

## Sanitary and hygienic regulations in Ancient civilizations

*Svitlana Hotsuliak\**

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**Abstract.** The article examines sanitary and epidemiological legislation in ancient civilizations on the basis of the analysis of the extant statutory acts of King Hammurabi and the Laws of Manu. By means of comprehensive study and analysis of the information base, the formation of sanitary-hygienic norms in ancient civilizations has been revealed. Despite a certain specificity of the scientific search, the theme of the article is very relevant, because the selection of methods for the implementation of historical and legal research of any orientation is concerned. The study of the methods used in the examination of sanitary and epidemiological laws in their system also serves to fulfil the historico-legal methodology's low important functions: a) to identify ways of acquiring scientific knowledge, which reflect the dynamics of state-legal phenomena and processes; b) to ensure the universality of obtaining information on the state-legal process or the phenomenon under study. Thus, analyzing sanitary-hygienic regulations can be seen the origin of sanitary-hygienic norms, designed to ensure the preservation of public health. Indeed, in ancient times, great attention was paid to the prevention and precaution of epidemic diseases. In general, of course, it is hardly possible to establish exactly when the first diseases, much less epidemics, appeared among the population of our planet. The formation of sanitary-hygienic regulations in ancient civilizations was a complex and multifaceted phenomenon.

**Keywords:** sanitation, epidemic diseases, hygiene regulations, ancient civilizations, population welfare.

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\* Svitlana Hotsuliak, assistant professor of the department of state history and law of Ukraine and foreign countries, Department of History of State and Law of Ukraine and Foreign Countries, Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University, Pyshkinskaja 77, Kharkiv, Ukraine, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4562-6210>.

## INTRODUCTION

The emergence of writing in ancient civilisations has given us the opportunity to learn about and research extant historical documents. Thus, for example, the laws of King Hammurabi, the laws of Manu and other primary sources of the Egyptians, Chinese, Mayans and other ancient civilizations, contain a variety of prescriptions and mishaps for architectural construction of cities and irrigation, sanitation and epidemic control, etc.

### *Aim*

A comprehensive study and analysis of the information base in the field of sanitation and hygiene norms and their formation in ancient civilizations.

### *Methods*

The key methodological approach to the study of health and hygiene regulations was anthropological, since it sees the human being as the basis of everything, and recognizes his needs (life, health) as a core value of the state. The comparative-historical method has been helpful in analyzing sanitation and hygiene regulations formulated at different stages of historical development (Shygal & Hotsuliak, 2021). The principle of historicism was used to depict the events and their participants from the point of view of contemporaries, and to assess the sanitation and hygiene standards governing sanitation and epidemics in terms of their time of existence. Its use has helped to explore the emergence of sanitation in the period of ancient civilizations.

The study of the development of sanitary and epidemiological affairs in ancient civilizations has a great variety of methods and methodological approaches. This is due to the fact that the results of any scientific research are of greater value, the broader the scientific generalization, as well as the more fundamental and well-developed is its methodological basis. It is also important that the systematization of methods gives a greater effect when using them in research similar in their problems. Since the truly scientific approach, as a rule, has a systemic nature, the

streamlining of all methods and approaches, even at the specific problem level, contributes to the further development of all science, including historical and legal.

## RESULTS

The first ancient civilizations established themselves in the valleys of large rivers. In particular, the Egyptian one in the Nile River valley, the Mesopotamian one between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, the Indian one in the Indus and Ganges Rivers valley and the Chinese one on the Yellow River.

The river valleys were very unsafe for human life and they constantly had to face the challenges of nature. In addition, large crowds of people objectively contributed to the spread of various infectious diseases depending on the time of year.

In addition, large crowds of people objectively contributed to the spread of various infectious diseases depending on the time of year (Cartwright & Armstrong, 2020). In particular, pox, dysentery, typhoid fever and jaundice were common in mid-spring and the first half of summer, as harvesting took place during this period of "drought". The next upsurge in infectious diseases was associated with the "flooding" season, because the Nile's water level rose from mid-July to September. This was a good time for agriculture, as floods helped deposit the fertile silt that helped the Egyptians survive, while the river also brought with it many contagious diseases, chief among them probably malaria.

In this connection, it is worth noting that Herodotus' work mentions sanitary and hygienic regulations, as they were given special attention. For example, the procedure of embalming and burying corpses implied certain actions, in particular - after cleaning the body from internal organs, it had to be immersed in sodium lye for 70 days, then washed, wrapped in a bandage and smeared with gum. Only then could he be taken away by his relatives to be placed in a wooden sarcophagus. The body was then kept in the family vault, with the coffin propped up against the wall (Herodotus, 1972).

The special importance attached to hygiene and disease prevention in Ancient Egypt is also proven by the fact that the Egyptians kept their hair short, cut their genitals not for beauty but for neatness and cleanliness, the priests shaved their entire body hair every three days to prevent lice and other parasites, wore linen clothes and shoes made of papyrus. Twice during the day and twice at night they performed ablutions in cold water, drank only from copper cups and washed them daily, wore linen clothes always freshly washed (Herodotus, 1972). In addition, the work of Herodotus outlined many restrictions on the food of the Egyptians, in particular the permitted foods were spelt, dried fish, salted poultry, etc., while the contaminated foods were cereals, beans, unclean animal meat, animal heads, etc.

There was also a great emphasis on cleansing the body, for example they cleansed the stomach every month for three consecutive days, took laxatives and kept healthy by vomiting and enemas (the same thing as an enema). As they believed that all diseases came from the food they ate (Herodotus, 1972).

Thus, the ancient Egyptian civilization was characterized by a concern for the health of its subjects, as reflected in the hygiene regulations binding on all, developed empirically, which contributed in a small way to the prevention of disease.

Mesopotamia is a land that was located between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in western Asia. It got its name thanks to Herodotus, which in Greek means "interfluves". Upper Mesopotamia was called Assyria and lower Mesopotamia was called Babylonia. The Babylonian kingdom reached its greatest power under King Hammurabi. His Laws were of great importance, carved into a basalt column and placed in the central square for all to know and for justice to prevail.

Article 148, for example, stated that if a man takes a wife and she is stricken with leprosy (an infectious disease caused by *Mycobacterium leprae*), she may remain in

her husband's house and he must support her while she is alive. At the same time, Article 149 stated that the woman may not want to stay with her husband and leave with her dowry (The laws of King Hammurabi of Babylon, N.d.). This can be interpreted as caring for the seriously ill, but not as preventing the spread of infections. However, hygiene and sanitation regulations were firm, such as not drinking water from unclean utensils, not drinking raw water from canals and rivers, offering unwashed hands to the gods, eating certain foods, priests had to be washed and shaved from head to toe to prevent lice (Cartwright & Armstrong, 2020).

Although strict hygiene regulations were in place in Mesopotamia, sewage systems were not constructed in cities for a long time, so sewage was simply thrown out into the street. T.S. Sorokina's work indicates that "in Assyria, canals for water supply and sewage began to be built in the capital cities. The water pipeline bed was lined with three layers of limestone slabs. Water was supplied through an artificial reservoir created by building a dam and altering the course of eighteen rivers" (Herodotus, 1972, 82–83).

According to Herodotus, the dead man in Babylon was buried in honey, and the Babylonians were buried according to similar rites to those of the Egyptians. This situation demonstrates the well-established hygiene requirements that have been recognized, enshrined and respected in the neighboring ancient civilizations.

Epidemics are only mentioned in Hammurabi's Laws in Article 266, "if an epidemic occurs in a barnyard or a lion kills livestock, the shepherd must purify himself before God". Thus, it can be assumed that epidemics at that time were associated with religious beliefs, such as "the hand of God" or "an evil spirit". This is why there were hygiene regulations for purification (no bathing in dirty water, no contact with filth or dead animals that could carry disease).

The Assyro-Babylonian state, on the other hand, already had laws in place in the 3rd and 4th millennium B.C., which prescribed recommendations for isolating

contagious patients during epidemics. This is largely evidence of the emergence of sanitary and epidemiological standards to prevent the spread of epidemic diseases over large areas.

### DISCUSSION

In today's world, epidemic diseases of all kinds can be diagnosed, treated and prevented, as it is a major component of monitoring and controlling current threats caused by epidemic risks while ensuring the health and epidemiological well-being of the population. In ancient times, health was a basic necessity, and its preservation was dictated by empirical knowledge accumulated over generations before the advent of writing. From this knowledge emerged skills, customs and hygiene regulations that contributed to the preservation of public health and the prevention of disease. Although knowledge in this field was not much, we can trace the beginnings of its accumulation and its beneficial effects on the further development of the preservation of public health as a central value of the state. By analysing the sanitation and hygiene prescriptions contained in the extant primary sources of ancient civilisations, we can see the emergence of sanitation and hygiene norms designed to ensure the preservation of public health. After all, in ancient times great attention was paid to the prevention and avoidance of epidemic diseases. The formation of sanitation and hygiene regulations in ancient civilizations was influenced both by the historically established cultural level and perception of the world around them, and by the specifics of their territorial, in particular natural and climatic location. Since, for example, the establishment of ancient civilizations, usually along river valleys, was accompanied by the transfer and spread of various infectious diseases, including during river floods.

### CONCLUSIONS

In addition, the emergence and spread of various diseases was also determined by the time of year. In particular, the incidence of the disease increased during the harvest period when there was a large gathering of people.

Epidemics in ancient civilizations were combated not only when it became necessary to eliminate the negative effects of the epidemic, but also by adopting regulations that would help to prevent their occurrence in the first place. In particular, regardless of which ancient civilization it concerned, close attention was paid to the preparation of the body for burial and its actual execution. And, according to historians of those years, many aspects of the burial process were regulated in a similar way in neighbouring civilizations.

In turn, preventive measures can include the regulation of personal hygiene (ablutions, shaving body hair), wardrobe (clothing, shoes), food intake (utensils, permitted and prohibited foods), etc. In the event of an epidemic, for example, provision was made for the isolation of contagious patients.

In addition, religion played an important role in maintaining the population's sanitary and epidemiological well-being and preventing epidemics. The profound religious beliefs of those times presupposed purity not only of the soul, but also of the body. Because when interacting with the gods, for example, the same priests had to follow basic norms of personal hygiene as well as rules of eating.

Thus, the formation of sanitation and hygiene regulations in ancient civilizations was a complex and multidimensional phenomenon. These precepts were shaped by various natural phenomena, their perception and interpretation, as well as by religious beliefs. In general, however, it is of course unlikely that it can be established exactly when the first diseases, much less epidemics, appeared among the world's population. But, the advent of writing gave us the opportunity to see the emergence of hygiene norms. The emergence of epidemic diseases as such, the need to control and prevent them, the emergence of writing, the religious beliefs of the time, all contributed to the emergence at that time and the further development of sanitation and hygiene regulations in ancient civilizations.

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