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The **Anguissola** and the **Scotti** come from **Piacenza**, in Emilia-Romagna, and rank among the most illustrious families of the city. The archives describe the Anguissola as one of the oldest houses of Piacenza; its members were jurists and landowners as well as lords of fiefs and allies of the great families of the region. The two families allied several times, and their arms, sometimes combined, are found on fireplaces, palaces and castles.

The Scotti, Guelph merchants and lords

The Scotti were a family of Guelph merchants, active in Genoa and the Levant. The first documented Scotti, Rainaldo, was consul of the merchants' guild in 1184. At the end of the 13th century **Alberto Scotti** held the lordship of Piacenza. The family later received, from the Visconti and then from the Emperor Sigismund, counties in the region, among them **Vigoleno** and **Agazzano**, in the early 15th century.

The Anguissola, an ancient house

The Anguissola, rather Ghibelline, were rivals of the Scotti in the city. A ducal act from Milan of 1404 confirmed privileges to the "squadre" of the Scotti, Landi, Fontana and Fulgosi, excluding certain Anguissola declared rebels. The family divided into several branches: that of **Vigolzone**, which received from Louis XII in 1511 the investiture of Turro and Castellaro; that of **Cimafava**, whose family archive covers the period 1303 to 1762 and is now kept at the Archivio di Stato in Piacenza; and that of **Podenzano**.

Agazzano: the Scotti castle that became Anguissola Scotti

The **castle of Agazzano**, of medieval origin (13th century) and rebuilt in 1475, remained with the Scotti from the early 14th century until their line died out in 1741. At that date, by marriage, it passed to the Anguissola of Podenzano, who took the name **Anguissola Scotti**. In the second half of the 18th century they added a French-style palace and a garden designed by Luigi Villoresi. After the death of the last heiress the estate passed to the Gonzaga; it can now be visited by reservation.

The coats of arms: reading and difference marks

The arms of the **Anguissola** are described as per fess gules and argent; those of the **Scotti** as azure, a bend argent between two stars or. A circle in the lower part of the Anguissola shield is a **brisure**: this mark of difference serves to distinguish a particular member of the family, for example a younger son, from the main line.

A pietra serena fireplace bearing the arms of an alliance

A fireplace in **pietra serena**, the grey stone of the Tuscan Renaissance, bears arms that are likely those of a marriage between an Anguissola and a Scotti. By heraldic custom the wife's arms are placed to the viewer's right: the husband's arms are read on the left and his wife's on the right. A fireplace of this kind is direct evidence of the alliances between great families.

Famous Anguissola

The name is best known today through the painter **Sofonisba Anguissola**, born in Cremona around 1532-1535 into a noble family from Piacenza: she painted portraits of the Spanish royal family at the court of Philip II from 1559 to 1568, and died in Palermo in the first half of the 17th century. In the 20th century **Luisa Anguissola Scotti** (1903-2008), heiress of the castle of Agazzano, married General Ferrante Gonzaga in 1937, which brought the estate to the Gonzaga.

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