

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910784169303321
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Titolo	Ancient laws and modern problems [[electronic resource]] : the balance between justice and a legal system / / John Sassoon
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Bristol, UK ; ; Portland, OR, : Intellect Books, 2005
ISBN	1-280-47703-2 9781841509175 9786610477036 1-84150-917-5
Edizione	[Pbk. ed.]
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (225 p.)
Disciplina	340.53 340.535
Soggetti	Law, Assyro-Babylonian Law, Sumerian
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Description based upon print version of record.
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references (p. 211-212) and index.
Nota di contenuto	Preliminary Pages; CONTENTS; INTRODUCTION; ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS; PHOTOGRAPHIC CREDITS; CHAPTER 1: EMERGENCE FROM PREHISTORY; CHAPTER 2: THE LAW CODES; CHAPTER 3: THE BURDEN OF PROOF; CHAPTER 4: THE CONCEPT OF PROPERTY; CHAPTER 5: THE FAMILY AS PROPERTY; CHAPTER 6: CHILDREN; CHAPTER 7: ADOPTION; CHAPTER 8: RAPE AND THE FAMILY; CHAPTER 9: WOMEN ACCORDING TO THE LAWS; CHAPTER 10: CRUELTY UNDER THE LAW; CHAPTER 11: THE HAMMURABI MYSTERY; CHAPTER 12: LAW IN THE ANCIENT WORLD; CHAPTER 13: ANCIENT LAWS AND MODERN PROBLEMS: THREE PROBLEM PRINCIPLES CHAPTER 14: ANCIENT LAWS AND MODERN PROBLEMS: JUSTICE AND OTHER HAZARDSLIST OF REFERENCES; BIBLIOGRAPHY; INDEX
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