



Figure 3. Dos Pilas Hieroglyphic Stairway 4 discovered by the Vanderbilt Petexbatun Project in 1990 (from Demarest and Houston 1990:Figure 15.12; drawn by S. Houston and D. Stuart, courtesy Vanderbilt University Press).

pand to conquer local neighbors (e.g., see Demarest 1990, 1993; Houston and Stuart 1990; Houston et al. 1992).

While the broad outlines of such epigraphic interpretations remain correct, we have reduced our reliance on them to interpret *specific* archaeological contexts and culture history for several reasons. Speculation about the motives and nature of specific wars or alliances must be modified in the light of recent evidence that conflicts in the seventh and early eighth century were also influenced from outside the region, beyond the direct ambitions of Petexbatun rulers (e.g., see Martin 1994; Martin and Grube 1994, 1995).

Furthermore, ongoing advances and debates over specific readings have led our own epigraphers themselves to reinterpret specific glyphs and to shift their readings. Some examples are given in the article in this issue by Escobedo (1997a) in which he considers changes in epigraphic interpretations regarding the precise political affiliation of Arroyo de Piedra with the larger center of Tamarindito and the nature and outcome of Tamarindito's wars. Another series of epigraphic shifts concerns whether Ruler 4 of Dos Pilas was captured by Tamarindito in A.D. 761 (Houston 1987), whether he was driven into exile (Schele, personal communica-