



Commented Translation of the “Letters of the Weise Brothers”

Written in the Blumenau Colony between 1855 and 1856

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Objectives

The primary goal of this research is to produce a commented translation of letters written in the 1850s by recently settled immigrants in the Blumenau Colony. On one hand, the project seeks to provide an updated Portuguese version of these texts, enriched with explanatory notes and annotations, making them accessible both to general readers and to scholars interested in the history of German immigration in Santa Catarina, particularly in Blumenau. On the other hand, the project also encompasses the study of the broader historical context of 19th-century migration from Germany to Brazil—its causes, consequences, and intellectual reception through editorial mediation. Furthermore, it involves a careful linguistic analysis as the foundation for defining translation strategies, offering starting points for socio-historical reflections as well as for critical examination of translation practices within the scope of a commented edition.

Methods and Procedures

The first step was to establish the source text through the transcription of four digitized issues of the weekly newspaper in which the letters were originally published, thereby composing the core working corpus. A visit to the “José Ferreira da Silva Historical Archive” in Blumenau provided access to bibliographic resources on the history of the colony and revealed a prior translation, whose critical evaluation also informed the new translation choices. Central to the project was the effort to situate the source text within its historical, social, and intellectual background—namely, the “German” context of the first half of the 19th century, as well as the circumstances of its production and publication. To this end, bibliographical research was conducted on emigration from German-speaking territories during the period, with particular focus on the activities of editor G. Fröbel in connection with H. Blumenau’s colonization project. Additionally, in order to understand the function of the source text—and consequently, to establish the intended function of the translation—the linguistic **analysis considered**

both macrostructural and extratextual features, as well as the microstructures that emerge in the translation process, prompting reflection not only on lexical “challenges” but also on grammatical ones, in line with the concerns of contrastive linguistics in translation studies.

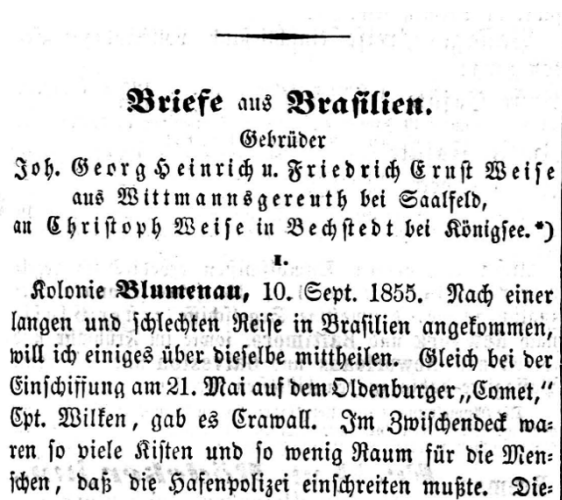


Figure 1: “Letters from Brasil”: headline to the first letter published by the “General Emigration Newspaper”, from Rudolstadt, Thuringia. Source: *Landesarchiv Thüringen*.

Results

The most immediate practical outcome of this project is the translation itself, now existing as a finished work, complete with annotations and paratexts. Its significance is further heightened by the recent bicentennial of German immigration to Brazil, which lends renewed relevance to such texts. Beyond personal research experience and contributions to the field of Translation Studies—a growing area within Brazilian German Studies—the results also include a series of (in)conclusions and new perspectives for further exploration.

Conclusions

Despite the research and translation efforts, many intratextual aspects of the corpus remain unresolved or even incomprehensible—for instance, the tone of the appeals urging a father, left behind in Thuringia, to undertake the same Atlantic crossing, or the extent to which editorial interventions altered the original text. These may seem minor matters, but they reflect deeply personal and political issues. For now, what transpired in Thuringia appears to remain there. What happened on this side of the ocean, however, can be traced historically and genealogically. Yet the intention here is not reconstruction, but rather to make available to contemporary readers and researchers a minimally authentic and subjective material that constitutes both historiographical testimony and expressive text. This opens new avenues for interpretation and research, from both historical and literary perspectives.

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