

Group C to settle upon the flat natural terrace. Without further evidence, the latter scenario appears more convincing, as the central access point to the Group seems an odd place to deposit refuse.

The western access to Group C is located north of the western arm of Str. 767 (Figure 8-1). This stairway is much smaller and cruder than the one to the north. It leads down to a lower terrace, 2.01 m below the level of the plaza of Group C. It has nine steps, but does not appear to have balustrades. The natural terrace upon which the western stairway descends was most likely the original level of Group C before the construction of the plaza. The western edge of this lower “natural” terrace appears to have been artificially retained and may have held a structure. No notable artifact concentrations were found on the western stairway.

#### Str. 764

Str. 764 is centered upon the eastern edge of the plaza of Group C (Figure 8-1) and faces due west (Figure 8-4 and 8-5). It is in the same position as a temple in a temple assemblage at Mayapán. Str. 764 is composed of a multi-terraced substructure topped by a five-doorway superstructure. Within the superstructure are a medial altar, L-shaped bench, and an interior altar/wall. A 373-m<sup>2</sup> excavation uncovered 100% of Str. 764. A fragment of wood in wall collapse behind the building was dated with AMS dating (Beta-112318)(Table 1-1) and was found to have a conventional radiocarbon age of  $585 \pm 45$  years before present (Table 6-2). The two sigma (95% probability) calibrated date for the same is A.D. 1299 to 1419.

### Architectural Composition of Str. 764

The platform of Str. 764 has two to three terraces depending upon the side of the building. The first terrace extends the entire length of the southern and eastern sides, but on the northern side, it merges into the platform of Str. 1002. Cache 1 was found at the base of the northeast corner of the first terrace. This cache included a miniature lidded egg-shaped vessel that did not contain any non-perishable artifacts. The walls and the terrace surface were once covered by plaster, which is presently quite eroded. The first terrace does not exist on the west side of Str. 764; a low bench lies north of the stairway, but not to the south. It is faced by vertical slabs, leading to its identification as a bench. In all, the first terrace does not seem to have been constructed with much consideration for symmetry. The first terrace and western bench were added onto the second terrace, perhaps to remodel a preexisting building following a different template and/ or to provide a buttress for the wall of the latter terrace.

The second terrace forms the majority of the mass of the platform of Str. 764. Only the western 4.4 m of this terrace is visible as the rest supports the third terrace. The plaster surface of this terrace had several oval burned spots, which may have resulted from the burning of offerings. The west or facade wall of the second terrace is better constructed and composed of limestone blocks with stucco still adhering to it in some places. The lowest course of the second terrace south of the stairway has larger blocks and a couple of circular burn spots lay on the adjacent plaza surface.

The temple's central, western stairway is inset and leads from the plaza to the top of the second terrace. It has 13 stairs and is composed of squared limestone rubble. Despite a small tree in its center, it is relatively well preserved. The lower portion of the

balustrade is sloped, but the upper part is eroded. At the base of the stairway extending from and centered upon the last step was a small stairway altar covered with plaster.

The third terrace is simply a 0.5 m rise in the second terrace. This rise is held by a poorly preserved retaining wall of medium-sized random rubble. The third terrace surface was constructed twice and the original was constructed at the same time as the second terrace. No stairway was found between the second and third terraces. The surface of the third terrace was once painted with bi- or polychrome designs (Figure 8-6). These designs are linear red segmented bands filled with red and black designs. The primary band(s) lay 30 cm west of and parallel to the columns, and additional bands extended perpendicularly south of this band. These may be blocks of glyphs or a patolli board. The latter seems most likely because the ladder-like patterns lie perpendicular to one another. Patolli boards were incised on the floors of some buildings at Tikal (Becker 1999: 58). Instead of X's, "places" in the painting on the floor of Str. 764 were marked with mat motifs, similar to "places" on game boards at Maintzunun, Belize. (see Graham 1985: Fig. 6). There may be several patolli boards with at least one adjacent to the northern and the southern columns. The segmented mat motif is also similar to designs on Petén ceramics linked to rulership (Rice 1989: 311-312) and to motifs painted on buildings at Tulum (Lothrop 1924: Plate 7). The plaster surface of the third terrace has numerous burned spots, even on the painted designs.

The superstructure of Str. 764 is enclosed by masonry walls to the north, south, and east, but is open with five columns to the west (Figure 8-5). The interior of the building contains a medial altar along the east wall and an L-shaped bench along the southern wall and the southern part of the east wall. An additional bench may have once

existed to the north of the altar; however, if this were the case, all that remained of this bench at the time of excavation was fill. An interior altar runs from north to south, nearly dividing the building in half.

The five columns of Str. 764 are rectangular and partially made of crude courses of cut soft limestone blocks. In addition to the columns, there must have been a bearing return wall at the western edge of the southern bench, which supported the lintel of the superstructure. Consequently, the temple had a five-doorway entrance making it anomalous relative to most three doorway Late Postclassic period Maya temples.

The north and south walls enclosing the superstructure are very eroded. The westernmost part of the south wall is composed of cut soft limestone blocks and slabs, of which only the lowest course remains. This material matches the construction of the five columns. Stucco still adhering to the exterior walls demonstrates that they were once covered by plaster. The plaster surface of the floor of the superstructure rests 2.5 m above the surface of the plaza. Portions of the surface still bear solid traces of a black wash including much of the floor adjacent to the medial altar and patches east of the third and fourth columns from the north. No evidence suggests the superstructure floor was painted with designs like the third terrace, but it may have been painted black.

The medial altar is terribly eroded. Excavations into the altar did not reveal any special deposits, but, as discussed below, a cache may have eroded out of it. The interior altar/wall is a low feature that bisects the superstructure. The bench of Str. 764 is L-shaped and rests along the south wall and the southern portion of the east wall. The retaining walls of the bench are poorly preserved, but most of it is composed of hard limestone rubble set as vertical slabs.

### Previous Constructions of Str. 764

Three 2 x 2 m test pits were excavated into Str. 764. These units revealed that Str. 764 was the product of several construction stages. In Test Unit 902, 312 (Figure 8-7), bedrock was encountered 2.9 m b.d. Directly upon bedrock was compact clay that leveled out the surface. In Test Unit 907, 318 (Figure 8-8), a couple of Postclassic low walls (Str. 764-I) were found in association with the leveling of the bedrock. Directly upon the compact clay and walls were deposited numerous Postclassic fill episodes. In Test Unit 905, 314 (Figure 8-9), the eastern platform wall of an earlier Postclassic building (Str. 764-II) was encountered. The wall ran north to south, facing 2° east of north. The base of this wall is 2.5 m b.d. and the top, which is covered by a plaster floor, is 1.36 m b.d. This plaster floor was constructed twice and beneath it was Burial 764-1.

The primary individual in Burial 764-1 was an adult oriented north/south in a prone position with the legs tightly flexed and the arms extended at the sides (Figure 8-9). The individual was buried “face down,” but lacks a cranium and may have been beheaded, or the interment might have been reopened and bones removed. Headless burials are not rare among the Maya and similar burials in Late Postclassic temples were found at Mayapán (Shook 1954: 258) and Topoxté (Pinto and Noriega 1995: 695). Preliminary osteological analysis has indicated that the remains of another adult and a child accompanied the headless individual (Duncan 1999).

The west wall of Str. 764-II was widened to the west after its initial construction. Architectural features inside the superstructure of Str. 764-II were encountered in Test Unit 907, 318. In the southeast corner of the unit was found a rectangular altar or bench that stood 0.15 m above the floor. In the southeastern portion of the unit, a wall base was

found. Beneath the floor of Str. 764-II was Cache 2, a lidded cache vessel (Figure 8-8). This cache was actually associated with the final construction of Str. 764 because there was a disturbance in the plaster floor of Str. 764-II directly above it suggests the excavation of a cache pit. Late Postclassic censer sherds were found in the fill covering the cache, further suggesting a late deposition. Adjacent to Cache 2 were the sherds of a smashed vessel. The vessel type has not yet been identified, but it may have been the original cache, which had been terminated similar to that encountered in Str.602.

The cache vessel was unslipped, but it had two loop handles on the rim and one on the lid. In situ, the opposing loop handles on the rim were oriented approximately 18° east of north. Cache 2 was somewhat odd in that the lid was very difficult to remove. Once the lid was removed, a dark material marked the contact points between the lid and vessel and may have been a sealant of some sort. The interior of the vessel was burned and a white residue was found on it and some of its contents, which included colored stone beads, a coral fragment, shells, and copper foil (Figure 8-10).

Upon Str. 764-II was built the final version of the structure (764-III, but referred to as simply Str. 764), the primary subject of the investigations. The three terraces and superstructure, described above, were part of this construction. In Test Unit 1, just west of the edge of the third terrace, one can observe an earlier plaster surface (Floor 2) of Str. 764; therefore, it was renovated at least once.

#### Artifact Distributions of Str. 764

The artifact distribution maps of Str. 764 illustrate several key spatial divisions: concentrations overlapping with wall collapse, a concentration south of the first terrace, outside versus inside the superstructure, and east versus west of the interior altar. In

artifact categories associated with architectural fill, such as miscellaneous ceramics, bone, and shell (Figure 8-11), concentrations tend to overlap with architectural edges, especially west of the outer platform edge. The majority of the artifacts originated from the fill of the collapsed walls of the platform. Since the west retaining walls were the tallest straight faces, they were the most unstable and the deposition of “fill” artifacts was greatest in this area. The floors of both the superstructure and the platform sloped east to west facilitating water drainage and the movement of artifacts in that direction.

A very high concentration of ceremonial refuse lay south of the first terrace centered on grid 896N, 314E. Items in this area include bone (Figure 8-11) and shell, perhaps from feasting, Chipotle Red sherds (occasionally used as cache vessels), sherds of most censer types, three human teeth (Figure 8-12), obsidian blades, and corner-notched points. Exotic ceremonial artifacts in this area include a stingray spine, a grasping crustacean pincer, and several fragments of an extremely large conch shell. As mentioned, conch shells are used by the Lacandon to call the gods to the god house (McGee 1990: 53). This area appears to have been a secondary deposit of ceremonial refuse, perhaps from sweeping activities and cache terminations such as were located on the north side of Str. 602.

Several artifact types were concentrated inside and outside the superstructure. One example is the distribution of chert bifaces (Figure 8-13). In the entire excavation, 0.06 chert bifaces per m<sup>2</sup> were recovered as opposed to 0.11 per m<sup>2</sup> in the superstructure, hence bifaces were more common in the superstructure. Miscellaneous and uncommon bone and shell (Figure 8-12), on the other hand, was almost totally absent from the superstructure and the frequency of miscellaneous ceramics was relatively low as well.

Human and animal teeth are very frequent on the platform and may have been offerings inappropriate for the superstructure. A concentration of miscellaneous shell and ceramics is apparent on the altar; however, the fill of this feature was excavated a bit deep in one of the units, perhaps accounting for this anomaly. Most artifact types were more heavily concentrated outside the superstructure, suggesting the use of the interior was limited to specific activities.

Censers tended to be concentrated west of the interior altar extending out of the superstructure onto the third terrace. *Idolos* and *Pitufo Modeled* censers deviated from this rule, and these sherds were found in very low frequencies scattered through the excavated area. At least 14 non-effigy censer vessels, many nearly complete, were recovered from Str. 764. The six identified *Mumul Composite* censers were concentrated between the fourth and fifth columns from the north. The seven identified *Gotas Composite* censers were concentrated around the fourth and fifth columns and 2 m west of the third column. The single discernible *Fijate Composite* vessel was located east of the fourth column. *La Justa/Extranjeras Composite* censer sherds could not be grouped into discrete identifiable vessels.

*Patojo var. Patojo Modeled* censer sherds were found west of the interior altar, but within the larger deposit were two areas of heavy concentrations (Figure 8-14). One concentration was located along the medial axis of the structure, adjacent to the western side of the altar. The other concentration was found just west of the fourth and fifth columns. Pairing could not be discerned in the distribution of the *Patojo modeled* censer sherds and the vessels appear to have been smashed and partially scattered. This concentration included 14 vessels. Most of the deity effigies were male, but one depicted



with a *huipil* appears to have been female. Several probable Chak effigies were present as were at least two of a deity with lightning bolts or locks of hair running adjacent to the eyes down the checks similar to the specimen recovered from Structure 602. A great number of both effigy and non-effigy censers were found smashed around the fifth column. It is possible that the vessels were intentionally destroyed or stored in this area.

The area east of the interior altar was clean of most artifacts, including censers, with the exception of a few unique artifacts. The sherds of a Tirso Red ceramic drum, decorated with cross motifs, were concentrated upon the east side of the medial altar along the medial axis (Figure 8-15). A sherd from a whistle/flute was found near the drum. A second interesting Tirso Red artifact was a polychrome quincunx chalice composed of a large central cup to which were attached four small cups. Each of the attachments between the large vessel and small cups is hollow so that liquid would pass from one to another. Several sherds from a second such vessel were spread around the interior of the superstructure. Similar vessels were found in Str. 602. They were also found at Mayapán and called “candlestick clusters” because some of the cups were burned (Thompson 1954: 75; Smith 1971: Figures 37 and 75). While similar, the quincunx vessels in Str. 764 do not appear to have been candelabras because of their hollow connections and lack of charring. Instead, they may have been used for ceremonial drinking. A complete miniature cup was found just west of the altar (Figure 8-16). A sherd from another cup, which may have once rested upon the altar, was found in collapse east of the altar. Also within the relatively clean space east of the interior altar was an obsidian core, a relatively uncommon artifact at Zacpetén. Several obsidian blades were found on the altar, but excavations in this area intruded into altar fill.

Several important rare and isolated artifact deposits were recovered in other areas, as well. Half of a large cat mandible (Figure 8-11), probably that of a jaguar given its size, was located on the small altar at the base of the stairs. This artifact was most likely an offering or sacrificial marker displayed in a very prominent place. A carved bird effigy was located just west of the fourth column from the north (Figure 8-16). It was crudely carved of soft limestone and is 25 cm long and 5.22 cm thick. This object may have been tenoned to the column. Two fragments of female effigy figurines or whistles were found behind Str. 764. Part of a chert eccentric was located near one of these figurines and another on the south bench. The former chert eccentric may have been cached originally within the medial altar, but eroded out as it deteriorated. Two small quartz crystals were found on the south bench. On the northwest edge of the platform were two spindle whorls near an animal claw or talon.

In sum, several important activities area can be identified in Str. 764. First, there is the area east of the interior altar, which contained musical instruments and cups and was otherwise devoid of activity. Second, the area immediately west of the interior altar contained numerous censers. Here, the deities on the censers would have been visible to those in the plaza, unless the entrance was covered, and offerings of incense were made to these deities in their attached vessels and independent spiked censers. The numerous god pots mark this building as a multiple god-house. It is interesting that there were 14 Patojo Modeled and 14 non-effigy censers. This correlation could be the result of coincidence, but it is also possible each god pot may have had a corresponding non-effigy censer. Nevertheless, each vessel was smashed and its sherds scattered preventing the identification of matching sets. Third is the small altar at the base of the stairway that

held the large cat mandible offering. Finally, a concentration of ceremonial refuse was found against the south wall of the platform.

### Str. 1002

Str. 1002 lies adjacent to the north or right side of Str. 764, also facing west and in the position of an oratorio in a Mayapán temple assemblage, but it has no extant masonry superstructure. A 37-m<sup>2</sup> area was excavated on the southern portion and to the rear (east) of Str. 1002, uncovering approximately 15% of the building.

Very little is known of Str. 1002 because only a small portion of the platform was excavated. The project simply did not have the time or resources to clear the entire structure and most of the platform surface was an exposed outcrop of bedrock suggesting few in situ deposits. Excavations were concentrated to the rear of the structure in hope that refuse materials to date construction would be recovered. The surface of the platform is not entirely flat, but interrupted by several low and smooth projections of bedrock. The highest part of the platform lies 1.73 m above the plaza. The western edge was faced by a masonry wall of which only the lower course of hard limestone blocks remains. At the rear of the platform, approximately 2 m northeast of the northeast corner of Str. 764, were found two postholes aligned north/ south cut into the bedrock outcrop. These two postholes may have been part of a series that defined the eastern edge of Str. 1002; however, the bedrock had eroded, destroying its northern extent.

No notable deposits were found in the units excavated on and behind Str. 1002. Artifacts recovered included miscellaneous ceramics, chert debitage/flakes, and a low frequency of censer sherds.