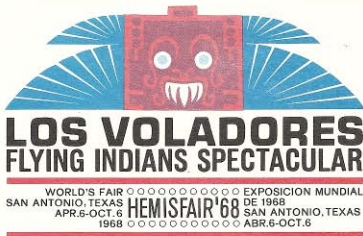


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HEMISFAIR '68 TAKES VISITORS ON A
TRIP INTO COLORFUL AMERICAN PAST

Turning the tables on recent international expositions, which have spotlighted man-on-the-moon, HemisFair '68 is taking seven-million visitors on a trip into the colorful past of the cultures that created America.

It's a suitable switch for San Antonio -- the tradition-minded host city for a World's Fair themed around "The Confluence of Civilizations in the Americas." Typically, even the center of entertainment attention at the 93-acre site, hard by the historic Alamo, involves an evocation of the colorful past -- in the form of a 400-year-old Aztec tribal rain dance.

HemisFair's version -- performed by 22 members of the Totonac tribe of Papantla, Mexico -- may be the last such dance still in regular ritual use.

At home -- in the district of Vera Cruz -- the Indians perform the ancient rite, from sacrifice through dazzling invocation of the gods, in the town square.

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HemisFair Trip Into Past -- 2.

At HemisFair '68, the rain gods are invoked four times a day, weekdays, and five times daily on weekends, at the Frito-Lay/Pepsi-Cola Pavilion.

Apart from the change of scene -- and frequency -- the ritual remains relatively unchanged from its Aztec origins. The pre-Columbian Indians believed that proximity to the heavens made it easier for the gods to hear their prayers; the modern Totonacs carry their ancient ritual to the top of a 114-foot pole, in a pageant designed to attract the gods' attention.

From the top of the pole, where their chief is perched on a twenty-inch disk, colorfully costumed Los Voladores lunge into space and "fly" to the ground and safety. While the flyers and pinwheeling Hua-Huacs (Wah-Wahs) provide the gods with a feast for their eyes, the tribe's pleas for rain -- so vital to an agricultural people -- are spelled out on the chief's flute and in the drumming steps of his traditional rain dance.

Climax of the ceremony comes when each Indian flyer -- secured only by a waist-rope -- makes 32 dramatic revolutions around the pole, flying through space in 30-foot circles before returning to safety.

The 30-minute ritual, with its colorful processional and "maiden sacrifice", may be the last gasp for this particular piece of the past.

Totonac tribesmen, their interpreter reports, are beginning to learn Spanish -- and enough English to order hamburgers and Texas Hots. If short-order lunches are on the way, can modern city civilization be far behind?