

An incunable edition of a brief history of Troy that was influential in its time.

Dares Phrygius. *Historia Troiana secundum Daretem Phrygium*. [Leipzig : Martin Landsberg, not before 12 July 1498]. 8 1/4 inches (210 mm), [56]pp.

The *Historia Troiana* of Dares Phrygius is one of those genial and harmless little absurdities that, like *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, flourish for a season (or a millennium) and then melt away. The minute entry for the book in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* is a minor masterpiece of elegant, dismissive concision:

DARES OF PHRYGIA, priest of Hephaestus at Troy (*Iliad* 5:9) and reputed author of a lost pre-Homeric account of the Trojan War (Aelian, *VH* 11:2). A supposed Latin translation survives, *Daretis Phrygii de Excidio Trojae Historia* (5th c.?) with an alleged dedication by Sallust to Cornelius Nepos. It has little merit, but was widely used by medieval writers on the Trojan War. *See* DICTYS CRETENSIS.

G.C.W.

The *Historia Troiana* was indeed a brief and popular text in the Renaissance, influential in contemporary perception of the Legend of Troy. Æneas, after all, eventually reached Italy (just as Mary Magdalen traveled to Provence and Saint Thomas to India), and tiny increments of further detail were not only appealing to Europeans of the Renaissance, but were as little subject to the rules of evidence as a newspaper article in the age of Yellow Journalism. The *Historia Troiana* was so brief, in fact, that it could easily accommodate other texts. **Spreads 21–30** print several Christian hymns by Aurelius Prudentius Clemens. Their breathtaking irrelevance to the main matter casts a revealing light on the psychology of publication in the Renaissance. Not only were disparate texts then published together in a single edition, but copies of several disparate editions might be bound up together to form individual and unique *Sammelbände*. There were printed commonplace books, after all: it is not inconceivable that the *Sammelband* might have served as a model for a publisher, or that both individual and composite book drew on the same source.

This copy presumably remained in Germany from publication until its transfer to California five centuries later. The title-page bears the signature (dated 1838) of Hermann Leyser (1811–1843). The signature (dated 1851) of the next owner, Rudolf Hildebrand (1824–1894), the eminent Germanist of Leipzig and posthumous editor of Grimm's *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, appears in the bottom right corner of **Spread 2**. Hildebrand edited in 1856, from the collections of Leyser and Friedrich Leonard von Soltau (1800–1846), a second hundred examples of *Deutsche historische Volkslieder*, a sequel to Soltau's first hundred of 1836.

The turn of the century was the golden age of German purchases for new American universities. The disastrous fire at Theodor Mommsen's house in 1880, in which irreplaceable manuscripts borrowed from Brussels, Halle, Cambridge, and Heidelberg had been destroyed, led to a severe tightening of lending regulations to private parties (however eminent) all across Europe, thereby reducing the value to a scholar of maintaining a personal reference library when studying unique documents. In the future, such activities would no longer be undertaken at home, but at a public library with all ancillary conveniences provided.

This volume of Dares Phrygius is bound in plain black boards; the upper cover has a typed title label. It was one of fourteen incunable editions included in Hildebrand's library of some 5,000 or 6,000 volumes, which was bought by Stanford University after his death for \$5,500. The book is now in the Cecil H. Green Library, which comprises roughly a third of the Stanford University Libraries' 8.5 million volumes. The Green Library houses special collections amounting to a quarter million rare volumes; among the rarities are an extensive collection of books printed by Aldus and numerous incunables.