

Livy.

Books I-X and XXI-XXXII

Holkham Ms. 344, 14th century

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LIVY. HOLKHAM MS. 344

This book perhaps belonged to Alfonso I of Aragon, King of Naples (d. 1458), the most accomplished king in the fifteenth-century. It was given by Cujas to Justus Lipsius, and passed to Janus Wouwerius of Antwerp and later to Gaspar de Haro, Marquis d'Eliche, son of Olivare (1673).. In 1715 Thomas Coke, the builder of Holkham and later first Earl of Leicester, bought it from the Augustins dechausses at Lyon. Coke collected Livy manuscripts and intended to edit the text of Livy. In fact, he never did so, but lent his Livy manuscripts for the use of Drakenborch. This manuscript contains Book i-x and xxi-xxxii, bound in a handsome original fifteenth-century binding. The style of illumination is North Italian, perhaps Bolognese. It is a large book and the original pages each measure 390 x 295mm. Roscoe, the early nineteenth-century Renaissance scholar, political reformer, banker and friend of Coke of Norfolk, firmly believed that this manuscript was the very one referred to in a story which related that the manuscript had been poisoned. In fact, the manuscript which is the real villain of this tale of attempted murder is more probably a Livy manuscript now owned by Commendatore T. De Marinis at Florence.

FRAME 1 Horizontal. Fifteenth-century Italian binding.

FRAME 2 ff. 22v-23. Horizontal. From book i. Typical Bolognese decoration with candelabra-like stems, acanthus leaves, golden balls outlined in black and figures in medallions. Tarquin succeeds Ancus as King at Rome. He founds the Circus Maximus, fights the Sabines and Latins and makes Servius Tullius his son-in-law. Tarquin builds a wall and makes drains.

FRAME 3 ff. 24v-25. Book i continued. Reign of Servius Tullius, successor of Tarquinius Priscus. He institutes the census and assesses the citizens by classes. He divides Rome into wards and extends the city boundary.

FRAME 4 ff. 27v-28. End of book i, start of book ii. The rape and suicide of Lucretia. Brutus stirs up the people and Tarquinius Superbus flees. Birth of the Roman republic.

FRAME 5 ff. 56v-57. End of book iii, start of book iv. The Romans act as unjust arbitrators in a dispute between neighbours. Dispute between nobles and commons about intermarriage and about the consulship.

FRAME 6 ff. 70v-71. End of book iv, start of book v. War with the Veientes and Volscians. A slave betrays Artena to Rome and is rewarded with pillage of two households. The Tribunes agitate because winter quarters are made for besieging Veii and this was a strange thing to Roman soldiers.

FRAME 7 ff. 94v-95. End of book vi, start of book vii. War with Gaulish invaders. Lucius Sextius the first plebeian consul. Camillus is among the victims of a plague which occasions the growth of superstitious practices. From these developed the first dramatic performances at Rome.

FRAME 8 ff. 114v-115. End of book viii, start of book ix. The Samnites, defeated, in turn defeat the Romans at the Caudine Forks.

FRAME 9 f. 125. Book ix (part of chapters 13 and 14) Vertical page from book ix. Note figure with fore-shortened head. Struggle with the Samnites.

FRAME 10 ff. 133v-134. Book x. The omen of the hart which the Samnites slew and the wolf which passed safely through the Roman host. P. Decius, like his father, gives his life to save the Roman army. (The characteristic hair style of the woman on the left-hand page occurs several times in this manuscript.)

FRAME 11 f. 140, vertical page. Start of book xxi (books xi-xx of Livy, are lost). The second Punic War. The boyhood of Hannibal. (The woman in the medallion has hair dressed as on the last frame.)

FRAME 12 f. 144, vertical page. Book xxi. (Woman with hair as above.) The approach of Hannibal.

FRAME 13 ff. 164v-165. End of book xxii, start of book xxiii. Rome's allies revolt after the defeat at Cannae. Capua.

FRAME 14 ff. 175v-176. End of book xxiii, start of book xxiv. Supplies for the Scipios in Spain. Hamilcar takes Locri.

FRAME 15 ff. 186v-187. End of book xxiv, start of book xxv. In Spain the Romans hire the Celtiberians, the first mercenaries ever to be used by Rome. Attempts to check the rise of new superstitions at Rome.

FRAME 16 ff. 197v-198. End of book xxv, start of book xxvi. The Romans besiege Capua.

FRAME 17 f. 209v, vertical page. End of book xxvi, start of book xxvii. The Carthaginians try to explain away the capture of New Carthage by Scipio. Cn. Fulbius defeated but Cl. Marcellus victorious.

FRAME 18 f. 222, vertical page. End of book xxvii, start of book xxviii. Rejoicings at Rome over the defeat of Hasdrubal. The situation in Spain.

FRAME 19 f. 231v, vertical page. Start of book xxix. Scipio prepares picked troops in Sicily to attack Africa. (Note hat and fur collar of man in initial and hair style of woman in medallion.)

FRAME 20 f. 242v, vertical page. End of book xxix, start of book xxx. Quarrel between the two Censors.

FRAME 21 ff. 275v-276. Book xxxiv, cap. v-vii. Speech against Cato and the Lex Oppia, which was a check on costly female fashions, and in praise of Roman women. (A figure in the margin spits at monster in medallion.) Holkham MS. 344 ends with Livy books xxxiv-xi, though Seymour de Ricci only mentions books i-x and xxi-xxxii as contained in this volume. On f. 357 the manuscript breaks off in cap. 37 at conciliabulaque edixerunt.

FRAME 22 ff. 307v-308. End of book xxxvi, start of book xxxvii. L. Scipio is to have Greece for his province with his brother Scipio Africanus for his lieutenant. (On right-hand side tunsured figure supports marginal decoration at top of page. Griffin-like creature sits on marginal decoration at bottom of page. It has no wings.)

FRAME 23 f. 336, vertical page. Start of book xxxix. Tough struggle to conquer the mountains of Liguria.

FRAME 24 ff. 342v-343. A large initial containing a figure, such as is used in this manuscript to introduce a new book, here occurs in the middle of book xxxix, cap. xxxi. Calpurnius rewards the cavalry (in Spain) with rich harness. (Note secular scribe in lower right margin.)