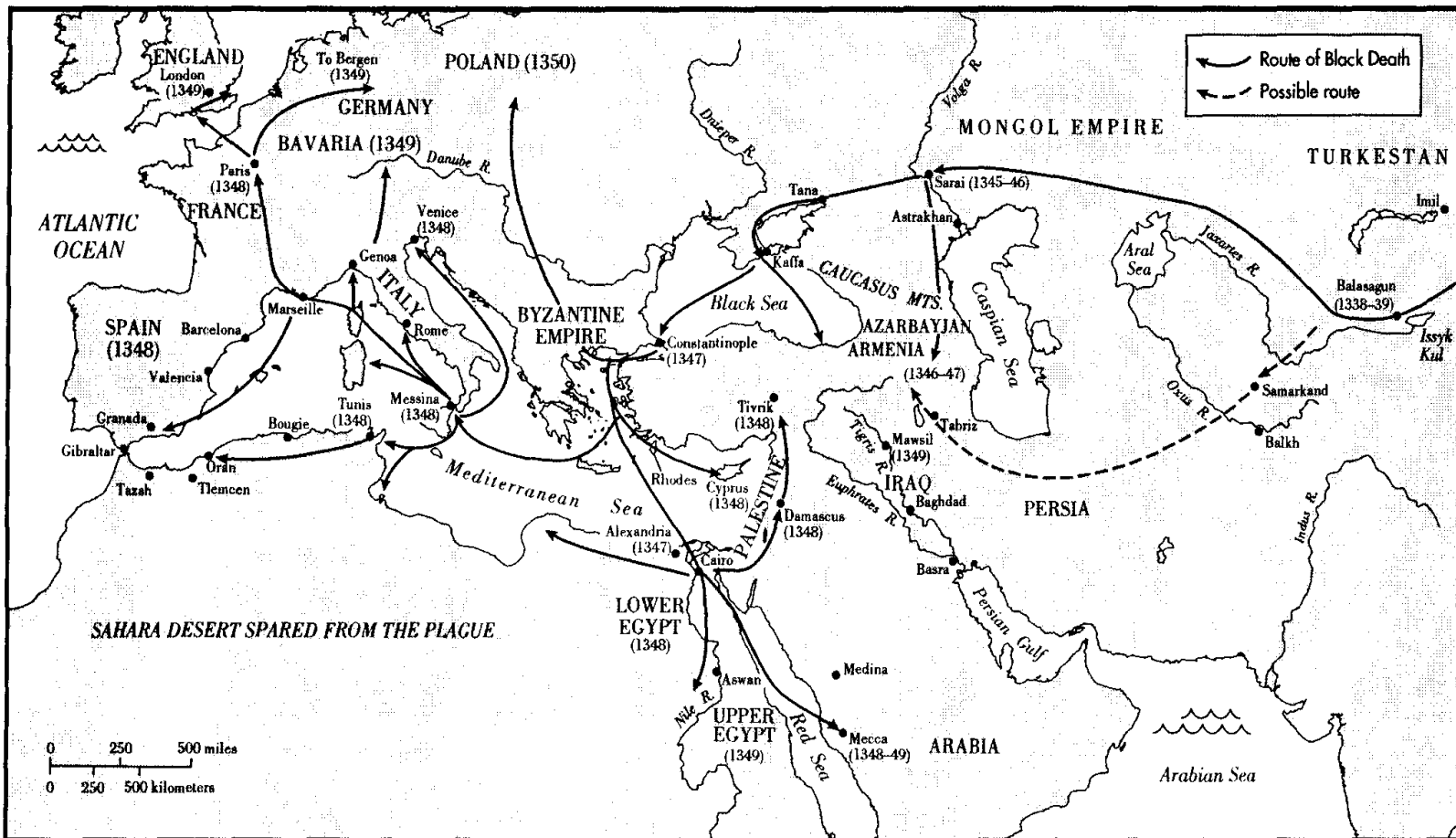


Source: Adapted from Michael Dols, *The Black Death in the Middle East*, Princeton University Press, 1977.

Paths of the Black Death



Source: Robert S. Gottfried, *The Black Death*, New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1983.

**Black Death mortality estimates for Christian Europe
by agents of Pope Clement VI, 1351**

Pre-plague population of Europe:	75,000,000
Population of Europe 1351:	51,160,000
Mortality rate:	31%

Source: Philip Ziegler, *The Black Death*, London: Collins Press, 1969.

**Black Death mortality estimates for England calculated
by historian Philip Ziegler**

Estimated pre-plague English population	4,200,000
Estimated post-plague English population	2,800,000
Death rate of general English population	33%
Death rate of all parish priests in England	45%
Death rate of English monks in monasteries	44%

Source: Michael Dols, *The Black Death in the Middle East*, Princeton University Press, 1977.

**Black Death mortality estimates for the Middle East
from selected Egyptian and Syrian sources**

Pre-plague Egyptian population	4 to 8,000,000
Pre-plague Syrian population	1,200,000
Death rate of Egyptian population	25 to 33%
Death rate of Syrian population	33%

Source: Chronicler Agnolo di Tura (The Fat), *Cronaca senese*, Italy, 1348. in Robert Gottfried, *The Black Death*, New York: The Free Press, 1983.

The mortality in Siena (Italy) began in May (1348). It was a cruel and horrible thing; and I do not know where to begin to tell of the cruelty and the pitiless ways. It seemed that almost everyone became stupefied by seeing the pain. And it is impossible for the human tongue to recount the awful truth. Indeed, one who did not see such horribleness can be called blessed. And the victims died almost immediately. They would swell beneath their armpits and in their groins, and fall over while talking. Father abandoned child, wife husband, one brother another; for this illness seemed to strike through breath and sight. And so

they died. And none could be found to bury the dead for money or friendship. Members of a household brought their dead to a ditch as best they could, without priest, without divine offices. Nor did the death bell sound. And in many places in Siena great pits were dug and piled deep with the multitude of dead. And they died by the hundreds, both day and night, and all were thrown in those ditches and covered with earth. And as soon as those ditches were filled, more were dug. And I, Agnolo de Tura, ... buried my five children with my own hands.... And so many died that all believed it was the end of the world.

Source: al-Maqrizi, circa 1400 in Michael Dols, *The Black Death in the Middle East*, Princeton University Press, 1977.

The malady (in Damascus, Syria) manifested itself in the following manner: a small swelling grew behind the ear which rapidly suppurated. There was a bubo under the arm and death followed very quickly. One noticed also the presence of a tumor which caused a serious mortality. They were occupied with this for a time; then they spat blood, and the population was terrified by the multitude of the dead. The maximum of survival after the spitting of blood was fifty hours.

Note: An Egyptian historian, al-Maqrizi was born in 1364, some fifteen years after the Black Death passed through Egypt and Syria.

Document 4

Source: Gabriele de Mussis, *Historia de Morbo*, a Piacenzan chronicler, 1348. In John M. Dunn, *Life During the Black Death*, San Diego: Lucent Books, 2000.

I am overwhelmed, I can't go on! Everywhere one turns there is death and bitterness to be described. The hand of the Almighty strikes repeatedly, to greater and greater effect. The terrible judgment gains in power as time goes by.

What shall we do? Kind Jesus, receive the souls of the dead, avert your gaze from our sins and blot out all our iniquities. We know that whatever we suffer is the just reward of our sins.

Now therefore, when the Lord is enraged, embrace acts of penance, so that you do not stray from the right path and perish.

Note: Piacenza is a town in northern Italy, 40 miles southeast of Milan.

Source: Muhammad al-Manbijī, *Fi Akhbar at-taun (Report of the Plague)*, 1364. In Michael Dols, *The Black Death in the Middle East*, Princeton University Press, 1977.

Prayer for lifting the epidemic is abhorrent because plague is a blessing from God; at the least, a Muslim should devoutly accept the divine act.

Note: Muhammad al-Manbijī was an Islamic scholar from the Hanbalite school, the most influential and the most conservative school of orthodox Islamic law in Syria.

Document 5

Source: Varied, including Michael Dols and Philip Ziegler.

Causes of the Black Death: Non-Religious Explanations

Europe

- miasma (impure air) carried by warm southern winds
- the March 20, 1345, conjunction of Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars
- excessive clothing; outrageous fashion

Near East

- miasma due to wind carrying stench of Mongol bodies from Crimea
- miasma due to overpopulation causing "evil moistures"
- abundance of shooting stars
- warm ovens
- evil jinn (fairies) or demons
- sin; alcohol and prostitution

Prevention of the Black Death: Non-Religious Practices

Europe

- build fires to purify contaminated air
- reside in a house facing north to avoid southerly winds
- cover windows with wax cloth
- fill house with flowers and sweet smelling plants
- drink liquefied Armenian clay, rose-water, peppermint
- avoid sleeping on back
- breathe in latrine vapors

Near East

- consume pickled onions, pumpkin seeds, and sour juices
- build fires and fumigate
- drink a solution of Armenian clay
- pass severe laws against alcohol and prostitution
- stay indoors
- use letter magic
- avoid sad talk

Source: Michael Kleinlawl, as reported in the *Strasbourg Chronicle* (Alsace), 1348, in Johannes Nohl, *The Black Death: A Chronicle of the Plague*, New York: Harper and Row, 1969.

And at that time, when death did rage
 In countries far and near,
 Yea, and throughout all Christenage,
 Of this it seemed quite clear,
 The Jews were guilty of this crime
 As all around was said,
 By poisoning wells at this same time,
 As on the rack when laid,



Woodcut titled "Burning of the Jews"
 c. 1351

Some (as were stated) to have done
 Themselves confessed it true,
 And, therefore, without mercy shown
 Were burnt in many a lieu.
 And death in this dread form
 To Strasbourg now drew nigh,
 And of its people killed a swarm
 Young, old and low and high.
 Particularly in forty-nine,
 When sixteen thousand died,
 The citizens did much incline
 To measures elsewhere tried.
 Three masters stoutly did resist
 All measures of this kind,
 The Jews they wanted to assist
 And loudly spake their mind.
 The people to the mister trooped,
 The masters soon must yield,
 And on the Jews they quickly swooped,
 Revenge to seek afield.

Note: The town council of Strasbourg tried to protect the Jews from a mob. The council was thrown out of office and replaced with new anti-Semitic members. Of the 1,884 Jews of Strasbourg, more than 900 of them were burned on the grounds of the Jewish cemetery and the rest were banned from the city. Anti-Semitic riots, known as pogroms, occurred throughout Europe during the Black Death. By 1351, 60 major and 150 smaller Jewish communities had been destroyed, and over 350 separate massacres had taken place.

Document 6

Source: William Dene, chronicler in Rochester, England, circa 1350, in Sir Arthur Bryant, *Chivalry: The Atlantic Saga*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1963.

The people for the greater part ever became more depraved, mo prone to every vice and more inclined than before to evil and wickedne not thinking of death nor of the past plague nor of their own salvation.. Priests, little weighing the sacrifice of a contrite spirit, betook themself to where they could get larger stipends than in their own benefices, on which account many benefices remained unserved. Day by day, the dan to souls both in clergy and people multiplied.... The labourers and skill workmen were imbued with such a spirit of rebellion that neither king, nor justice could curb them.

Note: "Benefice" in this case means parish or territory.

Prompt: Compare Christian and Muslim responses to the Black Death.