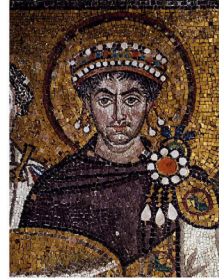


Contemporary emperors of the Plague?



Mihirakula (c. 515-540)



Justinian (527-565)

© M. Alram (Mihirakula), Wikipedia (Justinian)

LECTURE

## WAS THE HEPHTALITE EMPIRE THE CRADLE OF ,JUSTINIAN'S PLAGUE'?

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The „Plague of Justinian“, the first pandemic in recorded history which can really be called „the plague“, swept the whole of the Mediterranean and western Europe between 541 and at least 544, with replicas until 750, and according to some modern estimates it might have killed as many as the Black Death six centuries later.

While there is now an agreement that the historical reservoir of the bacillus *Yersinia pestis* throughout the centuries was among rodents around the Tianshan (Kirghizistan, southeast Kazakhstan, northern Xinjiang), it appears less and less probable that Justinian's Plague took the same continental route as the Black Death. Its first documented outburst was in the harbours at the northern end of the Red Sea. On the basis of this fact, some recent research postulates a longtime intermediary reservoir in Eastern Africa, while others (Kyle Harper, Marcel Keller, Gilles Bransbourg) are in favour of a transportation from the Western Indian harbours. In this version, which I share, the question remains of the link between these regions and the Upper Asian reservoir. This paper purports to show that this link existed and that it was the eastern part of the Hephthalite empire, which in c. 500-540 put in regular contact western India and the northern Tarim.

