

we all play



© 1967 Norman Oswald

Ghana Popular Game

I talked with these children almost every day in Ghana as I walked through my little village toward the school where I taught. They often played this popular game called, in the Akan language, "Nte" ("n-tay" with the accent on the "tay"). Each child sent a seed spinning into the middle of the mat, trying to knock other seeds out. The one who knocked out the final seed, except his, was the winner and got to keep all of them.

At this moment, the boy's little sister has either knocked his seed out or she has grabbed it anyway just to torment him. He does NOT think this is funny and is saying "Fa mame," ("fah mah-may") — "Give it back to me, Sis!"

—Norman Oswald, *Peace Corps/Ghana 1967-69*

Ghana (Republic of Ghana)

Capital Accra

Population 23,832,495 (2009 est.)

Life Expectancy 59.85 years

Literacy 57.9% (age 15 and over can read and write)

Languages Asante 14.8%, Ewe 12.7%, Fante 9.9%, Boron 4.6%, Dagomba 4%

Religions Christian 68.8%, Muslim 15.9%, traditional 8.5%

Government constitutional democracy

Source: The World Factbook, 2009



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Thailand Stilt Walking in Refugee Camp

In Umphiem Mai refugee camp, home to 20,000 Burmese refugees, bamboo is critical to survival. The camp sits on a mountainside a few miles from the border between Thailand and Burma. The people must carry the unwieldy bamboo poles up and down steep and winding slopes. In the camp, the use of bamboo seems to be nearly infinite as demonstrated by this young boy who was found one sunny morning balancing on his bamboo stilts. His persistence and gentle sense of humor were typical of the camp's refugee population.

— Jane Hall, *Peace Corps/Nicaragua 1994-96*

Thailand (Kingdom of Thailand)

Capital Bangkok

Population 65,998,436 (July 2009 est.)

Life Expectancy 73.1 years

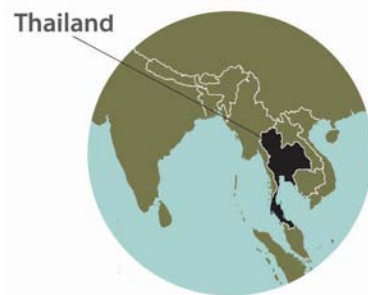
Literacy 92.6% (age 15 and over can read and write)

Languages Thai, English, ethnic and regional dialects

Religions Buddhist 94.6%, Muslim 4.6%, Christian 0.7%

Government constitutional monarchy

Source: The World Factbook, 2010



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© 2007 Phyllis Noble

China Chess on the Sidewalk

Xiangqi ("shang-chi") or Chinese Chess is an intricate game of military strategy, its circular pieces representing generals and advisors, soldiers and cannons, elephants and horses. In China, people have been playing Xiangqi since the 4th Century BC. To play it well requires deep concentration and years of practice. Today in urban China it is not uncommon to see people playing Xiangqi on the sidewalks of busy thoroughfares, oblivious to the press of pedestrians, bicyclists, and bystanders. Often a small crowd gathers with intent observers noting and admiring the strategies and skills of the players. Sidewalks here are much more than just passageways; they provide the stage for a full and active social life. Retired people in urban China gather outdoors daily to play Xiangqi, practice Tai Chi, or make music.

— Phyllis Noble, *Peace Corps/Nigeria, 1965-1967*

China (People's Republic of China)

Capital Beijing

Population 1,338,612,968 (2009 est.)

Life Expectancy 73.47 years

Literacy 90.9% (age 15 and over can read and write)

Languages Mandarin, Cantonese, Shanghainese, Fuzhou, others

Religions (officially atheist), Taoist, Buddhist, Christian 3%-4%, Muslim 1%-2%

Government Communist state

Source: *The World Factbook, 2009*



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© 2004 Christina "Jill" Granberg

Swaziland Rolling Avocados

Swaziland quickly puts to rest any drab, monochromatic notion of Peace Corps life. The land is awash with color year-round; it blushes with wintertime poinsettias and brushfires. Summer rains bring out the brilliant greens of fruit trees and family gardens; market stalls, teeming with produce, offer an artist's palette of colors. Here, the visual feast began right at my doorstep where one afternoon I stumbled upon my host's young daughter rolling green avocados in the sunshine. In contrast to this beauty, however, is Swaziland's tragic distinction as home to the world's highest rate of HIV. Increasingly, communities make use of the country's bounty to feed the staggering number of children orphaned by the crisis. These efforts — cooperative gardens and feeding centers — reflect the richest hues of beauty I witnessed each day.

— Christina "Jill" Granberg, *Peace Corps/Swaziland*, 2003-05

Swaziland (Kingdom of Swaziland)

Capital Mbabane

Population 1,337,186 (July 2009 est.)

Life Expectancy 47.85 years

Literacy 81.6% (age 15 and over can read and write)

Languages English, siSwati

Religions Zionist 40%, Roman Catholic 20%, Muslim 10%, other

Government monarchy

Source: The World Factbook, 2010



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© 2004 Tommy Schultz

Philippines Engaging Grin

Smiling playfully from the doorway of his family nipa palm hut, Lito Laudijo Jr. made an instant impression on me. Affectionately known as the “*kometryante*” (comedian) by his family and neighbors — and even by a chicken or two — Lito Jr. was, within minutes of my arrival, already working through his slapstick comedy routine to welcome me to his family’s home on the small island of Pangangan in the Philippines’ Bohol province.

I lived with the Laudijos as part of my Peace Corps training and learned how it feels to be a volunteer immersed in a small, rural community. Although I stayed only a few days, Lito Jr.’s infectious grin and the generous welcome from his family are among my fondest memories of my Peace Corps service.

—Tommy Schultz, *Peace Corps/Philippines, 2004-2006*

Philippines (Republic of the Philippines)

Capital Manila

Population 97,976,603 (2009 est.)

Life Expectancy 71.09 years

Literacy 92.6% (age 15 and over can read and write)

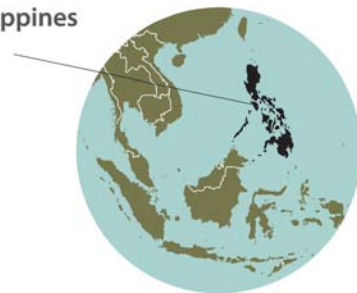
Languages Filipino (official), English (official), Tagalog, Cebuano, Ilocano, others

Religions Roman Catholic 80.9%, Muslim 5%, other Christian 11.6%

Government republic

Source: *The World Factbook, 2009*

Philippines



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© 1979 Charles Eilers

Pakistan Having Fun Studying the ABCs

In Karimabad, Hunza, a village high in the mountains of northern Pakistan, students after class play learning games on the school porch. A group of boys have fun playing a game quizzing each other on writing the English alphabet. English is actually their third language. They already speak Burushaski, the local language of Hunza, and Urdu, the official national language of Pakistan, which uses the Arabic alphabet. The girl in the photo may look left out; however, she is playing in her own study group.

Kids everywhere make learning fun by making up their own games to play. In Hunza it is a welcome break from their chores of tending cattle on the hillsides, collecting wood for the cooking fire, picking apricots to dry from the orchard, and helping grind flour in the mill.

— Charles Eilers, *Peace Corps/Nigeria 1966-67, Ethiopia 1967-69*

Pakistan (Islamic Republic of Pakistan)

Capital Islamabad

Population 176,242,949 (2009 est.)

Life Expectancy 64.49 years

Literacy 49.9% (age 15 and over can read and write)

Languages Punjabi 48%, Sindhi 12%, Siraiki 10%, Pashtu 8%, Urdu (official) 8%,

Religions Muslim 95% (Sunni 75%, Shia 20%), Christian, Hindu and other 5%

Government federal republic

Source: The World Factbook, 2009

Pakistan



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© 2005 Joy Campbell

Tanzania Bubbles

The village of Pommern is nestled in the southern highlands of Tanzania's Iringa Province. The basic needs of the citizens are met thanks to a clinic, a few churches, a phone system, a public water source, and a road to the provincial capital, Iringa. Development work continues through local efforts and those of international groups such as Global Volunteers.

This little girl's name is Dorini. Her pretty handmade dress has a map of Africa and African flags across the top, in some way making this beautiful child representative of the children of a continent. I met her and about two dozen other children while in Pommern on a short-term volunteer trip. The kids would come to play with us after we finished our work for the day. Various team members had brought coloring books and markers, balls, bubbles, and Frisbees for the children to play with. Dorini loved the bubbles, but shared generously with the other children as well. We tried to use our extremely rudimentary language skills to talk to them in Kiswahili, but for the most part had to make do with smiles and giggles.

— Joy Campbell, *Peace Corps/Morocco, 1998-2000*

Tanzania (United Republic of Tanzania)

Capital Dar es Salaam

Population 41,048,532 (2009 est.)

Life Expectancy 52.01 years

Literacy 69.4% (age 15 and over can read and write Kiswahili, English or Arabic)

Languages Kiswahili or Swahili (official), Kiunguja, English, Arabic, others

Religions Christian 30%, Muslim 35%, indigenous beliefs 35%, (Zanzibar: 99% Muslim)

Government republic

Source: *The World Factbook, 2009*



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© 2003 Matt Larson

Guatemala Playing Ball

Taking a break from a daylong Junior Achievement training program, these girls wanted to play basketball. The Peace Corps Volunteers organizing the training were happy to oblige, and were surprised to find the girls so good at the game — especially considering they were playing in their traditional Mayan woven skirts and sandals. Everybody had fun.

This Junior Achievement program, called *Fundamentos Empresariales*, took place in the Mayan town of San Antonio Aguas Calientes, famous for its weaving and textiles.

— Matt Larson, *Peace Corps/Guatemala 2003-05*

Guatemala (Republic of Guatemala)

Capital Guatemala City

Population 13,276,517 (2009 est.)

Life Expectancy 70.29 years

Literacy 69.1% (age 15 and over can read and write)

Languages Spanish 60%, Amerindian languages 40%

Religions Roman Catholic, Protestant, indigenous Mayan beliefs

Government constitutional democratic republic

Source: *The World Factbook, 2009*

Guatemala



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© 1989 Karin Krueger

Cameroon Artists in Vogue

Koza is a place of juicy mangos, hidden streams, huge white moons, and eerie flute music in the middle of the night. At harvest season (August-October) the rings of huts clinging high on the mountainside are lapped by yellow crackling stalks of millet. Boys make toys from millet stalks and sell them by the road to tourists. The outer stalks are split and used to peg the soft inner stalks together to make tiny huts with doors and windows that open, and cars with operable hoods and trunks. Once I even saw a little toy cassette player with a button to eject a cassette.

One weekend, several busloads of retired Europeans deluged our village. This photo records the most immediate impression these tourists made on my young friends.

— Karin Krueger, *Peace Corps/Cameroon 1987-1990*

Cameroon (Republic of Cameroon)

Capital Yaoundé

Population 18,879,301 (July 2009 est.)

Life Expectancy 53.69 years

Literacy 67.9% (age 15 and over can read and write)

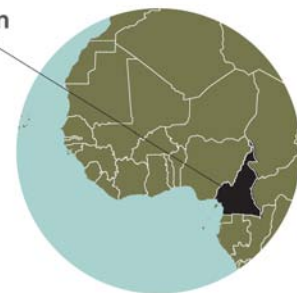
Languages 24 major African language groups, French, English

Religions indigenous beliefs 40%, Christian 40%, Muslim 20%

Government republic

Source: The World Factbook, 2010

Cameroon



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© 1980 Mark Mahoney

Brazil Tire Racing

Brazil is a huge land, with marked contrasts. Traveling from Sao Paulo with a busload of very animated Brazilians, we arrived in Salvador the night before *Carnaval*. Brazil's Northeast, particularly the state of Bahia and its principal city, Salvador, seemed to ooze with soul and charm and history. This is typified by its harmonious racial hotchpotch of African and Portuguese cultures and people.

But the phenomenon of homeless street children (*meninos na rua*, "children on the streets") is an ever-more disturbing issue in Latin American countries, foremost among them Brazil. Despite this situation, while exploring Salvador I happened upon these street children engaged in a very typical childhood activity, "tire racing." As I reflect back on this scene, I am struck by the infectious enthusiasm of these boys and the universality of the simple pleasures of life. It depicts more than words can ever explain.

—Mark Mahoney, *Peace Corps/Ecuador 1975-77, Chile 1978-80*

Brazil (Federative Republic of Brazil)

Capital Brasilia

Population 198,739,269 (July 2009 est.)

Life Expectancy 71.99 years

Literacy 88.6% (age 15 and over can read and write)

Languages Portuguese (official), less common: Spanish, German, Italian, Japanese, English

Religions Roman Catholic 73.6%, Protestant 15.4%, Spiritualist 1.3%, others

Government federal republic

Source: *The World Factbook, 2010*



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