

Sofonisba Anguissola at the Court of Philip II

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The first female painter of Renaissance Italy to gain widespread fame, Sofonisba Anguissola was born into a noble family in Cremona, probably in 1532.¹ Her formation was carefully nurtured by her father, Amilcare Anguissola, who decided to educate his daughters according to the highly respected teaching practices mentioned by Baldassar Castiglione in *The Book of the Courtier*. In giving an education to his daughters, Amilcare may have considered himself to be making an excellent investment to be repaid should his daughters find a position at court, as this was an almost sure way of obtaining a dowry and protection.

During Sofonisba's childhood, Amilcare enabled her to study with a professional artist and to cultivate her artistic talent. In 1546 she trained with Bernardino Campi, and then in 1549 with Bernardino Gatti, in order to hone her skill in portraiture (fig. 1).² Though Sofonisba's training is certainly a fundamental key to her artistic style, the full explanation of her meteoric rise to fame must include an analysis of the role of her family and her father, as well as an understanding of Sofonisba's intertwined roles as a noblewoman, as a painter, and as a lady-in-waiting at the court of Philip II. Thus far, however, only a few of the historical studies on Sofonisba have been deeply concerned with her familial environment and the important connection between the Spanish court and Anguissola's family.³

The Anguissola were an illustrious family from Piacenza traditionally recognized as descendants of Soardi Galvano, who had liberated Constantinople from the Saracens in 717. The origins of the Anguissola family were connected to the magnate families of Piacenza. Since the twelfth century, the Anguissola—like the Landi, the Scotti, and the Fontana—was one of the most celebrated and famous families in northern Italy. Sofonisba descends from the Gazzola-Pigazzano branch of the Anguissola family. Thanks to a genealogical reconstruction, it has been possible to find the name of her great-grandfather Lazzaro, the man who gave rise to this branch from Cremona.



Fig. 1. Sofonisba Anguissola, *Self-Portrait*, c. 1559–61, oil on canvas, 28.5 x 24 cm, Milan: Pinacoteca di Brera.

Lazzaro, born in the fifteenth century, was a wealthy merchant of Piacenza. He had two sons, Marsilio and Annibale, the latter of which was Sofonisba's grandfather. Annibale covered important institutional positions; he was named as the captain of the bishopric of Cremona, while Ludovico il Moro gave him the title of 'Lord (*castellano*) of Soncino', Soncino being a strategic fortress near Cremona. After he put the Castle of Soncino at the disposition of the Venetian army in 1499, his name was written in the book of Venetian nobility with the designation 'patriziato' and a monthly pension, another noble title that made him and the Anguissola family even more powerful.⁴ Annibale married Elena de Filisgradis with whom he had no children, however his clandestine affair with Bianca Crivelli gave him two children: Amilcare and Elena.



Fig. 2. Sofonisba Anguissola, *Elisabeth of Valois*, c. 1561–65, oil on canvas, 206 × 123 cm, Madrid: Museo del Prado.

Amilcare, Sofonisba's father, born around 1494 as the natural son of Annibale Anguissola, was recognized as his legitimate offspring in 1511. Annibale made careful plans for the transfer of his noble title and possessions to a male heir, namely Amilcare. In order to train his son, Annibale decided to send Amilcare '[a] imparar d'arme' (to learn the art of war) around 1509 at the court of the marquis Galeazzo Pallavicino of Busseto with whom Annibale had a political alliance. Here Amilcare came into contact with a representative of the Sforza family, since the consort of Galeazzo Pallavicino was Elisabetta Sforza,

daughter of Beatrice d'Este and Tristano Sforza, brother of Ludovico il Moro. It was probably during the years he trained at Pallavicino's home that Amilcare met his future wife, Bianca Pallavicino, who may have been the daughter of Cristoforo Pallavicino, Galeazzo's brother. The marriage lasted many years, almost from 1510 to 1530, but apparently it did not result in any children.

The fact that Amilcare had married Bianca Pallavicino, a descendant from the noble family that had extended dominions in northern Italy, established a relationship between him and another nobleman who had married into

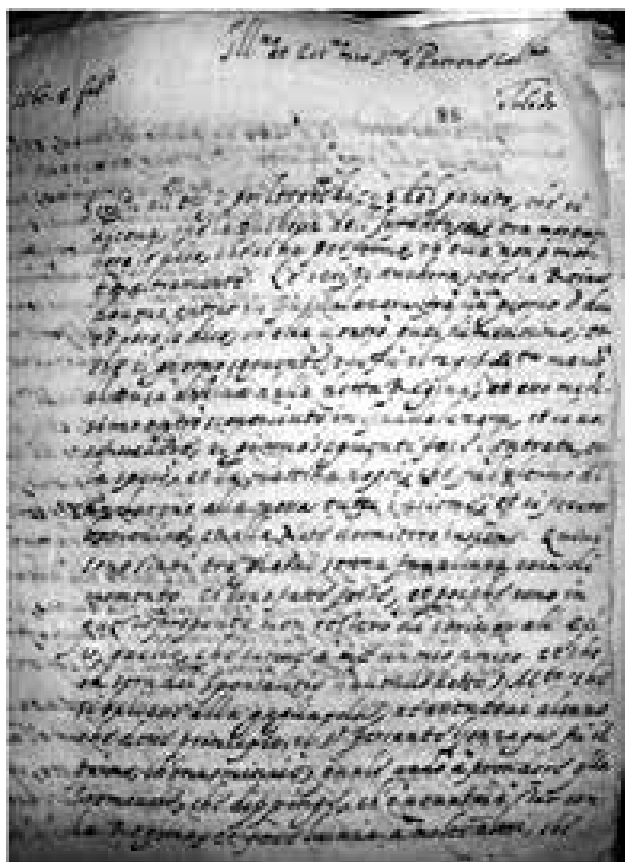


Fig. 3. Letter of 8 February 1560, Mantua: Archivio di Stato di Mantova, Archivio Gonzaga 590, fol. 96r.

the same family: Gianfrancesco Gonzaga, who married Laura Pallavicino, the daughter of Galeazzo Pallavicino. Moreover, Gianfrancesco Gonzaga was the brother of Aloisio Gonzaga, who was trained at the court of Mantua, after his parents' death, by his cousin Francesco II Gonzaga, son of Federico I Gonzaga.

In light of all of this, Amilcare, father of Sofonisba, was closely linked to the most important noble families of northern Italy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: the Pallavicino, the Sforza, and the Gonzaga. Up until to now, researchers have consistently emphasized the role of Amilcare in his daughter's promotion. We can now see that the Italian courts where Amilcare sent his daughter's self-portraits were not chosen accidentally, but rather they were linked to his family through significant bonds, either kinship or, at a minimum, a family-based connection. All of the Anguissola family's ties and connections with various influential people lead us to conclude that Sofonisba's appointment as a lady-in-waiting to the 'Queen of Peace', Elisabeth of Valois (fig. 2), the third wife of Philip II in 1560, was the product of not only her great skills in painting and her reputation as a 'virtuosa', but also this network of contacts that until now has been ignored.⁵



Fig. 4. Mantua: Archivio di Stato di Mantova, Archivio Gonzaga 582, fol. 8r.

The writings of contemporaries Pietro Paolo de Ribera and Giorgio Vasari indicate that Philip II appointed Sofonisba as the lady-in-waiting of his third queen thanks to the recommendation describing her artistic virtues that he received from Fernando Álvarez de Toledo y Pimentel, the third Duke of Alba.⁶ Nominated in 1555 by Charles V as Viceroy of Naples and Captain General of Milan, Álvarez de Toledo played a key role in the events surrounding the recruitment of the young woman from Cremona for Elisabeth's entourage.

Yet another contribution to the mediation of this arrangement was made by a nobleman of Cremona named Broccardo Persico, who is cited many times by Amilcare with the duke of Sessa, governor of Milan, in his letters to Philip II after his daughter's departure.⁷ Persico was very close to the Anguissola family and he was also an advisor to Philip II, who had appointed him to lead several diplomatic missions; his many roles in the king of Spain's court included 'Master of the Horse', 'Gentleman of the House of His Majesty', commissary of the Spanish army, and member of the secret council of the State of Milan.⁸ Nevertheless, despite the involvement of the duke of Sessa and Persico, the duke of Alba's role in all of this was surely

the most crucial. As the one who stood in for the king as his proxy in the Paris marriage to Elisabeth of Valois, the duke of Alba was the first to have a personal relationship with the queen and to discover her artistic disposition.⁹

Early on, Sofonisba had a very visible role at the Spanish court, even gaining the court's attention on the king and queen's wedding night. At the grand ball for King Philip II and Elisabeth of Valois, when the king had ordered the dancing of a galliard, for an awkward moment, no one was bold enough to begin the dancing. We learn from Girolamo Negri, the Mantuan ambassador who described the wedding ceremonies in his letter to Duke Guglielmo Gonzaga of Mantua, that this tense atmosphere was finally dispelled when Ferrante Gonzaga invited Sofonisba to open the *gagliarda* dance with him.¹⁰ According to Negri's report (fig. 3), Ferrante Gonzaga went over to the 'Cremonese woman who paints and who had come to stay with the Queen, and leading the way for the others who then followed, he began the dance with her first'.¹¹

The ball concluded with a dance of torches, in which lighted torches were passed from hand to hand to designate the next dancer.¹² In the darkness of night, the burning torches must have elicited great wonder. Music would have only enriched the magical sensation. One of the guests noted to have participated in this fantastic scene was Sofonisba, referred to as 'the Italian woman' in this anonymous account from 1560:

Upon the end of the dance the music continued a bit; then Don Diego de Cordoba arrived with the torch and he took as his partner Lady Ana Fajardo; and Lady Maria of Aragón, to whom he had given the torch, chose the marquise of Cenate; and prince de la Rocha, to whom the torch had been passed, now chose Lady Leonora Girón, daughter of the countess of Ureña, but she did not wish to dance; and thus he took as his partner the Italian woman to whom he gave the torch, and she chose the Duke of the Infantado and gave the torch to His Majesty the King, who doffed his hat to her in a deep bow; and later he took the queen as his partner, having gone up onto the podium to collect her, and they danced a little while.¹³

In this passage, Sofonisba is recorded to have handed the torch to Philip II, the most powerful king of Europe at that time, who bowed down in front of her. In the original Spanish text, the bow is described by the expression 'quitarse la gorra'. This very reverential kind of bow was supposed to have been reserved for the queen that evening, according to the text; thus, by executing this gesture spontaneously before the young Italian lady, the king could not possibly have honored Sofonisba more in front of the court.¹⁴

If Sofonisba managed to dance gracefully and serenely, perhaps it was because this was not a completely

unfamiliar and alien situation for her, considering that the court was populated by members of her family such as Ferrante Gonzaga, the son of Caterina Anguissola.¹⁵ As a member of the Anguissola family, Ferrante Gonzaga probably was with Sofonisba when she left Milan to move to the Spanish court in 1559; in this respect we should recall that the historian Pietro Paolo de Ribera wrote that Sofonisba was with two relatives during her long trip. Ferrante Gonzaga had been sent to the court to 'imparar d'arme', a Gonzaga tradition that had been followed for many decades. After his father's death in 1549, Ferrante and his brothers were placed under Giovanni Anguissola's protection: he took care of his nephews and oversaw the administration of Castel Goffredo, Castiglione dello Stiviere, and Solferino.

Ferrante carried out various diplomatic missions for the Spanish court and received many honors from Philip II. In 1566, he married Marta Tana de Santena, Elizabeth of Valois's lady-in-waiting. Marta, daughter of Baldassarre Tana and Anna Della Rovere, was born in 1550 in Chieri near Turin. She left France in the company of the queen in order to settle at the court of Philip II. Before that, she has been living at the French court with Elizabeth of Valois since she was a child. She was also considered one of Elizabeth's favorites; in fact, when Philip II demanded that the queen's French retinue leave Spain in order to make the queen more Spanish, Marta was permitted to stay.¹⁶ Moreover, as archival documents from the 'cuentas de la reina' in Simancas testify, Sofonisba and Marta travelled often in the same carriage when the court moved to different places near Madrid. It was customary for rulers and their large entourages to travel frequently from one to another palace to spread royal presence throughout the realm, so they must have journeyed together with regular frequency. We can safely assume that the two young women were friends, due to their nationality and probably because they shared the same language with the queen, Italian and French.¹⁷

I would argue, in light of these new discoveries, that Sofonisba was a kind of instrument that served the Anguissola family as a vehicle to elevate the family status. This would not be the first time that members of the Anguissola family tried to obtain favors from the royal family by means of talents and abilities. For example, there is the case of Count Giovanni Anguissola (b. 1514), whose sister Caterina Anguissola married Aloisio Gonzaga in 1540 and who had an ancestor in common with Sofonisba, even though Giovanni was from the branch of Anguissola of the Riva, while Sofonisba was from the branch of Anguissola of Gazzola.¹⁸ Through extensive archival research, it has come to light that the Spanish

court held Count Giovanni Anguissola in high regard. He held important assignments in the service of both Charles V and Philip II. Among the most notable of these was his involvement in the conspiracy against Pier Luigi Farnese, son of Pope Paul III. As a reward for his endeavors on behalf of the empire, in 1547 Giovanni was appointed as a chamberlain. The above-mentioned conspiracy involved many allies of Sofonisba's family: it was facilitated by Ferrante Gonzaga, the governor of Milan who asked Charles V for permission to occupy Piacenza (where he supported a revolt of the local nobility), as well as by Aloisio Gonzaga, Lord of Castiglione of Stiviere and the husband of Caterina Anguissola (Giovanni Anguissola's sister), who acted as intermediary.

Many letters by Charles V, Philip II, Fernando Álvarez de Toledo, the third Duke of Alba, Francesco I de' Medici, and Ferrante Gonzaga are directed to Giovanni; these take the form of instructions, as well as personal written requests for protection and favors. Philip II took Giovanni directly into his service and entrusted him with important tasks, referring to the trust he put into Giovanni by referring to him as 'magnifico y fiel y nuestro amado', 'amado consergero nuestro', and 'amado nuestro el Conde Juan Anguissola senador y del nuestro conesezo secreto de Milán'. The count successfully fulfilled any task assigned to him, such as in 1565 when he was entrusted with the governing of the city of Como in the State of Milan.¹⁹

It is important to underline that a figure like Giovanni Anguissola was linked with our Sofonisba by both genealogy and a similar career path. This shows that the Anguissola family had a strong connection with the court of Spain long before the arrival of Sofonisba in Spain in 1559. This tie of trust guaranteed Sofonisba's future in Spain and went beyond her virtues and skills as a painter. From this new perspective, the Anguissola family has to be reconsidered. The story of Sofonisba is not just limited to 'Sofonisba and her sisters', and the great ability of Amilcare to create favorable connections for his daughters is only one part of the entire plot. These connections existed before Sofonisba's birth, and, as a matter of fact, before Amilcare's birth, too. Throughout the period Sofonisba participated at the court life, she was protected by the reputation that the Anguissola family had already established through loyal service.

Additional evidence regarding Sofonisba's artistic activity at court is provided by another letter from the Mantuan ambassador, Girolamo Negri, dated 18 February 1561. In conveying to the Duke of Mantua some aspects of the daily life at the Spanish court, Negri mentioned that Sofonisba had been instructing Elisabeth of Valois in the

art of painting — a practice that, along with sketching, had been dear to the queen since her early youth:²⁰

The queen, who shows she has both wit [*ingegno*], and a very good conceptual faculty [*buonissima imagine*], has begun to paint; and it is said by Sofonisba of Cremona — the one who teaches her and who much favored by the Queen — that she draws portraits in charcoal while studying the sitter [*dal naturale*], such that one can instantly recognize the person portrayed.²¹

Another letter by Negri to the duke of Mantua, dated 23 December 1561, contains information about Sofonisba's first known potential suitor, Count Broccardo Persico:

I was told what someone called Rastello said, all about that count (Count Broccardo Persico) and how the pope told him clearly that he wants to make him cardinal, but he [the count] does not care about this and he would rather have permission to get married, because he is in love with the painter Sofonisba and he wants to marry her.²²

It is implied by Negri's report that Count Broccardo would need the pope's permission to marry Sofonisba. This can be explained either by the fact that they were members of the same family, as stated by Pietro Paolo de Ribera in 1609,²³ or by the fact that he would have taken a vow of celibacy when he entered the knightly Order of Saint John.²⁴

Anguissola's number of suitors turns out to be greater than previously realized, thanks to the discovery of a document (fig. 4) entitled 'Instructions to Signor Giovan Francesco Arrivabene who departed on 16 January 1564 for the Catholic Court', located in the State Archive of Mantua in a volume labeled 'Instructions to Gonzaga envoys sent to the Court of Spain' ('Istruzioni agli inviati dei Gonzaga nella corte di Spagna'):

You have seen, Mr. Arrivabene, what was written to me, Eustachio Amati, in the name of our illustrious and excellent lord in the case that His Majesty the King had given his approval, as well as the Queen and the other lords, regarding the pursuit of the marriage between Madonna Sofonisba and Signor Girolamo Negri, His Excellency's ambassador; however now, because the marriage plans were not successful, you will carry out these tasks with regard to whomever it might concern, using the name and the authority of His Excellency as you consider appropriate in the general sense of the instructions given to you.²⁵

In this 1564 document written by Eustachio Amati, the Gonzaga court's ambassador to Spain, the author refers to the fact that ambassador Girolamo Negri also attempted to pursue marriage with Sofonisba. In contrast to Negri's earlier report on Count Broccardo, the emphasis here is on the concerted political efforts necessary to pursue the marriage rather than on any emotional endearment between the parties. This potential union with Negri did

not succeed, and here it is implied that a lack of royal support may have been one of the causes.

The reason that this second suitor failed to obtain the endorsement of the Spanish king and queen might have been the result of deliberate opposition to reinforcing the Gonzaga's ties to the Spanish court. It might also have been, however, the accidental result of the Spanish crown's distraction with a personal tragedy, since Elisabeth had suffered a miscarriage in 1564. In August of that year, she endured terrible bleeding, and only an Italian doctor was able to save her. Her body was covered by scars and marks because of all the bloodletting and purges inflicted by doctors and she was extremely weak.²⁶ Moreover, assuming Sofonisba was truly cherished by the queen, it would not have benefitted the queen's perilous condition to lose her female companion through marriage to the visiting Mantuan ambassador.

Unpublished documents discovered in the Mantua archives reveal that yet another member of the Anguissola family was present at the Spanish court: Giovan Francesco Anguissola, the ambassador of Duke Guglielmo Gonzaga of Mantua who moved to Madrid from Vienna in 1568. In August of the same year, the queen again became seriously ill. Her condition was made even worse by the Spanish doctors, who had prescribed continual cycles of bloodletting and enemas that made her weaker every day. Mantua's ambassador Giovan Francesco Anguissola wrote to Duke Guglielmo on 30 September 1568 to characterize the deteriorating health condition of the queen, who now was considered to be incurable by the doctors and even terminally ill.²⁷ Though the queen believed herself to be five months pregnant, her doctors did not believe she was pregnant at all. The next letter to the duke from Giovan Francesco Anguissola, written on 3 October 1568, recounts in poignant detail the agonizing death of the queen immediately following the premature birth of an infant who survived but a few hours. Another letter from the ambassador, dated 9 October 1568, reveals that the queen's death was then being blamed on her incompetent doctors who never recognized her pregnant condition.

The queen's death had a devastating impact on

Sofonisba, who even lost the will to live, according to the letter written by the duke of Urbino's agent, Bernardo Maschi, on 4 October 1568:

The laments as [the queen's] coffin was carried from the palace to its place in the chapel, were very loud on the part of both men and women of every age, but unless you were there in person to see those suffering ladies, and to hear the crying, sobbing, and wailing of every one of them as they tore at their hair, you could not otherwise imagine how these choirs exploded with mourning and pain. [...] Lady Sofonisba says she no longer wants to live, and as certainly Your Excellency well knows, they have all suffered a great loss.²⁸

The letter demonstrates that although this death had affected the whole court with immense sadness without exception, Sofonisba's reaction was of particular importance to the ambassador. The explanation for his focus on Sofonisba may lie in the fact that she was Italian and as such was a kind of political touchstone watched with interest by the Italian diplomats. Otherwise, perhaps he honed in on Sofonisba because she demonstrated the most intense agony of all the members of the court, and thus provided a means of summing up the suffering of all those who had been devoted to the queen.

The documents that have been examined in this essay make it possible to understand Sofonisba Anguissola's experience at the court of Spain in light of her family connections and to some extent even international court politics. At the Spanish court, Sofonisba demonstrated her formidable artistic talents, not only as painting teacher to the young queen, but also as a portraitist. However, none of the known documents refer to her as a portrait painter. This fact suggests that, in compliance with courtly etiquette,²⁹ she first was a lady-in-waiting, then a Cremonese noblewoman, and only in a final consideration was she a painter.³⁰ While we cannot fail to recognize the artistic talent of Sofonisba, it should be clear from this investigation that her position at the court of Spain was also implicated by her noble name. This dual aspect of her status must be taken into account whenever we wish to evaluate her artistic output and her career.

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Online resource: Cives Veneciarum [accessed 10/03/2016], sub voce 'Annibal Angusola'.

NOTES

1. Sofonisba Anguissola's father was Amilcare Anguissola. His first marriage was to Bianca Pallavicino, Galeazzo Pallavicino's nephew, around 1510, and his next marriage was to Bianca Ponzoni around 1530. Carlo Bonetti transcribed a document where Galeazzo Pallavicino stated that he wanted to 'recognoscere li benemeriti di D. Bianca Pallavicini, et per amarla como filiola' and he also transcribed the dowry for Bianca Pallavicino dated 18 May 1510. These documents were signed by the notary Giovanni Francesco Sordi. Archivio di Stato di Cremona (hereafter ASCr), Notarile 451, notaio Giovanni Francesco Sordi. Bonetti noted that the documents regarding the relationship between Amilcare and the count Ponzino Ponzoni in 1531 could be considered useful for knowing the date of the marriage of Sofonisba's parents and moreover her birthdate in 1532; see ASCr, Notarile 1045, notaio Vincenzo Casario, first cited in Carlo Bonetti, 'Nel Centenario di Sofonisba Anguissola'. *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, 6th ser., 3 (1928), p. 289. Rossana Sacchi by contrast asserted that more importance should be given to a document dated 14 September 1533 regarding Bianca Ponzoni's dowry: ASCr, Notarile 1000, notaio Giovanni Pietro Comenducci, c. 47, first cited in Carlo Bonetti, 'Nel Centenario di Sofonisba Anguissola', *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, 3 (1928), p. 289, and later cited in Rossana Sacchi, 'Intorno agli Anguissola', in *Sofonisba Anguissola e le sue sorelle*, exh. cat., ed. by Mina Gregori (Rome: Edizioni Leonardo, 1994), p.345. See also Daniela Pizzagalli, *La signora della pittura. Vita di Sofonisba Anguissola, gentildonna e artista nel Rinascimento* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2003), pp. 11-17. In disagreement with most scholars, Maria Kusche stated that she was born in 1538; see Maria Kusche, 'Sofonisba Anguissola en España retratista en la corte de Felipe II junto a Alonso Sánchez Coello y Jorge de la Rúa', *Archivo español de arte*, 248 (1989), pp. 391-420. For the debate regarding Sofonisba's birth, see also Tramelli's essay in this volume.
2. A new model of polite behavior gained currency during the sixteenth century

thanks to humanistic writings that gave greater importance to women. Baldassare Castiglione codified the literary tribute to women's virtue in *The Courtier*. Among the new opinions about women's education and the ideal of 'the courtly Lady' was Castiglione's assertion that women should ideally 'avere notizie di pittura' (have knowledge of painting); his use here of the term 'notizie' is relevant because it comes from the Latin 'notitia' meaning knowledge as the result of an experience. With regard to Sofonisba we can consider her training in painting as a practice that complemented other kinds of knowledge. Castiglione states that one of the most important qualities of the courtly lady is the ability to 'intertener', meaning 'entertaining'; painting could certainly be considered another kind of entertainment. See Baldassare Castiglione, *Il libro del Cortegiano* (Turin: Einaudi 1965), pp. 222-25. It is likely that Amilcare, as a Decurione and a Fabbriero, was influenced in his ideas on women's education by his political position in the city of Cremona. Being Fabbriero for the city's cathedral as well as the church of San Sigismondo linked him with the most important artists of the age, including the two painting teachers of Sofonisba, Bernardino Campi and Bernardino Campi. Amilcare was one of those decided the assignment of frescoes and paintings in these churches. The activity of Amilcare Anguissola as a Decurione and Fabbriero is documented in the *Filiciae Fragmentorum* at the Archive of Cremona. For his activity in 1530-32 and 1539-40 see ASCr, *Fragmentorum* 26, 27, 33. On Cremona and Amilcare see Giorgio Politi, *La società cremonese nella prima età spagnola* (Milan: Unicopli, 2002) pp. XXXVIII-XXXIX; Valerio Guazzoni, 'Pittura come poesia. Il grande secolo dell'arte cremonese', in *Storia di Cremona. Letà degli Asburgo di Spagna*, ed. by Giorgio Politi (Cremona: Bolis, 2006), p. 360; Lisa Emmeluth Hanes, 'Beyond the Dutiful Daughter: An Examination of the Role and Representation of Daughters in the Renaissance' (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of South Florida, 2008); Orietta Pinessi, *Un pittore alla corte*

di Filippo II (Milan: Edizioni Selene, 1998), pp. 8-9; Ilya Sandra Perlinger, *Sofonisba Anguissola. The First Great Woman Artist of the Renaissance* (New York: Rizzoli, 1992), pp. 42-43; Alessandro Lamo, *Discorso intorno alla scoltura et pittura* (Cremona: Appresso Christoforo Draconi, 1584), pp. 37-44. For other bibliography on Sofonisba, see Amparo Serrano de Haro Soriano and Esther A. Carvajal, *Retrato de la mujer renacentista* (Madrid: UNED, 2012); Millo Borghini, *Sofonisba, Una vita per la pittura e la libertà* (Milan: Edizione Spirali, 2006); Bea Porqueres, *Sofonisba Anguissola, pintora, c. 1535-1625* (Madrid: Ediciones del Orto, 2003); Maria Kusche, *Retratos y retratadores: Alonso Sánchez Coello y sus competidores Sofonisba Anguissola, Jorge de la Rúa y Rolán Moys* (Madrid: Fundación de Apoyo a la Historia del Arte Hispánico, 2003).

3. For the genealogy of the Anguissola, see the Archivio di Stato di Milano, Famiglie 6, Anguissola, miscellaneous; Jacopo Della Cella, *Della famiglia Anguissola. Elogio storico* (Piacenza: presso Giuseppe Tedeschi vicino a s. Fermo, 1779); Giorgio Fiori, *Le Antiche famiglie di Piacenza e i loro stemmi* (Piacenza: Edizioni TEP, 1979), pp. 93-110; Orazio Anguissola Scotti, *La famiglia Anguissola* (Piacenza: Gallarati 1976); Carlo Bonetti, 'Nel Centenario di Sofonisba Anguissola', *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, 3 (1928), pp. 285-306; and Pompeo Litta, *Famiglie celebri d'Italia. Gonzaga* (Milan: Giusti, 1840), VI, p. 21. By contrast, the large majority of publications on Sofonisba Anguissola have addressed the authorship of her works, attempting to establish her pictorial corpus. Standing out as the most relevant are those carried out by Maria Kusche; see Kusche, 'Sofonisba Anguissola en España', pp. 391-420; Maria Kusche, 'La antigua Galeria de Retratos del Pardo: su importancia para la obra de Tiziano, Moro, Sanchez Coello y Sofonisba Anguissola y su significado para Felipe II, su fundador', *Archivo Español de Arte*, 257 (1992), 1-36; Maria Kusche, 'Sofonisba Anguissola, retratista de la corte española', *Paragone*, 509-11 (1992), 3-34. On Sofonisba Anguissola's portraits, see Flavio Caroli, *Sofonisba Anguissola e*

- le sue sorelle* (Milan: Mondadori, 1987); Mina Gregori, *I Campi e la cultura artistica cremonese nel Cinquecento* (Cremona: Electa, 1985).
4. See *Memorie storiche della città di Piacenza compilate dal proposto Cristoforo Poggiali*, 10 vols (Piacenza: Giacomazzi, 1757-61), I (1760): pp. 142, 179; Luca Beltrami, *Soncino e Torre Pallavicina: memorie di storia e d'arte* (Milan: Ulrico Hoe, 1898); Annibale Anguissola as "patrizio" in Venice see online resource: *Cives Veneciarum* [accessed 10/03/2016], sub voce 'Annibal Angusola'.
 5. Further evidence of this can be found in the letters that Amilcare wrote to Margherita Paleologa in Mantua while she was hosting his daughters, Elena and Sofonisba. See Chiara Tellini Perina, 'Documenti inediti riguardanti Sofonisba Anguissola', *Paragone*, 509-11 (1992), 95-100.
 6. Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori, ed architetti* [1568], ed. by Gaetano Milanesi (Florence: Sansoni 1881), V, pp. 80-81. See also the commentary of Pietro Paolo De Ribera, *Le Glorie immortali de Trionfi ed eroiche imprese d'ottocento quaranta cinque Donne illustri, antiche e moderne* [...] (Venice: Evangelista Deuchino, 1609), pp. 313-16, cited by Maria Kusche, 'Sofonisba Anguissola al servizio dei re di Spagna', in *Sofonisba Anguissola e le sue sorelle*, exh. cat., ed. by Mina Gregori (Rome: Edizioni Leonardo, 1994), p. 114.
 7. Letter from Amilcare Anguissola to Philip II, 6 September 1559, Archivo General de Simancas (hereafter AGS), Estado, leg. 1210, fols. 153, 190. First cited by Rossana Sacchi, 'Documenti per Sofonisba Anguissola', *Paragone*, 457 (1988), docs II and III, p. 87. Letter from duke of Sessa to Philip II, 14 October 1559, AGS, Estado 1210, fol. 168, first cited by Maria Kusche, 'Sofonisba Anguissola retratista de la corte española', pp. 6-7.
 8. Sacchi, 'Intorno agli Anguissola', pp. 352-54.
 9. Maria Kusche, 'Sofonisba Anguissola retratista de la corte de España', pp. 5-8. Maria Kusche interprets Elisabeth of Valois's artistic skills as a testimony of the drawing education she received in France.
 10. Carl Justi, 'Philipp II als Kunstfreund', in *Miscellaneen aus drei Jahrhunderten spanischen Kunstlebens* (Berlin: G. Grote, 1909), II, p. 12.
 11. Archivio di Stato di Mantova (hereafter ASMn), Gonzaga, Esteri 590, fol. 96r, 8 February 1560, Girolamo Negri to Duke Guglielmo of Mantua, first cited in Justi, 'Philipp II als Kunstfreund', p. 12 n. 7 (misattributed to Girolamo Negri instead of Nerli): 'la sera dello spozalizio havendolo detto sua Maestà che si ballasse alla gagliarda, né essendovi alcuno che desse il principio, il signor Ferrante Gonzaga fu il primo ch'incominciò, quale andò a prendere quella cremonese che dipinge, ch'è venuta a stare con la Regina, et fece la via a molti altri che ballarono dopoi'.
 12. Carmela Lombardi, *Danze e buone maniere della società dell'antico regime. Trattati e altri testi tra il 1580 e il 1780* (Arezzo: Mediateca del Barocco, 2000), pp. 77-81.
 13. *Relación Verdadera de algunas cosas que han acontecido en Las bodas de Nuestro alta y muy poderoso señor don Felipe* (Seville: Pascual de Gayangos, 1560), cited in Agustín González Amezcua y Mayo, *Isabel de Valois: Reina de España, 1546-1568* (Madrid: Graficas Ultras, 1949), II, pp. 622-25: 'Acabada esta danza estuvieron un poco tañendo; e salió don Diego de Cordova con la hacha y sacó a doña Ana Fajardo y a doña Maria de Aragon y a esta le dió la hacha; y ella sacó al Marques de Cenete y al Principe de la Rocha y dióle la hacha; e [este] fue a sacar a doña Leonor Girón, hija de la condesa de Ureña, e no quiso salir, y sacó a la italo y dióle la hacha, y ella sacó al Duque de Infantado y al Rey su majestad dióle la hacha; e [el Rey] quitóle la gorra muy baja; y luego sacó a la Reina y subió arriba por ella [al estrado] y danzaron un poco'. English translation courtesy of Sheila Barker.
 14. A word should be said about the dance of torches. This dance was usually performed at the end of a feast because its aim was to celebrate the arrival of the day with the dawn, by means of an imitation of the motion of planets around the sun, whose life-giving role was personified by the king. The dance symbolically exalted the Catholic monarch, guardian of the Church and a vast empire on which the sun never seemed to set. This culturally complex representation was carried out in accordance with a royal ceremonial, that is, a code of conduct listing the privileges, obligations, and hierarchies regarding the members of the court. The participants, as if they were acting on a stage, showed their importance in the court through this dance. Moreover, the dances were very important for enhancing women's symbolic visibility in that society, since the ladies of the court were among the main protagonists in the dance. María Luísa Lobato and Bernardo J. García García, eds, *La fiesta cortesana en la época de los Austrias* (Valladolid: Junta de Castilla y León, 2003), p. 7 and María José del Río Barredo, 'El ritual en la corte de los Austrias', in *La fiesta cortesana en la época de los Austrias*, ed. by María Luísa Lobato and Bernardo J. García García (Valladolid: Junta de Castilla y León, 2003), 17-25.
 15. On Ferrante Gonzaga, see Raffaele Tamalio, 'Ferrante Gonzaga', online resource: *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* [accessed: 15/04/2016]. He was Giovanni Anguissola's nephew and they corresponded: see for example the letter of 20 January 1567, Archivo del Instituto Valencia Don Juan, Envío 7, Tomo 1, 84; and AGS, Secretarias Provinciales, Milan, caja 1793, f.85. Caterina Anguissola was Gian Giacomo Anguissola's daughter and sister of Giovanni Anguissola. Lodovico Domenichi celebrates her beauty in his *La nobiltà delle donne*; Lodovico Domenichi, *La nobiltà delle donne* (Venice: Giolito di Ferrari, 1552), p. 263.
 16. Padre Giovanni Bandera, *Marta Tana Gonzaga Marchesa di Castiglione delle Stiviere* (Castel Goffredo: Cassa Rurale ed Artigiana, 1991), pp. 13-23.
 17. AGS, Casas y Sitios Reales, leg. 398, fols. 33-36. Marta Tana and Sofonisba were both Italian ladies-in-waiting, so they probably had a similar education, especially considering that a perfect training was mandatory to be part of the Spanish court. A source that must be taken into account when analyzing the role of Sofonisba as *dama de corte* is the extensive letter written in 1581 by Annibal Guasco to his daughter Lavinia, who was about to join the court of Catalina Micaela in Turin as a lady-in-waiting. Published as *The discourse to Lady Lavinia*, it was the first book directed at a female audience. This treatise is extremely important for understanding the behavior and the education that a noblewoman had to follow in order to be considered worthy of a royal court. On this subject, Annibal recommended reading Castiglione's *Courtier*, Giovanni della Casa's *Galateo*, and Stefano Guazzo's *Civile conversazione*. Guasco wrote that a *dama di palazzo* should practice daily her reading, calligraphy, singing, instrumental music, counterpoint, abacus, and chess. Annibal Guasco had much in common with Amilcare: both were esteemed as intellectual men in their cities, both belonged to the lower nobility, and both introduced daughters to the court thanks to the influence of powerful intermediaries. On Guasco, see Annibale Guasco, *Sotto il segno di Chirone. Il Ragionamento di Annibale Guasco alla figlia Lavinia*, ed. by Luisella Giachino and intro. by Blythe Alice Raviola (Turin: Nino Aragno, 2012); and Giuseppe Girimonti Greco, 'Annibale Giuseppe Guasco', online resource: *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* [accessed: 15/04/2016].
 18. For the genealogical reconstruction see note 3 above.
 19. Giovanni Anguissola killed Pierluigi Farnese in a conspiracy hatched in 1547; see Orazio Anguissola Scotti, *La famiglia Anguissola*, p. 163. On his service to Charles V and Philip II, Antonio Bonardi, 'Giovanni Anguissola e la Spagna secondo documenti dell'Archivio Bonetta di Pavia', in *Archivio storico lombardo*, 22.3 (1895), 43-62; Nicola Raponi, 'Giovanni Anguissola', *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (Rome: Treccani, 1961), III: 318-20; Anna Teresa Ragazzi, 'Giovanni Anguissola governatore in Lombardia, ambasciatore di Filippo 2° nella Svizzera e in Genova', *Strenna Piacentina*, 18 (1940), 62-65; Anna Teresa Ragazzi, 'Il conte Giovanni Anguissola' (unpublished thesis, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano, 1939); Silvia Repetti, 'Dall'aspetto pensoso e dall'opinione tenace: il conte piacentino Giovanni Anguissola (1514-1578)' (unpublished thesis, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano, Facoltà di Scienze della Formazione, 2008); and M. José Bertomeu Masiá, *La guerra secreta de Carlos V contra el Papa: La cuestión de Parma y Piacenza en la correspondencia del cardenal Granvela* (Valencia: Universitat de Valencia, 2011).

20. Ilya Sandra Perlingieri, 'Sofonisba Anguissola', p. 120.
21. ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, Esteri 591, 18 February 1561, cited in Agustín González Amezua y Mayo, *Isabel de Valois: Reina de España (1546–1568)* (Madrid: Graficas Ultras, 1949), I, p. 262: 'Essa Reina si mostra d'aver ingegno, et di buonissima immagine. Ella ha cominciato a deppingere, et dice la Sofonisba cremonese, che è quella che le insegna, et è molto favorita sua, che ritrae dal naturale con carbone, in maniera che si conosce subito la persona che ha ritratta'. English translation courtesy of Sheila Barker.
22. ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, Esteri 591, 23 December 1561, cited in Rossana Sacchi, 'Regesto dei documenti', in *Sofonisba Anguissola e le sue sorelle*, exh. cat., ed. by Mina Gregori (Rome: Edizioni Leonardo, 1994), p. 369: 'Mi è stato detto haver detto uno che si chiama il Rastello, ch'è tutto del detto conte [Count Broccardo Persico], et è che il Papa gli ha detto apertamente, che lo vol far cardinale, ma che esso non se ne cura, et che la grazia che vorrebbe dal Papa è ch'esso si potesse maritare, perché essendo innamorato morto della Sofonisba pittrice si vorrebbe maritare con lei per ogni modo'. English translation courtesy of Sheila Barker.
23. Rossana Sacchi, 'Intorno agli Anguissola', pp. 352–54.
24. The Order of the Knights of Malta required the vow of chastity.
25. ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, Esteri 582, n.d.: 'Voi havete viduto signor Arrivabene quello, che fu scritto a me Eustachio Amati in nome dell'illustrissimo ed eccellentissimo Signore nostro et si dovesse operare le maestà del Re e della Regina e con altri signori al fine che succedesse matrimonio fra madonna Sofonisba e il signor Girolamo Negri ambasciatore di sua eccellenza, or poiché quello spozalizio andò in sinistro, voi farete tali uffici con chiunque sarà di bisogno spendendo il nome e l'autorità di sua Eccellenza (Duke Guglielmo) secondo che conoscerete essere a proposito sotto la generale credenza delle istruzioni che vi si danno'.
26. Geoffrey Parker, *Felipe II* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2003), p. 111.
27. The letters of Giovan Francesco Anguissola to Duke Guglielmo of Mantua are collected in ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, Esteri 594.
28. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Ducato di Urbino, cl. I, div. G, 184, fols 45r-v. English translation courtesy of Sheila Barker. First cited by Georg Gronau, 'Documenti artistici urbinati', in *Raccolte di fonti per la storia dell'arte*, ed. by M. Marti (Florence: Sansoni 1936), pp. 268–69, and later in Mina Gregori, ed., *Sofonisba e le sue sorelle*, exh. cat. (Rome: Edizioni Leonardo, 1994), p. 437, although with the archival location given incorrectly as 'filza 184, c. 54'.
29. The 'etiquetas de palacio' were written instructions regarding the governance of the monarchy's household. Those for the Queen Anna of Austria, for example, have been preserved in Biblioteca Nacional de España, MS 10.129, 'Etiquetas de Palacio. Felipe II', fols 75r–91v. On the etiquette of Elisabeth of Valois, see María José Rodríguez Salgado, "'Una perfecta princesa": casa y vida de la reina Isabel de Valois (1559–1568). Primera parte', *Cuadernos de Historia Moderna. Anejos*, 2 (2003), p. 72.
30. Compare with Rossana Sacchi, 'Documenti per Sofonisba Anguissola', p. 74.