

# The South American Mission of the Shinshū Ōtani-ha and its Contribution to Buddhism in Brazil

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## *Introduction*

ALTHOUGH the jurisdiction of the South American Mission of the Shinshū Ōtani-ha covers the whole of South America and also carries out missionary activities in Argentina and Paraguay, we are restricting our considerations to Brazil, where the mission's headquarters is located and where its most important tasks are concentrated.

## *Introducing Brazil*

Brazil is the largest country in South America. Its total area is 8,514,876.599 km<sup>2</sup>, and it is divided into twenty-six states plus the Federal District. In 2007, the country had 5,564 municipal districts, and the population is currently estimated at 186,619,424 inhabitants. It is the only Portuguese-speaking country in the Americas, as unlike other countries in the region which were colonized by Spain, Brazil was colonized by Portugal. Discovered by Portuguese explorers in 1500, it was colonized by the Portuguese Crown with the aim of supplying riches, rather than providing a new country for religious dissidents persecuted in Europe, as was the case with the English colonies that gave rise to the United States. The principal activities of the colony were based on the system of feudal agriculture which revolved around slave labor, cattle and mining. Enslavement of the indigenous Indians was attempted, without much success. It was Africa which supplied most of the slaves to Brazil, both in its colonial phase and in its early decades as an independent nation.

At the end of the eighteenth century, the introduction of illuminist ideas from Europe stimulated the first movements for political emancipation, which was only achieved in 1822. It is interesting to note that throughout most of Europe, the Enlightenment had an anti-clerical and anti-religious connotation, whereas in the Iberian countries and their colonies, including Brazil, it was espoused mainly by the enlightened Catholic clergy. The process of independence was facilitated by the arrival of the Portuguese royal family in the colony in 1808, escaping from the Napoleonic armies. The gaining of independence was relatively peaceful and a Portuguese prince, Dom Pedro I, became the first monarch of the emancipated nation. The maintenance of the monarchist regime preserved the territorial unity of the old Portuguese America, while Spanish America became fragmented into numerous republics. Slavery was abolished in 1888, but nothing was done to integrate the ex-slaves into Brazilian society as free workers. The feudal landowners resorted to foreign immigration to replace the lost labor force. A republican regime was set up in 1889, under which there were alternate phases of democratic liberalization and authoritarianism. The current phase is a period of consolidation of the democracy which was instituted in 1964, after a military dictatorship which had lasted for about twenty years. The Brazilian economy had been predominantly agricultural up until around 1930, when modernization began, characterized by industrialization and the acceleration of urbanization.

The official religion of Brazil had been Catholicism ever since the colonial period, until the republic brought about the separation of church and state and guaranteed freedom of worship. Brazil is now theoretically a lay state, but the dominant religion (Roman Catholicism) still preserves a series of privileges, which gives this secular Brazilian regime two different weights and two different measures: real or imaginary offenses against the dominant religion are promptly put down in the name of the law, while discrimination against minority religions is largely ignored by the authorities. The religious panorama of Brazil is characterized by the presence—alongside the dominant Catholicism (representing about 70 percent of the population)—of a growing Protestant community, and other minority religions such as Orthodox Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, worshipers of syncretistic Afro-Brazilian cults, etc.

*Japanese Immigration and Buddhism in Brazil*

From the mid-nineteenth century onward, the province (now a state) of São Paulo became the principal recipient of foreign immigrants to our country in response to the need for labor brought about by the spread of coffee cultivation and the imminent end of the slave economy. Realizing that slavery was an institution whose days were numbered, the São Paulo farm owners saw foreign immigration as an alternative to slave labor, and began organizing the arrival of European agricultural workers: Italians, Spanish, Portuguese, Germans, etc. However, being used to having slaves, the coffee-growers were not prepared to offer working conditions worthy of free workers; conditions for the immigrant farm workers were extremely hard, and the number of European candidates for immigration to Brazil began to dwindle. The alternative the coffee-growers came up with was immigration from Japan. After various attempts and intense negotiations, the first wave of Japanese immigrants, consisting of 781 people, who traveled on the steamship, the *Kasato Maru* 笠戸丸, disembarked at the port of Santos on 18 June 1908. The Centenary of Japanese Immigration to Brazil being commemorated this year is also the Centenary of the arrival of Buddhism, and the first Buddhist monk to set foot on Brazilian soil was the Ven. Ibaragi Nissui 茨木日水の Butsuryū-shū 仏立宗, who came aboard the *Kasato Maru* as a simple agricultural worker. The immigrants brought the Buddhist faith imprinted in their hearts, and their prayers in their baggage which included home altars (*butsudan* 仏壇). When an immigrant died, a companion with some knowledge of the Buddhist texts would officiate at the funeral.

Initially, the Japanese immigrants had no intention of establishing themselves indefinitely in Brazil, but rather intended to work hard for several years, put some savings together and return to Japan. Few immigrants were successful in this original plan. Most of them were caught up in the process resulting from the involvement of Brazil and Japan in World War II on opposite sides. When the conflict was over, the radical change in the context definitively barred their return to Japan and forced them to make Brazil their second homeland. The situation of the immigrants between 1942 and 1952 was particularly difficult, when Brazil and Japan cut off all diplomatic ties because of the war. Most Japanese immigrants' assets were frozen or sold off and they suffered various forms of discrimination and restrictions, such as the prohibition on using and teaching the Japanese language, the publishing of newspapers, and the freedom to travel. With the end of

the conflict, the Japanese community in Brazil split into two factions, the *kachigumi* 勝組 or triumphalists, who believed that Japan had won the war, and the *makegumi* 負組, the realists or defeatists, who accepted the bitter reality of defeat. A secret *kachigumi* organization, the Shindō Renmei 臣道連盟 (League of the Way of the Subjects) brought about a series of assassinations of the *makegumi*, who were stigmatized as traitors. This painful episode caused a wave of resentment and enmity which lasted for many years among the Japanese community in Brazil. Unable to return to their country because of the defeat, the immigrants began to import their cultural and religious institutions to their adopted homeland, following the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between Brazil and Japan in 1952. The first official Japanese Buddhist missions to Brazil were created with the primary objective of providing spiritual aid to the immigrants and to worship their dead. The oldest missions are those of Shin Buddhism (the Ōtani-ha and Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha) which date back to 1952. Later, the Sōtō Zen, Nichiren, Shingon and Jōdo Schools arrived. The Federation of Japanese Buddhist Schools was set up in Brazil in 1958, and now includes Shin Buddhism and the Jōdo, Nichiren, Sōtō Zen, Shingon and Butsurū Schools.

Immigration recommenced in 1953 after its interruption due to World War II, until this too ceased in 1973, when the ship, the Nippon Maru 日本丸, docked in Santos bringing the last group of immigrants. In 1988, the demographic census of the community estimated the Japanese population in Brazil at 1,228,000 people. That same year, Japanese descendants began to emigrate temporarily back to Japan in search of better living conditions, and this phenomenon, known as *dekasegi* 出稼ぎ, reached its peak in the 1990s. The number of people of Japanese descent living in Brazil is now estimated at around one and a half million, and the number of *dekasegi* Brazilians at over 300,000.

The Japanese Buddhist missions which first arrived in 1952 were the first organizations of this type that Brazil had seen. For this reason, for several decades, the term “Buddhism” was synonymous in Brazil with “Japanese religion.” Nowadays, with the presence in this country of Buddhist communities of Chinese and Korean immigrants, and organizations aimed at the Brazilian public, such as the groups specializing in the Theravada practice and of Tibetan Buddhism, the situation is quite different. Working principally with the Japanese community, the Japanese Buddhist missions have kept a low profile in Brazilian society. With the large amounts of publicity surrounding the groups of Tibetan origin, and the widespread publication of books written by the Dalai Lama, many Brazilians now think that Buddhism was introduced into this country by the Tibetans.

We now see two distinct types of Buddhism in Brazil: (1) ethnic Buddhism or that from immigration principally aimed at providing spiritual care for the Japanese, Chinese or Korean immigrants; and (2) missionary or conversion Buddhism which is directed mainly at the Brazilian public in general. The organizations representing the Theravada and Tibetan traditions fall under this latter category. Nevertheless, Buddhist organizations created within immigrant communities may also act as Buddhist missionaries.

When dealing with the current situation of Buddhism in Brazil, the media generally adopts a triumphalist and sensationalist tone, claiming there has been a significant growth in the number of Buddhists and followers of the Dharma among artists and celebrity journalists. In reality, many of these celebrities belong to the Japanese “New Religions” which are very active among Brazilians and are frequently confused with Buddhism. A study published in 2004 by Prof. Dr. Frank Usarski of the Department of Religious Sciences at the Pontificia Universidade Católica de São Paulo shows, based on official Brazilian statistics, that the number of Buddhists in Brazil is in fact declining. The 1991 census recorded 236,408 Buddhists in the country, while the figure for 2000 showed that this number had fallen to 214,873. These numbers demand explanation and reflection. Firstly, they can be considered inflated, as they include the faithful from the “New Religions.” Secondly, this reduction can be explained by the end of Japanese immigration, the deaths of the old immigrants, and the *dekasegi* phenomenon, which was responsible for the return of many of the Japanese immigrants to their original country. It should also be remembered that most of the Japanese descendants no longer call themselves Buddhist, and have converted to Christianity or to the Japanese “New Religions.” However, even these people occasionally visit Buddhist temples to participate in services in memory of their ancestors. Whatever the case, with immigration to Brazil having ceased, Buddhism from Japanese immigration is dying out. Its only solution is to transform itself into missionary Buddhism and open up to the Brazilian public in general. The South American Mission of the Ōtani-ha is among those attempting to take their first steps in this direction.

#### *The History of the South American Mission of the Ōtani-ha in Brazil*

The South American Mission of the Ōtani-ha was officially founded in 1952 during the visit to this country by the abbot Ōtani Kōchō 大谷光暢. This visit, besides marking the start of the missionary activities in our country in response to the appeal by pioneer immigrants belonging to the denomination,

also had the purpose of promoting reconciliation between the *kachigumi* and the *makegumi* factions, according to a report by a member of the abbot's party, Rev. Furukawa Chitoku 古川智徳:

On the visit by the abbot we faced a series of problems. Firstly, in the territory to be visited there was no missionary activity, nor was there a temple connected with Higashi Honganji. Also, there was vehement opposition against the abbot and his wife, who were completely unknown in the region. Another problem arose when . . . we received news that the Japanese residents in the region were split into two opposing factions: the *kachigumi*, who believed Japan had won the war, and the *makegumi* who accepted the defeat. The Minister of Foreign Affairs was extremely apprehensive, fearing the visit would fan the flames of animosity.

However, those who welcomed the visit by the illustrious couple were of the opinion that the practice of worship in memory of the dead immigrants, under such adverse conditions, would bring together the people from the two sides under a single ideal, and lead them to overcome their resentments. So they firmly declared that they considered the visit necessary to overcome these problems. . . . We too wished for the union of all Japanese, but we saw the tensions between the opposing factions were becoming more deeply entrenched, as is common in the human condition. . . . As we already had some information about the region, our basic rule of thumb was that in every location or settlement to be visited, the differences between the two factions were to be smoothed out for the visit to be possible. . . . We started by visiting places where the conflict was less intense. In those places where the opposition was more deeply entrenched, we sometimes had to negotiate eleven or twelve times before reaching an agreement between the parties. Even so, sometimes, when we arrived at the place being visited, the two groups would present their greetings separately, or our party would be obliged to split up: the abbot being a guest at the residence of a *makegumi*, whilst Rev. Inaba, the head of our party, and myself were obliged to spend the night somewhere else so that both sides could play the role of host. Sometimes we had lunch with one of the factions and dinner with the other. . . .

Whatever the case, we concluded that the visit and the celebration of the memory of the dead brought favorable conditions for the establishment of a dialogue between the two groups.<sup>1</sup>

Rev. Inaba Dōi 稲葉道意, who accompanied the abbot on the visit, was named the first bishop in 1954. In the early years, the headquarters of the mission was temporarily based at the followers' homes. In 1955, a piece of land was bought in the Jardim da Saúde neighborhood of São Paulo, and this was the site of the Nambei Honganji Temple, inaugurated in 1959, the present-day headquarters of the mission. In addition to its headquarters in São Paulo, the South American Mission has eighteen temples in various states, most of them in the cities of the interior of the states of São Paulo and Paraná. It also has various nuclei and representatives in cities where there are no temples. In 1990, the mission had forty-five Dharma ministers, of which nineteen were missionaries from Japan, two were Brazilians, and the rest were recruited from among the followers as auxiliary clergy. This number is now reduced to twenty ministers, with thirteen missionaries (two of whom are Brazilian) and seven auxiliary clergy (three of whom are Brazilian). In 1990, there were about 5,000 *sōzokkō monto* 相続講門徒, heads of families regularly enrolled in the mission society (Sōzokkō), and 400 followers affiliated to the Gojikai 護持会 (association responsible for the upkeep of the central headquarters). The Sōzokkō and Gojikai no longer exist and we have just a group of 350 keepers of urns at the ossuary of the Nambei Honganji Temple, who make contributions for running the headquarters. The number of followers has fallen dramatically and the management of the central headquarters, the nuclei and local temples is made up mostly of old people, with the younger people from the Japanese community rarely showing much interest in the institution. All this is reflected in the financial side: we have already seen cases of the sale of property to provide funds for the payment of debts and to avoid going into the red. This very serious crisis is threatening the mission with extinction. We believe that only a radical transformation of the organization, from a Buddhism based on immigration to one based on conversion, will prevent imminent collapse. For this transformation to occur, in our opinion, the activity of the Buddhist Institute of Missionary Studies (Nambei Shinshū Kyōgaku Kenkyūjo), the organization founded in the mission in March 1980, by the bishop Hoshinobori Susumu 壘昇羨, will be of primary importance.

<sup>1</sup> Statement taken by Bishop Urabe Fukashi 浦部玄.

The history of this institute is intimately connected with my personal history in the Ōtani-ha, as although I have kept in contact informally and published a doctoral thesis at the University of São Paulo in 1972 on medieval history, focusing on the conception of history of Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1262), it was the foundation of the institute that motivated my entry into the denomination as a minister of the Dharma, in order to collaborate with its work. The institute, which is the only body specializing in research into Buddhism at the university level in South America by a Japanese mission, has the following objectives:

1. Carrying out studies on the doctrine of Shin Buddhism and collaborating in the training of personnel dedicated to missionary activities.
2. Supplying the missionaries with information resources about the society, culture and religion of South American countries so that they can adapt their work to local conditions.
3. Producing written and audio-visual materials for use by the missionaries.
4. Translating sacred Shin Buddhist texts into Portuguese.
5. Publishing books, pamphlets and periodicals in Portuguese on Shin Buddhism.
6. Holding courses and conferences on Shin Buddhism for the general public.

The principal publications of the institute are listed below.

1. *Louvação do Budismo* (Praise in Buddhism). Bilingual book of liturgies published in 1987 for the commemoration of the 35th Anniversary of the Mission. It will shortly be republished in a new revised and expanded version.
2. *Revista do Instituto Budista de Estudos Missionários* (Journal of the Buddhist Institute of Missionary Studies). Vols. 1 and 2.
3. Kenryo Kanamatsu. *Naturalidade* (Naturalness). São Paulo: Aquarius and Templo Budista Higashi Honganji, 1983.
4. Manshi Kiyozawa. *Arcabouço de uma Filosofia da Religião* (Outline of a Philosophy of Religion). São Paulo: Roswitha Kempf and Instituto Budista de Estudos Missionários, 1986.
5. *Cantares da Aspiração do Nascer na Terra Pura* (Aspirational Songs of Birth in the Pure Land). A translation of Ganshōge 願生偈. São Paulo: Instituto Budista de Estudos Missionários.

6. Gyomay Kubose. *Budismo Essencial* (Essential Buddhism). A translation of *Everyday Suchness*. São Paulo: Axis Mundi and Budagaya, 1995.
7. Shuichi Maida. *Quem é o mau ?* (Who is Evil?). A selection of his articles. São Paulo: Budagaya, 1997.
8. Yutai Ikeda. *Vivendo Juntos na Diversidade* (Living Together in Diversity). São Paulo: Budagaya, 1997.
9. Shunko Tashiro. *O Respeito à Vida* (Respect for Life). São Paulo: Instituto Budista de Estudos Missionários.
10. Masao Ryose. *Rompendo as Amarras do Ego* (Breaking the Bonds of the Ego). São Paulo: Instituto Budista de Estudos Missionários.
11. Otani University, ed. *Jodo Shinshu*. São Paulo: Aquarius, 1981.
12. Ricardo Mário Gonçalves, trans. *Tannishō: O Tratado de Lamentação das Heresias* (Tannishō: Treatise of Lamentation of the Heresies). São Paulo: Higashi Honganji, 1974.
13. Ricardo Mário Gonçalves. *O Caminho do Despertar* (The Way of Awakening). São Paulo: Instituto Budista de Estudos Missionários, 1992.
14. *Ouvir Shinran Aqui e Agora* (Listening to Shinran Here and Now). São Paulo: Instituto Budista de Estudos Missionários.
15. Takashi Hirose. *O Caminho do Discípulo* (The Way of the Disciple). São Paulo: Instituto Budista de Estudos Missionários.
16. Ricardo Mário Gonçalves. *A Ética Budista e o Espírito Econômico do Japão* (Buddhist Ethics and the Economic Spirit of Japan). Published in commemoration of the centenary of Japanese immigration to Brazil. São Paulo: Elevação, 2007.

The team at the institute, made up of missionaries and lay collaborators who were admitted on the basis of their extensive knowledge, is currently preparing a bilingual collection of model sermons on various themes, for preaching the Dharma, in order to facilitate the work of the ministers who work in different locations.

It is worth remembering that books on Buddhism are very well accepted by the public in Brazil and can be found at most good book stores. Some of these, such as the works of the Dalai Lama, are true best-sellers. So investing seriously in book publishing is certainly one way of helping the mission overcome its present financial crisis.

One of the main tasks of the institute is to make translations of the sacred texts, as without these, the message of Shin Buddhism will not reach the Brazilian people in general, or the Japanese community, since most of them do not understand Japanese. My first experience in this area was the translation of the *Tannishō* 歎異抄, the first edition of which was published in 1974, even before my formal links with the Ōtani-ha were established. Next, we translated *Shōshinge* 正信偈 and also produced partial translations of the *Wasan* 和讃 and the *Ofumi* 御文 by Rennyo 蓮如 (1415–1499) for the *Book of Liturgies* published in 1987. We are currently preparing a translation of the three Pure Land sutras, and Shinran's *Kyōgyōshinshō* 教行信証, to be published by 2011.

Throughout these years, we have built up experience that has led us to draw up a methodology which is appropriate for the translation of sacred texts of Shin Buddhism. The main points of this methodology are given below.

- (a) The texts must always be translated from their original sources. We can compare with English, French or any other translation when looking for help, but we cannot admit second-hand translations. Therefore, the texts by Shinran and Rennyo were translated directly from the original Japanese, and those of the sutras and treatises were taken directly from Chinese translations which were used by Shinran.
- (b) In accordance with the method of translation developed by the missionary and the translator Kumārajīva (344–413), the translations are carried out by a team. A draft produced by one member of the team is exhaustively discussed by the whole group, until a consensus is reached on the final text to be published.
- (c) We see translation as a work in progress, in which there is always room for improvement. Thus, a text which has already been published is submitted to a re-assessment before going to the next edition.
- (d) As producers of translations in Portuguese, we have easy access to texts which are rich in inspiration, and tools which are unlikely to be used by translators working with English or other languages. These were texts produced in Japan by the Jesuit priests who were there as missionaries in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and who were the first westerners to study the Japanese language and culture. The *Vocabulario*

*da Lingoa de Iapam*, the Japanese-Portuguese dictionary published by the Jesuit priests in Nagasaki in 1603 has countless Japanese Buddhist technical terms translated into Portuguese and is for us a priceless working tool, particularly in the translation of Rennyō's *Ofumi*, whose language is practically the same as that found by the Jesuits in Japan, a century later. The *Historia de Iapam* (History of Japan) by Father Luís Fróis is another important source of useful information in our work.

Within the institute we have set up a group dedicated to the work of translation called the *Kumarajiva Translation Workshop*. One of its objectives is to train younger and less experienced members to become efficient translators specializing in Buddhist texts.

Another important area of the institute's work is holding courses and talks in Portuguese to the general public. Since the institute was founded, we have experimented with various ways of doing this at the mission's headquarters, until settling on the current model of giving introductory courses in basic Buddhism and Shin Buddhism on Saturday afternoons. The course in Shin Buddhism is given either by the bishop or by missionaries from Japan, with the assistance of an interpreter, and I teach the courses in basic Buddhism. In the temples of the cities of the interior, one-day introductory courses in Buddhism are held. In addition to these courses, monthly meetings are held to preach and study the Dharma in Portuguese, both at the headquarters and at some of the branches. These activities attract not only the children and grandchildren of Japanese people, but also a considerable number of Brazilians of non-Japanese descent. Some of these people have become interested in receiving confirmation (*kikyōshiki* 帰敬式) and many Brazilians received it directly from the abbot Ōtani Chōken 大谷暢顕 when he visited South America in October 2007. Some of these initiates have become leaders of study groups and practice Shin Buddhism in their home communities. One notable example is Carlos Roberto de Oliveira, a retired manager of the Bank of Brazil who lives in Recife, the state capital of Pernambuco, in the northeast of the country. Having received confirmation at the mission headquarters, he is very active in voluntary work in the area of health care among the needy communities of his city, and leads a Shin Buddhism study group at his home. Another notable example is Heitor Dias, a graduate student of psychology who, having been confirmed by the abbot, set up a Shin Buddhism study

group at the University of Uberaba, in Minas Gerais, where he is doing his Master's degree. There is also a study group in the city of Maceió, the capital of the state of Alagoas, which was organized by Rev. Wagner Bronzeri. Another group is being organized under our guidance, at the University of Fortaleza, in the capital of the state of Ceará.

It is also worth noting our participation in the New Consciousness Encounters, interreligious spiritual retreats which are held annually in Campina Grande, in the northeastern state of Paraíba, with support from both the municipal and the state governments. These encounters, held since 1992 during Carnival, bring together thousands of people, including representatives of various religions and philosophies who give talks and hold round tables, workshops, etc. We have taken part in these since 1997, representing the Buddhist tradition. In the early days we emphasized Buddhism in general, but since 2006 we have held specific workshops on Shin Buddhism.

A new area of action which appears to be quite promising is the missionary activities carried out via the Internet. In Brazil there is already intense Buddhist activity on the Internet, centralized at the Buddhist Portal, Dharmanet (<http://www.dharmanet.com.br/home/>), where it is possible to access sites of traditional and regular Buddhist organizations active in Brazil, as well as download translations of sacred texts of the various schools, purchase books on Buddhism at virtual bookstores, get up-to-date news on Buddhism, etc. The South American Mission now has three sites:

Official Mission Site: <http://homepage.mac.com/ishu/index.htm>.

Site of the Apucarana Nambei Honganji Temple in Apucarana, in the State of Paraná, by Rev. Wagner Bronzeri: <http://www.honganji.org.br>.

Site of the Tohoku Nambei Honganji Temple in Ribeirão Preto, in the State of São Paulo, by Rev. Tadao Sawanaka: <http://br.geocities.com/templbudista>.

There are also numerous Buddhist communities on Orkut (a social networking and discussion site) and excellent discussion forums on the various Buddhist paths, a notable example being the Discussion Forum on Shin Buddhism set up by Rev. Wagner Bronzeri in July 2003, which now has 183 participants, mostly Brazilians of non-Japanese origin living in various parts of the country, as well as some living abroad: [Buddhism\\_Shin@yahoo.com.br](mailto:Buddhism_Shin@yahoo.com.br).

As of a few weeks ago the forum has been undergoing a significant change in content. Messages from beginners, or those who are just curious and are looking for basic information, have decreased and interchanges among mature scholars discussing doctrinal questions of great depth are now predominant. For example, there was recently a posting by the scholar Daniel Arraes, who has been registered with the forum since 29 May 2008, which was made during a discussion of the statement by the Shin thinker Soga Ryōjin 曾我量深 (1875–1971) that the bodhisattva Dharmākara is the *ālayavijñāna*. His treatment of the issue not only displays a competent grasp of certain concepts central to Shin Buddhism, but also reveals a wide understanding of ideas basic to Mahayana Buddhism, in general, and Yogācāra thought, in particular. Interchanges such as this lead us to conclude that the emerging Brazilian Buddhism is beginning to leave its childhood and reach adulthood, and that the South American Mission is making its contribution to this development.

### *Conclusion*

As mentioned earlier, the immigrant Buddhism, centered on funerary rites and memorial services for ancestors in Japanese families, is dying out. Temples that had previously flourished in the golden age during the arrival of Japanese immigrants to Brazil have been closed due to a lack of resident missionaries and followers. The number of followers has fallen because of the *dekasegi* phenomenon, and because most of the descendants of immigrants have not shown much interest in preserving the spiritual heritage of their ancestors. If the South American Mission remains imprisoned in this model, there can be no doubt that it will be destined to disappear in the not too distant future.

However, a new type of Buddhism is emerging, centered on the Brazilian public in general and, as we saw earlier, there are promising signs that the South American Mission is already making its contribution, albeit in a modest way, to the process of its formation. If this development is to continue, the institution must seize the moment and radically transform itself, investing in activities which convert it into missionary Buddhism, but without neglecting the activities it has traditionally performed among the Japanese community. We believe that the mission will need to invest heavily in educational and publishing activities, and seek alternative means of support. It will also have to achieve greater visibility in Brazilian society. Fields of action will not be lacking, as Pure Land Buddhism has already begun to

attract respect and interest from the Brazilian public, as occurred with Zen, Theravāda and Tibetan Buddhism, branches of Buddhism which are present and active in various places throughout the country.

(Translated by Fernando Domicildes Carvalho)