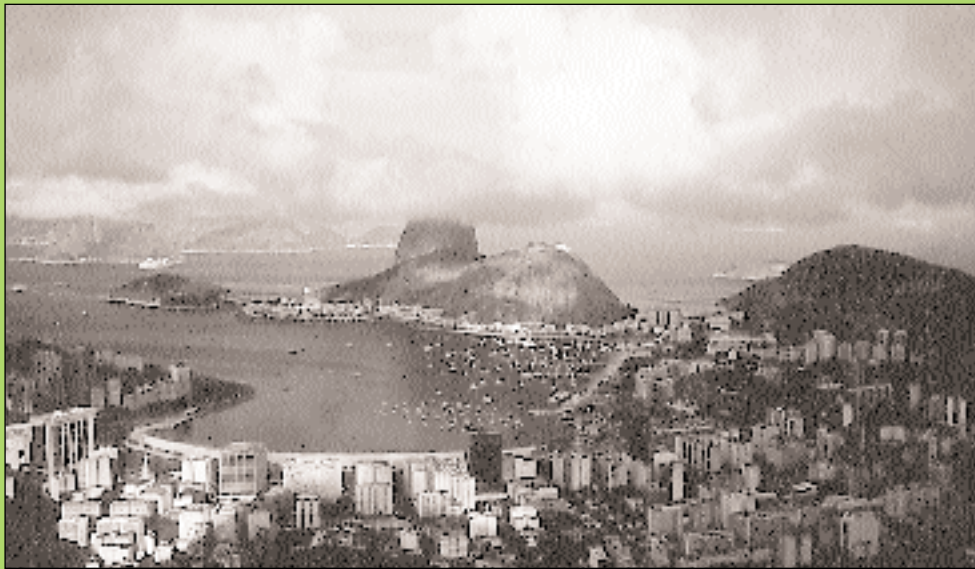
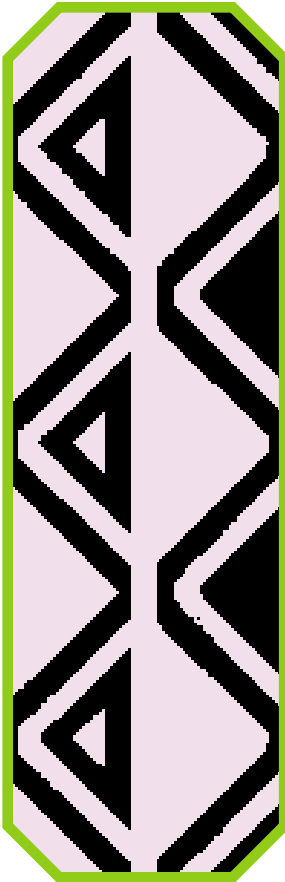


Brazil



A CULTURAL PROFILE



Brazil



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This cultural profile is designed primarily for volunteers working in organized HOST Programs which match newcomers with volunteers who offer friendship, orientation to the community and an opportunity to practise English or French, if needed.

BRAZIL TO CANADA

Your interest in reading this booklet may be due to your involvement with the HOST Program, where you will have the opportunity to meet people from Brazil and introduce them to life in Canada. You may be an employer who is prepared to offer a job to a person who is new to Canada. You could also find this booklet helpful if it is your job to provide assistance to people from



other countries. Whatever your interest, this booklet will help you learn some important facts about your new friends' culture and their country. It will introduce you to Brazil and Brazilians and may help you to understand a little about what life was like for them before they came to Canada.

Brazil is a country rich in its diversity of peoples. Traditionally Brazil has been a country in which people from all over the world come to live. In the last 15 years however, an increasing number of Brazilian people have left the country for a variety of reasons to establish themselves in places like Canada.

While our culture will seem curious and strange to them

in many ways, there will also be many similarities between the two cultures. Brazilians will have many of the same questions that you might have if you moved to a new town or city. For instance, they will wonder where they will find a job, which schools their children will attend and what their new community will be like.

It is important to understand some elements of the Brazilian culture that your new friends bring with them, but what will be valuable is your offer of time, friendship and concern for them. While this cultural profile provides insight into some customs, it does not cover all facets of life. The customs described here may not apply in equal measure to all newcomers from Brazil.





LANDSCAPE AND CLIMATE

Brazil is located in the central-eastern part of South America. It makes up nearly one-half of South America and is the fourth largest country in the world. To the north and west, it is bordered by all of the South American countries, except Chile and Ecuador. To the northeast, east, and southeast, lies the South

Atlantic Ocean. Brazil has 7400 kilometres of Atlantic coastline and many beautiful beaches.

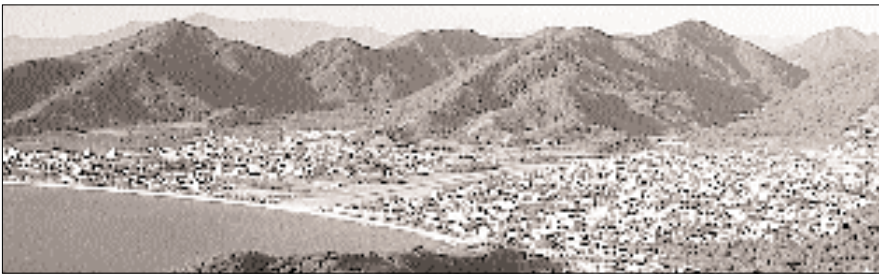
There are five major regions in Brazil. The north is almost entirely covered by the Amazon rainforest, the largest rainforest in the world. Heavy rainfall and high temperatures characterize the climate in the north. The northeast, *Sertao*, is made up of rocky plateaus and scrub vegetation. The climate is semi-arid and the weather is much harsher than in the



Amazon region. Dry spells can last for three to four years. When the rains come, a heavy downpour can last for weeks, causing serious flooding. The more humid coastal area, *Zona da Mata* or forest zone, has numerous sugar cane and cacao plantations.

The southeast consists of huge plateaus bordered in the east by the *Serra do Mar* mountain range. The region has a subtropical climate. Coffee, cotton, sugar cane, soybeans and wheat are grown here.

In the south, the four seasons are clearly defined. Wooded mountains and grassy plains dominate this region. The central western region includes towns and cities as well as vast plains where cattle-raising predominates. The region is called the *Mato Grosso* for its thick scrub forest.



SUMMARY FACT SHEET

Official Name:	Federative Republic of Brazil
Capital:	Brasilia
Type of Government:	Federal Republic
Population:	162 million
Area:	8,511,996 sq km
Major Ethnic Groups:	Portuguese, Italian, German, Native, African, Japanese
Languages:	Portuguese, Spanish, English, French, Guarani
Religion:	Christianity
Unit of Currency:	Real
National Flag:	Green background with a yellow diamond and a blue sphere which has 27 stars and a white sash across it with the words <i>ORDEM E PROGRESSO</i> (Order and Progress) written in green.
Date of Independence:	September 7, 1822

A LOOK AT THE PAST

Before colonization the Native people on this Continent numbered approximately ten million. Native people, such as the *Tupi Guarani*, fished, grew crops, hunted and gathered fruit from the forest.

Around 1500 a sea captain from Portugal, Pedro Alvares Cabral arrived in this land of lush vegetation and rich soil. By the 1530s, colonists began to arrive in Brazil by shiploads. Jesuit missionaries also made the journey to Brazil to try to convert the Native people to Christianity.

The northeast of Brazil was thought to be an ideal environment for sugar cane plantations and the Native people were soon forced into slavery. When they fled or died because of the harsh treatment, slaves were brought from Africa to replace them.

DID YOU KNOW?

The first European expedition to explore the length of the Amazon took place in 1541.



At the beginning of the 18th century, Portuguese adventurers called *bandeirantes* explored the interior in search of slaves and gold. This led to the discovery of what was then the largest gold mine in the world.

In 1763 the colonial government moved from Salvador to Rio de Janeiro, which became the capital. Dom Pedro, the son of Portugal's king, declared Brazil independent in 1822 and became the emperor. In 1888 under the second emperor, Dom Pedro II, slavery was abolished. This angered the rich landowners, and in 1889, they took power from him and declared Brazil a republic. Brazil's economy continued to depend on the exploitation of workers in mining, cattle ranching, cotton and coffee cultivation and the collection of latex for rubber.

A dark period in Brazilian history began in 1964 when a military dictatorship was introduced. In 1982 with the Latin American debt crisis, inflation reached a peak of nearly 50% a month. Finance Minister Fernando Henrique Cardoso introduced a new currency, the *Real* and a plan to reduce inflation. In 1995 he won the presidential election. Brazil has entered a period of economic and political stability.





FAMILY LIFE

DID YOU KNOW?

There are 12 million *abandonados*, children without parents or homes, in Brazil.

Poor families in Brazil live in the slums of crowded cities. These slums are called *favelas* and the people living here are called *favelados*. In Rio and São Paulo, the slums are among the worst in the world. Many of the dwellings have mud floors with no running water. Diseases are common. Families cook on crude wood-burning stoves and wash their clothes by hand in polluted water. In some areas, however,



families have water, electricity, medical care and maybe a television. There may also be community centres.

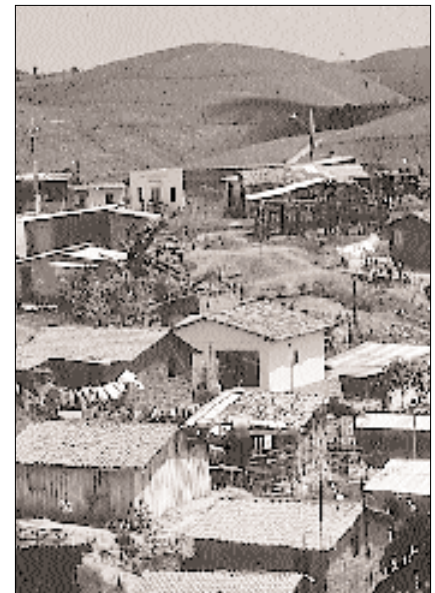
Millions of children live on the streets in the large cities. They are called *abandonados*, the deserted ones. These children may be homeless orphans. Others have families, but must work on the street to find money for food. Many children survive on the streets by shining shoes, begging, washing cars, stealing, or carrying shopping. In the last five to ten years, a national movement for street boys and girls has developed to help these children improve their lives.

Middle-class families can usually afford a home with electricity, running water, indoor bathrooms and sewer systems. Upper class

families in Brazil live in luxury apartments in big cities or in large houses surrounded by armed guards. These families make up Brazil's political, industrial and land-owning elite.

Historically, large houses on plantations were for the owner, his wife and their children, as well as for married children and their families, brothers, sisters, aunts, and uncles. Today these types of Brazilian families can include 300 or more relatives.

Although there is no longer an authoritarian patriarch, the advice and consent of the eldest male family member is usually sought by other members of the family before important decisions are made.



THE WORLD OF WORK

Brazil is the most industrialized country in South America and is the tenth richest country in the world. Nevertheless, there is a growing gap between the rich and the poor. Two-thirds of Brazilian people live below the poverty line and one-third suffer from malnutrition.

Brazil's economy was once based primarily on agriculture. A few wealthy people owned most of the farmland. Many people worked the land as labourers. In the 1970s rapid industrialization took place. People moved to the big cities to look for better jobs. Today, seven out of ten people live and work in cities, but the industries in these urban centres cannot provide enough jobs. Cities are crowded with poor and unemployed people. Seventy percent of the urban working class is not unionized. This means wages and the



DID YOU KNOW?

The city of São Paulo has the world's largest Japanese community outside of Japan.

standard of living for people in this group are low.

Middle and upper class people work as civil servants, managers or professionals and live very well.

Settlers who live by the river Amazon and the interior of Brazil lead simple lives. They grow basic crops, catch fish or raise cattle. In the northern region, fishing, tourism, and agriculture are important. In the south there are industries, mines, cattle ranches, sugar cane and soy plantations. As in other areas of Brazil, wealthy people often own farms. The workers however, live in small houses.

Brazil remains a patriarchal society and the contributions of women in the work force are not yet fully acknowledged. A desire for change and the economic realities of Brazil have dramatically altered the country. Many women now have college degrees and work outside the home. Women are pursuing careers in politics, banking and business. More and more daughters are taking over their father's businesses and many doctors and scientists are women.





SPORTS AND RECREATION

DID YOU KNOW?

The Brazilian soccer team is the first team to win the World Cup four times: 1958, 1962, 1970 and 1994. Brazil has more professional soccer teams than any other country in the world.



Soccer is Brazil's most popular national pastime. Passion for *futebol*, the Portuguese word for soccer, is reflected in the number and the size of soccer stadiums all over the country. The world's largest soccer stadium, the *Maracana*, is located in Rio de Janeiro and seats 200,000 fans. It is no surprise that when a boy is born, often the first gift he receives is a soccer ball.



A sport that is purely Brazilian is the *capoeira*. This sport has elements of martial arts and of dancing. The *capoeira* comes from a fighting style that originated in Angola. In the early slave days there were frequent fights among the blacks. Both sides were punished when caught. As a result, the slaves disguised their fighting by using music and song. Over the years, it was refined into a highly athletic sport in which two contestants move in a series of swift cartwheels and whirling handstands on the floor. Each one tries to deliver blows to the other using only legs, feet, heels and heads. Hands are not allowed.

Auto-racing and beach sports are very popular among Brazilians. Brazil has some

of the world's best volleyball teams. Basketball, tennis, surfing and canoeing are also important sports.

DID YOU KNOW?

The greatest soccer player who ever lived is Edson Arantes do Nascimento, known as Pelé, a Brazilian, who scored more than 1200 goals during his career and led his team to three World Cup championships. He made his international soccer debut at the age of 16. At 17 he played for Brazil in the World Cup Soccer Final, scoring two goals in the 4-2 win over Sweden.

LOOKING AT HEALTH CARE

DID YOU KNOW?

The life expectancy in Brazil for men is 64 and for women is 68 years.

Health and sanitary conditions in Brazil vary widely from region to region. The big cities have many physicians who have trained abroad. In smaller towns and interior areas of Brazil however, there is a shortage of doctors, nurses and hospitals. While Brazil offers a public health care system, its coverage is not extensive. The quality and promptness of public health care is not as good as the service offered by private

health care. State-of-the-art facilities are available for those who can afford them.

For the 60% of the population using the public health care system, service is limited to basic immunization and emergency care. There is also a shortage of hospital beds, making it difficult for most Brazilians to get medical treatment.

Drinking dirty water, inadequate sewage disposal, poor housing conditions and widespread malnourishment cause most diseases. More than one-half of the people of Brazil are poorly fed.

In the Amazon basin tropical diseases such as yellow fever and malaria are common. In this region, travelling bus clinics and riverboat hospitals provide immunization and other medical help. Many babies die soon after



birth. The death rate is highest in the northeast and in the *favelas*, the slums, of the large cities. Children born to mothers who live in *favelas* are six times more likely to die than those whose mothers can afford to go to university. Programs have been established to improve health conditions in the *favelas*, particularly for prenatal and infant health care.

The spread of HIV and AIDS in Brazil has been rapid, resulting in 40,000 known cases to date. Brazil has the third highest rate of AIDS in the world. In many instances, the spread of this disease can be traced to Brazil's poorly regulated blood supply. This means people are being exposed to the disease through tainted blood transfusions. Due to a low level of government health care funding, the system is not equipped to treat people suffering from AIDS.



LEARNING IN BRAZIL

DID YOU KNOW?

Some of Brazil's main cities have night schools for the poor which teach, feed and provide medical care for children.

Primary education in Brazil is free and starts at age seven. The first eight years of school are called first degree, or *primeiro grau*. Secondary school, *segunda grau*, starts when a child is fifteen years old and lasts for three years. Schools usually start at 7 a.m., although primary school children can choose to go

in the morning or afternoon. Secondary school finishes each day at 1 p.m. Students who wish to attend college sign up for the *colegial* program, which prepares them for university. Others may sign up for the *tecnico* program to learn a trade such as sewing, data processing or welding.

Schools are usually better in the big cities. Rich families send their children to private schools. They provide a higher standard of education and tend to have more funds to spend on training teachers, building gymnasiums or buying equipment for the science lab. Students in these schools usually go on to secondary school and then to university education.



Although the universities are public and government-sponsored, private school students find it easier to get in, since they tend to have higher marks. Private language schools in the cities teach English or other European languages. They are popular among wealthy students.



Going to school for many children is a luxury. Few children complete their elementary education. *Favela* children must often work or beg instead of going to school. Many leave school unable to read or write. Brazil's literacy rate is very low. Even when poor children stay in school, the free state schools are overcrowded, lack money and equipment and have a shortage of teachers.

EATING THE BRAZILIAN WAY



There are many different regional specialties. For example, in Bahia, a popular dish is called *vatapa*. It contains pieces of shrimp and fish mixed with palm oil, coconut milk and pieces of bread. It is served over rice. African slaves were the first to make a number of dishes including *vatapa*, by mixing



different foods. Since food was scarce, combining the food they found was a way to make the most of what they had.

In Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and Minas Gerais, a favourite dish is *feijoada*. It is a stew made of black beans, chunks of beef, pork, sausages and sometimes pigs' ears and tails. In Rio Grande do Sul, *churrasco*, Brazil's version of a barbecue, is a favourite meal. This word describes chunks of beef pierced with a metal skewer and roasted over hot coals.

Brazil is the world's largest producer of coffee. Brazilians usually make it dark, sweet and strong. A typical breakfast consists of a cup of *café com leite*, a hot milk and coffee mixture and a piece of fresh bread. *Almoco* or lunch is the biggest meal of the

day. Brazilians eat rice, beans, salad, meat or other dishes. In the evening a light supper is served in many homes.

Here is a tasty recipe to try.

Empanada

Ingredients

5 eggs
500 ml milk
250 ml oil
4 tbs grated parmesan cheese
1/2 tsp salt
12 tbs flour
baking powder

Put all the above, except the cheese and the baking powder, in a blender. Add these final 2 ingredients at the end.

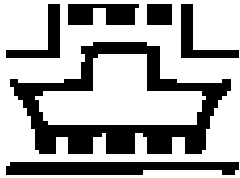
Stuffing ingredients

1 tomato chopped very small
1 red or green pepper
1 onion, sliced very small
olives sliced, preferably black olives
1 cooked chicken breast (cooked with bouillon, salt and black pepper) chopped into small pieces

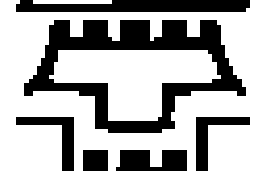
Preparation

Preheat oven to 350°F. Put 1/2 the blender ingredients into a cake pan, enough to cover the bottom. Put the stuffing ingredients on top of the blender ingredients. Cover with the rest of the blender ingredients. Cook for 30 to 40 minutes.





COMMUNICATING WITH BRAZILIANS



Brazilians are the only Latin Americans who speak Portuguese. The Portuguese used in Brazil is different in accent and intonation from the Portuguese spoken in Portugal or in other former Portuguese colonies. The language has its origin in ancient Latin.

Until the mid-18th century, a version of *Tupi Guarani*, the main Native language at the time, was widely spoken. This was simplified and written down by Jesuit missionaries. Around 20,000 words from the *Tupi Guarani* language have become incorporated into the Portuguese language of Brazil. *Tupi Guarani* words can also be found in the



English language: jaguar, tobacco, hammock and tapioca are some examples.

There are also many African words in the Brazilian Portuguese language. Between 1532 and 1850, about five million slaves were brought to Brazil from Guinea, Mozambique, Angola, the Congo and Benin. Each group brought its distinct language and culture. African languages have survived in religious rituals, cooking and some general words like *samba*, a form of music.

Body language plays a very important role in communication. Brazilians are very energetic when they speak and usually stand a lot closer to one another than

people do in a country like Canada. Greetings are usually quite physical and it is common to greet one another with kisses on the cheek, hugs, handshakes or backslapping. Thumbs up means hello or thanks. Brazilians often have difficulty in saying “no”. Instead they will say, “well, let’s see...” or “maybe”, which is seen as being diplomatic and polite. It is also acceptable to be late for appointments.

Here are a few words for you to try:

English	Portuguese
bread	<i>pao</i>
dog	<i>cachorro</i> (or <i>cao</i>)
window	<i>anela</i>
boy	<i>menino</i> (or <i>rapaz</i>)
house	<i>casa</i>
church	<i>igreja</i>
city	<i>cidade</i>

DID YOU KNOW?

In Brazil, the Government Indian Agency documented 175 different Native languages and dialects.

SPIRITUALITY

Catholicism is Brazil's largest religion. Almost 90% of Brazilians are Roman Catholics. Other religions practised include Protestantism, Judaism, Evangelical Christianity and spiritualist religions of African origin.

Animism was the original spiritual way followed in Brazil. The Native people believe that all natural things such as trees, water, earth and wind have spirits and souls. It is important to care for the environment and honour one's ancestors.

African slaves also brought their own religions which were rejected and condemned by the Portuguese. Nevertheless, these religions have survived

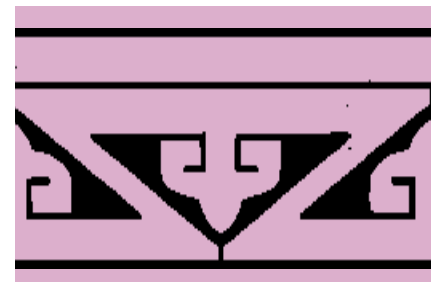


and are widely practised in Brazil today. *Macumba* is a voodoo-like religion based on black magic. *Candomble*, a mixture of African and Indian religions, has many gods representing natural forces.

Candomble has become mixed with Catholicism. Those caught practising the forbidden ceremonies were

severely punished. To avoid persecution, the slaves concealed the identity of their gods behind the names of Catholic saints. They found the saint who most closely represented the image of each African deity. *Orixas*, or *Candomble* gods, therefore, have a Catholic saint assigned as an equivalent.

The city of Salvador in Bahia has many *terreiros* or sites for *Candomble* rituals. *Pais de santo*, who are *Candomble* priests, are well respected in their local communities.





HOLIDAYS

Just before Lent begins, Brazilians celebrate Carnival with a huge party. For months in advance, people spend time making elaborate costumes and floats, as well as practising their music and dancing. In many cities, entire streets are roped off for the celebrations and many businesses and stores are closed for the four days. In the big cities such as Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and Salvador, thousands of people organize into *samba* schools. Dozens of musicians play various shapes and sizes of tambourines, rattles and drums.

Brazil also has festivals throughout the year which include the June Festivals *Festas Juninas*. In June several religious holy days

occur. Brazilians celebrate these with many parties. Children dress up in old-fashioned plaid clothes, paint freckles on their faces and wear straw hats. People also dance the *quadrilha*, a Brazilian square dance.

September 7 is Brazil's Independence Day. This is the day in 1822 when the country was declared independent of Portugal.

Christmas is important for Brazilians. Families will often get together and celebrate on Christmas Eve rather than Christmas Day. The seasons in Brazil are opposite to those of Canada, so it is usually hot at Christmastime.

On New Year's Eve, thousands of spiritists, people who practice Spiritism, gather on the beaches of the Atlantic Coast. They come together to



pay tribute to *Iemanjá*, the goddess of the sea. This is a time to be thankful for the past year and to ask *Iemanjá* for her blessing in the year to come.



DID YOU KNOW?

During Carnival, each *samba* school parades through the downtown streets showing off its own costumes, dances and rhythm sections. The *samba* schools compete against each other and prizes are awarded for the best song, costume and dance.

THE ARTS AND LITERATURE

While the Portuguese influence has been strong in architecture and literature, African and Native contributions have been important in Brazilian folklore, art and music.

Brazilians have a rich collection of legends and myths that reflect their religious heritage and their country's many wonders. Many stories originated with the Natives who lived in the Amazon region. The Native people believe that spirits who dwell in the jungle, both good and evil, influence their lives.

Brazilian writers produce poetry, fiction and drama with

DID YOU KNOW?

One of Brazil's artistic marvels is a series of figurines carved in the 18th century by a sculptor known as *Aleijadinho*, or Little Cripple. This sculptor completed dozens of statues using tools strapped to his limbs as he had no hands.



a complexity and diversity that is among the best in the world. Perhaps the best-known modern Brazilian artist is Candido Portinari. Most of his paintings are of Brazilian life and its people. His mural, *War and Peace*, is displayed in the United Nations Building in New York.

In Brazil one is never too young to start displaying artistic talent. In Curitiba, located in the southern state of Paraná, famous artists come to the city to paint blank billboards while people watch. Every Saturday morning, city workers take a huge roll of paper and unroll it down an entire block. Young boys and girls come and each is given jars of paint and a paintbrush. When they are finished, the long pieces of colourful paper are displayed in

buildings around the city. Brazilians love music. The best-known Brazilian types of music are internationally recognized. These include the *samba*, which originated in the slums of Brazil, the *bossa-nova*, a combination of *samba* and jazz and the *lambada*. There is also a dance called the *ciranda*, performed mostly in the northeast, which is done in a circle to represent the net used by fishermen.





IF YOU WANT TO LEARN MORE

One profile can give you only a glimpse of Brazilian life. If you would like to read more, here are a few suggestions.

COBB, Vicki. *This Place is Wet*, Walker, 1989.

This book is ideal for younger readers. Cobb focuses on the people, land, ecology and animals of the Amazon rain forest in Brazil. In this area of Brazil, there is so much water that some families need to build their houses on stilts.

CHAGNON, A. *Yanomamo: the Fierce People*, 3rd ed., CBS College Publisher, 1983.

This is a classic work which offers a case study in cultural anthropology of the *Yanomamo* Indians of Brazil and Venezuela. Chapters include discussions on cultural ecology, the *Yanomamo*'s view of myth and cosmos, their social organization, political alliances, warfare, way of life and the introduction of western lifestyles.

LANDES, Ruth. *The City of Women*, University of New Mexico Press, 1994.

This book explores Candomble religious society in Brazil as a woman-centred spirit possession religion. It's rich portraits are informed by an analysis of race, gender and sexuality.

***The Mission*, a movie (1986) directed by Roland Joffe, starring Robert De Niro and Jeremy Irons**

The Mission is set in South America in the 1770s. In the film, *Guarani* Indians, inhabitants of the rain forest, encounter Jesuit Missionaries and European slave traders. This powerful epic illuminates the relationships among these groups and shows what can happen when different cultures encounter one another and the interests of faith and greed clash.

Web site

<http://www.latinworld.com/sur/brasil/>

<http://www.axidia.fr/bresil/bresil/frbresil.htm>





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