

# CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE – A CATEGORY OF HISTORICAL SCIENCE AND OF THE DIDACTICS OF HISTORY AND ITS CONSEQUENCES IN TEACHER TRAINING

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Elisabeth Erdmann

*Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg, Germany*

e-mail: [elisabeth.erdmann@fau.de](mailto:elisabeth.erdmann@fau.de)

## ***Abstract***

Contemporary relevance as a category of the didactics of history teaching includes not only historical facts which might be deemed the causes of present-day problems and circumstances but also those which, on the grounds of the values or ideas inherent in them, are identical, equivalent, or contrary to present-day problems or notions. A context of meaning is created between present and past which gives rise to orientation knowledge, making it possible to reflect on solutions to present-day problems, to think of alternatives to habitual contemporary patterns of thinking and living, and to develop future perspectives. Selected examples of the various aspects of contemporary relevance are discussed, such as the conflict between Israelis and Arabs in the Middle East, and the role of religion at various times in history. The consequences arising from this category for both the didactic and subject-specific training of History teachers will be discussed, as well as the nature of the relationship between subject-specific and didactic training.

**Keywords:** Contemporary relevance; Context of meaning between present and past; History; Didactics of History; History teacher training; History lessons; Israel and the Palestinians, State and religion.

## **Introduction**

Anyone who has taught history has experienced how interested students are when they are able to touch an ancient object like a Neolithic axe or a fragment of Roman pottery. They are therefore encouraged to put questions about the object, about the material and the period from which the object originates. If together with students you visit Celtic or Roman remains or a medieval castle in the vicinity, a similar effect is achieved. It is important that the students not only look at the remains, but have the opportunity to explore them, to take their measurements and to discuss them.<sup>1</sup> In this way remains from times long past become part of the students' lives.

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<sup>1</sup> W Stadtmüller, "Sachquelle", W Schreiber, *Erste Begegnungen mit Geschichte. Grundlagen historischen Lernens*, 2nd ed., Vol. I (Neuried, Ars Una, 2004), pp. 441-454.

These examples show how past and present are connected. It is not surprising that in 1992 an experienced teacher stated: “Historical contents without contemporary relevance are irrelevant for students and cannot be taught”.<sup>2</sup>

Before examples for contemporary relevance in history and in history lessons are given and consequences for history teacher training shown, it is important to determine what role contemporary relevance plays in History as science and in History didactics.

## **Contemporary Relevance**

### ***Development since the late 1960s***

During the late 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s historians and history education experts were already discussing contemporary relevance, because History as science at university as well as history teaching at school were controversial.<sup>3</sup> How could it be justified to teach History at university and at school, since universities and schools were socially relevant and had an effect on existing society? Several articles were published about why history should be taught, not only at universities but also in schools.<sup>4</sup> In these articles contemporary relevance played an important part. Historians and history education experts made proposals in order to outline the different tasks of History as science and of teaching history. Only the arguments for contemporary relevance will be discussed below.

### ***Causes of present-day problems and circumstances***

Primarily, historical insight is necessary for the understanding and explanation of present-day phenomena and subsequently their historical causes and developments. As a rule this would draw the attention mainly to phenomena of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, such as the Middle East conflict or the German division. But other subjects are rooted further

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2 P Karsten, “Unterricht in Geschichte-Politik”, *Geschichte, Politik und ihre Didaktik*, 20, 1992, p. 14.

3 K-E Jeismann (ed.), “Funktion und Didaktik der Geschichte”, J Rohlfes & K-E Jeismann (eds.), *Geschichtsunterricht, Inhalte und Ziele. Arbeitsergebnisse zweier Kommissionen* (Stuttgart, Klett, 1974), pp. 106-139; I Geiss, “Der Ort der Geschichtswissenschaft in der Gesellschaft oder Die Funktion des Historikers”, E Jäkel & E Weymar (eds.), *Die Funktion der Geschichte in unserer Zeit* (Stuttgart, Klett, 1975), pp. 192-207; E Weymar, “Funktionen historischen Unterrichts in der Schule”, E Jäkel & E Weymar (eds.), *Die Funktion der Geschichte...*, pp. 265-279.

4 I Geiss, “Der Ort der Geschichtswissenschaft in der Gesellschaft...”, E Jäkel & E Weymar (eds.), *Die Funktion der Geschichte...*, pp. 196 et sqq.; K-E Jeismann (ed.), “Funktion und Didaktik der Geschichte”, J Rohlfes & K-E Jeismann (eds.), *Geschichtsunterricht ...*, pp. 115-116.

in the past, for example the splitting of the Roman Catholic Church by the Reformation.<sup>5</sup>

### ***A context of meaning between present and past***

Contemporary relevance includes not only the causes of present-day problems but also those which, on the grounds of the values or ideas inherent in them, are identical, equivalent, or contrary to present-day problems or notions. A context of meaning is created between present and past which gives rise to orientation knowledge, making it possible to reflect on solutions to present-day problems, to think of alternatives to habitual contemporary patterns of thinking and living, and to develop future perspectives. Moreover, History as science can provide categories of and insights into object areas which are similar to the present, but at the same time distant enough not to evoke emotional barriers. Also, central categories of political decision-making processes like the scopes of action of states of different size can be better understood from certain temporal distances and compared with the present. It is to be noted that with a comparison or an analogy between present and past, only the characteristics of the respective eras and the historical difference must be considered. Only then is a context of meaning as described created.<sup>6</sup> Rohlfes defines contemporary relevance as a category of historical science and of historical didactics. According to him, contemporary relevance comes into play only “if you have empirical evidence for the connection between past and present”. He is convinced that the present is illuminated by the past as well as the past by the present.<sup>7</sup> A still a more important role as regards contemporary relevance comes up in the didactics of history rather than in historical science. Since didactics of history requires not only structure and form, genesis and function of historical consciousness, but in its practical area also takes into consideration the respective addressees, in History lessons the learners look and discuss which aims, contents and methods are to be found. Thus contemporary relevance is defined in the didactics of history, not only as a case connection and a context of meaning between past and present, but it also needs to be determined what meaning the connection has for the present and life reality of the respective addressees. For school children contemporary

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5 K-E Jeismann (ed.), “Funktion und Didaktik der Geschichte”, J Rohlfes & K-E Jeismann (eds.), *Geschichtsunterricht...*, pp. 118-119.

6 HD Schmid, “Verfahrensweisen im Geschichtsunterricht”, J Rohlfes & K-E Jeismann (eds.), *Geschichtsunterricht...*, pp. 54-56; K-E Jeismann (ed.), “Funktion und Didaktik der Geschichte”, J Rohlfes & K-E Jeismann (eds.) *Geschichtsunterricht...*, p. 126.

7 J Rohlfes, “Gegenwartsbezug als Kategorie der Geschichtswissenschaft und des Geschichtsunterrichts”, R Schörken (ed.), *Der Gegenwartsbezug der Geschichte* (Stuttgart, Klett, 1981), p. 60; “...wenn der Konnex zwischen der Vergangenheit und der Gegenwart konkret und empirisch ausweisbar ist”.

relevance is a sort of existence relationship, because they want to know what meaning history has for them, which is why they should deal with it. In addition, in the context of meaning in past and present, it is necessary for the addressees to not only perceive the action motives in the sources and interpretation categories, but also to understand and explain them. Finally, from it follows the orientation towards the past which affects the present and future.<sup>8</sup> To produce a context of meaning of the various epochs, a so-called “longitudinal section” is often suggested as a subject-specific teaching procedure.<sup>9</sup>

Cause connection and a context meaning between past and present can be made clear in different and multiple phenomena of history. Of course, contemporary relevance can also include testimonia of the historical culture like remains, monuments, anniversaries etc. These are intentionally not shown as an example, because they often differ on regional level. Their inclusion in the lessons should therefore occur according to the sphere of reference of the addressees. An example of cause connection and one of context meaning between past and present will be outlined next, before conclusions are introduced for history teacher training.

## **Examples for contemporary relevance**

### ***Causes of today's conflicts in the past: Israel and the Palestinians***

An end to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is currently not in sight, although there have been attempts to orchestrate reconciliation. However, armed hostilities and wars flare up constantly. Solution possibilities have covered a wide field. How did it come about that in the area of the former Ottoman Empire Arabs and Jews clash so bitterly?<sup>10</sup>

The Middle East belonged to the Ottoman Empire. However, in 1882 Egypt was taken by British troops and during the last quarter of the nineteenth century Arab nationalism emerged in the towns of Egypt and Syria. In Egypt this nationalism was directed against the English, and in the Arabian countries

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- 8 J Rohlfes, “Gegenwartsbezug als Kategorie...”, R Schörken (ed.), *Der Gegenwartsbezug der Geschichte...*, pp. 62-63.
- 9 Compare E Erdmann (ed.), *Thematische Längsschnitte für den Geschichtsunterricht in der gymnasialen Oberstufe* (Neuried, Ars Una, 2002). This volume refers mostly to secondary school learners (about 16 to 19 years old). The first two articles deal generally with longitudinal sections; E Erdmann, “Thematische Längsschnitte im Geschichtsunterricht”, E Erdmann (ed.), *Thematische Längsschnitte für den Geschichtsunterricht...*, pp. 11-24; A Michler, “Längsschnitte im Geschichtsunterricht”, E Erdmann (ed.), *Thematische Längsschnitte für den Geschichtsunterricht...*, pp. 25-42.
- 10 For the following I refer to the book of E Krautkrämer, *Krieg ohne Ende? Israel und die Palästinenser – Geschichte eines Konflikts* (Darmstadt, Primus, 2003). In the appendix there is a German translation of the draft of the British Zionists and the letter of Minister Balfour to Lord Rothschild, 2 November 1917, pp. 160-161.

against Turkish rule. In 1914 a total of 700,000 Arabs and 80,000 Jews, amongst them approximately 12,000 Zionists, lived in Palestine. The term “Zionism” emerged only at the end of the nineteenth century. Theodor Herzl (1860 – 1904) is regarded as its founder; his ideas were taken up by the already existing “Zionist” movement. Herzl was clearly aware of the Arabs living in Palestine, but he could only imagine a peaceful and prosperous immigration for the whole Palestine.<sup>11</sup> Also, the Zionists did not want to hurt or provoke the Arabs.<sup>12</sup> For centuries the Arabs and the Jews resident in Palestine had been living together peacefully. However, this changed in the decade before the First World War when the number of Jewish immigrants grew perceptibly. Until that time the principle “conquest by work”, i.e. substituting Arabian workers with Jewish ones, had been unknown in Palestine.

During the First World War British government officials made promises and concluded agreements with the Arabs, with the Zionists and with French government officials. These promises or agreements were partly rather vague, so that they could be interpreted differently. Moreover, they contradicted each other. Here we have the birth of the Middle East conflict. How did it come about?

During the First World War the Middle East as third front gained in importance. The west side of the Arabian peninsula was strategically significant for Great Britain in order to guard the Suez-Aden line. Emir Hussein, the ruler of Al Hijaz and the most influential Arab prince, wanted to free himself from Ottoman domination and expand his rule over the entire Arabia. He offered the British Empire an alliance in order to gain his independence with the help of the Britons. Since he had to show consideration for the Arab nationalists, the condition for an Arab uprising to take place, was the recognition of an Arab great Empire which would enclose today’s state areas of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, the Arab peninsula (without Aden), the sheikdoms in the Persian Gulf, Saudi Arabia and Palestine, then part of Syria. In this regard his son Faisal negotiated with Sir Henry MacMahon, the British High Commissioner in Cairo. MacMahon, however, had to consult the Foreign Office, who could and did not want to go over the head of the French, who were also very interested in this area. The French government suggested secret negotiations between France and Britain about the subdivision of the area to protect English and French interest areas. From the British side diplomat Mark Sykes and from the French side François Georges-Picot, secretary of the

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11 A Shlaim, *The Iron Wall. Israel and the Arab World* (London, Allen Lane, 2000) pp. 3-4.

12 F Schreiber & M Wolfsohn, *Nahost. Geschichte und Struktur des Konflikts*, 4 (Opladen, Leske und Budrich, 1996), pp. 42, 52.

French embassy in London, were asked to negotiate. On 16 May 1916 they reached the following conclusion: France would receive Syria and Lebanon, and England would receive Mesopotamia as well as Palestine and Jordan as interest areas.<sup>13</sup>

Under the impression of the German-Turkish advance to the Suez Canal, MacMahon was urged to hurry, because Britain wanted the Arabs' active support. He sent an appropriate letter to Hussein on 14 October 1915 in which he expressed his hope for "a firm and lasting alliance" between Great Britain and the Arabs. Indeed, "the two districts of Mersina and Alexandretta and portions of Syria lying to the west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo cannot be said to be purely Arab, and should be excluded from the limits demanded".<sup>14</sup> In his reply on 1 January 1916 Hussein pointed out that he would deviate from his demands only out of consideration for France. He could assume that the Arab great Empire was guaranteed, and that there would only be an argument about the Syrian coastal areas. In the summer of 1916 the uprising against Ottoman rule commenced. Colonel Thomas Edward Lawrence instructed Faisal's Bedouins in the art of guerrilla warfare and they were provided with British money and French weapons. His point of view, which he expressed in his book "The Seven Pillars of Wisdom", has to be read critically.<sup>15</sup>

The third agreement involved Chaim Weizmann (1874 – 1952). He had developed a process to produce larger quantities of acetone, which was very important for the armaments industry. During the First World War the British Admiralty provided him with a research laboratory and in this way he came into contact with leading politicians whose support he could win for Zionist plans, amongst others Winston Churchill, the First Lord of the Admiralty. Prime Minister Lloyd George and his Foreign Minister, Arthur Lord Balfour, were convinced in 1917 that the Jewish concern had to be supported; considerations of the British Middle East strategy probably also played an important role. If a Jewish community in Palestine was under a British protectorate, the Suez Canal could be safeguarded from the East and the overland route from Egypt to India could be opened. The British Zionists, being in contact with American like-minded individuals who had in

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13 W Laqueur (ed.), "The Sykes-Picot agreement", *The Israel-Arab Reader. A documentary history of the Middle East conflict*, rev. ed. (London, Pelican books, 1970), pp. 29-33.

14 W Laqueur (ed.), "The MacMahon Letter", *The Israel-Arab Reader...*, pp. 33-35.

15 E Krautkrämer, *Krieg ohne Ende? ...*, p. 13. Critically about Lawrence: W Koch, "Entzauberung einer Legende", *Die Zeit*, 47, 1969 (available at <http://www.zeit.de/1969/47/entzauberung-einer-legende>, as accessed on 24 January 2017), pp. 1-3.

the meantime won over President Wilson and other prominent politicians to their aim, demanded and obtained a declaration which had been submitted to, and approved by, the British Cabinet. This decision, that a national home may be established in Palestine for the Jewish people, was made known in the form of a letter by the Foreign Minister, Lord Balfour on 2 November 1917.<sup>16</sup>

The Balfour Declaration was neither compatible with the MacMahon-Faisal-letters (1915/16) nor with the Sykes-Picot agreement (1916). Until this day the State of Israel bases its claim for existence and legal right on this declaration. It is therefore necessary to look at it more closely. Lord Rothschild, friendly with Weizmann, the Upper House member and Vice-President of the British Organisation of Jewish Communities, had in July 1917 presented Lord Balfour with the draft of a declaration in which the British government would recognise Palestine as the national home of the Jewish people. The draft therefore demanded Palestine as a whole. However, Balfour in his reply only referred to the establishment “of a national home in Palestine”. Moreover, he insisted on respecting the rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine. The Zionists had demanded the re-establishment of a national home in Palestine, but the declaration mentioned only “establishment”. Re-establishment would have meant the recognition of historical rights in the whole of Palestine. The expansion of the current state of Israel does not, in Israeli view, contradict the Balfour Declaration, because the historical Palestine extended over parts of Syria and Transjordan and for the British in 1917 it was also part of Transjordan.<sup>17</sup>

In 1919 negotiations between Weizmann as spokesman for the Palestinian Jews and Emir Faisal in Damascus, who actually controlled an Arab great Empire, led to an agreement. With this Faisal approved the competence of Weizmann to speak for the Palestinian Jews. Provided that changes should occur with regard to the foreseeable independence of the Arabs, Faisal had made the reservation that he could not be held accountable for the non-realization of the agreement. This in fact transpired. In July 1920 France expelled Faisal from Syria, after which the British installed him as king in Iraq and he became anti-Zionist. Something similar happened to his brother Abdullah who was installed in Jordan as administrator, later on as Emir. France received the mandate over Syria and Lebanon, and Great Britain the mandate over Mesopotamia as well as over Palestine.

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16 W Laqueur (ed.), “The Balfour Declaration”, *The Israel-Arab Reader...*, pp. 35-36.

17 CH Weizmann, *Trial and Error. The Autobiography*, 4 (London, Hamilton, 1950), pp. 252-262; E Krautkrämer, *Krieg ohne Ende? ...*, pp. 22-23.

In the context of this article, the further development until the present cannot be followed, but it may have become clear that the different promises of England and France during the First World War are irreconcilable. The local population in the Middle East were not consulted, rather they were used. Also, the states created there by the Great Powers were without legitimacy, which has an effect until today.<sup>18</sup>

### ***Context of meaning between past and present: State and religion***

Topically the relationship between the state and religion is increasingly discussed. Hence it is logical to outline a longitudinal section about this theme from Roman antiquity until the present in order to look at the relationship between polytheistic religion and the state, as well as the relationship between monotheistic religions and the state through the centuries, e.g. Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Polytheism was the norm in antiquity. Thus the Romans worshipped a multitude of gods and goddesses. For them it was important that on certain holidays sacrifices had to be made in a traditional way and they also observed signs in nature, such as the flight of birds and lightning. Because they worshipped so many deities they permitted other people to adore their own deities. Often they tried to harmonize their gods with foreign gods. The Romans therefore equated Zeus, the supreme god of the Greeks, with Jupiter, their supreme god. If there was no correspondence with the Roman gods, foreign gods were borrowed to maintain the name, as with the Greek god Apollo. They tried to equate Oriental, Celtic and Teutonic gods or deities which were worshipped in a certain region only with their own gods, e.g. the name of the Celtic god Grannus, who was attributed with the gift of curing people was added to Apollo, who besides other qualities, had the same attribute. Inscriptions exist containing the name Apollo Grannus.<sup>19</sup> If it was not possible to equate foreign and Roman deities, the Romans also worshipped foreign gods like Epona, the Celtic goddess responsible for horses.<sup>20</sup> The main thing was that all inhabitants of the Roman Empire considered Jupiter to be

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18 F Schreiber & M Wolfsohn, *Nahost. Geschichte und Struktur des Konflikts...*, pp. 39-40.

19 W Czysz et al. (eds.), "Six dedication inscriptions to Apollo Grannus from Faimingen and surroundings", *Die Römer in Bayern* (Stuttgart, Theiss, 1995) p. 443; compare PH Filtzinger, D Planck & B Cämmerer (eds.), *Die Römer in Baden-Württemberg*, 3 (Stuttgart-Aalen, Theiss), p. 85.

20 Epona was worshipped not only in present-day South-West Germany, but also in the Balkans, in Rome and in present-day Algeria and Morocco; compare M Euskirchen, "Epona", H Cancik & M Landfester (eds.), *Der Neue Pauly*, 4, column 2 (Stuttgart, Metzler, 1998). To different places and inscriptions compare W Czysz et al. (eds.), *Die Römer in Bayern...*, p. 271; compare PH Filtzinger, D Planck & B Cämmerer (eds.), *Die Römer in Baden-Württemberg...*, pp. 197-198, 238, 370, 374, 395, 435, 465, 588.

their supreme god and honoured the emperor in the usual fashion. As long as this was maintained the Romans had a tolerant attitude.

The Jews were monotheistic and recognized no other deity except their own god. In the Roman Empire they had a privileged position with regard to their religion. The Roman Empire expanded into large parts of the countries around the eastern Mediterranean. In the last third of the second century B.C. the Diaspora-Jews who lived there came under the direct rule of the Romans. In 63 B.C. Pompeius conquered Syria and Palestine. Caesar and Augustus were supported by the Jewish rulers, of whom Herod the Great is probably still the best-known. For this reason the Jews were privileged: they were allowed to practise their religion and to observe their religious laws and rites freely. The Jewish communities were *collegia licita* according to Roman law.<sup>21</sup> Apart from an expulsion of Jews from the city of Rome in 139 B.C., which obviously soon became obsolete, and the exception under Caligula (37-41 A.D.), the Roman state was tolerant. The intense clashes flaring up repeatedly between Greeks and Jews in Alexandria were a special case which can be explained by specific structures and developments of this city. The Jewish uprising, which ended with the destruction of Jerusalem and the taking of Masada, had its origin in different internal Jewish religious endeavours competing with each other, with which social and economic tensions were also connected. The Bar Kochba uprising during the reign of Hadrian (132-135 A.D.) was unleashed by the construction of a temple for Jupiter instead of Jahweh and a disputed banning of circumcision.

The tolerant attitude of the Roman state was not affected by the wars, although the government tried hard to hold the Jewry within its ethnic borders and to prohibit missionary work and proselytism. Prejudices against the Jews are testified to in written comments of the Roman upper class, although prejudices surely also existed in the lower classes, but of these we have no written testimonies. Because of their religious laws the Jews were perceived as separate from society and different, to the extent that they were regarded as anti-social beings.<sup>22</sup>

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21 H Castritius, "Die Haltung Roms gegenüber den Juden in der ausgehenden Republik und in der Prinzipatszeit", TH Klein, V Losemann & G Mai (eds.), *Judentum und Antisemitismus von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart* (Düsseldorf, Droste, 1984), pp. 17-23.

22 H Castritius, "Die Haltung Roms gegenüber den Juden...", TH Klein, V Losemann & G Mai (eds.), *Judentum und Antisemitismus...*, pp. 32-33; W Schmitthenner, "Kennt die hellenistisch-römische Antike eine 'Judenfrage'?", B Martin & E Schulin (eds.), *Die Juden als Minderheit in der Geschichte*, 3rd (München, Deutscher Taschenbuchverlag, 1985), pp. 9-29, 21.

At what time Christianity became an independent religious community cannot be exactly determined. The name Christiani arises about the middle of the first century. The Christians did not call themselves so; this evolved at a later stage.<sup>23</sup> In Rome Christianity possibly already gave rise to conflict under emperor Claudius (41-54 A.D.). The Roman historian Suetonius reports in his biography of Claudius that the emperor expelled the Jews because, incited by a certain Chrestus, they constantly caused trouble (Suetonius, Claudius, 25, 4).<sup>24</sup> Here it becomes clear that the government did not as yet distinguish between Jews and Christians. On the other hand, the expulsion had occurred not due to religious motives, but to maintain public order.

Under the reign of Nero (54-68 A.D.) the known persecution of Christians took place, about which the historian Tacitus reports. In order to oppose the rumour that the emperor himself had set fire to Rome (64 A.D.), Nero cast suspicion on the Christians. The population of Rome seemingly harboured an aversion to and even hatred of Christians. According to Tacitus, Christians were convicted of “hatred for the human race” (*odium humani generis*), condemned and executed. At the same time they were reproached for disgraceful religious practices, which pertains to the fact that Christians did not practise their religion in public, so that the population had to rely on suppositions (Tacitus, *Annales* 15, 44).<sup>25</sup>

It is controversial as to whether persecution of Christians took place under Domitian (81 – 96). Christians probably felt threatened because the emperor took actions against high-ranking persons specifically.<sup>26</sup> From the reply of emperor Trajan to an inquiry by his special legate in the province Bithynia-Pontus, Pliny the younger, it can be deduced that the government had no interest in tracking down and convicting Christians. It happened only if somebody was accused by name. Anonymous reports should not be considered. Who claimed not to be a Christian had to sacrifice to the Roman gods and went unpunished (Pliny the younger, *Letters* X 96-97).<sup>27</sup>

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23 K Piepenbrink, *Antike und Christentum* (Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2007), pp. 2-3.

24 Suetonius, *De vita Caesarum*, 2 (London, Loeb Classical Library, 1914). With an English translation by JC Rolfe. The English translation of the life of Claudius (available at [http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/e/roman/texts/suetonius/12caesars/claudius\\*.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/e/roman/texts/suetonius/12caesars/claudius*.html), as accessed on 25 January 2017). The Latin text refers to “Chrestos”, the translation of Christus according to the interpretation of the Church Fathers.

25 Tacitus, *Annals*, translated by AJ Church & WJ Brodribb (London, Macmillan, 1876) (available at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/tac/a15040.htm>, as accessed on 25 Jan.2017), book XV, 44.

26 J Moreau, *Die Christenverfolgung im römischen Reich*, 2 (Berlin, De Gruyter, 1971), pp. 37-44; K Piepenbrink, *Antike und Christentum...*, p. 2.

27 Pliny the younger, *Letters*, with a English translation by W Melmoth, revised by WLM Hutchinson, 2 (London, Heinemann, 1915), pp. 96-97 (available at <https://archive.org/details/letterswithengli02plinuoft>, pp. 401-407 as accessed on 24 January 2017).

In the second century persecutions became more frequent, due to accusations from the community. At the time when Marcus Aurelius (161 – 180) came to power, epidemics, famines, barbarian invasions and flooding in Rome occurred increasingly. Christians were firmly opposed, because they did not sacrifice to the Roman gods and consequently did not participate in reconciling with the gods. The Church Father Tertullian describes this as follows: “If the Tiber reaches the walls, if the Nile does not rise in the fields, if the sky doesn’t move or the earth does, if there is a famine, if there is a plague, the cry is at once: ‘Away with the Christians to the lion!’” (Tertullianus, *Apologeticum* 40).<sup>28</sup>

During the third century the Empire experienced one of its heaviest crises. The external, but also the internal situation worsened noticeably. It was believed that the gods had turned away from the Empire. Hence, emperor Decius at first (249) ordered a general sacrifice to the gods. All inhabitants of the Empire were requested to donate incense and some wine and to eat from the sacrificial animal. Because many Christians refused to do so, from the state’s point of view they showed a lack of loyalty, leading to the persecution of Christians throughout the Roman Empire. Because the situation of the Empire deteriorated, emperor Valerian (253 – 260) took legal action against the clerics in order to disturb the structures of the Christian communities.

All Christians who belonged to the social elite were also persecuted so as to persuade them to relinquish their faith.<sup>29</sup>

A few more or less quiet decades followed, after which the Christians were again persecuted under Diocletian and his colleagues. Diocletian’s edicts against the Christians (303) applied to all four parts of the Empire, even if the edicts were executed with different intensity. The system of the tetrarchy meant a religious authorization of the rule. Diocletian as Jovius was not Jupiter, but he received from him all authority, which he transmitted to Maximian Herculeus. At the same time he was higher than Maximian, because Hercules had to carry out the orders of Jupiter. The same was also valid for both the Caesars who were designated successors of the Augusti. If the Christians refused to sacrifice to the Roman gods on whom the political

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28 Tertullian, *Apology, De Spectaculis*, with an English translation by TR Glover (London, Heinemann, 1977), p. 40 (available at <https://ryanfb.github.io/loebolus-data//L250.pdf>, as accessed on 25 January 2017), p. 183.

29 J Moreau, *Die Christenverfolgungen im römischen Reich ...*, pp. 85–90; K Piepenbrink, *Antike und Christentum...*, pp. 15–16.

system of the tetrarchy was founded, they were not only guilty of a political offence, but were also committing a sacrilege.<sup>30</sup>

With the tolerance edict of the emperor Galerius (311) the persecutions of the Christians formally came to an end in the whole Empire. Galerius did not convert to Christianity, but near the end of his life he had to accept that although the Christians were persecuted they could not be persuaded to sacrifice to the traditional gods and so support the continued existence of the Roman Empire. With his edict he allowed the Christians to worship their god, provided that they prayed for the welfare of the emperors and of the state as well as for their own well-being and did not violate the public order.<sup>31</sup>

Other themes which could be treated within the scope of a “longitudinal section” about “state and religion” include: Constantine and the absolute tolerance of the Christian faith; the fight for freedom of the church versus the state; bishop Ambrosius’s opposition to the emperor Theodosius; the difference between the development of the relationship between state and church in Rome and Byzantium; the investiture conflict in the eleventh and twelfth centuries; Protestantism and its relation to the state; the so-called Kulturkampf (conflict between the Prussian state and the Roman Catholic church) in the nineteenth century; the Christian churches in the time of national socialism; progressive secularisation and the separation between state and church in our time;<sup>32</sup> the special case of Islam.

### **Consequences for future history teacher training**

The wide range of examples shows how important the scientific basis is for future history teachers. Therefore, subject-specific lectures or seminars on causes of present-day problems and about a context of meaning between past and present should be presented to those students. In seminars, dealing with didactics of history should be broached and discussed, not only theoretically regarding contemporary relevance and its significance for history lessons, but also citing concrete examples, to make contemporary relevance in its different manifestations conceivable. Indeed, exact planning and agreements

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30 K Piepenbrink, *Antike und Christentum...*, p. 19; K Christ, *Geschichte der römischen Kaiserzeit* (München, HC Beck, 1988) pp. 726-727.

31 J Moreau, *Die Christenverfolgungen im römischen Reich...*, pp. 112-113; K Christ, *Geschichte der römischen Kaiserzeit...*, pp. 735-376. With a translation of the edict of Galerius; K Piepenbrink, *Antike und Christentum ...*, pp. 70-71, also with a translation of the edict.

32 It is obvious to start this theme with the discussion paper of the FDP (Free Democratic Party), “Freie Kirche im Freien Staat”, from 1974 (available at <http://gbs-hh.de/pdf/Thesen-FDP-Kirchenpapier.pdf>, accessed on 24 January 2017).

between historians and history education experts are necessary in order to present coordinated or common seminars. Bachelor and master studies have since been introduced in some countries; other countries have adhered to the state examination, but have been modularizing all courses of study for future teachers. Such agreements can be made not in general but only in accordance with the different regulations either of the country or of each university.

If historians and history education experts succeed in cooperating, future teacher students will learn how they can use subject-specific knowledge for the didactically well-founded planning and carrying out of history lessons at school. On the one hand, it is necessary for future teachers to acquire a detailed knowledge of the subject. On the other hand, it is absolutely necessary to determine to what basic insight the subject can be reduced. The reduction is one of the most important didactic categories.<sup>33</sup> Future history teachers must learn to resist the temptation of considering everything they have learned about the subject to be equally important and therefore of interest to their learners. They should rather ask themselves the question as to what aspects of the subject could be relevant for the young learners. In this way the subject can be summarized under a question or a problem question. At the same time, the subject and an interest in learning can be combined. In the didactic analysis, it may be asked what the current theme means for our present and for the interests of the learners. By planning lessons, future history teachers need to consider the age and the pre-knowledge their learners already bring with them.<sup>34</sup> For history classes at secondary school level (about ten to 16 years old) it is definitely adequate to deal e.g. with the causes of a conflict that is significant for the present. It is also possible for younger children to deal with actual physical remains from the Celts or the Romans, with historical monuments, old buildings, memorial statues, or with a museum in the region, all of which are manifestations of historical culture.

A longitudinal section, as mentioned above, produces a context of meaning through the epochs. For younger learners it is difficult to contextualize, because they do not have enough previous knowledge, especially during the first years of history lessons. Consequently there is the danger that with it a short-logical progress devoutness, a mono-causal connection and a lack of complexity in

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33 H Buszello, "Zum Problem der 'didaktischen Analyse' im Fach Geschichte: Fachspezifische Lernzielkategorien und ihre Anwendung in der Praxis", *Die Realschule* (84)10, 1976 pp. 600–609; F Conrad & E Ort, "Didaktische Analyse", U Mayer, H-J Pandel & G Schneider (eds.), *Handbuch Methoden im Geschichtsunterricht* (Schwalbach/Ts, Wochenschau, 2004) pp. 561-576.

34 N Zwölfer, "Die Vorbereitung einer Geschichtsstunde", H Günther-Arndt (ed.), *Geschichts-Didaktik. Praxishandbuch für die Sekundarstufe I und II* (Berlin, Cornelsen Scriptor, 2003), pp. 197-205.

the way things are perceived, are promoted. In any case, the teacher's support is necessary.<sup>35</sup> History education experts have mentioned this problem quite often. On the other hand, the longitudinal section intensifies contemporary relevance and therefore contributes to political education. The motivation of the students is also strengthened.

Of course, future history teachers have to consider which materials, either written sources or pictures, caricatures, maps, diagrams etc. are available to and advantageous for their learners. In the end this also enables future history teachers to prepare themselves to differentiate in their classroom.

## **Conclusion**

For future history teachers, detailed subject-specific knowledge is absolutely necessary in order to recognize possibilities to teach the different forms of contemporary relevance. At the same time, they need to possess detailed didactical knowledge to take the interests and age of their learners into consideration. For these reasons, planning that coordinates historical and didactical seminars and lectures is considered desirable in universities.

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35 E Erdmann, "Thematische Längsschnitte im Geschichtsunterricht", E Erdmann (ed.), *Thematische Längsschnitte für den Geschichtsunterricht...*, p. 18 with note 20; H Strotzka, "Globale Aspekte in nationalen Geschichtslehrplänen. Probleme und Perspektiven", K Pellens et al. (eds.), *Historical consciousness and History teaching in a globalizing society* (Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 2001), pp. 287-290.