INTRODUCTION

A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON SCOTTISH MIGRATION TO THE POLISH-LITHUANIAN COMMONWEALTH IN THE SIXTEENTH TO THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

Polonia Est nowa Babilonia: Ciganorum, Germanorum, Armenorum et Scotorum colonia.

(Latin: Poland is like a new Babylon, a colony of Gypsies, Germans, Armenians and Scots.)

During the last few decades, a significant amount of scholarly and popular work has been carried out on migration. The latest research has shown that there was a lot more migration in the early modern period (1500–1800) than once thought. It used to be claimed, and sometimes still is, that few people left their towns and villages, let alone their kingdoms, to seek a better fortune abroad. Yet recent studies have shown that throughout the period there was a continuous voluntary and involuntary movement of people. Among the voluntary migrants were those who were motivated by economic aspirations, the desire to improve their livelihood, extend their skills, advance their careers and/or to maximize returns on their investments. The involuntary migration was generally prompted directly or indirectly by persecution, threats of violence and/or deprivation, including poverty. For some individuals the migratory movement was only temporary. Yet in many cases—whether intended or otherwise—migration meant permanent relocation. While some emigrants left their ‘homes’ to move to neighbouring towns or villages, others were making journeys to locations distant geographically and culturally.

Very prominent among these ‘international’ migrations was the movement of Scottish emigrants, exiles and sojourners to continental Europe:

---

to France, to the Low Countries, to Scandinavia, to the Baltic provinces, and to Poland-Lithuania.

The flow of Scots abroad has been the subject of a number of important studies. The most influential discussions concentrated on the military migrations, and in particular the Scottish involvement during the Thirty Years’ War. Using a variety of primary sources—official government and military records, private memoirs and letters—historians established a much more detailed picture of the scale and the chronology of the Scottish involvement in the particular armies than has previously been available.

Of prime importance to the success of this study was the groundbreaking research undertaken by Murdoch and Grosjean, who used an online database to collect and examine extensive bibliographical and prosopographical material. Their pioneering work prompted a re-examination of the role and the significance of Scottish military involvement in the formation of diplomatic contacts and alliances in Northern Europe, specifically between Scotland and Denmark–Norway, and an analogous, but ‘unofficial alliance’ between Scotland and Sweden. The studies of military migration also raised questions about concepts of national identity, the complex relationship of expatriate Scottish mercenaries to their homeland, and the relations between the Scots and their hosts. By placing the

---


6 Apart from the studies mentioned earlier dealing with the Scottish military presence in Denmark–Norway and Sweden by Murdoch and Grosjean, there are several publications outlining the Scottish military experience in France and in the Low Countries: M. Francesque, Les Écossais en France, les Français en Écosse, (London: 1862); G. Gardner, The Scottish Exile Community in the Netherlands, 1660–1690 (East Linton: 2004); M. Glozier, Scottish Soldiers in France in the Reign of the Sun King: Nursery for Men of Honour (Leiden: