

Dance of the Voladors

For this curious Mexican religious ceremony dating from pre-Aztec times, and in this rendition performed in Papantla, a lofty tree trunk is erected in the town square, rising from a hole in which are placed live offerings of animals and fowl. The whirling spectacle, once under way, is over in a minute and a half.



1. Five dancers mount the towering staf, atop which is a movable spindle.



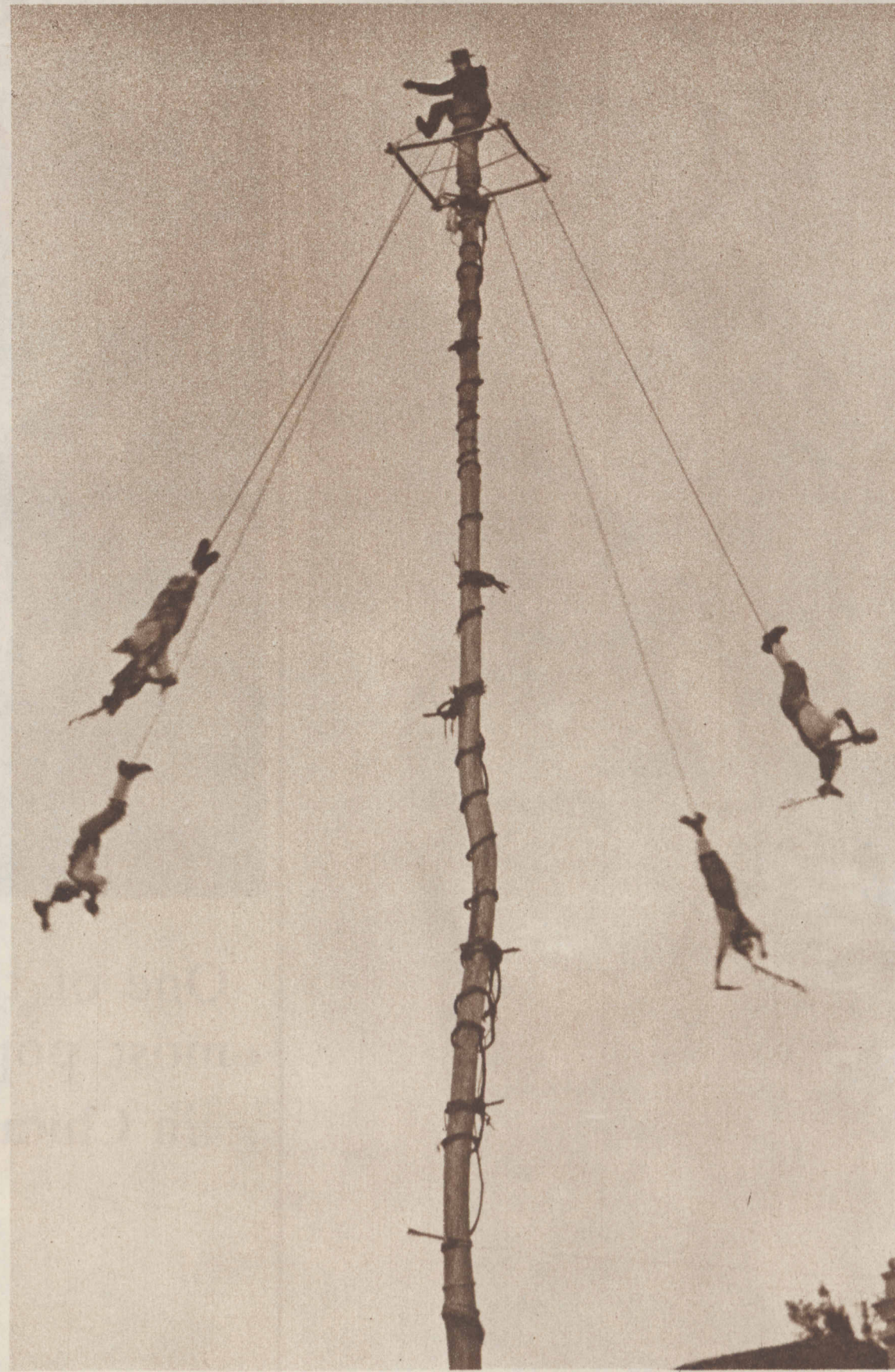
2. One of the dancers sits upon the movable spindle, around which four ropes are wound.



3. With ropes attached to their feet, the dancers swing off into space.



4. The dancers hurtle farther and farther into space, the weight of their bodies unwinding the rope from the spindle.



5. With one of their number playing a weird tune on a whistle-like flute, they whirl nearer to earth at each revolution.

(Photos from Ralph E. Gray.)