

# Review of: "Redefining borders in the contested territory between San Pedro and San Andres Cholula"

Geoffrey G. McCafferty<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University of Calgary

**Potential competing interests:** No potential competing interests to declare.

This is a very interesting and well-conceived article. As an anthropological archaeologist I have lived (on and off) in Cholula for 50 years and have always been interested in the distinctions between San Andres and San Pedro (the Cholulas). In the 1980s San Andres was very agricultural, with the exception of businesses (especially bars and discos) associated with the University of the Americas student population. This development began in the 1970s, with a strong influx of North Americans, many of whom continued to live in Cholula after graduation. I believe this socio-economic development played an important role in the subsequent development of the greater metropolitan area.

One thing that impressed and intrigued me when I lived in San Andres was the animosity between inhabitants of the two municipalities, to the extent that marriages were endogamous and residents of San Andres preferred to go to the Puebla market rather than closer San Pedro businesses. The cultural boundaries were also observable in such traits as musical preferences, with San Andres more likely to party to salsa while those of San Pedro listened to northern Mexican music. Gender differences were also pronounced, with the women of San Andres much more aggressive and dominant.

These cultural differences had historical precedents, as Olivera and Reyes noted in their 1969 book (Olivera de V., Mercedes and Cayetano Reyes, 1969; *Los Choloques y los Cholutecas: Apuntes sobre las Relaciones Étnicas en Cholula hasta el Siglo XVI*. *Anales del INAH*, Epoch 7, Vol. 1 (1967-8): 247-274.

Central to this historical question is the Great Pyramid itself. Archaeo-tourism is a major economic factor for both communities, and ongoing conflicts revolve around the boundary and 'ownership' of the Pyramid. Archaeologically, the original town center was in San Andres, and their ancestors built early stages of the pyramid. But pyramid construction continued in stages for nearly 2000 years, with changing ethnic composition through time. In the final phase of construction, between about AD 700 to 1200, the Olmeca-Xicallanca were the dominant ethnic group among a multi-ethnic community. They had strong cultural ties to the Gulf Coast, including the Chontal Maya. The Tolteca-Chichimeca, with origins in northeastern Mexico, arrived in about AD 1200 and were able to establish their own city-center around their Pyramid of Quetzalcoatl in what is now San Pedro. It is presumed that this ethnic conflict was the basis for San Andres separating from San Pedro in the 1600s.

It should not be surprising that modern boundaries have historical foundations. Cholula, as the oldest continuously occupied city in the Americas, certainly has a long and complex history. I congratulate the author of this article for a careful consideration of contemporary problems, but would also invite him to include more historical context.

