CHAPTER FIVE

THE LIFE OF SCOTTISH MIGRANTS IN POLAND-LITHUANIA

If Scots who migrated to the Commonwealth constituted a diverse group, they had one thing in common: the decision to leave their homeland brought them to an entirely different cultural environment to which they had to adapt.

They had also to deal with some hostility from the host community. For example, on 11 November 1569 the guild of merchants of Prussia presented a petition to the Duke of Prussia. The merchants complained that Scots had affected their business. Scots were bringing over and selling goods to people who lived in rural areas, they explained, and the customers were not coming to towns to buy. The guild of merchants wrote that Scots were disobeying orders issued as far back as 1545. They accused Scots of illegally exporting “beaver and marten skins and amber” from Prussia to Lublin in the Crown. Moreover, Scots were accused of selling “false (adulterated) ware” such as pepper, saffron, and silk spoilt by water. The indictment also included a list of accusations: “Let alone that they are cheats... bribing the custom officers and it is to be feared, acting as spies to betray the contry [sic].”

Indeed it was against the rules of the guilds to sell from house to house or to sell on commission, while the trade in amber and furs was supposed to be a monopoly of the government of Ducal Prussia.1 Thus the merchant guilds protecting the interests of their own members became hostile towards competitors, especially Scottish hucksters, as well as wealthier Scots trading outside the guilds. An important action was the lawsuit of the cutler guild of Cracow against the ‘cunning’ Scots who “did not content themselves with one shop but had several at each end of the town, and would moreover send a boy to sell their wares from house to house”.2 Merchant confraternities and craft guilds also accused Scots of evading taxes, smuggling and carrying on their business illegally, that is, keeping unlicensed shops or lodgings in their homes. These accusations were not groundless. It has been established that, for example in Gdańsk,

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1 SIG, 34.
2 Ibid.
around 1650, five Scots were earning money by keeping illegal hospices.\(^3\) Thus, in the constitution of 1562 Scottish peddlers were named, along with Italians and other unidentified foreign merchants, as traders whose activities harmed the local economy and the cities of the Polish Crown. Those without civil rights were banned from peddling their wares both in the cities and in the countryside.\(^4\)

The constitution of 1562 was expanded in 1565 with additional terms. All foreign traders, including Scots who were already admitted to civic rights, were asked to behave like the locals, that is, to swear alliance to the local authorities, hold burgher rights in only one city and uphold the law. In addition, they were asked not to use any letters of free passage and, under penalty of confiscation of their wares, warned not to illegally send abroad locally acquired goods. Local authorities were given the power to enforce the laws.\(^5\) Consequently, some town and city councils placed obstacles and limitations on Scots and other foreign traders roaming the countryside peddling their wares. In Poznań in 1567 the council banished from the city all Scots who did not own real estate there.\(^6\) King Zygmunt August, in a privilege of 1568 granted to the stall-keepers guild of Bydgoszcz, forbade Scottish peddlers to purchase real estate within the city walls. This prohibition was later echoed in the statute of the guild. However, its members declared that the guild was open to Poles, Italians, Czechs, Scots and others, as long as they promised to abandon peddling.\(^7\) Neither Scots nor Jews were entitled to settle in Toruń, and those who lived temporarily in the suburbs were in 1634 explicitly forbidden from peddling.\(^8\) In Kościan Scots were refused the right even to sojourn in the city.\(^9\)

For some locals that was still not enough. The anonymous author of “Dyszkurs o pomnożeniu miast w Polszcze” (A discourse on increasing Polish cities) argued that foreigners without \textit{ius civitatis} or the desire to

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\(^{3\text{M. Bogucka, “Obcy kupcy osiedli w Gdańsku w pierwszej połowie XVII w.,” Zapiski Historyczne 37, no. 2 (1972): 68.}}\)

\(^{4\text{VL II, 20, no. 61.}}\)

\(^{5\text{VL II, 51, no. 65.}}\)

\(^{6\text{PRSP, xiii.}}\)

\(^{7\text{Z. Guldon and R. Kabaciński, Szkice z dziejów dawnej Bydgoszczy XVI–XVIII wiek (Bydgoszcz: 1975), 96–97.}}\)

\(^{8\text{W. Kowalski, “The placement of urbanised Scots in the Polish Crown during the sixteenth and seventh centuries,” in A. Grosjean and S. Murdoch, eds., Scottish Communities Abroad in the Early Modern Period (Leiden: 2005), 57.}}\)