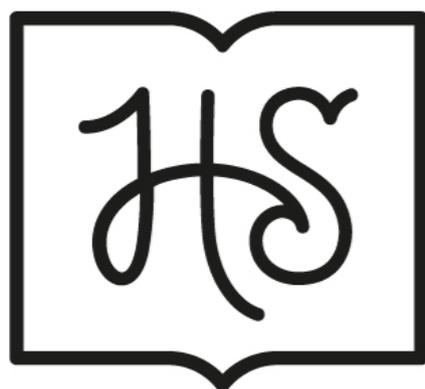


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VARIA:

## Mikhail Geraskov (1847–1957) – the founder of University of Pedagogy in Bulgaria.

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### ABSTRACT

*Mikhail Geraskov (1874–1957) – The Founder of University of Pedagogy in Bulgaria*

The research paper is on the history of Bulgarian pedagogical theory and practice. It focuses on the historical development and differentiation of Pedagogy as a university course. Professor Mikhail Geraskov is one of the erudite Bulgarian lecturers at the Sofia University, who developed the scientific foundations of Didactics, Teaching and Learning Methodology, and their status as independent academic disciplines. The aim of the research paper is to present Geraskov’s ideas about the pedagogical theory and practice. The analysis focuses on the gradual rejection of the Herbartian concepts and the later search for creation of a closer relation between the needs of students, life and society as a whole.

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### Introduction

Prof. Mikhail Geraskov is a distinguished Bulgarian scholar from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was a devoted teacher. The Bulgarian pedagogical practice had a strong influence on Geraskov’s views. He rejected Herbart’s concepts of pedagogical science and educational teaching. Geraskov enriched his ideas by his valuable experiences, accrued over his interesting and successful career as a school teacher, school inspector and a professor at the Sofia University. His pedagogical philosophy influenced the overall development of the modern academic thought. His ideas support the development of the Bulgarian pedagogical thought, rejection of Herbartian concept, more specifically he develops differentiation of pedagogy and scientific foundations of didactics and teaching and learning methodology as independent academic disciplines.

Despite all these facts the Geraskov’s contribution was neglected before the 1990s. The contemporary Bulgarian historiography scientific publications include separate studies of his

ideas<sup>33</sup>. The reason for this is the change of the political ideology in Bulgaria. In September 1944 a communist regime was installed in Bulgaria and the country's political, social and cultural structures were radically changed by the ideology of this regime. Thinking people are a barrier before any dictatorship; the first task of usurpers was terror and genocide on a mass scale against the intellectual class. Some of the books by Geraskov have been on the list of books banned by the government. Bulgarian cultural life was dominated by the communist ideas for 45 years.

The Bulgarian educational history includes separate studies and one monography of his pedagogical conceptions. While many studies have been done since then, few of them includes Geraskov's philosophy of Didactics, Teaching and Learning Methodology, especially their status as independent academic disciplines<sup>34</sup>.

In 2014 Geraskov's grandson donated archival heritage to the Sofia University. The result of this was the discovery of Geraskov's autobiography written in 1955. It was published in 2016. This allows us to present in detail the personality of Mikhail Geraskov as a university lecturer and his scientific and teaching activity.

The research paper investigates and presents the content of didactical and teaching and learning methodological conceptions as academic disciplines developed by Mikhail Geraskov. The aim of the research paper is to present Geraskov's ideas about the pedagogical theory and practice. In the context of this research, this contribution is related to the development of this issue in its entirety. The following tasks are:

- personality of Mikhail Geraskov,
- his views on the differentiation of Pedagogy,
- his ideas about the pedagogical theory and practice,
- scientific foundations of Didactics, Teaching and Learning Methodology, and their status as independent academic disciplines.

The research is built on the scientific production of Geraskov's work and interpretation of key publications on the topic.

The research should show another aspect of his pedagogical heritage and should enrich the Bulgarian historiography.

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<sup>33</sup>Radev (1988, 1999, 2002) described his contribution to the development of the Bulgarian pedagogy, especially of the Didactics. Boycheva (2005) described Geraskov's contribution to the development of the Bulgarian Pedagogy. Kirilova (2004) and Ivanova (2014) examined Geraskov's ideas about the education. In the some research about the history of the teaching and learning methodology the authors very briefly wrote for Geraskov. Radeva (2008) presented information about his teaching and learning methodological concept of History. Antonova (1983) wrote about his teaching and learning methodological concept of Chemistry. Yordanova (2005) examined the teaching and learning methodological views of Geraskov for Pronunciation in the elementary school. Petrova (2005) presented in detail information about his teaching and learning methodological concept of Bulgarian Language. Gulabova (2005) briefly described the ideas of Geraskov about the teaching and learning methodology of Particular subject at school.

<sup>34</sup>Ilieva (2008) presented the professor's personality and his relationship with his colleagues and students. She (2014) described in detail Geraskov's ideas about Pedagogy and Didactics. Also Ilieva (2012, 2014, 2015) presented in detail his teaching and learning methodological concepts of Bulgarian Language and Mathematics, History, Physics and Foreign Languages.

### **Biographical sketch**

Mikhail Geraskov was born on 4 October 1874 in Bercovitz town. He graduated from primary and secondary school in his hometown. His family was poor. Geraskov could not continue education in high school. The opportunity to work as a teacher was also impossible at the moment. He was only 13 years old and short in stature. That was the obstacle to become a teacher in a rural primary school. Geraskov was desperate. He wanted to learn. He liked to be at school. In his autobiography he wrote: “*I loved to learn, loved to be at school and went very early to school almost always.*” (Geraskov 2016, p. 69). Probably this is the reason to pursue a teaching career. However, he was lucky. The Ministry of Education founded Pedagogical High School in Lom town; they wanted to attract more young people and granted scholarships. M. Geraskov appeared competitive at the exam and received a scholarship which enabled him to continue his education. In 1891 he graduated from the Pedagogical High School in Lom town.

He began his career as a teacher. Between 1891 and 1906 he was a teacher. He also developed a large activity for the Bulgarian teachers’ organisation and defended their professional and political interests. In this period he was a member of the Supreme Education Council and a school inspector at the Ministry of Education. In the period 1900–1903 he was the chairman of the Bulgarian Union of Teachers. This position is proof of the respect from his colleagues and a great reputation. This is the result of his public activity and dedication to the ideas of justice and protection of the rights of teachers. However, this period of his life was characterized by the disappointment and bitterness of reality. He was a truthful, courageous and idealistic person. He openly expressed his opinion, firmly defended positions, criticized and opposed to what is contrary to his beliefs and his views. He had a clear civic and professional position. Geraskov entered into a conflict without any hesitation even with the Minister of Education. The results of this were permanent relocations from his employer and one dismissal.

Between 1906 and 1912 he studied Philosophy and Pedagogy at the University of Zurich, Switzerland. His lecturers were some of the most distinguished professors. Geraskov studied General Psychology and Pedagogy by Prof. Dr. Friedrich Schumann (1858–1940), Experimental Psychology by Prof. Dr. Arthur Wreschner (1866–1932), Psychopathology, Logic, Ethics, Pedagogy and Moral Education by Prof. Dr. Gustav Storring (1860–1946), History of Pedagogy by Prof. Dr. Robert Seidel (1850–1933) and others. They influenced his views. Furthermore, in his pedagogical ideas Geraskov was influenced by the views of Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746–1827), Herbert Spencer (1820–1903), Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920) and Hermann Ebbinghaus (1850–1909). Geraskov obtained his doctoral degree in 1912. The doctoral thesis was titled *Herbert Spencer’s Theory of Moral Education*. He received an invitation to lecture at the University of Zurich, but he returned to Bulgaria with the idea to give the most of him to the development of the Bulgarian science teaching and practice (Geraskov 2016, pp. 158–160).

After his return to Bulgaria, between 1913 and 1921 Geraskov worked in Vratza town. He started as a teacher in Philosophic Propaedeutics and German in Girls’ High School.

Consistently he was a director of Boys' and Girls' High school. In this period he wrote the books *The Didactics or The Theory of Teaching and Learning Process* and *The Teaching and Learning Methodology for Primary and Secondary School*, which were guides for the students in the Teachers' institutes, schools, for teachers and for self-improvement. The books were reprinted several times and they are the fundamental guidelines for schools to prepare teaching staff. This shows the best estimate, which is given to the work of Geraskov. Each edition is tailored to the school curriculum of the Bulgarian educational system and changes in it. In 1921 he started to work in the Teachers' institute as a teacher and a director next year. In the period 1923–1940 he was a lecturer at Sofia University. After his retirement Geraskov continued to work actively. In September 1944, the communist regime was imposed in Bulgaria. He participated in a conference about the changes of the educational practice in the context of the Soviet pedagogical ideology. He did not deny totally the change but defended preserving the best points of the current school system (Geraskov 2016, pp. 253–257). The authority imposed oblivion of his ideas and contribution to the development of the Bulgarian schools and science. He died on 14 December 1957 in Sofia.

### **Mikhail Geraskov as a lecturer at Sofia University**

In the period 1923–1940 Mikhail Geraskov was a lecturer at Sofia University, Department of Didactics and Teaching and Learning Methodology. In this period the Bulgarian pedagogical science strengthened its positions at academic level in conformity with the European tendencies in university education. During this period at the University some of the most distinguished Bulgarian lecturers were teaching – Professors Dimitar Katzarov (1881–1960), Petko Tsonev (1875–1950), Hristo Negentzov (1881–1956). In 1924 at the University were formed two major departments - the Department of General Pedagogy, led by Professor Katzarov, and the Department of Didactics and Teaching and Learning Methodology, headed by Prof. Tsonev who attracted Geraskov for academic activity. The period 1921–1950 was characterized by the launch of the development of university courses in the methods of teaching various subjects. Prof. Geraskov is one of the erudite Bulgarian lecturers. Geraskov's personal experience as a teacher led him to the central ideas of his Didactics and Teaching and Learning Methodology. He made not only a major contribution to the reform of educational and teaching practice, but also revolutionized the pedagogical thinking in Bulgaria.

Mikhail Geraskov taught the following academic courses:

- Didactics,
- High School Didactics,
- Teaching and Learning Methodology,
- Discussion Questions of Didactics,
- History of Didactics,
- Educational Psychology,
- Social Psychology in View of Pedagogy,

- Teaching and Learning Methodology of the Philosophical Propaedeutics,
- Psychology and Education of Children with Abnormal Development.

Prof. Geraskov also conducted a seminary on Didactics, Teaching and Learning Methodology and *Didactica magna* by John Amos Comenius. In the period 1923–1942 he worked in the Training Institute at the Third Model Boys' Secondary School. This Institute was in relation with the Sofia University. There the future high school teachers acquired practical pedagogical training for one year. Mikhail Geraskov taught the following academic courses: Pedagogy and Teaching and Learning Methodology of the Philosophical Propaedeutics. He conducted practice lessons and conference meetings of the Philosophical Propaedeutics, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Modern and Old Languages and Singing. During his work with the future teachers and the observations which he made, Geraskov described in detail his ideas about Teaching and Learning Methodology in high school.

Geraskov drafted plans for his lectures. His aim was the clear, specific speech and relevant examples. Sometimes in the process of talking he changed some points of the plan. During the lecture he stood straight to cover with his sight the audience. He was observing the mood of the audience and seeing if the interest weakens.

Geraskov believed that the aim of a professor is not to instill in the minds of the students any pedagogical and psychological dogmas. He exposed the problems in detail. Geraskov presented his view and arguments about this. He criticized the views substandard of his understanding. Geraskov put the emphasis on students' activity. His aim was to provoke interest in the students to the issues, to give them more knowledge on which to reflect and thus gradually to form their own view. He gave constructive and useful feedback to his students. He encouraged students to speak and ask questions and then they trusted him. He was gracious and helpful to his students. At the final exam he helped them feel calm and balanced, improving their concentration levels. He talked with them, asked simple questions, gave time, if felt necessary, to think about the questions (Geraskov 2016, pp. 196–200).

Geraskov was a favourite professor for his students – thoughtful, unpretentious, and gentle to different views, with accessible language. That is how students described him in their memories. Prof. Dr. Nayden Chakarov (1907–1991)<sup>35</sup> wrote that his professional interest in didactics and the social pedagogy was the result of Geraskov's influence (Chakarov 1988, p. 102). Prof. Dr. Zhecho Atanasov (1919–2000)<sup>36</sup> wrote that Geraskov manifested love for both science and his students. He provoked them to pursue a teaching career. Despite the completion of lectures his students continued to read his books and to trust the information in them (Atanasov 1941, p. 2).

Professor Geraskov encouraged his students to explore various issues connected with educational practice and theory. He worked hard to help university students studying education to develop progressive, stable, and independent personalities and professional attitudes even while they were still at school. He was guided by the belief that a teacher is a

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<sup>35</sup>Nayden Chakarov was a professor by The General Pedagogy at the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

<sup>36</sup>Zhecho Atanasov was a professor by The History of Education at the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

very important factor in a person's development and of the entire society. That is why a teacher must have good subject-specific, teaching, psychological, and didactic knowledge, as well as a good understanding of related disciplines; also required are well-developed professional skills, refined professional ethics, and a deep feeling for people, the community, and the environment. These are the key components of a teacher's professional competence, which must be continually enhanced. All of this is especially true for the teachers of teachers, including Geraskov himself.

### **Scientific status of the Didactics by Mikhail Geraskov**

The scientific production of Mikhail Geraskov is voluminous and of a varied content. The scientific areas contain Pedagogy, Theory of Education, Philosophy of Education, Didactics, Teaching and Learning Methodology, Educational Psychology, School Law, History of International and Bulgarian Education.

After Liberation from Ottoman domination (1878) the Bulgarian pedagogical thought and practice was characterized by the development and strong influence of Herbartianism. Geraskov was not a follower of Johann Herbart (1776–1841). The Herbart's concepts of pedagogical science and educational teaching were dominated. Geraskov opposes to these concepts. He distinguishes Pedagogy and Didactics. In his view he assumes that between Didactics and Pedagogy there is a direct correlation. However the Professor Geraskov rejects the Herbart's concept about fundamental function of education. Geraskov's ideas support the development of Bulgarian pedagogical thought.

Geraskov distinguishes Pedagogy, Didactics, Teaching and Learning Methodology. The science that studies the process of education of children and young people either in family, at school or in any other social situation in general is called pedagogy. Pedagogy is the descriptive, explanatory and normative science for goals, principles and methods of properly educating of a child and young people in general. Pedagogy establishes certain rules and norms for educational practice or for self-education. It studies the development of a child and young people on the context of their susceptibility to change and impact. It also explores the human activity, which focuses on the development of the child in order to achieve a perfect human type.

Professor Geraskov points out two classes of Pedagogy: educational science and practical pedagogy as each has specific tasks. He defines the tasks of the theoretical pedagogy. They are:

- Exploring the psychophysiological development of the child,
- Specifying the limits and possibilities of the educational process,
- Establishing the goal and the resources of the education,
- Describing the limits and possibilities of the educational phenomena and education-relevant topics.

The practical pedagogy has a major task:

- Indicating how to implement education in individual cases and under certain conditions (Geraskov 1937, pp. 5–10)

Geraskov distinguished the terms “pedagogy” and “education”. He points out Pedagogy is science and education occurs in practice. The professor defines practical pedagogy as an art because the concrete application of the pedagogical principles in practice is an art. The theoretical pedagogy divides the content of the education in seven components and they are:

- Physical Education,
- Moral Education,
- Intellectual Education,
- Aesthetic Education,
- Sexual Education,
- Religious Education,
- Civic Education.

He argues that it is necessary to define the educational goal and tasks, methods and recourses, but without losing the overall view of the person (Geraskov 1937).

Prof. Geraskov believes that Didactics is a theory of teaching-and-learning in the school. Pedagogy and Didactics have one object which is child’s development in particular conditions and environment. However Didactics focuses on proper teaching and learning in the school and Pedagogy focuses on his upbringing and education in the broadest sense (Geraskov 1944, pp. 4–17). The fundamental points of School Didactics are therefore:

- The student
- The teacher
- The necessity and significance of the teaching and learning process
- The goal of the teaching and learning process
- The fundamental principles of the teaching and learning process
- The curriculum and schedule
- The methods of the teaching and teaching forms
- The didactic resources and materials
- The instructional model
- The internal and external organization of the teaching and learning process (Geraskov 1921, p. 10)

Geraskov’s Didactics contains his views and ideas of other significant scholars in historical and current context about:

- Scientific status and methods of didactics,
- Philosophy of the teaching and learning practice,
- School role in society as a cultural institution,
- Necessity and significance of the school,
- School organization, including planning and control affectivity,
- School hygiene.

In his view, Didactics modify the content according to the development of students. He argues that it is impossible the training to be tailored to the individuality of each student. However, it is necessary to develop problems, according to the characteristics of the age groups. He makes the division according to the development of students and determines – Didactics of primary school, Didactics of secondary school and Didactics of high school. Each of them has special task-driven objectives. Compliance with the psychophysiological opportunities for the students of different age groups is important and necessary for the teaching and learning process. The author claims that pointing out that in developing the science standards should specify the individuality of the students (Geraskov 1921, pp. 17–20). This division can certainly be extrapolated as a correlation between Didactics and Methodology. This represents the correlation theory – practice and the Didactics modify the content. Although Geraskov puts them only according to age groups, he does not give a prescription on curriculum. He recommends specific tasks to involve the organization, compliance with laws and application of specific methods. The sciences principles should be according to the characteristics of the age groups. Dividing a system into its separate parts is considered to be a support to the proper organization of teaching and learning process and the use of appropriate methods. In practice, each of the steps in education should aim at promoting the development of students. The goal of teaching and learning process is possible to accomplish when school system is consistent with psychology of students. These conditions influence the quality of education. Geraskov adopts the Herbart's idea about subsidiary sciences but he expands the interaction between the Didactics and other sciences. He believes that the Didactics has correlation with Ethics, Logics, Psychology, Aesthetics and Gnoseology, Political economy, Ethnography and Social ethics especially with Anthropology of Children, Physiology and Hygiene. He emphasizes the relationship with History. This concept is important about the development of Didactics and the strong need for theoretical realization of the connection between scientific fields (Geraskov 1944, pp. 14–17).

### **Scientific status of the Teaching and Learning Methodology by Mikhail Geraskov**

Teaching and Learning Methodology contains theory and technique of teaching and learning particular subjects. Geraskov assumes that between Didactics and Teaching and Learning Methodology there is a direct correlation. Teaching and Learning Methodology has a specific task – to examine and specify the use of Didactic and Pedagogical training rules in order to achieve the best educational outcomes. He defines Teaching and Learning Methodology as a Special Didactics (Geraskov 1922, p. 3). In his view he assumes that teaching and learning are two processes of interaction, but he focuses separately on teaching or on learning i.e. does not examine them together. In his methodological issues Geraskov focuses on teaching methodology especially. The fundamental question of Teaching and Learning Methodology are therefore:

- The necessity and significance of the particular subjects at school,
- The aim and tasks of the particular subjects at school,

- The place of the particular subjects in the curriculum,
- The selection and order of the material,
- The methods of teaching and learning (Geraskov 1922, pp. 4–8).

In considering methodological issues in individual subjects Geraskov adopts an idea about the subject of the special methodology. In his particular style Geraskov presents the development of his ideas and confirmation of each subject in a historical aspect. He points out specific objectives and tasks of the subjects, starting from general educational purposes, the place they occupy in the curriculum and the requirements for the selection and order of the material. To achieve his intention Geraskov presents views on the conduct of individual units' methodological subjects and recommends concrete implementation of teaching methods and forms. He emphasizes the relationship with psychology, while examining the methodology and presentation of various subjects puts particular emphasis on the psychophysiological basis of the student. He thinks that the best methodology and application of each method is in a direct correlation with the knowledge of psychology. This is important for the goal of teaching and learning process.

Professor Geraskov defines three groups of the particular subjects at school. The first group includes: Bulgarian Language, Geography, History, Civics, Religion, Foreign Languages. The second group contains: Mathematics, Natural History, Physics, Chemistry and Pronunciation in the primary school. The third group includes: Drawing, Modeling, Penmanship, Gymnastics, Music, Handwork and Needlework.

He focuses on the educational and practical importance of each subject. He presents in detail the design, technology and methodological requirements for the lessons. The content is consistent with the presentation and the importance of the subject key concepts associated with it and its development as a science. Geraskov adopts a direct relationship between school levels. The direct correlation between school levels is pronounced by placing individual goals and objectives in teaching various subjects. The three school levels of the Bulgarian education in this period are primary school, secondary school and high school. Each of them has specificity determined by the psychophysiological progress of the students. This determines differences in the recommended methods. Also each subject area requires the use of certain methods. In the methodological views of Geraskov thoroughly is presented the idea of the need to implement a variety of methods. For each school grade in different subjects he indicates which methods and forms of training are best to be used. This is clearly expressed in the setting of individual goals and objectives of training in each subject. He focuses on the methodology of primary school, as it laid the foundations of the education of young people, particularly in reading, writing and arithmetic, which are not only skills necessary for personal and social development of adolescents, but also a prerequisite for higher knowledge scientific fields. Geraskov puts to correlation emphasizes theory – practice. The concept of method cannot be defined without reference to one individual's activity to support another individual's efforts to reach competence through the process of learning. He believes that the appropriate methods are determined by the curriculum, set of educational goals and age characteristics, and capabilities of adolescents. In his methodical recommendations Geraskov

focuses on the teaching methods and forms that provoke students' activity. This implies to a greater degree the use of heuristic learning and development (Geraskov 1946).

His instructional model should not be directly related to the model of Herbartianism<sup>37</sup> which is fundamental model of the teaching and learning process at the Bulgarian school for this period. He takes only a few aspects of this model. Geraskov's instructional model consists of four steps in teaching:

- definition of the aim of the lesson,
- preparation for teaching the new curriculum material,
- teaching new knowledge,
- practice knowledge (Geraskov 1921, p. 177).

The Geraskov's instructional model determines the change of the teaching and learning process and the rejection of the model of Herbartianism.

The way people learn and process the new information that they are taught is one of the many factors that makes each person unique. While some people learn quickly by actually performing a task for themselves, others learn better by watching someone doing the task or by simply hearing the task explained. The methods that each prefers for learning is known as their own unique learning style. Geraskov believes that teachers' understanding of their student's learning style can be the key to unlocking their full potential and making difficult concepts seem as easy as they can be. These methodological assumptions of Geraskov are determined by his ideas of the significance of the psychophysiological progress of students. The teacher must know their students (Geraskov 1922). The knowledge must be practical and focused. Geraskov states that, "*Methods of teaching must influence the feelings of the students and their critical attitude towards things in public life*" (Geraskov 1946, p. 84).

## Conclusion

In general, Professor M. Geraskov successfully constructed and systematized scientific fields of Didactics and Teaching and Learning methodology. He developed their scientific foundations and status as independent academic disciplines. In these areas M. Geraskov appeared as erudite theorist and practitioner. His style was characterized by realism, objectivity and pluralism. This style is preserved (today). This is very important for the future teacher's pedagogical view formation. He gave in details information about each issue and its consideration in historical and current context. He presented his personal position depending on the Bulgarian reality and pedagogical practice. His textbooks and lectures were the groundwork for them as academic disciplines.

One of the major achievements of Mikhail Geraskov is improvement of the Teaching and Learning Methodology for Bulgarian school. In the time in which he lived and worked, the Bulgarian pedagogical thought experienced a deficit in its methodological developments.

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<sup>37</sup>The instructional model of Herbartianism consists of five steps in teaching: Preparation; Presentation; Association; Generalisation; Application.

Geraskov filled this gap and it worked very well. He believed in basic principle which emphasized that the school organization had to be determined by the students' specifics. There is a significant similarity with the ideas in modern school.

His ideas were highly appreciated and influenced other researchers in this field. He made a significant contribution to the university pedagogy. He wishes the didactical and methodological recommendations are a guiding thought for teachers in organizing and implementing their practical work, as well as an objective criterion for discussion of issues in this area. He made valuable contributions. His Didactics and Teaching and Learning Methodology were reprinted several times and still are one of the main guidelines for schools to prepare teaching staff. Before the 1950s he was the mentor for scholars who worked on this topic.

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