Chapter 6
Conclusions

The symbolism of conquest, resistance, and reconciliation is registered in the graceful arabesques of the Matachines dancers.
-Enrique Lamadrid, Hermanitos Comanchitos

The Bernalillo Matachines Today

The Bernalillo Matachines today is a thriving spectacle which has been recognized as one of the most prominent Matachines performances in the Southwest. This chapter focuses on the meaning of the dance and what it means to the people of Bernalillo, and how this community, with pressures from the outside world to assimilate, continues with the dance of the Matachines every year. Because of Bernalillo's proximity to Albuquerque, it has not fully rejected development and the idea of assimilation, yet now in contemporary times, the large influx of interest by Bernalillo's youth is a reminder of the dance's importance to the community. Intercultural and intracultural syncretism has and continues to occur throughout the region, but is especially evident in the Matachines seen today with cultural borrowing, and the respect the Pueblo and Hispano communities have for one another; whether it's implicit or explicit. Other prominent traditions have also had influence on the Matachines, namely the Comanchitos dances and Penitente Brotherhood. Bernalillo has also focused its attention inward as opposed to other communities that have marketed their cultures in an effort to boost local economies. This act is a clear indication of the how focused and immersed the populace of Bernalillo is on the church and the faith. On very few occasions, the people of Bernalillo have opened up to the world allowing outsiders to come in and document their dance.

In July 1992, the Smithsonian Institute came to Bernalillo to research the Matachines performance. Later that year, the Bernalillo Matachines were asked to perform in Washington

D.C. for its "Folklife Festival." Of several Matachines performances throughout the Southwest, Bernalillo was chosen because of its regional fame and the number of participants involved.[i] Claude Stephenson, a state folklorist, states that the selection of the Bernalillo Matachines was based on the fact that of other dance groups, "Bernalillo was the best."[ii] According to Lala Acosta, the Bernalillo Matachines performed twice a day. Regarding the performances, she states "it was like clockwork because everyone knew what they had to do."[iii]

The Bernalillo Matachines was also featured in the 10-year "American Encounters Exhibit" at the Smithsonian in Washington D.C., an exhibit that the people of Bernalillo take much pride in. In 1997, the Bernalillo Matachines was inducted to the New Mexico Hispanic Traditional Folk Musicians Hall of Fame.[iv]

During Father Bill Sanchez' tenure (1992-1998) at Our Lady of Sorrows Parish, the original church, completed in 1853,[v] which was "dedicated by the Archdiocese of Santa Fe in 1856"[vi] was re-dedicated in honor of Bernalillo's second patron San Lorenzo. According to Sanchez, plans were made for the Santuario to be demolished, but because of faithful parishioners, the church began to undergo renovation projects. The church was abandoned in the 1970s after Our Lady of Sorrows Church was built, which was then turned into storage. The coffins buried under the altar, relics, statues, altar railing and wooden floor were removed the church.[vii] The church has since has had its own Mayordomos, in which Tina Dominguez and Santiago Montoya share the responsibility, along with being Mayordomos of San Lorenzo. Santiago Montoya states that the main responsibilities as Mayordomos include the overall upkeep of the church, taking care of the relics inside, preparing the church for the fiestas, weddings and funerals.[viii] Danzantes, as well as parishioners remain committed to this church, in the organization of monthly renovation projects which reflect the commitment of the people to

the church, as well as the devotion to their patron saint. Montoya states that since the re-dedication of the Santuario, a restoration committee, comprised of Matachines dancers and community members, spearheads the restoration efforts.[ix] The church steeples tower above all other structures in the town, signifying the prominence of the church in the past and today, in addition to reflecting the superb efforts by many community members to preserve this important community icon.

In 1992 the Town of Bernalillo Administrative Offices organized a council of present and former Matachines dancers in an effort to promote Bernalillo's unique heritage. The fiesta council, which is a separate entity from the actual fiesta dances, plans the events that are held at Bernalillo's Rotary Park during the fiestas. During the fiestas, entertainment, food vendors, and arts and crafts booths supplement the religious aspect of the fiestas. Rinaldi, speaking of Bernalillo's past and the significance of the events at Rotary Park states:

> Tents would come to town and have the street dances in order to bring everybody back out into the streets to visit their neighbors and to give people more of the fiestas than just the religious aspect. So there's entertainment on stage and dancing and there's vendors and one of the most wonderful things that has come from this is the family reunions, all the parks are filled with family reunions during the fiestas. People come home and there's as much and even more to come home to than when they were children and remember these things.[x]

Another responsibility of the fiesta council is the promotion and selection of the annual fiesta poster, including the development of publications and brochures that explain the history of the Bernalillo area, as well as the significance of the dance and tradition. The annual poster is chosen every year as the official poster which is open to anybody who wishes to submit a design. The designs that have been chosen over the years accurately depict a portion of the Fiestas de San Lorenzo. The work of many local artists has been chosen to represent the official fiesta poster.

Intercultural syncretism, cultural borrowing and Native American/ Hispano relations

Elements of syncretism are evident throughout the world in which two or more cultures have merged to create new and distinct cultures. This is very much the case in New Mexico, where Spanish-Catholic influences once merged with those of Mexican indigenous, then once again merged with elements of the Native American Pueblos of the Rio Grande Valley. The Matachines dance was superimposed as a means of conversion, over already existing dances and traditions of the Mexican populace. This dance survived in Mexico because it worked for the people who learned it. European dance steps, music and costume style survived in the New World, but teachers of the dance then added the characters of Malinche and Montezuma, which were still important figures in the recent history of the Aztecs. The Toro figure was also added at this point to represent the Aztec religion as a symbol of evil. The European shields and swords, previously used in the Matachines dance were now substituted by the palma as a symbol of Christianity, and the recognizable gourd rattle, which was already used in Aztec ceremonies. As the Matachines dance traveled north, the dance then began to be shaped and molded by the people that accepted it.

The dance is now performed in the Rio Grande Valley by Hispanos and Native Americans alike. Each community that adopted the Matachines into its own ritual calendar again shaped and molded it into what worked for them, creating distinct dances within the larger whole of Matachines. In Bernalillo, women dancers, two filas, change in attire and dance structure and drums make their Matachines distinctive. The drums are an interesting aspect of the dance, showing some cultural borrowing from neighboring pueblo communities. Bernalillo, as well as its pueblo neighbors to the north and south have lived in bi-cultural harmony since the first

Spaniards came to the valley. Oral tradition says that pueblo people told the residents of Bernalillo of the Pueblo Revolt of 1680. Hispanos have lived in the pueblos, and vice-versa with intermarriage between the people of both communities. A Bernalillo resident claims that his great-grandmother lived in Sandía Pueblo,[xi] thus strengthening the idea of Hispano and Pueblo social interaction. This statement is also echoed by many Bernalillo families in their oral traditions. Throughout the course of my fieldwork, I realized that most Bernalillo informants spoke about the Native Americans in some respect. Some spoke about their ability to maintain language and culture, others about their familial ties to the pueblos. It appears as if the people of Bernalillo have an implicit respect for pueblo people and culture. During the low point of the Matachines dance of the 1950s, dancers from Sandía Pueblo were asked to participate in the dances of Bernalillo, in which the dancers from Sandía were influential in the survival of the dance. Aguilar states that his grandfather played the violin on several occasions at Sandía. In addition, Aguilar claims that the people from Sandía came and stayed with families that they knew throughout the duration of the fiestas.[xii] On some occasions, it is said that residents of San Felipe brought food to share with families that they knew in Bernalillo for the fiestas.[xiii] Some residents of Santa Ana Pueblo have, and continue to participate in the Bernalillo Matachines as well.

Shirley Pino, a resident of Santa Ana Pueblo, was taught about the Matachines/ "Matachinas" dance in Bernalillo by her late grandfather.[xiv] Her grandfather made a promesa of four years to dance in the Matachines, but was unable to complete his promesa due to health restrictions. He told Pino "these Matachinas have been dancing for a long time." Pino touches on the striking similarities between the traditional pueblo dances and the Matachines dance in practice, positions of organization, and a form of the entrega done in the pueblo after ceremonies,

which is similar to the entrega of the Matachines. In 1979, after her grandfather's death, Pino asked the veteran dancers if she could complete her grandfather's promesa. She explains that the Matachines were not shy about teaching her the dance steps, and even lent her dance attire. Lala Acosta was also influential in teaching Pino the dance steps. Throughout her time dancing, Pino heard the townspeople of Bernalillo speak of hardship and struggle and how San Lorenzo would intercede for them, but felt that she had yet to feel the power of San Lorenzo's intercession.

Also a participant of several traditional pueblo dances throughout the Middle Rio Grande Valley, Pino states that she began to ask herself: "Why am I being a part of this? Am I being a part of something that is a celebration that the Spanish people came back from Mexico to re-establish? Am I not thinking about my people? Am I doing this for what? Am I going against my people?" Pino began to question her position in the Matachines dance as to whether or not she was celebrating the subjugation of her people by the first Spanish settlers. At about the same time, Pino's mother became ill, which resulted in a brief break from dancing the Matachines. She came back to Bernalillo three years later, after the death of her mother, and decided that she was not dancing the Matachines in celebration of what happened to pueblo people, rather she was committed to finishing her grandfather's promesa "and going on with my own, and then being a part of what Bernalillo was all about, because I grew up with the kids from Bernalillo." As Pino struggled with her involvement in the Matachines, she realized that the Matachines has become not a celebration of the re-establishment of Bernalillo and of New Mexico rather that it has been something that the people of both communities have come to share. Pino states "today, we're celebrating together." When Pino came back to dance the Matachines in 2004, she expressed the interest many of the community took in her return when they said "You're back, we missed you, you've been dancing for so long, we haven't seen you, how's your mother?" A microcosm of

what has occurred for over three hundred years in the Bernalillo area, regarding the interactions between Hispano and Native people is embedded in Pino's statement "the families welcomed me back."[xv]

Intracultural Syncretism

Penitente Brotherhood

In addition to analyzing the dance as a three-day folk observance, including certain elements of what occurs at certain points during the fiesta, it is essential that the underlying themes and symbolism be looked at as well. The Matachines dance reflects the manner in which the community views self-sacrifice, prayer, and charity/reciprocity. How has this tradition evolved to incorporate thought and action that mirrors other traditions throughout the region?

Sylvia Rodriguez presents a linkage between the Matachines tradition and the Penitente Brotherhood as seen at Arroyo Seco. She states that this linkage also surfaces in Picurís Pueblo, Alcalde, Bernalillo and San Jose in Albuquerque (Rodriguez 1996:56). A strong case for this linkage between the Matachines dance of Bernalillo and the Penitente Brotherhood can be made when the values of *caridad* (charity), *oración* (prayer) y *el buen ejemplo* (the good example), which are central to the Brotherhood's value system, are examined. These core values are evident in the Matachines dance of Bernalillo in that many of the traditions and customs that can be seen today run parallel to them.

While it is evident that the Matachines dance and the Penitente Brotherhood are not the same tradition, I wish to present the possibility of a link in how the Penitente Brotherhood has had an impact on the Matachines thus further shaping and molding the dance into its own distinct version. First, it is important to examine the historical background of the Penitente Brotherhood

in New Mexico and specifically in Bernalillo to further understand how each tradition mirrors the other. The three core values of the Penitentes, mentioned previously, must then be examined in order to discover the striking similarities between the two traditions.

The Penitente Brotherhood, or la Fraternidad Piadosa de los Hermanos de Nuestro Padre Jesus Nazareno, was established as a lay organization in response to a shortage of clergy during the post-reconquista period in New Mexico (John de Aragon 1998:3, 27-28). In response to this shortage, Penitente Brotherhoods emerged to meet the spiritual needs of New Mexican communities, including the disbursement of mutual aid, community charity and penance (John de Aragon 1998:3). While membership in the Brotherhood was year-round, one of the main activities of the Penitentes was the observance of Lent, especially Holy Week and the re-enactment of the Passion of Christ.

Throughout time, the Brotherhood has been subject to misrepresentation and inferences drawn about their acts. In the mid-19th century, the Penitentes withdrew underground in response to harsh criticism by the newly appointed bishop. Jean Baptiste Lamy of France condemned the Penitentes and substituted the local clergy/secular priests with French clergy (John de Aragon 1998:35). After this withdrawal the Brotherhood began to slowly resurface in many communities and has again become a vital resource for several communities throughout New Mexico.

According to Ray John de Aragon, the Penitentes believed that it was their duty to maintain “the centuries-old traditions that were carried over from la Madre España” or Mother Spain (John de Aragon 1998:49). These traditions included performances of los Pastores, las Posadas, los Comanches dance, and los Moros featuring los Matachines dance, which were used as a means of educating the community in history, religion and culture (John de Aragon 1998:49-

50). Aragon also states that the Matachines dance was performed by many members of the Brotherhood (John de Aragon 1998:50).

In addition to maintaining many traditions, Alberto Lopez Pulido states that the Penitentes, who were engaged in *haciendo penitencia* or doing penance, lived by three core principles: caridad (charity), oración (prayer) y el buen ejemplo (the good example) (Lopez Pulido 2000:10). He states that an act of charity to the Penitentes was a sacred expression by praying and providing help to those in need are understood as synonymous sacred acts (Lopez Pulido 2000:11). He also states that prayer was understood not just as traditional prayer, but was also done through action and that through prayer one provides a good example to the community at-large (Lopez Pulido 2000:12-14). Finally Lopez Pulido states that prayer, coupled with el buen ejemplo/good example, means that one offers personal prayer for someone in addition to helping them (Lopez Pulido 2000:16). This translates to a society in which acts of charity such as helping and caring for the sick, repairing a roof, harvesting the crops etc. were also thought of as a form of prayer to the Penitentes. When one is engaged in charity and prayer, it provides community members a model in which to live their lives. In addition to these core principles, the Brotherhood also believed in doing penance in the form of self-sacrifice, namely flagellation (Wiegle 1976).

Marta Weigle presents a map which notes various known *moradas,* or Penitente meeting spaces, throughout New Mexico including 11 in Sandoval County and 9 in Bernalillo County (Weigle 1976:13). According to Charles Aguilar various communities within close proximity to Bernalillo had a Penitente presence including: Peña Blanca, Albuquerque, San Luis and Tomé.[xvi] Bernalillo also had a Penitente Brotherhood with a morada located in southeastern Bernalillo, on Oak St. [xvii] The Bernalillo Penitentes were led by a man by the name of Horacio Mora. [xviii] The

morada has since been destroyed with all of its religious articles inside given to the San Jose morada in Albuquerque.[xix]

Aguilar refutes the claim that these Penitentes had any impact on the Matachines dance, however he does note that a very prominent individual by the name of Prospero Baca, having moved to Bernalillo from El Valle de San Miguel, near Las Vegas, New Mexico, was highly involved in the Matachines tradition in Bernalillo.[xx] Prospero Baca was also an Hermano of the Penitente Brotherhood in San Miguel.[xxi] Aguilar mentions that Prospero Baca was the Abuelo in the Bernalillo Matachines, but after he went blind, became the rezador.[xxii] Prospero Baca has since passed, however he has left his imprint on the Matachines tradition that can be seen today.

As mentioned in the previous chapters much emphasis is placed on self-sacrifice. The Matachines dance during the hottest times of the day with their faces covered in heat absorbent black cloth. During the dances, water is strictly forbidden. La Corrida demands a participant be conditioned well enough to take on such an arduous task. The further the home of the Mayordomo to the church in proximity, the more difficult la corrida can be. The concept of *la limosna* is also very prominent in Bernalillo. Every year the Mayordomos go out into the community and knock on doors asking for a donation to San Lorenzo. Many families give monetary donations as well as donations of food, drink or physical labor reflecting a complex system of reciprocity.

When these and other systems within the Matachines dance are looked at in light of the core values of the Penitentes, a clear picture is discernable in terms of why they were introduced and who introduced them. First, charity as being a sacred act is clearly mirrored in the act of giving a donation or la limosna to the Mayordomos. Economically, Bernalillo is not a self-sustaining community which is reflected by current United States Census data. Bernalillo's

household income equals $30,884 and income per capita is a low $13,100.[xxiii] These numbers further reflect a need for charity and reciprocation within an already economically depressed community. Charity can also be looked at in terms of making a promise to dance the Matachines for the health and/or well-being of another person. It is impossible to know that every dancer is dancing for another individual, since personal promesas are not often explicitly asked or talked about, however it is clear that due to war and health complications, among other things, many promesas are made for others. Perhaps the most evident form of an act of charity is embedded in the concept of "escalvo de San Lorenzo" which Aguilar states that as a dancer or participant of the Matachines, one must give themselves to the service of the Mayordomos and San Lorenzo thus becoming a "slave of San Lorenzo" throughout the duration of the preparation before and during la fiesta.

Prayer, or oración is also present in Bernalillo. Many of the alabados sung today in the Matachines were written by Prospero Baca. Alabados are usually associated with the *Penitente* Brotherhood and it is possible that much more emphasis was placed in the alabados with Prospero Baca's influence. Marta Weigle states that in order to enter a morada, the brothers recited a very recognizable chant in Bernalillo:

-Quien en esta casa da luz? [from the outside]
-Jesús [from the inside]
-Quien la llena de alegría?
-Maria
-Quien la conserva en la fe?
-Jose [xxiv]

With a minor change at the end, this same chant is also recited during the monthly rosaries, la novena and las vísperas in Bernalillo:

-Quien en esta casa da luz?
- Jesús

-Quien la llena de alegría?
-Maria
-Quien la abraza en la fe?
-Jose

According to Lopez Pulido, prayer is not only thought of as traditional prayer, but is achieved through action. The act of making a promesa to dance, cook food, pray, etc. is closely associated with prayer. By engaging in charity and prayer, the Matachines dancers and all participants of la fiesta provide "el buen ejemplo" for the community at large. This may be a catalyst which reflects the large amount of individuals dancing and participating. Because it is proper and serves as a good example, many people wish to reflect that aspect and thus become involved in the Matachines.

It is questionable that the Penitentes of Bernalillo had any impact on the Matachines dance. What is clear is that many aspects of the Penitente Brotherhood can be seen in the Bernalillo Matachines dance- self-sacrifice, charity, prayer and good example. Prospero Baca may perhaps be the catalyst of much of these elements, either for starting them or reinvigorating existing elements upon his arrival. As a prominent member of the Matachines tradition, Prospero Baca, as a member of the Brotherhood in Northern New Mexico caused the community to turn inward yet again in order to identify what worked for the community in how it viewed certain elements of this tradition.

Comanchitos Dance

Elements from the Comanche dances performed during the Christmas season in Bernalillo can also be seen in the Matachines dance. Enrique Lamadrid has conducted extensive research on the Comanche dances performed throughout New Mexico which he presents in his 2003 publication entitled *Hermanitos Comanchitos*. Lamadrid's research offers fruitful lines of

inquiry regarding the grafting of las Posadas and Comanchitos traditions and their influence on the Bernalillo Matachines dance. It is important to understand who the Comanches were and the elements that changed a significant facet of the Matachines dance tradition- the all night watch/velorio.

The Comanches, or *Numunuh*, established a strong presence in New Mexico during the 18th century (Lamadrid 2003:27-28). Known as the 'Lords of the Plains' the Comanches were very aggressive in their raids upon Hispanic and Pueblo villages, which ultimately led to the Comanche Wars of 1706-1875 (Lamadrid 2003:28-30). Throughout the wars, each side of the battle gained minor victories but a Comanche chief named Cuerno Verde terrorized Hispano and Pueblo communities through continuous raids, each time taking human captives with him (Lamadrid 2003:33). Upon Cuerno Verde's death, the Comanches and Governor Juan Bautista de Anza slowly worked toward a resolution, which ultimately led to the end of the Comanche raids (Lamadrid 2003:36).

In response to these raids, Hispano communities reflected the idea and reality of raiding and captivity. Lamadrid states that Hispano communities link captivity with Comanches and can be seen in the velorio tradition of San Marcial, of southern New Mexico. According to Lamadrid, "*padrinos*, or godparents, would stand over the Santo Nino all night long, to guard against anyone who would take Him captive, Indians or not" (Lamadrid 2003:91). Furthering the notion of linking captivity with velorios, Lamadrid points to the work done by Rebolledo and Marquez in Placitas, New Mexico.

> On each side of the altar stood an ever watchful guard, a man and a woman. They were the padrinos and they must watch the Infant. Those who went to the altar to adore must go in twos…Thus the remainder of the night went on. At about the hour of midnight the padrinos feigned drowsiness…The padrinos made efforts to keep awake and guard the infant. But at last sleep overpowered them, and the

> Child was left unprotected. It was then that one secretly chosen by the Padrinos stole furtively into the room and tiptoed noiselessly to the altar and snatched the padrino's charge and as quietly crept from the room with it. The seconds passed and within the room all was as silent as death. Then in due time a noisy roar from a gun aroused the slumbering ones. They looked at the altar to behold the vacant spot where the crib had been (Rebolledo and Marquez 2000:215).

This staged "stealing" of the Infant culminates with the padrinos finding the santo in which the individual that took the Infant must name the price for his return, typically a rosary or monetary donation (Rebolledo and Marquez 2000:215). Regarding this passage, Lamadrid states that "the plot is structurally identical to the Comanche Nativity plays, but without specific reference to Comanches, only to the constant threat of abduction and captivity" (Lamadrid 2003:92). This story is reflective of the velorio tradition as seen in the Bernalillo Matachines tradition.

Charles Aguilar states that the Comanchito dances in Bernalillo depict the stealing of the santo during Christmastime.[xxv] According to Lamadrid, the Bernalillo Comanchitos is a product of a grafting of Comanche dances with the Christmas Posadas tradition, attributed to a man named Ezekiel Dominguez (Lamadrid 2003:120). Also presented in Lamadrid's work is a description stating that "toward the end of the twenty verse [Comanchitos] song the priest invites everyone who has made a *promesa*, or promise to the Holy Child, to come and dance with the Comanchitos. Several young and older adults then join the group and dance with the children" (Lamadrid 2003:123, for Bernalillo Comanchitos lyrics see appendix). Finally, Lamadrid states that "the Bernalillo 'Comanchitos' recapitulates the entire plot of the Comanches morality play, the arrival at the house of the vigil, the formal entrance, the promises, and the abduction of the Santo Nino" (Lamadrid 2003:127).

It is clear that elements of the Comanchitos dance have emerged to have presence within the Matachines tradition, namely the velorio. Although velorios are common in many traditions throughout New Mexico, the act of guarding, or *velando* as seen in Bernalillo certainly merits

attention. The act of Matachines holding guns, which were once loaded[xxvi] is possibly a remnant of the fact that Mayordomos and participants of la fiesta literally guarded the saint from being stolen. Historically, this can be attributed to the fact that because a religious icon such as a santo carried special significance within the community, participants went to great lengths to protect the santo from raiding nomadic tribes. Throughout time, because of forced relocation and reservations, as well as urbanization and the signing of treaties, Bernalillo no longer has to guard the saint from other ethnic groups, but possibly from members of the same community. Because the tradition of guarding the saint is embedded in history and tradition, it has since become a part of the Matachines tradition to a dance and act that works for the community.

In addition, as previously mentioned, San Lorenzo cannot be left alone in the home of the Mayordomo, which means that a member of the family must always be in the presence of the santo. The passage mentioned earlier in which the Mayordomos become lax in watching over the saint, offers another connection to this tradition in Bernalillo. Charles Aguilar cites a story of a family that was the Mayordomo of the saint. They left their home leaving San Lorenzo alone. When the family returned several hours later, San Lorenzo was gone. The family looked everywhere for the saint, and even asked the neighbors if they had seen anybody at their home. One night, the door rattled and the family discovered the stampa of San Lorenzo back on the altar in their living room.[xxvii] This tradition may answer the question as to why explicit rules are in place in regards to watching over or guarding the saint. It is evident that this tradition, although embedded in historical connotations of captivity and raiding, has thus become a contemporary way of ensuring the tradition of los Matachines is maintained while giving respect and honoring historical events of the past.

With many elements of intercultural syncretism evident in the Bernalillo Matachines, it is equally important to give some attention to the possibility that the Matachines tradition is a product of intracultural syncretism. This can be seen in how the Matachines explicitly reflect the Penitente Brotherhood's values of prayer, charity and good example. Self-sacrifice, central to the Penitente tradition, is also mirrored in the execution of the Matachines dance. The Comanchitos tradition, performed during the Christmas season, has also been incorporated in the Matachines tradition, or at least a facet of it- the velorio. As the Comanche occupation in New Mexico created folk dramas in response to their raids and captivity, Bernalillo reflects this tradition by "guarding" the saint during the all-night watch. Although the Matachines dance is very distinct from the Penitente Brotherhood and Comanchitos dance, the Matachines absorbed elements from the latter traditions which can be seen in today's Bernalillo Matachines tradition.

Tourism and the Faith

When the railroad reached New Mexico in the mid 19th century, it not only opened the Southwest to trade and growth, it created an interesting polarization of the Hispanic and Native American people and cultures of the region, into what Lamadrid calls an idealization of the Native Americans and a denigration or "Hispaniphobia" of the Hispanics (Lamadrid 2003:xii). Native American culture items were now desired by people from the Eastern United States. This exotic and glamorized view of the Southwest has not subsided with cities such as Santa Fe and Taos becoming some of the most popular Southwestern tourist destinations. Hispanics have thus yearned to create objects that are considered beautiful and acceptable by outsiders. Some Hispanic communities have in turn boosted their economies by marketing the cultural aspects of the area.

Some communities perform the Matachines in order to market and draw in outside tourists, whereas the participants of the dance in Bernalillo have focused their intentions inward, contrary to many northern New Mexican communities that have focused their attention outward. The Matachines is a dance of the people and tourists are rarely seen in attendance at the fiesta dances. The Town of Bernalillo has marketed the fiestas in the publication of posters and brochures only to educate the community in the important facets of this tradition, but the Matachines dance is not an event that attracts tourists in large numbers from all areas of the country. The posters and brochures serve as a reminder of Bernalillo's unique culture and traditions. The Matachines draws attention not from outsiders, but from locals and the populace of the surrounding communities. Because Bernalillo has yet to establish itself into a self sustaining economy, it is questionable as to why the Matachines, which has now become such a distinct performance in the region, has not marketed and sold the performance to outsiders.

The Bernalillo Matachines have been asked to dance at several events and venues throughout the state and have on many occasions been paid for dancing. In this case, all monetary donations made to the Matachines are given to the Santuario Restoration Fund. According to Ralph Chavez, the Matachines "go out into the public to show people our tradition, not for money. That makes me feel better. I'd rather just donate it and make it go to the church."[xxviii]

Throughout my fieldwork and participating in the fiestas as a danzante, I have seen and grown up in a community which holds the Catholic Church and faith in such high regard. The church remains the most important component within the community, and while I do not wish to discredit the faith and prominence of the church in other communities, the church has always been the social glue of Bernalillo which binds the people together. The fiestas have survived into

contemporary times because of the faith that people have that by participating in the fiestas God will aid them through hardship and struggle, all through the intercession of San Lorenzo.

Comparing it to other New Mexican Matachines dances, it is evident that the overall appearance of the Bernalillo Matachines is quite different. For example, the Toro role is played by a man, as opposed to a young boy in other communities. All Matachines wear white shirts and black pants, giving a more formal appearance to the dance. Most importantly, the Abuelo figures have evolved from grotesque figures, to more dignified figures within the dance. In other communities, the Abuelos wear masks and are very vocal while interacting with the crowd. Because of the emphasis in the church and the faith, it appears as if the Bernalillo Matachines has moved away from the grotesque into a more formal approach to the dance. When asked why the Bernalillo Abuelos do not wear masks and interact much with the crowd, Prairie states "I've been asked to dress as a clown. An individual that asked me was willing to make the uniforms and all that and I didn't think it was proper. If you're there to honor someone, you should do with respect and not do it as a joke."[xxix] Prairie's statement is a testament to the importance of honoring a religious figure and the serious form the dance takes. The Bernalillo Matachines once had Abuelos that dressed like clowns and interacted with the crowd, telling jokes about Monarca, etc., but the dance has been shaped by those who perform it into something that has worked for them. Over time, the participants of the dance decided that the clowning and social interaction of the Abuelos should be omitted to emphasize the seriousness of the dance. A character known as la Perejundia existed Bernalillo, which was usually played by a man cross-dressed as a female. La Perejundia and her husband abuelo would interact during the dance with frequent playful skirmishes, resulting in the "birth" of a child. Kloeppel notes that some dances, including "La Matada del Toro" (the killing of the bull) and "The Bailada de los Abuelos" (the dance of the

clowns) have “fallen by the wayside” (Kloeppel 1970:8). The taming of the Abuelos, the complete omission of the Perejundia character and dances that portray more of a grotesque clowning aspect of the dance ceded to the more dignified roles within the dance, and the formal style to the Matachines, thus reflecting the town’s perception of what a religious dance should be.

Also an interesting aspect of the dance is the prohibition of pictures, film and sound recordings at the home of the Mayordomos during the fiestas. As seen in pueblo communities, pictures, sound and film recordings are strictly prohibited because of the religious importance of the dances. Small portions of the dances can be recorded by culture members for the purpose of learning dance steps, but if outsiders are seen recording the dances in any way, they are asked to conceal their equipment. The oficiales are usually responsible for enforcing this rule, but obviously it is impossible to limit all recording. The first occasion in which the Matachines allowed an outside source to film and document their event was when the Smithsonian Institute was granted permission to do so. The prohibition of filming or photography of the dance reflects the religious significance of the dance, and is yet another example of cultural syncretism in the valley. The prohibition of recording the event also hints of a manner in which this tradition is preserved by not allowing outsiders to take a piece of the dance with them. Several Hispano traditions however have been changed or lost due to the inception of a new language to the Southwest- English.

Assimilation, Loss of Culture and Ethnic Pride

Our grandparents spoke Spanish, our fathers learned it, but we hear of a time in their lives when they were ridiculed for speaking Spanish in American schools. Spanish, which was the

central language of Hispano people in the Rio Grande Valley, was slowly fading away with the inception of a third ethnic group in the Southwest- the Anglos. With the signing of the Treaty de Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, Mexico lost 1/3 of their land to the United States. The United States gained the land which included much territory in the present-day Southwest including all of New Mexico. The people, who were previously under the banners of Spain, then Mexico for 25 years (1821-1846), then finally the United States, began to see a large group of Anglos move into New Mexico. Because this land was now a part of the United States, the Spanish language quickly lost its prominence. Schools now taught in English, forcing the people throughout the Southwest to learn a new language. The people now spoke two languages; the Spanish of their forefathers at home, and the English of the Anglos at school. The Spanish language no longer had a use in a community such as Bernalillo, which longed to keep up with rapidly growing American concepts and popular culture. Our fathers no longer used the Spanish language because it was considered primitive to use it in America. This view of the language resulted in the majority of our fathers not passing it down to our generation. With the loss of language, our people began to see some, if not most, of its traditions and customs succumb to the dominant American culture. Why then, does Bernalillo continue with dancing the Matachines every year? How does a community maintain a dance that does not fit into the parameters of what it is to be "American?"

Recently, Bernalillo has seen three gaming casinos built within a 15 minute drive. In Rio Rancho, Intel has grown into one of the largest producers of computer processors in the world. Bernalillo has also seen the previously small Hispanic village of Placitas evolve into a large predominantly Anglo community. Plans for a Wal-Mart, to be built on Bernalillo's borders, threatens the local economy, as well as the little traditions and customs Bernalillo remains to practice. With the economy rapidly growing around Bernalillo's borders the modern companies

and corporations definitely attract the people of Bernalillo for employment, but every year beginning in July, those participating in the Matachines dance begin to request for time off in order to attend practice, and especially during the three days of the fiesta.

The Matachines dance has, in large part, survived for over three hundred years in Bernalillo because of cultural resistance and ethnic pride. As Bernalillo advances into the 21st century technologically, economically and politically, it has successfully maintained a dance that is centuries old. While conforming to the dominant culture in some ways, Bernalillo proudly affirms its resistance to assimilation by performing the Matachines. In her book entitled *Hecho en Tejas*, Norma Cantú describes the Matachines of south Texas as a dance group that resists the dominant culture stating "the persistence of certain ethnic practices associated with the donning of a specific costume constitutes a resistance to the encroaching cultural practice and affirmation of the existing one" (Cantú 1991:18). This is very much the case with the Bernalillo Matachines which is threatened by encroaching communities around its peripheries. By wearing the Matachines costume, and by performing the dance, the dancers affirm their culture and resist the dominant outside culture (anti-hegemony).

Since the 1970s, Bernalillo has seen many of its youth interested in dancing the Matachines and because of this interest, two filas were created and women now played integral roles within the dance. At this time, the dance took an important turn in the preservation of this tradition. In contemporary times, the Bernalillo Matachines has become one of the largest performances in the region, reflecting its long history of cultural syncretism, assimilation, cultural resistance, and a large influx of growing ethnic pride. The youth of Bernalillo grow up seeing members of their families dancing the Matachines, and thus become interested in dancing when they reach the proper age- evidence that the Matachines blood runs through the veins of

entire families. When asked what the Matachines dance means to them in one word, the people responded with statements such as pride, passion, continuation, family, tradition, faith and culture, proving that the Matachines has become extremely rooted in how the people of Bernalillo identify with their past, present and future. The Matachines dance will continue in Bernalillo well into the future as long as we continue in the ways of our ancestors.

CHAPTER 6 NOTES

[i] Charles Aguilar, interview with author
[ii] Claude Stephenson, personal communication, September 2006
[iii] Lala Acosta, personal communication, September 2006
[iv] "311th Fiesta de San Lorenzo" pamphlet produced by the Fiesta Council and distributed by the Town of Bernalillo Offices, 2004.
[v] Santiago Montoya, personal communication, September 2006
[vi] "311th Fiesta de San Lorenzo" pamphlet produced by the Fiesta Council and distributed by the Town of Bernalillo Offices, 2004.
[vii] Santiago Montoya, personal communication, September 2006
[viii] Santiago Montoya, personal communication, September 2006
[ix] Santiago Montoya, personal communication, September 2006
[x] Maria Rinaldi, interview with author
[xi] Eddie Torres II, interview with author
[xii] Charles Aguilar, personal communication, September 2006
[xiii] Personal communications with various individuals during several visits to San Felipe Pueblo
[xiv] The dance is typically known in Hispanic villages as the Matachines, but the dance is called Matachinas by various Pueblo groups that perform the dance
[xv] Shirley Pino, interview with author
[xvi] Charles Aguilar, personal communication
[xvii] Charles Aguilar, personal communication
[xviii] Charles Aguilar, personal communication
[xix] Charles Aguilar, personal communication
[xx] Charles Aguilar, personal communication
[xxi] Charles Aguilar, personal communication
[xxii] Charles Aguilar, personal communication
[xxiii] Based on 1999 U.S. Census data set, www.uscensus.gov
[xxiv] Weigle, Marta. 1976:155
[xxv] Charles Aguilar, personal communication
[xxvi] Robb A. Sisneros, interview with the author
[xxvii] Charles Aguilar, class lecture given on March 2, 2005
[xxviii] Ralph Chavez, interview with author
[xxix] Leonard Prairie, interview with author