

## Review

# *Hitopadésa, translation by D. Pedro II. Genetic editing organized by Sergio Romanelli, Christiane Stallaert and Adriano Mafra*

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### **Abstract:**

Organized as a genetic edition, this book portrays and appraises a creative process, and to our great surprise it is the genesis of the translation, by Emperor D. Pedro II, of *Hitopadésa*, a collection of fables and folk tales of Hindu origin. The authors define themselves as organizers, but they do their job as editors in a broader dimension, by bringing details about a not so commonplace view of the emperor's person, that of a literate man, passionate about translations, which he intensely and constantly performed, in a number of languages. The result of a research of over ten years, which required meticulous transcriptions and making decisions about format and visualization, this study unfolds into dimensions that the organizers explain, in an engaging and fascinating way.

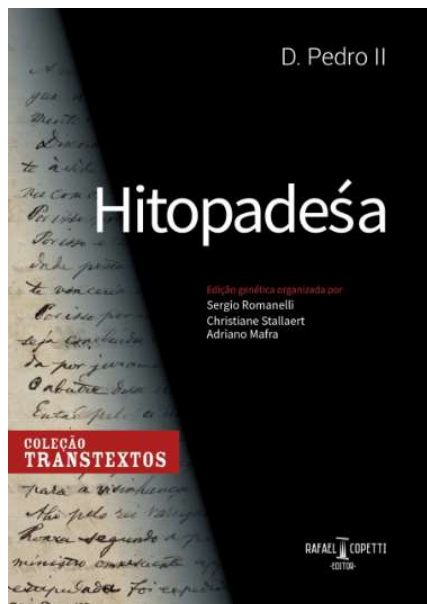
### **Keywords:**

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*Hitopadeśa*  
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Organized as a genetic edition, this book portrays and appraises a creative process, and to our great surprise it is the genesis of the translation, by Emperor D. Pedro II, of *Hitopadeśa*, a collection of fables and folk tales of Hindu origin. The authors define themselves as organizers, but they do their job as editors in a broader dimension, by bringing details about a not so commonplace view of the emperor's person, that of a literate man, passionate about translations, which he intensely and constantly performed, in a number of languages. The result of a research of over ten years, which required meticulous transcriptions and making decisions about format and visualization, this study unfolds into dimensions that the organizers explain, in an engaging and fascinating way.

The genetic edition was sponsored by the Imperial Museum and other institutions, such as the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq) and the University of Antwerp, Belgium. Sérgio Romanelli is an Associate Professor at the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina and Postdoc at the University of Antwerp. Christiane Stallaert is a PhD in Social and Cultural Anthropology and a Full Professor at the University of Antwerp. Adriano Mafra is a PhD in Translation Studies from the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina and a professor at the Instituto Federal Catarinense.

*Hitopadeśa* texts were originally written in Sanskrit and constitute one of the best-known and widely translated books of Hindu literature. The tales and fables are illustrated with maxims and aphorisms, and are targeted mainly at young people, in order to provide them with the wisdom and ethical conduct necessary for adulthood. The narratives are short, with plots involving everyday life, and characters of people and animals, including the fantastic and the unlikely. The title expression stands for “good counsels” being *hita* (useful, helpful) and *upadeśa* (instruction, advice). It is divided into four sections entitled: Gaining Friends (*Mitralābha*); Splitting Partners (*Subridbhedā*); War (*Vigraha*); Peace (*Sandhi*).

Because it is a genetic edition, according to the organizers, “it is not centered on a text work, but on what falls short of it, in an unfinished state”. This is how D. Pedro II's translation is shown, preserving, in the body of the text, erasures, digressions, philological analyses, interventions and immediate corrections, to allow them to be perceived as layers, adjustments applied on the surface of the manuscript. This genetic edition provides evidence of talents and ways of looking at the reality, and the responsibility of a monarch as head of a nation under construction, in need to find its place in the world and fit into it.

The translation is therefore approached not merely as translation of words, but as a possibility of engendering cultural exchanges, a strategy designed to launch the country into the circuit of central nations. Unlike the view that is usually emphasized in schoolbooks, the Emperor had a strong trait that marked his

reign, that of having been a sponsor of culture in a dimension to this day underestimated. The presentation of the manuscripts allows an immersion in the content of *Hitopadesa*, through the perspective of the illustrious translator, but that would be insufficient if not accompanied by a historical analysis, in addition to the edited material. The organizers fulfilled this task with remarkable precision and depth, out a list of themes that focus the figure of the emperor from a different angle.

The genetic-digital transcription of *Hitopadesa* occupies the entire second part, with the manuscripts of the translation in the form of process documents. The themes are discussed in the first part and are indicated with the following subtitles: Brazil of the Second Empire. Don Pedro II, diplomat-translator. Literate/Emperor. Orality/Writing. Author/Receiver. Imperial entry into the “World Republic of Letters”. Don Pedro II, Creole Orientalist. The double connection of Brazilian Orientalism. Brazil and ontological Orientalism. Brazil and intellectual Orientalism. A “Creole Orientalist” on the throne of Brazil. Christian Friedrich Seybold, professor of Sanskrit. The emperor’s guardian. Collaboration between Dom Pedro II and Seybold in the translation of Sanskrit.

In the first theme, there is mention of the fact that, unlike other Latin American countries, Brazil, at the time of its independence, did not have a literate development, mainly because of lack of universities. There has always been an ambiguity hard to dissolve: the uniqueness of a blended Creole culture, in an independent country, but a vision still shaped by European standards. Since ascending the throne, D. Pedro II had understood that the country lacked a “literate identity” and sought to balance this aspect. The translation worked as a rescue from this delay. “Don Pedro II was a man passionate about letters, science and the arts. As a statesman, he understood the importance of providing the young Brazilian nation with a face of its own that could be internationally recognized” (p. 11). Translation could fit as a strategy in this direction.

D. Pedro II is then referred to as a diplomat-translator: “The Emperor’s translation work reveals the fundamental role of translation as a strategic means used by Don Pedro II to move around in the complex and inaccessible network of European, and partly North American, literate intellectuals” (p. 13). The translation is placed in a supranational network of economic and cultural practices. The figure of the emperor as a translator is a strategy even reinforced by him, in a world that was hierarchical: “The profile of the Emperor is that of a typical modern literate in a country of ‘illiterate’ with no consolidated written literary tradition, which wanted to go forward to progress and to the ‘civilized’ world” (p. 15). D. Pedro II, in this context, is characterized as a combative translator and committed to ensuring, to the country, a “literate capital” in its insertion in the world.

In the theme Literate/Emperor, the highlight is the hybrid way D. Pedro II represented himself in his travels to Europe, without the costumes and royal emblems and identifying himself as simply the citizen, man of letters Pedro de Alcântara. The representations of authority were confined to when he was in Brazil, now yes, Emperor D. Pedro II. In Orality/Writing, the organizers emphasize how persistently the Emperor attempted to raise indigenous orality to a literate status. References in this regard appear in the correspondence kept with the Baron of Rio Branco, mentioning the Brésil note published in the *Grande Encyclopédie*, known worldwide. The recommendation was to “offer the French the most realistic and complete possible image of the country’s diversity so that the article can give rise, in a domino effect, to more works about Brazil” (p. 17). Two other points raised in this theme were the recognition of the importance of plural narratives and heterogeneity and diversity as marks of national identity. In Autor/Receptor, the central point is the strategy of hiding the authorial figure of the Emperor, but insisting on the objective of increasing the symbolic capital of Brazil “behind and beyond” the Atlantic.

The imperial entry into the “world republic of letters” is marked by the Emperor’s refusal to “be passively attached by the center and uses the mechanisms of the literary world system to provide room for autonomy to Brazil, transforming it into a modern nation” (p. 23). The next themes involve the concept of Orientalism and describe the role played by Christian Friedrich Seybold, a German teacher who taught Sanskrit

to D. Pedro II. He was also a counselor in the studies of other languages and absorbed the notion of Creole Orientalism, with the integration of the indigenous also characterized “in the Oriental way”. The translation of *Hitopadeśa* was instrumental, given the assumption raised by the monarch that the Guarani language had ties to the Asian languages. The objective of ensuring an identity to the Empire of Brazil, meant the need “to widen the scope of the language of the Brazilian native in relation to the classical Indian language, Sanskrit” (p. 41). Sanskrit was emerging as an important language trunk with growing adherence to its study in Europe.

From the report of the research, the reader can understand that the process of analysis of the translation of D. Pedro II had a succession of moments. The first step was to decipher, the closest possible to the materiality of the process documents, the content of the erasures, the insertions, the use of margins, a challenging job. At another point, it was indispensable to understand the set of symbols employed, the annotations in Arabic or other languages. It was also necessary to rely on an image editor – software, capable of reproducing the movements – especially the correction movements upwards and downwards. Finally, the search was towards understanding how words and adjustments overlapped, from beginning to end, considering the erasures, the fittings, the marks on paper, the refinements, in order to allow the reader to trace these movements in the work of D. Pedro. The organizers further explain that “Don Pedro II did not set his own pagination to his manuscripts, perhaps because the documents were not written on loose sheets, but on notebooks following the linearity of his pages” (p. 53). The following figure illustrates the transcription of the manuscript:

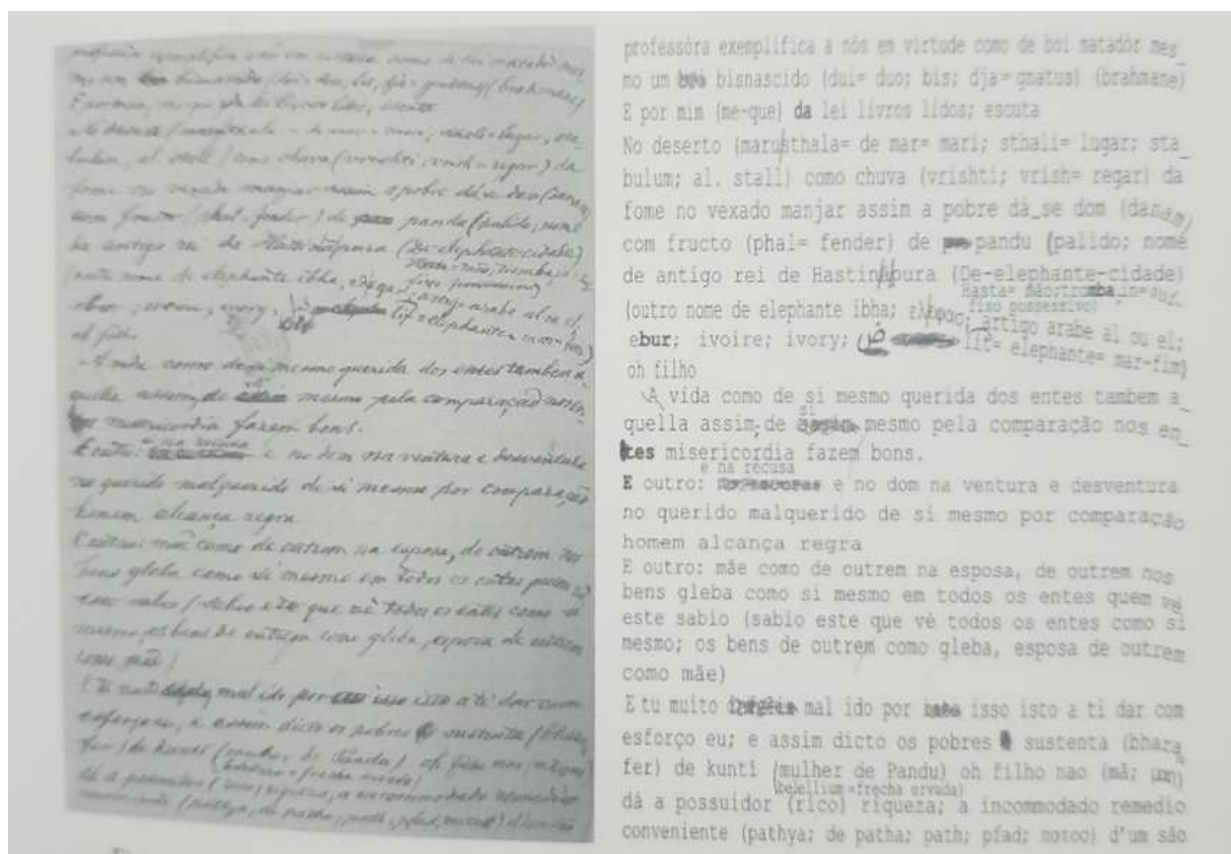


Figure 1 – Transcription of the translation manuscript

Throughout the text, it can be understood how translation goes beyond a purely linguistic practice and becomes an instrument of cultural diplomacy at the service of the country in the context of the second half of the 19th century. The records indicate that the Emperor spent long periods translating, without

interruption, assisted by his Sanskrit teacher, Christian Friedrich Seybold, who was also an enthusiast for the study of Eastern languages and even supported the endeavors to incorporate studies of indigenous words.

The reader will understand that there is, in the manuscripts of D. Pedro II, firm evidence of an author who, even though being linked to European traditions, opens his translations for the inclusion of the indigenous language, valuing, in his drafts, Tupi words. The translation is, in this case, identity construction, mythic, literary, historical. There was also a D. Pedro II emperor willing to constitute a literate identity in Brazil, and translation was a strategy to build before the eyes of foreigners an identity that did not exist. According to Salles<sup>1</sup>, the finished work, “is exposed to different looks and angles” and can be “exposed to new analytical instruments, associated with different exploratory interests that will also offer unprecedented interpretations.”

The translation also worked as a common denominator amongst the strategies of accumulation and consecration of a symbolic cultural capital. “The study of Arabic and Hebrew alternated now with the study of Guarani, or with the retranslation of Camões and the Bible, in an intellectual environment of dialogue with Jewish interlocutors and teachers” (p. 36). The notes made in his diary contain abundant records of the fascination for Eastern, Iberian and Brazilian cultural heritages. Translating was an everyday activity for the Emperor. The genetic method allowed the organization, classification, and transcription of manuscripts, in addition to bringing to the public an enormous wealth of files that would possibly remain “on the shelf” for another long period in the historical archives. Genetic Criticism is a procedure aimed at understanding the mechanisms of production, keeping track of the writer and clarifying how literary works are born.

A genetic edition is not centered on the published text, but consists in the edition of what falls short of it, precisely the writer’s work, “a certain unfinished or even virtual state”. Genetic Criticism, among other actions, organizes and transcribes manuscripts on the condition of process documents. The organizers of this genetic edition explain the procedures of the creation in the Emperor’s translation, and to do so they have followed some steps. The first was to map this amount of material, then transcribe part of the documents, in order to analyze what these documents could tell.

Of the four parts of *Hitopadeśa*, D. Pedro translated two, the *Mitralābha* (Gaining Friends) and the *Suhridbheda* (Splitting Partners); also translated the final pages of the last part *Sandhi* (Peace).

From the *Mitralābha*, Don Pedro translated, in addition to the main plot, the following stories: The traveler and the tiger; The deer, the jackal and the crow; The blind jackal, the cat and the birds; The history of Hiranyaka. The old man and the young wife. From the second part of the work (*Suhridbheda*), the Emperor translated the main story and the following secondary fables: The ape and the wedge; The ass and the dog; The lion, the mouse, and the cat; The poor woman and the bell; The adventures of Kanadarpaketu, of the messenger and of the merchant; The farmer’s wife and her two gallants; The crow, the golden chain and the black serpent; The lion and the rabbit (p. 52).

The genetic edition *Hitopadeśa* is worth reading for the perceptions it contributes to enhance. It improves the access of translation researchers, historians, political scientists and other areas to documentary sources of unquestionable credibility. The accuracy of the research is ensured by the long period of investigation, implying a detained work of annotation, transcription, checking, monitoring tracks, which also required commitment and participation of many people. The work leaves a sound legacy, by associating the figure of D. Pedro II with a dimension that gives an account of his stature, as an intellectual influence in the history of the country. A reading that is exciting, triggers curiosity and, above all, instructs.

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<sup>1</sup> SALLES, C. A. *Gesto inacabado*. São Paulo: Annablume, 1998, p. 41.