

BIBLIOGRAPHIES

WILLIAM GURNEE SINNIGEN - 20TH CENTURY CLASSICIST AND ROMAN HISTORIAN: BIOGRAPHY & BIBLIOGRAPHY.

Abstract: William Gurnee Sinnigen was a Classicist and Roman historian, active in the mid-to-late 20th century. Trained at the University of Michigan by noted Roman administrative historian Arthur E. R. Boak, Sinnigen continued his mentor's work in administrative history, producing several articles on different aspects of Roman and Byzantine administrative topics. Sinnigen was also responsible for the revision and update of Boak's acclaimed textbook on Roman history, as well as Charles Alexander Robinson's textbook on Ancient history. This article will provide a brief biography of Professor Sinnigen, along with a bibliography of his published works and reviews by other scholars of his work.

Keywords: Roman Historian, Biography, Bibliography, 20th Century Historian, Ancient History, Roman Empire, Administrative History

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A respected classicist and Roman historian, William G. Sinnigen was born 12 September 1928 and died in Vermont on 26 January 2002¹. Sinnigen graduated from the University of Michigan with his Bachelor of Arts degree in History in 1949, and his Master of Arts in History in 1950². He would continue his coursework on a Doctorate degree, also from the University of Michigan, where he was a student of Professor Arthur E(dward). R(omilly). Boak, an expert on Roman & Byzantine administration with a long list of publications. At that time Boak had published a standard textbook of Roman History, then in its 3rd edition³; a monograph on the *Magister Officiorum*⁴; a major journal article on the Civil & Military Magistri during the Roman Empire⁵; and several publications on early Byzantine administration in late 3rd/early 4th century Egypt based on papyri from the archives of Aurelius Isidorus⁶. Boak would pass on his research interests in Roman-Byzantine administrative history to Sinnigen, who graduated with his doctorate from the University of Michigan in 1954 after successfully defending a dissertation on *The Officium of the Urban Prefecture during the*

¹ RAAB 2002

² ANONYMOUS 1949, 190. Referencing his undergraduate graduation; ANONYMOUS 1953, 98.

³ BOAK 1943.

⁴ BOAK 1919; BOAK/DUNLAP 1924, 1-160.

⁵ BOAK 1915.

⁶ Including but not limited to: BOAK 1928; BOAK 1932; BOAK 1940; BOAK 1947.

*Later Roman Empire*⁷.

Beginning in 1954, after completion of his doctorate with the University of Michigan, Sinnigen was the Rome Prize Fellow with the American Academy in Rome for two years where he completed post-doctoral work that would lead to the publication of his dissertation as a monograph of the Academy in 1957. *The Officium of the Urban Prefecture* was one of two works published in 1957 on the office of the Urban Prefecture, the other was the Italian language *Ricerca sulla prefettura urbi in età imperial (Sec. I-III)* by Giovanni Vitucci. Though covering the same office Sinnigen and Vitucci had differing focuses and goals in their respective monographs. Vitucci's work put its primary focus on the broad history of the office of the Urban Prefecture, from Augustus to the Fourth Century, while Sinnigen looked far more closely at the functions and administration of the office. In particular Sinnigen was more concerned with how the Urban Prefecture functioned and its relationships with other offices in the central Byzantine government⁸. Their works however, are complementary, each covering areas the other does not so that, taken together, one can have a broad and detailed understanding of the history of the office and how it functioned in its day-to-day operations⁹.

After completing military service with the United States Army in Germany, Professor Sinnigen worked as an Assistant Professor in the History Department at University of California-Berkeley from 1957-1962¹⁰. In 1962 Sinnigen departed U.C. Berkeley to join the faculty of the History Department at Hunter College of the City University of New York. Sinnigen would spend the next twenty-eight years at Hunter College, including six years as the Department Chair, before retiring in 1990¹¹. While at University of California-Berkeley and at Hunter College, City University of New York, Sinnigen supervised a small number of dissertations dealing with the Late Roman/Early Byzantine period. Among the scholars he supervised were Richard I. Frank on the *Scholae Palatinae*, Frank D. Gilliard on *The Social Origins of Bishops in the Fourth Century*, David A. Graves on the *Consistorium Domini*, and Gershon Fogel Mamlak on *Jesus and the apostolic community*¹². The student who has taken up Sinnigen's research interests in the intelligence operations in Roman administration would be Colonel Rose Mary Sheldon. Col. Sheldon, while not a graduate student of Sinnigen, notes that Sinnigen and his work introduced her to the Roman Secret Service¹³.

In addition to the publication of *The Officium of the*

⁷ BRIGGS 1994, 50-51; See also the OCLC WorldCat entry on his dissertation: William Gurnee Sinnigen, *The Officium of the Urban Prefecture During the Later Roman Empire*. 1954. Accessed 6 March 2016. http://www.worldcat.org/title/officium-of-the-urban-prefecture-during-the-later-roman-empire/oclc/68272985&referer=brief_results; Sinnigen's dissertation is also available through the ProQuest Dissertation Express, Publication Number 0008411. Accessed 6 March 2016. <http://dissexpress.umi.com/dxweb/results.html?QryTxt=&By=&Title=&pubnum=0008411>.

⁸ See in particular CHASTAGNOL 1958; Gilliam 1957; HOWE H. 1958; HOWE L. 1958. Reviews by other scholars of Sinnigen's publications are listed in the bibliography.

⁹ Gilliam 1957, 434; HOWE L. 1958, 717.

¹⁰ American Academy at Rome; RAAB 2002.

¹¹ RAAB 2002; See author & institution information provided in SINNIGEN 1957 169; SINNIGEN 1961 72.

¹² FRANK 1965; GILLIARD 1966; GRAVES 1973; MAMLAK 1990.

¹³ SHELDON 2005, xx.

Urban Prefecture during the Later Roman Empire in 1957, Sinnigen was the co-author of two other major works. Beginning in the fall of 1961, due to declining health, Professor Arthur E. R. Boak asked his former student to aid in the preparation of the 5th edition of his textbook *A History of Rome to A.D. 565*. Originally, Sinnigen was to be responsible just for the revision of the chapters dealing with the Late Empire. However, by 1962 Boak's health had become precarious enough that he asked Sinnigen to take over revisions for the entire Imperial period and, if Boak should not be able to finish the rest of the revisions, to be responsible for completion of the work. With Boak's death from illness on 16 December 1962, Sinnigen inherited the entirety of the revisions to *A History of Rome to A.D. 565*, whose 5th edition was published in 1965 by Macmillan Publishing. Some ten years later Sinnigen was also responsible for the preparation of a 6th edition, published in 1977 by Macmillan. This edition was marked by Sinnigen's revision and rewriting of the first seven chapters of the book, which had been revised by Professor Boak for the 5th edition¹⁴.

The second major work Sinnigen co-authored was the 3rd edition of Charles Alexander Robinson, Jr.'s textbook *Ancient History: From the Prehistoric to the Death of Justinian*, also for Macmillan Publishing. Revisions of *Ancient History* were extensive due the need to completely rewrite five chapters on classical Greece and the Hellenistic age, update factual materials & interpretive sections, and in general tighten the organization of the book. Sinnigen's revision of *Ancient History* would be published in 1981 as the 3rd and final edition of Robinson's work.¹⁵ While there is some overlap between *A History of Rome* and *Ancient History* in the sections on Rome, as a whole both are distinctive works with *Ancient History* offering a more concise interpretation of events.

In addition to his book-length works, Sinnigen was the author of several academic articles on several aspects of Roman administration, including among others: the *Frumentarii*, the Roman Secret Service, and administrative changes in the government¹⁶. Sinnigen was also the author of several critical book reviews of works on Classical and Roman history and the editor of a source book on ancient Rome.

Through his work on both *A History of Rome* and *Ancient History*, which were both standard textbooks when published, Sinnigen helped introduce an untold number of college students to the Ancient World. Sinnigen's earliest publication, *The Officium of the Urban Prefecture*, is still, nearly sixty years after its initial publication, the only available monograph in English on the subject. While his publications were perhaps not as prolific as other Classical & Roman historians of his generation were, Sinnigen's work has stood the test of time and continues to be used today.

¹⁴ SINNIGEN/BOAK 1977, ii-iii.

¹⁵ SINNIGEN/ROBINSON 1981, ii.

¹⁶ RAAB 2002; A bibliography of Sinnigen's publications is included at the end of this essay.

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