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Sommario/riassunto	John Sassoon's study of the written laws of four thousand years ago puts paid to the belief that the most ancient laws were merely arbitrary and tyrannical. On the contrary, the earliest legal systems honestly tried to get to the truth, do justice to individuals, and preserve civil order. They used the death penalty surprisingly seldom, and then more because society had been threatened than an individual killed. Some of

the surviving law codes are originals, others near-contemporary copies. Together they preserve a partial but vivid picture of life in the early cities. This occupies more than h

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