

THE HISTORY OF THE
**ROYAL
PALACE**

An imposing building



ANTIGUA GUATEMALA

ROYAL PALACE

A witness to important events



Today it is one of the most emblematic buildings in Antigua Guatemala. The monumentality and the complexity of its architecture are a reflection of the power, the relevance, and the variety of functions that took place within its walls, when it was seat of the Colonial Government.

The Royal Palace was witness to important events during the more than two hundred years that it functioned as the seat to the Audiencia de Guatemala, and to the Captaincy General of the Kingdom of Guatemala. It was headquarters for the political, military, and economic administration for the Spanish Crown in the territories of current Chiapas and Central America.

Traversing through its spaces, one can discover how the government functioned, the administration of justice, and the control of the population

and wealth through the production of currency in the Colonial period.

Its preeminent location in the city and architectural characteristics make the Royal Palace a unique expression of a relevant period in the history of Guatemala and Central America, and a jewel of the Nation's Cultural Heritage.

Its interior spaces today allow us to comprehend the historical evolution since the arrival of the Spanish Conquistadors.





THE VERY NOBLE AND VERY LOYAL CITY OF SANTIAGO OF THE KNIGHTS OF THE KINGDOM OF GUATEMALA

Antigua Guatemala, as we know it today, was once the city of “Santiago de los Caballeros de Guatemala”. It was the setting for an important part of the country’s history.

In colonial times, for 232 years, Antigua was the seat of power to the government of the Kingdom and Captaincy General of Guatemala. Because of this, and the preservation of colonial architecture, this city was declared in 1979 a World Cultural Heritage Site by UNESCO.



The capital of the Guatemala Province was originally established in the Kaqchikel city of Iximché, in 1524. Due to constant indigenous uprisings, on November 22nd, 1527 it was relocated in the Valley of Bulbuxyá or Almolonga, a name that means “*place where water springs*”.

In 1541 the capital was destroyed by a strong weather front and a mudslide that descended from Agua Volcano, causing the death to the Governess Doña Beatriz de la Cueva, widow of the “*adelantado*” (a civil and military governor of Spanish colonies) and “*conquistador*” Don Pedro de Alvarado, among many others.

Later in 1541 the capital was moved for the third time to the Valley of

Panchoy. Two years after, the first “*cabildo*” (council) of the city was held, and the relocation was officially consummated.

Located at an altitude of 1500 meters, in an area of prevalent seismic activity, it was largely destroyed by the Santa Marta Earthquake on July, 1773.

In August of that same year, at the request of the President, Governor and Captain General, Martín de Mayorga, the relocation of the city was agreed upon, at first temporarily and then permanently to the Valley of the Ermita or the Virgin, where the capital of Guatemala remains until today – in 1776 this new city was named “*La Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción*”– .

URBAN PLANNING AND PUBLIC BUILDINGS

Constructed in a grid plan where streets run at right angles to each other and form rectangular blocks, the layout was inspired in the principles of the Italian Renaissance. This style of urban planning was largely utilized since the outset of the colonization of the Americas, in which a Plaza was built in the center along with government and religious buildings.

Shortly after its settlement, the city extended beyond the originally planned layout. In less than three centuries a large number of imposing monu-

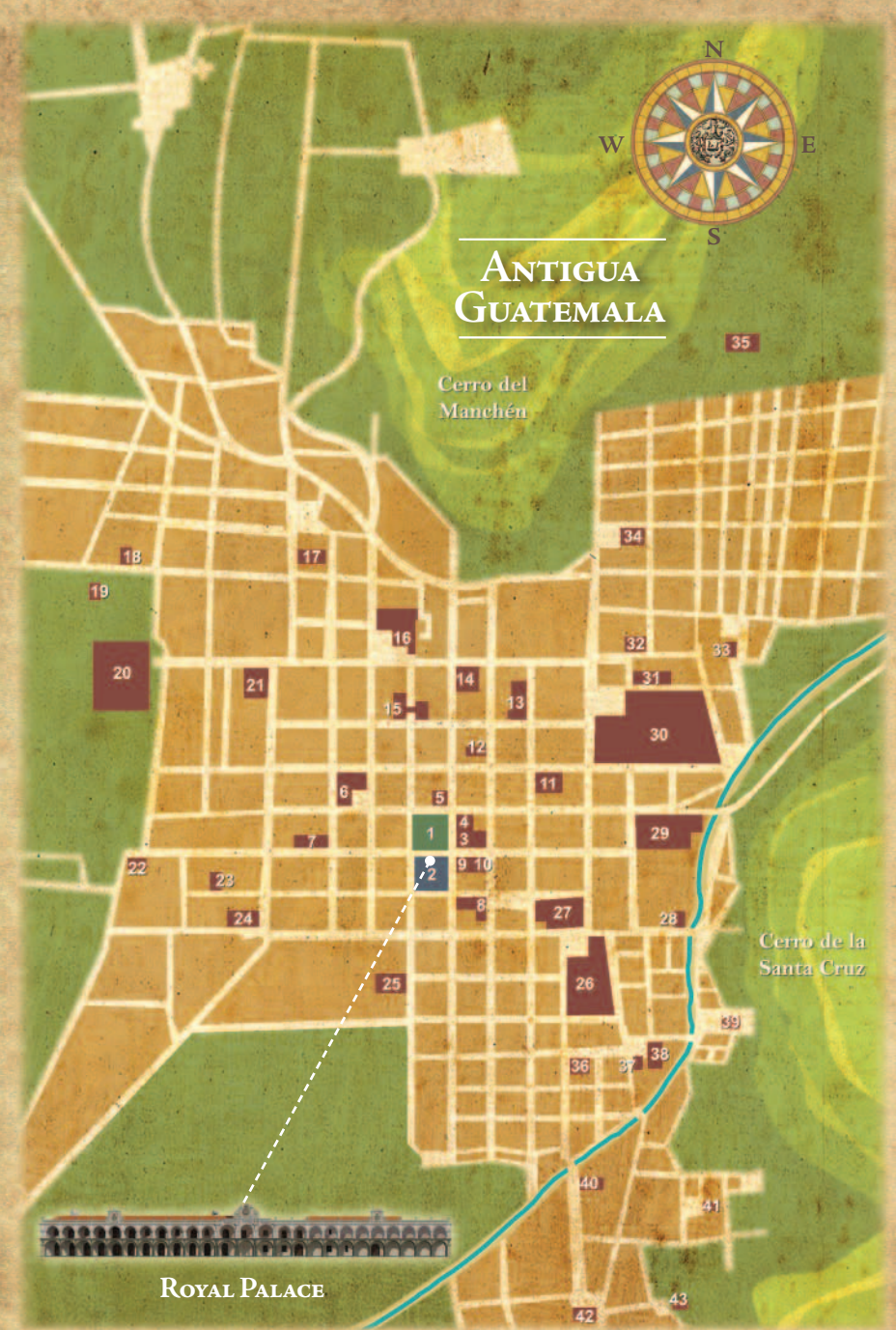
ments, including public buildings, various churches, convents and residences, were constructed.



On July 1532 Queen Doña Juana I of Spain awarded the city of Santiago its Coat of Arms. Later, in March of 1566 King Felipe II conferred the city the title of Very Noble and Very Loyal City of Santiago of the Knights of the Kingdom of Guatemala.



Photo: Diego Lezama, courtesy of: Fundación C&T



MAIN BUILDINGS

- | | | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Main Square | 12. El Carmen | 23. Espíritu Santo | 34. Candelaria |
| 2. Royal Palace | 13. Capuchinas | 24. Santa Lucía | 35. N.S. Dolores del Cerro |
| 3. Cathedral | 14. Santa Teresa | 25. San José el Viejo | 36. Escuela de Cristo |
| 4. Palacio Arzobispal | 15. Santa Catalina | 26. San Francisco | 37. Guadalupe |
| 5. Ayuntamiento | 16. La Merced | 27. Santa Clara | 38. Belén |
| 6. Compañía de Jesús | 17. San Sebastián | 28. Cruz del Milagro | 39. La Santa Cruz |
| 7. San Agustín | 18. Santiago | 29. La Concepción | 40. Los Remedios |
| 8. San Pedro | 19. Santísima Trinidad | 30. Santo Domingo | 41. Santa Ana |
| 9. Colegio Tridentino | 20. La Recolectión | 31. Beatas Indias | 42. El Calvario |
| 10. San Carlos University | 21. Real Aduana | 32. Santa Rosa | 43. Santa Isabel |
| 11. San Juan de Dios | 22. San Lázaro | 33. N.S. Dolores del Llano | |

Symbology

Discovery of America

History of the Real Palacio building during the Colonial Period

Main events of the Colonial Period in Guatemala

HISTORY OF THE ROYAL PALACE

During colonial times the Royal Palace was headquarters to the Government of the Kingdom of Guatemala, fulfilling the purpose of its construction

1543

Sept. 13th.
The first Hearing called Audiencia de los Confines, was introduced by Royal Decree

June 13th
The "pregon" takes place, giving the order to name the city "The City of Santiago"

March 10th
The first "cabildo" or council was held in the new city

1549

Bishop Francisco Marroquín handed over his residence for the Royal Audience

1560

His Majesty the King stated that the president of the Royal Audience would also be the general governor of the province

The First Palace in the XVI century
In this century the architecture of the building was very modest, made with unstable construction materials, which coupled with the constant seismic activity in the region, and it was constantly damaged

1600 - 1603

The Palace in the XVII century
The old jail was refurbished as housing facilities for two members of the Royal Audience

1651- 1700

Major construction work was done to the Royal Palace upgrading the construction materials and remodeling various spaces

1674

The building was two stories high on its north wing and had an ample portal, also two stories high, but only in the front facade of the Grand Palace

1679

March 18th
Inauguration of the room for the Royal Seal in the Grand Palace

The new facade in the XVIII century

In this century three major earthquakes caused an unprecedented scale of destruction in the city of Santiago, and the Royal Palace building had to undergo major renovations

1751

The magnitude of the damages caused by the earthquake to the Royal Palace caused the closing of the jail, the Royal Agreement Chamber (Sala del Real Acuerdo) and the Chancellery

1755

The President of the Royal Audience Alonso de Arcos y Moreno requested a complete renovation of the building

1777

Sept. 27th
The Captain General Martín de Mayorga, after a visit to the structure of the Royal Palace ordered the removal of everything that could be used in the new city, including pipes, fountains, timber, coat of arms, etc.

1764

This remodeling left the new portal as is seen today

1775

Dec. 29th
The "Ayuntamiento" of the "Very Noble and Very Loyal City of Santiago of the Kingdom of Guatemala", after 232 years and 9 months of having remained in the Valley of Panchoy, moves to the Valley of the "Ermita" for its new establishment. It was the last government institution to abandon Santiago

After the relocation of the city small houses were built in front, and the building did not have a specific use. In 1850 the facade was restored and between 1885-1892 various sections were reconstructed

1490 1500 1510 1520 1530 1540 1550 1560 1570 1580 1590 1600 1610 1620 1630 1640 1650 1660 1670 1680 1690 1700 1710 1720 1730 1740 1750 1760 1770 1780 1790 1800 1810 1820



1492

Cristopher Columbus with three ships, departed from Spain, trying to find a western route to Asia, but discovered the Antilles instead

1493

Columbus Second Voyage: discovered Puerto Rico and Jamaica



1502

Columbus Fourth Voyage: Discovered Central America

1524

Pedro de Alvarado began conquering Guatemala

July 27th

Establishment of the first city in Guatemala in Iximche', with a camp site

1527

Abandonment of Iximche'

Nov. 22nd.

The capital was moved to the Bulbuxyá or Almolonga Valley

1532

Queen Doña Juana I of Spain granted the city of Santiago its Royal Coat of Arms



1541

July 15th
Don Pedro de Alvarado passed away

Sept. 11th

A mud slide descended from Agua Volcano destroying the city in Almolonga, and killing Doña Beatriz De La Cueva, among many others

Sept. 17th

The "Ayuntamiento" (council) elected and appointed Francisco Marroquín and Francisco de la Cueva as governors of the Guatemala province

Nov. 18th.

The order was given to move the capital to the Panchoy Valley

Dec. 4th

The ejidos or communal lands where assigned in the new city

1566

March 10th
King Felipe II conferred the city the title of the "Very Noble and Very Loyal City of Santiago of the Kingdom of Guatemala"



1570

The Royal Audience was definitely settled in Santiago

1563

The Royal Audience was moved to Panama

1660

The first printing press was Introduced

1676

Creation of the Saint Charles University

1717

Sept. 29th
San Miguel Earthquake causes unprecedented destruction in the City of Santiago and its buildings

1719

Feb. 3rd
The Royal Audience informs His Majesty the King that the city was almost reconstructed on September 1717

1731

The founding of the Currency House in the City of Santiago was authorized



1729

The Gaceta de Guatemala, was published, one of the first newspapers in America

1773

July 29th
The Santa Marta earthquake caused severe damage but even though not totally destroyed, it was the reason for the definite abandonment of the City of Santiago, following the insistence of Captain General, Martín de Mayorga

1799

March
The city is named Villa of La Antigua Guatemala

1821

Sept. 15th
Independence of Guatemala

COLONIAL HISTORY OF GUATEMALA

1775

July 21st
Royal Decree by His Majesty King Carlos III authorizing the formal relocation of the City of Santiago to the Valley of the Virgin

1776

Oct. 22nd
Royal Order enacted that the capital in the Valley of the Virgin was to be named the "Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción"



HISTORY OF THE BUILDING

The Royal Palace did not always have the same appearance that it has today. It experienced a series of transformations throughout the centuries, required by the new functions that were to be performed, along with the constant restorations following seismic activity that affected the city.

The first Palace in the XVI century:

It was constructed on the area of the original residence of Bishop Francisco Marroquín, who sold the land to the Royal Audience in 1549. The first Palace was a very modest building, because of the lack of sufficiently qualified architects and master builders for large buildings.

The Palace in the XVII century:

The constant seismic activity in the region caused damage in almost every building on the city. The Royal Palace was especially vulnerable to deterioration because it was a group of buildings, not one solid structure.

By the second half of the XVII century the Royal Palace underwent major renovations, upgrading the construction materials and changing its appearance, mainly to the front facade facing the Main Plaza. Up until that time the north wing was divided in the Grand Palace (that covered almost half of the front and belonged to the Royal Audience), the Hall of Arms, the Royal Chapel and the jail.

The Palace in the XVIII century: a new facade

In this century three major earthquakes caused an unprecedented scale of destruction in the city of Santiago, and the Royal Palace building had to go under deep renovation, more than in previous centuries.

The first large earthquake occurred on September 29th 1717. It caused grave damage to most of the buildings in the city, among them the Royal Palace. Architect Mayor Diego de Porres was in charge of the repairs, and were completed in 1720. Later the Currency House was added in 1731.

A new earthquake affected Santiago on January 4th 1751 and the magnitude of the damages affecting the Royal Palace were so serious that

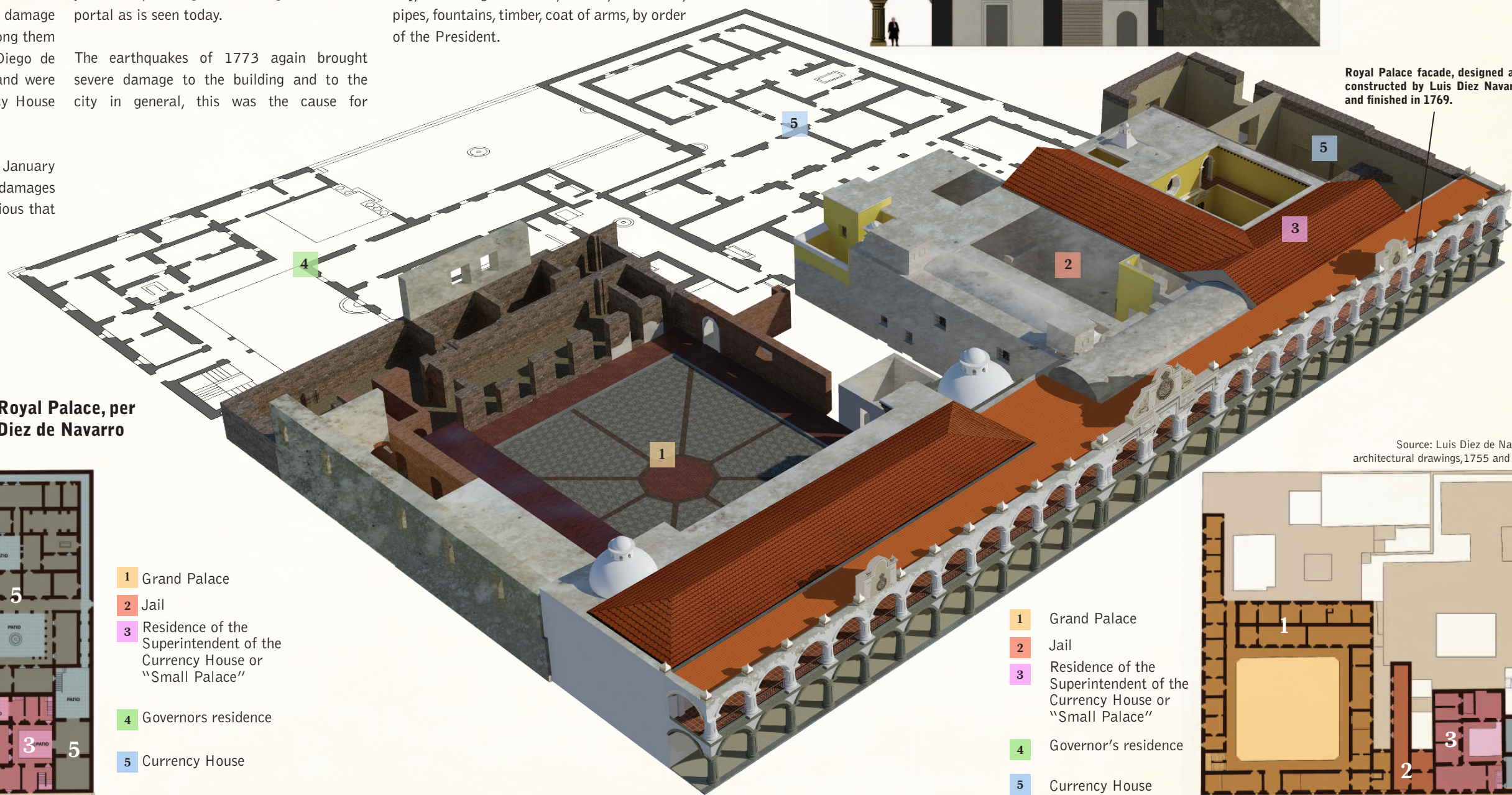
they prompted the closing of the jail, the Sala del Real Acuerdo, and the Chancellery. Considering the destruction, in 1755 the President of the Royal Audience Alonso de Arcos y Moreno requested a complete renovation, the remodeling concluded nine years later, leaving the building and its new portal as is seen today.

The earthquakes of 1773 again brought severe damage to the building and to the city in general, this was the cause for

Captain General and President Martín de Mayorga to give the order to move the city to a new location. Large areas of the building suffered serious damage, not only caused by earthquakes, but also because of the removal of everything that could be used in the new city, including furniture, doors, balconies, pipes, fountains, timber, coat of arms, by order of the President.



This section view shows the Royal Palace monumentality and the large scale of its architectural spaces



Royal Palace facade, designed and constructed by Luis Diez Navarro, and finished in 1769.

Architectural floor plan of the Royal Palace, per architectural drawings of Luis Diez de Navarro 1755 and 1763



First floor

- 1 Grand Palace
- 2 Jail
- 3 Residence of the Superintendent of the Currency House or "Small Palace"
- 4 Governors residence
- 5 Currency House



Second floor

- 1 Grand Palace
- 2 Jail
- 3 Residence of the Superintendent of the Currency House or "Small Palace"
- 4 Governor's residence
- 5 Currency House

Source: Luis Diez de Navarro, architectural drawings, 1755 and 1763



Front facade of the Royal Palace by the end of the XVII century, and the beginning of the XVIII century. This reconstruction shows the building before it was reformed to the appearance we now see today.



The Palace of the XIX century

By the mid 1850's, several administrative and religious buildings were reconstructed in Antigua Guatemala. Renovations were made to the portal of the Royal Palace, mainly on the eastern wing, that had suffered the most damage. Small houses built by residents after 1773 were also removed from the front of the building.

The Palace of the XX century

In 1936, after a new reconstruction ordered by president Jorge Ubico, the palace was headquarters for the State Government. The building was repaired again after the earthquakes of 1942 and 1976, that had devastated the central region of the country.



ROYAL PALACE

Seat of Power to the Colonial Government

The highest jurisdictional body that functioned in the Palace was the Royal Audience, it concentrated the executive and judicial powers. The Captain General —a high military rank in the Spanish Army— was also the Audience President, and the province governor, appointed from Spain. He was under the command of the New Spain Viceroyalty (today Mexico), but as we will see, he had some autonomous functions. Because the Palace housed both the seat of power for the Government, and also the Governor's and Captain General residence, today it is commonly known as the Captain's General Royal Palace.

Royal Audience and Royal Treasury

The "*Real Audiencia de los Confines*" was introduced by Royal Decree by King Carlos I on September 1543, and first it was established in Comayagua, and then temporarily settled in Gracias a Dios, both on what is now Honduras.

In 1549 the "*Audiencia de Los Confines*" was moved to Santiago. Sometime later the provinces of Yucatan (1550) and Soconusco (1553) were added. In 1563 the Royal Audience transferred to Panama and the "*Audiencia de los Confines*" was closed. Five years later King Felipe II ordered the closing of the Royal Audience in Panama, and the creation of a new one called the Royal Audience of Guatemala, definitively settling in Santiago, by that time the construction of the first Royal Palace begun.

The Royal Audience was comprised of a President, who was also the Governor and Captain General, and Five "*Oidores*" (judges), in charge of presenting and discussing proposals, and deliberating on Royal Decrees. They also functioned as judges, responsible for the administration of justice.

When the Royal Audience was permanently established in Santiago (1570) it managed a vast territory, consisting



of five countries of Central America: Costa Rica, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala, the Mexican state of Chiapas, part of the state of Campeche and Soconusco, it was governed by President Alonso de Maldonado, appointed by the Viceroy of New Spain, who was the former governor of Guatemala and Honduras provinces.

The Royal Audience also controlled other institutions like the Royal Treasury, whereas in Spain the Royal Treasury received and administered the money from the colonies, in the colonies its function was to collect taxes and fees.

Captaincy General

The Captaincy General was exclusively a military institution. The Captain General was the outmost leader of the Land and Sea Armies of the Indies, and its jurisdiction extended over the territories that were assigned under him. The militia in the Americas exercised the functions of defense, police, and prison guards, so the Captain General had to administer these three functions. The Viceroy was the maxi-

imum authority of the Viceroyalty. In certain cases, due to the vast expanse of the territories, Captain Generals were named, and depended on the Viceroy, as was the case of Guatemala.

The Captaincy General of Guatemala was founded by King Carlos I in 1536. The territory that the Captaincy General administered was the same as that of the Royal Audience.

In the case of Guatemala, the maximum authority was the president of the Royal Audience who also acted as Captain General and Governor of Guatemala, played a determinant role in the history of the country. An example of the great influence of the position was the order to relocate the capital of Guatemala from the valley of Panchoy to the valley of La Ermita, by order of the president Martín de Mayorga, which the church and neighboring populations opposed.

Other relevant initiatives presided by the Captain General were the expeditions to submit the “lacandonos”, the native population in the northern jungles, throughout the XVII century and the subsequent conquest of Noj Petén, capital

of the “Itzaes” –today Flores, Peten-, in 1697. Finally the outstanding role of Captain General Gabino Gainza in the events that reached the agreement and signing of the declaration of independence September 15th, 1821.

The Currency House

During most of the colonial period the scarcity of coin or currency was a serious problem, to the extent of limiting transactions, and even the payment of tributes. Many times, it was necessary to barter and trade, and even cacao, the Pre-Hispanic currency, traditional to the region, was at times used.

The Kingdom depended on the distribution of coins minted by the currency houses of México and Peru, being the

only authorized ones in the XVI and XVII centuries. This situation changed when in 1731, the Mint House of Guatemala was authorized.

It was the fourth Currency House authorized in the continent, after México in 1537, Peru in 1565, and Potosi in 1572, gives testimony to the importance that the Kingdom of Guatemala acquired in those years. To facilitate its control, the construction of its facilities on the south-east side of the Royal Palace were authorized, in a separate building but within the same complex.

The Royal House of Currency issued its first minted coin in 1733: a doubloon of sixteen shields.



Source: Lovell, W. George and Lutz, C. H.



Royal Palace facade after the city was moved, XVIII century

USES OF THE BUILDING AFTER THE RELOCATION OF THE CITY

After the city's evacuation following the earthquakes of 1773, the Royal Palace was abandoned. Due to the fact that not all of the population vacated the city, some sectors of the Royal Palace were re-occupied, such as the house of the President of the Audience, and the Currency House, along with other parts left standing.

In engravings of the time one can discern various small houses standing over the ruins of the portal. Around 1850 those buildings were vacated and demolished, the facade of the portal was reconstructed, but still the building had no definite use. Some sources

claim that around that time the Royal Palace served as a storehouse, and the ancient House of the President and the Currency House became private residences.

During the government of Manuel Lisandro Barillas (1885-1892), some sections of the Palace were reconstructed and various public offices were installed within them: the Peace Court, Magistrate's Courts, National Police Outpost, jail, and political headquarters. In governments following Manuel Estrada Cabrera, the political leadership was transformed into the Departmental Government.



Photo: E.J. Kildare, end of the XIX century. Consejo Nacional Council for the Protection of La Antigua Guatemala

By the end of the 1960's the Currency House was occupied by the post and telegraphs office, managed by the recently created Empresa de Telecomunicaciones (GUATEL).

In the beginning of the 1980's part of the main courtyard of the Grand Palace and other areas around it were granted to the Army, and transformed into Military Headquarters.



THE ROYAL PALACE TODAY

The Royal Palace is an important part of the Guatemalan identity, and pride to the people of Antigua, the "antigüeros".

Because of its location in the heart of Antigua Guatemala, it is a monument with immense value to the Nation's Heritage, and is subject to the Antigua Guatemala Protection Laws, to ensure its conservation.

The restoration and conservation of the building had the supervision of the National Council for the Protection of Antigua Guatemala.

At present, the building is under the administration of the Ministry of Culture and Sports, and destined to be Antigua Guatemala's Cultural Center.



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