

**Title—Global Migrants, Local Culture: Native and Newcomers in Provincial England, 1841-1939**

**Author—Laura Tabili**

**Year—2011**

Categories: Migration, Empire, Metropolitan Culture, Colonialism, Integration

Place: Britain

Time: 1841-1939

Argument Synopsis:

Tabili's book is focused on the area of South Shields in England to assess migration in the pre-1945 period that so dominates the literature on migration into the UK. She claims that analyzing South Shields reveals migrants more numerous and intercultural contact more widespread in the pre-1945 period than previously acknowledged. The biggest economic and population growth for South Shields happened in the late nineteenth century. She claims that South Shields can be seen as a microcosm of industrial societies also forming on the European continent, in the Americas, in Japan, and elsewhere. The history of migration to and from and through South Shields challenges the view of Britain as a culturally and racially homogenous society disrupted only by exotic 'intruders' creating unprecedented cultural change. Tabili seeks to demonstrate how efforts to preserve Britain's cultural purity or demographic homogeneity have been and remain misguided, as such purity never existed. Arguing against the dominant tendency to view 1945 as a turning point in British migration, Tabili posits that British society before 1945 was already culturally and racially heterogenous.

The book is organized into seven chapters, roughly chronologically. Tabili begins in the first chapter by describing South Shields' pattern of economic boom and decline in the 1850s. She argues that even before mass migrations of industrial era, South Shields took shape through ongoing processes of migration and settlement. South Shields became increasingly dependent on exports to global markets, rendering it vulnerable to competition, technological change, and geopolitics far beyond local control, while simultaneously attracting a labor force from equally far-flung locals. The second chapter presents and analyzes the first 100 per cent sample of overseas residents in modern British history. This evidence demonstrates that neither South Shields nor its migrant population proved atypical of industrial towns elsewhere in Britain. Tabili relies heavily on naturalization case files as valuable sources for the networks and composition of migrant populations in particular towns. She then turns to an examination of migrant households, showing Germans, Jews, Norwegians, and others reconstructed their communities in South Shields through chain migration, compatriot networks, co-residence, endogamy, and institution building. Her book strives to complicate views of migrants and natives as mutually exclusive populations. She seeks to recast South Shields as a crucible of multicultural and transcultural class and social formation. A later chapter shows how local and migrant women played a crucial role in the mostly male migrants' survival. She argues the state relied on local women to act as gatekeepers into British society. Overall, she reveals, through her case study of South Shields, British society and culture as plural, contested, and changeable—local and global as well as national and imperial.

Key Themes and Concepts:

- Europe's industrial workforce was heterogenous in origin and globally migratory
- Britain was never a homogenous closed society, detached from global flows of population or cultural influence
- Gender struggle and negotiation emerge as central dynamics of human mobility