Fabric and Embellishment in Late Period Spanish Clothing:
Evidence from the Inventories

A quantitative analysis of garments and materials in the inventories of Isabel of Portugal, Empress of Spain, and other royalty of the Spanish Golden Age

Inventory Basics

An inventory is simply an accounting of possessions. These inventories can be comprehensive, or they can be focused on a specific topic (jewelry, clothing, books…). Inventories are most commonly taken alongside a major life change:

- Marriage (dowry)
- Death
- Moving
- Major gifts
- Sales or auctions
- Arrival with goods
- Death of spouse
- Shipping of items
- Distribution of inheritance

Inventories may also be taken periodically, especially of highly valuable items (jewelry, art, gold/silver objects, etc). Of the inventories considered here, roughly half are taken as part of regular bookkeeping and half taken because of a life change as mentioned above.

What We Can Learn From Inventories—And What We Can't

Inventories did not account for everything. The goal was to take a snapshot of valuable belongings, and as such, the less valuable items were regularly skipped. Think of it this way: if it is listed in an inventory, it definitely existed—but if it isn't listed, that is no guarantee it did not exist. It's a clue, sure, but it's no proof.

Yes

- [x] was made from [y]
- [x] was most commonly made from [y] amongst what is listed in the inventory.
- [z] was decorated with [b] technique
- [c] is not listed in any inventories
- [x] was made in the colors listed
- [y] material was known and available at the time

No

- [x] was *only* made of [y]
- [y] was *only* used to make [x]
- [z] was *only* decorated with [b]
- [b] was *only* used to decorate [z]
- [c] did not exist
- [c] material omitted from the inventory was unavailable or unknown

Understanding Value

Late period clothing is very valuable. Cloth—especially the nicer silks used by the highest of classes—was a very valuable commodity. There are so few extant garments from late period because rather than being buried in their clothing, it would often be donated, handed down to attendants, etc rather than simply being discarded.

Beyond fabric composition, the next significant impact on an item's value was the presence of a precious metal. Metallic thread was both used to weave cloth and as a common embellishment. Any garment with this as a component had a higher value, and was more likely to be listed. This is taken to enough of an extreme that the item might even have its metal content weighed, and be listed accordingly.

Basic, unadorned body linens while almost certainly present were almost never mentioned. Items made of linen that have inherent value are, but the most basic things are often left out as they were not considered significantly valuable enough to record.

Likewise, clothing inventories are less common than inventories of furniture, jewelry, etc. The value of clothing was high, but the value of these durable and permanent pieces could eclipse the cloth, especially for royalty like the subjects of these inventories.

The Good and Bad of a Text Record

Inventories are descriptive text only. There are no pictures.

This is good, as it can be hard to tell fabric content and other specifics from pictures. But this is very bad in that it can be a struggle to find an actual representation of what is described in an inventory. It's all well and good to know that a *saya* is made of velvet, but what if you don't know what a *saya* looks like? You might not even be able to tell from the inventories whether it's a body garment or a hat. (note: it's a dress).

The same is true for details of workmanship. You might know that a garment is embroidered with gold thread, but you don't know in what pattern, or any further details of how.

In order to parse these descriptions and connect them to some kind of visual representation, we have a rather hilarious idiosyncrasy of pious Spain: there are a fair number of religious writers who complain about various fashion trends, using their names as given at the time and complaining about them in enough detail that they can be backfigured. Other good resources include the various patterning manuals of the period (Alcega, etc). Once a basic idea is had, we can endeavor to track down an image that matches and work from there.

Camisas—The Inner Layer

How many were there? **156 total across 24 inventories**

Owner	Camisas
Isabel of Portugal	46
Juana I de Castilla	35
Carlos V	25
Fernando I	21
Catalina de Austria	15
Margarita de Austria	9
Maria de Hungria	5
Grand Total	**156**

Owner
- Isabel of Portugal
- Juana I de Castilla
- Carlos V
- Fernando I
- Catalina de Austria
- Margarita de Austria
- Maria de Hungria

What materials were used?

Material	Camisas
not specified	81
de holanda	47
de cambray	9
de tela de oro	4
de cacahan morisco	3
de aljofar	2
de toquilla	2
de tela de Flandes	1
de pano de India	1
de volante	1
de embutido	1
de franjas de oro y seda	1
de alitrate	1
de aguja	1
de malla	1
Grand Total	**156**

Primary Material
- de aguja
- de alitrate
- de aljofar
- de cacahan morisco
- de cambray
- de embutido
- de franjas de oro y seda
- de holanda
- de malla
- de pano de India
- de tela de Flandes
- de tela de oro
- de toquilla
- de volante
- not specified

What embellishments were used?
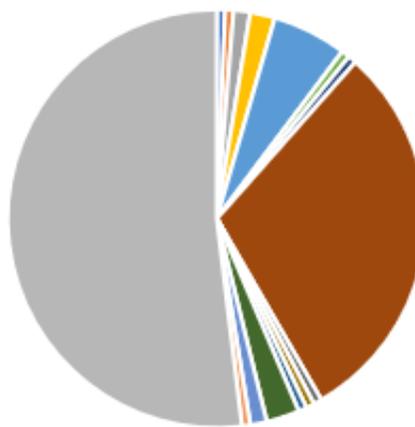
Embellishment style, materials	Camisas
aderezadas	**6**
con metales, piedras preciosas y/o perlas	6
labradas	**18**
not specified	18
not specified	**132**
not specified	132
Grand Total	**156**

Did they get more or less common over time?
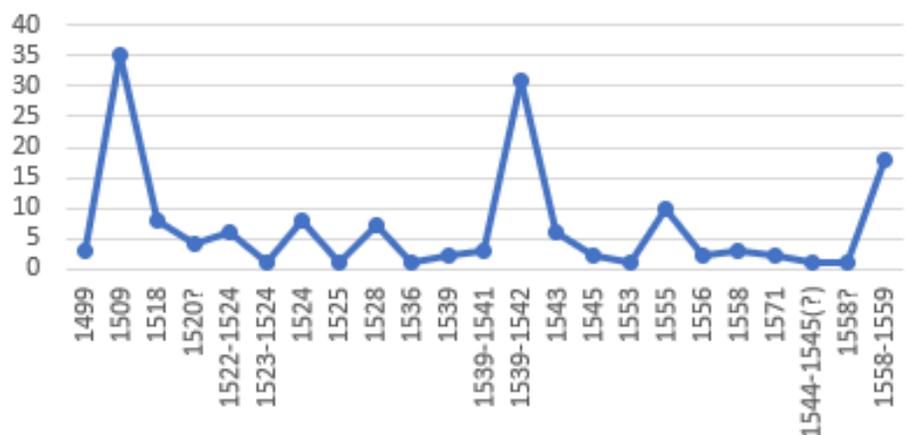
Corpiños & Cuerpos—Pairs of Bodies

How many were there? **102 total across 13 inventories**

Owner	Corpinos
Isabel of Portugal	59
Juana I de Castilla	26
Catalina de Austria	8
Carlos V	4
Maria de Hungria	2
Margarita de Austria	2
Fernando I	1
Grand Total	**102**

Owner
- Isabel of Portugal
- Juana I de Castilla
- Catalina de Austria
- Carlos V
- Maria de Hungria
- Margarita de Austria
- Fernando I
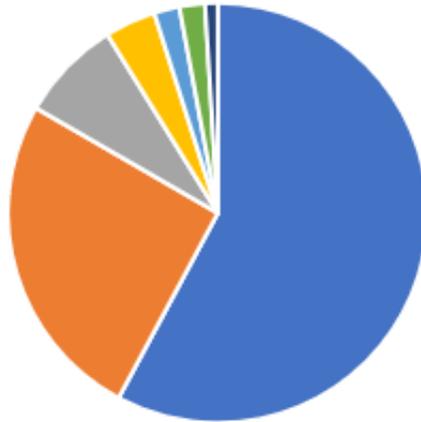
What materials were used?

Material	Number
de terciopelo	28
de raso	13
de tafetan	13
de damasco	9
de cotonia	8
de brocado	7
not specified	6
de ceti	5
de tela de oro	2
de seda	2
labrados	2
de grana	1
de fustan	1
de burrato	1
de sarga	1
de pano	1
de chamelote	1
de lienzo	1
Grand Total	**102**

Primary Material
- de terciopelo
- de raso
- de tafetan
- de damasco
- de cotonia
- de brocado
- not specified
- de ceti
- de tela de oro
- de seda
- labrados
- de grana
- de fustan
- de burrato
- de sarga
- de pano
- de chamelote
- de lienzo
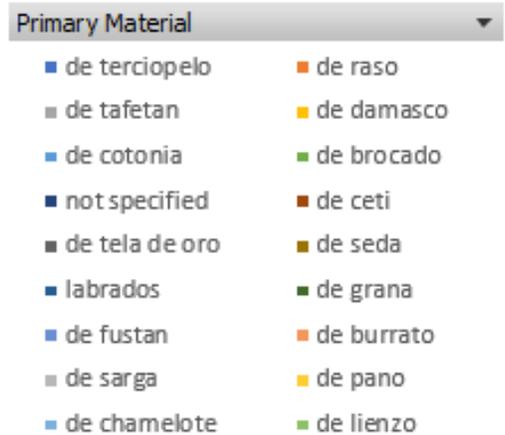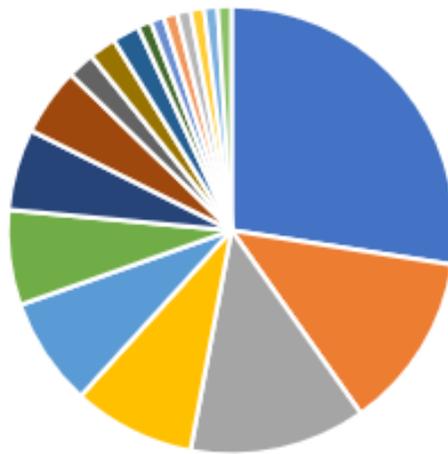
No recorded embellishments. But "types"

Type	Number
de saya	6
Flamencos	5
not specified	91
Grand Total	**102**

Did they get more or less common over time?

Corpinos do not appear until 1529—possible shift in stiffness of underlayer?
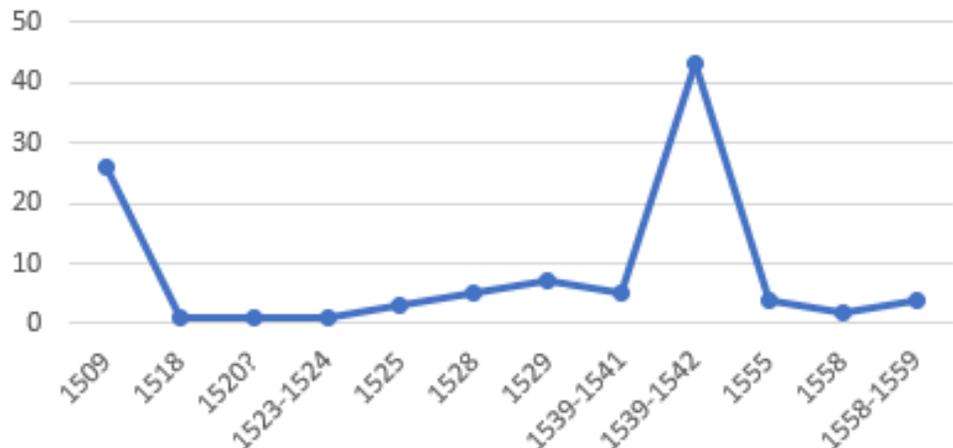
Gorgueras—Partlets

How many were there? **188 total across 13 inventories**

Owner	Gorgueras Owned
Isabel of Portugal	126
Juana I de Castilla	44
Catalina de Austria	13
Margarita de Austria	5
Grand Total	**188**

Owner
- Isabel of Portugal
- Juana I de Castilla
- Catalina de Austria
- Margarita de Austria
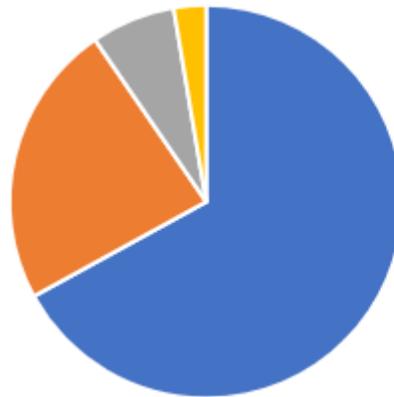
What materials were used?

Material	Number
not specified	34
de red	20
de piezas de plata y/u oro	14
de oro hilado	14
de oro y plato hilada	13
de oro hilado y perlas	10
de volante	10
de seda	9
de holanda	7
de aljofar	7
de cambray	7
de terciopelo	5
de telarejo	5
de telilla de plata	4
de plata hilada	4
de hilo de cadeneta	3
de tafetan	3
de ceti	3
de embutido	3
de cortado de deshilado	2
"de las Pees"	2
de vidrio	2
de torcales	1
de hilo de red	1
de raso	1
envoltorio de	1
de lienzo	1
de tela de oro	1
de terncillas de oro y negro	1
Grand Total	**188**

Primary Material
- not specified
- de red
- de piezas de plata y/u oro
- de oro hilado
- de oro y plato hilada
- de oro hilado y perlas
- de volante
- de seda
- de holanda
- de aljofar
- de cambray
- de terciopelo
- de telarejo
- de telilla de plata
- de plata hilada
- de hilo de cadeneta
- de tafetan
- de ceti
- de embutido
- de cortado de deshilado
- "de las Pees"
- de vidrio
- de torcales
- de hilo de red
- de raso
- envoltorio de
- de lienzo
- de tela de oro
- de terncillas de oro y negro

Gorgueras—Partlets

What embellishments were used?

Embellishment style, material	Gorgueras
con canutillo	**3**
plata y/o oro	3
con guarnicion	**12**
de oro	12
con labor	**1**
de oro	1
labrada	**3**
en oro	3
labradas	**4**
not specified	4
not specified	**165**
con franias	2
not specified	153
perlas	10
Grand Total	**188**

Did they get more or less common over time?
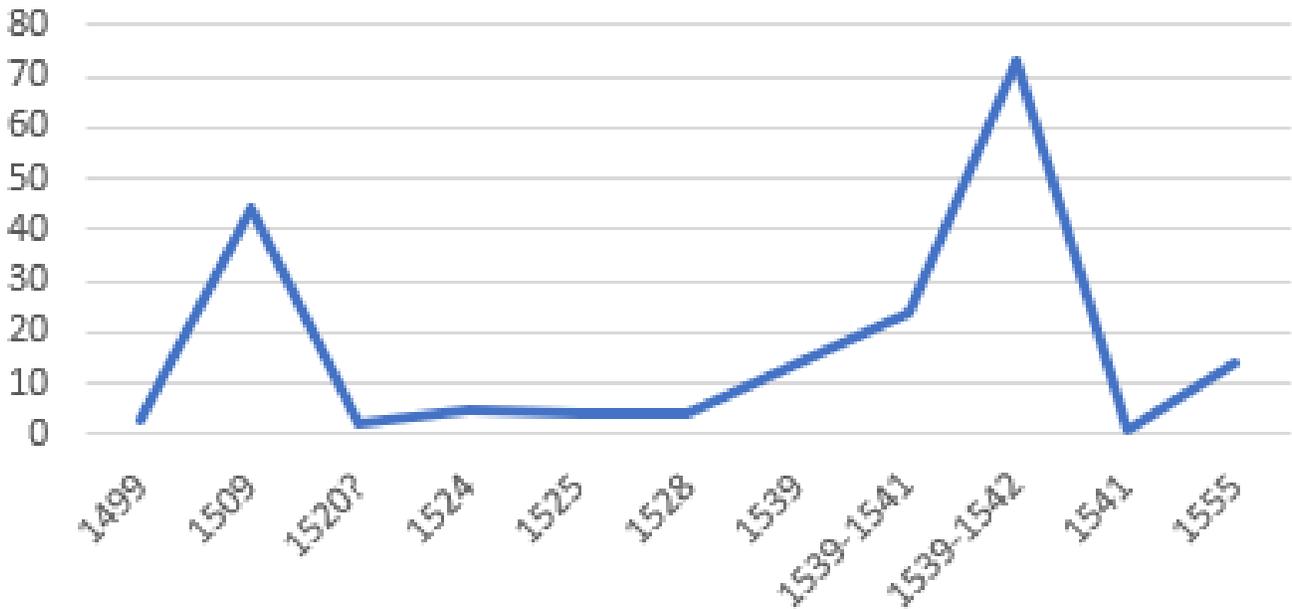
Mangas—Sleeves

How many were there? **348 total across 19 inventories** (this includes mens)

Owner	Mangas
Isabel of Portugal	225
Juana I de Castilla	70
Catalina de Austria	32
Fernando I	8
Carlos V	5
Margarita de Austria	4
Maria de Hungria	3
Leonor de Austria	1
Grand Total	**348**

Owner
- Isabel of Portugal
- Juana I de Castilla
- Catalina de Austria
- Fernando I
- Carlos V
- Margarita de Austria
- Maria de Hungria
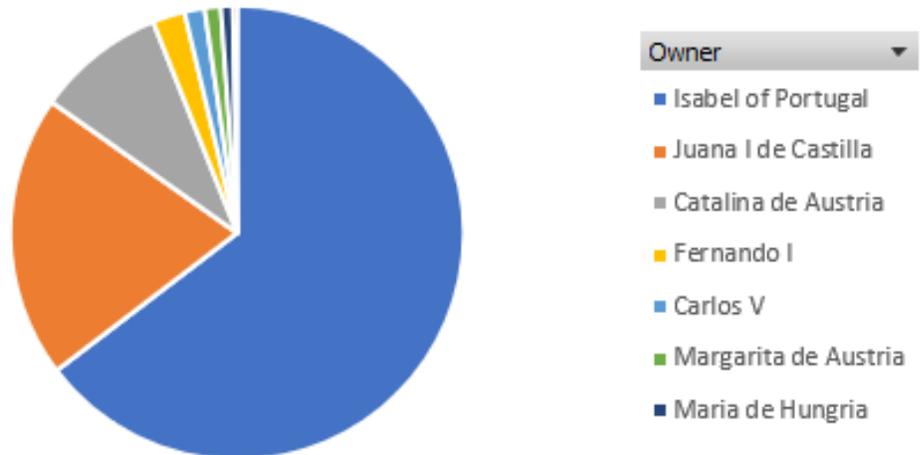
What materials were used?

Material	Mangas
de terciopelo	56
de tafetan	34
not specified	33
de raso	29
de damasco	15
de cotonia	13
de ceti	13
de aguja	13
de calicud	12
de tela de plata	10
de holanda	10
de tela de oro	10
de frisa	8
de lienzo de la India	8
de oro	7
de brocado	7
de cambray	7
de sinabafa	7
de oro hilado	6
de franjas de oro	6
de martas	5
de trenzas	5
de seda	5
de cordellate de grana	4
de arminos	3
de pano	3
de grana	3
de chamelote	3
de holandilla	3
de pano papal	2
de lienzo	2
de beramos	1
de sarga	1
de malla	1
de buriel	1
de cendal	1
de lana	1
Grand Total	**348**

Primary Material
- de terciopelo
- de tafetan
- not specified
- de raso
- de damasco
- de cotonia
- de ceti
- de aguja
- de calicud
- de tela de plata
- de holanda
- de tela de oro
- de frisa
- de lienzo de la India
- de oro
- de brocado
- de cambray
- de sinabafa
- de oro hilado
- de franjas de oro
- de martas
- de trenzas
- de seda
- de cordellate de grana
- de arminos
- de pano
- de grana
- de chamelote
- de holandilla
- de pano papal
- de lienzo
- de beramos
- de sarga
- de malla
- de buriel
- de cendal
- de lana

Mangas—Sleeves

What embellishments were used?

Embellishment style, material	Mangas
con forro	**8**
de almizcleros	1
de arminos	4
de martas	3
labradas	**1**
en seda	1
not specified	**339**
con oro y perlas	1
con perlas	1
not specified	337
Grand Total	**348**

Did they get more or less common over time?
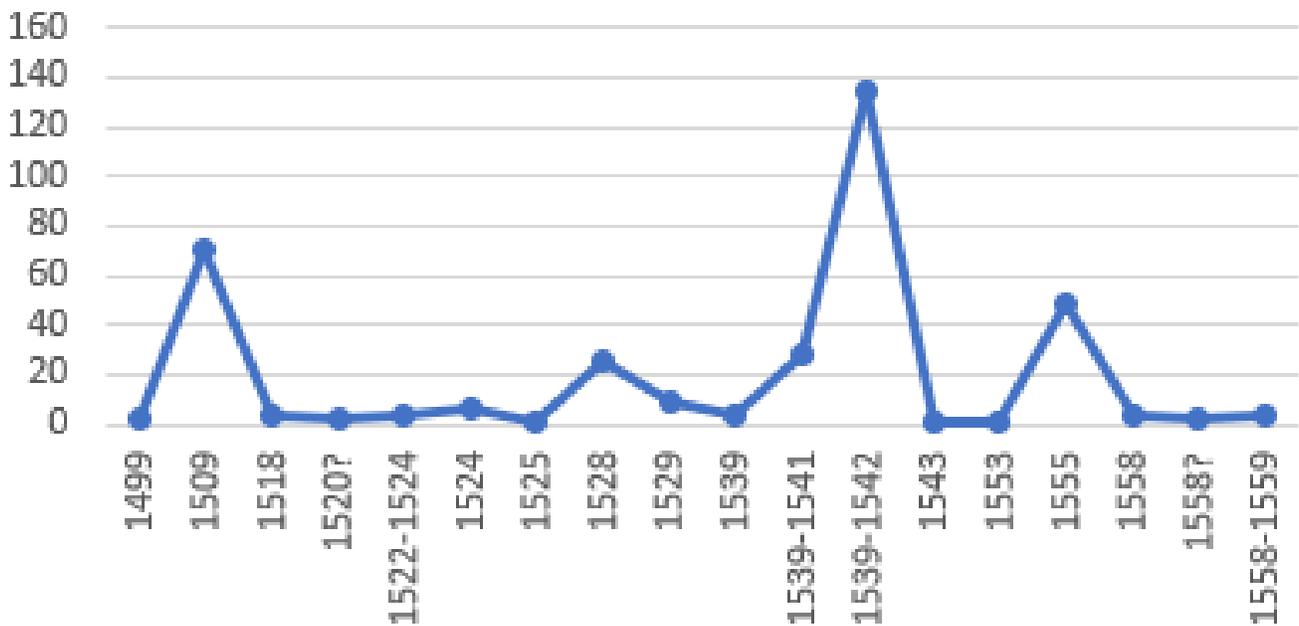
Verdugados—Farthingales

How many were there? **52 total across 4 inventories**

Owner	Verdugados
Isabel of Portugal	50
Catalina de Austria	2
Grand Total	**52**

Owner ▼
- Isabel of Portugal
- Catalina de Austria

What materials were used?

Material	Verdugados
de damasco	18
de tafetan	13
de terciopelo	6
de raso	5
de chamelote de seda	4
de grana	2
de pano	2
not specified	1
de frolentin	1
Grand Total	**52**

Primary Material ▼
- de damasco
- de tafetan
- de terciopelo
- de raso
- de chamelote de seda
- de grana
- de pano
- not specified
- de frolentin
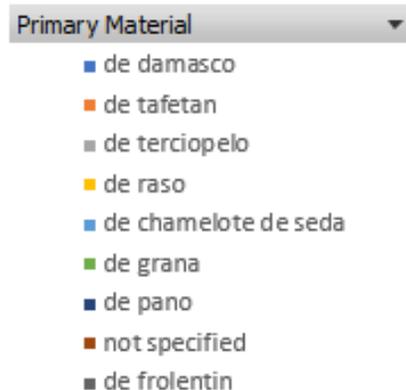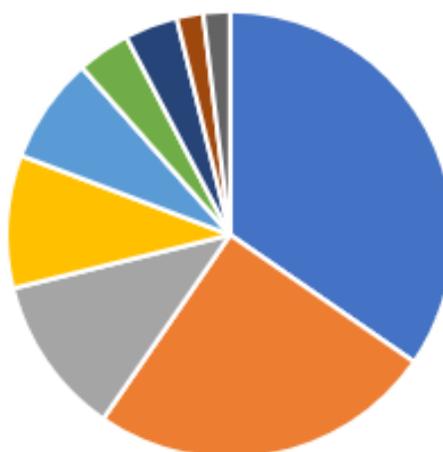
No recorded embellishment.

Did they get more or less common over time?

Do not appear until 1528.

Sayas—Dresses (well, one type of dress)

How many were there? **177 total across 9 inventories**

Owner	Sayas
Isabel of Portugal	155
Catalina de Austria	9
Fernando I	7
Juana I de Castilla	5
Maria de Hungria	1
Grand Total	**177**

Owner
- Isabel of Portugal
- Catalina de Austria
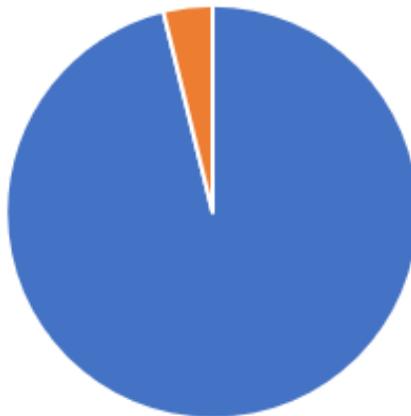
What materials were used?

Material	Sayas
de raso	37
de terciopelo	30
de tafetan	21
de frisa	20
de damasco	16
de pano	11
de tela de oro	10
de tela de plata	8
de telilla	5
not specified	5
de cotonia	5
de brocado	4
de Harbin	2
de anascote	1
de buriel	1
de estamete	1
Grand Total	**177**

Primary Material
- de raso
- de terciopelo
- de tafetan
- de frisa
- de damasco
- de pano
- de tela de oro
- de tela de plata
- de telilla
- not specified
- de cotonia
- de brocado
- de Harbin
- de anascote
- de buriel
- de estamete
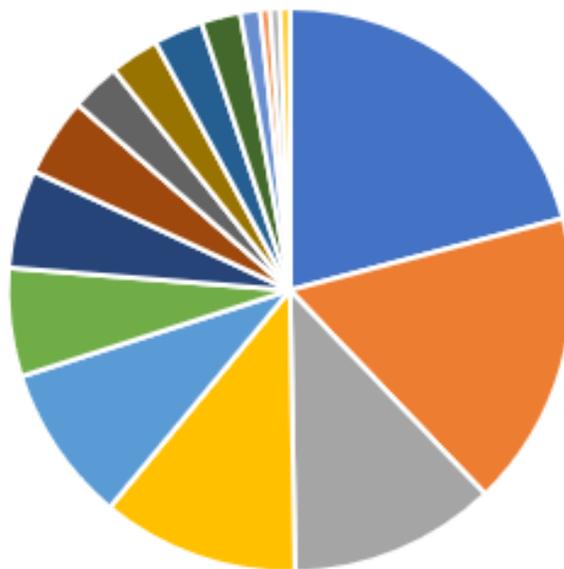
No recorded embellishment.

Did they get more or less common over time?
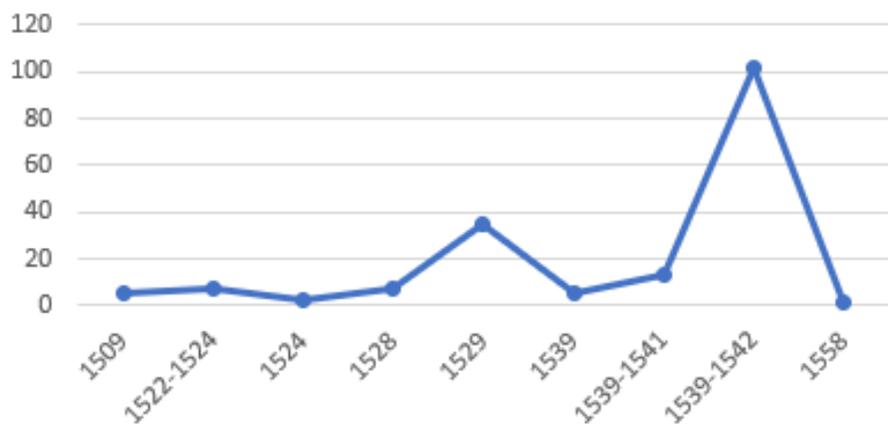
Okay…but what are those materials?

In some cases, **I don't know yet.** In all cases, I'm currently trusting the work of others. My source for each definition is marked accordingly.

Brocado: Brocade*

Calicud: An Indian cotton*

Cambray: A fine linen*

Ceti: A form of silk*

Chamelote de seda: A form of silk*

Cotonia: Cotton*

Damasco: Damask+

Frisa: Heavy gold or braided trim*

Grana: Woolen fabric*

Holanda: Holland linen*

Lienzo: Linen*

Oro hilado: Spun gold*

Paño: woolen cloth*

Raso: Satin*

Red: Net

Seda: Silk*

Tafetan: Taffeta+

Tela de oro: Cloth of gold*

Tela de plato/plata: Cloth of silver*

Terciopelo: Velvet+

*Ruth Matilda Andersen, *Hispanic Costume 1480-1530*

+ Carmen Bernis, *Indumentaria Española en Tiempos de Carlos V*

Questions? Comments? Concerns? And above all, neat discoveries? Tell me!

Elena de la Palma on Facebook
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Appendix: So, Whose Inventories are These Anyway?
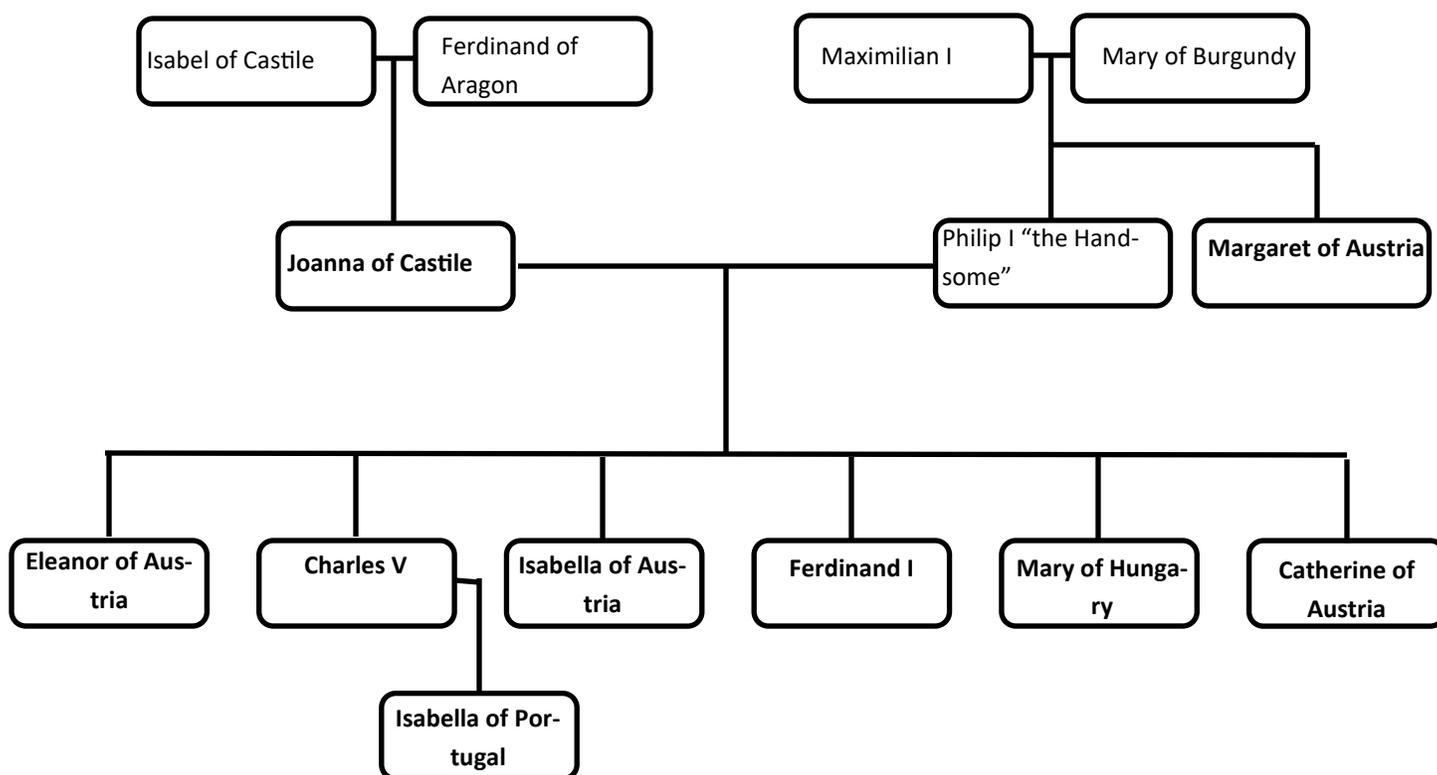
Joanna of Castile: 1479—1555, reigned 1504-1555 (sort of)

Margaret of Austria: 1480—1530, reigned 1507—1530 in Habsburg Netherlands

Eleanor of Austria: 1498—1558, reigned 1518-1521 in Portugal, 1530—1547 in France

Charles V: 1500—1558, reigned 1516—1556 (in Spain, Holy Roman dates differ)

Isabella of Portugal: 1503—1539, reigned 1530—1539 in Spain

Isabella of Austria: 1501—1526, reigned 1515—1523 in Denmark-Norway-Sweden

Ferdinand I: 1503—1564, reigned 1558—1564 as Holy Roman Emperor

Mary of Hungary: 1505—1558, reigned 1515—1526 in Hungry and Bohemia, 1531—1555 as Governor of the Habsburg Netherlands

Catherine of Austria: 1507—1578, reigned 1525—1557 in Portugal

How 'Spanish' are they?

These inventories represent Spain in transition. While we do have plenty of inventories from direct Spanish monarchs (Isabel of Portugal, Carlos V, and Joanna of Castile), of those three only Joanna can be said to be truly 'Spanish'. A daughter of Isabel of Castile (the famous one), Juana marries into the Habsburg dynasty with her union to Philip I, folding Spain into a much wider cultural world. The intersection is a brief one—by the time of Philip II, the son of Isabel and Carlos V—Spain's monarch is no longer also the Holy Roman Emperor, and it is under Philip II and his son Philip III that Spain hits the heights of its power.

However, it is especially worth noting that every woman in these inventories save for Joanna was a transplant. The sisters of Carlos V—the daughters of Joanna and Philip—married out across the continent, and the majority of the inventories were completed after their marriages. Isabella of Portugal married into Spain, but she was originally Portuguese, and her husband had a strong focus on his duties to the Holy Roman Empire rather than ruling Spain, which may be reflected in her own styles and priorities.

So then, can we pinpoint the degree to which these inventories reflect 'Spanish' between 1500 and 1550? No. We can only use it for the resource that it is, understanding its limitations, and do our best to weigh all the factors.
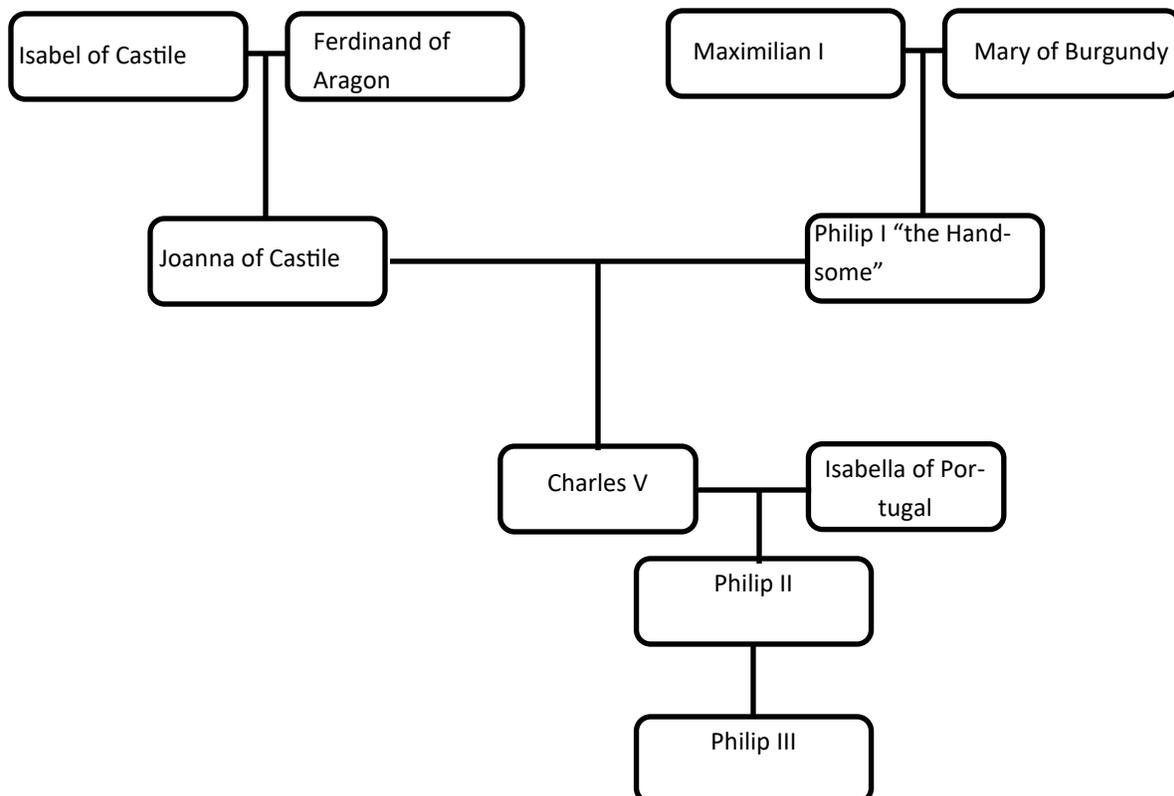
Volume 1

Carlos V/Charles V

- **C1:** Inventory of quality furniture of the palace at Gante [furniture, art objects], 1536

- **C2:** Inventory of jewelry, tableware, tapestries, books, and other objects, 1536

- **C3:** Inventory of tapestries, 1544

- **C4:** Inventory of furniture and other objects, 1544-1545(?)

- **C5:** Inventory of jewelry, precious stones, tableware, and other objects, 1545

- **C6:** Inventory of jewelry left in Spain, 1556

- **C7:** Inventory of tableware, paintings, and liturgical objects, 1556

- **C8:** inventory of the armory at Valladolid, 1558?

- **C9:** Postmortem inventory, 1558-1559

Juana I de Castilla/Joanna I of Castile

- **J1:** Inventory of the property of the queen [all types of objects], 1509

Volume 2

Isabel de Portugal/Isabella of Portugal

- **IP1:** Inventory of dowry jewelry, 1526

- **IP2:** Record of clothes brought from Portugal, 1529

- **IP3:** Jewelry, tapestries, and other objects sent from Charles V to Isabella, 1531

- **IP4:** Record of the things not inventoried, 1539

- **IP5:** Postmortem auction, 1539

- **IP6:** Inventory of jewelry and other clothing objects [all types of objects], 1539-1542

- **IP7:** Portmortem auction [furniture, textiles], 1541

- **IP8:** Postmortem auction [all types of objects], 1539-1541

- **IP9:** Allocation of the dressing room of Isabella between Philip II, Mary of Hungary and Joanna of Austria [all types of objects], 1555

Volume 3

Margarita de Austria/Margaret of Austria

- **MA1:** Inventory of jewelry, tableware, and other objects, 1493

- **MA2:** Inventory of trousseau received upon marriage to Prince John [jewelry, furniture, textiles], 1497

- **MA3:** Inventory of jewelry, pearls, precious stones, and other objects, 1499

- **MA4:** Inventory of the drawing room above the theater, early 15th century

- **MA5:** Fragment of an inventory: paintings and art objects, 1516

- **MA6:** Inventory of paintings, 1516

- **MA7:** Inventory of tapestries, 1516?

- **MA8:** Inventory of tableware, ceramics, and paintings from the library, 1520?

- **MA9:** Inventory of silver and gold tableware, 1520?

- **MA10:** Fragment of an inventory: etched plates and other objects 1520?

- **MA11:** Fragment of an inventory: library, 1520

- **MA12:** Inventory of trifles [jewelry, textiles, tableware], 1520?

- **MA13:** Inventory of napkins and other clothes, 1520?

- **MA14:** Inventory of napkins and other clothes from Spain, 1520?

- **MA15:** Inventory of white clothing, 1521?

- **MA16:** Inventory of tableware, jewelry, tapestries, paintings, and other objects, 1523-1524

- **MA17:** Inventory of the drawing room and library [books, art objects, textiles, tableware], 1524

- **MA18**: Inventory of items sent from papa to Margarita [jewelry, textiles], 1530

- **MA19:** Inventory of devotional paintings, Post. 1530

- **MA20:** Inventory of tableware, jewelry, paintings, and other objects, 1530

- **MA21:** Pieces sent to Madame de Toulouse, 1531

- **MA22:** Inventory of the Chateau at Pont-D'Ain [books, furniture], 1531

Volume 3, cont'd

Leonor de Austria/Eleanor of Austria

- **L1:** Inventory and evaluation of pieces brought from Portugal, 1518

- **L2:** Incomplete inventory of jewelry given by Manuel I of Portugal, 1518

Isabel de Austria/Isabella of Austria

- **IA1:** Inventory of jewelry, pearls, and precious stones belonging to Christian II, 1523

- **IA2:** Inventory of jewelry, 1523

- **IA3:** Inventory of jewelry, 1523

- **IA4:** Inventory of jewelry, 1523

- **IA5:** Inventory of jewelry, 1524

- **IA6:** Inventory of items pledged (pawned?) in Amberes and Malinas, 1526

- **IA7:** Inventory of items taken and given back to the castle of Copenhagen, 1539

Fernando I/Ferdinand I

- **F1:** Inventory of jewelry, clothing, and other objects, 1518

- **F2:** Inventory of tableware, fabrics, clothing, and other objects 1522-1524

- **F3:** Inventory of jewelry, precious items, and other objects, 1543

- **F4:** Inventory of jewelry and other objects, 1553

María de Hungria/Mary of Hungary

- **MH1:** Inventory of books and other objects brought to Turnhout, 1558

- **MH2:** Inventory of other furniture and household goods brought to Turnhout, 1558

- **MH3:** Postmortem inventory [all types of items], 1558

- **MH4:** Inventory of good furniture received by Joanna of Austria [books, furniture, art objects, textiles], 1571

Volume 3, Cont'd

Catalina de Austria/Catherine of Austria

- **CA1:** Inventory of clothing, jewelry, tapestries, and other objects, 1524

- **CA2:** Inventory of jewelry, silver, and other objects, 1525

- **CA3:** Inventory of jewelry, silver, and other objects, 1525

- **CA4:** Inventory of jewelry, 1527

- **CA5:** Inventory of jewelry and wardrobe, 1528

Works Consulted

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