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### Robert Douglas Smith and Kelly De Vries. The Artillery of the Dukes of Burgundy, 1363-1477

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**Robert Douglas Smith and Kelly DeVries. *The Artillery of the Dukes of Burgundy, 1363-1477* (Rochester: The Boydell Press, 2005). 377 pp. Hardback \$45.00.**

From the 1360s to the 1470s, the Valois Dukes of Burgundy increasingly employed artillery in both siege warfare and head-on battles. For over a century, these four dukes integrated gunpowder weaponry into different military units, forging the way for other European powers to quickly determine where such weapons would be most successful. In 1476, however, a large Swiss confederation defeated Charles the Bold, capturing the majority of Burgundian artillery. Twenty-three of the twenty-seven surviving pieces still reside in Switzerland in various museums, and their loss was a devastating blow to the Burgundians who had come to rely fairly heavily upon gunpowder technology in certain military situations. In *The Artillery of the Dukes of Burgundy, 1363-1477*, Robert Douglas Smith and Kelly DeVries detail the dukes' accumulation of artillery pieces and proliferation of their use in battle. Smith and DeVries question past ideas about the manufacture and use of gunpowder weapons, challenge "established" dates when many powers obtained and how they began regularly employing these weapons in battle, and ultimately aim to use contemporary narratives, documentary sources, and surviving artillery examples to create a framework for the development of gunpowder weaponry in Europe through the fifteenth century.

The book is split into four sections: a summary of gunpowder weaponry from "the earliest times" to 1500, an examination of the military aspects of the four dukes' military reigns, an overview of the different types of gunpowder weapons, and an illustrated catalogue of the surviving weapons. Smith and DeVries' primary aim is to correct decades of often misleading work on the history of gunpowder technology that more modern enthusiastic artillery operators produced with practical knowledge of modern gunpowder technology rather than through an examination of contemporary sources. These works tend to attribute much more 14th century military success to the use of artillery than is shown in the records Smith and DeVries examine. These successes were often credited to leaps in gunpowder technology that were not necessarily bona fide revolutionary advances, as seen by the example of French victories in the Italian Wars, beginning in 1494. Francesco Guicciardini,

writing in 1754, credited these successes to new types of artillery, iron cannonballs, and light, fast carriages drawn by horses, all of which had been in use for at least half a century

By tracing in detail the role that gunpowder weapons played in the reigns of Philip the Bold (1363-1404), John the Fearless (1404-1410), Philip the Good (1419-1467), and Charles the Bold (1467-1477), as well as briefly discussing the reign of Mary, Charles' daughter, the authors are able to trace the dates and ways in which the Burgundians used canons and bombards, both in battles and siege warfare. Developments appear to be slow until the early fifteenth century, and the weapons gradually became larger and more numerous. By the end of the fifteenth century, the Burgundians, and many of their adversaries, had fully developed artillery units in their armies.

Though the authors do discuss Burgundian-Swiss relations, beyond a twenty-page section on the final battles of Charles the Bald and the capture of Burgundian artillery weapons, the book does little more than touch upon the Swiss' role in the employment of Burgundian artillery. One aspect of the Swiss-Burgundian Wars (1474-1477) that Smith and DeVries clear up is why the Swiss entered the fray against Burgundy in the first place. Richard Vaughan and other historians who have looked at the wars have generally done so solely from the Burgundian perspective. More recent Swiss scholars, however, view the Swiss involvement as proceeding from their desire for territorial expansion, rather than as a reaction to Burgundian expansion. Smith and DeVries discuss the battles of Grandson (during which some of the Burgundian artillery was captured and removed to Nidau), Lausanne, Murten (where the Swiss took much of the rest of the artillery), and Nancy, tracing how ineffectively Charles employed his artillery, ultimately costing him his life.

Despite all this book does for the field of gunpowder studies, the authors fail to describe when, how, and where gunpowder technology entered Europe, instead choosing to merely trace its spread after arrival. For the study of Swiss-Burgundian military interactions, however, this will suffice, and Smith and DeVries' detailed examination of Charles' decisions in battle against the Swiss Confederation proves both important and compelling to those both inside the field of Swiss studies and out.

~ Kelsey Ransick  
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