



Laurie Watson Rush, Luisa Benedettini Millington. *The Carabinieri Command for the Protection of Cultural Property: Saving the World's Heritage.* Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2015. 231 pp. \$99.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-78327-056-9.

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In *The Carabinieri Command for the Protection of Cultural Property: Saving the World's Heritage*, authors Laurie Rush and Luisa Benedettini Millington draw attention to the diverse world of cultural property crimes as well as what they convincingly describe as the world's foremost military law enforcement agency dedicated to protecting cultural property.

The book serves as a valuable guide to the important and often dangerous work that the Carabinieri do to protect the world's cultural heritage, sprinkling numerous anecdotes about art crimes amid even the more didactic sections about organizational hierarchies and European Council regulations. While the book lacks the narrative punch of a work such as *The Monuments Men* (2009), its scope and thoroughness make it a useful reference tool for the academic, and it provides plenty of interesting stories for the more casual reader—as well as important cautionary notes for art buyers and amateur archaeologists. In addition, the book helpfully includes numerous black-and-white photographs to enliven the text.

The book begins with a series of historical illustrations of crimes involving works of art, objects of religious veneration, and antiquities, collectively known as “cultural patrimony” or “cultural property,” dating back to the Roman Republic.

It weaves in the history of the Carabinieri, the Italian military police force, from its establishment in 1814 up through its operations in the current decade, as it details Italy's challenges in securing and preserving its millennia worth of cultural property from threats ranging from perennial ones such as grave robbery to the Nazi looting and Allied bombardment of World War II.

In the remainder of the book, the authors describe the lineage, structure, and activities of the Carabinieri Command for the Protection of Cultural Property, referred to by its Italian initials “TPC” since 2001.[1] The Carabinieri TPC's predecessor organizations were formed decades earlier, in response to the 1954 Hague Convention's requirement for states to protect cultural property in peacetime and armed conflict.[2] Throughout its history, the Carabinieri TPC has developed an impressive track record of identifying, investigating, and thwarting cultural property crimes, in part by educating the public and partner institutions on how to recognize and prevent them. Sometimes, the TPC's work has involved great personal sacrifice, as in the mission to Nasiriyah, Iraq, in 2003.

Key strengths of the book are how it illuminates the myriad ways people commit cultural property crimes, and how it advocates for best practices in cultural property preservation and re-

patriation, in which the TPC often plays a leading role. On the first point, to cite just two examples among many in the book, Rush and Millington describe how dealers of stolen works may forge certificates of authenticity to accompany them, or even attempt to deceive scientific dating of counterfeit pottery by mixing ground-up ancient objects into the clay. On the second, the authors point to success stories such as the agreement between the Italian government and New York City's Metropolitan Museum of Art. There, the museum, having discovered that some objects in its collection were illegally excavated, agreed to return the objects to Italy, while the Italian government agreed to lend it other objects of equal beauty and significance, and perhaps even, after their repatriation to Italy, lend back the original objects themselves. In this way, the objects were restored to their rightful place, and the public continued to benefit from the Met's exhibits.

The book also recognizes that opinions may vary as to what activities should be considered as cultural property crimes. Everyone can agree to condemn acts of forgery, vandalism, and theft of artwork and artifacts from churches, museums, and private collections. However, national laws and individuals' intuition may differ as to how other activities, such as digging up and keeping or selling dinosaur fossils from one's own property, or salvaging goods from an ancient shipwreck, should be treated. This can create complications when such objects are trafficked across international borders from a jurisdiction where the private excavation and possession of such objects is illegal to one where it is legal. The book illustrates how international agreements and cooperation can solve these thorny issues as well and makes persuasive arguments as to why "finders, keepers" is seldom the best rule to apply.

In sum, *The Carabinieri Command for the Protection of Cultural Property* is a valuable addition to the library of anyone who may be interested in cultural property preservation, the Carabinieri

TPC, or the investigation of domestic and international crimes involving cultural property.

Notes

[1]. The full name in Italian is Comando Carabinieri per la Tutela del Patrimonio Culturale.

[2]. Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (The Hague, May 14, 1954). The TPC was originally established as the Comando Carabinieri Ministero Pubblica Istruzione – Nucleo Tutela Patrimonio Artistico in 1969, and renamed the Comando Carabinieri per la Tutela del Patrimonio Artistico in 1971.

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