

1. Record Nr.	UNISA996247984203316
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Titolo	Criminal justice in China : a history / / Klaus Mühlhahn [[electronic resource]]
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Cambridge, Mass., : Harvard University Press, 2009
ISBN	0-674-05433-4
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (365 p.)
Disciplina	364.951
Soggetti	Criminal justice, Administration of - China - History Criminal justice, Administration of - History - China Law - Non-U.S Law, Politics & Government Law - Africa, Asia, Pacific & Antarctica Electronic books
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Bibliographic Level Mode of Issuance: Monograph
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references (p. [305]-351) and index.
Nota di contenuto	The right degree of pain : imperial China -- The prison regime : republican China -- Trials of terror : war and revolution -- Reform through labor : the communist state.
Sommario/riassunto	In a groundbreaking work, Klaus Mühlhahn offers a comprehensive examination of the criminal justice system in modern China, an institution deeply rooted in politics, society, and culture. In late imperial China, flogging, tattooing, torture, and servitude were routine punishments. Sentences, including executions, were generally carried out in public. After 1905, in a drive to build a strong state and curtail pressure from the West, Chinese officials initiated major legal reforms. Physical punishments were replaced by fines and imprisonment. Capital punishment, though removed from the public sphere, remained in force for the worst crimes. Trials no longer relied on confessions obtained through torture but were instead held in open court and based on evidence. Prison reform became the centerpiece of an ambitious social-improvement program. After 1949, the Chinese communists developed their own definitions of criminality and new forms of punishment. People's tribunals were convened before large crowds, which often

participated in the proceedings. At the center of the socialist system was “reform through labor,” and thousands of camps administered prison sentences. Eventually, the communist leadership used the camps to detain anyone who offended against the new society, and the “crime” of counterrevolution was born. Mühlhahn reveals the broad contours of criminal justice from late imperial China to the Deng reform era and details the underlying values, successes and failures, and ultimate human costs of the system. Based on unprecedented research in Chinese archives and incorporating prisoner testimonies, witness reports, and interviews, this book is essential reading for understanding modern China.
