

## Humberto de Campos: An Old Brazilian Poet Gets New Life in Print

Contributed by Isaura Daniel  
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The third edition of "In the shade of the date trees: oriental tales" (*À sombra das tamareiras: contos orientais*), a book by Brazilian author Humberto de Campos is coming out this month. The new release marks the 75th anniversary of the death of the writer, in January 2009.

Published by Almadena publishing house, based in Rio de Janeiro, in the Brazilian Southeast, the work includes 29 short stories set in the Arab world and Far East, and is the third release by Almadena, a publishing house specialized in Arab themes.

Humberto de Campos starts the work telling his readers about a day he was visited by a Turk interested in selling him a book. The author bought the manuscript for 120,000 réis (the Brazilian currency at the time), and published them in a newspaper, as his work. At the time, Campos did publish his tales in newspapers in Rio de Janeiro, but, different from what readers may think, the story of the Turk is also fiction.

"Early in the 20th century, it was fashionable to talk about the Middle East," said João Baptista M. Vargens, the editor at Almadena. The book continues with tales like "Story of a faithful man", which tells of the pain of Abul Fadl, a rich man who, on leaving the mosque, doubted that any man could cheat him and thus saw his fortune collapse, or "The two daughters of King Hassan", which tells the story of two sisters, one called Lie and the other called Truth to explain the custom of story tellers, who tell lies as if they were truths.

Almadena publishing house invested about one year's worth of work in the book before publication. According to Vargens, the differential of this publication is the 86 footnotes. They help readers to understand words and expressions that are characteristic of the Arab world.

Worked on by Vargens and by two collaborators at Almadena, Suely Ferreira Lima and Renata Mansour. They explain, for example, that "cádi" is a judge, Hauran, a region in Syria, Janissaries are elite Turk-Ottoman soldiers and the Koran, the sacred book of the Muslims.

The book presentation is by Antonio Carlos Secchin, a member of the Brazilian Academy of Letters and Brazilian Literature professor at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro.

"In this multi-faced work by Humberto Campos, 'In the shade of the date trees' represents a successful incursion into the imaginary of the East, which had a discreet, albeit constant, presence in Brazilian writing in the first half of the 20th century," says Secchin, in his text.

Campos was born in the northeastern Brazilian state of Maranhão and was not only a writer of short stories but also a journalist, critic, biographer, poet, chronicler and memoirist. Having lost his father, at the age of 17 Campos moved to Belém, where he worked as a writer for newspapers Folha do Norte and Província do Pará. His first work was poetry, with book "Dust, first series". He became a member of the Brazilian Academy of Letters in 1919 and was a representative for the state of Maranhão. His most famous book is "Memoirs", a chronicle.

The cover price of "In the shade of the date trees: oriental tales" is 29 Brazilian reais (US\$ 18,00). The work may be found in the largest bookstores in Brazil. If it is purchased directly from Almadena, though, the cost drops to 20 reais (US\$ 12.50). The book has 141 pages.

Service:

In the shade of the date trees: oriental tales

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