

PEOPLE  
PLACES

DOCUMENTARY  
30 MIN.

**VERSIONS**

English, German, Spanish  
(03 x 30 min.)

**RIGHTS**

Worldwide, VOD, Mobile

**ORDER NUMBER**

00 0698-00 0700



## The Hanseatic League

The German Hansa started out as a union of North German merchants and was transformed in the middle of the 14th century into a league of mercantile towns. Our series describes the economic system of the Hanseatic League, traces its rise and decline, and asks whether the Hansa concept is relevant today in the light of the opening up of Europe's internal market.

### **The Adventure of Maritime Trade in the Late Middle Ages | 00 0698**

In its heyday the Hanseatic League had some 200 seaboard and inland towns belonging to it. For all its size and power, however, over its almost 500 year history, the Hansa never acquired sovereignty. Its strength was based solely on the will to dominate trade in Northern Europe. The Hansa would continue to exist – thus the simple mercantile principle – as long as it was economically useful to its individual members. The history of the Hansa starts with the hazardous expeditions of the merchants and their attempt to limit the risks of trade by drawing up contracts and establishing settlements. The history of the Hansa is also the history of a new type of ship. Without the cog, the Hanseatic League would never have become so successful.

### **The Travels of Hildebrand Veccinghusen | 00 0699**

With the help of account books, business correspondence and a few private letters, we can follow the trade routes and the movement of goods within the Hanseatic League. Likewise, this unique, almost completely preserved written record provides a remarkable insight into the everyday life of a typical merchant's family towards the end of the Middle Ages. The second part of our series on the German Hansa traces the life and travels of Hildebrand Veccinghusen, a successful businessman, who landed in the debtors' prison as a result of trading in risky merchandise. His life story puts the myth of the fabulously wealthy Hansa merchant into proper perspective.

### **Decline into Legend | 00 0700**

It wasn't until it was beginning to break apart that the union of Hansa towns appointed a joint managing director whose job it was to consolidate the contracts that still existed and whatever commitments and responsibilities continued to be shared. The move came too late. The Hansa towns had long ceased to be united – their economic interests were too far apart. From outside, too, the League came under political pressure. Those essential guarantors of flourishing trade, a secure peace and stable social conditions, had been dealt a serious blow. The Hansa was too conservative: instead of meeting the new challenges, it insisted – in vain – on retaining its old privileges. Its influence diminished, but it left behind an extraordinarily rich cultural heritage. The last part of our series describes the economic system of the Hanseatic League, traces its decline and asks whether the Hansa idea is relevant today in the light of the opening up of Europe's internal markets.