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The Book of Mormon in Portuguese

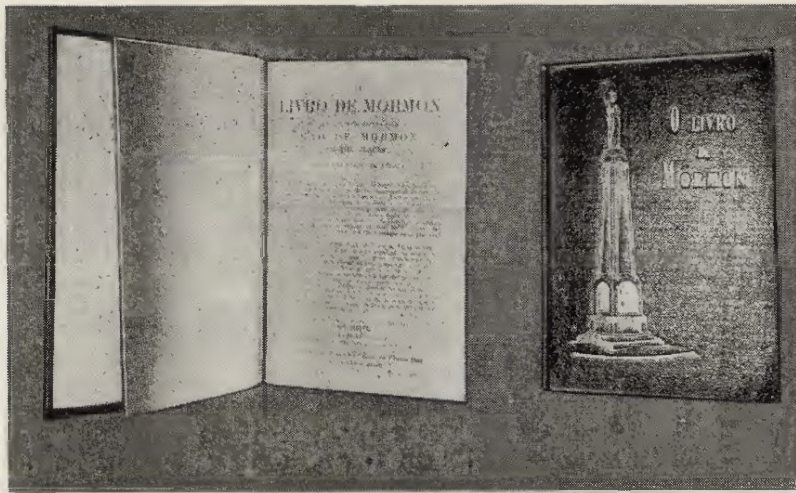
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Abstract: This article relates that the first printing of the Book of Mormon in Portuguese rolled from the press March 15, 1940, after two and one-half years of effort.



FIRST COPY OF THE BOOK OF MORMON IN PORTUGUESE

The BOOK OF MORMON IN PORTUGUESE

By J. ALDEN BOWERS

President of the Brazilian Mission

ON March 15, 1940, the first copy of the Book of Mormon in the Portuguese language was received from the printer, marking the culmination of a project started almost two and a half years before. The three thousand copies of the first edition of this book in Portuguese will greatly facilitate the spreading of the Gospel to about thirty million people in Brazil and make this record available to millions of other Portuguese-speaking peoples in various parts of the world.

The Portuguese is the twenty-third translation of the Book of Mormon and the nineteenth to be printed.

We, here in Brazil, are naturally very proud of the new Book of Mormon and intend to do everything possible to acquaint this people with its contents. It is our hope to place copies in about two thousand homes before the end of the current year through the facilities of the mission library system which has been subscribed to by the Elders of the mission. This system, similar to that used in California, contemplates the lending of copies of the Book of Mormon to interested people for short periods of time, that they may read and become acquainted with its contents, and it prescribes regular follow-up visits by missionaries to assist readers in maintaining the initial interest in the book, by offering explanations and answering questions. It is expected that many copies of the Book of Mormon will be sold in this manner.

Like all good things, the Book of Mormon in Portuguese was well worth waiting for. We were naturally very eager to have it for assistance in our missionary work, but we were more concerned that it be translated correctly, or as nearly so as possible. The mission was fortunate in having within its borders, Brother Daniel Shupe, a former French missionary from Ogden, Utah, who has lived a number of years in Rio de Janeiro. When, therefore, the former Brazilian Mission president, Rulon S. Howells, sought to get a translation started in the late fall of 1937, he secured the assistance of Brother Shupe, who, with the aid of his Brazilian school-teacher wife and her charming, educated mother, undertook the work in his spare time. A few months later, as this translation was progressing, the First Presidency approved funds for the work and authorized a first edition of three thousand copies.

In the meantime, another independent translation was begun so that the two translations could be compared to insure a correct interpretation of doctrine in good and grammatical language. In addition, two able, educated Brazilians were employed to make the comparisons, read proof, and place the work in the latest approved orthography.

Although the work was greatly

delayed because most of it was done in spare time, the second translation was finished in March, 1939. Between this time and about December 15 of the same year, the book had been revised and corrected through three proofs. To expedite the work, the Elders of the Sao Paulo District assigned to Portuguese activity undertook a comparison of the footnotes with the original in English, and also did a great deal of work in supplying the page numbers required in the index references.

At this point, when everything was nearly ready to be printed, lack of wood pulp suitable for the paper (former European sources were cut off) delayed the work another month. But the first copies, beautiful to look at and well bound, more than made up for the many delays which had occurred in the printing schedule.

There are those who believe that the delay was not only worth waiting for, but a good thing for the work in general. When the work was first started, there were no Portuguese-speaking missionaries, for missionary activity in this new language is less than two years old. The Brazilian Mission was a German-speaking mission until governmental nationalization decrees (aiming to force the extension of the use of the national language, Portuguese, among its native born citizenry and the reduction of foreign languages spoken, principally German, Italian, and Russian) were placed in effect.

In the Brazilian winter—June, July, and August—of 1938, four missionaries were assigned to Portuguese. With the change in mission presidents in October of the same year, the new work was continued, until at the present time there are about fifty Portuguese-speaking Elders and only fifteen German-speaking Elders.

Since the Portuguese work was started, there has been much to do. Elders assigned to Portuguese had no senior companions with experience in that language. There were no organizations of any kind, no meetings, and but little literature for missionary use.

It was during this change-over period that the Book of Mormon was completed. When it finally arrived, a way had been prepared for it with tracts and much personal contact. It may now be systematically introduced by experienced, prepared Elders, to bring knowledge and joy to another great people. Once again, a new frontier has been opened to the Book of Mormon.