

# The black death

Business



“ They died by the hundreds, both day and night, and all were thrown in ... ditches and covered with earth. And as soon as those ditches were filled, more were dug. And I, Agnolo di Tura .

.. buried my five children with my own hands ... And so many died that all believed it was the end of the world.

” —The Plague in Siena: An Italian Chronicle The Black Death is one of the most devastating diseases in human history. It peaked in Europe from 1348 to 1350. It is thought to have started in China and traveled along the Silk Road and reached Crimea by 1346. From there it was spread by the fleas living on the backs of rats that lived on trader’s ships. The Black Death is estimated to have killed about 30-60% of Europe’s population.

It took over 150 years for Europe’s population to get better. The most common symptom of the Black Death was buboes in the head and neck. This is Boccaccio’s description: “ In men and women alike it first betrayed itself by the emergence of certain tumors in the groin or armpits, some of which grew as large as a commonApple, others as an egg. From the two said parts of the body this deadly gavocciolo soon began to propagate and spread itself in all directions indifferently; after which the form of the malady began to change, black spots or livid making their appearance in many cases on the arm or the thigh or elsewhere, now few and large, now minute and numerous.

As the gavocciolo had been and still was an infallible token of approaching death, such also were these spots on whomsoever they showed themselves.” The symptoms after this include fever, and vomiting blood. Most victims died

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within 2 to 7 days after infection. The Black Death killed an estimated 75 to 200 million people in the 14th century. The overall chaos of the Black Death caused the persecution of Jews, peasants and foreigners. Bodies were burned, and there was widespread rioting.

The political effect that the Black Death had was devastating. King Alfonso XI, and many other monarchs, such as the queen of France, died during the plague. City councils for small towns all over Europe were destroyed, and whole families of nobles died. Parliaments were adjourned when the plague struck, and the Hundred Years' War was even called off until the plague ended, on account of so many soldiers dying. There were serious economic effects too. Debtors and their clients were killed, and construction projects were postponed or even stopped completely.

Guilds lost many members. Because there were so many deaths, there was a surplus of resources, and prices dropped. Trading villages were completely wiped out. Well, that's my essay on the Black Death, the disease which effectively wiped out about one-third of the population of Europe.