



Japan-Brazil YEAR OF EXCHANGE



2008 is the “Japan-Brazil Year of Exchange,” commemorating 100 years since the first Japanese emigrated to Brazil. Against the backdrop of a diverse range of commemorative events being held in both countries, we take a look at the fruits of 100 years of interaction between the two nations.

Brazilians In Japan

At present, approximately 320,000 Brazilians live in Japan. The largest concentration of this contingent—some 19,000 people—is found in Hamamatsu City, Shizuoka Prefecture.

Why did so many Brazilians decide to live in Hamamatsu? The reason is that some of Japan’s main vehicle manufacturers, such as Yamaha motor, Suzuki and Honda, have established factories there, meaning there are employment opportunities.

Since the 1990s, the trend has been for the rapidly rising numbers of Brazilian workers to be less likely to be short-term workers coming on their own, as more long-term workers accompanied by their families come to Japan. With this influx has come an increased desire among the local Japa-

LEFT: A samba parade held in the streets of Hamamatsu on “Hamamatsu Brazil Day.”



ABOVE: The Brazilian martial art of capoeira performed on a stage in Hamamatsu City.

nese to find out more about Brazilian culture and history, rather than simply expecting the immigrants to “when in Rome, do as the Romans.” This has been given further momentum by the activities to commemorate 100 years of Japanese immigration to Brazil. A diverse range of events related to music, arts and sport are being held in Hamamatsu City throughout this year.

At one of these, “Hamamatsu Brazil Day” held from September 12 to 14, many people were attracted to stalls selling Brazilian food and local Hamamatsu dishes, as well as to demonstrations of the traditional Japanese and Brazilian martial arts of karate and capoeira.

Keiko Muraki, director of the International Affairs Division of the Hamamatsu Municipal Office, said, “Brazilian immigrants play an important role in sup-

porting the local economy in Hamamatsu. This is something that Japanese citizens need to fully appreciate. I think that through this type of event, shared awareness of the fact that we are all citizens of Hamamatsu City will deepen mutual understanding.” Hamamatsu City will continue to do its best to support Brazilian immigrants in order to create a society in which people live happily together.

Celebrating The Japanese Emigration To Brazil

The emigration ship Kasato Maru arrived in the Brazilian port of Santos with 781 Japanese passengers aboard on June 18, 1908, after departing from Kobe seven weeks earlier on April 28. One hundred years ago this year, the population explosion dur-



LEFT: The emigrant ship Arizona Maru is bid farewell as it leaves Kobe for Brazil in 1937.

TOP: Young Japanese emigrants about to set sail for Brazil from Yokohama in 1935.

ABOVE: Immigrants living near Manaus in the Amazon basin area in 1954.

ing Japan's Meiji period (1868–1912) helped to trigger a Japanese emigration to Brazil. Most of the Japanese immigrants started working as contract laborers on coffee plantations, but gradually set up their own farms to grow crops such as coffee, cotton or pepper. Some 250,000 Japanese emigrated to Brazil over the years and now the 1.5 million Brazilians of Japanese descent constitute the largest overseas Japanese population in the world.

At an event held in the Brazilian capital of Brasilia on June 18 this year to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Japanese immigration, President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva described the contribution of people of Japanese descent to Brazilian society as follows: "With aspirations toward the future, the Japanese immigrants who came to this country helped to create the nation that is Brazil. They were hard-

working, creative and diligent people." Japanese immigrants made remarkable contributions to Brazilian agriculture, most notably by introducing new crops such as lettuce, potatoes and tomatoes. In addition, in terms of culture, such as sport, they popularized the traditional Japanese martial arts of judo and karate throughout Brazil, which is now famous for producing many Olympic medalists in judo. On another front, approximately 320,000 Brazilians, including descendents of Japanese immigrants, currently live in Japan, creating ever-deepening links between the two countries. How the relations forged over the last 100 years will develop into the future will be determined over the next 100 years.