BOOK REVIEWS

Agnius Urbanavičius, **Vilniaus naujieji miestiečiai 1661-1795 m.** [New Citizens of Vilnius] (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 2005). Pp. 383. ISBN 9986-23-098-5

In his study of new citizens of Vilnius between 1663 and 1795 Agnius Urbanavičius has dealt with a subject, which is of great academic interest, especially from the point of view of research into migration, urbanisation processes and the organisation of cities and their economies in the early modern period. The term ‘new citizens of Vilnius’ refers to persons who swore an oath of allegiance to the city authorities and thereby obtained civic status.¹ Dr Urbanavičius set himself the main aim of investigating the number and professional composition of this group as well as the geographical and social origins of its members (pp. 14-15).

Interest in the topic of accession to civic rights was shown by the inter-war Polish scholars, Henryk and Maria Łowmiański, who gathered up a large amount of relevant data. However, the fate of the material they accumulated remains a mystery (p.18). Several decades later the issue of new citizens was touched upon once more by Aivas Ragauskas.² The interesting results he obtained confirmed the need for a general study of this problem within a broad chronological framework.

For his research Urbanavičius selected a period of almost 150 years, which has allowed him to observe long-term trends in migration to the Lithuanian capital and changes within the group of new citizens (as regards their number and professions, and so forth). The starting date of the book is the liberation of the city of Vilnius from several years of Muscovite occupation (1655-1661).³ This liberation allowed the resumption of normal activities on the part of the city fathers, which, according to the author, probably took place from 1663 (p. 39).⁴ From that time too there is sufficient

¹ In other words these persons were admitted to the burgher estate in Vilnius. In primary and secondary sources they are referred to as persons admitted to civic rights. The definition in this book (p. 12) stresses the moment when the oath was sworn.

² A. Ragauskas, *Vilniaus miesto valdantysis elitas XVII a. antrojoje pusėje (1662-1702)* (Vilnius, 2002).

³ The city itself was liberated in July 1660, but the Muscovite garrison held out in the Upper Castle until the end of November 1661.

⁴ On the subject of the earlier fate of the Vilnius City Council – E. Meilus, ‘Życie codzienne w Wilnie w czasie okupacji moskiewskiej 1655-1661’, *Litwa w epoce Wazów* ed. W. Kriegerseisen, A. Rachuba (Warsaw, 2006), p. 143.

source material to examine this issue. Just as 1661 was chosen as an obvious starting date for the study, so the final date, 1795, forms a natural caesura, marking as it does the Final Partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

The study consists of an introduction, five chapters and a conclusion. Chapter One deals with 'the circumstances and conditions for the swearing of civic oaths in Vilnius', while the second section covers changes in the number of new citizens and the factors that influenced the tempo and intensity of migration to Vilnius, and the main migratory tendencies. The next chapter analyses data concerning the professions of the newcomers, and the changes, which took place in the city's professional make-up. In the fourth and fifth chapters the author deals with the geographic and social origins of the new citizens. The study finishes with the presentation of primary and secondary sources used by the author and a list of tables and diagrams, indices of people and places and a summary in English.

Direct studies of this topic are still rather few and far between and so the author found much inspiration from studies of new citizens in other European countries. These studies provided him with comparative material too. The main basis of this foreign research comprises rich source material, which makes up mainly for the lacunae in Vilnius civic records, especially where the city council is concerned.⁵ Separate records were not kept in Vilnius for admission to civic rights. The relevant data was included in various types of council records, a circumstance, which on the one hand complicated research, while on the other created opportunities for additional means of checking the record.

Given the wealth of observations made in this book, we will draw attention to only a few of its considerations and conclusions. In the first chapter we come across, among other things, a very instructive account of how new citizens were admitted to civic rights. The author presents the oath of allegiance made by candidates to the city authorities, showing where and to whom the oath was given (always in the town hall – pp. 58-59), describing the institution of sponsors, guaranteeing the suitability of candidates, and explaining which days of the week were selected most often for the ceremony.

Adult male residents of the city could apply for civic rights; they had to be free, born in wedlock and of exemplary behaviour. There were also additional demands made of craftsmen and merchants (pp. 64-65). Orthodox and Protestant residents of Vilnius also had the same opportunities, formally, to apply for civic rights as Catholics had, but in practice these were not recognised on many an occasion (pp. 69-70). The conditions regarding the

⁵ The presentation of sources provided in the Introduction is a specialist study of great value for every historian of Vilnius in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

candidates' social status were not clearly defined.⁶ They were subject to certain changes, as can be seen from the example of petty retail traders (hucksters). From the end of the seventeenth century such men were admitted to civic status, despite the fact that this had been forbidden by a decree of King Władysław IV in 1646 (pp. 68-69, 161).

As the author shows, admission to civic rights was sought in general by merchants and craftsmen residing under the city's jurisdiction. In most guilds it was set as a condition for gaining the status of master but the practice was varied. Civic rights were obtained before or after a craftsman became a master (p. 86). Sometimes craftsmen who were not subject to the magistrate's jurisdiction would be admitted as guild masters. On this basis I concluded that they had full rights to take part in guild life (including the right to hold office within the guild) without becoming citizens in the legal sense.⁷ However, this theory does not hold water, given the research of A. Urbanavičius. Indeed in practice it transpired that masters and even guild elders failed to take the oath of civic citizenship but such behaviour was considered to be wrong. This issue calls for further research for we may suppose that it was accepted for non-citizens of Vilnius to hold office within the guilds.⁸

In chapter two, when describing the scale, intensity and tempo of migration to Vilnius, the author draws attention to the swift growth of this phenomenon after the destruction suffered during the mid-seventeenth century and at the end of the eighteenth century and its deep decline in the period 1685-1715. Various factors are mentioned (political, economic and ecological) which had an effect on these fluctuations, meaning that their significance was not always the same. For example, the wars and associated natural disasters (plague and famine) which led to falls in population, may have had a braking effect on migration, but on the other hand, when calamities drove people from their native homes, they must have driven these displaced people to settle in new places. However, in the case of migration to Vilnius we must take account of the negative effect of wars. It is not possible to generalise from observations based on data concerning freemen of the city, when they made up only part of the newcomers to Vilnius.⁹ Jews formed a

⁶ Dominant among them were craftsmen and merchants. We may suppose that both types of candidates were required to exhibit their ability to work independently.

⁷ J. Jurkiewicz, 'Wybory starszych rocznych w cechach wileńskich (XVI-XVIII w.)', *Praeities pēdsakiais*, ed. E. Rimša et al. (Vilnius, 2007), p. 173.

⁸ This is the case, perhaps, with the master mason Jerzy Ertli. He gained civic rights on Nov. 29 1672 but he must have been an elder of the Masons' and Carpenters' Guild in Vilnius already in 1655 – V. Drema, 'Jerzy Ertli – budowniczy wileński', *Biuletyn Historii Sztuk*, 1980, Nr 2, p. 141.

⁹ It has not been discovered so far what part new citizens formed of the newcomer population in general. It is also unknown what proportion of the population of Vilnius belonged to the burgher estate (p. 14).

large part of the population flowing into Vilnius (it is thought that between the mid-seventeenth century and the mid-eighteenth century their number rose to form from around 10 per cent of the city's population to around 30 per cent). These people were not granted civic rights.

The author has shown in his third chapter that throughout the period under examination the largest proportion of new citizens were craftsmen, while the next largest section comprised merchants and hucksters. The proportion between the groups was subject to fluctuation. For example, in the second half of the eighteenth century the number of merchants among the newcomers decreased, while the number of craftsmen rose. This reflects the decline in trade in Vilnius in that period and a rise in its importance as a centre of manufacture (p. 172). The reasons for these changes require further research. I suppose that one of the reasons for this was the weakening of the intermediary role of Lithuanian merchants in the exchange of trade between Russia and Western Europe as a result of the former's gaining access to the Baltic Sea after the Northern War of 1700-1721.

The author stresses the significance of the Lithuanian capital as an important manufacturing area in Central-Eastern Europe and he considers that the case of Vilnius does not confirm the theory that a low proportion of craftsmen among the urban population was typical of large towns and cities (pp. 158, 160).

When researching the professional composition of the new citizens Urbanavičius shows that leather workers and food producers (processors) dominated among the craftsmen (p. 175). From this fact and data concerning the number of general guilds in Vilnius we come to the conclusion that one of the real factors governing the tempo of migration was the chance to obtain work in the city (p. 196).

Extraordinarily interesting results have emerged from the author's study of the geographical origins of new citizens (chapter four). The table on pages 205-210 includes 61 toponyms (names of countries and regions), which provide an interesting insight into the terminology used in Vilnius for describing particular territories and nationalities.

The calculations made on p. 216 show that among the general number of new citizens (4,353 men) newcomers from lands within the Grand Duchy of Lithuania dominated (3,139 men or 72 per cent of the total). The next most numerous groups came from the Kingdom of Poland (7.7 per cent), Germany (that is, the Holy Roman Empire outside Habsburg dominion – 7 per cent), and Ducal (Eastern) Prussia (5.8 per cent). The author explains the immigration from German territories by, *inter alia*, the personal union between the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Saxony. Among 334 arrivals from the Kingdom of Poland almost one third came from Royal Prussia (p. 218).¹⁰

¹⁰ Among the immigrants from Poland the author also mentions citizens from Ukraine (16) and Great Poland (35).

This is the first study to provide an authoritative account of the scale of the influx of Polish and German craftsmen and merchants to Vilnius. Historians, especially those of earlier generations, have been wont often to exaggerate the number of such immigrants. It seems that newcomers from Poland and Germany together formed less than fifteen per cent of the total of Vilnius' new citizens.¹¹ The results of this research confirm the view prevalent among Lithuanian and Polish historians (Henryk Łowmiański, Juliusz Bardach) that the amount of migration from Poland to the lands of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania did not have a deciding influence on changes in ethnic relations there or the increasing use of Polish by the population of Vilnius.

While researching migration processes the author also paid attention to the number of new arrivals in Polish towns (Warsaw, Lwów, Poznań) from the GDL. This was not large (within 1-2 per cent), but it appears premature to conclude that links between towns in the GDL and Poland were weak (p. 219).

The majority of new citizens hailing from the Grand Duchy's Lithuanian and Belarusian territories were natives of the Vilnius (55.7 per cent), Trakai (14.5 per cent) and Novgorodok (9.2 per cent) palatinates. This shows that it was easier for those dwelling near the city to settle in Vilnius. However, this was not an absolutely deciding factor. The relatively small number of new citizens from nearby Žemaitija (4.3 per cent) can be explained by the high level of urbanisation in that duchy as well as the fact that migration from the area was also directed towards Prussia (pp. 295-296).

The last chapter of the book is devoted to the social origins of Vilnius' new citizens from the Grand Duchy. The real significance for the results of this research lies with the author's choice of four groups for his analysis: persons from cities and towns enjoying Magdeburg Law; persons from smaller towns; natives of villages (peasants); and members of the gentry. These groupings reflect the state of research on society within the Grand Duchy and best suit the aims of this study. Most newcomers from the Lithuanian and Belarusian lands of the Grand Duchy were from small towns (42.7 per cent) and villages (around 36 per cent). The smallest group comprised members of the gentry (1.1 per cent of the total number of new citizens) but the very fact that gentlemen sought civic rights as burghers is notable.¹²

As the author distinguishes groups among the new citizenry, which differed according to profession, or geographic or social origin, he pays

¹¹ Newcomers from Poland, the Holy Roman Empire and Eastern Prussia all told made up around 20 per cent of new citizens. Among them were (alongside Poles and Germans) Lithuanians and Mazurians (from Eastern Prussia) and Ruthenians (from Crown Ruthenia).

¹² Of 48 gentlemen admitted to civic rights in Vilnius between 1661 and 1795 the great majority (as many as 40) were so admitted after 1715 (p. 331).

most attention to the largest groups. Among those defined basically according to their professional activities he gives most detail about craftsmen, while the merchants and hucksters, whom he treats in his tables of statistics as one group, are dealt with more superficially. It may be that shortages of source material did not allow him to distinguish these persons more clearly. The book lacks data on the small number of journeymen who were granted civic rights. It would be interesting to know what determined their social advancement as citizens. Given the wealth of statistical material presented in this book, it was not possible for the fates of individual new citizens to be examined in detail. Certainly, the presentation of specific examples could throw more light on the problems dealt with in this study.

The considerations and conclusions presented in this study are documented very carefully and represent a significant contribution to our knowledge of the history of Vilnius. They also have more general significance for comparative studies of migration and urbanisation not only within the Grand Duchy of Lithuania but also other European countries. The whole work has a pioneering character, which in connection with its other assets such as the broad presentation of source material, rich contents and all-round understanding of the subject and precise analysis, places it among the ranks of important achievements in contemporary Lithuanian historical scholarship.

While not knowing what the author's plans are for his future work, we must cherish the hope that he will wish to publish the sources with which he is so familiar regarding the admission of new citizens in Vilnius. Such an edition, which was planned at one time by Henryk and Maria Łowmiański, would have great significance for Lithuanian history and especially for the further development of studies of the Lithuanian capital's past.

Jan Jurkiewicz