

"Disciplines of expression" in the programs for elementary school (Distrito Federal, 1929)

ARTICLE

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze proposals regarding artistic disciplines present in “Programs for Kindergartens and Primary Schools”, a document published in 1929 and signed by Brazilian Educator Fernando de Azevedo and other six educators. It proposed and organization of topics that should be considered in public education in the Brazilian capital. Amongst these, it is of interest to investigate the syllabus of teaching language, drawing and crafts that aimed to foment, in children, ways to express their thoughts and feelings. Therefore, the discussion is theoretically and methodologically based on the literature that considers the printed matter as a source of study (VIDAL, 1996; CAMARA, 2004; PAULILO, 2015). Thus, scrutinizing this manuscript makes it possible to deepen the initiatives implemented by the Public Instruction Reform of the Federal District.

Keywords: Public Instruction Reform. Fernando de Azevedo. The New School Movement. History of Brazilian Education.

"Disciplinas artísticas" nos programas das escolas primárias (Brasil-Distrito Federal, 1929)

Resumo

Analisar as propostas para as “disciplinas de expressão” presentes nos *Programmas para os Jardins de Infância e para as Escolas Primárias* é o objetivo deste estudo. O documento publicado em 1929 e assinado pela comissão composta por Fernando de Azevedo e outros seis educadores organizou as temáticas que deveriam ser trabalhadas no ensino público da capital brasileira. Dentre elas, interessa investigar o conteúdo programático do ensino de linguagem, desenho e trabalhos manuais que tinha por finalidade cultivar, nas crianças, meios de expressarem seus pensamentos e sentimentos. Para tanto, a discussão fundamenta-se teórica e metodologicamente na literatura que elege o impresso em questão como fonte de estudo (VIDAL, 1996; CAMARA, 2004; PAULILO, 2015). Destarte, perscrutar esse manuscrito possibilita o aprofundamento das iniciativas implementadas pela Reforma da Instrução Pública do Distrito Federal.

Palavras-chave: Reforma da Instrução Pública. Fernando de Azevedo. Escola Nova. História da Educação Brasileira.

1 Introduction

The Reform of Public Instruction in the Federal District (1927-1930), in its various guises, has been the subject of interest by various researchers in the field of the History of Brazilian Education. Led by Fernando de Azevedo, the work carried out in the then capital of Brazil was spread by his aspiration to inculcate new hygienic and behavioral habits in children in order to "make them aware" of their duties to society. To this end, the educator organized the educational enterprise - regulated by Decree 2,940 of November 22, 1928 (DISTRICTO FEDERAL, 1928) - which aimed not just to restrict itself to the classroom, but to encompass the entire school apparatus.

In the midst of the urban reforms carried out in the federal capital, the miner took on the role of Director General of Public Instruction and proposed work that linked the school and the city. According to Paulilo and Silva (2012, p. 134, emphasis added), the initiative to "[...] pedagogize social relations in Rio de Janeiro, so that educational precepts could contribute to the organization and disciplining of daily life, was a strategy that favoured different lines of action during the period". In this way, the educator concentrated his efforts on undertaking a reform that combined educational and political interests with the acceptance of the local population.

The initiatives covered not only curricular aspects, but also school (re)organization, focusing on "[...] defining the scientific, pedagogical and social bases, transforming the school into an instrument of social transformation and adaptation to the demands of the new civilization that was being formed" (BALDAN, 2015, p. 65). To this end, Fernando de Azevedo was inspired by the theories defended by foreign intellectuals and the reforms organized in other countries¹, especially in the work engendered by the international New Education movement, which was gaining greater visibility at the time by spreading modern desires for education.

In the country's capital, especially during the 1920s, "[...] the educational debate [...] exasperated the defense that primary schooling practices could function as devices to

¹ Segundo Baldan (2015, p. 66), "as reformas que influenciaram Azevedo, segundo o próprio autor, constam: a reforma austríaca, a reforma russa, a reforma mexicana e a reforma chilena; entre os teóricos que o influenciaram constam: Dewey, Claparède, Kerchensteiner, Montessori e Decroly".

teach modernity and a modern attitude to the population" (SILVA, 2009, p. 21). Such conduct refers to the hygienic and behavioral practices that should be disseminated in educational institutions. Along these lines, "the mainstay from which the reform of education in the Federal District was to be based, the reorganization plan provided for the articulation of educational institutions with social reality and modern principles of education" (CAMARA, 2021, p. 776).

The project aimed to make the school a place that would serve children from different social classes, enabling them to be trained for life in the community, as well as for work. The creator of the reform aimed to "[...] make the public education system an instance of public power in the reformulation of the productive system, in the formation of a national identity and in the moral conformation of the habits and conduct of Rio de Janeiro and Brazilian children" (PAULILO, 2001, p. 33). In this respect, considering the influence emanating from the federal capital, Xavier (2002, p. 123) asserts that Fernando de Azevedo expressed "[...] a clear intention to promote a reform that would serve as a model for the organization of education systems in the other states of the federation".

In order to promote this endeavor, the educator used the press as a way of gaining notoriety. In the introduction to *Programmas para os Jardins de Infancia e para as Escolas Primarias* (1929), a text (re)published in different periodicals², wrote that his work was intended "[...] to give the school a deep awareness of its social and national task and to equip it with the means necessary to carry out this powerfully educating task, both in terms of the intensity and extent of its influence"³ (AZEVEDO, 1929, p. 3). To achieve this, he organized primary education into a single school, a work school and a community school, because "[...] with work as its means and object, and society as its end, this characterization should be reflected in its teaching, as far as the list of subjects is concerned" (VIDAL, 1996, p. 32).

² The text was also printed in *Boletim de Educação Pública* n. 1 (1930), in the magazine *Escola Nova* (1930) and in the two editions of the book *Novos caminhos e novos fins* (1930/1958). It was also translated into French and published in the magazine *Pour l'Ère Nouvelle* (1931).

³ In all direct quotations from this document, the original spelling will be used.

Among the various documents that governed the initiatives disseminated by the Reform of Public Instruction in the Federal District (1927-1930), I used as a research source the Programmes for Kindergartens and Primary Schools (1929), available in the library of the Institute of Brazilian Studies of the University of São Paulo (IEB/USP), with the aim of analyzing the proposals for the "disciplines of expression". To this end, this article has been organized into two sections. The first deals with the material aspects of the printed material, especially with regard to what was proposed for primary education; in the second, respectively, we try to investigate the syllabus for teaching language, drawing and manual work.

2 Primary School Programs

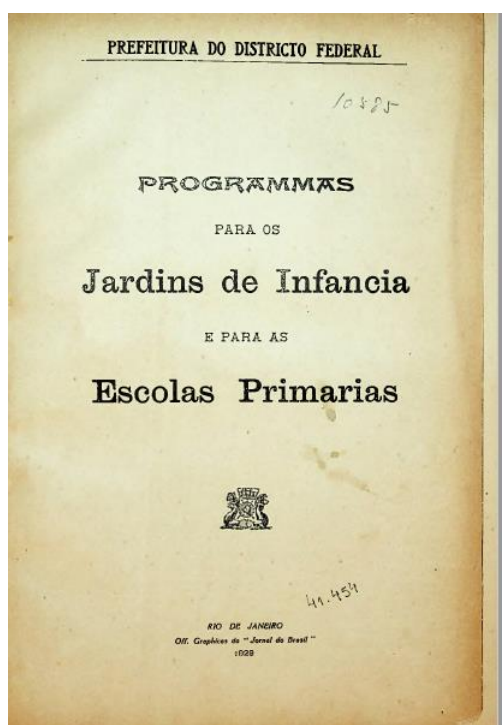
By choosing printed documents that circulated among specific groups, in this case the school, as historical sources, it is possible to understand them as indications of a past that we want to illuminate, since they point to connections between subjects, daily aspects and work carried out at a particular time. According to Vasconcelos (2014, p. 39), "this information becomes an expressive source used to analyze the demand for education, since it makes it possible to locate the most prominent institutions, their scope, their educational practices and conceptions".

However, it is also important to consider that the selection of an "official" manuscript requires care to realize that this type of source generally "[...] emphasizes the history of great men, wars, political and social events. But by giving a new focus to the same documents, questioning the predominance of history, other explanations can emerge" (CARLI, 2013, p. 191). Therefore, "only the analysis of the document [...] allows the collective memory to recover it and the historian to use it scientifically, that is, with full knowledge of the cause" (LE GOFF, 1990, p. 545).

In this study, we are interested in investigating the proposals made for teaching language, drawing and manual work in the "Primary School Program" and the "Program (subject distribution plan)". To this end, the documents were accessed virtually, after being

scanned and sent by e-mail, which required theoretical and methodological care in the analysis procedures. Unlike contact with physical sources, the process of "[...] rematerialization involves the partial or total disappearance of a range of organoleptic properties (color, brightness, light, smell, texture, softness, sound, taste, etc.) which, in fact, can be decisive in describing certain historical sources" (BRASIL; NASCIMENTO, 2020, p. 201). Therefore, it should be noted, for example, that it was not possible to ascertain the size, color and type of paper used. Despite these issues, it is worth agreeing with Barros (2022, p. 73) when he states that "working with digital archives, [...], is a reality for historians of our time".

Image 1 - Cover of the Programmes for Kindergartens and Primary Schools (1929)



Source: Library of the Institute of Brazilian Studies (IEB/USP)).

The commission, made up of Fernando de Azevedo, Paulo Maranhão, Everardo Backheuser, Celina Padilha, Maria dos Reis Campos, Affonsina das Chagas Rosa and

⁴ It has not been possible to translate the image in order to preserve the excerpt from the original work.

Alcina Moreira de Souza, was responsible for organizing the Programmes for Kindergartens and Primary Schools, dated May 25, 1929. Over the course of 80 pages, "[...] they proposed another way of relating to school, as well as perceiving the pupil from some of their individualities and preparing them for work and community life" (PIRES, 2021, p. 195). These ideas were intended to highlight certain concepts and content to the public schools of the then Federal District.

These "[...] programs presented guidelines by which schools should be guided, establishing the objective purposes to which teachers, students and other employees should guide their procedures and conduct" (CAMARA, 2004, p. 163). In this sense, it was intended that the school institution should become a space for the formation of habits and behaviours that would help to integrate children into the society that was being (re)organized at the time. To this end, the educator from Minas Gerais believed that "[...] teachers were responsible for inculcating and disseminating moral and civic education among students" (SILVA; MELO, 2022, p. 13).

The reform project was linked to the social, political, cultural and economic aspirations envisioned in the process of establishing the republican nation. To this end, the construction of the programs privileged notions that articulated teaching performance and school (re)organization in their "[...] techniques of reading, writing, calculation, habits of hygiene, health, patriotism, moral values, standards of politeness, notions of domestic and social life [...]" (CAMARA, 2004, p. 164). In this way, "[...] they addressed the social practices involved in the initial schooling process and, thus, teacher-student relations, family participation in the school environment and the school's role in the environment" (PAULILO, 2015, p. 247).

In an attempt to subsidize the training it aimed to achieve, the manuscript was structured as follows: "Introduction"; "Program for Kindergartens"; "Program for Primary Schools"; "Program (subject distribution plan)"; and "Schematic Plan for Ensemble Teaching". When looking at the systematization of the proposals for primary education, it is possible to observe that the document contains "[...] a common subject distribution plan

for the five years of elementary school, differing in the contents and methodologies to be adopted by teachers each year" (CAMARA, 2004, p. 165).

In order to analyze the content of the subjects in these syllabuses, it is important to consider that:

Disciplines are not abstract entities with a universal and static essence. They are born and develop, evolve, transform, disappear, swallow each other up, attract and repel, break away and unite, compete with each other, relate and exchange information (or borrow it from others), etc. They have a denomination or name that identifies them from the others, although sometimes, as has been pointed out, different denominations show quite similar content and, vice versa, similar denominations offer content that is not always identical. These names also constitute their social and academic cover letter. At the same time, school subjects can also be seen as fields of social and academic power, of power to be contested. Spaces where interests and actors, actions and strategies mix (VIÑAO, 2008, p. 204).

Thus, the "Primary School Program" was organized into: Instructional Subjects (Geography - Physical and Natural Sciences); Expressive Subjects (Language, Drawing and Manual Work); Mathematical Initiation (Arithmetic and Geometry); National History; Social Education; Hygienic Education (Hygiene and Childcare); and Domestic Education. Of equal interest to this study, the "Program (subject distribution plan)" was laid out as follows:

Table 1. Material distribution plan

YEAR	DISCIPLINE	KNOWLEDGE
1º	General Knowledge	Observation subjects
		History
		Social Education
	Expression Disciplines	Language
		Drawing
		Manual work
	Mathematical Initiation	Arithmetic
Geometry		
Hygiene Education	-	
Domestic Education	-	
2º	General Knowledge	Observation subjects
		History
		Social Education
	Expression Disciplines	Language

		Drawing
		Manual work
	Mathematical Initiation	Arithmetic
		Geometry
	Hygiene Education	-
	Domestic Education	-
3 ^o	Observation subjects	Geography
		Physical and Natural Sciences
	Expression Disciplines	Language
		Drawing
		Manual Work
	Mathematical Initiation	Arithmetic
		Geometry
	National History	-
Social Education	-	
Hygiene Education	-	
Domestic Education	-	
4 ^o	Observation subjects	Geography
		Physical and Natural Sciences
	Expression Disciplines	Language
		Drawing
		Manual Work
	Mathematical Initiation	Arithmetic
		Geometry
	National History	-
Social Education	-	
Hygiene Education	-	
Domestic Education	-	
5 ^o	Observation subjects	Geography
		Physical and Natural Sciences
	Expression Disciplines	Language
		Drawing
		Manual Work
	Mathematical Initiation	Arithmetic
		Geometry
	National History	-
Social Education	-	
Childcare	-	
Domestic Education	-	

Source: Pires (2021).

The form was produced (DE CERTEAU, 1982) to "guide" the teaching staff of the Brazilian capital as to what should be taught to children. According to Camara (2004, p. 165), "in addition to constituting a curriculum to be developed at school, the program was established as a guide for the conduct to be observed by the teacher, based on the establishment of principles that guided the practices produced at school". As such, its constitution was based on the intertwining of what was intended by both the public sphere and the various arenas that made up society at the time, with the aim of providing "solutions" to the city's adversities.

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3 Expressing thoughts and feelings: teaching language, drawing and handicrafts

As analyzed by Camara (2004, p. 165), "[...] some subjects became indispensable aids for teachers, regardless of the subject they were working on". This was the case with the teaching of language, drawing and handicrafts, which should be used in the teaching of all subjects. The so-called "expression subjects" were designed to encourage children to express their feelings and thoughts in the usual way. To do this, it was necessary to cultivate the senses, which were transformed from impressions into ideas, as well as observation and experimentation, which together provided notions of the world. The teacher's role was to observe and not "stifle" the student's spontaneity, but also to "[...] get them used to seeing knowing what they see and how they see it, and to feeling aware of what they feel and how they feel it" (DISTRICTO FEDERAL, 1929, p. 4, emphasis in original).

The aim of language teaching was for children to be able to express their thoughts intelligibly through speech, as well as understand the expressions described by others through listening and reading. To achieve this, they had to do exercises in elocution, reading, writing and studying grammar. The subjects covered were related to the pupils' daily lives, especially "[...] the life of domestic animals, descriptions of the classroom, the

school, the house, what they see on the way to school" (DISTRICTO FEDERAL, 1929, p. 35).

As for learning about everyday life in the city, they would learn the rules of conversation, especially gesticulation, intonation, pauses, the height of the voice and not to interrupt the speaker, which would help them achieve the "resourcefulness" needed to express themselves in a measured way in public. The teacher, for his part, could choose his teaching methods (as long as the principal and the school inspector agreed) in order to act as a facilitator of the learning process by proposing to talk to the students about the topics being taught. It was also his job to encourage ordinary reading and writing practices.

Also included in the teaching of this subject was the practice of calligraphy, in which the child would learn to have a "clear" handwriting, starting by writing in block letters and then moving on to cursive, using pencil and, once they had acquired the necessary "ease", they could use ink. The teaching of language was intended to awaken and cultivate in children an idea of unity among the Brazilian nation, as well as "[...] interest and respect for all that is ours, thus forming in the pupils, supported by love for the national language, the spirit of Brazilianness, which we so desperately need to develop" (DISTRICTO FEDERAL, 1929, p. 37).

The aim of teaching drawing, on the other hand, was to give great importance to "[...] the education of the visual sense and the development of imagination, memory, the capacity for observation, the externalization of personalities and the cultivation of aesthetic taste" (FEDERAL DISTRICT, 1929, p. 38), encouraging students to express their thoughts and feelings. It was up to the teacher not to correct what they saw, but to guide and point out aspects of the artistic reproduction so that the representation presented became as faithful and proportional as possible, taking the human figure as a comparison. These constructions would be encouraged through observation, in which objects could not be copied, increasing the level of detail required as the school years progressed. Furthermore, the aim of encouraging the learning of decorative compositions was to cultivate aesthetic taste. The aim was to encourage a creative spirit.

Finally, handicrafts were considered a way for children to learn economic sense (learning by doing) and aesthetic education, since they were seen as a means of expressing and manifesting impressions and observations, as well as feelings and thoughts. In addition, it was aimed at integral formation, collaborating with instruction that would give the child "[...] a much greater capacity to collaborate in the social environment through the practical sense that will be formed in them" (FEDERAL DISTRICT, 1929, p. 39). Teaching would be done by respecting students' individual interpretations, as well as teaching techniques.

In order to carry out this work, it was important to develop movement coordination skills through muscular education, which would also involve attention, reasoning, memory, imagination and practical intelligence. In addition, these teachings have an effect on moral formation, since the exercise of concentration at the time of production helps to develop initiative, perseverance, a habit of order and method, reflection and tenacity. In this way,

In work done individually, she learns to be self-sufficient, solving difficulties on her own; in work done cooperatively, she acquires self-control and a sense of group, which will teach her to defend her personality while respecting others' and to place the collective work above the individual point of view (FEDERAL DISTRICT, 1929, p. 40).

The relationship between theory and practice helped to prepare children for the job market, because by learning by doing, children acquired scientific knowledge about industrial intelligence that prepared them to be future workers, a profession that was taking on large proportions of the professional market at the time. In short, "[...] all the subjects of the primary course must be associated with manual labor in order to carry out the studies: manual labor, in short, bases education on facts and not on mere words" (FEDERAL DISTRICT, 1929, p. 40).

The teaching of handicrafts was described as an exercise designed to improve the imagination and creative capacity. The pupils' handicrafts could be used to decorate the school or the home of the person who made them. They would also have the opportunity to exhibit their creations at the Circulos de Paes meetings and end-of-year exhibitions, where some items would be sold. The money raised would be divided between the school

fund, the cooperative, the library and the students who had made their work, which would encourage confidence and a greater taste for future crafts.

The subjects prescribed in the "Programs for Primary Schools" were based on the initiatives disseminated by the Scholastic movement. In this way, they were based on centers of interest and encouraging students to learn by doing, intertwining theory and practice on a daily basis. In order to achieve the aims of the reformist work, it was important to relate city issues to what was developed in the classroom. In this respect, Chervel (1990, p. 220) points out that "school subjects also intervene in the cultural history of society. Their functional aspect is to prepare the acculturation of pupils in accordance with certain aims: this is what explains their genesis and constitutes their social reason".

Present in all five years of elementary school, the activities to be developed in the subjects of language, drawing and manual work were detailed in the "Program (subject distribution plan)", taking into account the needs inherent to the moment experienced at each stage of schooling ⁵: *First year*: Exercises in elocution and storytelling, based on observations made; reciting stories, comic strips and fables learned by listening; passing on messages; games for acquiring vocabulary and forming sentences; practicing variations in gender, number and person; drawings as an expression of observations made; drawings linked to language, arithmetic, hygiene and the other knowledge acquired in the first year; reproduction of natural forms made in parallel with geometry and modeling; colored lines covering perforated or traced outlines on cardboard or cloth; stringing beads and grains on fibers and wire, with decorative applications; making small objects or toys with raffia material, cardboard or soft wood; gardening.

Second year: silent reading (not preceded by explanation) and oral reading preceded by explanation; reciting short fables, quatrains, dialogues, etc, using as much of the subject matter as possible; role-playing; ordering sentences, highlighting the words

⁵ In this work, the activities have not been reproduced in full, as they appear in the original document. The selection was made for illustrative purposes only.

needed to make sense of them; notes, letters, observation reports, all done in writing, in collaboration or individually; modeling on wire frames; sewing: basting, simple hemming and lacing: pleats, fringing, darning; appliqués for garments and home decorations; patches; attaching buttons, brackets and press studs; cross-stitch on thick cloth, covering designs; paper folding with appliqués for envelopes, bags, toys; woven and braided fabrics in paper, cloth, wire, string, straw and taquara; knots and bows; wood carving; animal husbandry.

Third year: development of the study of the proposition with the complements of the verb; knowledge of the name, the adjective, the pronoun, the verb; writing prepared on the blackboard and at the sight of prints; easy notes and letters, addressed to a real recipient, when possible; reproduction of scenes and interpretation of tales and fables; measurements with a ruler or pencil to observe what is natural (edges of the blackboard, window frames, etc.); copying bodies in a cube shape.); copying conical and cylindrical bodies; coloring silhouette drawings; free and applied modeling, from memory and copying from nature; folding and cardmaking in correlation with the study of geometry; beadwork, fabrics, knots and braids, expanding on previous programs; crochet; sericulture and beekeeping.

Fourth year: study of variable words, with greater development than in the third year; adverbs; propositions; prefixes and suffixes most used; punctuation; reduction and extension of periods; student diary and class newspaper; declamation; copying of bodies with the same shapes as those indicated for the third year, plus those with a prismatic shape (cube, parallelepiped, etc.) and pyramid; isolated motifs.) and pyramid shapes; isolated motifs in radiused and circular arrangements using leaves, flowers and fruit, radiused animals, molluscs and insects; sewing: open hems with various stitches and substitution of threads; application of all the stitches learned to garments and household adornment; embroidery; beadwork, fabrics, knots and braids suggested by the opportunities; varnishing and painting with anilines..

Fifth year. commentary on light projections, both fixed and animated, paintings; discussions on moral education issues; oral and written commentary on short literary excerpts, aimed at understanding the form and the period in which the author's biographical information was written; interpretation and transformation of excerpts in prose and verse, aimed at understanding the meaning; use of capitalization; reproducing scenes and interpreting tales and fables; copying objects or fruit in shapes derived from the sphere, ovoids and ellipsoids; friezes with alternating, verticillate and opposite arrangements using simple leaves and flowers and fruit; machine sewing; newborn's trousseau; embroidery; knitting; small printing work; plant cultivation.

Crossed by power relations, the organization of these programs, inherent to the educational entities of the federal capital, is constituted as a socio-cultural product that produces individual and collective identities in an attempt to meet the objectives idealized by those who drew it up. The "official" documentation, then, indicates some of the intentions they wanted to achieve in terms of the social, political, economic and educational aspects of that time, the early 20th century. In this way, institutions (re)produce school cultures that range "[...] from the history of schooling, practices and conduct, to content, inserted in a historical context that realizes the aims of teaching and produces people" (OLIVEIRA; GATTI JÚNIOR, 2002, p. 75).

The investigation of these school subjects and their prescribed content helps in the process of understanding the production of social actors through the school, as well as what was intended in the social arena that was now being organized. Therefore, when analyzing the proposals for the "disciplines of expression" (the syllabus for teaching language, drawing and manual work), present in the Programmes for Kindergartens and Primary Schools (1929), it was essential to investigate the support that underpinned them, as well as the city and reformist desires and the formative intentions that permeated the manufacture of this curricular component.

4 Final considerations

The study of elements that make up the initiatives implemented by the Reform of Public Instruction in the Federal District (1927-1930), led by Fernando de Azevedo, sheds light on some of the strategies that shaped the school arena in the then Brazilian capital. In this way, it should be emphasized that different sectors of society were in dispute, aspiring to (re)shape the city through the actions carried out by the school, in order to reach a large number of people through the education of children. In the meantime, educational knowledge and guidelines were understood as a means of forging a "new" citizen. To this end, the aim was to instill specific thoughts, attitudes and values in Rio's boys and girls in order to reach their homes and families.

As a way of disseminating other pedagogical ideas, inspired by scholasticist models from abroad, where practical knowledge was the guiding principle of the learning process in preparing for the job market, the contents for school subjects were selected (published in "official" documents). Thus, these practices corroborated the process of fabricating a childhood that was intended to be formed based on modern social precepts. Understanding these paths requires attention to some of the tensions surrounding the reform movements that were taking shape in Brazil and which have been widely discussed in historiography.

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