The Crises of the 17th Century: Henry Kamen, *The Iron Age: 17th C. Europe*

**CLIMATE:** studied by glacial ice core samples and dendroclimatology (tree rings)

"Little Ice Age" approximately 1400-1800, following the "Medieval Warm" 1100-1400

Result: Subsistence crises, famines due to colder temperatures: 1590's, 1630, 1659-62

![Graph: Estimated European Population](image)


**DEMOGRAPHICS** (study of populations):

14th C. Black Plague: endemic in Europe 1348-1660's
   population loss of up to 2/3 of urban populations in 14-15th C.
16th C. population rise begins, but not until 1600 do populations reach levels of 1300

Prices: differential changes — 16th C. inflation due to Spanish gold & silver declines in 17th C.
   wages: decrease due to population increase, while land, rent, food increase in price

**MALTHUSIAN CRISIS:** described by Thomas Malthus 1789 *Essay on Principle of Population*:
   population increase outruns food production, resulting in
demographic scissors," or increase in the death rate.
17th C. population stagnant or declining, 1620-1670 period of deflation (prices fall), why?

**EUROPEAN MARRIAGE PATTERN**
unique demographic pattern found in studies of Europe west of Trieste/St. Petersburg line
later ages of marriage; 15-20% of population never marries (traditionally only 5%)
result: first recorded decline in European birth rate as means of population control
evidence of birth control (abstinence, coitus interruptus):
   see letters of Madame de Sévigné, 17th C. French aristocrat (over)

**POLITICAL CRISSES:**

**GERMANY:** Thirty Years War 1618-1648

**ENGLAND:** English Civil War 1640-1660 and Revolution of 1688

**FRANCE:** The Fronde 1648-1653

**SPAIN:** decline of Hapsburg power, revolt of the Netherlands, rise of Dutch Republic
   1640's revolts in Portugal, Catalonia, Naples