



## 1520 SPANISH SAYA

*Based on the Altarpiece of San Felix de Girona by  
Juan de Burgunya, circa 1518-1520. Held by the  
Museu d'Art de Girona*

### ABSTRACT

A recreation of the dress at left, from redaction of period patterns to selection of materials and colors, to construction and finishing.

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## Project Brief

A Spanish *saya tirada* (gown decorated with strips of fabric) for a middle class woman circa 1520. Based upon the seated woman from the Altarpiece of San Felix de Girona, “Preaching of Saint Felix to the Women of Girona”, held by the Girona Art Museum. Patterning and fabric choice based on the *Saya y sayuelo de paño para muger*, folio 25 of Diego de Freyle’s 1588 *Geometria y traça para el oficio de los sastres*. Construction and stitch choices based on the satin gown worn by Eleonora of Toledo as profiled in Janet Arnold’s *Patterns of Fashion 3*. Patterning and construction informed by the work of Mathew Gnagy.

### Why this project?

- **Ability to work with a finer weight of wool.** After finally sourcing excellent tropical weight wool through Burnley & Trowbridge, I wanted to see how that finer weight would work for a gown like this. My previous work has largely been with thicker wool, which behaves very differently.
- **Working with *tiras* for the first time.** *Tiras* are strips of fabric applied decoratively (the red lines on the yellow of the reference dress – they will be discussed in much more detail in future sections, and with much more citation). We have no idea how they were made – not how they were cut, nor how they were attached. I wanted to experiment, so I did everything from scratch without the conveniences modernly available.
- **Dream gown!** This gown was one of the first that really made me fall in love with this time period. I’ve always wanted to make it.

## Part 1: A Survey of Available Resources

Late period costuming is an exercise in having less resources than seems reasonable. We have precious few extant garments (and none of them are Spanish). We have a relative proliferation of layout books – commonly referred to within the SCA as tailor’s manuals - but these come from the end of period and have their own complications as a source of patterning. We have inventories, meticulously detailed in some aspects and frustratingly lacking in others. And of course, we have plenty of images - but these are often artistic interpretations that omit key details.

Let’s start by exploring this landscape, because understanding all the possible sources available to me is key to understanding everything about my dress. What I chose to ignore and what I chose to include shaped the ultimate materials I used, the pattern I created, and the stitches and construction that hold it all together.

## Extant Garments

Funeral gown of Eleonora di Toledo – Italian, 1562 (the date of her burial)<sup>1</sup>

The funeral gown of Eleonora di Toledo is badly decomposed, yet well chronicled due to the access granted to Janet Arnold for its study. Exact dimensions are available through her work, as are the complete details of stitching and construction. Key features of this garment, as identified by the author in the source above:

- A silk satin exterior, lined in linen and interlined with coarser linen
- Seam allowances were folded in over the interlining to hide the raw edges completely
- The skirt was stitched to the bodice
- The shoulder straps were cut integrally to the bodice front/back
- The shoulder straps were joined at the  $\frac{3}{4}$  back (join roughly sitting on the shoulderblade)
- The bodice was laced at the  $\frac{3}{4}$  back
- The attached skirt was slit at the lacing join
- The skirt hem is faced with matching satin
- There is a small (1”- 1 1/8”) tuck in the skirt just above the guard
- There is no evidence of stitching or cutting for lacing holes at the armscye
- The lacing rings are offset, indicating spiral lacing was likely used
- Bodice laces are silk 3mm (1/8”) wide
- Eyelet holes on the bodice were worked over metal rings
- The embellished guards are couched gold thread over velvet ground
  - The pattern is cut in places to fit it to the dress, indicating it was originally designed for a different gown
  - The velvet is entirely cut through in places, revealing the silk satin of the dress underneath
  - The velvet has not frayed, indicating the use of some kind of glue or sizing to seal the edges
  - The bodice guards are 2” wide with gold braid  $\frac{1}{4}$ ” wide on both sides
  - The guards at the hem are 4 1/8” – 4 1/4” wide inclusive of the braids

A second bodice was found underneath the dress<sup>2</sup>:

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<sup>1</sup> Janet Arnold, *Patterns of Fashion 3*, (Hollywood: Quite Specific Media Group, 1985), 102.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

- Made of velvet
- Likely lined with linen as well
  - The stitching is loose, indicating it once held additional layers of fabric
- Closed with hooks and eyes at the front instead of lacing
  - Hooks on the right, eyes on the left
- Has stitching holes at its waist for a possible skirt
- Stitches all around indicate either a lining or a binding
- A small fragment of unknown material from lining or binding remains on the inside right front of the waist
- Bodice has seams at the  $\frac{3}{4}$  back

### Red Dress of Pisa – Italian, 1560s

The Red Dress of Pisa is similar to the Funeral Gown of Eleonora di Toledo (so much so that there is conjecture they were made by the same master tailor)<sup>3</sup>, but in much better shape. However, details are not as readily available – Janet Arnold was not given access. Much of this information relies on my observations based on detailed photos taken while this garment was on loan in Spain<sup>4</sup> and also from observations by Anea Arnesen.<sup>5</sup> Key features of this garment:

- A silk velvet exterior
- Bodice lined in linen
- The skirt was stitched to the bodice
- The shoulder straps were cut integrally to the bodice front/back
- The shoulder straps were joined at the  $\frac{3}{4}$  back (join roughly sitting on the shoulderblade)
- The bodice was laced at the  $\frac{3}{4}$  back
- The attached skirt was slit at the lacing join
- The skirt hem is decorated with bands of cut velvet with couched goldwork
- The front is decorated with guards, usually in pairs, with couched goldwork
- The sleeves tie to the bodice
- The skirt hem has the same tuck and facing found on the Eleonora di Toledo funeral gown
- The skirt is largely composed of rectangles joined and pleated into the waist

### Funeral Dress of Giulia Varano – Italian, 1540s

Very little of the gown survives, which is unfortunate as it is 20 years closer to our time period of study. The restored gown is held by Castello Brancaleoni di Piobbico (Pesaro e Urbino). The information here relies on a translation of *I Della Rovere*, the catalog of a showcase held in 2004 which included detailed information about this gown.<sup>6</sup> The translation referenced here is the original work of Anea Arnesen,

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<sup>3</sup> Ania Ansen, “Extant Italian Dresses,” last modified May 25<sup>th</sup> 2017, accessed November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023, <https://web.archive.org/web/20170525074119/http://aneafiles.webs.com/renaissancegallery/extant.html>

<sup>4</sup> Fiberferret, “Siglo del Oro,” last modified July 24, 2015, accessed October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/fiberferret/albums/72157656258313642/>

<sup>5</sup> Ansen, “Extant Italian Dresses”

<sup>6</sup> *I Della Rovere*. Piero della Francesca, Raffaello, Tiziano, [catalogo della mostra] a cura di Paolo Dal Poggetto, Milano, Electa



whose website has since been taken down but whose work survives accessible via the Wayback Machine.<sup>7</sup> Key features of this garment:

- Bodice was stiffened with linen further hardened with glue
- Bodice was lined in silk taffeta, with an external of silk satin and twill
- Skirt was roughly 5 meters of fabric, pleated
- The sleeves were tied to the shoulders
- The skirt was laced to the bodice

#### Maid's Dress – Hungarian, 16<sup>th</sup> century

This gown is relatively intact, but has not been studied with as much depth as other extants. Key features of this garment<sup>8</sup>:

- Made of silk
- Trimmed with velvet
- Edged with gold

The following is based on my visual inspection<sup>9</sup>

- High collar
- Appears to close at the front with hook and eye (no visible lacing)
- Seams appear to be at the side, but angled slightly back – possibly a legacy of side back lacing, but unclear.
- Skirt is gathered at the waist
- Sleeves are short (t-shirt style). Additional longer sleeved may have tied in.
- Skirt must have closed at the front – there is no evidence of seams elsewhere

#### Mixed gown (also referred to as a house dress) – Italian, c.1550s

Very little is known about this gown, held alongside the Red Dress of Pisa in the costume collection of the Palazzo Reale in Pisa. Most of the information comes from Ania Arnesen's firsthand description of it after seeing it on display.<sup>10</sup> Key features of this garment:

- Mixed wool and linen woven in a diamond pattern
- Back of the dress is entirely missing
- Unclear where the garment would have closed – potential arguments for front or ¾ back
- There is a seam down the front – but that may have been a modification after it began life as a garment on a statue of a saint
- Skirt made of four straight panels sewn together and pleated
- Skirt is sewn to bodice

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<sup>7</sup> Ania Arnesen, "Articles and Galleries," last modified June 2nd 2017, accessed November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023, <https://web.archive.org/web/20170602110641/http://aneafiles.webs.com/articles.html>

<sup>8</sup> Fiberferret, "Siglo del Oro," last modified July 24, 2015, accessed October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/fiberferret/19968828662/in/album-72157656258313642/>

<sup>9</sup> Fiberferret, "Siglo del Oro," last modified July 24, 2015, accessed October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/fiberferret/19950376826/in/album-72157656258313642/>

<sup>10</sup> Arnesen, "Extant Italian Dresses"

- Discoloration along the hemline indicates possible trim there

### Red satin sleeves – c1580-1600

These sleeves fall substantially past our period of consideration, but are one of the better preserved specimens we have. It is reasonable to suspect that stitches used on sleeves in 1580 likely existed in 1510, and could have been used on our exemplar *saya*. Key features of these sleeves:

- Decorative backstitching
- Linen lining
- Padding of cotton wool with an interlining of blue linen
  - The lining, padding, and interlining are quilted together and then sewn in at the seams
- The sleevehead is bound with a strip of straight-grain satin matching the rest of the exterior fabric
- Hooks are attached at the sleevehead to allow the sleeve to hook onto a bodice (no matching bodice survives)
- Two rows of satin are sewn at the cuff (the exterior fabric is turned under and secured with visible backstitching at the cuff)

Note – undergarments and foundation garments have no bearing on the construction of this exterior dress, and so are not chronicled here.

### Tailoring Manuals

The second source of information available to the late period costumer is tailoring manuals. That name in itself is a misnomer – tailoring manuals are better translated as “books of tracing and cutting out”, which better reflects their actual goal: showing knowledgeable tailors how to best lay out patterns given a certain amount of cloth. Indeed, you’ll often see two or more different layouts for the same garment reflecting different amounts of cloth.

#### Diego de Freyle

The *Geometria y traça para el oficio de los sastres* was published by Diego de Freyle in 1588<sup>11</sup>. Freyle was originally from Granada, yet settled and wrote in Sevilla.

Freyle post-dates my reference image by 68 years, but is still extremely relevant. Freyle’s layouts are quite similar to the styles of my 1520s reference images: the neckline and shoulder straps are an almost perfect visual match. The bodice fronts detailed in Freyle’s images are more pointed at the bottom than those in the references, but the skirts and sleeves are quite similar. In addition, Freyle clearly shows bodices joined at the  $\frac{3}{4}$  back, as seen on the Eleonora di Toledo extant. Freyle’s layouts also include some options that may imply a bodice with no front seam.

Freyle’s layouts are particularly useful for redacting the extremely large sleeves that are characteristic of this gown. These extremely wide sleeves are one of the most distinctive characteristics of the reference image: they are visibly voluminous enough to gather than fold in on themselves as the wearer rests her arms in her lap. But they are closed, covering her whole arm from elbow to wrist. In the later period of Freyle, these large sleeves were worn either open at the front and hanging, or closed halfway with the

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<sup>11</sup> Aldarondo, Abner. “A Master Tailor’s Manual,” last modified January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023, accessed November 23<sup>rd</sup> 2023, <https://www.folger.edu/blogs/collation/a-master-tailors-manual/>

forearm out.<sup>12</sup> I used Freyle's pattern as my base, but widened it further at the armscye and reduced the taper at the wrist. The end result was a similar shape to Freyle's draft, but much better matched to the gown I was re-creating.

Juan de Alcega

A master tailor working out of Madrid, Juan de Alcega's *Libro de Practica y Traca* offers a similar selection of patterns to Freyle's.<sup>13</sup>

As with Freyle, Alcega is notably outside my reference period, but still relevant. While some details clearly do not match between Alcega's layouts and the fashion of the 1520s – most notably, the exact shape of bodices and where they close – the neckline, sleeves, and skirt layouts are all quite consistent with the visual styles of the 1520s. Alcega tends to include more distinctive 1580s styling elements – e.g. shoulder tabs – than Freyle, although their base shapes remain quite similar.

## Inventories

The third resource available to the late period costumer is inventories. Inventories are lists of goods, written primarily for the purpose of recording their value. These might be simple bills of sale, household accounts, lists taken to record assets upon a marriage, or a record of valuables upon the owner's death. Because inventories focus on value, they are a strong record of materials used: fabric and the precious metals and gems used to embellish clothing have significant value. Inventories are usually meticulous in capturing details when they can influence that value. Where inventories fail is *how* these elements were put together. We can know that a *saya* was made, but we don't know what that *saya* looked like just from the text. Similarly, we may be told that so many ounces of metal were used to decorate a particular item, but we're not told how. They also fail to record every type of material used during a time period: if an inventory lists an item as made from certain materials, we can be confident that the item was made from those materials in that time and place. But we cannot conclude that it was always or only made with those materials: absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.

The only inventories I am currently aware of for Spain during this time period are those of Isabel of Portugal, Queen and Empress of the Holy Roman Empire, and her family. These inventories naturally skew towards the extravagant, making their data an imperfect fit for the middle class subject of this reference painting. However, even Isabel of Portugal owned wool dresses. From this evidence, it is certain that wool was being used for *sayas* in 1520: a *saya* of wool is listed in an inventory taken in 1529 on the occasion of Isabel's arrival from Portugal.<sup>14</sup> In the inventories taken on the occasion of Isabel's death and the auction of many of her belongings in 1539, wool dresses were consistently drawing smaller sums at auction when compared with silks, brocades, and damasks.<sup>15</sup> These factors all point to wool *sayas* as a hallmark of a lower class. Their lower value would make them more accessible to those with less buying power. While their infrequency could actually be a sign of rarity – perhaps these were so prized that even a queen would only have a few – the low price makes that interpretation unlikely. It is

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<sup>12</sup> Fiberferret, "Siglo del Oro," last modified July 24, 2015, accessed October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/fiberferret/19942494512/in/album-72157656258313642/>

<sup>13</sup> Juan de Alcega, "Tailor's Pattern Book 1589", Facsimile, (New York, Costume and Fashion Press, 1979).

<sup>14</sup> Cremades, Fernando Checa, "Los Inventarios de Carlos V y la Familia Imperial", Vol. 2, (Madrid, Fernando Villaverde Ediciones, S.L., 2010), 1328.

<sup>15</sup> Cremades, "Los Inventarios de Carlos V y la Familia Imperial", Vol. 2, 1657.

far more plausible that wool *sayas* were simply not garments extravagant enough for a queen. But perhaps they would be just extravagant enough for the middle class woman in the reference portrait.

I have secondary source access to inventories and other transactional documents from 16<sup>th</sup> century Spanish Florida via the work of A. LaPorta, whose essay summarizing their findings is included at the back of Mathew Gnagy's *The Modern Maker Vol. 2*.<sup>16</sup> I would love to someday read these documents for myself, but unfortunately have not yet found a way to access them and so instead rely on LaPorta's summaries from their direct access.

## Portraiture

The final resource available to the late period costumer is portraiture. Portraiture shows how a garment should look, including fit, drape, and color. However, key details are often left out: artists are not clothiers and may misinterpret - or choose to omit - key details like lacing and seams.

It is also important to understand the context of any reference image. When was it painted? Who painted it? Why was it painted? Who is pictured? A foreign artist unfamiliar with local fashions is more likely to miss details, or exaggerate what they find unfamiliar depending on their lens. Someone painting decades or centuries later is unlikely to capture outfits accurately. Allegorical portraiture featuring religious characters are often stylized rather than representative of current fashion trends.



There are a number of portraits dated to the 1520s. I focused on the seated woman at the forefront of the Altarpiece of San Felix de Girona by Juan de Burgunya, circa 1518-1520 held by the Museu d'Art de Girona. This dress has long been on my list for the beautifully draped sleeves and extravagant use of *tiras* – decorative strips of fabric that the Spanish used as trim.<sup>17</sup> Secondary references include the image at left, *Predicación de Santa Magdalena en Marsella* by Pere Mates, circa 1526 held by the Museu Tresor de la Catedral de Girona which features similar base construction and use of *tiras*.

<sup>16</sup> Mathew Gnagy, *The Modern Maker Volume 2*, (Charleston, Createspace.com, 2018), 245.

<sup>17</sup> Ruth Matilda Anderson, *Hispanic Costume 1480-1530*, (New York, Hispanic Society of America, 1979), 205.

## Part 2: What I Did



## Periodness of Materials and Methods at a Glance

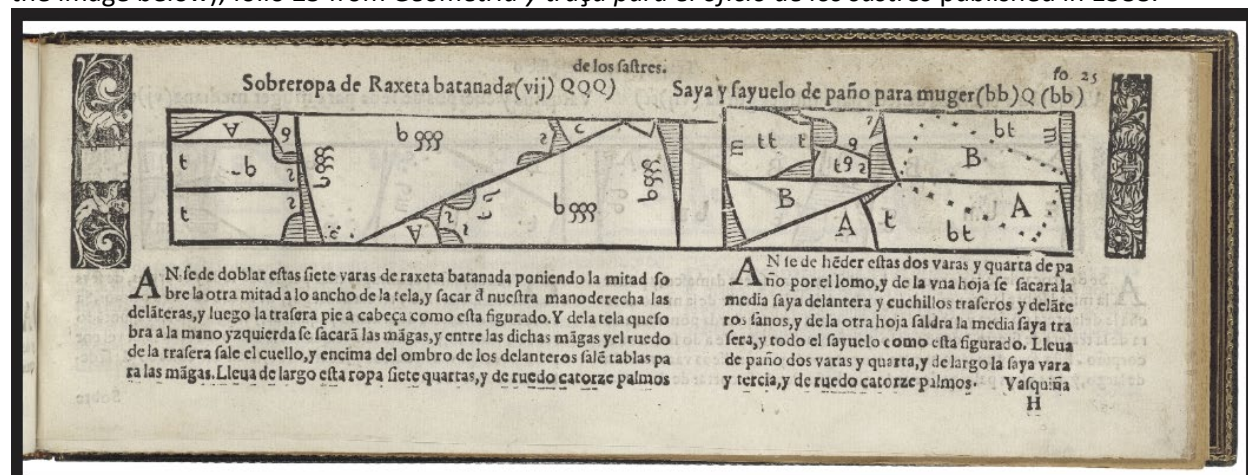
See below for detailed discussion.

Component	What They Used	What I Used	Comments
Fashion Fabric	Wool	Wool	
Lining Fabric	Linen	Linen	
Interlining Fabric	Linen	Linen	
<i>Tiras</i> (decorative fabric strips)	Wool	Wool	
Thread	Unknown	Silk	

Component	Exemplar/Source	Adjustments Made
Bodice Shape	Freyle	
Bodice Construction	Freyle & Eleonora di Toledo extant gown	Installation of lining and integration of layers per Eleonora di Toledo extant.
Skirt Shape	Freyle	Removed train.
Skirt Construction	Freyle & Eleonora di Toledo extant	Left slits at $\frac{3}{4}$ back to match bodice lacing.
Skirt Hem	Freyle, Eleonora di Toledo extant gown & reference image	None.
Sleeve Shape	Freyle	
Sleeve Construction	Red Satin extant sleeve & reference image	Sleevehead is permanently joined to the armscye and gathered slightly as per the reference image
Decorative <i>tiras</i>	Inventories	

## Patterning

The primary pattern reference is Diego de Freyle, *Saya y sayuelo de paño para muger* (seen at right in the image below), folio 25 from *Geometria y traça para el oficio de los sastres* published in 1588.<sup>18</sup>



<sup>18</sup> Diego de Freyle, "Geometria y Traça Para el Oficio de los Sastres", accessed via the Folger Shakespeare Library digital catalog [https://luna.folger.edu/luna/servlet/view/search;JSESSIONID=8b3dce12-3919-4f95-b7e7-a85c7257dd66?search=Search&q=call\\_number%3D%22TT575.F8+1588+Cage%22+LIMIT%3AFOLGERCM1%7E6%7E](https://luna.folger.edu/luna/servlet/view/search;JSESSIONID=8b3dce12-3919-4f95-b7e7-a85c7257dd66?search=Search&q=call_number%3D%22TT575.F8+1588+Cage%22+LIMIT%3AFOLGERCM1%7E6%7E)

My translation and reading of Freyle's text is as follows:

Raw Transcription:

Saya y sayuelo de paño para muger

An se de heder eftas dos varas y quarta de paño por el lomo, y de la vna hoka fe facara la media faya delantera y cuhcillos traferos y delateros fanos y de la otra hoja faldra la media faya traferos, y todo el fayuelo como efa figurado. Lleuva de paño dos varas y quarta, y de largo la faya vara y tertia, y de ruedo catorce palmos.

With corrected spelling:

Saya y sayuelo de paño para mujer

Han se de hacer estas dos varas y quarta de paño por el lomo, y de la una hoja se sacara la media saya delantera y cuchillos traseros y delanteros panos y de la otra hoja faldra la media saya {trafers}, y todo el sayuelo como esta figurado. Lleva de paño dos varas y quarta, y de largo la saya vara y tertia, y de ruedo catorce palmos.

Translation:

*Saya* and *sayuelo* of wool<sup>19</sup> for a woman

You must take two varas and a quarter of wool on the 'spine'<sup>20</sup>, and from one sheet take the middle *saya*<sup>21</sup> front and the back and front 'knives'<sup>22</sup>, and from the other sheet take the middle *saya* back and the entire *sayuelo*<sup>23</sup> as in the picture. Take of wool two varas and a quarter, and the length of the *saya* is a vara and a third, and of the skirt-foot 15 palms.

There are no instructions or construction details – as is typical of manuals such as this. They are intended to illustrate the most efficient cutting layouts, not guide construction or fit. However, even this basic layout can provide key insights about the construction, especially when combined with the reference image:

- **This bodice laces at the  $\frac{3}{4}$  back.** The bodice front and back clearly meet at the  $\frac{3}{4}$  back, rather than at the sides or center back. While this layout might permit a bodice that laces either at the front or the  $\frac{3}{4}$  back, the reference image eliminates any possibility of front lacing: the alignment of the *tiras* simply cannot be so precise with a front closure.

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6&QuickSearchA=QuickSearchA&cic=FOLGERCM1%7E6%7E6&sort=call\_number%2Cmpsortorder1%2Ccd\_title%2Cimprint&pgs=250&res=2

<sup>19</sup> LaPorta, A. *Cloth and Clothing in 16<sup>th</sup> Century Spanish Florida*. Published within *The Modern Maker Vol. 2* by Mathew Gnagy, p. 257.

<sup>20</sup> In this context, spine likely means a fold – as in the spine of a fold. The word is used occasionally throughout Freyle's other layouts, but is not interchangeable with 'doblar' (to fold).

<sup>21</sup> *Saya* is the name of this overall garment. While the literal translation is "dress", I have elected to maintain the use of the proper noun *saya* in this translation to help clarify and delineate versus the use of *sayuelo* later in the text, which can also be translated as 'dress'.

<sup>22</sup> Modernly referred to as gores. This is clear from the layout, and also an easy logical leap as the shape of the gore is similar to the blade of a knife.

<sup>23</sup> *Sayuelo* is a distinct garment type, but used here to indicate the bodice portion of the dress.

- **The shape of the large sleeves and their seams.** These large sleeves are clearly cut as one piece with just one seam, rather than being cut as two halves and joined together with two seams.
- **The shape of the skirt.** The Freyle skirt does not have a train, whereas many Alcega patterns do. It is unclear whether the seated reference image has a train or not. I strongly prefer not to wear one, and so opted to use the pattern without it.
  - **I opted to cut my skirt without gores.** I had enough excess fabric to allow me a pleasing hem width even without the gores. Knowing that the *tiras* as decoration will add complexity, I opted to minimize total seams. We see garments in both Freyle and Alcega cut without gores – an example of goreless construction can be seen at the left of my reference pattern image above.

### The *Bara* Method

All patterning for this project was done using the *bara* method, a unique system of proportional drafting pioneered by Mathew Gnagy. Instead of using measurements per a standard system of measured increments as we do today, the *bara* system creates a series of four different tapes which measure the subject's chest, hips, waist, and height. These tapes are then subdivided: in half, in quarters, and so on. The end result is a tape marked out according to the individual's unique size.<sup>24</sup> Based on the proportionality of the body, patterns can be drafted simply by relying on these ratios.

Creating a *bara* pattern is like redacting a medieval recipe: the writer of the tailor's manual (Freyle, in our case) gives just enough information to get started, but a lot must be determined by trial and error. The dimensions given are marked out on the pattern: in the example from Freyle above, the length of each skirt is a *bara* and a third (represented by *bt*, meaning a *bara* (b) plus a third *bara* (t)). Because we are measuring something most directly proportional to the wearer's height, we will use a height tape for this measurement.

We are also given a waist of *t* or *m*, depending on whether we are looking at the front or back skirt. From Freyle's directions (see previous section), we know that the front must have a waist of width *t*, as it is cut with the gores labeled B and A. The back must have width *m*, as it is cut with the other items. Because these measurements are most directly proportional to the waist, we use the waist tape for this measurement. By connecting our lines, we obtain a to-scale draft of a skirt.

The sleeve proved much more difficult. I started with the relatively comprehensive proportions given in the reference image: we can clearly see that the sleeve at its widest point is equivalent to the waist of the gown, which is an *m* on the waist tape. Continuing to work from the waist tape, we assume a length of *tt* and a wrist width of *t*. However, when mocked up, this was not the right shape – not entirely surprising, considering how much time passed between my dress in the 1520s and Freyle's writings in the 1560s. Using this pattern shape as a base, I adapted it to the unique sleeve style I required.

I widened the sleevehead significantly. I also added an armhole curve – in my experience this is commonly omitted throughout Freyle, as the author assumes anyone using the book will know enough

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<sup>24</sup> See Appendix A, Bara Method for further detail on this system.

to add it. And finally, I made the wrist wider and the slope from the width of the sleeve to its tapered end



smaller.

I mocked up this end result, and found it worked well.

However, I still needed to account for the tied-on nature of the sleeves. From visual examination of the portrait, these sleeves clearly have a separate cuff that is smaller at its end than the sleeve, which is gathered and tied to the cuff. Rather than cutting these separately, I elected to cut the cuff from my sleeve and taper it by sight. The tapered cuff vs. the size of the full sleeve can be seen in the image at right.



The bodice built upon my previous patterning work for a 1510 *saya*. The shape is almost identical, so I used my previous *bara*-based pattern as is. This pattern is designed to fit on top of a supportive sleeveless under-*saya*, the Spanish equivalent of the gown commonly called a kirtle. To achieve this fit, the tapes I used were measured with this kirtle in place. As with previous bodices, I designed my lacing holes to be spiral laced, meaning that the holes themselves are offset. This is seen on the Eleonora di Toledo extant, and has proven effective and comfortable to wear.<sup>25</sup> While the extant bodice had eyelet holes originally worked over metal rings, given the lighter weight of my fabric I elected not to do so.<sup>26</sup>

The only adjustment to my existing pattern was a raising of the v-shaped back of the pattern to make a straight line across my back between the straps. This is seen in the pattern as laid out by Freyle, and will

<sup>25</sup> Arnold, *Patterns of Fashion* 3, 104.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.



hopefully prevent the extremely heavy sleeves from dragging the dress off my shoulders. I did correct a small drafting error from my initial creation of this pattern: I widened one strap at the juncture with the bodice to ensure a consistent thickness throughout, as one shoulder's internal curvature was slightly too steep and made the pattern harder to work with.

### Tiras

The key decorative element of this gown is *tiras*, small strips of fabric that were a common decorative trim in this time period.<sup>27</sup> While *tiras* are widely mentioned in contexts that make clear they are used for decoration, the specifics of how they were made and applied are unknown. There are no extant garments decorated with them. I conjecture that they were cut on the bias, their edges folded under to prevent fraying, and applied to garments with closely spaced slip stitches. The result is crisp lines that cling tightly to the body exactly as in the portraits.

The size and pattern of the *tiras* in this project are copied directly from the reference portrait. To determine size, I used the relative size of the subject's fingers compared to my own. I determined six main sizes of *tiras* in use:

Wide shoulder band: 5/8" width

Thin shoulder band and chest band: 2/8" width

Wide chest band: 6/8" width

Wide skirt vertical bands and sleeve bands: 1" width

Thin skirt vertical bands, sleeve bands, and hem bands: 3/8" width

Large hem bands: 1 1/2" width

I used existing pieces of ribbon I had to check my calculations by laying them up against the bodice:



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<sup>27</sup> Anderson, *Hispanic Costuming*, 205.



Making these was a process of trial and error – my final method is determined simply by my own experience.

## Construction

The construction was directly informed by the funeral gown of Eleonora di Toledo as examined and documented by Janet Arnold.<sup>28</sup> This gown is Italian rather than Spanish, and dates to circa 1562 placing it 42 years after reference image.

Despite these drawbacks, this gown remains an important reference for construction. We have no extant Spanish garments from within the 16th century. We have no descriptions of construction or stitches used. We must rely on what we do have – understanding the drawbacks and cultural differences at play.

To minimize the cultural differences, I rely on the Spanish patterning and styling of the reference images to determine the actual look and shape of the garment. The Eleonora di Toledo extant is used exclusively to determine how the pieces are put together, and with which stitches.

The 42 year time gap is similarly minimized by using the Eleonora di Toledo extant as a reference for the most basic of construction information. There is nothing about the construction of the lining and interlining or stitches not plausible in the 1520s. I have already applied these techniques to a similar dress from the 1510s, and found it to look and feel correct.

The simple construction folds the edges of the exterior fabric around the interlining, and then covers those raw edges with the lining.<sup>29</sup> The skirt is stitched to the bodice directly.<sup>30</sup> The hem is folded under, backed with a reinforcing bias strip, and then the back is covered with a contrasting bias strip (which can also be seen at the hem of the gown in my reference image.<sup>31</sup>

From my research, both the Eleonora di Toledo gown and the gown I am replicating are designed to be worn over supportive undergarments. The Eleonora di Toledo gown was found with a separate bodice underneath the gown, indicative of a supportive underlayer.<sup>32</sup> A proper Spanish lady would similarly always wear multiple layers.<sup>33</sup> A. LaPorta, noted scholar of 16<sup>th</sup> century Spanish Florida, notes the prevalence of “bodied petticoats” in inventories and other documents of that area.<sup>34</sup> I patterned this using the dimensions of my body while wearing the supportive undergarments I have crafted, ensuring a proper fit and not requiring any support within the exterior gown.

## Materials

I used wool for the outer fabric and the decorative *tiras*, linen for the lining and the interlining, and silk for the thread. The Freyle pattern confirmed my suspicion of the exterior fabric: paño translates to wool, indicating this pattern would commonly have been made from wool. I suspected wool already as it was

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<sup>28</sup> Arnold, *Patterns of Fashion*, 102.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> LaPorta, *Cloth and Clothing in 16<sup>th</sup> Century Spanish Florida*, 253.

<sup>34</sup> LaPorta, *Cloth and Clothing in 16<sup>th</sup> Century Spanish Florida*, P. 250-251

commonly used among the middle and upper middle class;<sup>35</sup> it was even found within the inventories of Isabel of Portugal, Empress of Spain, in 1529, indicating its use among the highest status women as well.<sup>36</sup> The reference portrait is a woman of the relatively small town of Girona listening to a sermon. She is unlikely to be as high status as an empress, but she is clearly one of the better dressed women in the portrait overall. That places her as a likely town leader, middle class or upper middle class – exactly the right status to be wearing a fine wool.

I selected a fine twill-woven wool dyed with woad as the base fabric. The *tiras* decorative strips are twill-woven wool dyed black. The lining and interlining are mid-weight linen that I had available from previous projects.

Silk thread is used throughout. While I have not found clear documentation on types of thread, silk is plausible given its known use as a fabric at the time, and available to us as modern garmentcrafters.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> LaPorta, *Cloth and Clothing in 16<sup>th</sup> Century Spanish Florida*, p. 247.

<sup>36</sup> Cremades, “Los Inventarios de Carlos V y la Familia Imperial”, Vol. 2, 1657.

<sup>37</sup> Arnold, *Patterns of Fashion* 3, 102.

## Part 3: Project Journal

## Basic Outline of Steps

1. **Pattern bodice.** Almost identical to the pattern I made for my 1510 *saya*, but with a higher neckline in the back to help keep the larger sleeves up. The Alcega pattern I used for the 1510 *saya* is virtually identical to this pattern from Freyle as well.
2. **Pattern sleeves.** Sleeves pulled directly from *saya de paño para muger* (wool dress for a woman) from Freyle, but adapted to the wider profile used in the 1520s. We can also see from the picture that these sleeves have a separate cuff, into which the end of the sleeve is gathered.
3. **Pattern skirt.** Used the same skirt pattern as for the 1510 *saya*, but with a slightly smaller skirt circumference to allow me to not use gores. With the detailed *tiras* placement, I wanted to minimize the bulk from any extra seams.
4. **Cut out lining.** The bodice front, bodice back, and sleeves all require lining.
5. **Cut out interlining.** The bodice front and bodice back require interlining.
6. **Cut out fashion fabric.** The bodice front, bodice back, sleeves, and skirt all require fashion fabric. Trace the pattern onto the fashion fabric, but cut the fabric slightly larger to allow it to fold over the interlining.
7. **Sew fashion fabric and lining bodice fronts and backs together at shoulder.** Sew the lining front and back and fashion fabric front and back together at the shoulder with a strong backstitch. This will become important for hiding this seam (and therefore making it more durable) later.
8. **Sew fashion fabric over interlining.** Whip stitch. Because this dress will be worn over an existing bodice, there is no pad stitching involved here. Carefully clip the interior neckline and around the armscye curves to allow the fashion fabric to lay flat.
9. **Sew lining over interlining, leaving bodice open at bottom.** Baste the interlining to the fashion fabric. Fold the edges of the lining down so no exposed edges are in place and baste. The bodice should lay mostly flat – if the fashion fabric is too tight on the interlining, it will pull up. While some of this is acceptable (the bodice will stretch back into place once worn), too much indicates that edges have not been properly clipped. Ensure that all corners (especially the bodice front and back inner corners) are tight and crisp; clip corner further if needed. Once all looks right, slip stitch and remove basting stitches. The skirt will eventually be enclosed by the bottom of the bodice.
10. **Make lacing holes in bodice.**
11. **Cut mock up of sleeve.**
12. **Baste sleeve into bodice and check fit.**
13. **Cut tiras.** Strip size is determined by visual reference – e.g. it looks like roughly one finger width. *Tiras* are cut on the bias, as they will need to hug the shape of the body without buckling or bunching. After trial and error, the best method I found is as follows: triple the final width, and add an additional  $\frac{1}{4}$ " of fabric to that. So for a *tiras* of 1" final width, I cut a strip of  $3\frac{1}{4}$ " width. Start by cutting a master bias line – I used a cutting mat with a grid to assist me with this, but did not use a rotary cutter. Scissors do make this process harder. Once your master cut line is in place, rotate your fabric so the cut side is now along the left side of your cutting mat, with the selvage edge at a 45 degree angle. Measure and cut each strip as needed, keeping the most recent cut side aligned with the side of your mat. I measured two points in from the edge of my fabric, and then used my yardstick to connect them. Mark out all your fabric before you cut, and cut with the fabric flat to the table. It's extremely easy to end up uneven. Go slowly, use patience. Small snips are better than large snips.

14. **Iron *tiras* sides to create bias tape.** I created templates to facilitate easy creation of tapes with folds – I used a thin, yet rigid sheet of posterboard and trimmed it to exactly my desired dimension. By keeping it carefully aligned to the grain, I was able to use it as an ironing template for my *tiras*. Iron the entire length of one side, and then the entire length of the other side – this helps reduce the risk of accidental cross-ironing or flattening. For larger *tiras*, I was able to simply iron one side and then iron the other, overlapping the template. For smaller strips, I found it better to cover the already ironed side with my template, and then cross the other side over and iron that.
15. **Sew skirt together, leaving space at the top of the seams.** The space should be roughly 8" to allow for on/off aligned with the quarter back lacing.
16. **Finish edges of the skirt, including the non-sewed edges and the top.** A simple rolled hem works for non-sewed edges. For sewed edges, fold the raw edge over so it's enclosed and hem stitch in place.
17. **Baste *tiras* to skirt at regular intervals, 3 strips on the front and 3 on the back.** I placed one *tiras* directly at the front, one at the back, two covering the side back seams, and two more 2/3 of the way to the back at the front of the skirt. Precision is less important here than with the bodice *tiras*, as the skirt will be gathered and some amount of fudging can be done. It is important to do this before setting the skirt into the bodice as the *tiras* will need to be in place when the bodice bottom encloses the top of the skirt.
18. **Gather skirt and baste in place on bodice.** Check placement of *tiras* before fully sewing them in.
19. **Remove skirt basting and sew *tiras* using slip stitch.**
20. **Sew *tiras* at the side openings as bias binding.**
21. **Sew skirt into bodice, attaching to interlining and covering with lining so no raw edges are visible.**
22. **Enclose wrist ties within cuff wrist seam and sew seam together.**
23. **Enclose wrist ties within sleeve wrist seam and sew seam together.**
24. **Apply *tiras* to cuffs and sleeves, sewing only through the exterior layer of fabric.**
25. **Set sleeve lining into sleeve and cuff.** Leave open at the back seam, but baste all around.
26. **Sew back seam of sleeve together.**
27. **Fold back seam selvedge over and slip stitch down to lining.**
28. **Sew sleeves to armscye, backstitching through all three layers of bodice fabric.** Gather as needed. Keep sleeve seam at ¾ back.
29. **Cover armscye seam on the inside with a strip of bias-cut linen.**
30. **Baste *tiras* in place on bodice and carefully check alignment.**
31. **Sew *tiras* to bodice front and back.** Sew 'edge" (e.g. along the neckline/base, around armholes) *tiras* first. Slipstitch on both sides to allow for most precise placement. *Tiras* do not corner, but rather the ends are hidden by the top and bottom *tiras* (visual reference).
32. **Hem skirt.** Apply running stitch to create 1/8" hem all around.
33. **Cut hem reinforcement fabric.** Cut bias strip of reinforcing fabric 4" wide.
34. **Cut hem binding fabric.** Cut bias strip of contrasting fabric 4 1/2" wide and turn under the edges by ¼" all around.
35. **Slip stitch hem fabric to bottom of hem.**
36. **Running stitch top of hem fabric.**
37. **Apply *tiras* to cover hem stitching.**

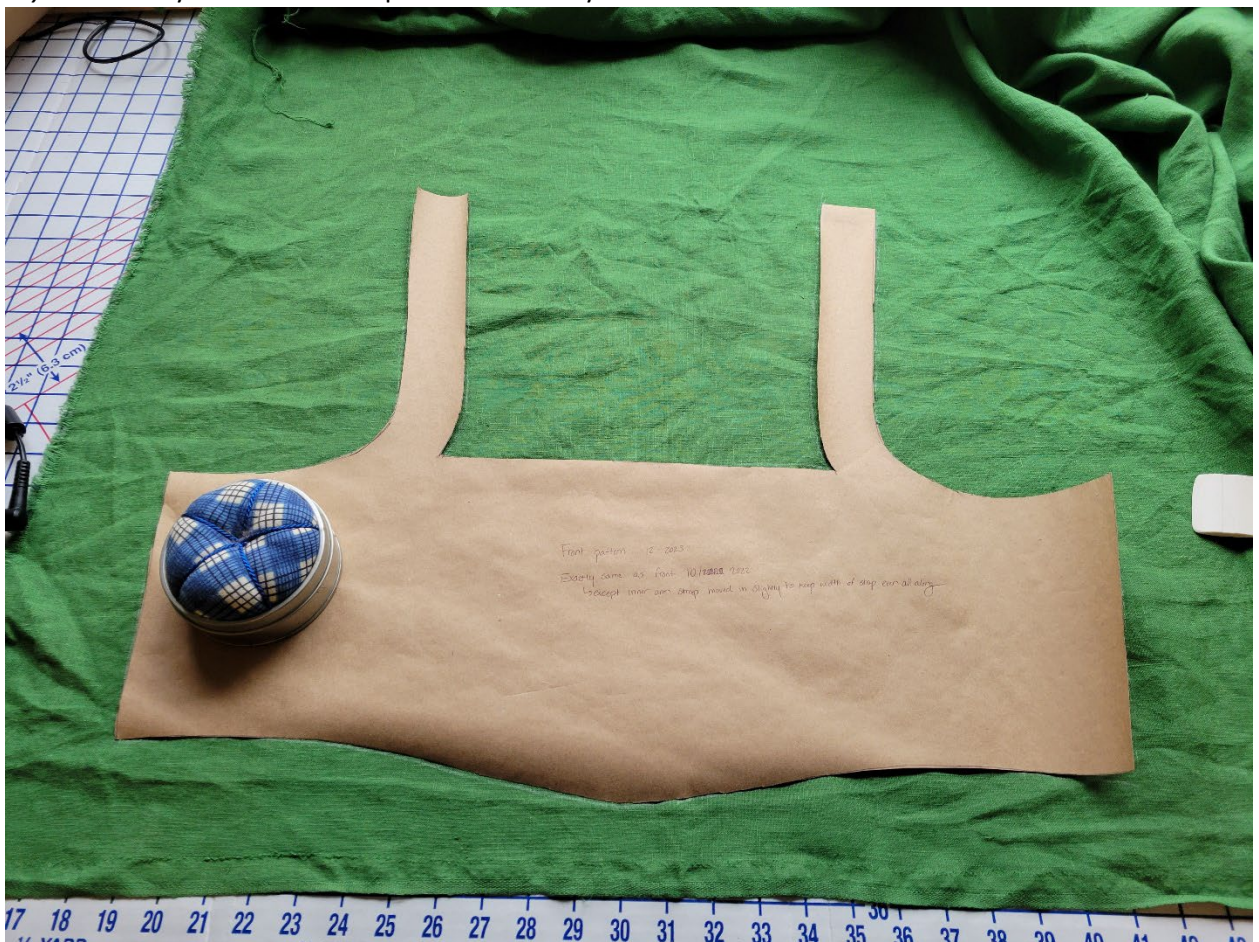


## A Quick Note on Ironing & Basting

I have become a completely devoted ironer and baster. I iron everything, and I baste everything using long, loose stitches to hold it together before I sew. Repeating instructions to press or baste would quickly grow tiresome here; Assume that if I'm going to sew a seam, I've basted it. Assume that if I basted a seam in preparation to sew, I'm going to press that seam down before I stitch. And assume that if I just sewed a seam, I am going to press it open.

## Step Detailer

1. **Pattern bodice.** Almost identical to the pattern I made for my 1510 *saya*, but with a higher neckline in the back to help keep the larger sleeves up. The Alcega pattern I used for the 1510 *saya* is virtually identical to this pattern from Freyle as well.



6. **Cut out fashion fabric.** The bodice front, bodice back, sleeves, and skirt all require fashion fabric. Trace the pattern onto the fashion fabric, but cut the fabric slightly larger to allow it to fold over the interlining.
7. **Sew fashion fabric and lining bodice fronts and backs together at shoulder.** Sew the lining front and back and fashion fabric front and back together at the shoulder with a strong backstitch. This will become important for hiding this seam (and therefore making it more durable) later.
8. **Sew fashion fabric over interlining.** Ensure the needle passes between the fashion fabric and the lining – there should be no visible stitching on the outside of the garment. Slip stitch or whip stitch (I attempted to whip stitch, but kept reverting to slip stitch because it's pretty). Because this dress will be worn over an existing bodice, there is no pad stitching involved here. Carefully clip the interior neckline and around the armseye curves to allow the fashion fabric to lay flat. Detail of the clipped armseye stitched down can be seen at the right.
9. **Sew lining over interlining, leaving bodice open at bottom.** Baste the interlining to the fashion fabric. Fold the edges of the lining down so no exposed edges are in place and baste. The bodice should lay mostly flat – if the fashion fabric is too tight on the interlining, it will pull up. While some of this is acceptable (the bodice will stretch back into place once worn), too much indicates that edges have not been properly clipped. Ensure that all corners (especially the bodice front and back inner corners) are tight and crisp; clip corner further if needed. Once all looks right, slip stitch and remove basting stitches. The skirt will eventually be enclosed by the bottom of the bodice. Detail of slip stitching the lining can be seen at right.
10. **Cut mock up of sleeve.**
11. **Make lacing holes in bodice.** I prefer to do my lacing holes using buttonhole stitch. As with my other gowns, the holes are offset from each other, with each hole on the back of the gown lower than the corresponding hole in the front. I first mark out my lacing hole sites with tailor's chalk. I don't measure them exactly, just making sure that they are offset and far enough away from the edge of my bodice that I don't expect to puncture any stitching. I then baste the lining down, ensuring that nothing will shift as I'm





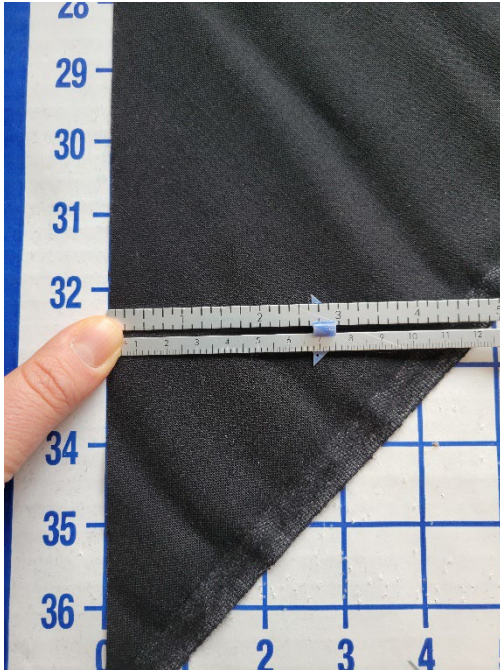
working. I press through the fabric with an awl until the hole is sufficiently large. In this case I opted for particularly large holes, as I want to attach aglets to my lacing cord eventually and have found that smaller holes can be challenging to navigate with commercially available aglets. I then whip stitch around the opening, re-pushing the awl through as needed to keep the hole open. A whip stitched hole ready for the next step is seen at right. Once the whip stitching is complete, I follow with buttonhole stitching. I pierce from the outside of the button hole in, and then loop my thread around and pull the excess out. A buttonhole in process is seen at right. Note how closely the thread encloses the edge of the hole, and how the needle points toward the inside of the hole.



12. **Baste sleeve into bodice and check fit.**

13. **Cut tiras.** Strip size is determined by visual reference – e.g. it looks like roughly one finger width. *Tiras* are cut on the bias, as they will need to hug the shape of the body without buckling or bunching. After trial and error, the best method I found is as follows: triple the final width, and add an additional  $\frac{1}{4}$ " of fabric to that. So for a *tiras* of 1" final width, I cut a strip of  $3\frac{1}{4}$ " width. Start by cutting a master bias line – I used a cutting mat with a grid to assist me with this, but did not use a rotary cutter. Scissors do make this process harder. Once your master cut line is in place, rotate your fabric so the cut side is now along the left side of your cutting mat, with the selvage edge at a 45 degree angle. Measure and cut each strip as needed, keeping the most recent cut side aligned with the side of your mat. I measured two points in from the edge of my fabric, and then used my yardstick to connect them. Mark out all your fabric before you cut, and

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15. **Sew skirt together, leaving space at the top of the seams.** The space should be roughly 8" to allow for on/off aligned with the quarter back lacing.



16. **Finish edges of the skirt, including the non-sewed edges and the top.** A simple rolled hem works for non-sewed edges. For sewed edges, fold the raw edge over so it's enclosed and hem stitch in place.



17. **Baste *tiras* to skirt at regular intervals, 3 strips on the front and 3 on the back.** I placed one *tiras* directly at the front, one at the back, two covering the side back seams, and two more 2/3 of the way to the back at the front of the skirt. Precision is less important here than with the bodice *tiras*, as the skirt will be gathered and some amount of fudging can be done. It is important to do this before setting the skirt into the bodice as the *tiras* will need to be in place when the bodice bottom encloses the top of the skirt.
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26. **Sew back seam of sleeve together.**
27. **Fold back seam selvedge over and slip stitch down to lining.**

28. **Sew sleeves to armscye, backstitching through all three layers of bodice fabric.** Gather as needed. Keep sleeve seam at  $\frac{3}{4}$  back.
29. **Cover armscye seam on the inside with a strip of bias-cut linen.**
30. **Baste *tiras* in place on bodice and carefully check alignment.**
31. **Sew *tiras* to bodice front and back.** Sew 'edge' (e.g. along the neckline/base, around armholes) *tiras* first. Slipstitch on both sides to allow for most precise placement. *Tiras* do not corner, but rather the ends are hidden by the top and bottom *tiras* (visual reference).
32. **Hem skirt.** Apply running stitch to create  $\frac{1}{8}$ " hem all around.
33. **Cut hem reinforcement fabric.** Cut bias strip of reinforcing fabric 4" wide.
34. **Cut hem binding fabric.** Cut bias strip of contrasting fabric  $4 \frac{1}{2}$ " wide and turn under the edges by  $\frac{1}{4}$ " all around.
35. **Slip stitch hem fabric to bottom of hem.**
36. **Running stitch top of hem fabric.**
37. **Apply *tiras* to cover hem stitching.**



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Predicación de Santa Magdalena en Marsella by Pere Mates, circa 1526 held by the Museu Tresor de la Catedral de Girona

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## Part 5: Appendix