Social Impacts of the Black Death and Hundred Years' War

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Introduction

The bubonic plague originated in Italy in the 1350s and spread across Russia in the 1360s. The plague, also called the "Black Death," killed almost one hundred million collectively all around the world. This caused global havoc. Since no cure was found for the disease at the time, its death toll increased drastically and reached such a high level that it killed entire towns and cities. Methods of prevention did not help protect against the disease, and the disease was extremely contagious and spread at a very fast rate. The Black Death had great demographic and social impacts, and it became the cause of various research efforts and social structural changes. The plague left a horrible impact on the population of Europe and changed the economic status of the people (Platt, 2014; Ziegler, 2013).

Its effects lasted for a long time in European countries. The second biggest massacre of the 14th century was the Hundred Years' War, which lasted more than a hundred years and killed 3.3 million people in Europe. The war was fought between France and its allies and the kingdom of England. Various battles were lost by the French, and many soldiers were killed, injured, and captured in the war. However, there was no real victor in the war, but it affected the people of both countries and their allies for several years after the war ended. This essay will describe the impacts of the Bubonic Plague and the Hundred Years' War on societies in the 14th century, the populations affected, and the impacts of these two great tragedies on the world. It will also describe what measures were taken to avoid the plague and what technological advancements helped change the course of history throughout the war. The theme of the essay follows a record-keeping diary of an English peasant (Whittington, 2016).

Discussion

Impacts of Bubonic Plague

I have seen the horror with my own eyes. The bubonic plague devastated the society, culture, and economy of all the European countries. As there were no methods of epidemic control, the disease spread in a very short time. Whole cities died, and streets and towns showed a horrible picture of the

misery and suffering of European people. The economy of the country was demolished, and the difference between the rich and the poor disappeared. Many servants took hold of their owners' properties and possessions when their owners died. My fellow peasants working in the fields refused to work anymore, and this caused famine in the country. The law enforcement situation was destroyed, the crime rate got high, and people started killing each other for food and facilities (Platt, 2014; Ziegler, 2013).

We all were scared of the disease. Though there was no cure, the medical experts of the time presented prevention as the only solution to the epidemic. The people took help from religion as some of them interpreted it as the "Wrath of God." They tried all possible ways to find a cure. They used leeches to suck the blood and tried to cut the swellings, but none of these methods worked. Some of the noble people who feared that this epidemic would wipe out their race even started marrying young women who seemed to have developed immunity against the disease. I have seen many young women forced to marry English nobles for money (Ziegler, 2013).

This epidemic caused a cultural redefinition among European people. Europe, which at that time was famous for its concepts of society and collective benefits, changed to a jungle culture of savage people, where people did anything to survive, even if they had to kill a thousand. The Roman Catholic priests, who were considered a connection to God, were used for the treatment of the disease. We trusted our priests, but they, too, were no help (Platt, 2014; Ziegler, 2013).

The Aftermath of Bubonic Plague

The savage nightmare of bubonic plague haunted us for centuries. It caused a substantial change in the cultural and political stability of the country. It has been claimed that bubonic plague worsened the existing economic condition of Europe. As the country lost most of its people, the economic system got into the hands of cruel and savage people who took control of available land and resources and exploited the people's misery. The population, which was already weakened by the rich, friendly economic system, collapsed as the available workforce and resources were lost (Platt, 2014; Ziegler, 2013).

I took my wife, my little John, and Elsa and left the area of misery, for I had heard there was this cold part of the country where the plague was not so severe. I quit my job and told my landlord I was never coming back. The laborers, panicked by the current epidemic, refused to work anymore, given the present conditions of wages and available resources of life. Most of the peasants refused to work in the fields and industries, and the availability of labor in the workplaces drastically decreased. The rich owners, when they saw the current situation, offered higher wages to laborers, and this started a competition between owners to acquire cheap labor for themselves (Platt, 2014; Ziegler, 2013).

The Bubonic Plague destroyed the very concept of society. It changed our concepts of divinity and religion, and we started seeing the epidemic as a curse of God that was brought upon us due to our mistakes. It changed people's concepts about religion. Some people continued to believe in God while

others changed their concepts about religion. When they saw Catholic priests failing to provide them refuge and a cure for the disease, they started questioning their purpose and lost faith in them. I was one of them who started losing faith in God, too, but my wife and I stood strong and believed that we would get through this. The priests who were once considered a connection with God were believed to be helpless themselves, and this resulted in the loss of people's faith in them and in religion. Last of all, it changed people's perceptions of disease and its prevention. They understood the need for a cure for diseases and started improving their way of life to avoid disease outbreaks and the chance of chronic epidemics (Platt, 2014; Ziegler, 2013).

The British and French War

After I left farming and settled with my family in Berkshire, another curse fell upon us when a conflict over ownership of the throne started between us and the French king. The war that stretched over a span of more than a hundred years was initiated when the emperor of England claimed himself as the rightful heir to the throne and refused to see a French owner of the throne. This war affected both the populations of the countries and their allied countries. The war included over a hundred battles that were fought in different years between France and England, some of which were won by the French and some by the English armies. These battles were fought on the disputed boundaries of France and England, and both countries tried to take over the other and gain power over the throne (Whittington, 2016).

The Battle of Cadzand, which was fought on the island of Cadzand, Flanders, was among the first battles of the war. This battle took place in the year 1337. The English troops were commanded by Sir Walter Manny, who defeated the French troops through the use of their advanced weapons. As I had to earn a livelihood, I started working in the British forge where these longbows were made. The weapons used in this war by British armies offered them a great advantage in fighting while staying at a safe distance. Our troops used their longbows to fire arrows at the island's defending armies, which gave them a positive edge in the battle. This battle was meant to boost the confidence of British armies as Cadzand was not protected by French armies as they protected their other parts (Whittington, 2016).

Our armies had no developed naval fleets, and this became the reason why we lost the Battle of Arnemuiden. This battle was the first battle between the British and French that was fought on water. The French had an advantage in this war as they had many big ships called "Carracks" that were equipped with big artillery guns. The French, with the help of this artillery and their special crossbows, won this battle and took hold of Arnemuiden island (Whittington, 2016).

The war provided the countries with new tactics of warfare and encouraged them to have powerful weapons and ships. The advantages countries had in the war gave them insight into the requirements of warfare. They understood the need for specialized weapons and learned how important it was to protect their main islands (Whittington, 2016).

We, the ordinary people, have been living in fear since the war started, and I gave my best to provide support to my country until I lost the use of my hand. However, after losing our loved ones and our precious, beautiful lands, we never lost hope and continued our struggle. It had been twenty years since the war started, and my other family members who stayed in central parts of Britain were either dead or lost. The nobility of the country never suffered like us. Most of our societies came under the control of the French, and they started their savage control of our economy and employment. They hired most of our people as servants, took our families from us, and forced us to serve them. My wife and I also worked for a French landlord who had a clothing business. Now, my hands are weak, and my eyes are losing their sight, but in this hopeless time, only one thing keeps me going, and that is the love of my country and my King. My little John has just joined the British army, and he is serving his country like his father did.

Conclusion

The Bubonic Plague and the British-French war both changed the course of history. The Black Death killed almost half of the European population, and the war killed thirty million people collectively in France and the United Kingdom. The people during the Black Death tried their best to find solutions to the epidemic, but none of their efforts were fruitful. The disease had adverse effects on society and the economy, and it changed people's religious concepts. The French-British war took away the livelihoods of people, and many people lost their properties and loved ones during these hundred years. However, both tragedies resulted in a huge loss of life, and it was the common people who suffered the most (Platt, 2014; Ziegler, 2013; Whittington, 2016).

Works Cited

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