

# The Spanish Jacket

## Style background

Hispano-Flemish style generally describes a period of Spanish art from the late 15<sup>th</sup> to the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. The term, which has expanded to include fashion, architecture, and other decorative elements as well as painting, reflects the tangle of cultural influences between Spain and Flanders. It is not clear from which direction the influence originated; however, many of the notable Spanish painters of the era, such as Luis Dalmau, Pedro Berruguete, and Juan de Flandes either traveled to or were themselves from Flanders.

Geographically speaking, Hispano-Flemish style was particularly popular in Castile and León. This may be due to the

Another synonym for Hispano-Flemish style is “Isabelline style,” which indicates that the style is characteristic of the reign of Isabella I of Castile (1484-1504). However, this term is falling out of favour due to some confusion with the later Isabelline style tied to the reign of Isabella II (1833-68). Despite the association with a specific ruler, Hispano-Flemish style didn’t cease to exist the moment Isabella I died; the style was adopted and modified, and eventually blended into the more commonly recognized styles of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

## Some vocabulary

As with the overarching style, there are various terms used to describe the article of clothing we’ll be discussing. Carmen Bernis, the formidable Spanish clothing historian, refers to pretty much every short jackety Spanish thing as a *gonete*. Ruth Anderson, on the other hand, divides the class of jackety-things into more specific subgroups, the names of which may or may not reflect what the actual people wearing them would have called them. Anderson refers to:

*Cos*: “Waist”. A short, fitted jacket with a short peplum or skirts.

*Corpecico*: another short waist. The word probably comes from the Spanish “corpino”, or body.

*Gonete*: a fitted waist with a peplum

*Saino/sayno/sayuelo*: a waist with a long, knee-length peplum

Although Anderson subdivides the garments, the names she uses seem to be used almost interchangeably in the various wardrobe accounts; for example, the garment shown in the first three illustrations in this handout is referred to as both a *cos*, a *corpecico*, and a *gonete*. It’s likely that the words were regional terms, or that they were similar in the way that the words “dress”, “frock” and “gown” are similar (perhaps they all mean “that little jackety thing the Queen wears over her gowns”).

Just to keep some consistency, I tend to default to Carmen Bernis and call all of these things a *gonete*.

## A description

*Gonetes* tend to be fairly fitted throughout the torso, with fitted sleeves and square necklines. They appear to open down the center front and may be fastened with pins or hidden hooks. None of the images appear to have lacing rings or eyelets. They all seem to be worn either with a separate petticoat in a matching or complementary colour, or over the fitted gowns common at the time. There is no noticeable class distinction; *gonetes* are found both in paintings of household attendants and in the wardrobe accounts of Queens.

Common fabrics included velvet, *cebtí* and *ceti* (silks), brocade, wool, satin, taffeta, and linen. They're found in a huge variety of colors and decoration styles. Isabella's wardrobe accounts list 44 black velvet and 25 crimson *cebtí gonetes*. *Cebtí* was her favorite fabric (66 garments) followed closely by velvet (61), satin (39), brocade (21), and wool (1). She shows a definite preference for black (80 garments) and crimson (57), but she also owned *gonetes* in mulberry, green, white, brown, tawny, and blue.

There is also a wealth of information on embellishment of these garments. The Spanish were, by contemporary accounts, extremely fond of using huge quantities of gold and lavish embroidery. Some examples from Anderson:

"A *cos* of tawny *ceti* was embroidered with points, with "Ps" (for Phelipe) [ed. Note Phillip the Handsome, husband of Queen Juana], and with leaves of gold."

"839 little shells stamped from hammered gold for a *cos* of black velvet lined with Holland [fine linen]"

"A waist of rose brocade, figured in darker rose...the peplum...carries a narrow border of white picked out with black (Arabic letters?) and hung with gold tassels."

On to the garments! Let's take a look at a few images.



1489-1495.

Rodrigo Alemán. *Mujer hilando*. Reprinted in *Trajes y modas*.

This first picture is at the early end of Hispano-Flemish style. You can see the hem of the *gonete* stopping at the woman's high hip; the band around the waist is probably a cloth sash that would be knotted decoratively at the front. It also looks like this *gonete* has short fitted sleeves that end above her elbow. The great folds of fabric below that edge is the sleeve of her *camisa* (shift). Although it's not distinct, it's probable that the jacket has a square neckline; we'll see that neckline on other garments.

The next two images are a full-length and a detail shot of the same image – *The Nativity of Our Lady* by Pedro Berruguete. We're particularly interested in the attendant at the front, in the crimson *gonete* and tucked skirt.





Gonete. 1490-1500.

Pedro Berruguete. *Nativity of Our Lady*. Detail reprinted in *Trajes y modas*.

The detail gives us a better idea of what's going on. Here you can see the fitted body and sleeves, and the same short-skirted peplum that is present in other images. This *gonete* has long sleeves that are split and tied along the lower seam to expose the full *camisa* sleeves underneath, while the square neckline is low enough to show off the embroidered neckline of the *camisa*. The paint texturing gives the impression that this is made from velvet, and is most likely embroidered with gold thread at the neckline and edges.



Gonete. 1502.

Juan Gascó. *Saint*. Reprinted in *Trajes y modas*.

This *gonete* has the characteristic fitted body and square neckline, but there are some notable differences between this and earlier garments. The garment appears to have no waist seam; you can see the fabric pulling just below the breasts, which may indicate that no additional fabric was added at the side seams to give more shaping. Another difference is the sleeves; whereas earlier *gonete* tended to have tight sleeves to the wrist or elbow, this garment has wider sleeves that are most likely longer than the wearer's arm.

Lest you think it's just the Spanish, it looks like the Basques got in on the action, too. The following images are from an anonymous French manuscript of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.





## **Bibliography**

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## **For more information on Hispano-Flemish style**

Gothic Painting in Spain. [http://www.wga.hu/tours/spain/p\\_14\\_15.html](http://www.wga.hu/tours/spain/p_14_15.html)

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