



The Book of Deeds of Arms and of Chivalry

Christine de Pizan, Sumner Willard

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It is unexpected in any era to find a woman writing a book on the art of warfare, but in the fifteenth century it was unbelievable. Not surprisingly, therefore, Christine de Pizan's The Book of Deeds of Arms and of Chivalry, written around 1410, has often been regarded with disdain. Many have assumed that Christine was simply copying or pilfering earlier military manuals. But, as Sumner Willard and Charity Cannon Willard show in this faithful English translation, The Book of Deeds of Arms and of Chivalry contains much that is original to Christine. As a military manual it tells us a great deal about the strategy, tactics, and technology of medieval warfare and is one of our most important sources for early gunpowder weapon technology. It also includes a fascinating discussion of Just War.

The Book of Deeds of Arms and of Chivalry Details

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From Reader Review The Book of Deeds of Arms and of Chivalry for online ebook

Jason Oliver says

During the late 14th and early 15th century in which Pizan lived, it was not common for women to write book (which she wrote 41) and it was even more unbelievable for a woman to write a manual for warfare, arms, and chivalry., which see did in The Book of Deeds of Arms and of Chivalry.

Using prior manuals as reference and also advisers, she discusses such topics as who has the right to declare war, what is a just war, the rules of engagement, and the law surrounding different aspects of war. She give outlines of how to attack and how to protect fortified cities, the weaponry needed, supplies needed and more.

My favorite part was the examples of chivalry in prior wars, such as Julius Caesar, Hannibal, Cicero and many others. This was the only part that did not read like a manual. When discussing the laws of war, it is done in a question and answer format. She poses a questions and a legal and rational answer is given for the situation she has outlined.

I learned a bit about history, much about how cities were attacked and how the were defended, and the definition of some terms. A legion was considered 6,666 men.

Very interesting but not a riveting or great read. I do recommend the examples of chivalry (basically bravery, not holding doors open for women) in prior wars. The stories and strategy was funny, amazing, and enlightening.

Key says

"It is unexpected in any era to find a woman writing a book on the art of warfare"
How casually sexist.

Rebecca says

This is a fascinating military treatise. I found it to be a informative for tactics and laws for medieval warfare, as well as the theological debates concerning warfare. This is a fantastic resource for anyone who is interested in military history, medieval history and warfare, and writers who want to do research either for fantasy or historical fiction set in the medieval era. Christine's encyclopedic knowledge is on display in this book, as is her brilliance and ability to offer insights into many areas of medieval life.

Matt says

An excellent resource, and full of great stories to boot. Not just a research document, but useful as such nonetheless.

Joss Ratcliffe says

Unless you're very interested in medieval warfare don't bother, primarily about religion and battle tactics

Laura says

I like that the editor of this edition included footnotes telling the reader specifically what each chapter is based on.

I think that too often medieval military enthusiasts look at a contemporary work and conclude that it's just a copy of something else, so why bother looking at it. Yes, Christine based much of her work on Vegetius. So did most medieval authors writing on warfare. But it doesn't follow that the best way to understand medieval warfare is to read Vegetius - WHAT Christine chooses to include, how she interprets different anecdotes, and where she strays from Vegetius can tell us far more about medieval attitudes towards warfare than Vegetius himself can.
