5. Cultural mythology and global leadership in Brazil

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INTRODUCTION

Brazil is the only country in the Western hemisphere that has the continental proportions, the regional contrasts and the demographic diversity that can be compared to the US and Canada.

According to Hess (1995), Brazil, in spite of its Western-like institutions, is a country where Western culture has mixed and mingled with non-Western cultures for centuries. This mixture of Western and non-Western, as well as modern and traditional is what DaMatta (1997a) has called the ‘Brazilian dilemma’, or what Brazilians call the Brazilian reality. Brazil is a country where institutions operate through personal relationships as much as general rules. Diversity is not the best word for describing Brazil and Brazilians; mixture is better. Brazil is a nation of the mixing of races (miscegenation), religions (syncretism) and cultures (diasporas, borderlands).

In cultural anthropology and studies of Brazilian national culture, DaMatta (1997a; 1997b) has influenced a number of scholars (such as, David Hess, 1995; Livia Neves Barbosa, 1995; Rosane Prado, 1995; Martha de Ulhoa Carvalho, 1995; and Roberto Kant de Lima, 1995) with his framework for interpreting Brazilian culture.

Hess (1995) describes Brazil as the product of a particular colonial legacy that includes a class of wealthy landowners who supported a highly centralized Portuguese state. In turn, the state implanted a latifundia or plantation agricultural system in Brazil, where plantations were controlled by patriarchs who exercised a nearly absolute authority over their dominions. According to Buarque de Holanda (1995), the colonial legacy also includes the origins of the traditional Latin American personalism, the lack of social cohesion and the looseness of the institutions. Additionally, the Tocquevillian legacy of comparative analysis influenced a number of twentieth-century thinkers such as Louis Dumont (1980). Dumont’s comparative studies focused on two key dimensions for comparing values and patterns of social relations across societies: ‘hierarchy and equality’, and ‘holism and individualism’. 
In the ascribed form of hierarchy used by Dumont, one’s social position is assigned at birth or is limited by one’s family position. In a traditional hierarchical society, laws apply differently to different groups of people. Of course, there are remnants of the ascribed kind of hierarchy even in the most modern of societies, but the legal recognition of such hierarchy is considered an affront to the fundamental value of equality.

The concepts of holism and individualism are closely related to those of hierarchy and equality. In a hierarchical society everyone occupies a definite position in the whole, and people’s identity is rooted in their association with a particular position in society.

DaMatta’s approach to Brazilian culture departs from these key concepts as developed by Dumont. DaMatta uses the term ‘persons’ to describe the category of identity, in which one is defined by one’s position in the family or in a hierarchically ordered social group. In contrast, in an individualistic society identity is rooted in one’s own life history and choices and people are individuals linked by the rules of the game, which are assumed to apply equally to all (or universally). Although in an individualistic society people certainly have personalistic loyalties, one’s identity as an individual rather than as a person tends to prevail. Likewise, in a personalistic or relational society, there are domains of society that operate according to individualistic and egalitarian principles, but in general, personal loyalties tend to prevail.

DaMatta argues that Brazil is somewhere between the two ideal polar extremes (hierarchical and holistic, and egalitarian and individualistic). He rejects the model of two Brazils, in which a traditional culture located in the lower classes of the cities and in the rural areas is opposed to a modern Brazil in the upper classes and in the big cities, showing how in societies like Brazil, Dumont’s distinctions can be applied simultaneously throughout the society. Instead of working with an ‘either or’ model, he opted for a ‘both and’ model, as both tendencies are present in any number of social groups, institutions and practices. Thus, Brazilians are constantly negotiating between a modern, egalitarian code and a traditional one. In some situations, modern practices predominate. However, frequently, hierarchical and personalistic/relational practices encompass modern ones.

Thus, Brazil is neither modern nor traditional but both, as in Brazil there is a tendency to move toward a middle ground of mediation and ambiguity, where myths make the transition between apparently different or even contradictory worlds. For example, the injustices of the Brazilian authoritarian and hierarchical system are blunted by the existence of a number of mediating institutions: extended kin networks, nepotism, the famous Brazilian jeitinho (the art of bending rules), and all sorts of social practices that would appear corrupt in North America and Western Europe. In short, personal relationships form the flip side of official hierarchies. Personalism is more than a cultural
system that gives people a social address in the hierarchical society; it is also
a resource that people can use to get around the official rules of the hierarchi-
cal society. Of course, personalism does not work the same way for everyone.
The networks of the weak are usually smaller and less influential. As a result,
although personalism can be used as a resource to subvert hierarchy, as an
overall system it ends up reproducing the general hierarchical order (Hess,
1995).

OVERVIEW OF BRAZILIAN CULTURE MYTHS

A myth, like a parable or an allegory, is a traditional story that embodies popu-
lar belief or phenomena. Like dreams, myths have the ability to resolve ambi-
guities and conflicts; they encourage rites and ritual. Indeed, myth is to ritual
as music is to dance (Furnham, 1996).

Myths are one of the ways in which a society mirrors its contradictions,
expresses its paradoxes and doubts. They can be considered as a possibility to
reflect about existence or about social relationships. Myths are diffuse and
multiple. They mean many things, represent several ideas and can be used in
different contexts (Rocha, 1985).

But, myths are not any kind of narrative. They are a special kind of narra-
tive, one that is a tradition in itself. Myths are not objective; they hide some-
thing, something without reality, or, in other words, a lie. Nevertheless, myths
operate at the social level. Consequently, their truth should be found in another
level, even in another logic. Myths have to be interpreted; myths are part of
existence (Rocha, 1985).

In Brazil, mediation myths become sites for the conflict of values and the
encompassment of the modern by the traditional.

Myth of Equality (Versus Hierarchy): the Carnival Rite (DaMatta,
1997b)

Carnival, a three day long yearly rite, is perceived as being the property of
everybody, as a moment when a hierarchically traditional society decentral-
izes. In a hierarchically ordered society, such as Brazilian society, when hier-
archy is suspended, the myth of equality materializes in the parade of the
samba schools, mixing the poor and millionaires, football and TV stars. The
parade is an exotic symbol of luxury as it is anchored in an aristocratic and
mythical period, as perceived by the members of the dominated classes (the
poor, usually Negroes and Mulatos). Carnival shows an inversion between the
poor who take part in the parade, and the mythical figures they represent
(kings, nobles, heroes), with the direct or indirect participation of all society.
In this controlled popular rite, the rich (dominating classes) are not seen as rich (with money, status symbols and power), but as nobles, with the aristocratic virtues of nobility. The social positions of everyday life are neutralized or inverted giving the myth of equality a semblance of reality.

Carnival costumes create a social field for encounter, for mediation, where the frontiers that separate groups, categories and people are suspended. There is a place for all kinds of people, characters and groups, for all values. It is an open social field situated out of the hierarchical reality; it is a world of metaphor where everyday social rules are temporarily suspended.

Carnival invents its own social space, with its own rules and logic. That space is an inverted image of the ‘real world’ and basically confirms it. However, it also represents an alternative model for collective behavior, mainly because it is the arena where new avenues of social relationship, normally conceived as mythical utopias, are tested.

**Myth of the Dual Social Domains: the Home and the Street (DaMatta, 1997a)**

The space of the home is identified with the hierarchical and relational/personalistic moral world, whereas that of the street is egalitarian and individualistic. Of course, in Brazil, the two worlds of home and street interact considerably.

As a social space, the home, and institutions modeled on the home, such as the workplace, is a place where relations among family members and servants or among superiors and subordinates institute hierarchies of race, class, age and gender. The home is the place of the in group, of family and friends.

The street is a different sort of place where those hierarchies are suspended. The street is the place where the egalitarian and individualistic principles of the marketplace or legal system are in operation. The street is a semi-unknown domain where danger prevails, where there are no precise contractual relations.

The home is the place where people find their identity, while the street is the place of individual anonymity. In certain situations the home encompasses the street and all matters are treated in a personal, familiar domestic way; in others, the street encompasses the home: the domain of personal relations is totally submersed and the axis of impersonal laws and rules prevails. There is, therefore, a double-edged ethic that operates simultaneously and that determines different behaviors that apply to the street (where behavior is free of the sense of loyalty, free of the meaning of us, ruled by the criteria of individualism, by laws and by the rules of the market) and to the home (where behavior is ruled by personal relations, the sense of loyalty and emotions, by reciprocity and friendship).

In brief, in a dynamic sense, behaviors continually oscillate in Brazil:
people can express apparently different or even contradictory opinions and behaviors depending on whether they position themselves in the street or in the home.

**Myth of the Conflict Averse Society: the ‘Do You Know who You are Talking to?’ Rite (DaMatta, 1997b)**

The ‘Do you know who you are talking to?’ rite implies a radical authoritarian separation of two real social positions. It places Brazilians on the side of hierarchical scales that they think should not be externalized, as ‘everyone should know their place’. The ‘Do you know who you are talking to?’ expression is considered part of the real world, a resource activated in the domain of the street.

The ‘Do you know who you are talking to?’ expression, usually followed by: I am so and so; or the wife of so and so; or the son of so and so; or even the friend of so and so, is not exclusive of any social segment or class. On the contrary, the expression seems to allow identification by means of social projection, when a subordinate uses it to take the place of his superior, acting in certain circumstances as if he was the superior himself, and thus placing another individual, who would normally be his equal, in a situation of inferiority.

That authoritarian expression always indicates a conflictive situation, and Brazilian society perceives itself as conflict averse. It does not mean that such perception eliminates conflict; on the contrary, like all hierarchical societies, Brazilian society has a high level of conflict and crises. But, between the existence of conflict and its acknowledgement there is a great distance. In Brazil, conflict tends to be perceived as ‘the end of the world’ and as weakness. Thus, historically, dominant groups always adopt a perspective of solidarity, while the dominated ones systematically defend the position of revealing the conflict in the system. Actually, in a world that has to move according to a hierarchy that has to be perceived as natural, conflict tends to be considered an irregularity. The world has to move in terms of absolute harmony, fruit of a system dominated by hierarchy that leads to a profound agreement between the strong and the weak (Dumont, 1980).

In such an environment, conflict cannot be considered as a critical symptom of the system, but as revolt that has to be repressed. Thus, conflict is personally circumscribed and the system is maintained.

**Myth of the Worker (Versus the Adventurer) (Buarque de Holanda, 1995)**

In the forms of collective life there are two principles that regulate in different
ways the activities of men and that are represented by the worker and the adventurer. The ideal of the adventurer is to collect the fruit without having to plant the tree. The worker, on the other hand, is the one who first sees the difficulties to be overcome, not the prize to win.

There is an ethic of work and one of adventure. Thus, the worker will only attribute positive moral value to the actions he feels the will to practice, and will consider immoral the qualities of the adventurer (audacity, improvidence, irresponsibility, instability). On the other hand, the energy and effort invested to have immediate reward are valued by the adventurer, while, for him, nothing is more senseless than the ideal of the worker. Both types exist in multiple combinations, although, in their pure state they do not exist out of the world of ideas.

In the colonization of Brazil, the worker had a very limited role, almost null. The desire for prosperity without cost, for easily acquired wealth, characteristic of Portuguese people are clear traits of the adventurer. Thus, those same traits favored the adaptation and flexibility that were necessary conditions during the colonization period, with intensive use of slave labor, latifundia and monoculture.

Myth of the Cordial Man (Buarque de Holanda, 1995)

Wherever the idea of family lies on a solid basis, and mainly, where the patriarchal type of family predominates, the formation and evolution of society according to modern concepts tend to be precarious and face strong restrictions. The adaptation crisis of individuals to the social mechanism is, thus, especially sensitive due to the triumph of certain antifamily virtues, such as those based on the spirit of personal initiative and of competition among individuals.

In Brazil, where, since ancient times, the primitive type of patriarchal family has prevailed, the development of urbanization (that does not exclusively derive from the growth of cities, but also from the expansion of means of communication, attracting vast rural areas to the sphere of influence of cities) produced strong social disequilibrium.

In Brazil, only exceptionally has there been an administrative system and a body of public officers dedicated only to objective interests. On the contrary, history shows us the constant predominance of particular interests fostered in closed circles not really adequate to impersonal ordination. Among those circles, the family was, undoubtedly, the one with stronger expression in Brazilian society. The family, in Brazil, is the unquestionable sphere of primary contacts, of blood bonds and of the heart. The relationships created in domestic life always provided the obligatory model of any social composition. This happens even where democratic institutions, based on neutral and
abstract principles, try to establish a society built according to anti-particularistic rules.

The cordial man, where hospitality and generosity are virtues recognized by the foreigners who visit Brazil, represents a clear trait of Brazilian character that denotes the ancestral influence of social patterns derived from the patriarchal culture.

The standardization of external forms of cordiality is equivalent to a disguise that allows individuals to protect their sensibility and emotions. In general, Brazilians accept reverence formulas with a superior, but only while they do not completely suppress the possibility of a more familiar relationship.

The ignorance of any kind of relationship that is not ruled by an emotionally based ethic represents an aspect of Brazilian life that few foreigners can easily grasp.

**Myth ‘Foreign is Better’ (Caldas, 1997)**

The myth that foreign is better and that the solution comes from abroad is strongly set in Brazilian culture. With the flexibility and adaptability that they possess, Brazilians first privileged Lisbon, to then change it for Paris and London, and finally, for the United States. Brazilians tend to look for solutions abroad, importing concepts without much adaptation or resistance, without stopping to seriously consider local reality and specificities, as if this behavior was an unavoidable sign of modernity.

For Wood Jr. (1997), Brazilians appear to feel an ancestral need to have somebody to guide them, to decide for them. According to Caligaris (1993), this need for external or paternal references indicates that Brazilians need something that tells them where to go, and at the same time, something that allows them to disobey such indication, something that they can despise and blame when their actions demand a reason for failure. The myth of foreign is better serves this purpose of both cult and repulse and, if it can be considered as an archetypical construction of Brazilian imaginary, it is undoubtedly a convenient one.

**OVERVIEW OF BRAZILIAN LEADERSHIP**

The study of how culture affects organizational behavior has been the focus of recent research (Hofstede, 1980; Laurent, 1981 among others) and considerable difference has been found in the values, attitudes and behaviors of individuals in the work environment. The behaviors of leaders and workers are based on beliefs, attitudes and values that are strongly influenced by their national cultures (Prestes Motta, 1997).
The study by Geert Hofstede (1980; 2001) initially involved 40 countries and then was expanded to 60 to include both oriental and occidental cultures. Hofstede, as well as Laurent, found significant differences in the behavior and attitudes of executives and workers of different countries, and those differences have proved to be consistent in time. Hofstede’s most important finding resides in the importance of national culture to explain differences in attitudes and work related values. He identified four independent dimensions of culture differences: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism versus collectivism and masculinity versus femininity.

According to Hofstede (2001), an unequal distribution of power over members is the essence of organizations, as such inequality is essential for control and for temporarily overcoming the law of entropy, which states that disorder will increase (Cotta, 1976). In most utilitarian organizations the distribution of power is formalized in hierarchies. In the relationship between leader and subordinate both objective and subjective factors play roles.

Organizations, according to Hofstede (2001), use technology, rules and rituals to cope with uncertainty. Rules are the way in which organizations reduce the internal uncertainty caused by the unpredictability of their members’ and stakeholders’ behavior. Rules are semirational: they try to make the behavior of people predictable, and as people are both rational and nonrational, rules should take account of both aspects. The authority of rules is something different from the authority of persons. The first relates conceptually to uncertainty avoidance; the second to power distance. Rituals serve social as well as uncertainty avoidance purposes. The former keep people together; the latter try to control the future.

The norm prevalent in a given society as to the degree of individualism or collectivism expected from its members will strongly affect the nature of the relationship between a person and the organization to which he or she belongs. More collectivistic societies call for greater emotional dependence of members on their organizations. The level of individualism or collectivism in society will affect the organization’s members’ reasons for complying with organizational requirements. The level of individualism or collectivism in a society will also affect the types of persons (locals versus cosmopolitans) who will be admitted into positions of leadership in organizations. The local type is largely preoccupied with problems inside the organization and is most influential in a collectivistic culture. The cosmopolitan type is more influential in organizations with an individualistic culture and considers him or herself an integral part of the world outside it (Hofstede, 2001).

National culture differences along the masculinity/femininity dimension affect the meaning of work in people’s lives. Between the two poles of living in order to work and working in order to live, masculine cultures are closer to the first and feminine cultures are closer to the second. The concerns for rela-
tionships and life quality in feminine cultures and for material rewards, performance and competition in masculine cultures are carried over from the family and school to the work environment. Masculine and feminine cultures create different leader types. The masculine leader is assertive, decisive and aggressive (only in masculine societies does this word carry a positive connotation). The leader in a feminine culture is less visible, intuitive rather than decisive, and accustomed to seeking consensus (Hofstede, 2001).

According to Hofstede (2001), Brazil is a collectivistic society, although its ranking does not place it among the most collectivistic, which happens to be Guatemala. Brazil also ranks among the nations where uncertainty avoidance and power distance are higher. In terms of the masculinity/femininity dimension, Brazil can be classified as feminine although quite close to the masculine side of the continuum, which in fact indicates a not very clear position in this dimension.

Another way of looking at Brazilian culture is through the lens of football. DaMatta (1994) draws a parallel between football and Brazilian culture and leadership. Football, for Brazilians, is a synonym of passion; a kind of passion that cannot be verbally explained, but that belongs to the universe of things that are related to the spirit. Football reveals many of the characteristics of Brazilian culture, such as the tendency to carnivalization, with the temporary suppression of hierarchy where mainly Negroes and Mulatos are heroes. It also contributes to the idea of exclusive collectivity, such as the home or the family, in a modern dimension where, on one hand, there is a sense of collectivity (the home, the team) and, on the other hand, there are individuals with universal rules (the street, the football rules). The Brazilian people see themselves in football; they learn lessons of democracy, of equality and of respect for rules. In contrast, Brazilian football also openly institutionalized the Brazilian jeitinho as the art of surviving and as the national style (DaMatta, 1994). In this sense, the jeitinho represents Brazilian warmth and flexibility even as it exerts a corrupting force on Brazil’s modern institutions (Neves Barbosa, 1995).

According to Sevcenko (1994) football is one of the main vehicles, in Brazil, of the popular manifestation of affection and passion. The cordial man, product of the contradiction of the patriarchal society with modern capitalism, found in football the ideal base to express its extremely rich emotional side; a side that conflicts with the bureaucratic impersonality of organizational structures and, in many ways, defines the Brazilian leadership style.

Brazilian research (Arruda, s.d., no date; Prestes Motta, 1997; Garibaldi de Hilal, 2006; among others) indicates that in Brazilian organizations, leaders are usually actively involved in the decision process, which requires intense social interaction. Brazilian leaders are generally considered autocratic with traits of paternalism. Hierarchical authority, as well as the intensive commu-
communication that takes place at work or after work, seems to guarantee the agility and speed of the decision process, although research also suggests that leaders tend to decide based on the information at hand, even if the content is poor.

Brazilian organizations generally denote such high power distance that it reminds us of the Brazilian inequality in terms of income distribution and of its slave labor past. The core of Brazilian culture was the sugar plantation, where plantations were controlled by patriarchs who exercised a nearly absolute authority over their dominions. In such an environment, social distance was the counterpart of physical proximity and the ambiguity of the social relations was inevitable (Freyre, 1981). Nepotism is a common practice in Brazilian organizations (Prestes Motta, 1997) and Brazilian leaders represent a society that is not close to the universalistic and entrepreneurial society of Talcott Parsons (1964).

Brazilian leaders tend to treat their followers based on masculine type controls, on the use of authority as well as on feminine type controls, on the use of seduction (Prestes Motta, 1997). In general, democratic values are not very strong in Brazilian organizations. However, if it is not democracy, it is not autocracy either, but something in between, ambiguous, as many Brazilian cultural traits.

In Brazil, ambiguity favors alternative leadership options that include creativity and innovation, but also perpetuate the figure of the godfather (or protector within the organization based not on meritocracy but on personal bonds), the preference for informal social relationships, the famous Brazilian jeitinho (the art of bending rules) and the intense expression of emotions. Brazil is a land of contrasts, where leadership reflects both sides of this contradictory world: the characteristics of individualism, rationality and capitalism on one side, and the characteristics of a patriarchal culture with its tradition, affection and personalism, on the other.

Garibaldi de Hilal (2002) studied a large Brazilian bank with international operations. Results suggested that leadership was based on hierarchical authority supported by a set of clearly defined norms and rules, but where the authority of the leaders prevailed over the rules. Garibaldi de Hilal (2002) identified two apparently contradictory aspects that legitimize leadership in Brazil: the relational aspect and the Caxias aspect (Caxias was a Brazilian general known for his efficiency, dedication and commitment to work). The relational aspect would be supported by the myth of the home (DaMatta, 1997a), while the Caxias aspect would privilege commitment, efficiency and meritocracy. This paradox would symbolize a potential source of conflict that embodies the difficulties faced by Brazilian leaders in order to develop practices sanctioned by all, as they would frequently be led to violate one of the two aspects that legitimate Brazilian leadership. Moreover, in the Brazilian
chain of social relationships, there is the belief according to which, once people are positioned in the network of personal bonds, they are automatically treated as friends and become a potential source of power for social and political manipulation by means of favor (DaMatta, 1997a).

The quotations in the Commentary box illustrate Brazilian views about the role of the leader.

**COMMENTARY BOX**

**Top Manager of a Large Brazilian Bank with International Operations**

The role of the leader, in Brazil, is an ambiguous one. It is the role of socialized autocracy with strong traits of paternalism, where the leader is also hostage of the group as he only becomes legitimate in his relationship with the group.

**President of a Large Energy Distribution Company**

If a leader is openly authoritarian he is hated; if he is paternalistic he can be loved. We have participative rituals, but that is relative. Participative rituals are necessary because, although nobody dares contradict the leader, without them the leader cannot implement anything and has to deal with great resistance to change.

**Director of a Large Brazilian State Owned Company**

Conflicts are not managed in this company. Conflict resolution can lead to opposing factions in the group. The role of the leader is that of a peacemaker so things are never clearly defined … The leader has simultaneously to command and seduce.

**Superintendent of a Large Brazilian State Owned Company**

In a relational culture such as Brazilian culture, leaders have to consider the expectations of their followers, and one of the relational assumptions is that for the in-group members anything may be possible; while for outsiders the law applies.
PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

A work of this nature has great risk for oversimplification and generalization for which many exceptions can be found. Nevertheless, keeping in mind the need to avoid stereotyping, the mistake of assuming that every Brazilian leader conforms to the profile presented in this chapter, foreigners can understand behaviors driven by Brazilian culture dimensions and myths and adapt their behaviors to perform effectively in the Brazilian cultural setting.

Most management models and leadership theories have been developed in the United States, and have been conceived in the context of its dominant cultural values. For example, had Frederick Herzberg, in developing his well-known two factor, job-enrichment model, studied Brazilian culture, it is very unlikely that he would have found that personal relationships were not a motivator. In fact, it was this very question of the applicability to other cultures of American management practices that lies at the heart of Hofstede’s research (2001).

A leadership style consistent with McGregor’s (1960) Theory X is based on assumptions that workers require thorough supervision, explicit direction, and coercion and derive little satisfaction from their work in and of itself but only from the sustenance and security it provides. This authoritarian style would seem clearly out of place in cultures with small power distance (Scarborough, 2001). Conversely, Theory Y assumptions, which hold that workers are motivated best by responsibility, autonomy, trust, and a more open, communicative environment, seem ill-suited for large power distance cultures, such as Brazilian culture. However, Adler (1991) suggests that the Y theory is well suited to those cultures because workers share common interests among themselves and with management and value relationships that are the collectivistic/relational values that often coincide with large power distance. Workers in large power distance cultures would still expect their leaders to make the decisions, clarify expectations, and demonstrate strength and technical proficiency, but, in relational Brazil, personalism and ambiguity suggest the applicability of a leadership style also consistent with Theory Y, at least with respect to the leader’s assumptions about worker motivation.

In the collectivistic/relational Brazilian culture, leaders have to take into account in-group membership in hiring, promotion and disciplinary decisions as individuals may feel compelled to act in the interests of the group when those interests conflict with those of the employer. In Brazil, leaders have to communicate in ways that do not cause loss of face within the in-group, and shame will be a more effective control device than guilt. In Brazil, relationships are paramount, even at the cost of breaking rules in order to promote and maintain the personal network.

The key to encouraging participation or just greater willingness to speak up, among large power distance subordinates is to build trust (Scarborough,
2001). In Brazil, it is important for a leader to let his subordinates know what is needed from them and why, and there should be an explanation that this is the preferred kind of relationship. Then patience, maintaining a low key, and repeated requests for input will be called for. In relational Brazil, leaders must understand that as Brazilians see themselves as a cordial and conflict averse society, there might be a tendency to accept a problem as is, rather than solve it, in effect denying the need for a decision. The belief in the conflict avoidance and in the cordial man myths may also cause a search for familiar solutions rather than innovative ones.

In terms of cross-cultural management, some personal traits or skills necessary to engage effectively with Brazilian leaders include open-mindedness, patience, flexibility to adapt considering the local reality, humility, consideration and good manners, to search for common ground rather than conflicting positions, the desire to build lasting relationships rather than to merely collect acquaintances and customers, and demonstrating some interest in matters beyond the business at hand and business in general.

Brazilian leaders are expected to be charismatic and value based but are also known for personalism, particularism and paternalism. Rule of law is often moderated by personal connections and the concepts of in-group and out-group are very strong. Temporal, geographical and cultural complexities separate the domestic role of the leader from its global context role. To be effective in the global context Brazilian leaders have to be aware of their cultural foundations, expect to encounter cultural differences, educate themselves about different cultures, be flexible about the existence of other patterns of logic, experience cross-cultural interactions and learn from them.

Human societies are certainly diverse, but once differences are discovered, one must show how one difference can be turned into another, that is, one must go back over the road, retracting it inversely. Otherwise, all that is left is a catalog of mutually inaccessible human experiences. If the concepts of culture, leadership and tradition are not seen as dynamic, they merely freeze differences and screen out an understanding of reality (Da Matta, 1995).

Thus, we can conclude that one’s behavior and conduct in a foreign setting are even more important than the ability to speak the host’s language; that, if one can manage successfully in one cultural environment, the same is possible in another, provided that one understands the different cultural rules and myths and learns from experience.

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