

## Emendar, substituir e cortar: Tradução da carta de Antônio Gonçalves Dias à Dom Pedro II

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**RESUMO:** O proeminente autor romântico brasileiro Antônio Gonçalves Dias (1823-1864) visitou a Europa de 1854 a 1858, em missão acadêmica oficial em nome do governo brasileiro e do imperador Pedro II, a quem esta carta é endereçada. O imperador foi o responsável por reunir um grupo de intelectuais do Instituto Geográfico Histórico Brasileiro. Gonçalves Dias foi para a Alemanha em 1856 e conheceu em Leipzig, em 1857, o editor e livreiro Brockhaus, que editou três livros seus: *Cantos*, *Os Timbiras* e o dicionário tupi-português, citado nesta carta. A importância deste documento reside não apenas no fato de ser uma correspondência entre duas personalidades brasileiras de grande destaque do século XIX, mas também em sua importância na história da prática acadêmica no Brasil e sua relação com a Europa Continental. É importante destacar que Gonçalves Dias não foi apenas autor de poemas e peças de teatro, mas também advogado, linguista e etnógrafo. O conteúdo desta carta também pode ser de grande interesse para os tupinologistas, visto que essa disciplina era muito apreciada no Brasil na época, em grande parte devido aos românticos brasileiros. O texto original da carta utilizada nesta tradução foi retirado dos registros do Instituto Moreira Salles, que por sua vez retirou-o dos Anais da Biblioteca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Gonçalves Dias. Romantismo. Pedro II. Carta. Anos 1800

### Amend, Replace and Cut Off: Translation of a Letter by Antônio Gonçalves Dias to Dom Pedro II

**ABSTRACT:** The prominent Brazilian romantic author Antônio Gonçalves Dias (1823-1864) visited Europe from 1854 to 1858, on an official academic mission on behalf of the Brazilian government and emperor Pedro II, to whom this letter is addressed. The emperor was responsible for gathering a group of intellectuals in the Brazilian Historical Geographic Institute. Gonçalves Dias went to Germany in 1856 and met editor and bookseller Brockhaus in Leipzig in 1857, who edited three books of his: *Cantos*, *Os Timbiras* and the Tupi-Portuguese dictionary, which is mentioned in this letter. The importance of this document lies not only in the fact that it is a correspondence between two highly important Brazilian personalities of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but also in its importance in the history of academic practice in Brazil and its relation to Continental Europe. It is important to note that Gonçalves Dias was not only an author of poems and plays, but also a lawyer, linguist and ethnographer. The content of this letter might also be of great interest to tupinologists, as this discipline was held in high regard in Brazil at the time, largely



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due to the Brazilian romantics. The original text of the letter used in this translation was taken from the records of the Moreira Salles Institute, which in turn took it from the Annals of the National Library in Rio de Janeiro.

**KEYWORDS:** Gonçalves Dias. Romanticism. Pedro II. Letter. 1800s

Dresden, 4<sup>th</sup> March, 1857

My sire,

Your majesty's most high benignity, deigning it permissible for me to sometime dare address my letters to your majesty, makes me abuse of this so honorable and, I humbly confess, rather undeserved privilege.

I have been staying in Dresden these two months so as to acquaint myself with the German tongue, and also because being in greater proximity to Leipzig made it easier for me to oversee my reimpression. The work of retouching things of which I judged myself free once and for all and which are, moreover, that which I now find repugnant, has been taking a lot of my time, especially when the composers know little Portuguese, and the proofreader of the typography is a man too well-versed in Spanish, the language in which he keeps correcting me.

Some years do not pass uselessly in a man's life, as I've discovered from experience now when, reviewing my volumes, I saw how much in them I had to amend, replace and cut off. I do know that I could have been more rigorous with myself, that I should be so as to not show myself entirely unworthy of your majesty's high protection, but I lacked the courage to sacrifice more than a tenth of what was already published. Following this precept of the Church<sup>2</sup>, I deem myself at peace with my conscience as an author.

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<sup>2</sup> This is a poetic reference to the Catholic practice of tithing, as the tithe is traditionally comprised of ten percent of one's income.

Brockhaus, which is in charge of this edition, and which has been showing great pleasure in doing so since it is their first time working with Brazil, has promised me to conclude it until the end of this month. Thus, even from Berlin, where I shall go only after casting this letter in the mail<sup>3</sup>, I shall be able to direct the printing.

The ease with which such work can be done from Leipzig, especially in that office, will perhaps make me print my play *Boabdil*<sup>4</sup> and a Tupi-Portuguese dictionary, which I intend to offer the [Brazilian Historical and Geographic] Institute.

To me, the dictionary seems to offer some advantage over that of Anchieta, and the anonymous one, just by virtue of the simple inversion of the languages; but independently from that, there would perhaps be some novelty in it that would not be purely poetic. These are works which I have done some time ago, but not in a coordinated fashion. This idea came to me when I read Brockhaus' catalogue of philology, which attributes to me the remarks about the indigenous language, today in use in the Upper-Amazon<sup>5</sup>, which I presented to the Institute, declaring that I owed them [the remarks] to the kindness of the current bishop of Pará. It seemed to me that I could amend this error, to which I have not contributed, not even involuntarily, publishing what I had previously written on the subject; And I deem such work most convenient, owing to the Institute the idea of the convenience of

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<sup>3</sup> The original text in Portuguese says “para onde parto apenas tenha lançado esta no correio”, which is rather convoluted. It shows the Lusophone convention of suppressing the word “carta” (“letter”) in letters.

<sup>4</sup> A posthumously published play about Abu Abdallah Muhammad XII, known in Europe as Boabdil, the last Nasrid ruler of the Emirate of Granada.

<sup>5</sup> This part of the letter implies that Gonçalves Dias is in fact referring to The “Língua Geral Amazônica”, known natively as *Nheengatu*, and not to the Old Tupi language of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Brazilian coast, despite his earlier explicit reference to José de Anchieta, easily the most important scholar of Old Tupi. It is a clear example of the lack of rigor of 19<sup>th</sup> century tupinologists regarding the different historical stages of development of the Tupi language(s).



this study, and much having been published recently on this subject, it was reasonable that one among its members accompanied the movement that is owed to it.

My intent was to publish it in Tupi, Portuguese, French and Latin; but when I commenced coordinating the work, I saw that this would take me much more time than I would be able to give; and reserving for later this affair with Brockhaus, I've restricted myself to Portuguese for now.

I have precisely half of the work ready for printing; and to make it start I am waiting to receive some orders, which have not yet arrived. If they come within these next two weeks, everything will be ready by the first days of April.

As for the drama, it happened that I read it to doctors França and Sousa, which happen to be here. They did not dislike it. França translated it to German and it looks the result doesn't seem bad. Still, it will be further reviewed, and the translator supposes that it shall see the light in Dresden and perhaps also in Leipzig. To represent it, there will be booksellers who wish to print it, even if only for the curiosity of it being a Brazilian drama. In this case, I would not wish that the translation appeared before the original. Unfortunately the printing depends on the aforementioned orders, of which I have been taking great care of.

Seeing as I have talked of Brazilians that I've met in Dresden, it happened casually that doctors Sousa and França, Stockmayer and I have met here. França has given some lectures in the French language regarding the constitution, commercial code and literature of Brazil. Sousa will publish his memoirs, or at least start working on this. If Stockmayer is our maestro of this name (I believe he shall be, but I had no occasion to tell him), Brazil, when it comes to arts, literature and sciences, could unquestionably be better represented; but still, it didn't go entirely unrepresented in Dresden.

My sire, making the sincerest wishes for the continuity of your majesty's and the imperial family's precious health, may your majesty allow me to humbly and respectfully kiss your kingly hands.

The most humble and dedicated subject of your majesty,

Antônio Gonçalves Dias

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