Expelling the poor: Atlantic Seaboard states and the nineteenth-century origins of American immigration policy

Hirota, Hidetaka, author

Abstrak

This book examines the origins of immigration restriction in the United States, especially deportation policy. Based on an analysis of immigration policies in major American coastal states, including New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Louisiana, and California, it provides the first sustained study of immigration control conducted by states prior to the introduction of federal immigration law in the late nineteenth century. The influx of impoverished Irish immigrants over the first half of the nineteenth century led nativists in New York and Massachusetts to develop policies for prohibiting the landing of destitute foreigners and deporting those already in the states to Europe, Canada, or other American states. No other coastal state engaged in immigration regulation with the same level of legislative effort and success as the two states. By locating the roots of American immigration control in cultural prejudice against the Irish and, more essentially, economic concerns about their poverty in nineteenth-century New York and Massachusetts, this book fundamentally revises the history of American immigration policy, which has largely focused on anti-Asian racism on the West Coast. Beginning with Irish migrants initial departure from Ireland, this book traces their transatlantic movement to North America, expulsion from the United States, and postdeportation lives. In doing so, it places the implementation of American deportation policy in a broad context that extended from the United States to Ireland, Britain, and Canada, demonstrating how the policy operated as part of a larger legal culture of excluding nonproducing members from societies in the Atlantic world.