS 12161-63 contains other sections (a fact not signalled by Gieben) pertinent to the same topic, notably a "Tafel ende cortbegryp van dese cronycke ende gheslachtenboom der seraphiense order van den heyligen vader Franciscus," on fol. 75v-90v. Gieben, *L'Albero Serafico*, 91-110, 156-94, esp. 95 & 156; J. Van Den Gheyn, *Catalogue des Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique*, vol. 6 (Bruxelles: Bibliothèque Royale Albert I^{er}, 1906), 206-07; cf. Hildebrand, "De Franciskaanse Boom," 4-13.

The *Epilogus* of 1625, together with the considerably adapted and expanded design likewise titled *Epilogus Tocius Ordinis Seraphici S. P. Francisci* printed in Antwerp in 1650 (fig. 11), did much to turn the Franciscan family tree into a relatively common sight.⁴⁶ The printed leaves of the image (12 or 9 depending on the edition) were relatively easy to transport. In Latin America a number of Franciscan convents – for example at Cuzco (Peru), Quito (Ecuador), Salvador de Bahia (Brazil) – possess murals or (panel) paintings based on the complex iconography of the *Epilogus*.⁴⁷ Yet other types of Franciscan family tree iconographies, based on different models, were equally widespread during the seventeenth century. This includes the murals at the convent of Tagliacozzo (L'Aquila, Italy) dating to 1608, as well as those at the convents in Gavi (Alessandria, Italy) and Palermo (Sicily, Italy) both dating to the seventeenth century.⁴⁸ The iconography of the Franciscan family tree by Pietro Negri (1670) at *i Frari* in Venice appears to be independent from the example of the *Epilogus* as well.⁴⁹

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Other printed images of Franciscan family trees with iconographies independent from the *Epilogus* were also occasionally influential.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ On this edition and how it differs from the 1626 edition see Gieben, *L'Albero Serafico*, 57- 90, 137-55; cf. Hildebrand, "De Franciskaanse Boom," 4-13.

⁴⁷ Morera, "El Arbol Genealogico," 123-25; Cassio, "Saint Giovanni of Capestrano," 249-54, 264, 266, 268; Estebaran, "Para Honra y Gloria," 268-73, 279-80. The Franciscan family tree at the Capuchin convent at Oristano (Sardinia, Italy) is said to derive from the *Epilogus* as well. Anon., "Recensiones Operum," 396-97. On the exemplar used at Oristano also see Gieben, *L'Albero Serafico*, 12.

⁴⁸ Cassio, "Saint Giovanni of Capestrano," 256-58, 270-73. The iconography of the Franciscan family tree at *i Frari* in Venice (1670 by Pietro Negri) also seems relatively independent from the example of the *Epilogus*.

⁴⁹ Alessio Pasian, "L'Albero Serafico di Pietro Negri: Note Storiche, Iconografia, Committenza," in *Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari: Immagini di Devozione, Spazi della Fede*, ed. Carlo Corsato and Deborah Howard (Padova: Centro Studi Antoniani, 2015), 263-72 (plates 4, 52-53, 120-28).

⁵⁰ Cf. fig. 8. In addition to this, there is also the image titled *Arbor Religionis Graphice Cupri Laminis Incisa* (Avignon: P. Bramereau, 1633) published by the Conventual friar Gabriel Fabri d'Avignon. Elsewhere Juan de San Antonio also describes it as a *Catalogus Sanctorum Ordinis Minorum cum Iconibus*. See "Gabrielus Faber" in *Franciscan Authors, 13th – 18th Century: A Catalogue in Progress*, <http://users.bart.nl/~roestb/franciscan/index.htm> (accessed on 28 June 2019). The same tree is also noted by Giovanni Franchini, who adds that it was dedicated to Pope Urban VIII. Giovanni Franchini, *Bibliosophia, e*

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The stocklist (c. 1650) of the Antwerp printer Johannes Galle (1600–76) lists several tree images: the tree of human life, the tree of Carmel, the tree of St Francis, the tree of St Dominic, and the tree of St Norbert. The presence of this tree of St Francis (along with other trees) on Galle’s stocklist illustrates that such images were relatively common, and it suggests that the printer expected potential clients outside of Antwerp to be interested in purchasing his “Arbor S. Francisci”.⁵¹ I was able to identify this Franciscan tree engraved by Galle at the Wolfegger Kabinett. This plate, titled *Arbor Vitae ac Regulae Fratrum Minorum*, deserves a much more elaborate discussion than I can offer within the scope of the present paper (fig. 12).⁵² For now, it suffices to point out that this *Arbor Vitae ac Regulae* designed by the Flemish Observant friar Petrus Marchant circulated in the same period as the Capuchin *Epilogus*, and likewise influenced Franciscan family tree visualisations in Latin America.⁵³

Memorie Letterarie di Scrittori Francescani Conuentiali (Modena: Soliani, 1693), 274. I have not yet been able to procure further information about (or a reproduction of) this image.

⁵¹ A stocklist is a record a printer’s stock of plates, which would allow clients to order prints from further afield, without visiting the printer’s shop. Peter Fuhring, “The Stocklist of Joannes Galle, Print Publisher of Antwerp, and Print Sales from Old Copper Plates in the Seventeenth Century.” *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 39, no. 3 (2017): 225–313, esp. 246, 297. I thank Evelyne Verheggen for bringing this paper by Peter Fuhring to my attention.

⁵² I intend to offer a more detailed examination of this *Arbor Vitae ac Regulae* and its influence in the near future. The plate is signed: *Antwerpiae Ioannis Gallaeus excudit*. Exactly the same *Arbor Vitae ac Regulae Fratrum Minorum* print seems to also have been published in Antwerp by Jan Boel (1592–1640). Cf. Yvonne Lange & Richard Ahlborn, *Mission San Xavier del Bac: Guide to its Iconography* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2004), fig. 1.6. See item 2242A in the *Project for the Engraved Sources of Spanish Colonial Art* (PESSCA). n.d. “2242A.” <http://colonialart.org>. (accessed on 28 June 2019).

⁵³ Examples include the eighteenth canvas likewise titled *Arbor Vitae ac Regulae Fratrum Minorum* preserved at the Museo de Historia Mexicana in Monterrey (Mexico) and the Franciscan tree by Cristóbal of Telavera (1731) at the Church of St Francis in Puebla de los Angeles (Mexico). Cassio notes the former painting as an exception (in the sense that it is not based on the *Epilogus*), but seems unaware of its print source. Cassio lists the latter painting by Cristóbal of Telavera as derivative of the *Epilogus*; I would argue that its iconography was also influenced by the *Arbor Vitae ac Regulae*. Cf. Cassio, “Saint Giovanni of Capestrano,” 250–51, 268–69. See item 2242B in the *Project for the Engraved Sources of Spanish Colonial Art* (PESSCA). n.d. “2242B.” <http://colonialart.org>. (accessed on 28 June 2019).

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To recapitulate, a number of textual and visual witnesses (the Florentine *Genealogia* of 1525 and the 1585 licence for a tree image, the histories by Ridolfi and Gonzaga) testify to the continued relevance of genealogical perspectives on Franciscan history during the sixteenth century. These examples illustrate the fluidity and adaptability of such representations: various types of trees (not all strictly genealogical) as well as a genealogical ship. From the early decades of the seventeenth century onwards, visual representations of the Franciscan family tree became at once more widespread and more uniform. These iconographies are instantly recognizable as a family trees, while the influence of other Franciscan tree diagrams seems to have receded to the background after 1600. At the same time, the seventeenth-century proliferation of Franciscan family tree images indicates that genealogy was becoming a widely

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accepted heuristic for thinking about and presenting order history, also in textual form. The *Genealogia* printed in Florence in 1525 suggests that the idea was not entirely new. From the early decades of seventeenth century onwards, increasing numbers of historiographical texts adopted a genealogical perspective on Franciscan history.

This highly adaptable heuristic appears across a range of texts in which individual historians employ it in different ways to serve a variety of purposes. It is nevertheless possible to discern a number of trends and features that characterize genealogical perspectives on Franciscan history. First, like their visual counterparts these texts are often, but not always, organized around the image of a tree. Second, the genealogical perspectives offered often, but not always, elaborate links between (branches of) the Franciscan family and particular geographical areas. In Gonzaga's *De Origine Seraphicae Religionis Franciscana* (1587), we

already came across a genealogical device – a family tree (fig. 10) – that connects the order with a particular geographical area: the province of St Francis (Umbria). Third, such territorial genealogies are on occasion motivated by competition between (Franciscan) orders, aiming to exclude others from particular spaces and places, in order to give precedence to one particular group. Finally, genealogical perspectives on Franciscan history could also be mobilized in the context of intra-order competition to support arguments about primogeniture among the Franciscan orders without any specific territorial claim. In what follows I outline the contours of this diverse corpus of texts, analysing their various features and purposes. Although genealogical representations of the Franciscan past appear to have been an accepted historiographical (textual) genre during the early modern period, this task is slightly challenging because this particular approach to Franciscan history has not been documented by scholarship.

Therefore, I begin my exploration by taking a sample text from the *Militia Immaculatae Conceptionis Virginis Mariae* (1663) by Pedro de Alva y Astorga (O.F.M.). The *Militia* gathers in alphabetical order an enormous number of (often Franciscan) authors whose texts may serve as ammunition in favour of the immaculate conception of Mary, a highly controversial doctrine at the time.⁵⁴ Alva y Astorga cites several texts titled *Arbor* that record the (material) Franciscan heritage in a particular province. These Franciscan *Arbores* provide him with the number of

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Franciscan convents, churches and altars dedicated to the immaculate conception. For example, the *Arbor Reformatae Provinciae S. Thomae Apostoli* by friar Antonius of

⁵⁴ For a brief introduction to this controversy and its impact on religious art particularly in New Spain (including Franciscan family tree paintings) see Antonio Porcayo Michelini, “The Immaculate Conception, Father Junípero Serra, and The Bifacial Crucifixes Of San Fernando Velicatá, Baja California,” *Journal of the California Mission Studies Association* 31, no. 1 (2015): 145-58.

Lantosque records one church, four altars, and two convents with this dedication.⁵⁵ The *Arbor ac Relatio Reformatae Provinciae Siciliae* by Giuseppe de Collesano, the *Arbor ac Tabula Provinciae Sancti Bernardini* by Silvestro of St Demetrio, the *Arbor Provinciae S. Antonii Venetiarum* by Thomas of Mantua, and the *Arbor & Relatione Provinciae Ragusinae* by Vitale Adriasio of Raguso are likewise cited by Alva y Astorga for information about the convents, churches, and altars dedicated to immaculate conception in these Franciscan provinces.⁵⁶ As of yet, not much is known about these authors nor about the whereabouts of their texts.⁵⁷ However, it is clear that these provincial “trees” are historical descriptions of order provinces. More research is needed, but given their arboreal titles (likely associated with the Franciscan family tree) it is highly probable that these *Arbores* offer a genealogical perspective on the history of and Franciscan heritage in these order provinces. All the more so, because other Franciscan authors employ the same heuristic to write the same type of history, from the seventeenth century onward.

The *Genealogia Seraphica Ordinis Primogeniti Minorum Conventualium S. Francisci* (1620–29?) by the Conventual friar Ilario Altobelli (1560 – 1637) is a case in point. It likewise suggests that ‘genealogy’ was a recognized historiographical form during this period. Moreover, the *Genealogia* showcases the potential of the genealogical heuristic for foregrounding the historical roots of Franciscan communities in particular areas (represented by convents, in this case). Today Altobelli is known primarily for his exceptional

⁵⁵ “Antonius a Lantusca, Ordinis Minorum Italus, in *Arbore reformatae Provinciae S. Thomae Apostoli* affirmat, quod in praedicta Pronvincia sint Altaria Conceptionis Quatuor, Ecclesia vero una, sub titulo Conceptionis. Item in relatione Provinciae agit de conventu Immaculatae Conceptionis de Maei, & de Monasterio Immaculatae Conceptionis Caballarii Majoris, quae relatio extat apud nos M.S.” Pedro de Alva y Astorga, *Militia Immaculatae Conceptionis Virginis Mariae* (Louvain: Typographia Immaculatae Conceptionis, 1663), 105.

⁵⁶ Alva y Astorga, *Militia Immaculatae Conceptionis*, 865, 1408, 1445, 1469-70.

⁵⁷ In the case of four out of the five examples given here, Alva y Astorga mentions that the library he used offered access to the text (in manuscript). “Quae relatio extat apud nos M.S.,” 105; “Extat MS apud nos,” 865; “Extat praedicta Relatio in nost. Biblioth. manusc.” 1445; “Extat apud nos,” 1469-70. It may be possible to identify these texts by determining which (most likely Roman) Franciscan library collection Alva y Astorga used when preparing the *Militiae*.

accomplishments as a scientist.⁵⁸ However, from 1617 onwards he was also the officially appointed historian of the Conventual

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order. In this capacity, Altobelli worked on his *Genealogia Seraphica*, which was originally intended as an all-encompassing history of the Conventual order and its convents. The surviving manuscripts suggest that this task may have proven to be too large: he visited and described many if not all convents in the province of Le Marche, gathering documentary evidence and detailed planimetric data.⁵⁹ Overall, Altobelli's *Genealogia* seems motivated by a desire to establish Conventual primogeniture with respect to the Observant Franciscan order, also in terms of who should own particular convents (many of which predating the Observant reforms).⁶⁰

In Altobelli's case a genealogical take on history may have served the territorial interests of the Conventual brethren in the competition with other Franciscan order branches, yet genealogy could also be employed inclusively. For example, the Tuscan Observant historian Antonio Tognocchi of Terrinca uses the device of a genealogical theatre to relate the history of all the Franciscan orders in Tuscany.⁶¹ 'Theatre' in this case suggests a particular

⁵⁸ For an overview of his work and bibliographical references see "Hilarius de Altobello" in *Franciscan Authors, 13th – 18th Century: A Catalogue in Progress*, <http://users.bart.nl/~roestb/franciscan/index.htm> (accessed on 29 June 2019).

⁵⁹ P. Gaetano Stano, "La 'Genealogia Seraphica' del P. Ilario Altobelli Seniore, OFMConv. (1560–1637)," *Miscellanea Francescana* 44, no. 1-4 (1944): 68-110; Francesco Merletti, "P.M Ilario Altobelli OFMConv. (1560–1637) e la sua 'Genealogica Serafica'," in *Ilario Altobelli: Scienziato, Teologo, Corrispondente di Galileo Galilei* (Treia: Empatiabooks, 2011), 9-26.

⁶⁰ Merletti, "P.M Ilario Altobelli," 17. The rather long title of the work suggests as much: *Genealogia Seraphica Ordinis Primogeniti Minorum Conventualium S. Francisci, in qua tum eiusdem ordinis generaliter, tum etiam ecclesiarum et domorum specialiter initia, progressus, status, privilegia, dignitates, situs, structura, amplitudines et plantae, atque alia singula adiacentia memoria digna ingenue referuntur; [...]*. For the still three times longer full title see Merletti Merletti, "P.M Ilario Altobelli," 18-19; Stano, "La 'Genealogia Seraphica,'" 71.

⁶¹ Antonio Tognocchi de Terrinca, *Genealogicum et Honorificum Theatrum Etrusco-Minoriticum* (Florence: Typographia sub Signo Stellae, 1682). The copy preserved at the National Central Library at Naples (Italy) is dated to 1684 (accessible via Google Books), apparently because two years, "II", were added with pen and ink to the year on the title page. This addition was probably inspired by the slightly incongruous fact that the dedication

way of collecting, organizing, and displaying knowledge, associated with early modern mnemotechniques.⁶² At the outset of the work, Antonio Tognocchi has included a schematic depiction of the genealogical theatre meant to give the “idea of the work” (fig. 13).

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From this diagram it becomes clear that the goal of this genealogical theatre is to bring together all notable Franciscans produced by all the “holy and glorious lineages” of the order in Tuscany.⁶³ Selected sections of the book’s contents are wrapped around the central stage of the theatre with indication of page numbers, giving a cursory table of contents. From these selected sections, it already becomes clear that Antonio Tognocchi’s genealogy connects Conventuals, Poor Clares, Observants, Capuchins, and members of the Third Order into one family. What unites the large and varied collection of prelates, writers, holy friars and sisters brought together in this book, is that they all come from Tuscany. The

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metaphors of lineage and family in this case serve to connect a highly diverse group of Franciscans to a particular province.⁶⁴

From the genealogical perspectives on Franciscan order history discussed thus far (the various provincial *Arbores* in Alva y Astorga’s *Militia*, Altobelli’s *Genealogia Seraphica*, and the genealogical *Theatrum* of Tuscany) it becomes clear that the metaphor of family often

of the book to Francesco Maria de’Medici (1660–1711) is dated to 4 October 1683. Compare with the copy preserved at the National Central Library at Florence (Italy), also on Google Books.

⁶² In this capacity, the word ‘theatre’ appears in countless sixteenth and seventeenth-century book titles. Ann Blair, *The Theater of Nature: Jean Bodin and Renaissance Science* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 153-79; Paolo Rossi, *Logic and the Art of Memory: The Quest for a Universal Language*, trans. Stephen Clucas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1-28, 80.

⁶³ “The crowned (pl.) shine in Tuscany through holy and glorious lineages.” *Sacris, et gloriosis stemmatibus in Tuscia coronati refulgent*. See fig. 14

⁶⁴ As of yet, my investigations of the (political) circumstances that motivated the publication of the *Theatrum* are still not concluded.

served to link communities to specific geographical areas. In the case of Altobelli's *Genealogia* the suggestion of Conventual primogeniture seems to have been aimed at supporting territorial claims against the Observants within of the province of Le Marche. Historical arguments about primogeniture among the Franciscan orders could also be mobilized in intra-order competition without any specific territorial claims. The *Arbol Serafico* (1703) by Juan del Olmo is a polemical work that explicitly employs the heuristic of genealogy to prove that the Observants are the true followers of Francis, not the Conventuals or the Capuchins (both whom staked competing claims at the time).⁶⁵ To this end, Del Olmo's analysis of order goes to show that there is a line of direct, uninterrupted succession (or descent) running from Francis to the then current minister general, Alonzo de Biezma. Del Olmo's textual *Arbol* also includes one illustration of Franciscan genealogy that is very different from coeval tree visualisations (fig. 14). Although it is called *Arbol*, this diagram is not shaped like a naturalistic tree. Instead, it traces Observant genealogy in a highly schematic way, from (1.) Francis prefigured by the angel of Apocalypse 7: 2-3, through a number of crucial turning points (no. 2-5), to finally the institution of the regular Observance as an independent order, declared primogeniture of Francis by Pope Leo X in 1517 (according to del Olmo).⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Juan del Olmo, *Arbol Serafico que con Luzes de Verdad Manifesta al Mundo la Legitima y nunca Interrupta Sucesion por Linea Recta del Generalissimo de Toda la Orden de San Francisco desde el Serafico Patriarca hasta el Reverendissimo Padre F. Alonzo de Biezma Ministro General de Toda la Orden* (Barcelona: Rafael Figuro, 1703). Cassio mentions this publication, erroneously suggesting that it was authored by Alonzo de Biezma. The work was written by Del Olmo and dedicated to De Biezma. Cf. Cassio, "Saint Giovanni of Capestrano," 249.

⁶⁶ Cassio suggests that Del Olmo's *Arbol Serafico* was used to update the visual programmes of Franciscan family tree depictions in the early modern Latin Americas. I suspect this is unlikely. Non-Observant communities might have been less than eager to refer to Del Olmo's *Arbol* and, apart from a list of ministers general and a very short list of Observant saints, the work does not offer adequate information for updating visual family trees. A Franciscan martyrology would be a more likely source for updating family tree depictions with the latest saints. Cf. Cassio, "Saint Giovanni of Capestrano," 249.

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Del Olmo's *Arbol* (both the text and its single illustration) showcases the potential of the genealogical heuristic applied to history in the competition between different orders. It does not connect the Observants to a specific place or geographical area, yet in some other cases there are clear signs that genealogy could be used to support competitive territorial claims. For example, during the 1630s the Observant Franciscan authors Francesco Quaresmio and Diego of Cea combined and reinvented representations of Franciscan ancestry and family in order to claim the Holy Land as the exclusive terrain of the Observant Franciscans based

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on familial rights of inheritance, thus excluding any other Catholic orders.⁶⁷

Overall, this preliminary investigation of genealogical perspectives on Franciscan order history in textual culture demonstrates that these were as widespread as they were multifarious during the sixteenth and especially during the seventeenth century. Much remains to be explored, such as the relationships with 'genealogical' Franciscan hagiography and with later traditions of arboreal Franciscan historiography.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, it is clear that, as a versatile historiographical heuristic, genealogy was employed to connect Franciscan communities to a collective, familial past, often associated with a particular geographical area. Moreover, historical analyses of primogeniture among the Franciscan orders acquired a level

⁶⁷ Marianne P. Ritsema van Eck, *The Holy Land in Observant Franciscan Texts (c. 1480–1650): Theology, Travel, and Territoriality* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2019), 198-206, 216-17.

⁶⁸ Think of the publications by Fortunatus Hüber and Jacobo de Castro in this context. Fortunatus Hüber, *Genealogia seu Liber Stemmatic. ord. S. Francisci h. e. Menologium Germanicum eiusdem Ordinis/Stammen-Buch, oder Ordentliche Vorstellung unnd Jährliche Bedächtnuß aller Heyligen, Seeligen, Vortrefflichen, Wunderthätigen, Himmelswürdigen, Gnadenreichen, Hoherleuchten, Verzuckten, Vollkommen, und Kirch-berühmten Diener unnd Dienerinnen Gottes* (Munich: Johann Jäcklin, 1693); Jacobo de Castro, *Arbol chronologico de la Santa Provincia de Santiago* (Salamanca: Francisco Garcia Onorato & San Miguel, 1722), several vols.

of political urgency in the context of competition between Franciscan orders, and were occasionally used to stake exclusivist territorial claims.

Concluding remarks

Certain visualizations of the Franciscan family tree, such as the Assisi tapestry of 1479 (fig. 5) and the *Epilogus* of 1625/50 (fig. 11), have received some scholarly attention. However, a systematic account of well-known and more obscure Franciscan genealogical representations does not exist. Within the scope of this paper, I could pay only passing attention to the images and texts discussed, all of which could do with more detailed analysis so as to fully reveal their (contextual) significance. Pending a more systematic treatment, it has been my objective here to provide an analytical overview of genealogical representations of the Franciscan past across a range of different texts and images, particularly emphasizing the conversation between visual genealogical diagrams (trees and other) and textual culture. It has become clear that, from the late medieval period onwards, Franciscan family tree iconographies were indeed only one expression of a broader, not necessarily visual perspec-

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tive on Franciscan order history that could be employed to serve a variety of purposes. However, several genealogical representations of Franciscanism (texts and images) likely remain to be identified and their significance revealed. Moreover, while I have pointed out that arguments about primogeniture could serve as a polemical tool in the competition between different Franciscan order branches, the role of genealogical representations in rivalry with non-Franciscan orders awaits further elucidation.⁶⁹ Since much remains to be explored, I plan to come back to the topic of the present paper in the near future.

⁶⁹ Cf. Ilg, “*Quasi Lignum Vitae*”, 204-06; Karen Melvin, *Building Colonial Cities of God: Mendicant Orders and Urban Culture in New Spain* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 57-59.

Figures and captions

Figure 1 : Tree of Jesse, tympanum of the Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Rouen, sculpted by Pierre des Aubeaux, c. 1512–13 (later damaged by Huguenots). Photograph by the author.

Figure 2: *Lignum Vitae* diagram, late thirteenth-century or early fourteenth-century. Yale University Library, Beinecke MS 416, fol. 1v.

Figure 3: *Lignum Vitae* by Taddeo Gaddi c. 1340, refectory of the convent of Santa Croce, Florence (public domain image, Wikipedia Commons).

Figure 4: Tree in 1513 edition of the *Conformities*, bearing forty conformity-fruits.

Bartolomeo of Pisa, *Opus Auree et Inexplicabilis Bonitatis et Continentie.*

Conformitatum Scilicet Vite Beati Francisci ad Vitam Domini Nostri Jesu Christi

(Milan: Gotardo da Ponte, 1513).

Figure 5: Tapestry with Franciscan family tree donated to the basilica in Assisi by Sixtus IV in 1479, Museo del Tesoro della Basilica di San Francesco, Assisi (public domain image, Wikipedia Commons).

Figure 6: *Rosarium beati Francisci* (Nuremberg, 1484). Vienna: Graphische Sammlung
Albertina, inv. no. 1930/190.

Figure 7: *Arbor consanguinitatis B. Francisci in quartam progeniem* in Pietro Ridolfi's

Historiarum Seraphica Religionis (1586).

Figure 8: Engraving of a Franciscan family tree (seventeenth century?) that cites the phrase “Stipite Francisci antiquo est bona reddita proles; namque bonos fructus fert bona planta suos” also inscribed in the *Arbor consanguinitatis* Ridolfi’s *Historiarum* (1586). I have not yet been able to identify the artist, engraver, or the printer of this Franciscan family tree. Print preserved at the *Wolfegger Kabinett* (Schloss Wolfegg, Oberschwaben), 211: 311.

Figure 9: Genealogical diagram shaped like a ship in Pietro Ridolfi's *Historiarum Seraphica Religionis* (1586).

Figure 11: The *Epilogus Totius Ordinis Seraphici S. P. Francisci* (Antwerp, 1650), 1665 mm x 1371 mm. Erfgoed Bibliotheek Hendrik Conscience, ID c.lvd.14166785.

Figure 12: The *Arbor Vitae ac Regulae Fratrum Minorum* (Antwerp, pre-1650), designed by the Flemish Observant friar Petrus Marchant, engraved and printed by Johannes Galle, with approval of the Franciscan minister general Benigno of Genova and provincial vicar of Flanders, Petrus Carpin. Print preserved at the *Wolfegger Kabinett* (Schloss Wolfegg, Oberschwaben), 10: 114.

Figure 13: Genealogical theatre diagram of Franciscan Tuscany in Antonio Tognocchi de Terrinca, *Genealogicum et Honorificum Theatrum Etrusco-Minoriticum* (Florence, 1682).

Figure 14: *Arbol Genealogico de la Observancia* (Genealogical tree of the Observance), page 177 of the *Arbol Serafico* (1703) by Juan del Olmo.