

# Boak, Arthur E. R.

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## In memoriam William L. Westermann

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IN MEMORIAM  
WILLIAM L. WESTERMANN

The well known and highly respected American papyrologist, Professor William L. Westermann, died after a brief illness on 4 October 1954 at the advanced age of 81. A graduate of the University of Nebraska in 1894, he received his Ph. D. at Berlin in 1902. Returning to the United States, he received his first appointment in classics at the University of Missouri (1902—06), but with his removal to Minnesota in 1906 he devoted himself entirely to ancient history. Subsequently he held the chairs of ancient history at the Universities of Wisconsin (1902—20), Cornell (1920—23) and Columbia (1923—48). Even after his formal retirement at Columbia he continued to give special courses there until 1952, and also lectured at the then Farouk I University in Alexandria, Egypt, for single terms in 1949, 1952—53, and for the academic year 1953—54.

Westermann early realized the importance of papyrological studies and joined enthusiastically in cooperative enterprises to procure papyri for American Universities. The papyrus collections at Wisconsin, Cornell and Columbia were the fruits of his efforts. His earliest volume of texts, likewise the first major publication of documentary papyri in America since 1900, *Greek Papyri in the Library of Cornell University* (with C. J. Kraemer, Jr., 1926) won him recognition as already a master in this field. His subsequent editions of Columbia texts, supplemented as they were by numerous articles on papyrological subjects, further enhanced his reputation. Until the close of his life Westermann remained active in research as well as in teachings. For the Bicentennial of Columbia University in 1954 he prepared (in collaboration with Prof. A. A. Schiller) an edition of an important text containing *apokrimata* of the Emperor Septimius Severus. But during his later years he concerned himself primarily with the question of slavery, at first

in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt but later in the Graeco-Roman World as a whole. In 1935, he contributed the important article *Sklaverei* to the *Realencyclopaedie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft*. This he subsequently expanded into a volume published posthumously in 1955. Westermann was an outstanding teacher as well as scholar, and he was able to draw a number of very able students into the fields of ancient history and papyrology.

The high quality of Westermann's won him widespread recognition. He received honorary degrees from three American Universities, was elected president of the American Historical Association, member of the American Philosophical Society, and honorary president of the *Association Internationale de Papyrologues*.

Although outspoken in his criticism of what he considered to be wrong, both in scholarship and in other branches of human activity, Westermann was in reality a very kindly person free from professional jealousy and rivalry. He gave generously of his time and counsel to younger scholars, encouraging them in their own research or associating them with his. He was also extremely sympathetic with the plight of displaced European scholars and aided several of them to continue their careers on American soil. His many friends will treasure the memory of their associations with him.

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A. E. R. Boak