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Bonaventure's "Visions of the Cross" in the Saint Francis Cycle at Assisi

This essay focuses on four episodes in the Saint Francis cycle at Assisi, examining how their representation is affected by Bonaventure's figural interpretation of them in the *Legenda maior* as 'visions of the cross'. The iconographic innovations introduced into the *Stigmatization* scene (the final vision); the subtle manipulation of the iconography, compositions and spatial disposition of the three preceding visions of the cross in the cycle; and the forging of meaningful diagonal links between the Saint Francis cycle and the biblical scenes in the register of wall paintings above it, can all be understood as part of a single-minded strategy on the part of the Franciscan Order at Assisi, in the final decade of the Duecento, to promote the stigmata of Saint Francis and his unique identity as an *alter Christus*. The visions of the cross in the Assisi cycle also demonstrate the sophisticated ways in which artists and iconographers engaged with the complex problem of how to represent visionary experiences, and the relationship between the visible appearances of things and the invisible truth beneath the surface.