Review

P. Bajer, *Scots in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, 16th-18th Centuries: The Formation and Disappearance of an Ethnic Group*. The Northern World. Leiden: Brill, 2012. 616 pp., 24 illus. 9789004212473. €161

In this weighty volume, Bajer offers insight into a relationship that has been the topic of little detailed investigation in recent years. In the context of the ever-expanding corpus of work examining Scottish migration and communities abroad, this book adds a welcome new dimension to current historiography. Bajer identifies three primary aims for his work; first, to ‘expand our knowledge of the scale and significance of the Scottish migration to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries’, the second to ‘demonstrate the importance of ties between western and central Europe, and the Baltic region’, and the third to ‘broaden our understanding of the history of migration’ (9-10).

The first two aims are successfully fulfilled. This is the first full-length, modern, dedicated exploration of Scottish migration to Poland-Lithuania in this period – one area of Scottish migration that, in the author’s own words, ‘remains largely neglected’ (8). It is diligently researched, incorporating a great deal of manuscript material sourced throughout Britain and Europe. The volume considers this relationship in its wider European framework – assessing the impact of the 1707 Anglo-Scottish Union on this association, as well as considering the Baltic context. The volume is impressively inclusive in its consideration of migrants – aiming to ‘devote attention to silent groups’, including

women, commoners, and men admitted to the nobility; migrants who have been 'left out or largely neglected in previous accounts' (8). A chapter on Scottish presence in the Polish nobility goes far to addressing one aspect of this imbalance (303-340), though consideration of female migrants is less detailed, comprising only one dedicated section (140-9), and elsewhere mentioned usually in the context of marriage (e.g. 132, 139). Bajer laments the lack of source material on the topic – surely the reason this group has been 'left out' of previous accounts. Missing from the volume, though, is developed consideration of the 'disappearance' of the Scots in Poland-Lithuania – part of the subtitle, but receiving dedicated consideration only in a paragraph on the final page of the Conclusion (352).

The third and final aim of the volume – to broaden our understanding of the history of migration in a more general sense – is less successful. Much of the first part of the book (1-39) is dedicated to an overview of existing historiography. This is useful, particularly in highlighting non-English scholarship, but one questions the need for so much of this in a research monograph. Throughout the volume, Bajer's tendency is to outline existing scholarship and to accommodate his findings into this (e.g. 128), rather than explore ways in which this research develops migration history. There are missed opportunities to do so. The conclusion to Chapter Six, *Scots in the Reformed Parishes*, that 'Scots defined their community very heavily in terms of religion' (301) counters findings of some scholars in other areas of Europe, which is surely worthy of note. Similarly, large sections devoted to explaining context (e.g. 41-75) could be deemed superfluous. A more focused text would make this a much easier read. This is compounded by the structure of the book, which leads to repetition (e.g. 16-8 and 81-3; 110 and 245-6) and includes careless editing (e.g. start of sections, 161 and 166). Though there are comprehensive

indexes of places and of persons, it is a shame that a subject-based index has not also been compiled. Much excellent content in this lengthy book may remain hidden to all but the most patient and diligent reader.

The volume concludes with an impressive array of appendices – there are fifteen in total, covering 155 pages. These would have been enhanced by greater explanation and more detailed reference to them in the text. The majority have been compiled by identifying ‘Scottish names’ in manuscript sources, yet as is fully recognised by Bajer himself (85-87), this is not always an accurate way of establishing origin, and these appendices are not accompanied by specific explanation of how or why these individuals have been identified as ‘Scottish’, or what qualifies them as having ‘retained a strong sense of Scottish identity’ (87). This is not to suggest that Bajer’s analyses are inaccurate; merely that deeper explanation and assessment of this approach is desirable. Further, appendices V and IX retain Polish titles and cite Polish-entitled sources, with no translation or explanation, which is frustrating in an English-language text.

Despite some limitations in its presentation and broader aims, the research contained in this volume is impressive. Bajer’s work contributes a great deal to our understanding of Scots in the Poland-Lithuanian Commonwealth in this period, and to our perception of the relationship between Scotland and Poland-Lithuania. If they can muster their patience, this is an essential read for scholars and students of this particular association.

Siobhan Talbott
University of Manchester