



A World History of War Crimes: From Antiquity to the Present

Michael Bryant

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A World History of War Crimes provides a truly global history of war crimes and the involvement of the legal systems faced with these acts. Documenting the long historical arc traced by human efforts to limit warfare, from codes of war in antiquity designed to maintain a religiously conceived cosmic order to the gradual use in the modern age of the criminal trial as a means of enforcing universal norms, this book provides a comprehensive one-volume account of war and the laws that have governed conflict since the dawn of world civilizations.

Throughout his narrative, Michael Bryant locates the origin and evolution of the law of war in the interplay between different cultures. While showing that no single philosophical idea underlay the law of war in world history, this volume also proves that war in global civilization has rarely been an anarchic free-for-all. Rather, from its beginnings warfare has been subject to certain constraints defined by the unique needs and cosmological understandings of the cultures that produce them. Only in late modernity has law assumed its current international humanitarian form. The criminalization of war crimes in international courts today is only the most recent development of the ancient theme of constraining when and how war may be fought.

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