

The Black Death

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The Black Death is considered one of the major epidemics to have ever hit Europe. Ravaging through the West from 1348 to 1350, the epidemic is often taken as part of the major events that shaped the medieval period. It is believed that the pandemic cleaned off over half of Europe's population and continued to reappear for a period of fifty years after. According to Platt (2014), the pandemic had a major impact on Europe both economically, socially, politically, culturally, as well as psychologically for those who survived. John Aberth "The Black Death: The Great Mortality of 1348-1350" offer a significant number of historical documents that provide information on the various responses' contemporaries had to the mortality that was ravaging Europe. The documents put together by Aberth can be divided into the medical response, socio-economic response, as well as the religious and psychological responses. Albert utilizes these documents to show his audience the various debates that surrounded the pandemic as well as how it affected Europe in general. He focusses on how significant the black death was in medieval thought and culture.

From the publication by Alberth (2005), there are various accounts to the pandemic as he looks into the different perspectives held by various artists, religious leaders, scholars, leaders, physicians, as well as commoners that were made up of the Christians, the Jews as well as the Eastern Orthodox and the Muslims. Such diverse viewpoints of the pandemic can be used in exploring the effects of the pandemic on Europe as well as how it helped shape the Western economy, culture and social-cultural background. Given the sustained onslaught of the pandemic on Europe, a number of effects could felt in the society. Europe was on the

verge of collapsing as almost every system that was put in place was under the threat of being eradicated as a result of the pandemic.

One of the major impacts of the epidemic was the effects it had on the economy of Europe. It is essential to note that in the medieval period, Europe significantly depended on Agriculture as the main means of income. The aristocracies of the day based their wealth on the amount of land they cultivated as well as the products they were able to come up with. However, as a result of the pandemic, Europe's agricultural prices began to tank. Prices dropped quickly putting the powers that were held by the aristocrats whose based their wealth and dominance on land at risk. With an economy based on agriculture, the significant deaths left the aristocrats with no one to work on their lands thus resulting in a shortage of food as well as a reduction in prices. Similarly, just like the fall in agricultural prices, it should also be observed that land prices also went down adding more pressure on the aristocrats that based their wealth on it. Average peasants had the opportunity to acquire more land and enhance their socio-economic well-being.

Apart from the effects on agriculture which was the foundation of the economy, it is essential to note that the pandemic also resulted in a rise in wages. As observed and argued by Aberth (2005), it is essential to note that over half of Europe's population was wiped out by the pandemic. As a result, Europe faced a labor crisis as the population was not enough to sustain or meet the labor demands. As such, wages rose dramatically providing the left laborers with an opportunity to enhance their livelihood as well as conditions of employment. In other words, it can be argued that employees during the time had better bargaining power as compared to the employees given their shortage.

From the documents collected by Aberth (2005), it is also essential to note that the pandemic also significantly affected the population demographic as it ravaged through Europe. Considered as one of the major diseases in history, the Black Death significantly reduced population numbers in Europe by half. In England alone, it is observed that over one million individuals were killed by the pandemic. This constituted over one-third of the population. At the time, it is argued that Europe population had significantly grown to the extent that it was no longer sustainable. According to Aberth (2005), the pandemic was an essential tool for reducing the number of people in Europe to enable sustainability of the human species. Every member of the society was affected by the pandemic, however, it mostly affected the peasants of the time resulting in various peasant revolts across Europe. It is critical to note that the highest number of deaths was observed in cities and towns as compared rural areas that were sparsely populated thus more revolts were experienced in towns that were densely populated as compared to areas that were sparsely populated.

Another significant impact of the pandemic on Europe was the development of health and medicine. Before the pandemic hit the region, it should be noted that most medical interventions in the society were based on biblical cures. As observed by Aberth (2005) in his collection of documents, the Black Death is one of the major events that spearheaded or stated the realization of modern medicine. The pandemic is observed to have revealed the shortcoming of the medical system that existed in Europe at the time. Due to the devastating effects of the pandemic, towns in Europe started to slowly implement local health boards that were instrumental in coming up with means that were to be used in fighting the pandemic. The boards developed as well as enforced various policies with the most notable one being

the sanitation procedures that were believed to be the primary cause of the pandemic. Such developments resulted in the realization of what is today referred to as the medicinal industry. It is as a result of the black death that physicians across Europe started focusing on the creation for treatment of diseases and not the causation and disease prevention which was previously their focus.

In conclusion, the Black Death is one of Europe's major pandemic given that it wiped off over half of Western society. The effects of the pandemic were so dire it shaped and influenced the current structure of Europe. This is evident in the publication by Alberth (2005) who put together various responses to the pandemic to help understand the different perspectives as well as the impact of the pandemic on the society. From his publication, it is apparent that the Black Death was an important epidemic as it resulted in various positive changes for Western Society. For starters, it is apparent that as a result of the pandemic, peasants within Europe were given the opportunity to advance their socio-economic status as prices of land as well as agricultural produced tanked. The pandemic also resulted in various peasant revolutions in Europe bringing about the equality that Western nations have come to be known for. It should also be observed that due to the pandemic, the medicinal industry was significantly changed as the society moved from religious or Biblical provisions to developing medicines that were instrumental in helping fight the pandemic. These are all developments that prove that the Black Death was an important event for Europe as it shaped the society to what it is today.

References

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