



2019.062

Unidentified Artist

Cuba

Portrait of Francisco Javier Ripalda de Beaumont Yoldi y Aoiz, 3rd Conde de Ripalda

1770s

Oil on canvas, 75 x 46 inches

Inscription at upper right with family crest: *Palacio de Ripalda*

Inscription on cartouche: *Fran. Xavier Ripalda Beaumont Yoldi y Aoiz III Conde de Ripalda S.^{or}
Del Palacio de cabo de America de Turrillas y de los Honores y casas de Hijos Dalgo de Murillo*

& Brigadier de los Reales [exercitos] y Gobernador Militar fue de la Isla de la Trinidad y del Puerto del Principeⁱ

Francisco Javier Ripalda, 3rd Count of Ripalda, served as a lieutenant governor in Cuba from about 1771 to about 1779. He was both a military officer in charge of the troops assigned to the Cuban cities of Puerto Príncipe (today Camaguey) and Trinidad, as indicated in the inscription at the lower left of the canvas and a member of the vast Spanish bureaucracy. Ripalda was Capitán del Regimiento de Infantería del Príncipe and Comandante de Santa María del Puerto del Príncipe of the island of Cuba.ⁱⁱ Correspondence between Ripalda and his superior, the governor (*capitán general*) of Cuba, Felipe de Fondeviela Ondeano, Marqués de la Torre, between 1771 and 1777 is found in the Archives of the Indies in Seville. Ripalda's manifold and varied civic duties involved opening roads, the estates of the deceased, illicit commerce, mail, homicides, hurricanes, salt, tobacco, hospital visits, the cultivation of flax, and Chinese slaves. He was also active in the first census taken of the island of Cuba in 1774.ⁱⁱⁱ Ripalda's military responsibilities included military reviews, the protection of seaports, and English pirates.^{iv}

Ripalda is pictured full-length, a somewhat portly gentleman whose right hand rests on a cane and his left holds what is perhaps a snuff box on the table next to him. His family crest occupies the upper right corner and a cartouche at lower left identifies both his family origins and his responsibilities to the Spanish crown. Ripalda's heavy brows seem to be raised in amusement, causing his forehead to wrinkle, and his lips are curved in a slight smile below a prominent, slightly bulbous nose. Ripalda is portrayed as an accessible figure, which might reflect (at a respectful distance, to be sure) portraits of King Carlos III like this one (fig. 1). The unknown artist would have known portraits of Carlos III because, although the Spanish kings, both Habsburg and Bourbon, never traveled to their American or Philippine realms, their portraits were ubiquitous. Through the art of portraiture the Spanish kings were always present throughout the Monarchy.



Fig. 1. Portrait of King Carlos III, 18th century, miniature in oil on canvas after Anton Raphael Mengs (1728-1779). Museo del Prado.

Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt

ⁱThe Ripalda family was originally from Navarre, which explains the unusual references in the inscriptions. For the family and the names mentioned in the inscription, see: http://www.euskalnet.net/laviana/gen_bascas/ripalda.htm. The Palacios Cabo de Armería, also called *casas de cabo de armeria*, or *cabo de linaje* regarded the rights of the nobility in the Kingdom of Navarre. The lineage of the family was tied to the family's land (estate), not to an individual. These "palaces" could range from medieval defensive towers to lordly homes. The title Count of Ripalda was established in 1724 by King Felipe V.

ⁱⁱAntonio Ramos, *Aparato para la correccion y adicion de la obra que publicó en 1769 el Joseph Berni y Catalá . . . con el título Creacion, antigüedad, y privilegios de los títulos en Castilla* (Málaga: Impresor de la Dignidad Episcopal y de la Sant Iglesia, 1777), 149.

ⁱⁱⁱJacobo de la Pesquera, *Diccionario gráfico, estadístico, histórico, de la isla de Cuba*, vol. 4 (Madrid: J. Bernat, 1863-1866), 500.

^{iv} The subjects of the letters between the governor and Ripalda can be found online at <http://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/description/60104>.