

## **Four Experiments in British Economic History: Evidence from a Unified Growth Model**

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### **Abstract:**

Recent work on the long-run growth patterns of the British economy suggests that there existed a slow-growth trend before the Industrial Revolution. This paper constructs a unified growth model to revisit British economic history. The model extends the canonical model of Unified Growth Theory with mortality crises since this theory puts a strong emphasis on a Post-Malthusian regime during which living standards exhibit slowly accelerating growth. The benchmark analysis rigorously calibrates the size and persistence of mortality shocks and some other structural parameters of the extended model, and it successfully identifies a Post-Malthusian regime for England. The paper then implements four counterfactual experiments (i) on the sources of preindustrial prosperity, (ii) on the long-run effects of the Black Death, (iii) on the nature of technological progress in preindustrial era, and (iv) on the role of initial demographic and technological conditions. Results show that (i) both productivity growth and the Black Death account for preindustrial prosperity in Britain, (ii) the persistence of the Black Death shock is more important than its size, (iii) the scale effect of population dominates the nursing effect on human capital in determining preindustrial productivity growth, and (iv) the initial level of population is more important in determining long-run outcomes than the initial productivity level.

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