

“Several *homini da bene* does not only satisfy of bread and wine.”

The soldiers’ veteran identity in the Italian Wars, 1494-1559

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### **Abstract**

The paper aims to demonstrate that the claims of better terms of service during the Italian Wars (1494-1559) were the consequence of the soldiers’ development of a veteran identity. The Italian Wars were the first conflict that lasted many years, during which the government developed standing armies and, consequently, the experienced soldiers were fully aware of being veterans respect than newly recruits. Aware of their military skills, these soldiers pretended better terms of service (*i.e.* higher wages) by their employers. If their claims were refused, the soldiers would have expressed their protest in violent riots such as mutinies. Idan Sherer has suggested that the Spaniards’ mutinies in the Italian Wars were due to the awareness of their professionalisation. Despite this, scholars have not explored the link between the veteran identity and the claims of better terms of service. This paper would fill this critical gap, permitting a better understanding of the development of the veteran identity during the Italian Wars.

The paper considers the Bartolomeo Peretti’s standing mercenary company, which was before an infantry company (1526-37) and then a galley squadron (1537-44) at the papal service having the rank of admiral. Peretti belonged one of the best Italian veterans standing unit in the first half of the sixteenth century. In his letters, Bartolomeo Peretti always remarked the point that his soldiers were mostly *homini da bene* – the Italian expression referred to veterans. The high percentage of veterans conferred to Peretti’s company an additional value, permitting him to claim better terms of service respect those pretended by inexperienced units. The paper bases on the sources preserved in the state archives of Roma and Siena. These sources permitted to reconstruct the veteran identity of the Peretti’s unit, and the claims made by them when he had to negotiate the terms of service.

### **Keywords**

Italian Wars, Mercenaries, Veterans, Bartolomeo Peretti, Identity

### **Short bio**

Jacopo Pessina (PhD, 2017) is *cultore della materia* (teaching assistant) in early modern history at the University of Pisa. He is specialised on the military history of the early modern era; his research topics are the military organisations of the Italian states in the Renaissance, the military tactics and technologies in early modern Europe. Among his recent works: *The military organisation of the Sienese Republic, 1524-1555* (Pisa, forthcoming 2021); *An Amphibious Special Operation: The Night Attack on Porto Ercoletto, Tuscany, 2 June 1555* (in Timothy Heck, Brett A. Friedman (eds.), *On Contested Shores. The Evolving Role of Amphibious Operations in the History of Warfare*, Quantic, Marine Corps University Press, in corso di stampa); «Rather the wealth to support their status than their quality as soldiers». *The Social Position of the Officers in Lucca’s ordinanze della Montagna, 1550-1600* (in G. Theotokis, A. Yildiz (eds.), *A Military History of the Mediterranean Sea – Aspects of War, Diplomacy and Military Elites*, Leiden-Boston, Brill Publishing, 2018, pp. 371-96).