

Eiichiro Azuma

“IN SEARCH OF OUR FRONTIER”:

Entangled Histories of Early Japanese America and Imperial Japan

Drawing on my 2019 monograph, *In Search of Our Frontier*, I will discuss how deeply the history of early Japanese America was intertwined with that of Japanese imperialism even though a spatially-organized way of scholarly research has rendered the two histories separate and distinct.

Inspired by the success of Anglo-Saxon settler colonialisms, many prewar Japanese ideologues and practitioners of national expansion embraced a popular notion of frontier conquest with the U.S. West as a prototype. While imperial Japan aspired to populate its new territories with ordinary farmers, former U.S. residents—armed with their firsthand experience in American-style “frontier conquest”—played a prominent role in the processes of migrant settlement and agricultural colonization throughout the Japanese empire. My presentation traces the mobility of immigrant bodies, their settler expertise, and the agricultural technology they transplanted from California to Manchuria between the mid-1920s and the late-1930s. This episode gives a glimpse into the trans-pacific/trans-imperial historical formations that the existing narratives of Asian American history (a component of U.S. “ethnic” studies) and East Asian history (that of foreign “area” studies) have failed to explore. As such, I will offer an empirical critique of the established scholarly practices, epistemologies, and institutional apparatuses that tend to chop up the human experiences and worlds according to the logic and mandate of the national academia.

20 MAY 2021 • 3 PM

Google Meet: <https://meet.google.com/nor-rfhs-jwf>

Institute of European and American Studies
ACADEMIA SINICA



Associate Professor
History and Asian
American Studies
University of Pennsylvania

Visiting Professor
History
National Chengchi University

