

Origins of Black Death discovered

Studying ancient DNA samples, a team of researchers has traced the origin of the infamous pandemic to central Asia in the late 1330s



■ DNA taken from teeth of seven skeletons in burial sites in modern-day Kyrgyzstan reveals traces of plague bacterium, *Yersinia pestis*

Genomes from teeth represent single strain of disease from which many versions evolved

Yersinia pestis

SPREAD OF BLACK DEATH

Bubonic plague swept across Europe, Middle East and northern Africa, killing up to 60% of population



Spread by maritime routes

Modern borders shown for reference



Carried from Asia in 1346

■ Two cemeteries, at Kara-Djigach and Burana, found to have disproportionately high number of burials from 1338 to 1339, with some tombstones – such as that of “the believer Sanmaq” (right) – giving cause of death as “pestilence”

