

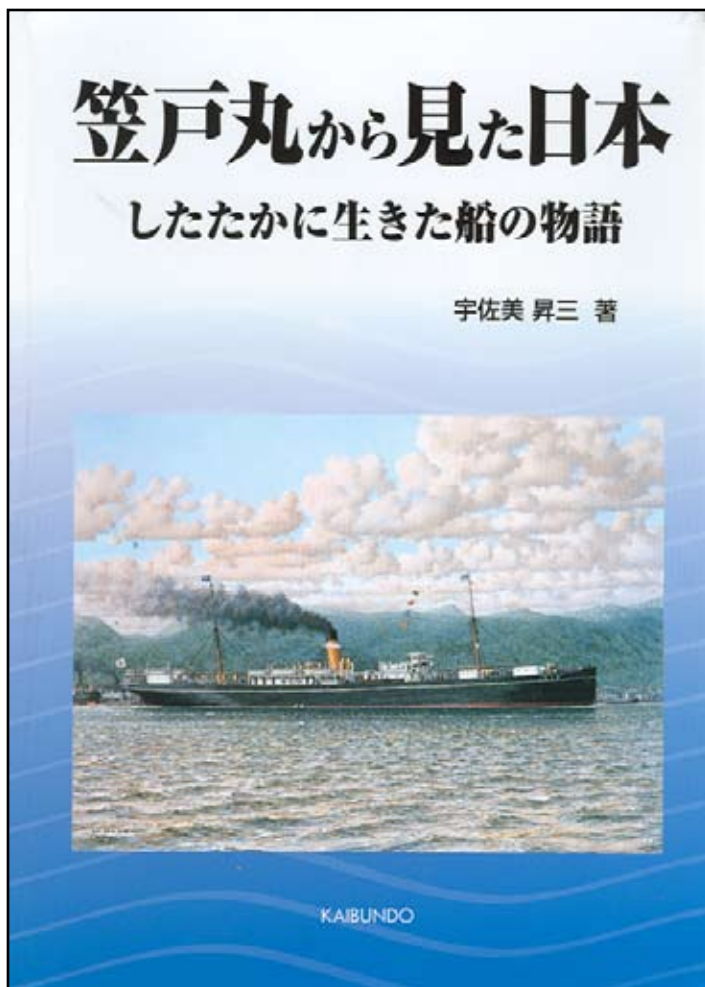
Brazil's 'Mayflower'

TOKYO Professor Shozo Usami spent decades researching and writing the history of the *Kasato Maru*, all about an old steamship that Japanese-Brazilians see as their “Mayflower.” The book “*Kasato Maru kara Mita Nihon*” was published in Japan in 2008. The cover is shown at right. Shozo’s book is making a splash internationally. *The Asahi Shimbun*, Japan’s largest newspaper, published this story from Brazil:



SAO PAULO – Brazilians of Japanese descent plan to salvage artifacts from a wreck in waters off Rus-

sia that they say symbolizes the nearly century-long history of Japanese immigration to Brazil. The project involving the *Kasato Maru*, the ship that carried Japan’s first immigrants to Brazil, is expected to start ahead of the 100th anniversary of the immigrants’ arrival in Brazil in 1908. Brazilians of Japanese descent are hoping to salvage anchors, the rudder, the ship’s bell and other fittings. The vessel was sunk by Soviet bombing in the closing days of World War II. “If everything goes according to plan, we hope to keep the anchors as symbols of immigration, one in the port of departure in Kobe and the other in Brazil,” said Makoto Yamashita, 63, who leads the project. On June 18, 1908, the first group of about 800 Japanese landed from the *Kasato Maru* on the port town of Santos to start a new life in Brazil. In the 99 years since, the Japanese-Brazilian population has expanded to top 1 million. For Brazilians of Japanese descent, the *Kasato Maru* is a symbol of their roots. The project is expected to face a number of hurdles, however. In August 1945, the *Kasato Maru*, which was used as a fish processing ship, was attacked and sunk in the Sea of Okhotsk off the west coast of the Kamchatka Peninsula. The salvage operations will require Russian government approval because the wreck is believed to lie within Russian territorial waters. Hidekazu Takayama, 59, a second-generation Japanese-Brazilian who sits in Brazil’s Lower House, is leading efforts to petition



the Russian ambassador and others for cooperation in the project. The exact location of the *Kasato Maru* is not known. Survivors of the Soviet attack only recall that the ship sank in relatively shallow waters, at a depth of about 18 meters. Still, the immigrants have high hopes that artifacts recovered from the ship will help them hand down their memories over the generations to come. It is a “magnificent dream that can unify the Japanese immigrants community in Brazil,” said one immigrant. The ship itself had a colorful past, according to Shozo Usami, former professor of Komazawa Women’s University and author of “*Kasato Maru kara Mita Nihon*” (Japan viewed from the *Kasato Maru*), published this year. According to Usami, the ship was built in Britain in 1900 as a cargo-passenger vessel and later carried soldiers in Russia. Japan seized it after the Japan-Russia War of 1904-1905. The ship, renamed the *Kasato Maru*, was then used to transport Japanese immigrants to Hawaii as well as Brazil and other Latin American countries.