

Charles F. Briggs: *The Body Broken: Medieval Europe 1300–1520*. Routledge, 2011, p. 8.

But what explains the demographic decline which historians agree affected much of western and Mediterranean Europe beginning in the second decade of the fourteenth century? The first serious attempt to explain this 'Crisis of the Early Fourteenth Century' came from Michael Postan, who posited an increased death rate, which he called a Malthusian 'positive check', brought on by population growth exceeding food supply. Indeed not only did the food supply cease to keep up with demographic increase, owing to there being no more land to put under the plough, it in fact started to shrink on account of the exhaustion of the poor soils of 'marginal lands'. The problem with this 'neo-Malthusian' explanation is that although it rightly identifies the fact of population saturation at the end of the thirteenth century, it does not account for the situation in those parts of Europe that were under-populated, nor does it identify the underlying social reasons for why population outstripped production. Nor, for that matter, is there certain evidence for a higher mortality rate in the two or three decades prior to the Great Famine of the 1310s. The same holds true for the supposed crisis of marginal lands, for which, it turns out, there is no really conclusive evidence. Perhaps, then, the problem was social, owing to the grossly unequal power relations of lord and villein on the medieval manor...

1. V čem je hlavní potíže zmíněného vysvětlení demografického poklesu?
2. Co bylo bráno jako Malthusovská „pozitivní zábrana“?
3. K čemu mělo přispět vyčerpání „málo úrodné půdy“?