

Ardian Muhaj

When the “peripheries” take over the role of the centre

In this paper we will analyse the process of decentralization that changed the role of the French territories in the network of trade routes of the medieval Europe. Because of the Hundred Years War and of the fact it was the main battlefield of this war, France lost its centrality in the trade routes. Contrary to some important views, European commerce flourished in the late Middle Ages, not through the old traditional routes that led to France (Champagne), but instead through new routes, geographically and traditionally peripheral that connected the Mediterranean with the Baltic and the North Sea. These new routes that flourished during the period of the de-centrality of France were to be found eastward beyond the Alps and westward beyond the Pyrenees. This decentralization led to the economic development of the “peripheries” such as Valencia, Portugal, Holland, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, Swiss confederation and southern Germany and to the economic decline of the “centres”, such as France, Flanders, Genova, and Florence. Consequently, the process of recentralization of the continental trade routes after the end of the Hundred Years War happened in a very different economic landscape and geography.