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Chapter 2 Summary

The Brazilian Way of Life

“‘Brazil is an immense country, a continent of great human, ecological, and social complexity,’ as Lula declared in his inaugural address as president on 1 January 2003,” (Reid 12). Like this quote from Lula, this chapter describes the environmental and cultural parts of Brazil. It begins with the ecological part, stating that almost every ecosystem is found in Brazil except the alpine. There are three different rivers in the country: the Amazon, the Parana, and the Sao Francisco, as well as five distinct regions.

The first region I will discuss is the south. The southern region has a temperate climate, and attracted many Europeans, making the Brazilians of this area blonder and paler than all other regions. Because it is a very developed area, it has the second highest incomes in all the regions, but only makes up seven percent of the population (Reid 12).

Next, the south-eastern region is where most of the population lies. It has Brazil’s two most popular cities; Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo. Rio is the party city, where cariocas are found on the beaches all day, and contains Copacabana and Ipanema. Sao Paulo has grown over the twentieth century due to industry and business. On the outskirts of the city, it feels very suburban, however the business in the center is booming with modern culture.

The north-eastern region is the poorest area of Brazil, with farming and cattle-raising as their main sources of income. Salvador is where much of the African Brazilians lie, and it shows in their culture and practices. Although most of the states in this region are struggling in poverty, the state of Ceara became popular for their shoe business, and has moved most their people into the middle class.

The central-west region is also used for farming. In Brazil, it is known as the most fertile region because of the “green revolution” of the 1970s. Outside of farming, much of this region is used for industry. The last sixty percent of the country accounts for the northern region. This region contains the Amazon rainforest, as well as many cities such as Manaus and Belem.

In the section “Football, the family and other religions”, Reid discusses the importance these three concepts in Brazilian society. Football, or soccer in American terms, is a way of identification in Brazil. People wear their team’s apparel with pride, and it is a typical question of Brazilians to ask strangers what their team is.

Outside of football, Brazilians are also known for the festival their hold every February called Carnival. People prepare for this festival months in advance, making floats, attending samba schools, and preparing costumes for these few days of fun. Carnival is known to be very sexual, because Brazilians are very accepting of sex into their culture. However, they are also some of the most religious people on the planet. Reid states “Brazil was the world’s largest producer of bibles until China recently overtook it,” (Reid 18). Many Brazilians use a combination of Roman Catholicism from Portuguese heritage, as well as African Spiritism from their massive number of slaves during the Atlantic Slave Trade, and pray to a variety of gods.

Other important factors to Brazilian life are telenovelas and the family. Telenovelas are Brazilian soap operas, and a company called Globo TV has a fifty percent audience rate for their shows. Telenovelas have had an impact on the society, as they have proven to have a “…slight impact on rising divorce rates as women become more independent,” (Reid 20). Although telenovelas are very important, the most important part of society in Brazil is the family and domestic life. Family is not described as simply blood ties, which pulls everyone closer both metaphorically and physically. Finally, Brazilians are described as alegria, or “…a positive expression of a culture that places great value on friendship and on the family and that finds consolation in religion, in carnival and football, and of a people who enjoy a country of great beauty and a warm climate,” (Reid 23).

Reflection

While the first chapter introduced the country as a whole, I felt this chapter was critical to introducing the type of people you would encounter on a trip to Brazil. I really liked learning more about the culture of the nation, as looking at a group in both a macro and a micro scale is important to me when I travel. Once I learn about the type of people I will encounter, I feel more comfortable with my surroundings.

Work Cited

Reid, Michael. Brazil: The Troubled Rise of a Global Power. New Haven, Yale University Press, 2014. Print.