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Abstracts

ROBERTO BELLOSTA, I briganti e le opportunità della guerra. Piccola storia criminale di due fuorilegge valesiani del Quattrocento

The recent historical production concerning the issue of crime and banditry in Italy towards the end of the Middle Age and the beginning of the Modern Age has often brought the foreground the link existing between war and the spreading of crime. However, war is here essentially regarded as a key factor responsible for the social and economic conditions which can bring about a rise in the crime rate. The story related in these pages of the two outlaws, living and acting between Piedmont and Lombardy in the XVth century, lends support to this theory, but it also shows war could offer other advantages and opportunities to criminals. In fact war was above all a primary cause of unrest and instability and, therefore, it could allow criminals a greater freedom of action and assure them ample guarantee of impunity, especially in those places where they were used to changing out their business: those were rugged fringe areas along the borders where the power of the State was weak and often unable to control the territory and keep order.

What is more, in wartime bandits were given the chance to be recruited as saboteurs or infiltrators beyond enemy lines. This opportunity was well-known too and fully exploited by the bandits who, looking for these opportunities war could offer to them, in peace time often set out and moved to places where there were conflicts going on. And this is precisely what the two protagonists of this story did.