CROWDER COLLEGE MELTING POT

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Welcome to the Crowder College Melting Pot Newsletter

Hello and welcome to the first edition of the *Crowder College Melting Pot,* where advanced students from the English Language Program share their culture! The students have worked very hard this semester to put together this newsletter for the Crowder campus, and we hope you enjoy reading the articles inside. Enjoy learning about legends from Guatemala, marriage customs in India, and taboos in Gambia! Hungry? Try out the wonderful Mexican BBQ recipe on page 4, and give your taste buds a treat fiesta style! I am so proud of all these students, and the way they have worked together to share their experiences with each other, and with you. Now be prepared to learn about new and exciting worlds as you read this first issue of the *Crowder College Melting Pot*!

—Rose-Marie Speck

The Marriage System in India

Navyakanth Mikkilineni

Arranged marriages are a tradition in Indian society. The majority of marriages in India are arranged. The elders find matches for their children within their religion, caste, social status and economic class. Love marriages do happen in India, but not many. It is an accepted fact that the person's family will play an important role in picking a partner. Divorce is not accepted among the majority of Indians, because the marriage choice is carefully thought out and planned. The horoscopes of the two people in question play an important role in the wedding process.

They look for matching levels of education, matching cultures and castes, family history, matching religions, matching food habits, such as vegetarians/non-vegetarians and more. Some brides and grooms come under examination with respect to factors, such as, "will the boy be able to support his new family, does the girl wish to work after marriage, drinking /smoking habits, etc."

Once there is a mutual agreement between the bride and groom who would like to marry, a formal engagement or exchange of the ring takes place. Traditionally, the bride and groom are not allowed to meet until the day of their wedding, but with changing times there is usually a short period when

the bride and groom meet with a few restrictions and limitations. Often the bride lives with her in-laws after marriage, in what is called a joint family.

With arranged marriages comes the dowry system, which is to provide for the bride, should something unfortunate happen to her husband, such as death or divorce. The dowry system slowly moved on to become more of a bride-price system. In India, marriage is meant for life and the divorce rate is extremely low. According to a survey conducted by darndivorce.com published on April 8, 2007, nearly 1.1% marriages in India led to a divorce, compared to over 54.8% in the United States, though the Indian figures are rising gradually.

Weddings in India are very bright events that continue for several days. Both the bride and the groom look their best. The guests who attend the wedding are dressed very well. The bride is dressed in colors, such as white or off-white in most parts of southern India and red in the rest of India. All persons attend the wedding wearing gold jewelry. The ladies have hands painted with henna tattoos. The bridegroom wears traditional clothes, such as dhoti or mundu in the southern part, and a kurta-pyjama, sherwani or a jodhpuri suit in the northern region. The traditional bride wears a saree or lehenga according to the region. All these dresses and colors symbolize the meaning of marriage and the life that follows.

DRCongo: The Big Picture

Fabrice Kamanda

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is the second largest and third wealthiest country in Africa in terms of natural resources. These are the main natural resources: The Congo River, second after the Nile River; the Equatorial forest, second after the Amazon forest; which contain a variety of animals like mountain gorilla, bonobos, chimpanzee, white rhino, and okapi, which can be found only in DRCongo. The DRCongo has five national parks listed as world heritage sites.

Regarding raw natural respurces, DRCongo used to be a grand producer of copper, and was in the cartel of countries that fixed the price of copper in the international market. Apart from copper, Congo is a producer of diamond, gold, and uranium. Congo gave its uranium to the USA during World War II, so that it could be used in the bombs that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan. These days we have cotton, mining that is used to manufacture cell phones, and also zinc and cobalt.

Ukrainian Holidays

Yulia Denisyuk

Ukraine is well known by it is numerous holidays. In total there are 144 holidays in the Ukraine. Such holidays as New Year, Christmas, International Women's Day, Easter, Victory Day, St. Valentine's Day, Ivan Kupala Day, The Day of Knowledge, and St. Nicholas Day are the most widely celebrated ones.

In Ukraine people celebrate New Year two times, on the 31st of December and the 14th of January. The last one is called "Old New Year." The existence of the Old New Year is due to a change of calendar systems in Ukraine. The holiday of the Old New Year is interesting because of its traditions and ceremonies. On the evening of January 13th, girls dressed in peasant costumes begin to walk from house to house singing special songs, called "shedrivki." Families that are visited by these girls give them food or money for their work. It lasts until midnight, but in the morning of the14th of January, the first person who should enter your home should be a man. That is why, early in the morning, only guys can walk from house to house and sprinkle people's homes with wheat, which is associated with richness, good health, and a great start of the New Year. New Year in Ukraine is associated with mandarin oranges, presents, "elka" (New Year tree), and Grandfather Frost (Santa in the USA). New Year's night is a night when your wish comes true. During the Ukrainian New Year, it is a tradition to make a wish under a chiming clock. Once the clock begins to beat midnight, you need to write your wish on a piece of paper, burn it, put the ashes into a glass of champagne and drink it. And your wish will come true for sure!

The next big holiday in Ukraine is Christmas, which is on the 6th of January. During Christmas all families prepare the dinner with twelve meatless dishes. The main dish is "Kutia." It is sweet barley or wheat with honey, raisins, "uzvar" (a drink made of dry fruits) and caramel. On Christmas night children also should bring "Kutia" to their godparents. Also, it is tradition to stay hungry and not eat anything until the first star appears in the sky. This is because the star tells you that Jesus Christ was born and now you can celebrate.

Taboos in Gambia

Basiru Gaye

Gambia is a very small country in west Africa with a population of just over 1.5 million people. It is often referred to as the smiling coast of Africa. This name is derived from the peace and tranquility the country continues to enjoy despite all the numerous wars and natural disasters neighboring countries experience. The country has more than 10 different languages and dialects, each representing a unique culture and traditional beliefs.

Despite strong Islamic and Christian influences, Gambians have their own traditional beliefs, which are inherited from one generation to another. These beliefs, or taboos, are not written laws, but are inherent in the culture, and everyone knows not to go against these beliefs because the offender will suffer great repercussions. Below is a list of the most notable taboos in the Gambia.

1. Pouring hot water on the ground is believed to burn our ancestors, who were buried on the ground.
2. People avoid doing things on Wednesday because it is believed to be a day of bad luck.
3. If a pregnant woman looks at a monkey or baboon, when born, her child will look like the monkey or the baboon.
4. If you buy shoes or perfume for your girlfriend, the relationship will not last long.
5. When cutting someone's hair, you should not throw it away because when a bird finds it and makes a nest with it, the person would have a constant headache.
6. Pregnant women should not eat eggs. If she does, the baby becomes dumb or deaf.
7. Nobody sleeps at night on his/her stomach. It brings bad luck.

Colombian Ecotourism

Cristina Jaramillo

I want to show many of the Natural Parks you can find in Colombia, so you can realize how wonderful my country is. Join with me in this little trip inside wonderful and unknown places in Colombia.

One is the **National Park "La Macarena."** This park is located in the southeast, and has a very special river called "Caño Cristales" - "Crystal Channel." This river has a special gift. Between September and October, you can see colorful water because many of the aquatic plants have different colors.

Another is the **"The Nevados National Park."** This is a park formed by five snow mountain peaks: Quindio, Santa Isabel, Cisnes, Ruiz and Tolima. It is very interesting because Colombia is a warm country, and you can enjoy the snow and the many wild life in the cold weather.

Tatacoa's Desert is actually not a desert, but is a dry and eroded extension of land. It is an open space with a clear sky without mountains. This place is sought by astronomy followers because you can see the constellations and meteor rains.

Amacayacu Natural Park is in the Colombian Amazon part. It is very important because it is the home of the "Titi's Monkey," the smallest monkey in the world. Also, you can see the famous "Victoria Reggia," the biggest lotus in the world. You can stand up under it.

Parties with Mariachi Band

Domitila Medrano

In Guadalajara, Jalisco, in Mexico, a mariachi band was created in September. Every year the creation of the band is celebrated, accompanied by charros, and a parade in honor of the mariachi band. It's a festival like the one that celebrates the foundation of the Jalisco capitol with the mariachi band playing for the running bulls. The mariachi band also plays at the party of the cathedral, in the festivity of December 12, every year. The mariachi band is present on the celebration of September 16, the Mexican day of independence, and it also plays in the church when the people celebrate certain parties. A mariachi band plays on Mother's Day, when people have a party in their homes that they enjoy with friends relatives, and for weddings.

Mexican Barbeque

Domitila Medrano

3 pounds of pork or beef
2 teaspoons of soy sauce
salt and pepper to taste
1 pound of red pepper
1 bay leaf
whole oregano to taste
garlic to taste

Blend the pepper with the garlic, salt, and soy sauce. When blended, put in a bowl, and marinate the meat inside for 30 minutes. Then, put in a pot and cover with the lid. Turn on the oven to 400 degrees, put the pot inside the oven, and cook for 3 to 4 hours.
Serve with cilantro and onion, if desired.

Uruguay Tourist Highlights
Andres Vernazza

Uruguay is a country where people live peacefully and are friendly, where hot weather and the happiness dominate life, and where people enjoy the culture, art and sports.

Uruguay has a coast of 600 kilometers of beautiful beaches. Half of those beaches are in the Atlantic Ocean.

The water of Uruguayan beaches is free from contamination. The summer season starts in December and ends in March, and the highest tourist season is in January. An hour and a half from the capital is Piriápolis, which is a beautiful and peaceful city with lots of history and a perfect Mediterranean style of living.

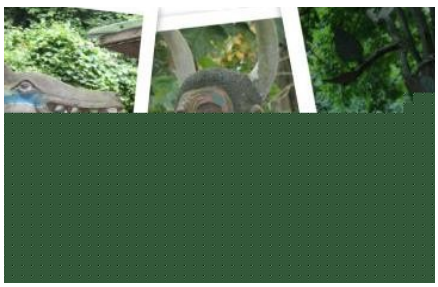
Continuing travel to the east, only 30 minutes from Piriápolis, you will find one of the most beautiful beaches in the Atlantic Ocean: Punta del Este, a resort in Uruguay, and one of the best in South America. During the last 50 years, Punta del Este has turned into a very modern tourist city. It is known as the "Pearl of the Atlantic" for its exclusivity, and every year people all over the world spend very nice holidays there. It has an international airport only 15 minutes away. Also, there are lots of international hotels with wonderful service. Uruguay is not an expensive country, and it can be cheaper than a vacation in Europe.

Uruguayan beaches are one of the most beautiful places in the world to rest, to have fun, and to live. So WELCOME all who want to experience this beautiful place.

Voodoo in Benin
Dulove Azon

Voodoo is a religion that was created in my country Benin, once called DAHOMEY. Some say that Voodoo started early in the 13th century, but nobody really knows when the practice began. Originally, everybody practiced Voodoo because the French colonization had not yet begun, and the people did not know about others' religions. Voodoo was the only religion practiced by the numerous ethnic groups in Dahomey. It started in Dahomey and was extended to neighboring countries like Togo, Ghana, and Nigeria. Voodoo was created by the ethnic group Fon. Now Voodoo is practiced worldwide, more in West Africa, but also in the rest of Africa, in Europe, the Caribbean, and in America, when the slaves brought it with them. Some researchers say that about 4 million people who practice voodoo (vodouisants) in Benin alone (news.nationalgeographic.com).

Voodoo is administered by a hierarchic system. At the top there is "DAGBO HOUNNON" who is the supreme chief of Voodoo. After that there is BOKONON HOUNNON, and there are many of them because they are in charge of the temples. In the lower level the BOKONON FAMANGAN is in charge of geomancy. And at the base there is the common people, NOUWATO.

Here are some Voodoo gods:

- **LEGBA**: Supreme God and virility god
- **DAN AIDO OUEDO:** God of wealth and beauty
- **VOODOO GOUN:** God of the road and of iron