



### ***Mayor's Staff***

1833–1868

Tortoiseshell, gold, enamel, amethyst, pearls, and diamond

918 mm (length); hilt: 68 mm (length), 30 mm (diameter); ferrule: 66 mm (length); chain: 290 mm (length)

This is the **ceremonial rod of the mayor of Santiago de Cuba**, from when the city still formed part of the American territories ruled by the Spanish Crown. It is an **exceptional piece of precious metalwork** that was created in the nineteenth century. Our attention is immediately drawn by its elegant and refined appearance: the wooden body is clad in **tortoiseshell**, while the handle and ferrule are made of gold and sumptuously decorated with blue enamel, amethysts, pearls and diamonds. A gold chain, finished with tassels, hangs from one end of the rod, lending it a touch of distinction and solemnity.

The rod's handle is a vision of both opulence and symbolism, incorporating enamel portraits of Queen **Isabella II** and her husband, **Francisco de Asís** of the **House of Bourbon**, encircled by 26 encrusted diamonds. These portraits are accompanied by a series of motifs, finely worked in gold: they include a set of scales, a sword, an open book and a cross, all of which allude to the combination of legal and religious authority. We can also make out the **coat of arms of the city of Santiago de Cuba**, featuring the image of **Our Lady of Charity** and a lizard, an animal that is symbolic of the region.

This rod was not only a **symbol of authority**; it was also a practical tool that played an important role in municipal and judicial activities. It was **probably made in the Philippines**, which reveal the connection that existed between Asia, the Americas and Spain during the nineteenth century. This particular mayoral rod belonged to **Miguel Díaz Álvarez**, who was born in Avilés and served as **the last mayor of the city of Havana** before Cuban independence. He brought it with him back to Spain, where it was kept as an important testament to a particular period in history. After returning to Spain, Díaz Álvarez remained very active both politically and socially, and eventually donated the rod to the Sanctuary in order to preserve not only the memory of his time in Cuba, but also **the bond between the Asturian émigré community and Covadonga**. This object thus provides us with an insight into the historical links between Cuba and Spain, as well as the deep meaning behind the symbols of power and justice in the Hispanic tradition.