Cockatrice

The Lochac
Arts and Sciences Magazine

A Possible Pattern for a 16th century Florentine Sottana — Part One
by La Signora Onorata Katerina da Brescia

In this second article on Florentine tailoring, I concentrate on possible patterns used in the middle 16th Century by Florentine Tailors, specifically for the falda (skirt) and imbusto (bodice). Firstly, it is most important to study the fashions.

Style and Fashion

The typical sottana (petticoat/dress) that was fashionable in the mid 16th century (1540-1560) consisted of a wide, square neckline with narrow 'shoulder straps'. The waistline varies during the 16th century, from the higher waisted 1530's slowly lowering to on or just below the waist by the mid 1500's. Originally the waistline was straight. During the 1540's there was a slight curve to the front of the waistline. By the 1550's the waistline was beginning to peak at the front. This became popular from the 1560's onwards. Pleating varied from flat pleating to cartridge pleating and returned more commonly to flat pleating by the 1540s. This can be seen in Figs 1, 2 and 3.

In the 1540's Bronzino portrait of Eleanora d' Toledo and her son, (Figure 5, at right) we can already see the formation of Eleanora's favourite outfit which consisted of the sottana with narrow sleeves (sometimes in panes) with mimimal baragoni, more like pleated ribbons at the top. This was often worn under a zimmarra (turkish inspired loose gown) especially into the 1550's. It is not very surprising that the sleeve became more slender in order to fit under the zimmarra. (Figure 4)

Figure 5

Extant Examples and Pattern Books

Extant Florentine sottana and contemporary pattern books give insight into possible patterns used during the mid 16th century. The following patterns are based mainly on the two available extant Florentine sottana: one being Eleanora d'Toledo's burial dress (Fig 6 - next page, top right) and another from Pisa (assumed to be Eleanora's) seen in Figure 7. There are discussions on these found in La Moda a Firenze and Patterns of Fashion and of the Red Pisa dress in L'abito della Granduchessa. This book deals with extant Florentine sottana found in the Meuseo Nazionale de Palazzo Reale in Pisa and their restoration.
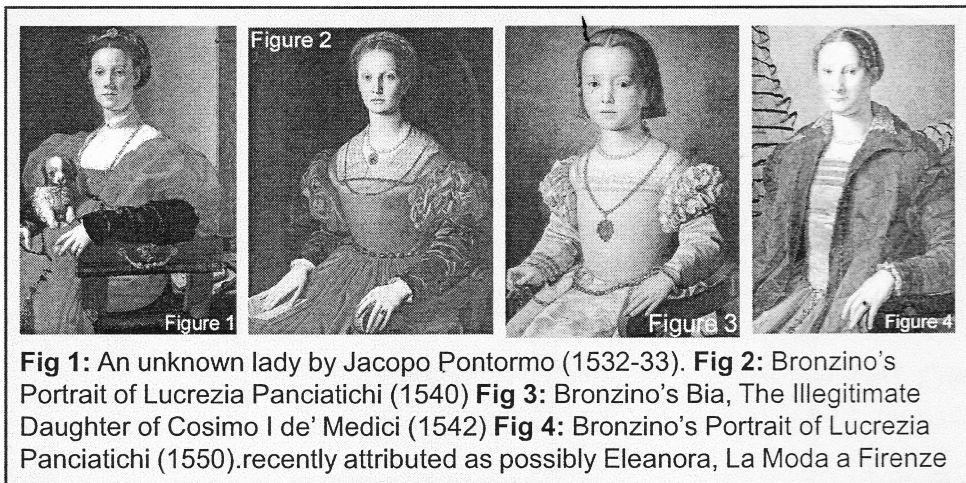
Fig 1: An unknown lady by Jacopo Pontormo (1532-33). **Fig 2:** Bronzino's Portrait of Lucrezia Panciatichi (1540) **Fig 3:** Bronzino's Bia, The Illegitimate Daughter of Cosimo I de' Medici (1542) **Fig 4:** Bronzino's Portrait of Lucrezia Panciatichi (1550).recently attributed as possibly Eleanora, La Moda a Firenze

Maniche (sleeves) were originally voluminous with large baragoni (uppersleeve) being very popular in the 1530's. The lower half of the sleeve was more fitted and could be of a different colour, material or decoration. (Figure 1 and 2).

By the late 1540's, the baragoni had become smaller until the sleeve had become sleeker with very minimal baragoni, sometimes just a nominal decoration. (Figure 7).

There are a few sources for contemporary drawings of 16th century patterns in use by European tailors:

a.. Il Libro del Sarto (Milanese Tailor's Handbook (Italian, written during 1570s)
b.. Alcega's Tailor's Pattern Book. (Spanish, 1589)
c.. Geometria y traca para el oficio de los sastres by Diego de Freyle's (1588). this is held

at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington DC. Some scans of plates are available on The Renaissance Tailor website.

Unfortunately these are from the middle to late 16th century. To date, I have not found pattern books specifically by Florence tailors or extant examples of an earlier 16th century Florentine sottana.

Looking at the layout of Eleanora's burial dress (Figure 6, top right), it shows what appears to be seam lines, which may indicate the pattern used at the time (1562). By this time, the front waistline was peaked. This is similar in style to 'kirtles' found in Juan Alcega's Tailor's Pattern Book (Fig 8, left side of third row, at right), which provides contemporary patterns for various outfits. This can be supported by extrapolated patterns found in L'abito della Granduchessa. Figure 7a shows one of the designs given for the pattern of the Red Pisa sottana.

As Eleanora was Spanish, it is a possibility that with her arrival in Florence, fashions would inherit a Spanish influence and that Eleanora's tailor may use a Florentine-modified version of a Spanish pattern. This may explain the changes in waistline, skirt pattern and sleeve fashion, as well as the similarities reflected in the Spanish and Florentine patterns. The authors of La Moda a Firenze suggest that Eleanora did modify her Spanish tastes towards those of Florence. Eleanor married Cosimo d' Medici in 1539 and resided in Florence. She died in 1562. The Medici used the same tailor Mastro Agostino, during Eleanora's time in Florence. (La Moda a Firenze p26). It is not unreasonable to surmise that patterns could have remained consistent during this time.

Patterns

The extant sottana available to us are just after mid 1500's. The available contemporary drawn patterns are from the later 16th century. This suggests that this pattern was still relevant a few decades later. Conversely, it is not unreasonable to propose that patterns were in use decades earlier than the printed patterns.

This gives a possible documented time line of the middle to late 16th century, with patterns being able to be adapted for sottana at the
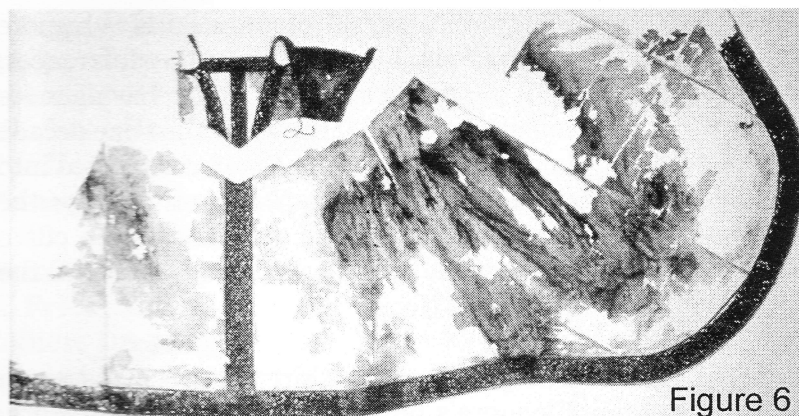
Figure 6
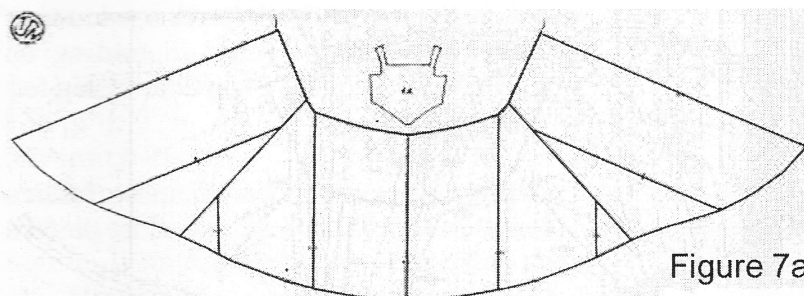
Figure 7a

f.60 Kirtle and low-cut bodice[4] of cloth rash[5] for a woman.
Figure 8
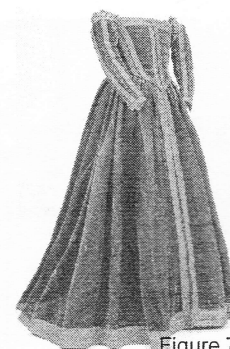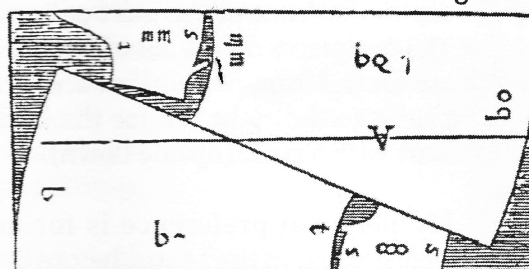
Figure 7
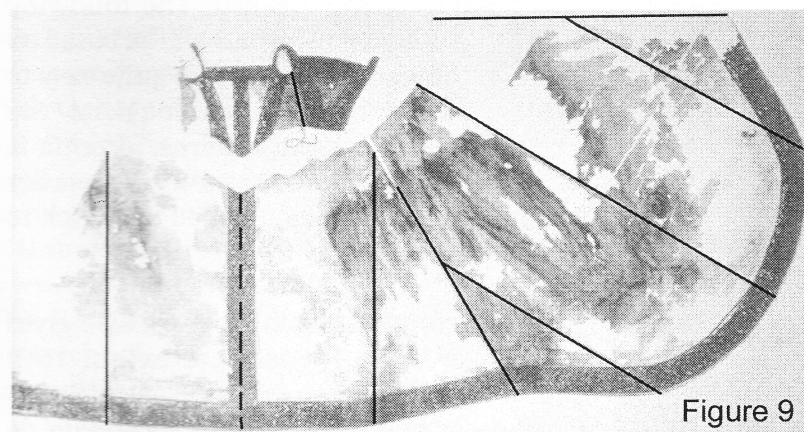
Figure 9

beginning of Eleanora's Florence of the 1540's for sottana with pleated skirts which look very similar in shape to those of the 1560's.

La Moda a Firenze provides us with a picture of Eleanora di Toledo's burial gown, after restoration. (Figure 9) and L'abito della Granduchessa shows various extrapolated patterns from the Red Pisa sottana (Figure 7a). The burial gown conveniently has all the parts of the dress displayed separately, showing how it was patterned.

Falda (Skirt)

Prior to the 1540's, Florentine skirts were more voluminous. Figure 1 shows the differences, with the 1530's and early 1540s, having more material pleated at the waist. Just one decade later, there is much less material pleated into the waistline (Figure 3). Figure 2 shows the transtition to a lower waistline with a curve towards the more peaked front, as seen in the Pisa dress (figure 7).

The pieces of the skirt pattern can seen in Eleanora's burial gown, made more clearly visible in Figure 9. (The dotted line can either be a seam or on the fold, depending on material width.) and in Figure 7a, with a few extra pieces added.

Looking further afield, the Milanese Tailor's Handbook f 94V has a similar skirt pattern as seen in figure 10.
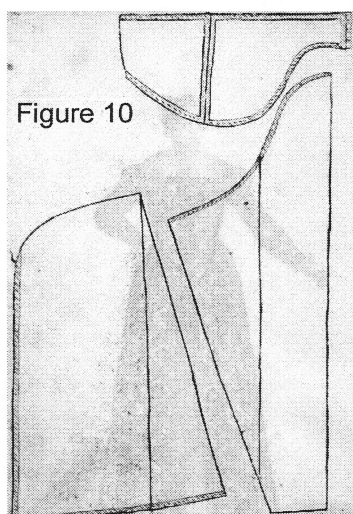
Figure 10

Figure 10a

This is also a later fashion, so there is a peaked bodice (imbusto) giving a dip to the front of the skirt pattern. The two pieces on the left of figure 10 are for the front of the skirt. The two pieces to the right are for the back skirt with a train (upside down).

My personal preference is for an earlier dress of the 1540s, before the bodice was peaked. The following patterns and layouts will be based on this ealier fashion. It is quite easy to adjust my patterns back to the available visual patterns, for sottana of the later part of the 16th century. For earlier fashions, the skirt is lengthened to attatch to a shorter bodice.

Note: L'abito della Granduchessa also gives a glimpse of an incomplete extant 16th century (exact dates not given) Tuscan linen/wool dress from the Meuseo Nazionale de Palazzo Reale in Pisa. This shows a curved waistline (Figure 10a). Interestingly, this sottana has a more simple skirt (possibly middle class sottana, assumed from the lack of decoration, materials used and simpler pattern) with four rectangles for the skirt pattern, pleated into the dress. So this is indeed a valid option for a Tuscan skirt of the 16th century.

Using Eleanora's burial dress and Alcega's layouts, a similar skirt pattern can be made. Another aspect of pattern use is the economical use of available material, which was expensive. Together, this could give the following pattern layout seen in Figure 11. (The shaded area can be used to cut the sleeves or bodice.) The size of each piece will depend on how tall you are, the size of the skirt and how you are attaching it to the bodice. The length of the front, back and side gores (a) are the height of the skirt (bodice to floor) plus the hem and waistband seam. If you want a train, then the length (a) for the back b would be longer, adding the train length.

The final width of the skirt (at the top, with all pieces joined) = (b)+(i+j). I generally make about 3-4 times the waist measurement, as I commonly use a flat square? knife pleat. I make the top of the back skirt (back waist) is generally 4 times the of the back bodice waist measurement (b). This is used to give a measurement to fit a pleated skirt into the bottom of the bodice. This may require adding other 'panels' at the front or back of the skirt, to make this measurement. This works well with 140cm modern width materials. In Figure 11, I have added a second front a, as I prefer the earlier, more pleated waistline.

The beauty of this skirt pattern layout is that it can be easily adapted to differing material widths by making each panel narrow or wider or inserting another.

Putting it Together:

The 2 side gores (d) attach to the front panels (a). Alcega promotes matching bias edges with selvage edges, as this as it will reduce the drop of the skirt and give less stretch on the seams. This can be done by spinning the back triangular gusset (c), so that the edge (f) is pinned to (g) on the side of the back panel. The front gusset d is flipped so that the bias edge (h) is pinned to the front side selvage. This can be seen in Figure 12.

This gives a skirt with a wide hem width, less bulk to sew in at the waist and very economical use of material. (I used at least 1.5 m less than I would have used on my 'standard' skirts of 3 to 4 panels of material sewn into a tube). This would also give the maximum visible amount of material (conspicuous consumption) within the bounds of any contemporary sumptuary laws on material consumption or modern money constraints.

In this pattern, there will be one section that

has the material pattern upside down. If modern sensibilities mean you cannot do this, then you will need to recut another section and use more material. I do not bother, as this is not visible when wearing the skirt. Examples of pattern reversal can also be seen in Patterns of Fashion.

Attaching the falda to the imbusto:

This will depend on the specific time and area of the desired outfit. Skirts can be attached by cartridge pleating, box or knife pleating. Earlier skirts (pre 1540's) appear to be flat pleated (Figure 1) or cartridge pleated (Figure 2). Most Florentine skirts in portraits, after the 1540's, appear to have a form of flat pleating (Figures 3, 4, 5, 6 and 10a)

The Red Pisa sottana was restored with possible cartridge pleating. However, the bodice was also restored in a very interesting fashion (L'Abito della Granduchessa) that is inconsistent with other contemporary extant sottana, 16th century Italian or Spanish pattern books. This is also inconsistent with most of the portraits of the 1550's and 1560's, which are contemporary to the Red Pisa sottana. So this is an anomaly that requires further investigation and shows the care we must take when assessing research done by textile restorers, just as we must take care when assessing restored paintings.

Definitions:

Armschythe: armhole curve of the imbusto pattern
Baragoni: puffy top half of the sleeve.
Falda - Italian for skirts
Imbusto - bodice/ body of the sottana, covering the chest and shoulders.
Maniche: sleeve
Sottana: (petticoat). This was originally the underdress, in earlier 16thC, later being more popularly being the dress worn on its own.
Toile: pattern made by draping material over the body or mannequin, shaping it to the desired pattern.
Zimmarra: a loose gown worn over the sottana. This was originally based on the Turkish coats.

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The Renaissance Tailor: Diego de Freyle's patten book. http://www.vertetsable.com/research_freyle.htm

back b, CB; front a, CF; front a; front gusset d; back gusset c; Figure 11

Figure 12

La Singora Onorata Katerina da Brescia is an Italian noblewoman in the 16thC. She was born in Brescia, escaping an arranged marriage, she became a Privateer. Having made her fortune and lived in Ferrara for a short time, she is now 'retired' in Fiorenze (Florence). She lives the life of a noble woman, married a younger man and has a beautiful daughter. Katerina is also known as Black Kat. Though she is retired from the Privateer life, she has retained ownership of her privateer ship The Gardian, berthed at the Port of Innilgard. *Karen Carlisle* is an optometrist. She is married to a younger man and has a beautiful daughter and way too little time for all of her interests.
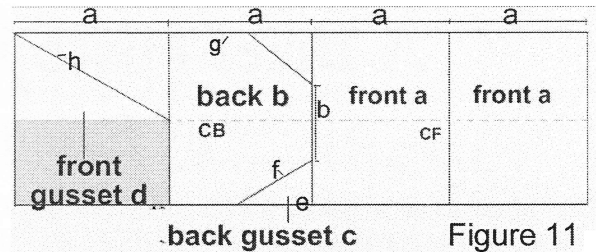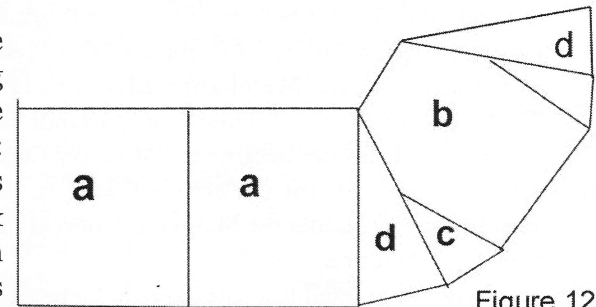
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ix Janet Backhouse et.al [eds] (1984) The Golden Age of Anglo-Saxon Art (Bloomington: Indiana University Press.) 94

x The 24 Hour Museum Trail: Anglo-Saxon Sundial http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/programmes/peoplesmuseum/week1_15.shtml Accessed 12th March 2007

xi Babylonian hours are a 24-hour cycle, with sunrise at 0 and 24 the sunrise the following day. Bohemian hours are also a 24 hour cycle, with sunset at 0, and 24 at sunset the following day. Common hours are 12 hour cycles, two a day. One begins at midday and ends at midnight, while the other runs from midnight to the following midday. This is an hour scale still used today with analogue 12-hour dial clocks. Planetary hours were important for astrologers and doctors who were guided by the influence of the zodiac and other important stars to determine what to do with their day.

xiiFor more information, see Gouk (1988) 18-19

xiii Penelope Gouk (1988) The Ivory Sundials of Nuremberg, 1500-1700 (Cambridge: Whipple Museum of the History of Science) 87

xiv Gouk (1988) 108

xv Frank Cousins (1970) Sundials (New York: Pica Press) 45 and Astronomical and Navigational Instruments at the National Maritime Museum http://www.nmm.ac.uk/collections/displayRepro.cfm?AST 0462 http://www.nmm.ac.uk/collections/displayRepro.cfm?AST 0339 Accessed 12th March 2007

xvi Cousins (1970) 47

xvii Hester Higton (2001) Sundials: An Illustrated History of Portable Dials (London: National Maritime Museum) 113

xviii Gouk (1988) 87

xix Higton (2001) 113-5 and Gouk (1988) 114

xx Gouk (1988) 87

xxi King (1993) VI 125

xxii For 19th century examples of such simple Islamic sundials, see David Bryden (1988) Sundials and Related Instruments (Cambridge: Whipple Museum of the History of Science) part 12, section 2.

A Possible Pattern for a 16th century Florentine Sottana - Part Two
by La Signora Onorata Katerina da Brescia

In this second part on Florentine patterns, I concentrate on possible patterns used for maniche (sleeves) and imbusto (bodice) of the middle 16thC by Florentine Tailors.

Imbusto (bodice)

Again, both Eleanora's burial sottana (figure 9) and Alcega's pattern book give us the closest to documented contemporary evidence outside of portraits and extant examples. The Red Pisa sottana (Figure 7) has very similar pattern construction to that of Eleanora's burial sottana. (La Moda a Firenze).

Both extant sottana have side back lacings (spiral),

Figure 7

wide necklines, thin shoulder straps, a peaked front, being higher at the back. The waistline was approximately at the natural waist level. Janet Arnold has drafted a pattern for this sottana, in her book Patterns of Fashion. From the extant dress, the following basic imbusto pattern can be drawn (Figure 13). An imbusto pattern, from L'Abito della Granduchessa, of the Red Pisa sottana is very similar in appearance. A third extant 16th century sottana, found in Pisa, is more consistent with the slightly
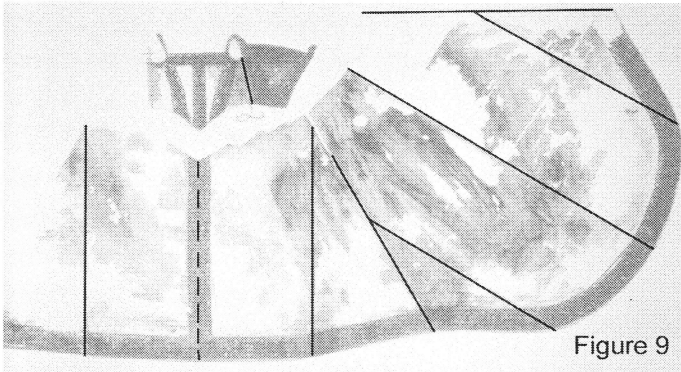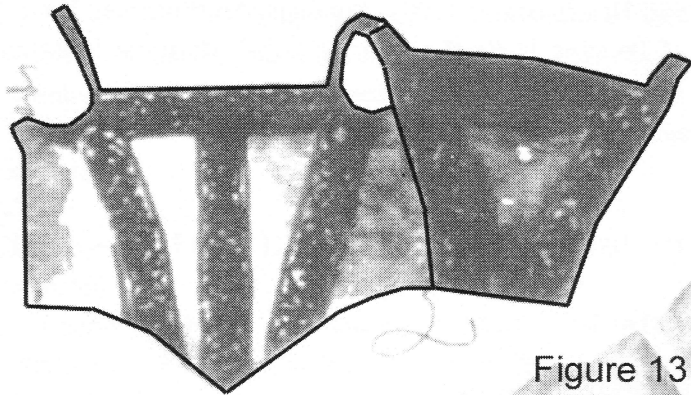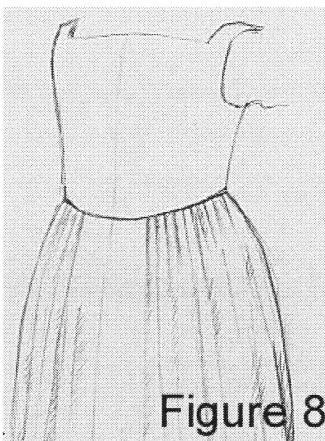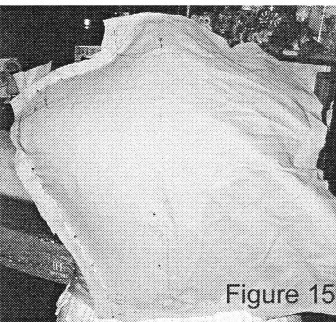
Figure 9

Figure 13

Figure 8

Figure 14

Figure 15

Figure 16

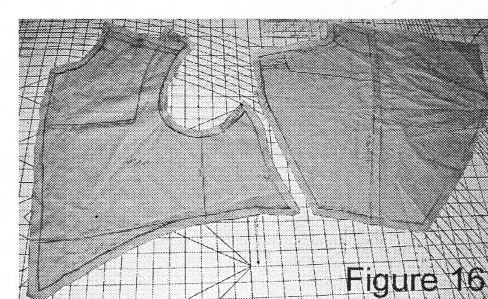14a   Silk doublet[1] for a woman, from open silk[4].

Figure 17

earlier portraits of 1540s or possibly a middle class sottana. This can be found in L'Abito della Granduchessa seen redrawn in Figure 8. This shows a more rounded front to the waistline at the natural waistline, at the back, and slightly lower, at the front.

Making a Toile/ Pattern for Imbusto

I find the best way to obtain a properly fitting pattern for the bodice, is to make a toile. Making a toile involves draping material over the body (you will need a helper) or a mannequin, to make a pattern. I usually start with the back, to get a smooth line up to the neck, then the front and over the shoulder. This allows me to realign the back, drawing in the lines of the sottana to make a pattern. then cutting away the excess to drape the shoulder and neck more accurately. Examples of toiles can be seen in Figure 14 (front), figure 15 (back) and the final pattern in Figure 16.

Maniche (Sleeve)

After the 1530's, the sleeve became more slender, later having a much smaller baragoni (sleeve top). Decorations abound, including structural changes, slashing and panelling. However the basic sleeve remains relatively narrow.

Documentable sleeve patterns are less certain for mid 16th century Florence. Eleanora's burial sottana did not have sleeves for study; the Red Pisa sottana does. However I have only recently seen discussions or drawings based on patterns used for the Red Pisa sottana. These can be found in L'Abito della Granduchessa (p30, 40).

Looking into the pattern books available to us, we see that Alcega has a narrow sleeve pattern for a doublet f14a (figure 17) which was initially the closest I could find to the ones of the Red Pisa sottana and visual evidence from portraits. This shows a slender, curved, two piece pattern with a shallow sleeve (convex) head. A flatter, less modern sleeve head is supported by the patterns in L'Abito della Granduchessa (redrawn in Figure 18a) showing a flatter sleeve head shape (concave) but a one piece sleeve as found in contemporary Florentine male sleeve patterns available from extant items (figure 18).

Patterns of Fashion has discussion on male extant Florentine garments. The pattern for Don Garzia's doublet (1562) sleeve can be seen in Figure 18.
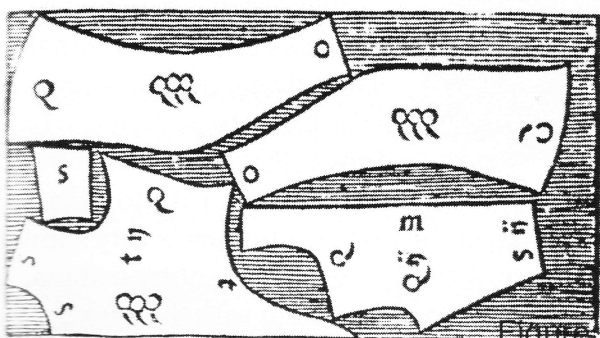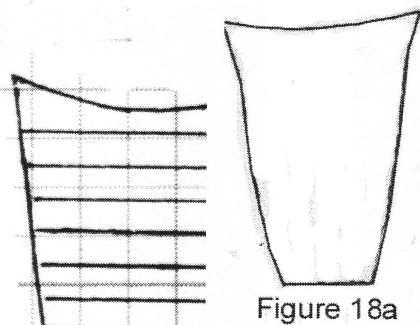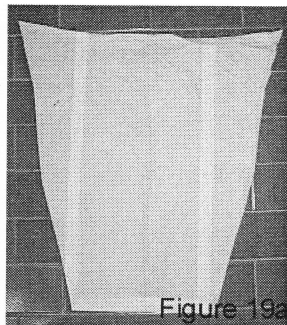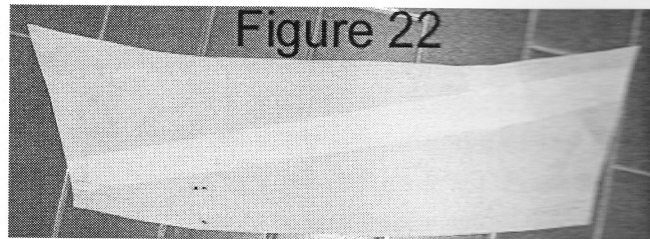
Figure 18a

Figure 19a

Figure 22

This pattern is a one piece pattern, again with a shallow sleeve head. The head is curved in an 'S' pattern similar to modern sleeves, unlike that of the Red Pisa dress. The male garment Florentine sleeve fits more easily to a more modern imbusto, with narrower neckline with the shoulders in a more modern position, on the shoulders.

My current sleeve pattern is based my more recent information gained from L'Abito della Granduchessa (Figure 18a) and can be seen in Figure 19a. This fits best on a very wide neckline with the shoulders sitting off the tip of the shoulder, with the sleeve seam lining up with the side back lacing of the imbusto.

Patterns can be developed, from the basic sleeve. Panelled sleeves could look like figure 20 (based on the latest sleeve pattern Figure 19a). Small, 1550's baragoni (sleeve heads) can be as simple as extending the top of the pattern and folding over to form 'loops' as seen in Figure 21 (based on my old pattern)

Another option, is the earlier 1540's sleeve with small, compact baragoni (gathered sleeve top) as seen in Figure 22a. My preference for this type of sleeve is for two separate patterns, one for the upper baragoni (upper sleeve) and one for the slender 'undersleeve'.

This can be achieved by either making a two piece sleeve, one with the basic sleeve as seen in Figure 19a. The baragoni is made separately to the undersleeve and then worn 'over it'. (Figure 22) This is a much easier method for differing sleeve materials. It
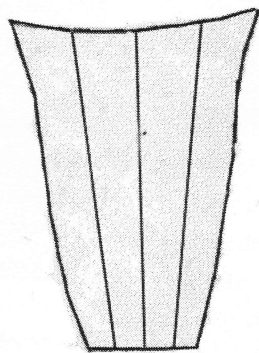

Figure 20

Figure 21

Figure 22a

Figure 23

also allows for more versatility. The 'undersleeve' can be worn separately or removed (for our modern summers in Australia). There are a few (non- Florentine) Italian paintings showing the wearer with no lower sleeve, such as Titian's Madonna and child with St Catherine, St Dominic and Donor or Lotto's Vestiture of St Brigid, 1524 (figure 23).

La Moda a Firenze does state that sottana could be worn without sleeves at home. This could suggest that the 'undersleeve' could be a separate item. Florentine portraits show an upper baragoni being the same material as the dress. the contrasting material is usally on the lower, slender maniche, particularly before the 1540's.

A separate 'baragoni' sleeve can be made using the top part of the basic sleeve pattern. This is elongated (approx. 2-3 times) so that it can be gathered or rouched horizontally and vertically, as seen in the bottom pattern in Figure 22. This pattern is based on the newer sleeve pattern in Figure 19a.

Attatching the Maniche (Sleeve)
Sleeves can be attached to the bodice (imbusto) by buttons (figure 26) or cloth ties (figure 27). The final product: These are two examples of sottana that I have made from toiles using the above patterns (Figures 24 and 25) (Figures 24-27 next page).

Definitions:
Armschythe: armhole curve of the imbusto pattern
Baragoni: puffy top half of the sleeve.
Falda - Italian for skirts
Imbusto - bodice/ body of the sottana, covering the chest and shoulders.
Maniche: sleeve
Sottana: (petticoat). This was originally the under dress, in earlier 16thC, later

being more popularly being the dress worn on its own.

Toile: pattern made by draping material over the body or mannequin, shaping it to the desired pattern.
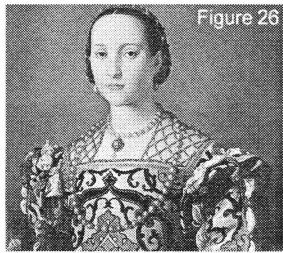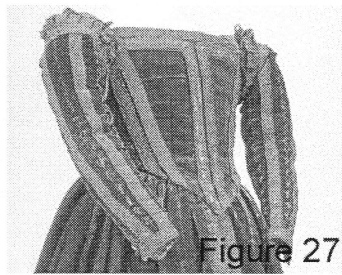

Figure 26

Figure 27

Figure 25

Figure 24

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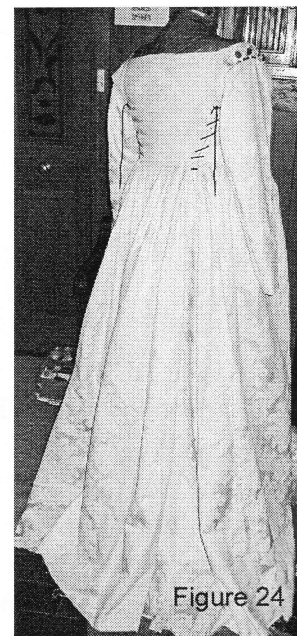Metopolitan Museum of New York.
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Web Gallery: Medici portraits by Bronzino.
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La Singora Onorata Katerina da Brescia is an Italian noblewoman in the 16thC. She was born in Brescia, escaping an arranged marriage, she became a Privateer. Having made her fortune and lived in Ferrara for a short time, she is now 'retired' in Fiorenze (Florence). She lives the life of a noble woman, married a younger man and has a beautiful daughter. Katerina is also known as *Black Kat*. Though she is retired from the Privateer life, she has retained ownership of her privateer ship The Gardian, berthed at the Port of Innilgard. *Karen Carlisle* is an optometrist. She is married to a younger man and has a beautiful daughter and way too little time for all of her interests.