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## Review Essay: DeVries, Kelly. *Medieval Military Technology*

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Cole, Penny J. *The Preaching of the Crusades to the Holy Land, 1095–1270*. Medieval Academy Books no 98. Medieval Academy of America, Cambridge, Mass. 1991. xiv + 281 pp. \$35.00.

*The Preaching of the Crusades to the Holy Land, 1095–1270* is a straightforward account of the sermons used to exhort men to go on crusade, as well as of the preachers who preached them, and of the shifts in papal crusade policy reflected in the sermons. The account begins with an analysis of the discussion concerning Urban II's controversial preaching of the First Crusade and carries on through the disaster of Louis IX's crusade at Tunis. The author shows clearly that the character of crusade preaching changed from the time of Innocent III, when preachers began to encounter opposition. In response the papacy developed a theology of guilt and sin to underpin further crusade preaching and began to place more emphasis on collection of money for the effort, often by cynical means. The account is well executed and the scholarship is impeccable.

Such a focused account of crusade preaching makes clear the important role of the crusades — and of crusade preaching — in undermining the reputation of the church among the faithful. As opposition progressed, an increasingly bureaucratized church structure used institutionalized crusade preaching by consistently minor figures. Preaching became less inspired and more inclined to the moral blackmail of the faithful. The church's unconvincing attempt to account for failure, its consistent misrepresentation of the difficulties of the expedition, and its inadvertent imputation of impotence to God (for example, the theme of Christ's ejection from his inheritance) combined to make crusade preaching an increasingly pointless exercise. Herein lies a lesson evidently never learned by those who claim to speak for God and to direct society with knowledge of his purposes for man — failure is inexcusable.

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DeVries, Kelly. *Medieval Military Technology*. Broadview Press, Peterborough, Ontario 1992. xi + 340 pp. \$14.95.

One of the most admired topics in medieval history is warfare, and a large number of books for popular consumption have been written on the subject. It would appear that the topic is overworked, at least on a superficial level, and scholars too frequently have shied away from an area apparently tainted by reenactment groups, wargamers, and chivalric idealists. This is unfortunate, because many topics are poorly understood and need to be reexamined by careful scholarly scrutiny. Within this framework DeVries's contribution, *Medieval Military Technology*, is welcome.

DeVries says that his 'book is directed mainly at the general reader with the intention of serving as a textbook and as a reference guide for medieval scholars' (p x). Drawing on much recent scholarship concerning his topics, DeVries provides quite good coverage of his subject. The work is divided into four main topics: arms

and armor, artillery, fortifications, and warships. Each item has been examined in relation to the development of numerous articles and devices from antiquity through the fifteenth century. The study is largely descriptive; DeVries enters into few scholarly controversies, aside from outlining the debate on Lynn White's theory that the advent of the stirrup was an important element in the creation of feudalism.

It is ambitious to attempt in a single volume to cover the entire form and function of armaments relating to medieval warfare, and the book suffers from several weaknesses. While many studies in foreign languages are available, the work relies almost exclusively on those in English. This limitation leads to an emphasis on England and France to the detriment of the rest of the continent. DeVries has not tapped numerous recent and very helpful classic enquiries. Such important studies as Guy Francis Laking's excellent five volumes on medieval armor and works by Charles Oman and Thomas Edward Lawrence on castles are neither cited nor referenced in the book.

The work also suffers from poor editing, and there are problems with contradictions, imprecise language, and illogical statements. In referring to Charlemagne's army, DeVries writes: 'The principal weapon, however, remained the spear and it was to be carried by both infantry and cavalry troops' (p 11). But later, alluding again to the same army, he states: 'In fact in many sources the sword is reported to be the cavalry soldier's primary weapon' (p 23). In describing a spear, DeVries explains: 'It was a particularly special weapon, . . . not only special in its design but also extremely special in its use in warfare' (p 10). Although overusing *special*, the author never clarifies what he means by the term. While outlining the development of the mace, DeVries argues: 'But beyond its evolutionary beginnings, little more can be determined about its origins' (p 25). Certainly its 'evolutionary beginnings' tell us something of its 'origins'.

Despite the book's deficiencies, DeVries presents an overview of medieval armaments in a single, convenient volume that will serve as a valuable reference.

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Frese, Dolores Warwick. *An Ars Legendi for Chaucer's Canterbury Tales: Re-Constructive Reading*. University of Florida Press, Gainesville 1991. x + 238 pp. \$34.95 / \$17.95.

This work — convoluted in style, organization, and argument — has two purposes: 'to demonstrate the originality and complexity of Chaucer's intertextual practice' and to defend the Ellesmere manuscript as reflecting 'Chaucer's final authorial intentions' (p 1) for ordering *The Canterbury Tales*. Although inventive, Frese's demonstration and defense will produce few converts.

In the first two chapters of *An Ars Legendi for Chaucer's Canterbury Tales*, Frese introduces and illustrates Chaucer's inter-textual practice with an effort to show that echoes of the *Romance of the Rose* in Chaucer's Pardoner's Tale imply the necessity, first, of rereading both the Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun