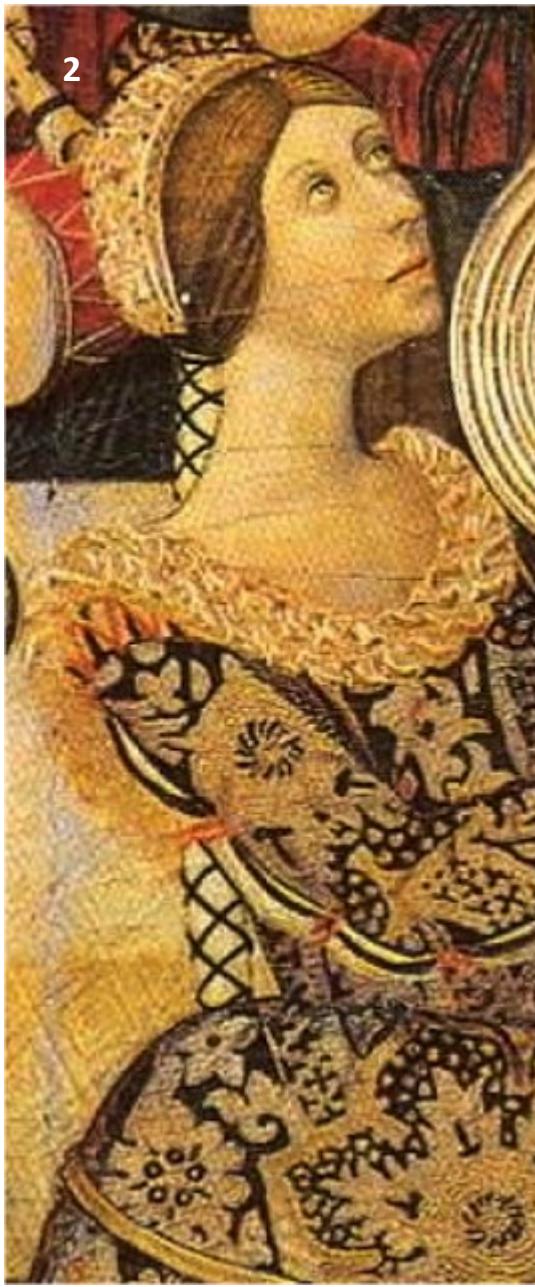


# Cofia y Tranzado

The Omnipresent Spanish Late Period Headwear



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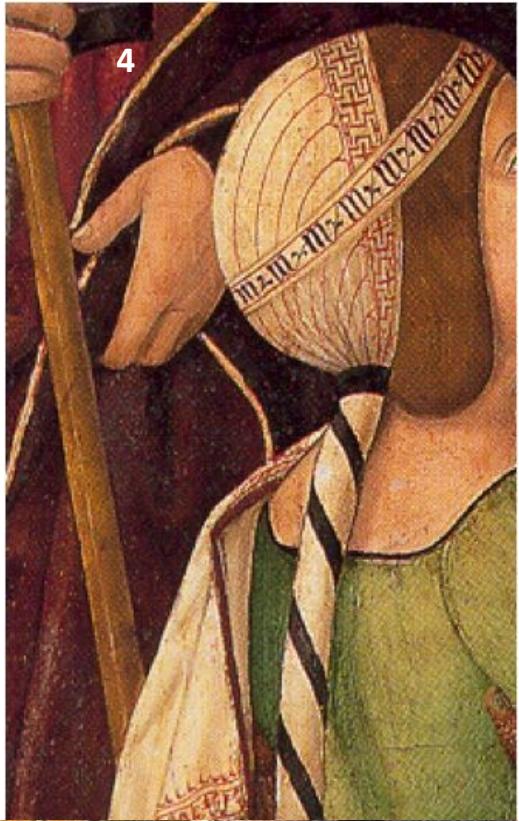
Found on ladies great and humble, the *cofia y tranzado* originated in Spain and remained popular throughout late period. While never popular in England, the style found great success in many parts of Italy and the low country (in a slightly altered form). This class will cover the many different ways to wear a *cofia y tranzado*, some of the regional stylization, and an easy pattern to make one yourself.

## Upper Crust Beginnings

The first images of the *cofia y trazado* show up circa 1410, richly adorned on high status women like Salome in images 1 and 2 on the front page. They could be made out of gold net or other expensive materials, and may have been complemented by richly adorned circlets. The bands used to hold them to the braid may have been similarly rich, potentially embroidered or woven in complex styles.

Amongst the upper crust, it seems to have been quite fashionable to have the *cofia* almost sliding back off the head. Sometimes it is secured with a circlet to keep it from falling completely.

The hair beneath the *cofia* is usually worn with highly characteristic earlocks, the hair pulled out of the braid so that it covers the ears (see right).



## The Lower Class Adopts

Within fairly short order, the lower classes were beginning to adopt the style. It shows up as the hairstyle of choice amongst lower classes by the early 1500s. Although we have no surviving examples and no inventories, visual evidence indicates that these lower class *cofia y tranzado* were most likely made of linen. While these would often be decorated as was feasible, the embellishment was more likely to be drawnwork or embroidered joinery, rather than the complex and expensive features seen on the upper class variants. Likewise, these *cofia y tranzado* are more likely to be worn higher on the head, covering more of the hair. While this may have been a modesty concern, it's also one of practicality: the higher on your head the *cofia y tranzado* is worn, the more secure it seems to be.



## *Cofia y Tranzado Through The End of Period*

By the 1530s, the *cofia y tranzado* was waning in popularity amongst the most wealthy. It is absent in portraits of the upper class at this point, replaced by signature hairstyles (earlocks and braids), caps, and other forms of head covering. By the 1550s, newer styles are firmly entrenched.

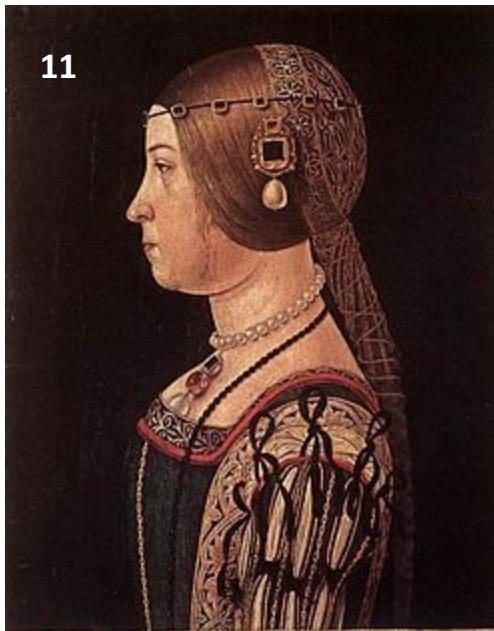
Amongst the lower classes, we have a relative paucity of images by comparison, and so cannot give as firm an end date to the predominance of *cofia y tranzado*. Given that fashion moves more slowly amongst the lower classes, it is possible to argue that it may have persisted through the end of period. The few images we have date to the very close to 1600 and largely show women with hair bound, but uncovered (as at right).



## Spanish vs Italian

The *cofia y tranzado* spread into Italy circa 1490 with the arrival of Beatrice d'Este and Isabella d'Este. Italian styles tended more towards an open or network style, and also tended to have the *cofia* even further back on the head—and therefore, appearing even more strongly to be falling off—than the Spanish. I have not researched Italian *cofia y tranzado* thoroughly, but what I have found indicates that there were typically three components: the *coazzone* (*cofia*), the *trinzale* (a wrapping for the braid—usually open rather than fabric as in Spain) and the *lenza*, an adorned band that would be set on the forehead, creating an appearance rather like a coronet.

While very fashionable when first introduced, the style faded quickly. There are few, if any examples of Italian *coazzone* after 1500.



## What's In a Name?

*Cofia*—coif, cap

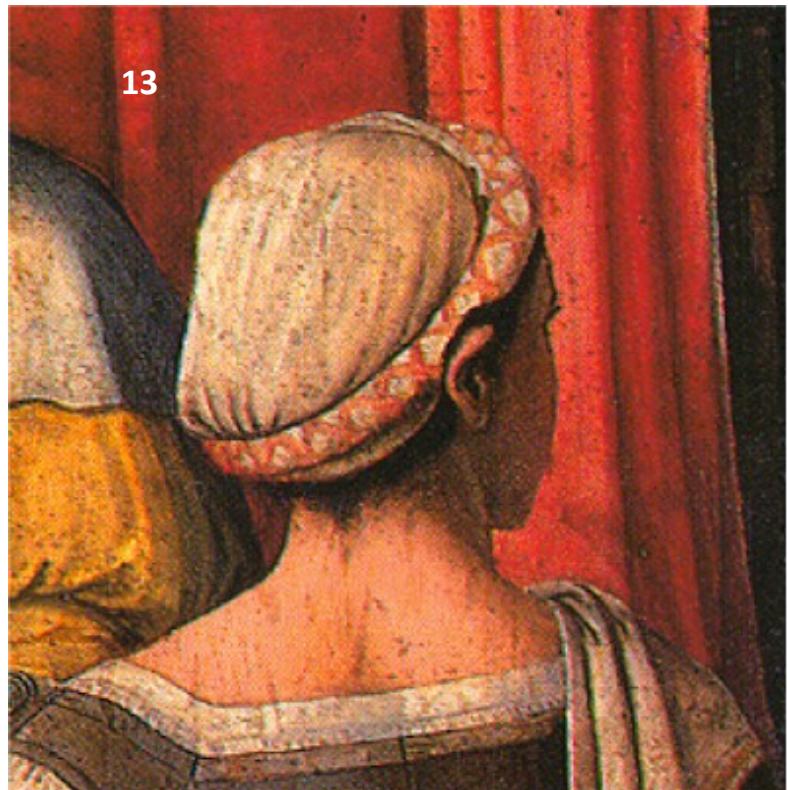
*Y*—and

*Tranzado*—braid case, deriving from ‘trenza’, meaning braid. –ado is the Spanish verb ending equivalent to “-ed” which makes the word roughly translate to ‘braided’

You may also see this same style called *cofia y tranzado*, or *cofia de tranzado*, or *cofia de trenzado*. They’re all referring to the same thing, and seem to more or less vary by the historian discussing them. Most English scholarly work uses *tranzado*, while much of the Spanish language discussion I have found favors *trenzado*.

## One Piece, Or Two?

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There is no extant *cofia y tranzado* that I am aware of (although, there’s a persistent rumor of one existing, Elvis-like, somewhere out there in the world. If you see it, please send it my way!). In the absence of an extant, we need to piece together construction using our best deductive reasoning.

The first indicator that it may be two pieces is actually the name. *Cofia y tranzado*—coif and braid case, rather than a single word indicating a single garment. We have a small handful of extant Iberian coifs from this period, braid cases not attached, and no extant braid cases.

But there’s a lot to imply a single garment too. For instance, in the example above, the woman has wrapped her braid up and around her head. This style would tend to show some kind of gap in two separate pieces. Likewise, in the example at left, if the *cofia* were not in some way anchored to the braid, it would not be able to hold on after having slid from her head.

## My Verdict: Why Not Both?

I suspect that both separate *cofia* and *tranzado* were used, as well as a single *cofia y tranzado* that was one piece of fabric.

The image at right clearly shows a *tranzado* being worn with no *cofia* at all. While images of the complete *cofia y tranzado* are the most prevalent, there are images showing solely a *cofia* or solely a *tranzado*.

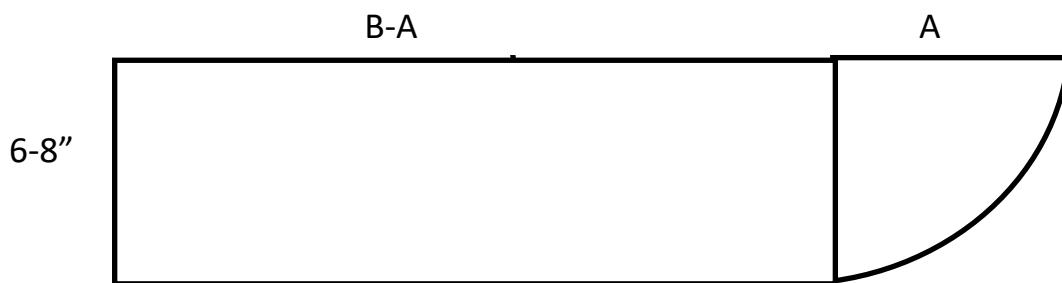
Therefore, we can feel free to use just one or the other in our own historical costuming endeavors, or to wear the two separate pieces together and experiment with how that feels.

**However, it is my judgment that the single *cofia y tranzado* was more commonly used, made from one piece of fabric as described below, especially amongst lower classes.**

Putting on a one-piece *cofia y tranzado* is relatively easy. Putting on a two piece and getting it to appear as one unit is far more difficult. For this reason, we're going to just pattern a single-piece one here.

### Creating The Pattern

1. This is not a very sensitive pattern. Exact measurements are not necessary.
2. Measure from the center front of your hairline to the base of your chin (Measurement A). This will determine the ‘curvature’ of your *cofia y tranzado*.
3. Measure the total length that you want (B). Longer is better; most exemplars reach at least to the waist.
4. Lay out your pattern as follows:



The total width (5-8") is dependent on personal preference. Feel free to experiment, but you want enough width for an easy overlap.

## Sewing the Pattern

1. Cut two of the pattern pieces you created in the last step.
2. You can simply sew them up the middle and finish the edges and you're done!
3. Alternatively, you can find some kind of pre-manufactured lace or edge material that looks like insertion work and sew it along the center seam.
4. Or, for the most period appearance, you can actually use insertionwork to join the pieces together. (Period insertionwork was known as *randa* and was so commonly used that inventories tend to specify *sin randa*—without *randa*—rather than with it for larger pieces of cloth. I have no idea whatsoever how the period *randa* would have been done, but I hope to learn.)
5. This pattern lends itself extremely well to piecing. Made a bunch of *camisas* and have some leftover white linen? If you piece together the *tranzado*, no one but you will ever know.
6. Any kind of band or ribbon can be used for the wrap. I personally am very partial to an inkle-woven band that was given to me by a dear friend, but I've also used ribbon off the rack at Joann's.

## Preparing Your Head for Success

- *Cofia y tranzado* is almost always worn with hair parted straight down the middle.
- Hair should be gathered at the base of the neck.
- I typically will part my hair with a rattail comb and then gather it at the nape of the neck. I prefer to use either a large number of elastics, or another thicker tie, as this will help hold the *cofia y tranzado*.
- Before braiding the hair, pull gently on the locks of hair by the ears to achieve the desired ‘earlock’ effect. This may require some finesse—practice!
- Braid hair. This is actually important—it’s hard for the *tranzado* to stay on if hair is not braided.
- Place *cofia y tranzado* atop your head, being sure to align the center seam with your center part.
- Wrap your wrap band twice fully around the base of the braid, making sure that it rests ABOVE whatever elastic/tie you used to secure your braid initially.
- Smooth the *tranzado* down along your braid, ensuring that it isn’t tangled up in itself.
- Wrap your band down the braid and tie off at the bottom.
- Don’t worry if the *tranzado* is longer than your hair—if it’s a lot longer, you might want to fill it out a bit more (don’t worry, fake hair was very common in period!)

## Tips For Wearing

- It wants to fall off your head. Trust me on this.
- Circlets, coronets, etc are highly recommended to keep it from falling off your head.
- If you've opted for the variety that has *randa* insertionwork, or something that looks like it, use bobby pins to secure it from the moment you put it on your head, before you start wrapping. You'll thank me for this tip.
- While period paintings do show spiral wraps of the *tranzado* from time to time, I prefer to criss-cross my wrap in the center (as shown on the woman at right). I find it gives a more secure wrap.
- The key to ensuring that your *cofia* does not constantly try to fall off is a tight fit around the *base of the braid*. Tightness there actually holds the *cofia* tight to your head. You won't notice that tightness, but you'll come to see the difference it makes.
- Avoid Duke Timothy of Arindale, he will use your *cofia y tranzado* as a means to tie you to furniture, other gentles, etc.

Questions? Comments? Concerns? Let me know!

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4. Vida de San Ildefonso, Maestro de Osma, 1500.
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7. Birth of the Virgin, Pedro Berruguete, 1485-90. (Diocesan Museum of Palencia)
8. Retablo, painter and date unknown (Church of San Julian de Orobia, Navarre)
9. The Virgin of Monserrat with St. John the Baptist and Saint Mary, painter unknown, early 17th century. (Barcelona, Frederic Mares Museum)
10. Portrait of Beatrice d'Este, Piero della Francesca (Palazzo Pitti, Florence)
11. Portrait of Beatrice d'Este, Alessandro Araldi (detail from Pala Sforzesca, Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan)
12. Portrait of Bianca Maria Sforza, Ambrogio de Predis
13. Birth of the Virgin, Vincente Macip, 1525—1531. (Segorbe Cathedral Museum, Castellon)
14. Retablo de la transfiguracion, Bernat Martorell, 1445-52 (Catedral de Barcelona, Barcelona)
15. The Virgin of the Catholic Monarchs, Maestro de los Reyes Catolicos, 1490 (Prado, Madrid)