

Plagues in Nomadic Contexts

convenors

kurt franz, ortrun riha, charlotte schubert

hosting institutions

sfb 586 collaborative research centre “difference and integration,”
university of leipzig and martin luther university of halle-wittenberg,
projects b1, halle, e7, leipzig, office: schillerstraße 6, 04109 leipzig •
karl-sudhoff-institut für geschichte der medizin und der natur-
wissenschaften der universität leipzig, käthe-kollwitz-straße 82,
04109 leipzig

venue

villa tillmanns, wächterstraße 30, 04107 leipzig •
phone +49 (0)341 9730-965 on conference days

registration

free • requested by 4 october 2010

contact

kurz.franz@orientphil.uni-halle.de

**Historical Impact
Medical Responses
Cultural Adaptations**
in Ancient to Mediaeval Eurasia

international conference
villa tillmanns, leipzig
7-9 october 2010

funded by deutsche forschungsgemeinschaft

A twin conference of SFB 586 on “Disaster and Relief Management in
Ancient Israel, Egypt and the Near East” is held at the same venue on 4-6
October 2010 • Information: berlejung@uni-leipzig.de

thursday, 7 october 2010

opening

<i>reception and registration</i>	17:30
<i>welcome address</i>	
Charlotte Schubert (Leipzig)	18:15
<i>greetings</i>	
Jürgen Paul (Vice-Speaker, Collaborative Research Centre Difference and Integration, Halle)	18:25
<i>opening lecture</i>	
Vivian Nutton (London) Plague, Epidemic Disease, and the Other in Classical Antiquity	18:35
<i>dinner at Cafe Madrid</i>	20:30

programme

friday, 8 october 2010

introductory remarks

Ortrun Riha (Leipzig) 09:00

1 · contagion and spaces

chair

Nicola Di Cosmo (Princeton, N.J.)

Arne C. Rodloff (Leipzig)

Mikrobiologische, epidemiologische und immunologische Grundlagen der Pest · Microbiological, Epidemiological and Immunological Foundations of Plague 09:15

Ruth I. Meserve (Bloomington, Ind.)

Traditional Disease Boundaries and Nomadic Space in Central Eurasia: The Search for Order 10:00

break 10:45

Kurt Franz (Halle)

Well off in the Wilderness? Muslim Appraisals of Bedouin Life at Times of Plague 11:15

Yaron Ayalon (Norman, Okla.)

When Nomads Meet Urbanites: The Outskirts of Ottoman Cities as a Venue for the Spread of Epidemic Diseases 12:00

lunch at Café Kowalski 13:00

2 · explanations and imaginations

chair

Joseph van Ess (Tübingen)

Charlotte Schubert (Leipzig)

Griechen, Nomaden und Seuchen: Eine verlorene Spur? · Greeks, Nomads and Epidemics: A Lost Trace? 14:30

Mischa Meier (Tübingen)

Die "Justinianische Pest": Mentalitätengeschichtliche Auswirkungen einer Pandemie · The "Justinianic Plague": The Impact of a Pandemic on Mentalities 15:15

break 16:00

Karl-Heinz Leven (Erlangen)

Die Tollwut der Barbaren: Über wahre und falsche Ursachen von Seuchen bei byzantinischen Geschichtsschreibern · Barbarian Rabies: True and False Cause of Epidemics as Seen by Byzantine Historians 16:30

joint departure 17:45

public lecture

special venue: alter senatssaal, ritterstraße 26

Klaus Bergdolt (Cologne)

Die Pest 1348 – Das Ende des europäischen Mittelalters · The Plague of 1348 – The End of the European Middle Ages 18:15

dinner at Barthels Hof 20:00

saturday, 9 october 2010

3 · livelihoods and mobility*chair***Joseph van Ess** (Tübingen)**Stuart J. Borsch** (Worcester, Mass.)

Epidemic and Landholding Structure in Egypt and England 09:00

Ortrun Riha (Leipzig)Flieh weit und schnell: Medizinische Empfehlungen in mittelalterlichen Pesttraktaten · *Cito, longe, tarde*: Medical Recommendations in Medieval Plague Treatises 09:45*break*

10:30

Sarah Büssow-Schmitz (Halle)

“The Disease Killed the One Who Stayed as well as the One That Moved”: Theories, Perceptions and Practices Concerning the Plague in Mamluk Chronicles 11:00

Boaz Shoshan (Beer-Sheva)

Fellahin and Bedouin: The Aftermath of the Black Death in Egypt 11:45

lunch at Mio Restaurante

12:45

4 · treatment and transformation*chair***Nicola Di Cosmo** (Princeton, N.J.)**Paul D. Buell** (Berlin)How Nomadic Peoples Treat Diseases, Including Plague:
The Mongol Case 14:00**Uli Schamiloğlu** (Madison, Wisc.)

The Black Death and the Transformation in the Nomadic-Sedentary Relationship in Western Eurasia in the 13th to 16th Centuries 14:45

break

15:30

discussion*general response***Nicola Di Cosmo** (Princeton, N.J.) 16:00*general response***Joseph van Ess** (Tübingen) 16:15*discussion*

16:30

*concluding address***Kurt Franz** (Halle) ca. 18:00*farewell dinner at Auerbachs Keller*

19:30

sunday, 10 october 2010

optional excursion

guided city walking tour

The New Face of Leipzig: The Historical Town Centre under
Reconstruction

departure from Villa Tillmanns

10:00

Yaron Ayalon

panel 1 · friday, 12:00

**When Nomads Meet Urbanites:
The Outskirts of Ottoman Cities as a Venue for the Spread of Epidemic
Diseases**

Historians often understand epidemics – breaking out in densely populated areas and facilitated by poor hygienic conditions – as an urban phenomenon. Although diseases surely affected nomads, we know very little of the effect such calamities had on people's daily lives outside major cities. This is very much apparent in the Ottoman Empire, where we are almost completely in the dark with respect to non-urbanites, let alone nomads. While the latter left practically no written evidence, we can penetrate their world through looking at the points of contact between them and sedentary populations.

In Ottoman cities, such interactions often happened at the outskirts of cities, where nomads came to trade and offer various services. In times of famines, nomads and villagers were attracted to cities in hope of finding food. When famines coincided with another disaster, such as a flood, fire, or earthquake, many urbanites moved out of the city center and established provisional lodgings in its vicinities, creating a hodgepodge of nomads, villagers, and urbanites sharing very limited space. Since the suburbs also housed businesses that produced the most pollution and noise – tanneries, butcher shops, soap factories – the concentration of so many people there guaranteed worsening hygienic conditions. This eventually led to the outbreak of epidemics, as happened in Aleppo in 1757–62. The question in which direction epidemics spread – from the vicinity into town or vice versa – and the role nomadic populations played in disease transmission, for instance from one city to another, is not entirely clear. In Ottoman and European sources, there is evidence supporting arguments that nomads both disseminated disease agents among urbanites, and suffered due to their temporary settlement around cities. What exactly was the role of nomads in spreading epidemics in the Ottoman Empire is the quandary I will try to resolve in my presentation.

Yaron Ayalon, Ph.D. · University of Oklahoma, Norman, School of International and Area Studies · yayalon@ou.edu

Klaus Bergdolt

public lecture · friday, 18:15

Die Pest 1348 – Das Ende des europäischen Mittelalters

The Plague of 1348 – The End of the European Middle Ages

The impact of the plague of 1348 (which struck, more exactly, the continent between 1347 and 1349) on the European countries was extraordinary. The difficult situation of the authorities, of doctors and theologians was intensified by the fact that comparable epidemics which had devastated many Mediterranean towns and harbours in the 6th and 7th century had been forgotten. So the Black Death (this name was only a later paraphrase) surprised the communities, to quote Petrarch, as an – in the strict sense of the word – “unseen” and “unheard-of” catastrophe. That its origin was somewhere in Asia – a continent as far away as uncanny – complicated psychologically the situation. Nearly a third of the population died, in the towns not seldom many more. Economics were, as we know from many towns, paralyzed, executive and legislative bodies out of function, families in dissolution. The spreading of the feared epidemic and typical all day conflicts, sometimes already caused by its *fama*, are presented, also by *literary* sources. It can be demonstrated that anxiety and mortal fear did not only impair adequate personal and public reactions but favoured, on the other hand, a new concept of subjectivism which was regarded as the beginning of renaissance philosophy.

Prof. Dr. med. Dr. phil. Klaus Bergdolt · Universität zu Köln, Institut für Geschichte und Ethik der Medizin · bergdolt@uni-koeln.de

Stuart J. Borsch

panel 3 · saturday, 09:00

Epidemic and Landholding Structure in Egypt and England

Contrasting outcomes in Egypt and England are the focal points of two disparate economies that shared certain common elements. Egypt's trajectory bent sharply downwards in the wake of epidemics that began in the mid-fourteenth century. England was better able to withstand the effects of depopulation and its economy was marked by a recovery on a per-capita level in the fifteenth century. The question here is how this divergence between the two economies became so steep. The evidence suggests that contrasting outcomes were driven by the difference in the structure of the two landholding regimes.

In both economies, the labor pool dropped precipitously. Rural labor became scarce. In both countries, landlords sought to resist any upward pressure on wages and contain any pressure from the peasantry. Varieties of labor, rent, and peasant mobility legislation were introduced in both countries. In England this labor legislation failed. It was slowly eroded by the economic pressure of scarce labor demand in the agrarian sector. Eventually landlords were forced to lower rents and offer flexible tenancies. This process witnessed the end of what was left of the manorial system.

Egypt's various efforts at collective labor control were unfortunately relatively successful. Legislation on mobility, or more particularly, on rents, worked to produce a countervailing pressure in the agrarian sector of the economy. The peasantry fared badly. This non-economic solution exerted a strong centrifugal pull that drew agrarian labor away from active participation in the rural sector. The resulting outcome was a sharp decline in the mainstay of Egypt's economy.

Prof. Stuart J. Borsch, Ph.D. · Assumption College, Worcester, Mass., Department of History · sborsch@assumption.edu

Paul D. Buell

panel 4 · saturday, 14:00

How Nomadic Peoples Treat Disease, Including Plague: The Mongol Case

Although the medicine of the ancient, Medieval and recent steppe world was necessarily less developed than that of the sedentary domains, including China, this is not to say that there were no medical traditions present there. The nomadic peoples could also be sophisticated in their understanding of disease and its causation. In the present paper, I will look primarily at the example provided by the Mongols, who probably have the longest and best documented history of any steppe group, as well as having a particular position in world history because of the cultural exchanges occasioned by the Mongol empire.

I will begin with an examination of native views of disease and ways of responding to it, including a well developed Mongol sense of avoiding disease, even embracing serious ones such as bubonic plague, which is endemic to Mongolia, in the first place. This will include a survey of Mongol use of *materia medica*, starting with the earliest evidence for this in the *Secret History of the Mongols*, but also an examination of Mongolia's powerful shamanic tradition, which will be compared to traditions found among other steppe Altaic groups in the area, particularly but not exclusively the Kazakhs.

Finally, I will look at how the Mongols responded to their own health issues and the health issues of a larger society around them by appropriating other people's systems, this included Arabic medicine, Chinese medicine, and most important, Tibetan medicine. A focus of the discussion will be how the Mongols managed to combine all of these traditions to produce their own classical medical system which, although considered Tibetan, actually has a more mixed pedigree. In passing, I will touch on the key issue of how the Mongols managed to be associated with the spread of bubonic plague without suffering from it that much themselves. Was this cross-immunity or a clear strategy of plague avoidance, and what are the implications of this for the larger study of history and of medicine.

Prof. Paul D. Buell, Ph.D. · Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Horst-Görtz-Stiftungsinstitut für Theorie, Geschichte, Ethik Chinesischer Lebenswissenschaften · paul-david.buell@charite.de

Sarah Büssow-Schmitz

panel 3 · saturday, 11:00

“The Disease Killed the One Who Stayed as well as the One That Moved”: Theories, Perceptions and Practices Concerning the Plague in Mamluk Chronicles

The plague traversed the whole known world within only a few years. Contemporary Arabic authors describe the feeling of how a death-bringing disease was approaching and could not be stopped as particularly terrifying. In this vein, a later chronicler personified the disease as a “creeping snake,” and representatives of the miasma theory supposed that it was a wind that carried the plague from one land to another. The question arose as to whether one could protect oneself from the disease by moving location, for example by escaping into a non-affected region. Many scholars, especially religious authorities, objected to this kind of reaction, arguing that the plague was not contagious but that it was sent by God, which made any attempt to flee it a vain endeavour. However, some physicians such as the Andalusian Ibn al-Khatib (1313–1374) made a strong case for the position that the plague was contagious and that one could theoretically avoid it. In this context they also assumed that there existed a connection between health and different types of space. The densely built-up city with its unhygienic conditions was contrasted with the habitat of desert and steppe dwellers which was believed to be healthier.

But what do we know about practical and literary answers to the plague beyond the medical discourse? In how far did mobility play a role there? The paper will discuss three accounts on the Black Death 1347–1349 by Mamluk chroniclers. It will be argued that the chronicles display more complex connections between plague and mobility than in medical treatises. Although the debate on the (im-)possibility of escape also plays a role here, several reactions to the disease are described that involved moving. Two topics will be discussed: mobility as metaphor for characterising the Black Death and strategies and practices of defence against the plague which involved physical mobility or the limitation thereof, such as processions and the closure of markets.

Sarah Büssow-Schmitz, M.A. · Martin-Luther Universität Halle-Wittenberg, Orientalisches Institut · sarah.schmitz@orientphil.uni-halle.de

Nicola Di Cosmo

Discussant
Chair, panels 1, 3

Prof. Nicola Di Cosmo, Ph.D. · Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, N.J. ·
ndc@ias.edu

Josef van Ess

Discussant
Chair, panels 2, 4

Prof. em. Dr. phil. Dr. h.c. mult. Josef van Ess · Eberhard-Karls-Universität Tübingen,
Asien-Orient-Institut · josef.van-ess@uni-tuebingen.de

Kurt Franz

panel 1 · friday, 11:15

Well off in the Wilderness? Muslim Appraisals of Bedouin Life at Times of Plague

The general difficulty of monotheisms in reconciling human despair regarding the horrors of epidemics with belief in divine justice was intersected in the Middle East by a fairly specific condition. Almost every aspect of human life revealed itself differently in the steppe/desert areas, in which nomadism was the prevalent mode of life, in contrast with the urban/rural areas characterised by sedentariness. Against the constant ecological background of vast wastelands that fringed and even separated the comparatively small-sized arable tracts of land, the coexistence of Bedouin and settled populations has been inscribed in the region's culture from early on. I shall argue that this interrelation and its perceptions recur in mediaeval Islamic concepts of epidemic.

These concepts were far from unanimous. One was based upon a pious tradition stating that there is *no* contagion; its advocates, rather, stressed divine will and stipulated immobility during epidemics. The other opinion, or strand of opinions, recognized the possibility of contagion, and it enquired into the impact of natural environments on the spread of disease, following ancient medical learning. Along with this went assumptions that wilderness itself was endowed with salubrious air and other properties that prevent miasmata, thus forming a barrier to contagion. This medical geography *in nuce* combined well with the notion that the hardness of life there was healthy and rewarded the Bedouins with robustness. Times of plague, it seems, reveal the superior resistance of Bedouins against infection and make their life appear advantageous.

I will review these appraisals with regard to pre-Ottoman periods. How do the number, geography and magnitude of pestilential epidemics that reportedly spread into steppe/desert areas compare to those that did not? Is there evidence to suggest that disease and mortality struck the Bedouins less than peasants and townspeople? How shall we, therefore, judge the consistency of each concept between factual occurrences of plague and cultural encoding – and did the Black Death of 748–749 / 1347–1349 induce a change in concepts?

Dr. phil. Kurt Franz · Martin-Luther Universität Halle-Wittenberg, Orientalisches Institut · kurt.franz@orientphil.uni-halle.de

Karl-Heinz Leven

panel 2 · friday, 16:30

Die Tollwut der Barbaren: Über wahre und falsche Ursachen von Seuchen bei byzantinischen Geschichtsschreibern

Barbarian Rabies:

True and False Cause of Epidemics as Seen by Byzantine Historians

In the year 554 a Franconian military troop in Italy under the command of Leutharis, according to the Byzantine historical writer Agathias of Myrina (Hist. 2, 3, 4 ff.), was met with a "Plague" (νόσος τις λοιμώδης). The causes of this sickness, which showed with Leutharis himself as an especially repugnant, "Rabies" type illness, were numerous: dietary mistakes, the unclean state of the air and such reasons, typical of contemporaneous medicine, were named. To this the "true" cause of the sinful and wanton behaviour of the Barbarians was added. The characteristic mix of causes of sickness, as seen in this episode of Agathias, is to be seen in the wider context of Byzantine depiction of disease. It shows that medical concepts and theological explanation structures, dependent on literary origins, were adapted. Here the process of "imitation" (μίμησις) plays a decisive role, as classically understood literary models, with their own tradition of disease depictions, reappear.

In relation to content it is also interesting that the "plague" in Byzantine literature appears in two forms. As in the example of Agathias it comes into view as a disease of warmongering soldiers – within these ranks the carriers of the sickness wander. The other form, the most common, sees the disease actually moving itself: like a conscience ridden tax collector, so Procopius of Caesarea, the disease meandered through the mainland and islands of the empire, taking its tribute in death. This personification and demonisation of the threat of plague stabilised itself as the dominant explanation structure, within which medical factors only constituted one layer.

Prof. Dr. med. Karl-Heinz Leven · Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen, Institut für Geschichte und Ethik der Medizin · karl-heinz.leven@gesch.med.uni-erlangen.de

Mischa Meier

panel 2 · friday, 15:15

Die “Justinianische Pest”: Mentalitätengeschichtliche Auswirkungen einer Pandemie

The “Justinianic Plague”: The Impact of a Pandemic on Mentalities

In the years 541/542 a deadly epidemic pervaded the entire Mediterranean region for the first time ever. It resulted in an unimaginable number of victims, especially in large urban centres such as Constantinople but also in rural areas. Not only the immense physical and material consequences of this “Justinian” plague permeated various spheres, but the experience of mass death at an, until then, unprecedented level was also of great effect. This has only been taken seriously within academic discourse during the past few years and has been incorporated into the discussion complex regarding the end of antiquity. The planned paper will provide an overview of these events and the contemporary discussion regarding them.

Prof. Dr. phil. Mischa Meier · Eberhard-Karls-Universität Tübingen, Historisches Seminar · mischa.meier@uni-tuebingen.de

Ruth I. Meserve

panel 1 · friday, 10:00

Traditional Disease Boundaries and Nomadic Space in Central Eurasia: The Search for Order

The entire field of Central Eurasian studies and various types of nomadism functioning within the region are undergoing modernization and vital change. Yet disease and medical history remain absent from many of these discussions. To begin to remedy this situation, disease boundaries in traditional nomadic societies of the region are examined. Very quickly, one recognizes that these boundaries occupy different perspectives, reflected in the local religious, economic, social and political life of the community. Sometimes carefully expressed in folk terms, language played a key role in addressing disease. Nomadic populations were intimately concerned with both human and livestock conditions, especially as deaths mounted during epidemics. As a result, a number of patterns in nomadic space emerged as responses to disease outbreaks. Preliminary pattern concepts with examples are offered.

Boundaries may be visible or invisible; concern for ancestors and future progeny exist; disease “maps” explain causes and routes of transmission. Both physical and metaphysical, these boundaries provide concepts of early transmission and “contagion” as well as treatment and “quarantine” within nomadic societies. Some of the diseases mentioned will include leprosy, tuberculosis, anthrax, smallpox, plague and foot-and-mouth disease. Materials are drawn from traditional medical texts, palaeopathology and archaeology, ethnography and anthropology, as well as the sciences (biology, geology, etc.). In many ways it will take the work of experts from many different disciplines to reconstruct the medical history of nomadic Central Eurasia.

Ruth I. Meserve, Ph.D. · Indiana University, Bloomington, Department of Central Eurasian Studies · meserver@indiana.edu

Vivian Nutton

opening lecture · thursday, 18:35

Plague, Epidemic Disease, and the Other in Classical Antiquity

Greek and Roman explanations for epidemic disease, which might include what today is known as bubonic plague, differed substantially from those for individual illness. While they often included some reference to the individual nature of plague sufferers, they also ranged much wider in their search for “causes.” Divine anger was far more frequently mentioned as an explanation for an epidemic than for an individual disease, and the most common assumption, bad air or miasma, was loaded with a variety of non-medical correlations. Often too, there was an element of “the other” involved, sometimes in ascribing the onset of an epidemic to something coming from “over there,” sometimes in blaming the outbreak on association with things foreign. The expansion of the Greek, and later the Roman, world also brought new interpretations, including demonology, and new explanations such as the notion of touch or contagion. This paper will look at this development from Homer and the Old Testament down to the 6th and 7th century.

Prof. em. Vivian Nutton, Ph.D. · University College London, Wellcome Trust Centre for the History of Medicine · ucgavnu@ucl.ac.uk

Ortrun Riha

panel 3 · saturday, 09:45

**Flieh weit und schnell:
Medizinische Empfehlungen in mittelalterlichen Pesttraktaten**

Cito, longe, tarde: Medical Recommendations in Medieval Plague Treatises

Considering the helplessness in the face of Black Death, the variety of medical treatises is remarkable. In fact, the catastrophe induced new sorts of texts and inspired physicians to strike new paths, if only on traditional ground. Old concepts were adjusted to the demanding task, and the needs of the frightened public were met in a satisfying way. Plague treatises rank among the texts most widely read by a lay public and early came to the letterpress. This is surprising, since from our point of view, the content is trivial and not helpful. Nevertheless, the texts evoked a feeling of security and made people believe to be in control of their destiny. At the end, it was not medicine that met the challenge: in the case of an epidemic, public health policy is called for.

Prof. Dr. med. Dr. phil. Ortrun Riha · Universität Leipzig, Karl-Sudhoff-Institut für Geschichte der Medizin und der Naturwissenschaften · riha@medizin.uni-leipzig.de

Arne C. Rodloff

panel 1 · friday, 09:15

Mikrobiologische, epidemiologische und immunologische Grundlagen der Pest

Microbiological, Epidemiological and Immunological Foundations of Plague

Prof. Dr. med. Arne C. Rodloff · Universität Leipzig, Institut für medizinische Mikrobiologie und Infektionsepidemiologie · acr@medizin.uni-leipzig.de

Uli Schamiloğlu

panel 4 · saturday, 14:45

The Black Death and the Transformation in the Nomadic-Sedentary Relationship in Western Eurasia in the 13th to 16th Centuries

The arrival of the Black Death in the mid-14th century had profound consequences for the inhabitants of Western Eurasia. While there are extensive reports in the chronicles for the neighboring regions inhabited by Slavic populations, the written records describing events in the Golden Horde itself are far more limited in scope. Nevertheless, if one considers the full range of consequences of the Black Death, there emerges a picture of profound upheaval in political, social, economic, cultural, and religious life in Western Eurasia.

This paper focuses on certain ethno-linguistic and demographic transformations. The evidence points to the collapse of the Golden Horde as a state and a decline in the newly-established urban centers. One can also argue for a decline in the traditional sedentary populations of the Middle Volga region, including the decline or disappearance of traditional ethno-linguistic communities. In traditional sedentary regions the political vacuum left by the collapse of centralized states was filled by the much smaller khanates of the “Later Golden Horde” period (15th–16th/18th centuries). In the nomadic regions, beginning in the second half of the 14th century, one sees a rise in the size and influence of the nomadic component, which in Western Eurasia meant the Kipchak Turkic nomads. With the collapse of the Golden Horde as a centralized state we see the sudden rise in nomadic confederations such as the Great Horde, the Özbeks (Shibanids), the Noğay Horde, and the Kazakh Hordes.

This paper argues that the nomadic populations of Western Eurasia did not suffer the same demographic decline from bubonic plague as the sedentary populations. For this reason, they became politically more significant relative to sedentary states such as the Khanate of Kazan, which no doubt continued to suffer from waves of plague through the 15th century. It also argues that this phenomenon underlies the ethno-linguistic Kipchakization of sedentary regions throughout Western Eurasia beginning in the late 14th to early 15th centuries.

Prof. Uli Schamiloğlu, Ph.D. · University of Wisconsin, Madison, Department of Languages and Cultures of Asia · uschamil@wisc.edu

Charlotte Schubert

panel 2 · saturday, 14:30

Griechen, Nomaden und Seuchen: Eine verlorene Spur?

Greeks, Nomads and Epidemics: A Lost Trace?

The ancient nomad image is a narrative pattern, which, in its structure, is based upon the dichotomy of settled and nomadic peoples. Behind it lies the assumption that human life forms are basically bipolar, either nomadic or settled. Various representational practises, as well as the interchanging between reality and the “social construction of reality” mark the history of the construction of this dichotomy in antiquity. Ancient descriptions of epidemics do not allow for a correlation with nomads; at least there exists no explicit depiction of this type in antique literature. Yet using the example of the communication of one of the most famous epidemic cases in antiquity, the so-called plague at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War (430 B.C.), it can be shown that the image of the nomad had anchored itself within the canon of Greek self representation.

Prof. Dr. phil. Charlotte Schubert · Universität Leipzig, Historisches Seminar · schubert@rz.uni-leipzig.de

Boaz Shoshan

panel 3 · saturday, 11:45

Fellahin and Bedouin: The Aftermath of the Black Death in Egypt

The plague cycles that ensued in the mid 14th century rendered precarious the sedentary structure confronting Bedouin population in Egyptian lands. Drastically reduced agricultural labor was unable to sustain irrigation systems and a significant result was a stream of peasant migration. Rural depopulation coincided with an increasing Bedouin pressure, the penetration of pastoralists and the increase of wasteland, especially in Upper Egypt. In the 1380s, as the Mamluk sultanate was no longer able to maintain sufficient forces to impose its authority, a group of Hawwara Berbers was installed in the Asyut region to counter Bedouins.

Elsewhere in Egypt the fragile rural-pastoral balance was also under stress. In the last decades of the 15th century a large number of expeditions were directed against the Bedouins in Lower Egypt. In 872/1468 Ibn Taghri Birdi stated that never have Bedouin ravages intensified as in these days and they infested the lower provinces. His general statement that the Bedouins confiscated *iqtas* in the Buhayra coincides with early Ottoman land registers revealing the significant migration of peasants and the loss of about 20 per cent of *iqtas* to Bedouin hands.

This process of so-called bedouinization has to be fine-tuned, however, in the light of Nicolas Michel's important research of the Ottoman archival material. It reveals that about 1528 Bedouin shaykhs in the Buhayra were involved in positive initiatives toward land reclamation. The Qanunname of 1525 assigns to Bedouin shaykhs a status equal to that of provincial inspectors. These recently discovered data point out an intriguing picture where collective Bedouin ravages can be juxtaposed to individual, financially motivated investments in agriculture.

Prof. Boaz Shoshan, Ph.D. · Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Beer-Sheva, Department of General History and Department of Middle East Studies · boazsh@bgu.ac.il

